



Risk Mitigation Consulting Inc.

Intelligence and Analysis Division

WHITE PAPER SERIES

White Nationalists as a Potential Transnational Terrorist Threat

INTENT

This white paper is designed to provide an in-depth analysis of relevant, publicly available information on threat and hazard events/trends and their potential impacts to the interests of the United States, both at home and abroad. This product is not intended to be an all-encompassing assessment of the subject, rather, it provides a brief overview to provide the reader with situational awareness regarding topics with which they may not be familiar.



White Nationalists as a Potential Transnational Terrorist Threat

Introduction

White nationalist groups are majority white groups that generally believe their white identity should be the unifying factor against the perceived encroachment of minority groups in countries that encompass Western civilization. To many in the U.S., these types of groups appear to largely domestic in nature, however the potential terror threat emanating from white nationalists has become increasingly transnational. Though they have varying goals and various levels of intent based on specific location, they are all united by their desire to preserve white, racial hegemony. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) defines white nationalism as “a form of white supremacy that emphasizes defining a country or region by white racial identity and which seeks to promote the interests of whites exclusively, typically at the expense of people of other backgrounds”. The international presence of white nationalist groups is both widespread and ever increasing, thanks in no small part to obscure internet forums, social media, and the ease with which those mediums allow for communication and the spread of propaganda. The conduct of many of these groups and their associated members, while hateful and counter to American values, have traditionally consisted of constitutionally protected activity. Security concerns emerge once these groups, or individual members of them, radicalize and espouse violent rhetoric, and intentionally carry out violent acts.

White Ethno-National Groups and Their Affiliations

Varying Groups and Their Associated Ideologies

White nationalist groups are located in most regions of the world where there is a white majority population, or the majority influence is western culture. These regions and their associated countries include but are not limited to the Americas (Canada, the United States, and Brazil); Europe (the U.K., Germany, France, Spain, Sweden); Oceania (Australia, New Zealand); Africa (South Africa). As stated, while there is a unifying principle among these groups and their ideology, these are tempered by specific local and regional concerns based on their immediate environment. Still, there is very much a transnational concern, as most groups use common language and broad ideology that transcends borders; they believe there is a “war on whites” in Western nations across the world.

In the Americas region, radicalized groups are known to conduct terrorist attacks along racial and ethnic lines, regardless of religion. They have also been known to foster anti-immigration sentiment. Many older ideologies have fused with more recent developments such as anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment.⁹

- Aryan Nations (AN) and World Church of the Creator (WCOTC). The AN and WCOTC have been acknowledged by the FBI as representing a terrorist threat to the U.S. since at least early 2001, in a Congressional Statement before the U.S. Senate. While it is currently believed that both of these groups are either no longer in existence or fragmented into



various factions, at their height they were both known for spreading the same race-based hate propaganda and promotion of violence that many modern white nationalist extremist groups are known for espousing. Additionally, the FBI noted efforts to reduce openly racist rhetoric in order to appeal to a broader segment of the population, again similar to modern white nationalist extremist groups in existence today.^{6,9}

- The KKK. The KKK is a hate group that continues to support the greatest number of national and local organizations around the United States. More than 40 different groups exist and overall the group is believed to host about 5,000 members. They have been known to commit acts of domestic terrorism, with a noted spike in activity since 2006. The group is also known to have infiltrated European countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom.^{9,15}
- Neuland. Brazil has also been a breeding ground for hate groups, with many European immigrants relocating to Brazil after the end of WWII. Although these groups are largely concentrated in the south region of the country, it appears they are expanding into the country's central-west region. Neuland is one such group, and in May 2009, Brazilian Federal Police foiled a coordinated IED attack by them on two synagogues in Porto Alegre, in southern Brazil. They are also known to have ties to other groups in Argentina, Chile, France, and the United Kingdom.^{16,17}
- Identity Evropa (IE). IE is an American neo-Nazi and white supremacist organization established in March 2016. Its founder is a former U.S. Marine, and leaders and members of IE have praised Nazi Germany and have openly pushed for the Nazification of America. The white supremacist slogan "You will not replace us" originated from this group. The group is extremely social media savvy and rebranded itself as the American Identity Movement in March 2019. Press reporting has also revealed that it has members actively serving in the military, although the full extent of which is unknown.^{9,14,15}

