

VIOLENT EXTREMISM

AND COMMUNICATIONS

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Acknowledgement

The publication you are currently reading is the final part of the *Violent Extremism as an Emerging Threat for NATO Nations* project requested by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence Steering Committee.

The aim of the project is to build awareness regarding this emerging threat, and to come to a common understanding about what drives the organizations that use extreme violence to defend their ideologies. Most importantly, our aim was to understand the roots of such violence—the seed of an idea flowers into an ideology, which leading proponents and followers further communicate to potential supporters. Although the existing literature extensively describes the problem, this report was greatly enriched by the seminars, working groups, and one-on-one academic discussions I had the privilege of participating in over the past year.

As the project officer and author of this report I would like to personally thank the speakers who took part in the *Riga StratCom Dialogue 2017*. Dr Hassan Abbas spoke about religious extremism at the conference. Thanks to his personal experience as a former Chief of Police in Pakistan and as an academic, he was able to share valuable knowledge about how violent extremism might be tackled through proper communication. Those working on countering violent extremism (CVE) and/or preventing violent extremism (PVE) would benefit from continuing to expand their understanding of the reasons some people defect from these groups, so that those who have experience of both sides might be engaged in the ideological fight to counter hostile narratives. I especially want to thank Dr Anne Speckhard for her thoughts on

engaging those who have been lured into violent Jihadi groups. She generously shared her extensive knowledge about people's motivations and what drives them to radicalism.

Communication is, of course, essential. However, countering every message produced by these violent groups is not always the right response. Sometimes offering alternative solutions can be a much more productive way of preventing people from committing violent acts. Long conversations with H.E. Maqsoud Kruse led me to realize that, under the proper circumstances, engaging with and asking questions of radicals, or of those on the brink of radicalisation, can lead us to a better understanding of the roots of their dissatisfaction.

The world powers are currently engaged in a heated discussion about Jihadism and religiously inspired fanaticism, but we shouldn't forget the other forms of violent extremism. Therefore, I am also grateful to Dr Kacper Rekawek, for his deep understanding of the problem of violent nationalistic movements. His knowledge of the conflict in Northern Ireland and the separatist movements in Lugansk and Donetsk have broadened my understanding about what might push people to become violent, religious fanaticism being only one of many reasons.



Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. I am not unmindful of the fact that violence often brings about momentary results. Nations have frequently won their independence in battle. But in spite of temporary victories, violence never brings permanent peace.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

We would all like to see a world without violence, however this utopian dream will probably never become our reality. Thus, it is necessary to consider what practical steps our nations can take to tackle the problems of violent extremism, terrorism, hate speech, and other forms of violence.

One of the aims of the NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence is to understand how state and non-state actors communicate about these issues, and how best to deal with violence and the narratives used by violent groups. The Centre has organized numerous workshops where military and civilian practitioners and experienced academics had the chance to discuss the problem of the violent extremism from a variety of perspectives. I want to thank Mr Mohamed Fatah, who shared his knowledge on domestic radicalisation processes in the US, Europe, and Africa. I would also like to thank Dr Ryszard M. Machnikowski, who led our discussion of violent nationalistic movements. His personal knowledge both of historical case studies and of contemporary radicalism shed light on the subject from an academic perspective. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude for his remarks about the theoretical model of violent extremism.

Our discussion of the well-known cases of violent extremism that the European countries have faced in the recent past was among the most valuable and enlightening. I would like to thank Dr Krzysztof Danielewicz, Ms Tarja Mankinen, and Mr Maurice J. Jeunet, who shared historical and contemporary examples of violent extremism either from their home countries or from missions abroad in which they took part. Additionally, I have to admit that without a proper understanding of the socio-psychology of communications our efforts would not be effective. Therefore, I express my sincere gratitude to Dr Tomasz Grzyb, with whom I have been cooperating in the field of Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) for many years. He has helped me understand the nature of social influence techniques, how to recognise manipulation, and how to develop effective defensive mechanisms.

Finally, I want to thank all of those with whom I met while travelling and collecting information for this project. Your knowledge and experience have allowed me to better understand the problem of violent extremism.

Rafał ZGRYZIEWICZ

Introduction

Over the past century modern societies have faced various types of violence.¹ Whether these have been wars, acts of terrorism, crimes, or violent political change, violence always has a direct impact on people and their possessions.

The term *violent extremism* is now much discussed around the world, but exactly what does it mean? People will always interpret words and ideas according to their own experience, but to deal with the problem of violent extremism it is first necessary to understand it properly. Where is the border between a crime, an assassination, and an act of violent extremism? To answer this question, the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence was tasked with researching violent extremism. This publication will show that violent extremism is not solely made up of acts of terror against democratic societies, but might sometimes be the result of dedication to radical and violent change in political systems. In some cases violent extremism is strongly connected with an ideology, where irreducible fundamental beliefs are driving the behaviour of groups or individuals.

There is a large body of literature that describes the problem of violent extremism. In addition to academic research, publications and reports by law enforcement, state-sponsored institutions, and think tanks analyse incidents in which violence has been used to achieve political, religious, or other ideological objectives. Although the subject has been extensively studied and described, there is room for improvement and much that still remains unresolved. Therefore we must continue our dialogue to understand emerging situations and what more can be done to prevent and respond to the problem.

A crucial part of the fight against violent extremism is taking preventive measures, and strategic communications

is a powerful tool that states can use. In particular, steps should be taken to engage people who are still hesitating, who are on the brink of making the decision to join a violent group. Offering alternative narratives might be one of the most effective ways to turn them away from the deadly illusions of radical ideologies. At any given moment there are conflicts around the world that might lead to violence. Uncertainties in the Middle East, the Kremlin's expansionism, or even fear of another's skin colour or way of thinking, are examples of such tensions. Despite geopolitical differences, violence has the same face, whether in Iraq, Syria, or eastern Ukraine. What lies behind these acts of violence? Is it political aspiration, religious expansion, or simply a different mode of thought, a more extreme way of approaching problems? Liberal Western societies that respect such principles as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and free markets can sometimes seem weak when confronting those who follow extreme radical ideas.

Coming face-to-face with people of different cultures who don't understand European values causes some Europeans to fear that their different cultural norms will cause future problems. Some people do not want to deal with different ways of thinking, behavioural norms, and unfamiliar values. Yet those who are subjected to violence or social inequality often migrate to more prosperous and peaceful countries. Either they are unable to find jobs that would allow them to support their families, or violence has made their lives insecure and unbearable. At first glance a combination of assimilation on the part of the

¹) Understood as the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy. It is also defined as vehement feeling or expression, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/violence> [08.09.2017].



A crucial part of the fight against violent extremism is taking preventive measures, and strategic communications is a powerful tool that states can use. In particular, steps should be taken to engage people who are still hesitating, who are on the brink of making the decision to join a violent group.

immigrants and acceptance on the part of the natives looks like a good solution. But what if patriotism changes into chauvinism? What if instead of respecting the culture of the indigenous population, immigrants to a strange new place feel the need to impose their own way of thinking? Although it is not easy to achieve, we should strive for balance and mutual understanding. For those who believe in democratic values, civil rights, and gender equality, it seems rational to disagree with a narrow nationalistic approach. On the other hand, nationalism emphasizes history, patriotism, and the need for self-determination in a dangerous and fragile world.² A situation in which radicalized youngsters praise those who commit terrible acts of violence and the killing of innocent people merely because they represent different way of thinking or adhere to a different religion can never be acceptable in democratic societies. But we should not forget that it takes two to tango.

When those who perceive *Jihad* literally use religion to explain their *holy war*, people on the other side grow fearful and can become highly motivated to protect their homeland by any means. That is why in recent history we have seen the rise of various nationalist and racist radicals who pose a threat to their own democratic societies. Undisputedly one such person is Anders Breivik, the white nationalist who killed almost a hundred people in two separate terrorist attacks in his home country of Norway. In that case the driving factor was Breivik's anti-liberalism, but how can we explain the behaviour of Dylann Roof, the American white supremacist who killed nine people

as they were attending a prayer service at their church in Charleston, South Carolina? Was it simply an ugly crime? Or was it violent extremism committed by a person who had an extremely negative perception of Afro-Americans? How do we assess the situation in Ukraine, where violence is driven neither by religion nor by cultural differences? Where does the problem lie? Many foreign fighters, calling themselves *volunteers*, migrated to the regions of Lugansk and Donetsk that have been seized by separatists. How we should regard the actions perpetrated by them? Are they war crimes or acts of extremism committed by Kremlin-supported separatists? Although Ukraine officially perceives the conflict as terrorist activities, not as a war, the shadow of Russia's geopolitical expansionism lies behind the violence. Separatism is nothing new. History is filled with examples of people with their own visions of statehood who have launched extensive campaigns of terror.

For many decades, the United Kingdom had to deal with problem of the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) extremism, before the 'Troubles' finally ended in a peaceful compromise. Now that the United Kingdom has officially declared that it will withdraw from the European Union, the problem may yet see another turning point. In the communities that straddle the divide between Northern Ireland and the Republic, anxieties about a hard border are becoming very real. Business owners fear for their livelihoods, while local people warn of a return to the days when IRA smugglers ruled 'bandit country'.³ It must also be noted that despite official claims of a cease-fire, some

2) M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, SAGE, 1995.

3) L. O'Carroll, How Brexit looms over the Irish border: 'It's the Berlin Wall approaching us', *The Guardian*, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/22/how-brexit-looms-over-the-irish-border-its-the-berlin-wall-approaching-us> [15.12.2017].



Communication is critical to success, whether it takes place through information or influence activities. It is also necessary to emphasize that actions not solely designed for an informational strategy can amplify messages and complement the overall communications process.

radical nationalists may still pose a threat to society and use the current political situation to fuel the old conflict.

There is evidence of former cooperation between the IRA and separatists from the Basque Homeland and Liberty Party (ETA), which was also politically and culturally motivated. Now that Catalonia is making a bid for independence, other independence-minded peoples are watching closely.⁴ Although the ETA has respected the ceasefire for years, how will those who still harbour nationalistic aspirations behave towards other peoples declaring their independence from Spain? We must understand that any action causes a specific reaction, formed by the circumstances of time, place, and those involved. Those who are subjected to violence might be pushed to use any means, including acts of terrorism, to protect their loved ones and their beliefs. In the case of the ETA, the violence perpetrated by the separatists was mainly in response to the political approach of Spanish general Francisco Franco and his policies towards the Basque minority. Nowadays, when people see a government sending its central police force against a regional one, it can trigger some unpredictable actions. Therefore, the issue of Catalanian self-determination should be approached wisely, with respect for democratic rule of law. If the situation becomes contentious, it may well be used by state or non-state actors to deepen the existing differences within Spain and within the European Union.

We can hypothesize that the response to an attack ought to be proportional. But what should be done when our democratic values tell us that violence is not the proper way to respond to violence? We defend our democratic principles and they are our defence, but we need to remember that there are different cultures, religions, and ways of thinking—we are playing a single game with multiple sets of rules. The question here is how we should actually respond if some entity commits an act of violence against us? There is no one simple answer, and because of the complexity of violent extremism, each case has to be approached separately.

We can assume that if violence stems from ideology, strategic communications is among the most appropriate tools we can use to respond to or prevent acts of violent extremism. Communication is critical to success, whether it takes place through information or influence activities. It is also necessary to emphasize that actions not solely designed for an informational strategy can amplify messages and complement the overall communications process. Without proper engagement of the various communications capabilities, supportive functions, and direct actions at our disposal, communications will not be effective. Therefore, an understanding of context, the roots of violence, and the perpetrators is critical to strategic success. The information environment is one of the many arenas used by states and equally by those seeking to undermine existing states and their values. Many such

4) A. MacLeod, The Catalan crisis could cause the collapse of Spain, The Independent, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/catalan-crisis-spain-collapse-independence-referendum-police-violence-voters-civilians-protests-a7978131.html> [15.12.2017].



The digital age has created many new opportunities for those who want to share radical points of view. It is important to remember that violent physical actions can be swiftly and easily amplified in the information environment, thus amplifying their destabilising effects.

entities are prepared to act in the physical domain, as well as in the virtual and cognitive spaces. The digital age has created many new opportunities for those who want to share radical points of view. It is important to remember that violent physical actions can be swiftly and easily amplified in the information environment, thus amplifying their destabilising effects.

This publication is organised into chapters to help the reader comprehend the scope of violent extremism, and understand why communications matter. Our aim is to enrich the ongoing discussion about various types of extremism. The first chapter focuses on a number of ideologies that may contribute to shaping people's decisions. Although we should not condemn people for holding an extreme point of view, situations arise where extreme views assume a violent form—the second chapter discusses these, emphasizing three factors that are important to consider when seeking to understand the problem of violent extremism. Moreover, this chapter provides some reasons why people join terrorist groups and choose to use violence to achieve their ideological goals.

The third chapter depicts the tools and tactics that have been used by violent groups based on selected historical and contemporary examples from around the world.⁵ It also shows that different ideological approaches drive the various types of violence we see. Since violent actions

are planned and executed to create a specific effect, the fourth chapter discusses what specific steps are taken by extremists representing different ideologies and which effects they desire to achieve.

The fifth chapter is about communications. People cannot avoid communicating; if everything starts from an ideology that is successfully communicated to a group of followers, we must consider what types of words and deeds can provide the best resolution to the pain of violence.

Finally, the paper concludes with a summary of the problem, the responses currently available to us, and provides some direction for future research.

5) A comprehensive discussion of violent extremism is not possible, therefore several examples have been selected for this publication in order to explore different ideological approaches and techniques that have been used in terms of specific regions.

Types of Extremism

The term *extremism* has been used extensively, and is sometimes overused. It is all too common in political arguments that someone will wrongfully call the representative of an opposing side an 'extremist', using the word in a pejorative but not a descriptive sense.⁶

Therefore we must ask what exactly extremism is. *Extremism* might be defined as a belief in and support for ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable. If we take the mainstream way of thinking as our point of reference, any strong disagreement with it would be considered an extremist aberration. However, in pluralistic modern democracies people have divergent beliefs and worldviews, so any judgement about what is and what is not mainstream thinking is bound to be controversial. Everything depends on regional affiliation and historical context. As history shows, what was considered reasonable or correct in the past might not be acceptable today. Even today, the standard for judging right and wrong in modern Saudi Arabia would probably not be acceptable in Western democracies.

Nevertheless, groups such as white nationalists, anti-gay zealots, black separatists, racist skinheads, or religious fanatics might be categorised as taking an extreme approach to achieve their political, economic, or other ideological goals. Behind each of the aforementioned types of extremism there lies an ideology that is expressed through particular beliefs and motivations. Attitudes and, more importantly, emotions can lead to extreme behaviour. Violence, terror, hate speech, and even a coup, may be regarded as expressions of extremism.

Because the contemporary world is driven by political affiliations and religious beliefs, we can easily recognize political and religious extremism. However, an attack on our values may come from those whose lives are driven neither by religion nor by political affiliation. And it is certainly possible that extreme religious and political ideological approaches overlap and interact with each other.

