RESOLVE NETWORK

# Deconstructing Rightwing Extremism:

## Conceptual Variance and Attitudes Towards Islam

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the first report of two setting out the different ways in which rightwing extremist actors constitute a risk to public safety and both national and international security. This report provides a guide to key concepts, ideas, and internal differences within movements associated with rightwing extremism (RWE). The second report focuses on patterns of violent incidents associated with RWE in Western and Central Europe.

The purpose of this report is to map, conceptually and empirically, the diverse elements that constitute rightwing extremism. The aim is to offer readers a guide to this complexity and an appreciation for the numerous ideas, actors, and outcomes associated with RWE. The report is divided into two parts. The first focuses on the conceptual issues associated with RWE while the second explores how this complexity plays out in practice by examining various ways in which RWE has framed and reacted to Islam. This case study was selected as it illustrates the intricacies of varied and evolving RWE responses and because Islam and Muslims are often a major target of RWE violence and hostility.

In Part 1 we caution against describing RWE as a single movement or an ideology given that those associated with RWE, overall, lack the common bonds that bind members of a movement together. We explore the substance of this complexity and summarize the key features on a schema focusing on actors, ideas, and outcomes associated with RWE.

In Part 2 we illustrate, with reference to this conceptual complexity, how a plethora of mainly European RWE approaches to Islam underscores the pluralism of ideas and interpretations within RWE. This ideological plurality steers its proponents in divergent directions and results in varied outcomes. Not only do right-wing extremists, including those inspired by white supremacism, nationalism, and cultural nativism, adopt divergent positions on the issue, their approach ranges widely from co-optation and inspiration to non-engagement and outright hostility. These divergent positions, in turn, differ depending on local contexts, frames of reference, core beliefs, and individuals' interpretations of each of these factors.

This heterogeneity has important implications for practitioners, policymakers and those who study RWE movements. Importantly, perceptions of threat are not constant or consistent across RWE movements. Varied threat perceptions can, in turn, produce different types of violence and extremism, with a diverse and inconsistent list of potential targets for violent acts, potential allies, and perceived constituents among RWE actors.

# INTRODUCTION

Violence associated with rightwing extremism (RWE) is recognized as a growing threat across the globe.[1] However, RWE is by no means a homogenous entity. Not only does the term encompass a wide range of individuals, groups, and parties, it has also proven remarkably adaptable in terms of ideological reconfiguration and metamorphosis. Scholarly literature reflects this homogeneity. There is a broad consensus that RWE—under which can be subsumed white supremacism, neo-Nazism, neo-fascism, racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism (REMVE), and indeed a plethora of other such labels—incorporates such a complex web of movements and ideological currents that any accurate assessment of threat or resource prioritization is hard to achieve.[2] While states, organizations, research networks, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders frequently attach single umbrella labels to capture the danger posed by RWE,[3] this should not disguise the fact that this threat category conflates myriad movements that are often at odds with one another both organizationally and ideologically.[4]

Despite the variety of definitions for the phenomena, RWE has been most succinctly defined as "anti-democratic opposition towards equality."[5] This definition highlights both the ideational and behavioral extremism inherent in RWE, which often can manifest itself as violent political action driven by racial, ethnic, or cultural nationalism, perpetrated by individuals or groups with reference to shared collective values and interests. Still, as noted, RWE activities, attitudes, and the ideologies behind them vary between and across the movements and groups that constitute RWE. The purpose of this report, therefore, is to map, conceptually and empirically, the different elements that constitute RWE and, in doing so, provide readers a guide to understanding the complexity and diversity of ideas, actors, and outcomes associated with the term.