In the European region, groups are largely xenophobic in nature. They are highly likely to conduct violent acts, often terrorist in nature. They seek to preserve white hegemony in response to both an influx of migrants and refugees from African and Middle Eastern conflict regions, and an associated increased in Muslim terror attacks in the region. From 2011 – 2017 roughly 25% of white nationalist extremist attacks in Europe targeted Muslims and mosques. These attacks increased significantly in 2015, along with a wave of xenophobic violence reacting to the migrant crisis. Far-right political parties like Germany's "Alternative for Germany" and Italy's "Northern League" have been able to generate substantial popular support by promising to defend their respective countries against the cultural attacks of immigrants and foreign influences and have consequently made gains in domestic parliamentary elections.⁵

- Combat 18. C18 was originally formed in 1992 as a security detail for the British National Party. Combat 18 takes its name from the first and eighth letters of the alphabet - A and H, the initials for Adolf Hitler. Members describe the organization as fundamentally neo-Nazi with its principles based on fascism. The group is responsible for numerous terrorist attacks from the early 90's through at least 2018. C18 has chapters and splinter groups in 18 countries: e.g. Germany, the Republic of Ireland, Australia, and in multiple states in the U.S. (Illinois, Florida, and Texas).^{5,13}
- Jobbik. Jobbik is Hungary's neo-fascist political party that rejects "Western European multiculturalism." Jobbik has also used the Nazi "Arrow Cross" to symbolize pride in



Hungary's Nazi past, and, in 2014, a Hungarian court ruled that Jobbik may be referred to as "neo-Nazi" in Hungary. Its members have blamed "international Jewry" for election interference and have called Jews national security risks.⁵

- Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM). The NRM Pan-Nordic, neo-Nazi movement originating in Sweden. They also have chapters in Norway, Finland, and Denmark, and also maintains members in Iceland. While also a Swedish political party, it is considered across Europe as a terrorist organization due to their propensity to train members in combat tactics and violent acts carried out against the public. They advocate against migration into Scandinavian countries and repatriation on non-Northern Europeans. Its roots date back to 1997 where it was formed by militant neo-Nazis and known as the White Aryan Resistance. They are banned in Finland.⁵

In the Oceania region, groups are known to focus on anti-Muslim and anti-immigration sentiment.⁵

- Reclaim Australia. Formed in 2015, this group has attracted many self-professed Neo-Nazis based on its open opposition to Islam. It has held nationwide protests since 2016. The head of the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO), their domestic security agency, stated that Reclaim Australia has espoused violence and it is believed its members will act violently whenever presented with pro-Islamic groups.¹⁸
- True Blue Crew. This is an Australian anti-Islam far-right group that has been involved in right-wing terrorism. Their ideology consists of overt racism, xenophobia, and preservation and protection of white Anglo-Saxon heritage against Jews, Muslims, and indigenous Australians.¹⁹

In the African region, groups are primarily located in South Africa. They generally seek removal of the African population, succession, or a return to apartheid.

- Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB). AWB is a South African neo-Nazi separatist political and paramilitary organization. As of 2016, it reported that the organization had around 5,000 members, and used social media for recruitment.¹²
- New Zealand National Front (NZNF). Primarily based out of New Zealand, it has sister organizations in South Africa.

Propaganda Sharing and Radicalization Via the Internet

Subject matter experts indicate that the Internet, and specifically certain popular social media platforms, play an integral role in the spread and consumption of extremist propaganda, and accelerates radicalization to the terrorist end state. When discussing social media radicalization, Islamic terrorism is usually the foremost thought. However, the aforementioned conclusion is similarly true of white nationalist extremists. In 2018, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) conducted a study on U.S. based extremists and their social media usage from 2005 through 2016. It revealed a few key points regarding U.S. extremist radicalization:¹

- Online social media platforms play an increasingly important role in the radicalization processes of U.S. extremists. While U.S. extremists were slow to embrace social media, in recent years the number of individuals relying on these direct user-to-user platforms for the dissemination of extremist content and the facilitation of extremist relationships has grown



exponentially. In 2016 alone, social media played a role in the radicalization processes of nearly 90% of the extremists in the PIRUS data.¹