Political extremism can be framed as a deviation from the social norms of a democratic state.⁷ Although, the official name of North Korea includes the word democratic, this doesn't mean that the state follows democratic rules. Extremism must be understood in context. In North Korea the Juche political ideology is characterized by a paranoid nationalism and a military-first state approach, which together have a determining impact on people's lives.⁸

Extremism on the far right of the political spectrum is often driven by intense nationalistic, chauvinistic, xenophobic, racist, or reactionary views.⁹ On the far left extremism is often driven by socialist or communist ideals, anti-capitalism, and the view that political power should belong to the working class.¹⁰ The left-wing political approach values social privileges, such as free access to education and healthcare, but strictly opposes sponsoring religious associations and wants religion kept out of schools. Quite often belligerent factions representing

6) J.M. Bale, *The Darkest Sides of Politics, I: Postwar Fascism, Covert Operations, and Terrorism*, Routledge, 2017.

8) B. R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters*, Melville House, New York, 2011.

9) R.P. Carlisle, *The Encyclopedia of Politics: The Left and the Right*, Rutgers University, 2005.

10) L. March, *Contemporary Far Left Parties in Europe*, International Policy Analysis, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin, 2008.

7) R. Tokarczyk, *Deliberations on the notion of extremism*, *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska*, Vol. 50/51 (2003/2004), p. 253-280.

Figure 1. Types of extremism



Source: Own elaboration.

contrasting political views are driven by hatred of each other, and fight for dominance within a specific region.

Although religious extremism may seem to be strictly tied to theology, law and politics are inevitably involved. Most democratic countries do not interfere with the personal worldviews and religious beliefs of their citizens. States and religious organisations form relationships based on mutual respect and independence for the greater good. However, some religious factions do not respect religious difference, and use their scriptures to undermine other religions or attack those who don't believe. Without a proper theological foundation, sacred scriptures may be understood too literally encouraging religious fanaticism. Uncritical zeal and obsessive enthusiasm related to one's own religious interpretations can cause significant deviations from mainstream social norms.

Although many differences exist between religions that can cause tensions, sometimes differences between the factions of a single religion can be violently contentious. For example, Daesh follows an extreme interpretation of Islam.¹¹ For Daesh Shia Muslims and others who oppose the group's interpretation of the Quran are thought of as *apostates*, *hypocrites*, or *polytheists*, and are subjected to persecution and mass killing.

There are also differences among the various Islamic

factions regarding how Christians should be treated. Some show respect toward priests¹² who are thought of as being *people of the book*,¹³ although they perceive Jesus as only a *human being*, not the Son of God.¹⁴ Others believe that Christians are apostates, and that Muslims have the right to force them to convert to Islam. As a purely monotheistic religion, Islam completely rejects the Christian concept of the Holy Trinity.¹⁵ There are also specific verses of the Quran that might have an ambiguous meaning; problems appear if somebody treats the words literally and incites or employs violence to fulfil passages in the central religious text of Islam.

Another form of Islamic extremism that has appeared in some countries is the determination to impose Sharia law in special zones where alcohol, gambling, smoking, drugs, music, homosexuality, and even men and women mixing in public, must be banned.¹⁶ Such attitudes are far from the mainstream for most citizens of democratic countries, who are accustomed to freedom of expression being guaranteed by law. It is easy to imagine that those advocating for Sharia zones would cause strong reactions from society at large and might come under investigation by law enforcement. When 'Sharia patrols' appeared in East London, some far-right groups organized 'Christian patrols' in opposition.¹⁷ Another example of an extreme clash of cultures is the response after the 9/11 attacks on

11) Vide: R. Zgryzewicz, Daesh Information Campaign And its Influence, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, Riga, 2016.

12) The Noble Qur'an, <https://quran.com/5/82> [13.06.2017].

13) F. Peters, People of the Book, NY, 2010.

14) L. Fatoohi, Jesus the Muslim Prophet, UK, 2010, <http://www.quranicstudies.com/books/jesus-the-muslim-prophet/> [13.06.2017].

15) Ibid.

16) S. Reid, As Islamic extremists declare Britain's first Sharia law zone, the worrying social and moral implications, The Daily Mail, 29 July 2011, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2020382/You-entering-Sharia-law-Britain-As-Islamic-extremists-declare-Sharia-law-zone-London-suburb-worrying-social-moral-implications.html#ixzz4jxYWrU00> [14.06.2017].

17) J. Elgot, 'Christian Patrols' Warning In East London Investigated By Police, The Huffingtonpost, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/02/05/christian-patrols-tower-h_n_4729611.html [14.06.2017].

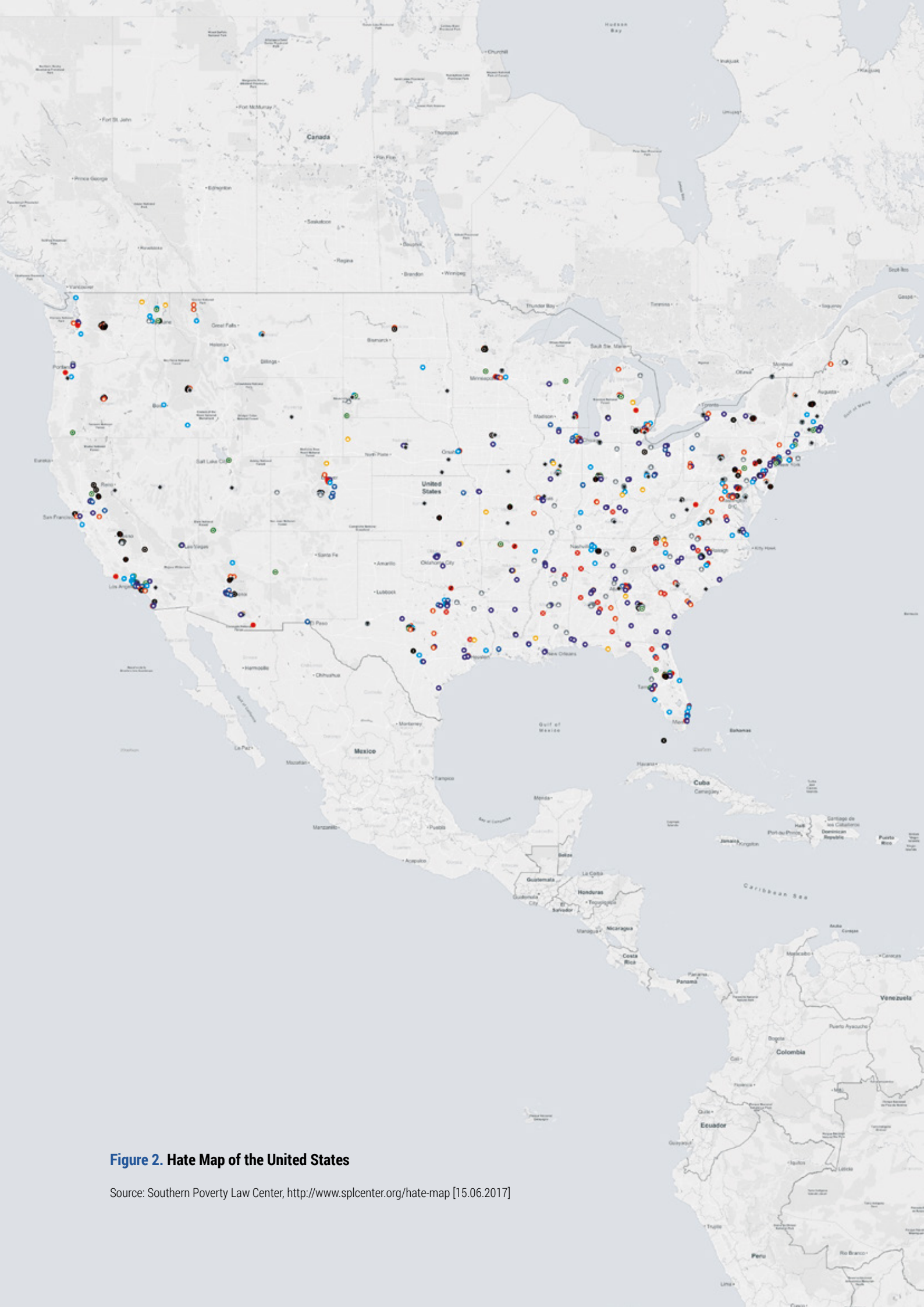
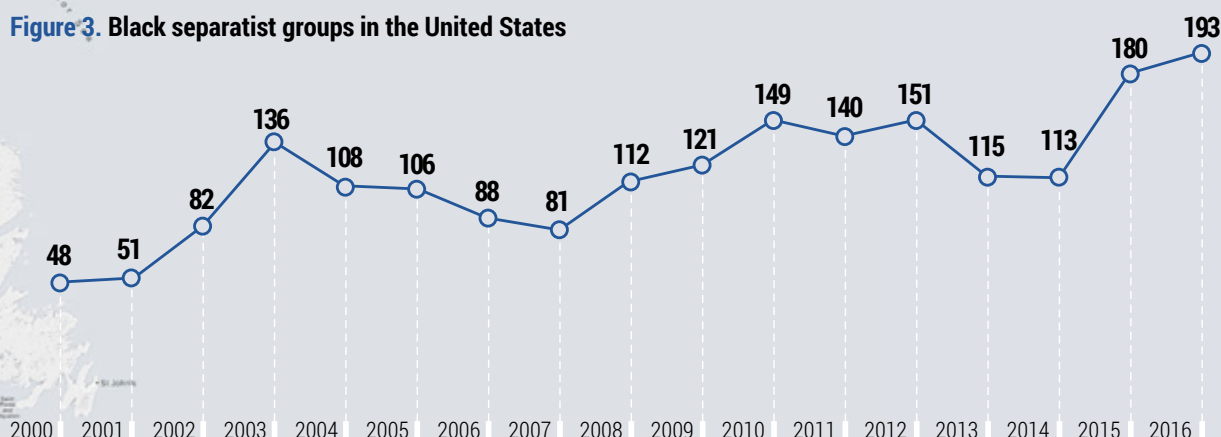


Figure 2. Hate Map of the United States

Source: Southern Poverty Law Center, <http://www.splcenter.org/hate-map> [15.06.2017]

Figure 3. Black separatist groups in the United States



Source: Southern Poverty Law Center, <http://www.splcenter.org> [15.06.2017].

the World Trade Centre in 2001. Numerous incidents and hate crimes against Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians were reported,¹⁸ including the murder of a Sikh taken for a Muslim by mistake.¹⁹

Islamophobia was a driving factor for the pastor of the non-denominational Christian Dove World Outreach Center in Gainesville, Florida.²⁰ He intended to burn 200 copies of the Quran on the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. He held a mock trial, during which he found alleged crimes against humanity in the Quran, and used them as an excuse to destroy it.²¹ Many people came to protest his actions, and some were killed or injured as a consequence. Afghan President Hamid Karzai publicly condemned the burning of the Islamic holy book, as did various US officials, including President Barack Obama.²² The incident showed that although the action was taken by a small, isolated religious community, it sparked religious, cultural, and political clashes all over the world. Its extreme

criticism of Islam and condemnation of same-sex marriage resulted in the Florida group being designated as a hate group.²³

Many ideologically-driven groups have been identified in the United States, including white nationalists (Fig. 2). These are groups that espouse white supremacist or white separatist ideologies, often focusing on the alleged inferiority of non-whites. Groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Confederates, neo-Nazis, and racist skinheads are examples of white nationalists. For many years, the largest group of white nationalist in America has been the Council of Conservative Citizens, a reincarnation of the former White Citizens Councils that was created to resist desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s.²⁴ White nationalism is also often supported and disseminated by racist music bands that advocate the vision and importance of *white power*.

18) M.R. Bloomberg, P.L. Gatling, Discrimination Against Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians in New York City Since 9/11, http://web.archive.org/web/20051108192400/http://www.nyc.gov:80/html/cchr/pdf/sur_report.pdf [14.06.2017].

19) CNN, Hate crime reports up in wake of terrorist attacks, 2001, <http://web.archive.org/web/20051127025019/http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/16/gen.hate.crimes/> [14.06.2017].

20) Non-denominational Christianity consists of churches that are founded by individual pastors and typically distance themselves from the Christian communities. They establish their own internal means and methods of policy and worship without interference from the policies and worship practices of regional, national, or multinational organizations. Members of non-denominational churches often consider themselves simply 'Christians'.

21) Ch. Smith, Dove World denies it's responsible for violence over Quran burning, 2011, <http://www.gainesville.com/news/20110401/dove-world-denies-its-responsible-for-violence-over-quran-burning> [14.06.2017].

22) CNN, Protests continue in Afghanistan against Quran burning, 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/asiapcf/04/05/afghanistan.protests/> [14.06.2017].

23) Southern Poverty Law Center, 'Burn a Koran day' pastor plans new desecration of Islamic holy book, 2011, <http://edit.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2011/02/07/%E2%80%99burn-koran-day%E2%80%99pastor-plans-new-desecration-islamic-holy-book> [14.06.2017].

24) Southern Poverty Law Center, White nationalists, 2015, <https://edit.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/white-nationalist> [14.06.2017].

Figure 4. The impact of extremism



Source: Own elaboration.

Another interesting development is the alliances between far-right groups and hooligans in the face of a common enemy.²⁵ In this context the ancient proverb that *'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'* points out that unassociated or even opposing factions can work together to deal with their common problems.

The number of black separatists' movements has also increased in the US in opposition to the growing vision of white supremacy (Fig. 3). Black separatists typically oppose integration and racial intermarriage, and advocate a racial definition of national identity for African-Americans. Their ideology stresses the centuries of inequality between races and the need for the social, political, and economic empowerment of black communities. Sometimes black separatism is driven not only by race, but also by religious beliefs.²⁶

Another classification of extremism might be based on the range of occurrence (Fig. 4). In this respect we can distinguish domestic and international groups. There have been many cases of individuals whose extreme views or actions were motivated by various ideologies in contemporary history. With few exceptions, individuals driven by local issues are involved in domestic extremism that concerns a specific country or region. Anders Behring Breivik (who changed his name to Fjotolf Hansen in 2017)²⁷ is one of the most extreme and cruel examples of an ideologically motivated individual.

This far-right extremist prepared and executed two acts of terrorism on 22 July 2011.²⁸ The first, intended for the Norwegian prime minister, was an explosion in which eight people died and dozens were wounded by what later proved to be a powerful bomb. The second attack was launched against the Workers' Youth League (AUF), Norway's largest political youth organization and affiliated with the Norwegian Labour Party, during a summer camp on the island of Utøya. He killed 69 people and wounded 33 in that attack.