1 "Member States Concerned by the Growing and Increasingly Transnational Threat of Extreme Right-wing Terrorism," *United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate*, April 2020, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/20200401_press_release_trends_alert_extreme_right-wing_terrorism.pdf. Our definition of RWE incorporates the RESOLVE Secretariat's conceptualization of "Racially and Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism", focused upon "racial and ethnic supremacy" where proponents "advocate for the suppression or elimination of multicultural societies through overt acts of violence or political manipulation." The ideologies espoused by such groups and individuals "feed off perceived grievances and persecution among in-group members, metastasize quickly and are easily stoked by global and social events." See: "Racially and Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism (REMVE)," *RESOLVE Network,* April 2020, https://www.resolvenet.org/projects/racially-and-ethnically-motivated-violent-extremism-remve. We incorporate under this heading political violence associated with right-wing extremism.

2 Tore Bjørgo, "Introduction," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7, no. 1 (1995): 1-16; Jacob Aasland Ravndal and Tore Bjørgo, "Investigating Terrorism from the Extreme Right: A Review of Past and Present Research," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 6 (2018): 5-22.

3 "Spotlight: Violent Right-Wing Extremism in Focus," *RAN,* May 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-06/ran_brochure_violent_right_wing_extremism_in_focus_en.pdf; "Member States Concerned by the Growing and Increasingly Transnational Threat of Extreme Right-wing Terrorism," *United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate,* April 2020; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2020* (European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, 2020), https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/european_union_terrorism_situation_and_trend_report_te-sat_2020_0.pdf.

4 Graham Macklin, "The Evolution of Extreme-Right Terrorism and Efforts to Counter it in the United Kingdom," *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 1 (2019); Paul Jackson, *Trans-national Neo-Nazism in the USA, United Kingdom and Australia* (Washington, DC: GWU Program on Extremism, February 2020).

5 Elisabeth Carter, "Right-wing Extremism: Reconstructing the Concept," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 23, no. 2 (2008): 157-82. See also: Anders Ravik Jupskås and Iris Beau Segers, "What is Right-wing Extremism?" *C-REX,* November 7, 2020, https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compendium/what-is-right-wing-extremism.html.

We divide this report into two parts. Part 1 provides a guide to concepts and begins by unpacking the ideological and organizational heterogeneity of RWE, arguing that it consists of neither a single unified social movement nor ideology. We seek to capture the differing elements of RWE by suggesting a conceptual schema that incorporates divergent ideas, outcomes, and actors, each of which can influence the other.

Part 2 looks at how this conceptual complexity unfolds in practice. In order to do so, it presents a case study, examining divergent positions within RWE towards Islam—an issue of notable importance within RWE, particularly in Europe.[6] Drawing on examples from the UK in particular, RWE reactions to Islamist extremism are examined, as are changes in RWE narratives concerning Islam and anti-Muslim prejudice over time, in light of the conceptual discussion in Part 1. As this case study illustrates, responses to Islam vary within RWE circles and can provoke diverse reactions and interactions. RWE actors have conceived of Islam in a plethora of ways, leading to different outcomes and idea construction.

Policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders must understand RWE as a complex and divergent phenomenon with a diverse range of targets, allies, and constituencies. An appreciation of these diverse elements can assist in responding to the varied manifestations of the risk that RWE actors can pose, both currently and as they continue to evolve. Our key takeaway is this: the threat from RWE is not a one-size-fits-all problem. Treating it as such risks overlooking the level of detail and granularity needed to counter such threats in tailored and effective ways.

# **PART 1:** A GUIDE TO CONCEPTS

In the first part of this report, we begin by emphasizing how RWE incorporates a collection of movements with varied identities, values, and objectives. This discussion is grounded in conceptual literature on RWE that cautions against generalizations about its key features and properties. We then emphasize the multimodal nature of RWE, whereby its components constantly generate new and overlapping ideological mutations as they adapt according to the changes in external circumstances. We lay out the components most commonly associated with different elements of RWE before mapping these on a schema. The purpose of this conceptual map is to offer a guide to the key dimensions of RWE, which we separate into ideas, actors, and outcomes. We argue that an appreciation for these different dimensions of RWE and the way they influence each other, rather than looking at one in isolation, offers us a better way of understanding the varied risks associated with RWE and the different parts of the state and civil society that can be mobilized to address them. In the second part of the report, we examine this diversity in practice through a case study of varied RWE responses to Muslims and Islam.