- From 2005-2016, social media played a role in the radicalization and mobilization processes of 68.12% of the lone actors in the PIRUS data. By comparison, from 2005-2016, social media factored into the radicalization of 50.15% of individuals who were members of extremist groups or radical cliques. In 2016 alone, social media factored into the radicalization and mobilization processes of 88.23% of the lone actors in the PIRUS data. Lone actors are defined as “individuals who were operationally alone in their extremist activities”.¹
- Despite the increased usage of social media among U.S. extremists, user-to-user communications do not appear to increase the likelihood that extremists will be successful in traveling to foreign conflict zones or committing acts of domestic terrorism. However, it can be reasonably assumed that is due to law enforcement pressure, and more likely the case for Islamic extremism rather than white nationalism extremism.¹
- While social media does not appear to increase the success rates of extremist outcomes, evidence suggests that it has contributed to the acceleration of radicalization of U.S. extremists. Again though, the apparent lack of increased success rates may be attributable to social media platforms largely targeting Islamic extremist accounts for suspension; the data indicates white nationalist extremist platforms are under significantly less censorship pressure. From April to August 2016, 288 white nationalist Twitter accounts were suspended compared to 1,100 Islamic extremist Twitter accounts during the same time frame.¹

From 2005-2016, the data indicates social media played a role in the radicalization / mobilization of far-right extremists in 42.76% of cases. However, it should be noted the PIRUS far-right dataset includes radical individuals linked to extremist religious groups (e.g., Identity Christians), non-religious racial supremacists (e.g., Creativity Movement, National Alliance), tax protesters, sovereign citizens, militias, and militant gun rights advocates. While all white nationalist extremist groups would be considered far-right, not all far right-groups would necessarily be classified as white nationalist extremists.^{1,2}

U.S. based extremist’s social media usage generally mirrors the popularity of social media sites and their respective usage in the United States. According to the PIRUS data, from 2005 through 2016, Facebook was the most widely used site by extremists with 64.53% of all U.S. based extremists using the platform to for radicalization or mobilization. YouTube and Twitter round out the top three social media sites with 30.57% and 23.4%, respectively, of all U.S. based extremists’ mobilizing or radicalizing through those platforms.¹