If extremists can unite themselves into a group they are more likely to have a bigger effect; their actions may cross state borders, and they may cooperate with foreign groups. They may also be able to motivate people who are not affiliated with them, but are impressed by the ideology.²⁹ Examples of extremist groups include religious sects, ethnic groups, gangs, and terrorist organizations. Members of such groups may be characterised by unusual needs, psychological problems, or deep indoctrination. Their supporters seek self-esteem and community acceptance; therefore loyalty to the group is a driving factor that can lead to a radical commitment. In addition, the authority of a charismatic leader can strengthen group cohesion, and can trigger violent actions from those who are ready to do their leaders' bidding. Personal involvement in such a group depends more on a positive acceptance of the value system and beliefs of the group than on critical thinking.

25) Der Spiegel, The Unholy Alliance of Neo-Nazis and Football Hooligans, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/new-right-wing-alliance-of-neo-nazis-and-hooligans-appears-in-germany-a-1000953.html> [14.06.2017].

26) According to the Southern Poverty Law Center an example of a black nationalist group that an ideology is driven by religious beliefs, but also anti-American, anti-Semitic, and anti-Catholic views, as well as by anti-gay sentiment is the Nation of Islam (NOI).

This group believes that white people were created thousands years ago as an inherently evil and ungodly race. Although most members of the NOI come from the U.S., the group also has supporters in Canada, Great Britain, and France.

27) S. Åsebø, Anders Behring Breivik har skiftet navn, 2017, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/terrorangrepet-22-juli/anders-behring-breivik-har-skiftet-navn/a/24069167/> [26.06.2017].

28) S. Murtne, et al., Politiet: Minst 84 drept på Utøya, 2011, <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/terrorangrepet-22-juli-etterforskningen/politiet-minst-84-drept-paa-utoeya/a/10080616/> [26.06.2017].

29) Example: Daesh's Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) or so-called lone actors that individually are engaged in the act of violence.

When Everything Turns to Violence

The world today is connected in many ways; therefore any region, country, or religion might be endangered by those who favour an extreme and violent vision of what the world should look like.

There are many hotspots and conflict areas where extremists might find fertile ground for their visions. Ideologically-motivated people who use physical force to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy pose a serious threat to security and stability. However, violent extremism can also include injury resulting from verbal distortion, infringement, profanation, or vehement negative feeling, and by acts expressing or symbolising distortion, profanation, and the like.³⁰ Therefore, all such activities by people who support the use of aggression for political, religious, or other ideological reasons might be perceived as contributing to violent extremism. Violent extremism includes all actions in which identity-motivated violence, from hate crimes³¹ to genocide, are used as tools to achieve desired objectives. In addition to violence we must consider two more aspects—radicalism and fundamentalism.

Radicalism might be understood as an attitude in favour of extreme changes in existing views, habits, conditions, and institutions. Such attitudes play an important role in the cognitive as well as the physical space. However, not every desire for radical change should be perceived as something bad, for example a radical change might be the improvement of insufficient social systems or the eradication of a disease, something that would have a positive effect on society. On the other hand, the seemingly positive goals of the communist ideology—equality, the liberation of the working class, social justice, and welfare—resulted in mass executions and decades of oppression. The term radicalism is associated with political opinions

and practices involving the belief that society needs to be changed for one reason or another, and that these changes are possible only through revolutionary means.

The second idea we must consider is fundamentalism, in which a religion, doctrine, or ideology serves as the foundation upon life is built. Usually, but not always, fundamentalism is an unwavering attachment to a set of irreducible beliefs based on a religious doctrine.³² It might also be defined as a movement that stresses a strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles (religious fundamentalism, political fundamentalism, etc.). Ideology and a strong sense of belonging create the well-known ingroup/outgroup phenomenon. Social psychology defines *ingroup* as the social group with which a person psychologically identifies as being a member. Those who are not part of the *ingroup* are the *outgroup*, and may not share the same ideology and values.

If we take an overview of the three aforementioned terms, we find that two of them often overlap (Fig. 5). A coalescence of fundamentalism and radicalism may lead to a programme of extreme changes based on an ideology with roots in religious or secular beliefs. A worst-case scenario, where we might start to talk about violent extremism is one in which a group seeks to introduce extreme changes through acts of violence on the basis of a secular ideology. We may find, for example, radicals who seek to attain their political objectives through violence.

30) Merriam Webster Dictionary, Violence, <http://www.merriam-webster.com> [28.06.2017].

31) Hate crimes are directed at a person or group of people because of certain demographic characteristics (i.e. race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.). These crimes can take many forms—such as burning down a religious building or threatening or injuring another person. Hate crimes are a type of violent extremism.

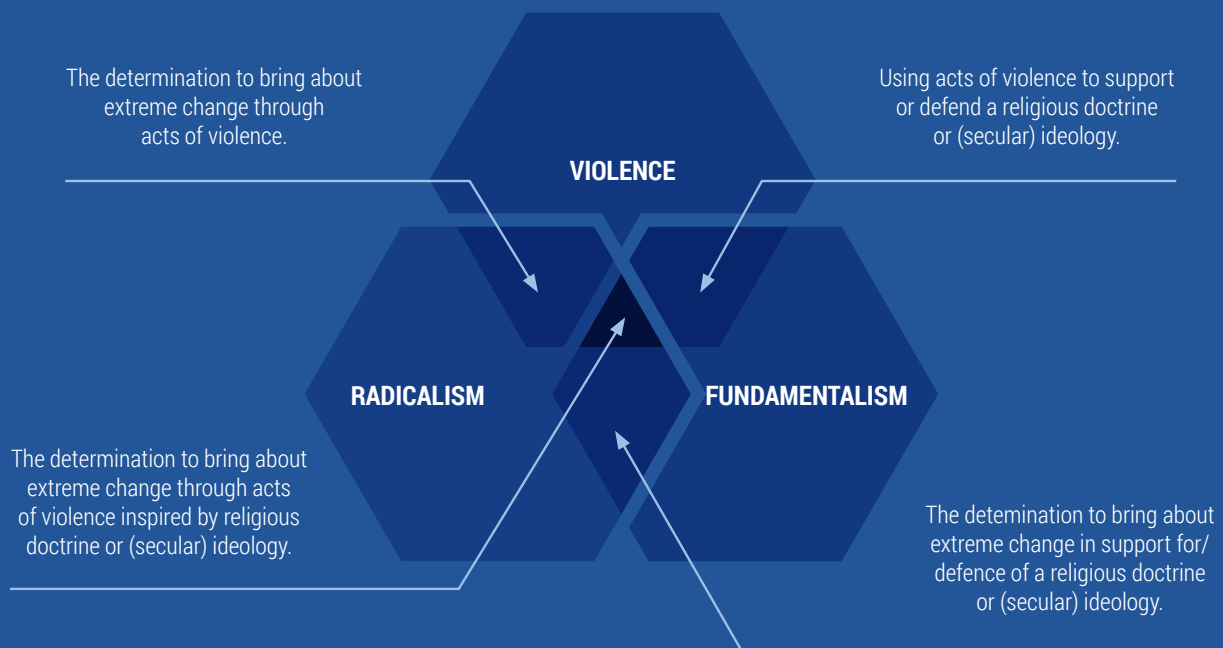
32) N. Judith, *Beyond Theology: Toward an Anthropology of Fundamentalism*, American Anthropologist, 2001.

The same problem might appear if a group with fundamental beliefs seeks to use violence to impose its own way of thinking or believing. In such cases, we often see acts of violence or even crime being driven by religious or secular fundamental ideology. The worst combination is when all three elements come together to produce a violent ideological approach driven by a determination to impose radical changes inspired by fundamental beliefs that do not address people's actual needs.

Many violent extremist ideologies are based on the fear of another race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or country or government.³³ Violent extremists often think that their values are under attack and that violence is the only solution to the problems they face. Despite what they sometimes say, violent extremists often do not believe in such central values of modern Western countries as democracy, human rights, tolerance, and inclusion. Violent extremists sometimes twist religious teachings and other beliefs to support their own goals.³⁴

One of the many tactics violent extremists employ is terrorism. Although, there are countless definitions of 'terrorism' in use, there is no single definition that commands full international approval.³⁵ Most of the existing definitions emphasize various attributes of terrorism, such as its often symbolic character, its indiscriminate nature, and its focus on civilian and non-combatant targets of violence.³⁶ Some definitions refer to the provocative and sometimes to retributive aims of terrorism, the disruption of public order, and the endangerment of public security. Usually the victims of terrorism are not the ultimate targets. The intended audience is the broad populace exposed to information about the violent acts committed by terror groups and is cast into state of fear as a result. The terrorists want people to feel insecure and to lose confidence in the ability of their governments to protect them. They want to frighten the wider audience by showing the inevitable consequences of their damaging ideology, often emphasising that all violent acts are due to social, economic, and political unfairness.

Figure 5. A Theoretical Model of Violent Extremism



Source: Own elaboration.

33) Federal Bureau of Investigation, What is Violent Extremism? Distorted Principles, <http://cve.fbi.gov>, [15.09.2017].

34) Ibid.

35) Vide: A.P. Schmid, The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research, 2011, p. 39.

36) Ibid.

Figure 6. Factors used by terrorist groups to attract members



Source: Own elaboration (pictures taken from different Daesh's products).

Terrorism disregards international humanitarian law, as well as the law of armed conflicts. It often has also an asymmetric character, where individuals or armed groups commit crimes against those who cannot defend themselves. Terrorism can also be described as the systematic use of terror—especially as a means of coercion,³⁷ or the unlawful use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims.³⁸ Today, when information plays such a significant role and so much depends on technological innovations, the world is facing a new type of problem—cyberterrorism. The term can be understood as the use of computer network tools to shut down critical national infrastructures (e.g. energy, transportation, government operations, etc.) or to coerce or intimidate a

government or a civilian population.³⁹ Therefore, all those who use cyber technologies to conduct violent acts that result in or threaten the loss of life may be defined as cyberterrorists. Although the terrorists' tools and scheme of action are clear, identifying them may prove to be the biggest challenge.

What makes people violent and pushes them to use a terror in order to satisfy their ideological needs? Factors that might have an impact on the decision to embrace violence and terror seem worthy of investigation. Amongst them are: the need for social support, the need for a sense of belonging, adherence to an ideology, and personal vulnerabilities (Fig. 6).⁴⁰

37) Merriam Webster Dictionary, Terrorism, <http://www.merriam-webster.com>, [28.06.2017]

38) Oxford Dictionaries, Terrorism, <http://en.oxforddictionaries.com>, [28.06.2017].

39) J. Lewis, Assessing the Risks of Cyber Terrorism, Cyber War and Other Cyber Threats, Center for Strategic and International Studies, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/021101_risks_of_cyberterror.pdf [28.06.2017].

40) A. Speckhard, The Riga StratCom Dialogue: Countering Violent Extremism Through Communication, NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence, Riga 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fPq6cHVP8>, [13.09.2017].

First and foremost, people need social support. This is important either because of common or exaggerated personal needs, or due to specific fears and frustrations. A person may feel alone because of a lack of meaning and purpose in his/her life. Psychological factors such as apprehension, frustration, social alienation, and painful experiences might push person into looking for any kind of support. Therefore acceptance by a group might be a turning point; a group's apparent interest shows that one is cared for and assisted by others, and can rely on the group he belongs to.

One of the most important functions is emotional support, where feelings play an important role (concern, trust, encouragement, etc.). A person who looks for social acceptance and others, who share his/her concerns, emotions, and stresses, comes to feel supported and valued by the other members of the group. Offers of financial assistance, material goods, or services also play an important role, and it seems that terrorist organizations have learned this lesson well (for example Daesh's provision of sex slaves, the money given to foreign terrorist fighters, etc.). Those who lack a job and future prospects can be lured by the vision of a utopian world where the terrorist group provides both employment and economic security. They also offer useful advice, guidance in dealing with personal difficulties, or suggestions for how to solve everyday problems. Finally, the presence of companions who are ready to engage in shared social activities plays an important role. All these factors create a strong feeling of social connection with such a group.

Nowadays it is very easy to get social support from online peers.⁴¹ Only two things are necessary—a mobile phone and an Internet connection. People who communicate to find new friends, gain support, or coordinate events, can use multiple tools offered by various companies. Some of them provide anonymous connections that encourage people to be more open with their problems and to trust the suggestions of those who are on the other side of the screen. Terrorist groups who want to isolate possible supporters and move the conversation to private clusters take advantage of these online tools.⁴²

Social support provides many benefits. People feel confident when they share values and work together to achieve common goals. The problem comes when there are no constraints on the methods used to achieve a seemingly vital objective. In such cases an ideology can become the factor that drives action, which may also include violence. To ensure obedience and ideological dedication from the members of a group, their vulnerabilities must be understood. Therefore the psychographics,⁴³ demographics,⁴⁴ and motivations⁴⁵ of any target group are important not only for those who seek to counter extremism, but to the leaders of the extremists themselves.

Daesh has been well researched and provides a good example for the elaboration of the aforementioned steps. First, it seems that the group is well versed in local grievances, and the reasons why people are dissatisfied with their current situation (*push factors*). The various informational products Daesh produces depicting an illusory vision of the intended caliphate motivate people who support the cause. Literal jihad is portrayed as a way of life, and *soldiers of the Islamic State* are shown as heroes who are fulfilling the will of God. Targeted communication highlighting all the attractions of Daesh's imagined utopian caliphate, supported by successes on the battlefield (*pull factors*), has inspired certain people to follow the same path, including many foreigners who have joined the global campaign. It is obvious that without understanding the needs and desires of its target audience, Daesh's information campaign wouldn't work. Therefore it is important to comprehend specific demographic sets and understand what may motivate people from a given segment. The study of Daesh's communication has shown that over 60% of its products are aimed at getting one kind of support or another.⁴⁶

41) H. Niela-Vilén, et al., Internet-based peer support for parents: A systematic integrative review, *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 51(11), 1524-1537, 2014.

42) Vide: R. Zgryziewicz, *Daesh Recruitment. How the Group Attracts Supporters*, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, Riga, 2016.

43) Psychological characteristics (i.e. fears, hates, values) that provoke an emotional response.

45) Psychological needs.

46) *Daesh Recruitment...*, Op. Cit. p. 34.

44) Gender, religion, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, political affiliation, level of education, etc.



Figure 7. A mobile information point

Source: Ninawa Province Media, But Allah Will Perfect His Light, 2016, <https://videopress.com/v/U0hNzQhf>, [27.09.2017].

But further analysis has shown that the products aimed at triggering specific actions are designed with people's motivations in mind, including the goals of re-establishing the caliphate, attaining deeper religious devotion (as interpreted exclusively by Daesh), changing one's current dissatisfying life circumstances, and migrating to join like-minded people in 'the land of the believers'.⁴⁷

Daesh's narrative there also includes calls for strengthening a righteous personal identity in the *rotten* Western world, as well as in *corrupted* Arab countries. Stories about the alleged cruelty of the Western world and its global fight against Islam, as well as footage where viewers are shown wounded persons (especially children), can provoke a strong emotional response. Therefore the group encourages its followers, and even those who have not yet decided to join, to take action in order to avenge these alleged wrongs. Those whose basic needs are already satisfied might be inspired by other appeals. In that case all the products that depict terrorists as brave

soldiers on the battlefield, and the battlefield as a real life first-person-shooter type adventure might trigger secondary motivations, such as the desire for excitement. Daesh's knowledge of the internal psychological factors of their target audiences, including their attitudes, values, lifestyles, and opinions, as well as the motivations that cause people to take action, have given the group a clear understanding of which demographic groups are the most vulnerable.