6 Daniel Koehler, "Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism in Europe Current Developments and Issues for the Future," *PRISM* 6, no. 2, https://cco.ndu.edu/PRISM/PRISM-Volume-6-no-2/Article/839011/right-wing-extremism-and-terrorism-in-europe-current-developments-and-issues-fo/.

# RWE: Ideological, Temporal, and Organizational Heterogeneity

The heterogeneity of RWE actors is widely recognized in the academic literature dealing with both historic and contemporary groups. Theoretical works that seek to provide an "ideal type" definition of fascism, for instance, have been mindful of the fact that "extensive ideological heterogeneity will exist between different examples of it, and even within the same movement, as well as allowing for considerable complexity as far as its sociological base and the motivations of its supporters are concerned."[7] There is arguably even greater complexity with regards to the ideological and organizational forms that RWE, and its hinterland, has assumed in the post-war period, which ranges from political parties that engage with the democratic process, to clandestine terrorist groups that conceive of themselves as revolutionary vanguards that will overthrow democracy rather than participate in it. Putting to one side the dizzying profusion of ideas and organizations that populate this space, since 1945 the RWE milieu itself has exhibited two "basic features": (1) a tendency towards "organizational complexity and ideological heterogeneity" and (2) "ideological and organizational innovation."[8]

RWE is not a static phenomenon. A common point of departure in seeking to define RWE is to separate it from the broader phenomenon of *rightwing radicalism*, which is opposed to the *liberal* aspects of liberal democracy but eschews violence and terrorism.[9] RWE meanwhile is inherently anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian and, in some cases, its protagonists see violence as justifiable and necessary in pursuit of its political goals.[10] While these distinctions are important, it should be remembered that a degree of overlap in terms of ideas and ideologies, as opposed to outcomes or proposed solutions, may still exist across such divides. We explore this in more detail below.

### Organizational complexity and ideological heterogeneity

Whilst the broader far right is characterized by "radical right" political parties and social movements, RWE is dominated by a continually shifting array of short-lived and often miniscule organizations, which makes accurately mapping the landscape an ongoing challenge. The literature on RWE frequently refers to these micro-groups, which proliferate across the RWE space, sometimes existing exclusively online, as *groupuscules*.[11] It defines them as political formations that "behave as fully developed, highly specialized

7 Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge 1993): 27; Roger Griffin highlights this ideological diversity across the course of the twentieth century, see: Roger Griffin, ed., *Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

8 Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism,* 161-71.

9 Cas Mudde argues for example that the extreme right "… rejects the essence of democracy, that is, popular sovereignty and majority rule," whilst the radical right "… accepts the essence of democracy, but opposes fundamental elements of liberal democracy, most notably minority rights, rule of law, and separation of powers," see: Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 2020): 7. For a short overview of some of the key ideas and concepts, see: Anders Ravik Jupskås and Eviane Leidig, eds., *Knowing What's (Far) Right: A Compendium* (Oslo: C-REX, 2020), https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compendium/c-rex-compendium-print-version.pdf.

10 Ibid.

11 Roger Griffin, "From Slime Mould to Rhizome: An Introduction to the Groupuscular Right," *Patterns of Prejudice* 37, no. 1 (2003): 27-50.

and largely autonomous grouplets that simultaneously form the constituents of an amorphous, leaderless and centerless cellular network of political ideology, organization and activism."[12]

There is a common misconception that still prevails, propagated by both these groups themselves and, on occasion, the media, that RWE groups are rigid "top down" hierarchical organizations. In reality, however, many of these *groupuscules* are ephemeral and "transitory" rather than "organized" entities. Kathleen Blee highlights that this "chaos" is in fact "central to how many racial extremist groups operate in a liminal status between a strategic movement and a vaguely bonded subcultural network."[13]