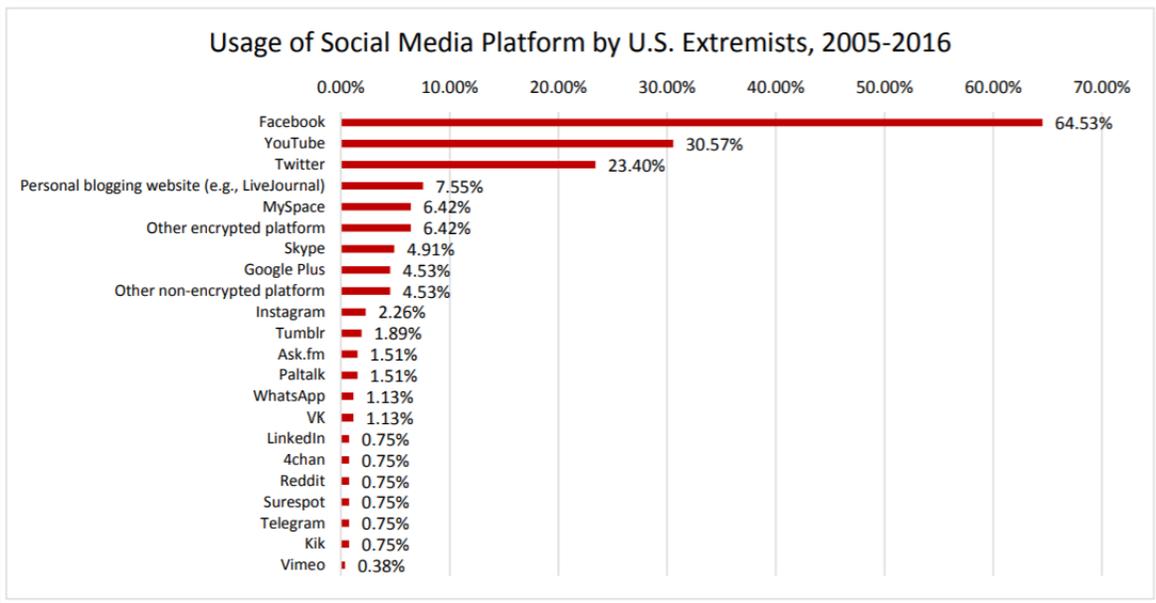


Figure 1-1
Usage of Social Media Platform by U.S. Extremists, 2005 – 2016

On Twitter, U.S.-based white nationalist related accounts have experienced an increase in followers by roughly 617% from 2012 through 2016. As of 2016, they outperform Islamic State related Twitter accounts in nearly every social metric, from follower counts to tweets per day. This could likely be a result of two causal factors: an increase in awareness and support for white nationalist movements, and/or increased targeting and suspension of Islamic focused Twitter accounts. It's likely a mix of both, and also likely that accounts and their followers will continue to expand until faced with the same level of scrutiny and interference as other radical extremist groups. White nationalist Twitter (and other social media accounts) will likely continue to increase in number and radicalize more individuals until they are subject to the same censorship level as other extremist pages.⁴

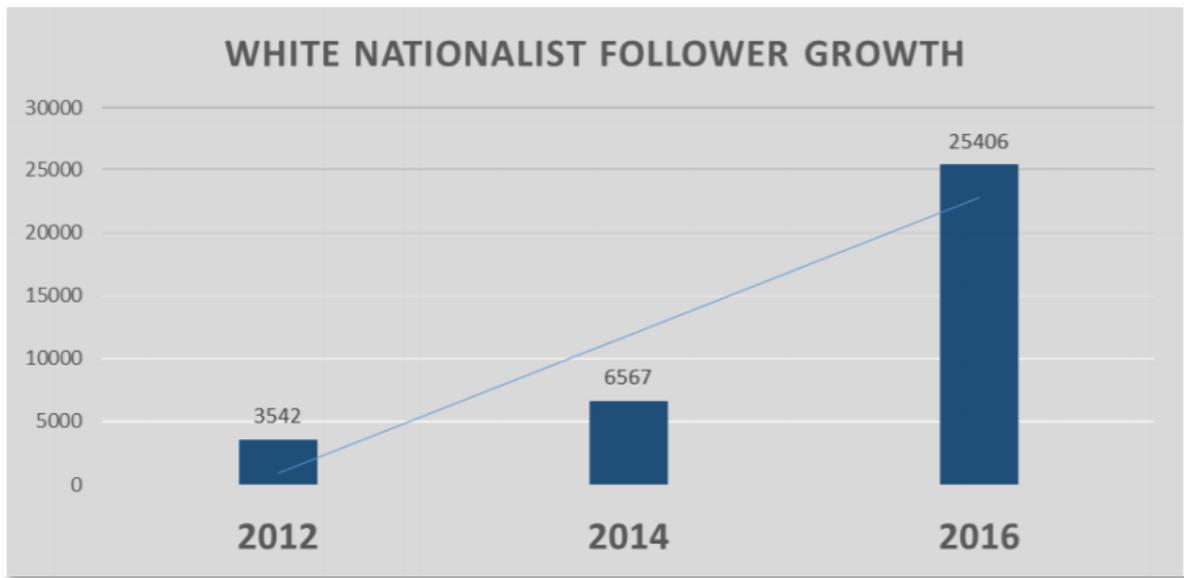


Figure 1-2
White Nationalist Follower Growth on Twitter, 2012 – 2016

As demonstrated above, while white nationalist extremist social media accounts have grown relatively unimpeded through 2016. Similarly, so has the number of terrorist attacks perpetrated by white nationalist extremist groups or actors in Europe, North America, and Australia. This also parallels an increase in hate crimes in each of these regions, and as the level of violence increases more severe attacks are occurring more often too. In 2011, there were 9 recorded terrorist attacks across the three regions. This number increased to 88 attacks in 2017 throughout the same regions, an increase of approximately 877%. While 2017 did not represent the period high point in attacks (2015 recorded 135 attacks, an increase of 1,400% from 2011), the number of terrorist attacks perpetrated by white nationalist extremists is still trending upwards.^{4, 7}