⁴⁷) The term 'land of the believers' quite often referred to the territory seized by Daesh.

The next step in the campaign is to reach those who might be useful from the group's perspective.⁴⁸ It is important that a particular message is delivered at the proper time through suitable channels to best achieve their goals. This can be done either online or at face-to-face meetings (depending on an accessibility of the targeted individuals). Although Daesh's recruitment campaign was aimed mainly at Arabic-speaking audiences, with the main focus on Iraq and Syria, a good knowledge of foreign terrorist fighters from European countries let the organization adjust its messages specifically for Westerners, and deliver them through effective channels.

The most convenient and fastest method preferred by the group was to upload products using anonymous servers, and then indicate via social media from where the message, electronic publication, or video footage could be acquired.⁴⁹ But other channels were also used effectively. For those who weren't able to get the information through electronic media, the group offered other opportunities. One of them was the *Al-Bayan* radio station, which operated in Iraq and Syria. The radio frequency was advertised through posters and leaflets and by word of mouth. An advertisement was also placed in the weekly newsletter *Al-Naba*, as well as in numerous video products, emphasizing that in order to keep people informed dedicated teams were ready to visit specific regions that did not have the ability to reach '*news and stationary information points*' (Fig. 7).

When both the communication channels and the vulnerabilities of their targeted group are well known, the ideology can be successfully delivered. Daesh knows perfectly well that words must be followed by actions and vice versa; therefore each action was always complemented by a public communication about the success of the operation. Affiliated media outlets worked on products depicting attempts or successful attacks. The products focused on justifying actions that had been taken, describing the person/s who did it, and on possible future consequences for their enemies.

The ideology of Daesh can be categorized in three main narrative themes: political, religious, and social.⁵⁰ Daesh's narratives fully support their core message—we are *the Caliphate*, the *Islamic State* for the Muslim *Ummah*—which drives the whole ideology. It can be assumed that those who are successfully recruited, and were subject to the

radicalization process, have developed strong ties with their peers within the group and are likely to be ready to prove their commitment to the cause. The phenomenon of the group's influence during radicalization shows that group belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization are even more important than basic needs such as physical and psychological security.

This example shows that the need for social support, group belonging, exposure to a particular ideology, and personal vulnerability are consciously used to push people toward violence. It is clear that Daesh has learned its lessons well, and uses every opportunity to expand. Good knowledge of their target groups—the indigenous population of Middle East, as well as of Western societies—allows them to identify vulnerabilities that can be exploited and those who might be susceptible to the group's ideology. The need for social support pushes people into the recruitment and radicalization process. The radicalisation process leads to psychological changes in which rational and social norms are denied. This type of influence turns people into being obedient ideological machines who embrace violence as a weapon used to achieve the group objectives. As in the model of violent extremism above (Fig. 4), Daesh uses violence to impose its ideology and change the political system in the Middle East. Everything the group has done is inspired by fundamental beliefs and the determination to re-establish Daesh's version of the caliphate—a simplified version of Islam that is understood literally and enforced by the group.

In recent times we have heard about terrorism motivated by Islamic radicalism more often than we hear about other forms of violent extremism. But we do need to keep in mind that other forms of violent extremism also exist. New identity formations may arise that make use of old ideas mixed with violence to achieve their most pressing goals. Whether it is ethno- or white nationalism, radical feminism, radical environmentalism, or left-wing radicalism, proponents of extremist ideologies shouldn't be underestimated. Therefore, we need to understand that no matter what ideology is, the four aforementioned factors—the need for social support, the need for a sense of belonging, adherence to an ideology, and personal vulnerabilities—can be used by any violent group to manipulate vulnerable people into behaviours that support the goals of the ideology.

48) Daesh Recruitment..., Op. Cit. p. 12.

49) J. Shaheen, *Network of terror: how DAESH uses adaptive social networks to spread its message*, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, Riga, 2015, p. 6.

50) Daesh Information Campaign..., Op. Cit. p. 31.

Techniques and Tactics

The twenty-first century is the age of information, in which all digital industries create a knowledge-based society surrounded by a high-tech global economy. The digital revolution, and changes on the global map have shown that a piece of information can be used as news, an alert, a message, and also as a weapon.⁵¹

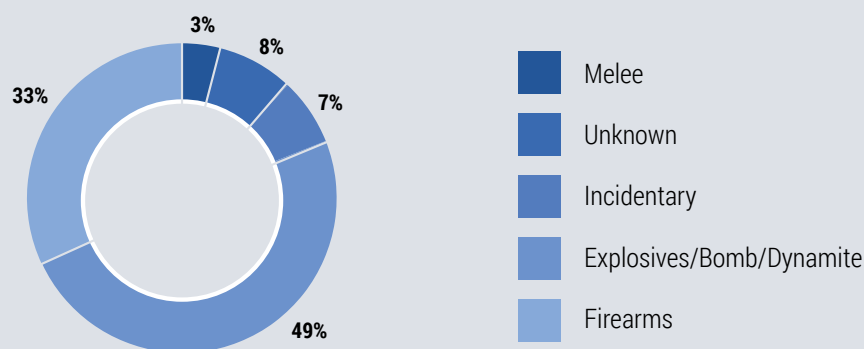
Information plays an important role in shaping perceptions and changing behaviours. Now, when we are facing nationalistic, ethnic, and ideological conflicts around the world, 'good/bad' information also plays a vital part in any effective campaign. Information might deny facts or expose contradictions or manipulation, but it might also amplify acts of terrorism. In that case, information is also being used to justify and ennoble the act of violence committed by some group of radicals.

History shows that violent groups use many types of weapons. Based on more than seventeen thousand incidents that took place around the world from 1970 until 2016, we can state that the most common form of attack

is the use of explosives and firearms (Fig. 8). However, without amplifying an act of violence, the effect of such attacks would be minor. Therefore, information about the destruction of property, people wounded, or mass killing becomes a weapon that potentially wields even more destructive power than the violent act.

There have been many cases all over the world in which groups have used violence as a tool for achieving objectives and amplifying their narratives. It is not the aim of this publication to describe them all, but rather to explore some examples that show the complexity of violent extremism. Although firearms or explosives were once the weapons of choice for almost every attack, it

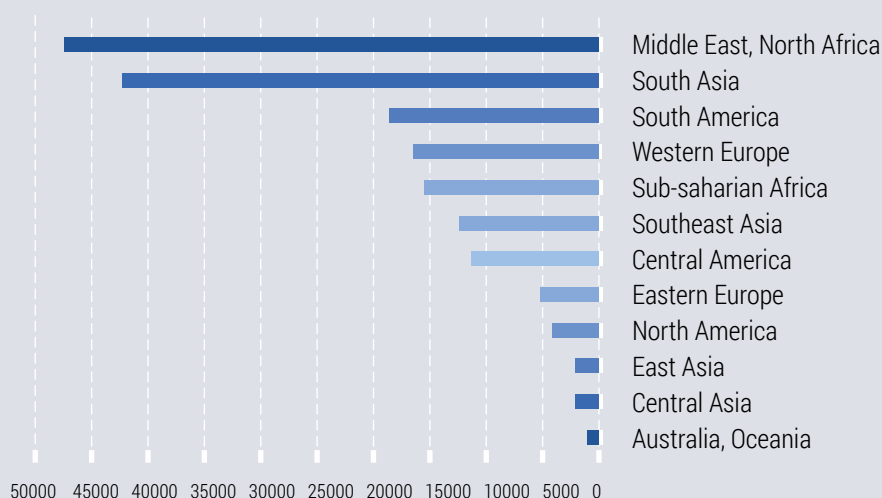
Figure 8. Violent incidents between 1970 and 2016 categorised by weapon type



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, Global Terrorism Database, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/> [28.06.2017].

51) Vide: T.E. Nissen, #TheWeaponizationOfSocialMedia: @Characteristics_of_Contemporary_Conflicts, Royal Danish Defence College, 2015.

Figure 9. Numbers of violent/terrorist incidents between 1970 and 2016 by region



Source: Own elaboration based on the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, Global Terrorism Database, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/> [28.09.2017].

must be emphasized that information is poised to become an even more powerful weapons system that can be used either to create fear and a sense of helplessness or to win hearts and minds. Some of our examples refer to threats of the past, but others refer to groups that still exist, posing a threat to contemporary societies.

The biggest violent act we have faced in recent history was the 9/11 attack committed by al-Qaeda. It was also a trigger point for the global fight against terrorism. In that case, hijacked aircrafts were used as weapons. The victims were not only the people on the airplanes, but also those who worked in the premises that were attacked and those who were killed and injured responding to the attacks. More than two and a half thousand people died in the two World Trade Center attacks. In addition the direct victims, the families of the victims were also profoundly affected. The 9/11 attack had a great impact of American society, and on the global perception of terrorism. Al-Qaida leaders such as Osama bin Laden and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed claimed responsibility for the attacks in multiple videotaped interviews over the years that followed. The information spread about the attack and the massive media coverage gave the perpetrators a massive public platform for their cause.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has suffered the greatest number of terror acts (Fig. 9). Over the past decades, ethnic tensions between the different tribes and religious factions in the region have caused serious problems for regional security, especially regarding the safety of the indigenous population. Although the roots of violence lie in the ideologies of various fundamental Islamic movements, probably the most violent form the world has seen thus far was adopted by Daesh when it seized a large part of Iraq and Syria during their 2014–2016 campaigns. The cruellest recent example was the armed assault on Camp Speicher in Tikrit city. This was a massacre of Iraqi military recruits during an attack on the local Iraqi military facility. After the attack more than 1,500 people were presumed dead. Daesh claimed responsibility and stated that the attacks were perpetrated in revenge for the killing of its leader Abdul-Rahman al-Beilawy. On June 12, the group used its Twitter account to announce that it had exterminated 1,700 Iraqi troops. The same day, the group posted videos of hundreds of captured men in civilian clothes, who it claimed had surrendered at the nearby military base.



Amongst many objectives Daesh is still working to achieve are—the unification of their people under Daesh’s black banner, receiving support from people locally and around the world, frightening its adversaries, and spreading information globally about the group’s effectiveness.

Two days later the group posted roughly 60 photographs, some of which showed masked Daesh members loading captives in civilian clothes onto trucks and forcing them to lie in three shallow trenches with their hands bound behind their backs. Some of the images showed masked gunmen pointing and firing their weapons at these men.⁵² The publicity campaign makes it clear that victims of the massacre were not Daesh’s ultimate audience. To amplify the effect, Daesh documented the massacre to influence the information environment. When the digital product was displayed, public statements and online conversations were reported by journalists, which also helped the group achieve its objectives. An understanding of people’s values and weaknesses and the channels used for communication enabled the group to launch an effective information campaign supported by such actions as this massacre.⁵³ Amongst many objectives the group is still working to achieve are—the unification of their people under Daesh’s black banner, receiving support from people locally and around the world, frightening its adversaries, and spreading information globally about the group’s effectiveness.

South Asia has also suffered greatly from terrorism and acts of violence. The population of the region is about 1.823 billion, which makes it the most populated region in the world.⁵⁴ It is socially a very mixed region, consisting of many language groups and religions, and social practices that vary greatly among these groups. Although there is great religious diversity, not all acts of violence in South Asia are driven by fundamental religious beliefs.

For example, the Maoist insurgents of the Communist Party of Nepal are a group driven by secular political ideology. The insurgency has a history going back to 1947,⁵⁵ but the use of violence to change the political system began in the 1990s. Driven by their communist

aspirations, political ideologists launched the rebellion on 13 February 1996. Their aim was to overthrow the Nepalese monarchy and to establish a People’s Republic. During a decade of insurgency, most of the attacks were aimed at state institutions and government officials. The rebel’s main weapons were firearms and bombs. The insurgency ended with the *Comprehensive Peace Accord* signed between the Government of Nepal and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal on 21 November 2006. After the signing ceremony the group became an official part of the government. Now the party is known as the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), and has lead three governments, from 2008 to 2009, from 2013 to 2015, and from 2016 to 2017.

The same type of ideological approach can be seen in some South American organizations. One of the largest and oldest is FARC, known as well as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—the People’s Army. This group was involved in armed conflict in Colombia beginning in 1964. Their ideology was based on Marxism-Leninism. FARC employed a variety of military tactics in addition to more unconventional methods including terrorism, extortion, political kidnapping, kidnapping for ransom, and profiting from the drug trade.⁵⁶ To keep its ranks fully manned, the group consistently recruited and accepted many child soldiers. Human Rights Watch estimates that between 20% and 30% of all members were less than 18 years of age.⁵⁷ Their cruellest attacks consisted a series of related incidents on 3 and 4 August 1998, in which FARC, together with another far-left group—the National Liberation Army (NLA)—conducted at least 42 attacks throughout the country, leaving 275 dead and many wounded. The targets were the Colombian government and military, as well as national facilities and private citizens.⁵⁸

52) Human Rights Watch, Iraq: ISIS Execution Site Located, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/26/iraq-isis-execution-site-located> [28.09.2017].

53) Daesh Information Campaign..., Op. Cit. p. 28-36.

54) United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, DVD Edition, www.un.org, [28.09.2017].

55) M. Lawoti, A.K. Pahari, The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal. Revolution in twenty-first century, Routledge, 2010.

56) S. Dudley, Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia, New York: Routledge, 2004.

57) Human Right Watch, Colombia: Armed Groups Send Children to War, 2005, <http://www.hrw.org> [29.09.2017].

58) E.F. Mickolus, S.L. Simmons, Terrorism, 1996-2001: A Chronology, Greenwood Press, 2002.

As a response to the actions committed by FARC and other far-left organizations, right-wing militias and private armies appeared. In addition, in 1982, members of the Medellín drug cartel, including its leader Pablo Escobar established *Muerte a Secuestradores* (eng. Death to Kidnappers or MAS) to protect its narco-business. It started as a private army with more than two thousand fighters who were allied with the Colombian military to combat leftist guerrillas, including M-19 and FARC. MAS actually consisted of many small paramilitary subgroups (private armies) that fought armed leftist organizations to keep their illicit businesses going. Their main activity was assassinating members of political parties that had connections with the military far-left movements. In the mid-1990s, the group weakened in strength and numbers. To keep a balance, the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (eng. the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia or AUC) had been established as a right-wing paramilitary group that fought with leftists. The group was active from 1997 until 2006, and used tactics such as kidnappings and assassinations against its opponents. The main aim of the AUC was to protect the economic interests of its sponsors: the local community, elites, and later drug traffickers.⁵⁹ When the AUC was disbanded, a criminal gang called *Bandas Criminales* (BACRIM) emerged. Although it is the successor of the AUC, its current activities are purely focussed on partnership with drug cartels and various illicit activities.