Indeed, these actors and ideas are often so disparate that it is hard to view them as a single movement let alone a coherent ideology. Whilst ideas about race and nation are a common denominator even here, when one looks closely at the views on race and biological determinism that have fueled visions of national rebirth, one finds ideologically plurality, at both the individual and group level, since these ideas "did not animate everyone equally, in the same way, or indeed at the same time."[14]

RWE, therefore, is best conceived of as a collection of movements with varied identities, values and objectives rather than being a monolithic entity. Some RWE actors, for instance, whose activities are largely digital, undertake very little concrete political action focusing instead on propaganda, disinformation, and incitement. As a result, some scholars have argued that such activities provide little of the affective emotional and cognitive experiences necessary to establish trust and build stable social relations between activists upon which social movements depend.[15] However, given the liminal state in which some far right movements exist, the extent to which this matters in terms of the digital domain serving to propagate their ideas and erode trust in democratic institutions and values is arguable.

Not all RWE actors share the same clearly identified opponents, nor are they united by the same networks, or indeed bound by the same collective identity. Collective identity of movements associated with RWE has also shifted over time. For example, the Nazis had considered much of populations of Russia, Ukraine, and Eastern Europe more generally, as racially inferior and therefore fit only for servitude or extermination.[16] In the space of approximately half a century, however, contemporary RWE actors have reimagined this region as the last redoubt of "white" racial survival, a feeling that has grown in tandem with their own pessimistic prognosis of the situation facing the more multicultural societies of Western

12 Ibid.

13 Kathleen M. Blee, "How the Study of White Supremacism is Helped and Hindered by Social Movement Research," *Mobilization* 22, no. 1 (2017): 5.

14 Graham Macklin, *Failed Führers: A History of Britain's Extreme Right* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 7-8.

15 Fabian Virchow, "The 'Identitarian Movement': What Kind of Identity? Is it Really a Movement?" in *Digital Media Strategies of the Far Right in Europe and the United States,* eds. Patricia Anne Simpson and Helga Druxes (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books): 177-90, 182 and 186.

16 For an introduction to ongoing debates, see: Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wipperman, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Devin O. Pendas, Mark Roseman, and Richard F. Wetzell, eds., *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Europe that some militants now consider racially irredeemable.[17] The notion that RWE possesses a formal or indeed stable collective identity is further complicated by ongoing arguments within the milieu about who is and is not "white" based upon a "spiritual" rather than biological understanding of race.[18]

Racial and ethnic supremacism is not necessarily synonymous with *white* supremacism either. RWE can include non-white supremacist movements, such as Hindu nationalists who have their own long history of entanglement with Western European extremists dating back through the Fascist epoch to the nineteenth century German Romantic movement.[19] Another strand of RWE, particularly associated with the "Identitarian" subcultures ideologically inspired by the French New Right, seeks to protect Eurasian "biocultural identity" from the existential threat it believes emanates from American hegemony and Anglo-Saxon culture irrespective of any racial harmony that might exist across such perceived cultural cleavages.[20]

Speaking about contemporary right-wing social movements, including those that employed, or sought to employ, racially and ethnically motivated violence, Virchow observed:

> *The wide variety of right-wing social movements and the different social, political and legal contexts in which they emerge and act makes a systematic study of the interactions of these movements with their respective environments impossible at this point. The same applies for the impact of such movements.*[21]

Even for the most extreme groups, the author cautioned, the relationship with violence was "complex and therefore generalizing statements should not be made."[22]

17 For the relationship between Russia and the European far right, see: Anton Shekhovstov, *Tango Noir: Russia and the Western Far Right* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

18 Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, *War for Eternity: The Return of Traditionalism and the Rise of the Populist Right* (London: Allen Lane, 2020): 13, 26-27.

19 Marzia Casolari, *In the Shadow of the Swastika: The Relationships between Indian Radical Nationalism, Italian Fascism and Nazism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020); Alexei Pimenov, *German Nationalism and Indian Political Thought: The Influence of Ancient Indian Philosophy on the German Romantics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020). See also: Kathleen M. Blee and Kimberly A. Creasap, "Conservative and Right-Wing Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010): 269-86; Eviane Leidig, "Hindutva as a Variant of Right-wing Extremism," *Patterns of Prejudice* 54, no. 3 (2020): 215-37.