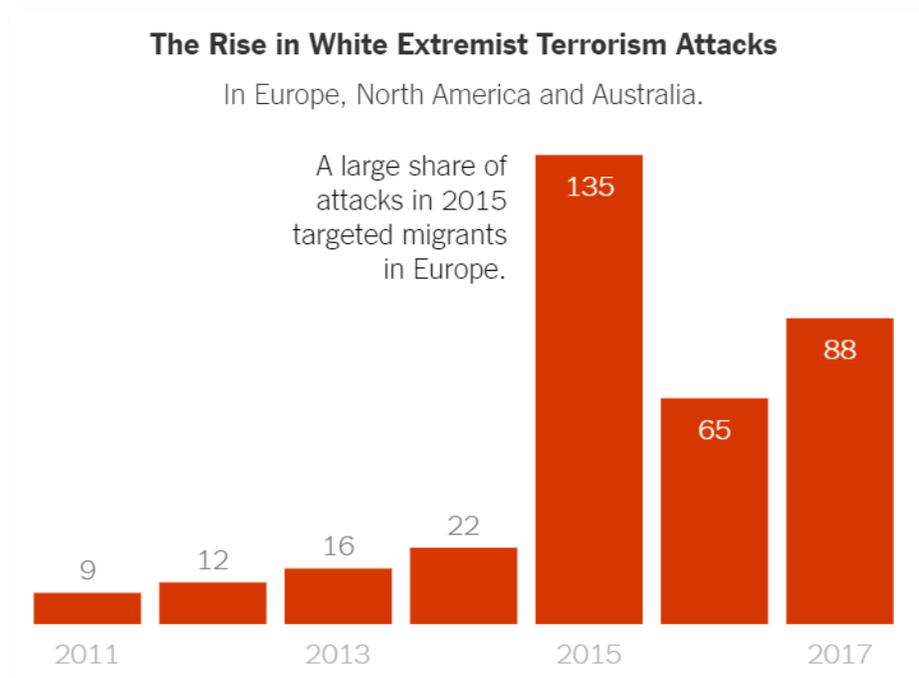


Figure 1-3
White Nationalist Extremist Worldwide Terrorist Attacks, 2011 – 2017

Similar to other radicalized extremist groups, such as Islamic extremists, several white nationalist extremists' terrorists attacks have been inspired by previous attacks, or communicated directly with other attackers. For example:⁷

- The March 2019 Christchurch shooter in New Zealand stated he was inspired by a few prior attacks, one of which being the 2011 Norway attack which killed 77 people.^{3,7}
- The 2018 New Mexico high school shooter had direct communication with the 2016 Munich Mall shooter.⁷
- The January 2017 Quebec mosque shooter had information on Dylann Roof on his laptop and well as over 1,000 social media searches related to other white nationalist extremist groups, right wing conservative media personalities, and the U.S. President in the month leading up to the attack.⁷

Many terrorist attacks have referenced the 2011 Norway shooter Anders Behring Breivik largely due to the publicity he and his manifesto received in the aftermath of his attack, which left 77 people dead. His 1,500-page manifesto, titled "2083: A European Declaration of Independence," was published online, and is widely recognized by intelligence personnel for its similarity to Islamic terror groups manifestos, albeit from a Christian perspective. It is more specifically recognized and widely circulated through white nationalist circles online because of how well it details his planning process and his mentality while preparing for his attack. It is essentially a blue print that was written to inspire copy cat attacks, and has since accomplished that goal. Several follow-on attacks since have also included manifestos of varying degrees, all of which have also been published online and shared extensively through social media and other sharing platforms; many have inspired others to terrorist plotting and attacking.⁷