Another violent organization in South America was *Sendero Luminoso* (eng. The Shining Path). This Communist militia group, which operates mainly in Peru, was very active especially in the 1980s and '90s. Since the capture of its leader Abimael Guzmán in 1992, the activities of the Shining Path have been in decline.⁶⁰ The group's ideological goal was to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat, which means that the working class should have control of political power. The group believed that pure communism could be established by inducing a cultural revolution. Their ideology and tactics were derived from other communist parties, including the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Their sources of funding were kidnapping, extortion, robbery, and cocaine trafficking. Although they engaged in bombing, firearm attacks, and assassinations, they also understood the need to wage information warfare.

To amplify its actions, the group disseminated propaganda products throughout the local society—murals, printed products such as billboards, posters and leaflets, and word-of-mouth messaging. After a bloody period in the last decade of the twentieth century, the group and its supporters continue to be active and fight for their ideological cause. Possession of contemporary tools and a wide access to the Internet give further opportunities: anyone can see an advertisement through the global network, almost everyone all over the world might be reached by the social media accounts owned by those whose intention is to amplify communist ideology (Fig. 10).

Over the past decades Western Europe has also faced many problems caused by violent extremism. Whether from a separatist movement inspired by nationalism or a sectarian terrorist organisation, violent extremism has claimed its victims. A well-known example that emerged from the rebel group that staged the Easter Rising in 1916⁶¹ is the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The main ideological goal was to free Northern Ireland from the British rule. The IRA split into two groups in 1969—the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA) and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), which adopted a more violent strategy. Each faction claimed to be the legitimate representative of the nationalist cause. PIRA accused OIRA's leadership of neglecting the military aspect of the Irish struggle in favour of a political strategy. These different ideological approaches caused clashes and attacks on both sides. PIRA was active until 2005 and focused mainly on British security forces. OIRA conducted mostly small attacks against the British forces, but its violent activities dropped dramatically in 1972, when a ceasefire was announced. Most of OIRA's members continued their commitment to socialism as members of the Workers' Party. The group fully decommissioned its weapons in February 2010. Although the two aforementioned groups no longer pose a threat, two factions originating from the PIRA are still active and may continue to use violence as a tool for achieving their nationalistic goals.

59) The guerrilla groups in Colombia, United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe. United Nations, <http://www.unric.org/en/colombia/27013-the-guerrilla-groups-in-colombia> [29.09.2017].

60) J.F. Rochlin, *Vanguard Revolutionaries in Latin America: Peru, Colombia, Mexico*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003.

61) Known also as the Easter Rebellion, which was an armed insurrection in Ireland launched by Irish republicans to end British rule in Ireland and establish an independent Irish Republic.

Proletarians of All Countries, Unite!

**LONG LIVE THE 100th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION!**

**DOWN WITH THE IMPERIALIST
REDIVISION OF THE WORLD!**

LONG LIVE MAOISM!

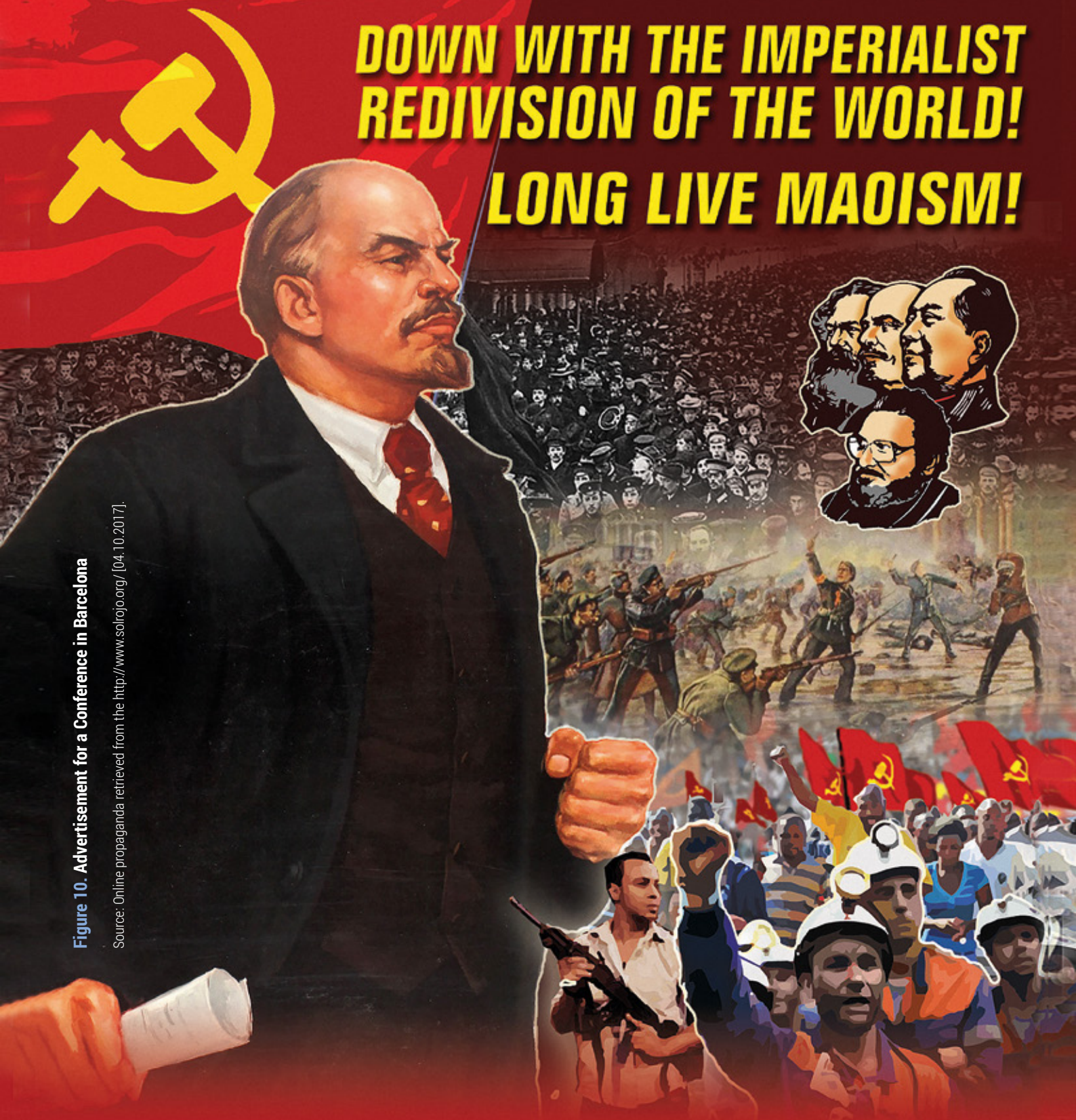


Figure 10. Advertisement for a Conference in Barcelona

Source: Online propaganda retrieved from the <http://www.solrojo.org/> [04.10.2017].

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN BARCELONA
NOVEMBER 3rd, 2017**

www.redsun.org

Peru People's Movement 2017

Although the long-lasting conflict was mainly political and territorial rather than religious in nature (the PIRA, for example, was largely Marxist and anti-religious), the violence was inspired by ethnic affiliations defined primarily by religious beliefs. The Catholic Nationalist community believed that the Northern Ireland should leave the United Kingdom and become part of the Republic of Ireland. The Protestant Unionist community believed that the region should remain part of the United Kingdom. From the latter arose such armed groups as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defense Association (UDA), which declared war on the IRA and all affiliated groups. Many of those most strongly opposed the idea of a United Ireland were also known for their anti-Catholic views.⁶² Armed Protestant organisations were responsible for assassinating Irish Catholic civilians, claiming that it was retaliation for IRA attacks on Protestants.

During the terror campaign, both sides were known for disseminating propaganda. Both sides understood the need for information warfare, in which acts of terror and declarations of commitment to the cause were advertised by different types of products (i.e. video, murals, posters, etc.). The main aims of these products were to attract new recruits, to obtain weapons, and to generate funding. Alongside the non-lethal informational activities, an essential part of the activity of militants on both sides was a campaign of violence. The groups adjusted their violent acts to the specific situation of the moment, in order to achieve political goals. The IRA used car bombs not only to kill British security forces but also to cause as much economic destruction as possible, and to make Northern Ireland expensive for Britain to defend.

It seems that these groups also knew the importance of local civilian society for the campaign; therefore targets were chosen carefully and for specific purposes. Part of the information campaign was also dedicated to commemorating the fallen comrades. Some murals, memorials, or plaques are still visible in Belfast (Fig. 11).

Western Europe is currently facing another unavoidable problem. Jihadi culture has already influenced many Westerners and sometimes even pushes them to make extreme decisions and join in violent actions. The conflict in the Middle East draws the attention of many people. It is estimated that between 27,000 and 31,000 people from at least 86 countries have travelled to Syria and Iraq to

join Daesh and other violent extremist groups.⁶³ Estimates made at the end of 2015 indicated that more than 5,000 fighters from member states of the European Union alone have made the trip to Syria. Of these, 3,700 come from just four countries: Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Belgium.⁶⁴ Since its rise, Daesh has been able to attract and inspire many non-affiliated people. Therefore even people not directly connected with the group have committed violent actions and spread terror in the heart of Europe. Moreover, members of Daesh who operate in Europe have planned and launched attacks to further the group's campaign against Western countries. Europe has endured bombings, assassinations, and decapitations perpetrated using readily available weapons, such as knives or trucks. In Europe, terror has been Daesh's main weapon for achieving its objectives. Again, those who suffered physically during the attacks were not the ultimate audience; rather, they were an element in Daesh's skilfully organised propaganda machine. Shortly after each attack, one of the group's media branches, the *Amaq News Agency*, prepares and disseminates short statements through social media to claim responsibility for the action.

Chasing about for information, the mainstream media spreads news about recent attacks, sometimes not fully aware that they are unintentionally taking part in the *Jihadi* communications strategy. Stories about perpetrators of *lone wolf attacks*, their lives, their families, and the suburbs where they live, are published to satisfy the needs and desires of viewers—and these people are the ultimate audience. Glossier propaganda products usually come later, when Daesh has more footage to use for information purposes, including that prepared by the Western media.

The recent successes of the Iraqi Security Forces and the commitment of the Global Coalition against Daesh have forced the group to change its tactics. While the myth of the caliphate is failing, the group's communication is much more focused on causing harm outside Iraq and Syria. Its main aim is apparently to gloss over its failures in the Middle East and to spread fear across Europe. The biggest problem most Western countries will likely have to face is the substantial corps of those who have been radicalized and travelled to Iraq and Syria to become foreign terrorist fighters directly engaged in battles. Radicalisation has changed their values and psychographics.

62) Groups such as Tara, the Protestant Task Force and the Red Hand Defenders.

63) A. Soufan, et al., *Foreign Fighters an Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*, The Soufan Group, 2015, p. 4.

64) *Ibid*, p. 12.



Figure 11. A mural advertising the Ulster Volunteer Force

Source: Source: E. Viggiani, Public Forms of Memorialisation to the Victims of the Northern Irish "Troubles" in the City of Belfast, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/viggiani/> [04.10.2017].

Once they are on the way back to their homelands, these returnees will be the main issue for Europe is to solve. The Daesh communications have left a huge imprint on cyber space, where the products are stored and waiting for those who might be vulnerable.⁶⁵ All of those products are constantly exchanged among those who are impressed by the group's achievements, as well as by curious people in search of adrenaline. Despite the efforts made by Internet providers and private social media corporations, the Internet is still full of products that could motivate people and trigger unwelcome behaviours. Daesh's digital products such as videos, online magazines, manuals, and *Jihadi* music pose a huge challenge for those tasked with keeping Europeans safe.

Sub-Saharan African countries have also been facing many problems. Poverty, illiteracy, and human resource weaknesses have led to socio-economic distress for disadvantaged populations,⁶⁶ including lack of treatment for health problems, and even starvation. Agricultural production, the instability of exports, and natural disasters are also factors the region must take into consideration. But these great hurdles are not the only difficulties that African countries must face. The region also suffers from the violence of extremist groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, and others, that are driven by religious sectarianism. Many militant organizations, political movements, and anti-government groups also use violence to impose their own values and beliefs, and to achieve desired objectives. Most of the attacks are focussed on governments and military forces, as well as on private citizens and their property. In addition, violence is now often used in ethnic conflicts. One of the best-known incidents is the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi. It was a massacre of Tutsi by members of the Hutu majority tribe. It has been difficult to establish the exact number of people killed, but it is estimated that up to one million Rwandans were slaughtered during a hundred-day period in 1994—around 70% of the Tutsi population. The slaughter ended when a heavily armed group, the Rwanda Patriotic Front, took control of the country. As a result, around two million Rwandans, mostly Hutus, were displaced and became refugees. These violent ethnic conflicts laid the foundations for the two Congo Wars and for further ethnic clashes in the region.

And here again it is important to understand how information warfare was used to prepare the battleground. The roots of problem go back to the colonisation of Rwanda by Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1916, Belgium took control. The colonial authorities perceived the Tutsi as superior to the Hutus. The Tutsis were predominantly herdsmen and Hutus were farmers. Group differences were amplified by the Belgian colonialists, who in 1933 introduced identity cards that assigned their bearers to a specific ethnic group. This created an artificial ethnic delineation, which later on became a rhetorical *Us vs Them*, ingroup/outgroup attitude. After gaining independence in 1962, the Hutu government upheld the previous policy of using identity cards, but at the same time issued anti-Tutsi propaganda. Thousands of Tutsis felt endangered and fled to neighbouring Uganda. By the late 1980s, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was formed by those who were living in exile as one response to the situation they faced. The military arm of the RPF invaded northern Rwanda in late 1990, and a four-year insurgency campaign followed. This led to an extensive propaganda campaign spread by the Hutu-dominated Rwandan media. The campaign focussed on differences and spread fears that Hutus would once more be the victim of suppression if Tutsis were to take control in Rwanda. The *Us vs Them* perception was transmitted through generations and became institutionalised.⁶⁷ The Hutus used mass media to influence other Hutus to turn against the Tutsi. One of the largest and most influential newspapers was the *Kangura*, where the militant *Hutu Power Doctrine* was published.⁶⁸ This anti-Tutsi propaganda is a prime example of products that promote hatred; it successfully influenced many Hutus. The illiteracy rate of the local population was high; for many Hutus the radio was the only source of information and communication in their day-to-day lives.⁶⁹ Therefore radio became a very important and effective tool in the Hutu campaign. The radio station, managed by Hutu extremists, had been mixing music with incitement to murder.

65) This issue was a subject of discussion during the Counter Daesh Communications Working Group in 2017 that were organized in Washington and Berlin. Internet private corporations are aware of the problem, therefore it became a subject of current activities against Daesh – to take the content out of Internet space.

The Global Coalition Communication Cell located in London prepared and launched a campaign #TakeDaeshDown which mobilizes youngsters and encourages them to take actions against online Jihadi propaganda.

66) According to the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, <http://unohrls.org/> [06.10.2017].

67) M. Lower, T. Hauschildt, *The Media as a Tool of War: Propaganda in the Rwandan Genocide*, HSC, 2014, <http://www.hscentre.org> [09.10.2017].

68) The Hutu Ten Commandments was a document published in the December 1990 edition of *Kangura*. The paper strongly advertised that the Tutsi were first and foremost an enemy of Hutu and that Hutu should break all ties with them, whether those links derived from marriage, business or professional relations.

69) A. Thompson, *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, London, 2007.

Quite often the station broadcast the whereabouts of Tutsis in order to indicate where Hutus should go to find and kill them.⁷⁰ During the extensive campaign, Tutsis were portrayed as *cockroaches* who must be found and killed. Propaganda-fuelled hysterical fear of Tutsis blurred the line between the RPF and the domestic population.

Although tensions had existed many years before the genocide, the media campaign triggered abnormal behaviours. The power of the propaganda was documented in testimonials, in which people described their thought processes—that it is difficult for a person to go out and kill others people if you must decide to do so by yourself, but if you are obeying orders from the authorities it is not difficult to act. It was the authoritative voices that incited people to transform the conflict from a hate-speech campaign into mass killing based on ethnicity.

Nigeria, a multi-ethnic country religiously divided among Muslims, Christians, and followers of the indigenous religious traditions, may become the next hot spot in Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to the seven-year Boko Haram insurgency driven by a *Jihadi* approach, the Fulani militia group have become the next rising issue for this region. Although, the problem has been known almost for two decades, the latest acts of violence have shown the Fulani militant group to be among the most dangerous and cruel organizations.

The Fulani are the largest semi-nomadic group in the world.⁷¹ They are spread across a large portion of West and Central Africa. They believed to have originated in North Africa or Middle East; they were converted to Islam by Arab jihadists.⁷² Some Fulani live as city dwellers, whilst others still lead lives as semi-nomadic herders. Those who herd their animals across farming areas frequently engage in clashes with local farmers. The fight is mostly about resources such as farmland, grazing areas, and the water needed for growing crops and maintaining animals. Farmers accuse the herders of damaging their crops and failing to control animals. The Fulani respond that they are only defending themselves against attacks perpetrated by gangs from the farming community.⁷³

To defend and expand their grazing land, some of the Fulani groups organized informal militias. In their assaults on farming villages, the Fulani militants used mainly small arms and machine guns. Apart from these clashes, there have also been allegations that some Fulani are involved

in armed robbery, rape, and communal violence, especially in central and northern Nigeria.⁷⁴ The attacks appear to be aimed mainly at private citizens. On average, Fulani militants kill eight people per attack.⁷⁵ The largest attack took place in April 2014, when assailants opened fire on community leaders and residents meeting in Galadima village in the state of Zamfara, killing at least 200 people.⁷⁶

Economic loss is another face of violent conflict. Nigeria boasts Africa's largest economy. Therefore the resource-based conflicts have impeded market development and economic growth by destroying productive assets, preventing trade, deterring investment, and eroding trust between market actors.⁷⁷ States affected by the conflicts have lost an average of 47% of their tax revenues due to these conflicts,⁷⁸ and if the violence were reduced it is estimated that the average household in the conflict zone would experience an increase in income of at least 64%, and if there were an absence of violence—a hypothetical peace scenario—the potential increase reaches 201%!⁷⁹

Although, the Fulani militants differ from Boko Haram in ideology, as well as in political and economic goals, both groups have effectively used terror as a weapon with the main aim of instilling fear and creating chaos. Therefore, the Nigerian military has begun working to limit the effectiveness of these armed militants. The example of the Fulani militia also shows us that violence is not always predominantly affiliated with a religious ideology. Their goals are largely secular, and the campaign of violence is fuelled by regional territorial claims.

Both the MENA region and Sub-Saharan Africa have faced many violent acts inspired by religious beliefs, territorial claims, and ethnic tensions. It is complicated to quantify the total economic cost of these acts of violence; however, we may assume that such factors as loss of life and property damage also affect local economies. In addition, the constant fear created by these conflicts and the lack of financial and future prospects perpetuate migration. Many people choose to migrate for greater security for themselves and their families, or to improve their situations (economic, educational, etc.). It is estimated that by the end of 2015, nearly sixty million people worldwide had been displaced from their homes due to violence and violent conflict, including terrorism.

70) Ibid.

71) R.M. Juang, N. Morrisette, *Africa and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History*, Santa Barbara, California, 2008, p. 492.

72) Ibid.

73) N. Mikailu, *Making sense of Nigeria's Fulani-farmer conflict*, BBC, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36139388> [10.10.2017].

74) Ibid.

75) Global Terrorism Index 2015: *Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism*, The Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016, p. 22, <http://economicsandpeace.org> [10.10.2017].

76) Ibid, p. 44.

77) *The Economic Costs of Conflict and the Benefits of Peace: Effects of Farmer-Pastoralist Conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt on State, Sector, and National Economies*, The Mercy Corps, 2015, <http://www.mercycorps.org> [10.10.2017].

78) Ibid, p. 44.

79) Ibid, p. 44.

Among them were twelve million refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Syria alone, more than half of the Syrian population.⁸⁰ The majority of Syrian refugees found safe haven in the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq. Three percent of world asylum seekers travelled to European countries.⁸¹ Amongst the major groups were Syrians, Iraqis, and Nigerians. Moreover, instabilities in other countries of the region intensify the migration crisis, which is likely to continue at the current level for some time to come.

In comparison with Western Europe, Eastern Europe has experienced fewer incidents of violent extremism/terrorism.⁸² Nevertheless, over the years the eastern part of Europe has also witnessed many acts of violence. For example, the situation in the Northern Caucasus region has influenced the internal situation of Eastern Europe since the Chechen Wars. Twenty years have passed since the end of that conflict and people still are searching for missing family members.⁸³ The conflict between the Russian military and Chechen rebel fighters also left a huge imprint on the local society. The worst incident took place in Beslan (North Ossetia, Russia). The attack on the school there is a terrible example of cruelty from the rebel side, but is also a result of Russia's involvement in this region. A group of armed Chechen and Ingush rebels, including men and women, seized a school. The perpetrators took approximately 1,200 hostages, including children, parents and teachers. The cruelty of the rebels and the incompetent leadership of the Russian forces left 344 people dead and more than seven hundred wounded. The massacre was not favourable to the image of Russia, and therefore the subject of massive media censorship. Reporters who were critical of the Kremlin were not allowed to go to Beslan.

The region became a violent hotspot again when Jihadists from the former Caucasus Emirate pledged allegiance to the so-called Islamic State (Daesh). After the oath of allegiance, Daesh established a governorate in the Caucasus in June 2015.⁸⁴ While Daesh struggles with its campaigns in Iraq and Syria, the Caucasus region might be a safe haven for the terrorists where recruits can be trained and further indoctrinated.

The next Eastern Europe hotspot where violence has become a tool is Ukraine. If we take a look in the number of incidents that occurred, we can see a huge spike especially in the summer of 2014.⁸⁵ This is the time when the Kremlin's geopolitical aspirations brought Russian

troops onto Ukrainian soil. Although the Russian president denied that Russian Federation soldiers were in Ukraine,⁸⁶ no one in Europe believed that it was only a local militia joined by grassroots volunteers from Russia who were trying to undermine Ukraine as a state. Thanks to modern technology, the world could see soldiers without rank insignia, military vehicles without licence plates, and heavy artillery shelling Ukrainian Army positions. Hybrid warfare—including deception, psychological pressure, special operation forces, and armed civilians—was used in order to gain dominance in the information field.⁸⁷ Violence in which people lost their property, their family members, and their own lives became an integral part of the combined operation undertaken by Russian soldiers and separatists. Ukraine became a battlefield where military actions were tied with Russian political statements, and with separatists' geographical claims to parts of Eastern Ukraine. All of this was supported by skilfully prepared anti-Ukrainian narratives that were part of an extensive communication campaign. Target audiences were exposed to allegations of crimes committed by Ukrainian soldiers and of the corruption of political dissidents. The narratives often associate Ukraine with *fascism* (Fig. 12), while portraying Russia, now including Crimea, together with the separatist 'states' of Lugansk and Donetsk as the only solution for the problems that the Ukrainian people allegedly face.

Modern technology enables anti-Ukrainian propaganda to emerge in a new form. The cyber domain has become a vital part of the overall campaign. Many examples might be listed, but if we focus on new media tools, an action that was launched on 24 October 2014 is particularly interesting. Digital billboards in the public space, including areas of heavy traffic and crowded sidewalks in Central Kyiv, were used as a medium to reach the intended audience. The operation was prepared and executed by 'Cyber Berkut'.⁸⁸ A video, more than a minute and a half long, was used to target the Ukrainian political scene. Some politicians were depicted as being responsible for war crimes, collateral damage, and the death of civilians in Eastern Ukraine. Passers-by were exposed to images of violence. Although it seems that the operation was mostly intended to influence Ukrainians living in Kiev, the video was also disseminated by small thematic Internet portals and subsequently amplified in some mainstream media.⁸⁹ This action reached unintended audiences, proving that products disseminated locally can become the subject of discussions for much broader audiences.

80) Global Terrorism Index 2015: Measuring and Understanding..., Op. Cit. p. 59.

81) Ibid.

82) Based on the numbers of incidents in Europe between 1970 and 2016, 24% of 21338 reported incidents took place in the Eastern part, <http://www.start.umd.edu> [10.10.2017].

83) Human Right Watch, Justice for Chechnya: The European Court of Human Rights Rules against Russia, 2007, <http://www.hrw.org> [11.10.2017].

84) H. Gambhir, ISIS Declares Governorate in Russia's North Caucasus Region, The Institute for the Study of War, 2015, <http://www.understandingwar.org> [11.10.2017].

85) The numbers of incidents in the Eastern Europe raised dramatically in 2014 <http://www.start.umd.edu> [12.10.2017].

86) P. Engel, Putin: 'I will say this clearly: There are no Russian troops in Ukraine', The Business Insider [online], 16.04.2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/putin-i-will-say-this-clearly-there-are-no-russian-troops-in-ukraine-2015-4> [13.01.2017].

87) Analysis of Russia's information campaign against Ukraine, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, Riga 2015, p. 26.

88) The voluntary anonymous group appeared after the dissolution infamous Berkut security force in Ukraine. The group declared that it would fight against the current government of Ukraine.

89) The billboard operation in Kiev was a subject of discussion during a seminar organized by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in 2015.

16 МАРТА МЫ ВЫБИРАЕМ



Figure 12. A billboard set up before the Crimea Referendum

Source: Publically available on Internet [12.10.2017].

The bloodiest act of violence that took place in Ukraine was the attack on a civilian aircraft. On 17 July 2014, a surface-to-air missile shot down Malaysia Airlines passenger flight MH17 traveling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. In this attack, 298 people lost their lives. Although the subsequent investigation proved that the only credible candidate for the missile launcher that downed MH17 was a Russian Buk 332 of the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade,⁹⁰ the Kremlin continues to deny the findings of independent investigators. The event became the subject of a propaganda campaign in which the Kremlin used multiple alternative narratives to complicate the picture of what had really happened.

In comparison with other continents, North America has faced many fewer incidents than other regions. In addition to leading the fight against global terrorism, the United States government has also been forced to deal with domestic extremism. According to US policy, it is legal to have hateful or extremist beliefs as long as those who hold them don't commit crimes or violence based on their beliefs.⁹¹ Nevertheless, law enforcement agencies express their concerns about the ideologies that may inspire their followers to use violence to achieve their goals. The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) released a paper in 2014 that depicts 'sovereign citizens', Islamic extremist/Jihadists, and militia/patriot groups—as the major threat to the US community according to law enforcement officials.⁹²

90) MH17 – The Open Source Investigation, Three Years Later, Bellingcat 2017, <https://www.bellingcat.com> [13.10.2017].

91) Federal Bureau of Investigation, Domestic Extremist Ideologies, <http://cve.fbi.gov>, [16.10.2017].

92) D. Carter et al., Understanding Law Enforcement Intelligence Processes. Report to the Office of University Programs, Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, College Park, 2014, p. 7.



Figure 13. An example of a sovereign citizen's license plate

Source: Washington County Sheriff's Office official Twitter account <http://twitter.com> [16.10.2017].

It is difficult to assess the exact number of people who favour the ideology of 'sovereign citizens'. This group believes that the US government is illegitimate and has no central leadership of its own. Across the United States there are various local leaders with individual views of the sovereign citizen ideology and the techniques appropriate to furthering it.⁹³ Sovereign citizens' activities can be found in virtually every state, from pirate radio stations in Florida to secessionist groups in Hawaii. Over a hundred sovereign citizen websites have been identified.⁹⁴ The movement

relies heavily on the Internet for propaganda, recruitment, and funds.⁹⁵ This communication channel is particularly important because it provides an inexpensive and reliable way to introduce people to their pseudo-legal theories and to promote their seminars and products. It is also useful for sovereign citizen con artists to reach gullible victims. As a result, an increasing number of sovereign citizen gurus create their own websites.⁹⁶

93) Southern Poverty Law Center, Sovereign Citizens Movement, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/sovereign-citizens-movement> [16.10.2017].

94) Sovereign Citizen Movement, the Anti-Defamation League, <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/sovereign-citizen-movement> [18.10.2017].

95) The Lawless Ones the Resurgence of the Sovereign Citizen Movement, the Anti-Defamation League special report, second edition, 2012, p. 8.

96) Ibid.



The attack on the Oklahoma City Federal Building is an example of a single man driven by a mixture of ideologies, those of the sovereign citizen and the white supremacist, committing one of the most deadly domestic attacks in US history.

The ideology centers on claims that sovereign citizens are separate (independent) from the United States. They object to following the rules of federal, state, or local governments, claiming that the governments are operating illegally. According to their ideology, they believe that federal and state officials have no real authority, and recognize only the local sheriff's department as a legitimate government office.⁹⁷ Their extreme anti-government ideology is characterized by conspiratorial and pseudo-historical stories, sometimes supported by racist language. The weapon of choice for sovereign citizens is paper—false identities and falsified documents, so the crimes they commit are sometimes called *paper terrorism*.⁹⁸ One such crime is selling property the seller doesn't own, which the victims may only discover when attempting to sell the property themselves. Although paper crimes may not hurt people directly, they have huge consequences for the future of those who were deceived, as well as and for the judicial system and administration. Moreover, such actions might evolve easily from deceptions such as counterfeiting, unlawful property occupation, and financial fraud to verbal and written harassment to major crimes such as murder, threatening public officials, and property destruction. Sovereign citizen extremists often target members of the government, including judges, police officers, and tax officials.

The attack on the Oklahoma City Federal Building is an example of a single man driven by a mixture of ideologies, those of the sovereign citizen and the white supremacist, committing one of the most deadly domestic attacks in US history. A total of 851 people were injured or killed as a direct result of the bombing or during their escape.⁹⁹ The main perpetrator, Timothy McVeigh, claimed that bombing was revenge against the government, which should not intervene in the affairs of people at the regional level; he was referring to the botched federal operations at Waco, Texas and Ruby Ridge, Idaho.