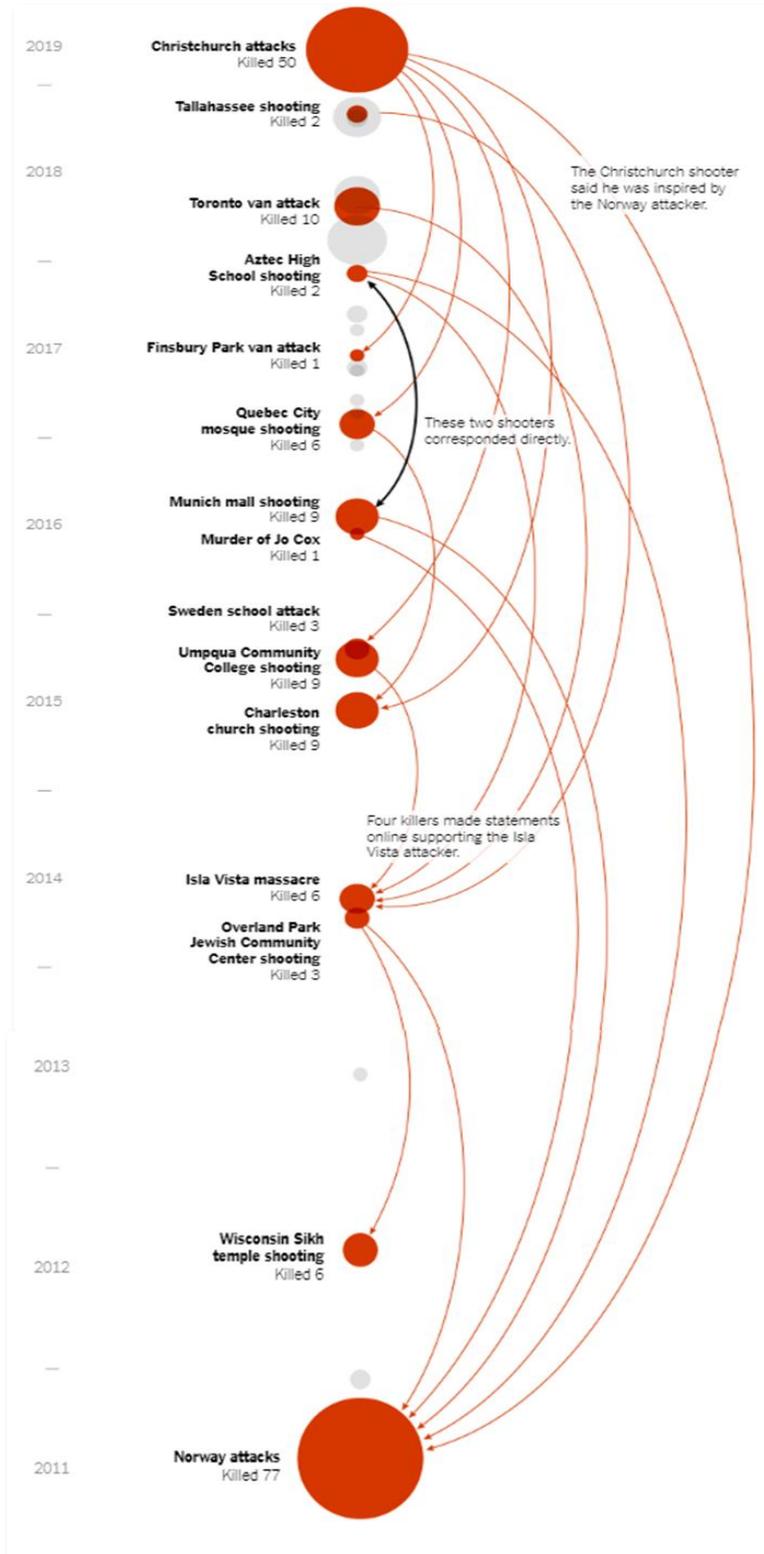


Figure 1-4
 White Nationalist Terror Attacks and their Connections to Other Attacks



Case Studies

Anders Behring Breivik – Norway, 2011

In July 2011, Breivik killed eight people by dressing as a police officer and detonating an ammonium nitrate/fuel oil (ANFO) explosive at a government headquarters building in Oslo. He then went on to fatally shoot another 69 teens attending a left-wing political summer camp on Utoya Island. His weapons of choice were a Ruger Mini-14 rifle and a Glock 34 pistol. He is considered far right-wing and is a self-professed neo-Nazi. Just prior to conducting the attack he released a 1,500-page manifesto, titled “2083: A European Declaration of Independence.” In it he explained his ideology and motivations for carrying out the attack and stated his opposition to Islam while blaming feminism for a European “cultural suicide.” The text called for the deportation of all Muslims from Europe, and Breivik wrote that his main motive for the attacks was to publicize his manifesto. The effects of his attack have had far-reaching consequences, as several white nationalist extremist groups and individuals have referenced it while carrying out other large-scale copycat attacks against similar groups of people around the world. Shortly after the Norway massacre, a prominent American white supremacist wrote on a white supremacist forum that Mr. Breivik had “inspired young Aryan men to action.” The same individual opened fire on a Jewish retirement home and community center in Kansas a few years later, killing three.⁷