In addition to the sovereign citizens movement, violent militia groups also pose a threat to US domestic security. Groups of citizens who come together, allegedly to protect their country, sometimes seek to violently attack or overthrow the official government. Calling themselves patriots, they believe that the government has become corrupt, has overstepped its constitutional limits, or has not been able to protect the country against global dangers.¹⁰⁰ They chose those who are allegedly violating their constitutional rights—police officers, judges, and government officials—as targets.

In addition to the top three violent extremist groups, law enforcement officials are also concerned about radical environmentalist movements. Their ideology emphasises the need to stop all those who allegedly act against nature. Many radicals believe that humans, especially those whose lives are technologically driven and consumer-culture-based Western societies, are a great threat to nature. Quite often, such extremists not only reject mainstream Western values, but also the people and organizations who care about environment but don't have radical views.¹⁰¹

The violence they use is not directly focused on killing or injuring people, but mostly on property damage (often arson or damaging equipment) and cyber-attacks. Typical targets include the fur industry, companies and individuals involved in animal research, and businesses that ship animals. Violent environmental extremists also target those they believe are destroying the environment, such as businesses and individuals involved in construction, deforestation, or automobile sales.¹⁰² These crimes and violent acts have resulted in millions of dollars in property damage over the years. However, some groups believe that their actions are nonviolent because no human beings or animals are directly targeted.

97) C. Meyer, 5 common crimes committed by sovereign citizens, Policeone, 2017, <https://www.policeone.com/community/articles/360819006-5-common-crimes-committed-by-sovereign-citizens/> [16.10.2017].

98) Southern Poverty Law Center, Sovereign Citizens..., Op. Cit.

99) S. Shariat, et al., Oklahoma City Bombing Injuries, Injury Prevention Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health 1998, https://www.ok.gov/health2/documents/OKC_Bombing.pdf [18.10.2017].

100) Federal Bureau of Investigation, Domestic Extremist Ideologies, <http://cve.fbi.gov> [19.10.2017].

101) N. Deshpande, H. Ernst, Countering Eco-Terrorism in the United States: The Case of 'Operation Backfire', Final Report to Human Factors/Behavioral Sciences Division, Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, College Park, 2012, p. 9.

102) Federal Bureau of Investigation, Domestic Extremist..., Op. Cit.



Explosives, bombs, firearms, vehicles, or even simple tools such as knives have always been effective weapons in the hands of those who use terror to achieve a desired effect. However, some violent extremists also understand that a piece of information might become a powerful tool.

Although many such incidents happened on American soil, environmental movements have a global scope. They are characterized by a leaderless structure, which means that movements consist of many autonomous subgroups of trusted people who form cells for the purpose of carrying out illicit actions according to their organisation's guidelines. The Internet and social networks give these movements more possibilities to share their ideology and guidelines,¹⁰³ spread ideas, and coordinate further actions. New recruits are encouraged to start their own cells with trusted associates. At the same time, regional and national press offices claim that they have no official affiliation with individuals who commit specific actions that violate the law. This approach makes it more difficult for law enforcement officials to reach those who favour and advertise violence as a tool for achieving their own objectives.

Explosives, bombs, firearms, vehicles, or even simple tools such as knives have always been effective weapons in the hands of those who use terror to achieve a desired effect. However, some violent extremists also understand that a piece of information might become a powerful tool. The famous saying that *'the supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting'*,¹⁰⁴ speaks to the importance of knowing one's opponent, and demonstrates that information is a vital part of warfighting. Whether information warfare will shape and amplify actions or mislead and manipulate an adversary, its greatest strength is in subduing the enemy without fighting.

History has proven many times over that violent extremists understand the importance of information in their campaigns. As the NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence studies on Daesh information campaign have shown, information might be used to spread word of the group's successes and to unite people, both physically

and ideologically. On the other hand, it can be also used to intimidate. Each violent act can be amplified by the communication following shortly after; or communication might be used to prepare the ground to what is going to happen. All attacks such as armed assaults, suicide attacks, assassinations, bombings, infrastructure demolition, hijacking, and unarmed assault are actions that also resonate in the information space.

In the past such actions were amplified by word of mouth and traditional media, but today it is the Internet, and foremost social media, that provides a previously unimagined advantage to those who use violence. Messages can reach a much wider audience and can be delivered in a much shorter time. People share everything they like and see. Therefore all acts committed by terrorists are transferred onto various platforms and sent to a broader audience. The message can reach those who are impressed, but also those who want to satisfy their own curiosity about what has happened. No one disagrees that sometimes it is good to share and inform others about incidents. Such information can help people avoid dangerous places and identify perpetrators. However, shared video footage or information might unwittingly amplify violent extremist narratives and help dangerous groups achieve the psychological effects they desire.

Chasing about for information has caused an unplanned effect. The traditional media that compete for viewers sometimes unintentionally become part of the information warfare of violent extremists. All the acts are recorded and shortly thereafter distributed and presented for the broader online audience. Even without their own dedicated resources, mainstream media provide everything needed for violent groups to further use the footage or information for their own products.¹⁰⁵

103) P. Joosse, Leaderless Resistance and Ideological Inclusion: The Case of the Earth Liberation Front. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19 (3), 2007, p. 351-368.

104) Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

105) As an example Daesh was using for its products footage taken during various attacks committed by supporters, as well as lone actors who weren't affiliated with the group. The footage taken by the mainstream media were quite often used in online magazines such as Dabiq or Rumiyaah, as well as video products.

Violence and its Effect

Whilst violent groups such as paramilitary formations or private armies wage war openly, terrorists usually choose an asymmetric strategy. This type of engagement is chosen because such groups are unable to fight militarily with their opponents; the state possesses professional security forces, whilst the other side has only limited numbers of people or their actions are so radical that cannot be used for regular warfare.

The ideologies and targets chosen might be an indication of what violent groups are hoping to achieve, the nature of their objectives, and desired end state. However, using violence to maximize fear and solicit publicity is the key element for all of these strategies. Already in the 4th century BCE the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu stated that *'killing one might frighten ten thousand'*. His statement has not lost its validity. The violent actions of terrorists and extremist groups are focused on instilling anxiety, fear, and panic in society,¹⁰⁶ which in turn create hopelessness and depict state authorities as incompetent. If our physiological needs are more or less satisfied, safety takes priority and dominates behaviour.¹⁰⁷ Violent groups seek to disrupt the hierarchy of needs to destroy the sense of security and safety in societies that don't conform to their vision. All those aforementioned features might eventually provoke inappropriate reactions from individuals or authorities in response, such as the use of violence against suspected individuals and organizations, further destabilising government and society. In addition, large-scale terrorist incidents can have adverse effects on world financial markets, travel and tourism, and may trigger xenophobic counter reactions.¹⁰⁸

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the ultimate goal may be different for different groups in reference to a specific ideology.

For instance violent separatists seek secession in order to form a new sovereign state or join another state (i.e. pro-Russian unrest in Ukraine, IRA and ETA claims). The Fulani militia in Nigeria is a good example of a group that is focused on territorial dominance and the fight for resources. However, territory and resources are not the only causes of clashes between ethnic groups. The events in Rwanda showed that differences between indigenous people, artificially exaggerated by outsiders and fuelled by hate speech, made genocide possible.

The imposition of certain forms of governance can also lead to disagreement between factions. Favouring people from a particular demographic set as leaders or officials at the state level will eventually lead to dissatisfaction among other groups within a population (i.e. situation in Iraq after the withdrawal of international troops). This, in turn, will have influence domestic security, and, in Iraq, led to a rise of violent extremism against the government. However, as the sovereign citizen ideology in the United States shows, unequal treatment is not the only trigger for committing acts of violence. They refuse to recognize state and federal law and act out against law enforcement and state officials because of their particular beliefs and psychological predispositions.

106) D.A. Alexander, S. Klein, The psychological aspects of terrorism: from denial to hyperbole, *Journal of The Royal Society of Medicine*, 2005, 98(12), p. 557–562.

107) A.H. Maslow, *Psychological Review: A theory of human motivation*, 1943, 50 (4), p. 370-396.

108) D.A. Alexander, S. Klein, *The psychological aspects...* Op. Cit.

Religious fanaticism has been observed over the centuries. The acceptance of a radical approach together with fundamentalist religious beliefs may lead groups or individuals to adopt violence as the means of imposing their own system of beliefs on others. Fanaticism isn't limited to any one particular religion. Over the course of history, extreme forms of fundamentalism have been observed in many religious groups. Therefore stigmatising any one religion, as is currently the case with Muslims in America, and to a lesser extent in Europe, should be avoided. However, over the past two decades we have observed an increase in violence and acts of terrorism committed by those who are inspired by a literal interpretation of *Jihad*. Those groups that use violence to advance their own agendas under the banner of Islam may differ somewhat from one another, but they all want to stamp out 'rotten' Western values, secular governments, and even those Muslim governments they believe have compromised their faith, at least in traditionally Muslim lands. Al-Qaeda established subsidiaries in various parts of the world, while Daesh's goal is to secure land and establish their Caliphate—a political state based on their view of Islam. Both of these groups wish for the spread of Islam around the world, but Daesh is distinguished by the belief that the final battle in which Islam will triumph over all its enemies is close at hand.

The targets chosen by violent groups also serve to indicate their ultimate goals (Fig. 14). The times and places for attacks are, in most cases, carefully selected. This variable shows that groups with different ideologies and goals have some targets in common, but others differ greatly. Three different approaches are explored here. The first consists of organizations characterized by their nationalist goals—the factors that drive them are separatism, a willingness to fight a sitting government, or the desire for an independent country of their own or joining another country with which they more closely identify. The second is driven by religious beliefs—*Jihad* is understood as a literal fight against *unbelievers* and *apostates*, and Western values contradict their ideology. The third consists of organizations with a narrow, purely ideological approach to specific issues (animal rights and environmental extremists).

Groups driven by an environmentalist ideology mainly chose businesses (62%) as their targets—restaurants, shops, banks, storage facilities, etc. Their other targets have been private property and infrastructure (14%); education institutions involved in animal research (11%), and government properties (8%). In most cases infrastructure and properties were attacked; there were no fatalities, and injuries to people were only recorded in six incidents.

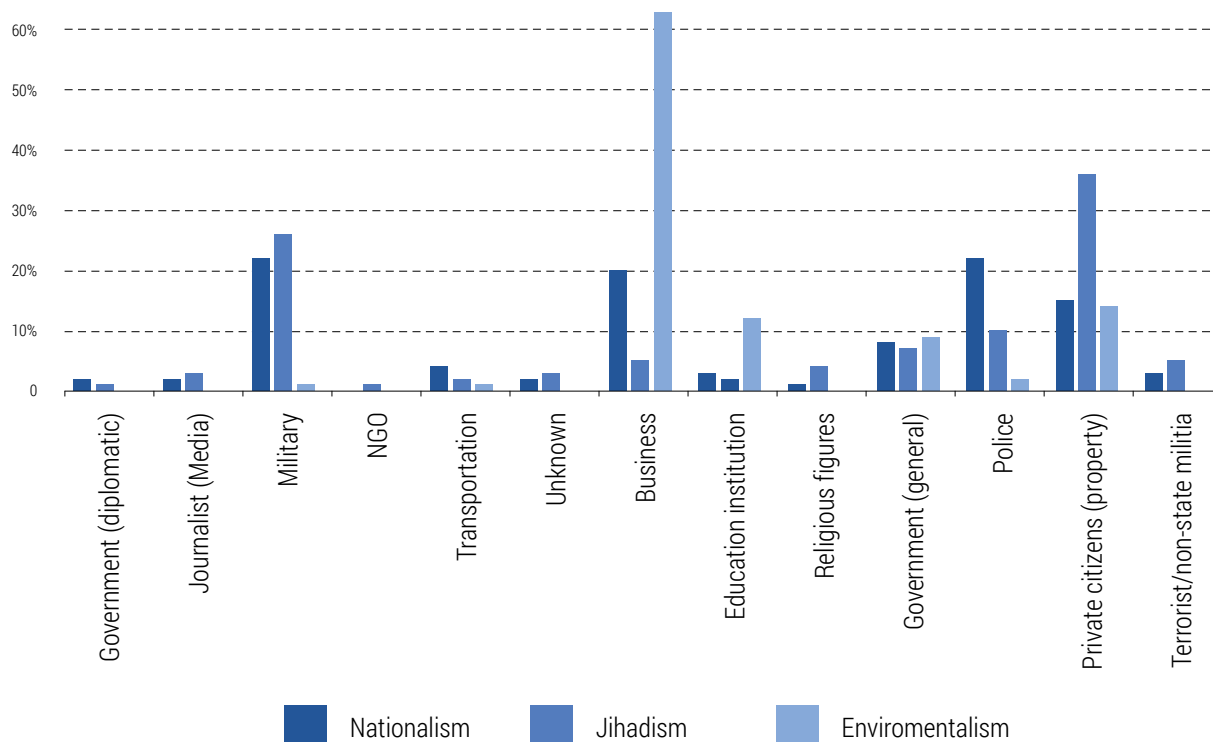
Nationalistic groups focus mainly on three kinds of targets—military forces, security forces (including the police), and businesses. The highest percentage of attacks was against military forces (23%); these were mainly military bases or troops deployed to operational units. Law enforcement officials were also often chosen as targets (21%). The third target group comprises businesses (20%), including shopping malls, restaurants, nightclubs, banks, holiday resorts, etc. Private citizens and their property were also targeted to a lesser extent (15%). But, although private citizens were not the main targets, in many cases they become victims of second-order effects (collateral damage). However, certain demographic factors (i.e. religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and political affiliation) also play an important role in target selection.

The third category is militant religious groups. More than one third of their attacks have been against private property and citizens (36%). Historical case studies prove that ethnicity, religion, and geography are the most important factors here. Crowded social places, such as bazaars, markets, and the venues of occasional events were chosen for attacks, most of which were carried out by suicide bombers. The remaining types of attacks consisted of armed assault, assassinations (including tribal leaders), the massacre of ethnic groups, hijacking, and hostage taking. Military (25%) and police (10%) forces were the next most frequent targets for these groups.

A comparison of these three ideological orientations shows that groups motivated by literal Jihad engage in the most violent form of extremism. A combination of fundamental beliefs and the perceived need for radical change has resulted in the greatest number of attacks on the most vulnerable targets—innocent civilians. It seems that 'the more, the better' became a driving factor in their strategy. Although security forces are also targeted, they were not the main focus.

For separatists and nationalist groups the situation is slightly different. Security forces and governmental institutions are their primary targets. Although they differ in the types of targets chosen, both categories aim to bring about political change. An analysis of attacks by environmental extremists has shown that their targets are much more carefully chosen. These groups were focused not so much on systemic political change as on the implementation of specific policies they see as vital.

Figure 14. Types of targets in reference to various ideologies



Source: Own elaboration based on the global terrorism database <https://www.start.umd.edu/> [03.11.2017]. More detailed information about types of targets in reference to various ideologies can be found in the Annex 1.