Dylann Roof – Charleston, South Carolina Church, 2015

In 2015, during a prayer service at an African American church in South Carolina, Roof shot and killed nine people, including the senior pastor who was also a state senator, and injured one other person. His weapon of choice was a Glock 41 .45-caliber handgun. He was arrested in Shelby, North Carolina the next day. He later confessed that he committed the shooting in hopes of igniting a race war. After the shooting, a website titled The Last Rhodesian was discovered and later confirmed by law enforcement to be owned by Roof. The website contained photos of Roof posing with white supremacy and neo-Nazism symbology, along with a manifesto in which he outlined his views toward blacks, among other peoples. He expressed to several friends about his desire to conduct a shooting but none of them took him seriously. He also often claimed that “blacks were taking over the world.” His reported inspiration came researching black on white crime during coverage of the Travon Martin shooting, and the Northwest Front, a Seattle-based white supremacist organization. He was also reported to have contact with other white nationalist extremists via several internet forum, although none are believed to have directly inspired him.^{7, 10}

Alexandre Bissonnette – Quebec City Mosque, 2017

Alexandre Bissonnette conducted a targeted shooting at the Quebec Islamic Cultural Center in January 2017. In the aftermath 6 people were left dead. Witnesses said he used an AK-47 style rifle. He appeared to have little interest in extreme politics until France's far-right National Front Leader Marine Le Pen visited Quebec City, inspiring Bissonnette to vocal extreme online activism. Bissonnette had information on Dylann Roof on his laptop and well as over 1,000 social media searches related to white nationalist extremist groups, right wing conservative media personalities, and the U.S. President in the month leading up to the attack. It was also eventually revealed that he was against immigration to Quebec – especially by Muslims.^{7, 11}



Brenton Harrison Tarrant – New Zealand Mosque, 2019

In March 2019, Tarrant conducted a widespread attack which left 50 people dead and another 50 injured. According to the shooter he was radicalized during his travels in Europe, and he specifically designed his attacks to attract an American audience. During his attack he live streamed it via social media and other internet forums. It was quickly circulated before being shut down, but not before individuals were able to download it and share it via lesser monitored websites and sharing platforms. Additionally, Tarrant released his own terrorist manifesto, which referenced common language used by white nationalist groups, many of which extremist in nature themselves. In it, he stated he killed “to show the invaders that our lands will never be their lands, our homelands are our own and that, as long as a white man still lives, they will NEVER conquer our lands”. He stated he drew inspiration from many including Anders Breivik and Dylann Roof. In his manifesto, he described himself as European by blood because Australia is “simply an offshoot of the European people”. He also referred to the U.S. President as “a symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose.” His actions and manifesto demonstrate the transnational nature of white nationalist extremism ideology and how it is potential terrorist concern that must be seriously considered.^{3, 7, 8}

Outlook

White nationalist extremist groups and their proliferation, especially on social media, will continue to persist for the foreseeable future. As long as the source of their grievances continue to exist, and as long as they have perceived support of their politicians of choice (whether or not that support is real is irrelevant), they will continue to feel emboldened in rhetoric and action. Many of these groups are aware of their branding and intentionally seek to present themselves as simply preserving the white race and Western culture, while simultaneously advocating for violence against minority groups in pursuit of political and social objectives. This mindfulness of branding and image will likely also contribute to the longevity of many of these groups, particularly on social media, despite being very extremist in nature and actively contributing to the radicalization of terrorist actors. What appears to be a regionally confined domestic issue on the surface, turns out to be demonstrably transnational in reality, and should be regarded in the same manner as other transnational terrorist groups. Otherwise, as social media continues to contribute to the accelerated radicalization rate of U.S. based extremists, and conceivably extremists worldwide, we can most likely expect to see the number of recorded white nationalist extremist’s terrorist attacks continue to trend upward in the near future.

Source List

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