Nationalism: Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA); Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA); Irish National Liberation Army (INLA); Irish People's Liberation Organization (IPLO); Irish Republican Army (IRA); Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK); Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA); Oglagh na hEireann; Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA), https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?charttype=pie&chart=target&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2016&dtp2=all&perpetrator=316,769,416,1806,417,449,5169,30193,20377

Jihadism: Al-Shabaab; Boko Haram; Islamic State of Iraq (ISI); Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?charttype=pie&chart=target&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2016&dtp2=all&perpetrator=20036,30101,20225,40151

Environmentalism: Animal Defense League; Animal Liberation Front (ALF); Animal Rights Militia; Earth First; Earth Liberation Front (ELF); Environmental Life Force, https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?charttype=pie&chart=target&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=1970&end_yearonly=2016&dtp2=all&perpetrator=3752,291,3632,10057,20147,3760

Suicide attacks are also worthy of study. Among violent nationalist groups only 0.4% of incidents, mostly committed by PKK and its affiliates, involved suicide attacks. However, for religiously inspired *Jihadis*, they accounted for 16% of all incidents. Interestingly, the perpetrators did not perceive themselves as participating in a suicide mission, but rather as embarking on an act of faith motivated by their own fundamental religious beliefs.¹⁰⁹ This example shows that from the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs the suicide attack is an

aberration. Although the Jihadi suicide attackers were aware that they were about to commit 'the ultimate sacrifice', they remained faithful to their core beliefs and didn't refuse an assigned mission. How can this be explained? It may be that phenomenon of radicalization subverts psychological needs such as prestige, esteem, and respect, transforming self-actualisation into self-destruction as a way of proving dedication to fundamental beliefs that ensure group acceptance and belonging.

¹⁰⁹ Average Westerners not affiliated with the ideology would perceive this as a suicide mission. However, Jihadists regard themselves as martyrs, and their religious beliefs include a glorious future if they sacrifice their lives in the name of Jihad.

Communications as a powerful solution

So far, the twenty-first century has seen many small ideological wars around the world. Thus, the problem of ‘how to deal with violent extremist ideologies’ has been the subject of many discussions. If our behaviour stems from what we believe to be true, it is clear that communication is of vital importance. However, ideologies or systems of belief resist change. How can communication challenge a violent ideological perspective?

The diversity of ideologies requires us to consider each instance of violent extremism separately. Nevertheless academic research and practical experience both suggest that we can identify many of the factors that must be taken into consideration for each case. Thus, the **first step** in tackling a violent ideology is understanding the basic motivating factors behind the ideology. Was it founded on religious beliefs, a desire for secular political change, or an intellectual theory? What are the historical circumstances in which this ideology arose? What is the current political situation influencing this ideology? An ideology will always have an internally coherent, if not strictly logical, structure of thought that is shared by a group of people. The core message drives the group’s strategy, and its subsequent narrative themes are used to generate particular stories, objectives, and actions to achieve desired effects in both the physical and cognitive spaces.

The **second step** is identifying the targeted audiences and understanding their vulnerabilities, considering first their motivations. Some factors push people into joining violent groups, others pull them in. Push factors are those characteristics of the societal environment that to push

vulnerable individuals onto the path of violence.¹¹⁰ These might include socioeconomic,¹¹¹ political,¹¹² and cultural¹¹³ drivers. In turn, factors that pull people toward a violent group might include the appeal of a particular leader, self-appointed preacher, or inspirational figure, as well as the material, emotional, or spiritual benefits which affiliation with a group may confer.¹¹⁴ Therefore, direct, respectful conversation can reveal the roots of dissatisfaction and generate ideas for solving problems. Answers might focus on increased job opportunities, better education, future prospects for themselves or their families, or even participation and group belonging. By discovering how to help people satisfy their needs, we can also help them avoid the trap of violent extremism. Our emotions—fear, frustration, anger, anxiety, and rejection, but also love, compassion, and empathy—drive our behaviour. Our thoughts and the emotions that are triggered by them are at the core of our vulnerabilities and can be manipulated by violent extremist organizations to achieve their ideological goals.

It is also important to understand that the direct targets of a terrorist act are not necessarily the ultimate targets;

110) Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism, USAID, 2009, p. iii.

111) Social exclusion, marginalization, discrimination and frustrated expectations, etc.

112) Denial political right and civil liberties, government repressions and human rights violations, foreign occupation, local corruption, local conflicts (including violent extremism), etc.

113) Cultural threats (religion, tradition, customs and value, etc).

114) Guide to the Drivers..., Op. Cit.

- 1 Understand an ideology.
- 2 Identify and analyse audiences.
- 3 Identify channels.
- 4 Build a plan.
- 5 Analyse and evaluate.

if there is no way to reach their desired audience, violent extremists turn to those closest at hand. The ultimate target audience is much broader than any single act of terror, and the victims and the perpetrators are only tools for spreading the message. Also, groups who previously were not targeted may become unintended targets, accidentally exposed to the terrorists' message. Hence, analysis of hostile communications requires an understanding a whole spectrum of those who might become the subjects for the message of the terrorists.

The **third step** is identifying the channels used for communications. Psychologist, communications theorist, and philosopher Paul Watzlawick argued that any and all behaviour is communication. Whether people talk or remain silent, choose one action, another, or inaction, express their true thoughts or try to suppress them, any and all behaviour, even a specific facial expression, has the potential to impact another and can resonate in the information environment. *'One cannot not communicate'*, Watzlawick wrote, and everything we do or avoid doing shapes the surrounding environment and influences people's behaviour and attitudes.

It is also true that in the twenty-first century we have opportunities to spread a messages quickly and reach broad audiences that are also very diverse. People search for the best, most authoritative opinions to follow. What are the most convenient and effective junctures at which those working to prevent and counter violent extremism can intervene to redirect the flow of communication into safe, productive, and efficient channels? Is it through social media, political statements in parliament, facilitating inter-faith dialogues between religions, pro-actively working to create new job opportunities, or simply engaging in face-to-face communication with the people in our lives? Everything depends on the aforementioned second step and on the accessibility of the audiences we are aiming to reach.

The **fourth step** is creating a comprehensive plan of action that takes into account all of the information discussed above. Here time is a crucial factor. If time allows, preventative measures can be taken. To have an advantage in the field of communication, narratives that provide positive alternatives to violent extremism must reach audiences before the narratives that violent groups spread take root.



*With guns you can kill terrorists,
with education you can kill terrorism.*

Malala Yousafzai

An important aspect of preventing violence includes educating vulnerable audiences about how to protect themselves from being manipulated by violence-inciting communications. Malala Yousafzai¹¹⁵ famously said: *'With guns you can kill terrorists, with education you can kill terrorism.'* Education that inspires critical thinking, pro-active problem solving, and familiarization with the experience of other groups, can immunize societies against extremism and has the potential to be much more efficient and effective than the slow and dangerous task of eliminating terrorists one at a time.

Moreover, learning from the mistakes of others instead of our own not only avoids suffering, but can also save a great deal of time. Those who were once attracted to the narratives of violent organizations, but later rejected them, are a valuable resource that should not be overlooked. Not only have they gone through the mental and emotional processes that led them to choose a better way, they also know the *modus operandi* of the organisation they left. Their intimate knowledge of how violent extremists function,¹¹⁶ and their personal stories of how they were manipulated¹¹⁷ can be a powerful instrument. Engaging such people would be especially useful for communicators and organizations involved in supporting disengagement from political and religious extremism.

The testimonials of those who have been through it might be used to dissuade vulnerable individuals from the path of violence, as well as inspire those who are on the brink of joining an extremist organisation to think critically.


On the other hand we might face the situation that actions/messages must be countered immediately. However, the decision about how to counter a specific messaging should ideally be based on a comprehensive analysis of the ideology, the audiences affected, and the communication channels used. Although, the term *counter-narrative* has been accepted in national strategies, communications used for countering violent extremism should be approached carefully. Simply refuting a narrative with information won't work in most cases, especially if the counter-narrative is narrowly designed in reaction to specific published content. Here we must learn from our own past mistakes; counter-narrative strategy should not rely primarily on the idea of countering, which, when taken at face value, can look like nothing more than unconvincing reactivity and defensiveness.¹¹⁸

115) Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Prize laureate, is a Pakistani activist against extremism. She advocates female's rights for education.

116) An example of TED talks 'A Way Out From Violent Extremism' provided by Robert Örell, the director at Exit Sweden, a project launched by NGO Fryshuset to help members safely leave racist, violent, and extremist groups. He has over thirteen years of experience in disengagement from political extremism and criminal gangs. He also has experience in social work, supporting victims of crime, parental support, networking and management, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNlgKsb1QbA> [14.11.2017].

117) One of many examples of campaigns is the series of products 'ISIS Defectors Speak' prepared and disseminated through social media by the International Centre for the Study of Violent Extremism, <http://www.icsve.org> [14.11.2017].

118) M. Kruse, The Riga StratCom Dialogue: Countering Violent Extremism Through Communication, NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence, Riga 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fPq6cHVFP8>, [14.11.2017].



Understanding the importance of social psychology, we must keep in mind that an authority is crucial from a communications perspective.¹¹⁹ Therefore a credible messenger is always crucial for communicative success,¹²⁰ both for delivering positive messages or for tackling violent narratives. People believe those whom they know, trust, and respect.

In the planning phase it is also necessary to draw on the experience of mixed groups, including practitioners, advisors, researchers, and academics, whereby deeply rooted knowledge can be supported by solid empirical data and a proper understanding of the environment. Their successes and recommendations can serve as the foundation for deliberate and effective communications through words, actions, and deeds.

The **fifth step** is to analyse and evaluate. We must identify the criteria we will use to assess whether the current strategy is working or needs adjustment. Properly constructing the questions used in the planning stages—identifying the specific, measurable, and observable behaviours we hope to inspire in the intended audiences—should result in reliable indicators for behavioural change

that can be complemented and adjusted as we learn more. Analysis based on emerging spontaneous events that include the actions/reactions of the violent groups and their target audiences will also complement the development of strategic communications.

Some might say that communicating alone can't succeed in overcoming violent ideologies. And at first glance, yes, it is true that engaging in discussion with others, simply stating facts and condemning violent acts, can't change what is happening. But, as has been shown through this discussion, strategic communications is not limited only to opinions, discussions, and official statements. The debates about what strategic communications actually means and who should lead these communications efforts continues. It is important that we frame our perception of the term to achieve the greatest positive effects.

119) R.B. Cialdini, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Revised Edition, 2006.


120) H. Abbas, *The Riga StratCom Dialogue: Countering Violent Extremism Through Communication*, NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence, Riga 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fPq6cHVFP8>, [14.11.2017].

Conclusions

Extremism has been with us for centuries. Historically, many ideological belief systems have been imposed through violence. Violence was used to spread the presumed will of God, to expand territory, and to satisfy the needs of one group or another. Early Muslim conquerors and Christian crusaders are both historical examples of groups that used violence to spread their ideologies and achieve their political objectives, and there are many others.

Nowadays, democratic countries guarantee freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and religious liberty. People living in democratic countries have the right to disagree with each other and with their government. From the perspective of other political systems, the right to express disagreement, so important for liberal democracies, may seem to contradict the principles of effective government. For liberal democracies only one thing is strictly prohibited—violent behaviour or the use of terror to achieve one's ideological objectives. For more conservative governments having such a distant boundary for what is permissible, looks foolhardy and seems to invite the questioning of authority. However, this rule applies not only to actions, but also to words. Therefore, radical ideologies supported by fundamental religious or secular beliefs that advocate the use of violence to transform their circumstances can and should be addressed at the root—the ideas that drive violent words and deeds.

Even the most radical ideology starts from a set of ideas about which people communicate. Although violent extremism may be approached from many angles, without properly understanding the ideology behind the actions, any plans we make and actions we take will most likely fail to achieve the desired effect. An ideology without followers is of no consequence—people are pivotal assets whose psychographic analysis becomes an integral part of the overall strategy for the success of any ideology. Emotions such as fear, frustration, anger, anxiety, and rejection, but also love, compassion, and empathy drive people's behaviour; our thoughts and emotions are inevitably at the core of our vulnerabilities and can be manipulated to achieve ideological goals. Sometimes such manipulation results in hate speech against non-believers, but in other cases an ideology pushes people toward violent solutions to their problems. Violence may be used to achieve certain psychological efforts, to change political decisions, to obtain publicity and media coverage, and eventually lead to policy change.



If it is all about communicating, then strategic communications is one of the most valuable instruments we have to confront the problem of violent extremism. All actions communicate—what we do and what we don't do. Actions that turn people away from violence and those that can redirect extremism will be the best solution in a confrontation with violent ideologies. However, such actions should be preceded and supported by words, statements, and political decisions that have an impact on everyday life. Strategic communications should address the issues that trigger violent behaviour and hostility toward opposition. This concerns all aspects of the problem, including casting doubt on such ideological communication that may pull people into irrational decisions because of its attractive propaganda and promises, or providing possible alternatives to the poor or dangerous living conditions that push people into desperate behaviour. Whilst building counter-narratives and pointing out the drawbacks, inconsistencies, and manipulations will be enough to counter some ideologies, the response to others will have to include real alternatives for those who are subject to the influence of violent groups.

We must continue to expand our understanding of these groups, their ideologies, and what can be done about them through research enriched by empirical data, and through collaboration between academics and practitioners. Only through deeply understanding the complex needs of the violent groups that threaten our societies will states be able to properly approach the problem through a strategic communications framework.

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Annex 1

Target type	Nationalism		Jihadism		Environmentalism	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Airports and Aircraft	35	0,47%	39	0,37%	1	0,49%
Telecommunications	34	0,46%	48	0,45%	1	0,49%
Tourists	30	0,40%	6	0,06%	-	0,00%
Government (diplomatic)	53	0,71%	55	0,51%	-	0,00%
Journalist (Media)	47	0,63%	108	1,01%	-	0,00%
Military	1709	23,02%	2721	25,48%	1	0,49%
NGO	8	0,11%	51	0,48%	-	0,00%
Transportation	272	3,66%	134	1,25%	1	0,49%
Unknown	95	1,28%	210	1,97%	-	0,00%
Business	1481	19,95%	537	5,03%	128	62,14%
Education institution	107	1,44%	121	1,13%	23	11,17%
Other	6	0,08%	80	0,75%	-	0,00%
Religious figures	35	0,47%	332	3,11%	-	0,00%
Food and water supply	4	0,05%	19	0,18%	1	0,49%
Government (general)	505	6,80%	697	6,53%	17	8,25%
Police	1579	21,27%	1089	10,20%	2	0,97%
Private citizens (property)	1119	15,07%	3831	35,87%	29	14,08%
Terrorist/non-state militia	165	2,22%	510	4,78%	-	0,00%
Violent Political Party	10	0,13%	16	0,15%	-	0,00%
Maritime	9	0,12%	5	0,05%	1	0,49%
Utilities	120	1,62%	71	0,66%	1	0,49%





VIOLENT EXTREMISM

AND COMMUNICATIONS