20 As expressed in the writings of French journalist and former La Nouvelle Droite figurehead, Guillaume Faye, including in his book, *Why We Fight: Manifesto of the European Resistance* (2011, originally published in French in 2001). For more on Faye, see, for example: Ico Maly, "Guillaume Faye's Legacy: The Alt-right and Generation Identity," *Journal of Political Ideologies* (2022), https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2022.2045460.

21 Fabian Virchow, "Post-Fascist Right-Wing Social Movements," in *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey,* eds. Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring (London: Palgrave, 2017), 619-46: 642.

22 Virchow, "Post-Fascist Right-Wing Social Movements," 636.

## Defining RWE

RWE, like its interwar predecessors, is thus best considered a multimodal entity, capable of constantly generating new ideological mutations as it adapts according to the changes in external circumstance.[23] Given the plethora of actors involved, these changes vary across both time and space. RWE actors have adopted fundamentally opposing positions on a range of key issues related to ideological positioning and identity. This includes areas such as:

- geopolitics (with opinion divided, for instance, by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022);[24]
- religion (comprising of everything from agnosticism to Christian fundamentalism, Norse paganism, Asian mysticism and Traditionalism, and even Satanism fused with Islamism);[25]
- gender (spanning conservative positions advocating for the maintenance of "traditional" gender roles to violent misogyny);[26]
- environmentalism (from climate denial to justifying racist politics as a simply a defence of the "natural order" and equilibria);[27]
- fundamentals of governance (ranging from "national anarchism" to authoritarianism).[28]

23 Roger Griffin highlights this point. See: Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*.

24 RWE opinion was divided on this topic even before the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. The subsequent war in Donbas saw white supremacists with a similar outlook and background joining both Russian (e.g., Donetskaya Respublika) and Ukrainian-backed volunteer forces (e.g., Azov), effectively fighting each other. Individual organizations were split down the middle by the conflict or opposed fighting in the region altogether, as was the case with Misanthropic Division Serbia, as evident from public VK communications (as of October 2020). For more, see: Tim Lister, "The Nexus Between Far-Right Extremists in the United States and Ukraine," *CTC Sentinel* 13, no. 4 (2020), https://ctc.usma.edu/the-nexus-between-far-right-extremists-in-the-united-states-and-ukraine/; Kacper Rękawek, "Neither 'NATO's Foreign Legion' nor the 'Donbass International Brigades': (Where Are All the) Foreign Fighters in Ukraine," *PRISM Policy Paper* 6, no. 108 (2015), https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/189979/PISM%20Policy%20Paper%20no%206%20(108).pdf. See also: Anton Shekhovtsov, "How Alexander Dugin's Neo-Eurasianists Geared Up for the Russian-Ukrainian War in 2005-2013," *Anton Shekhovstov Blog,* January 25, 2016.

25 Religious sources of influence include Christian identity movements as well as more recently articulated forms of "muscular" Christianity based upon "crusader" campaigns to protect European Christian identity. RWE is also home to a number of new religious movements that encompass anti-Christian belief systems including Ben Klassen's "World Church of the Creator" and Norse paganism, such as those articulated by the likes of Varg Vikernes, convicted for burning down churches in Norway. Other actors including the writers Savitri Devi and Julius Evola have fused RWE beliefs with Asian mysticism and Traditionalism. Groups like the Order of Nine Angles meanwhile blend RWE ideas with a violent extremist interpretation of Satanism.

26 Gender is integral to all branches of RWE politics both ideologically and in terms of its values, norms and behaviors with ideas about masculinity and femininity that underpin particular forms of male empowerment. For a short introduction to this topic see Inger Skelsbæk et al., "What Role Does Gender Play in the Far Right?" in *Knowing What's (Far) Right: A Compendium,* Anders Ravik Jupskås and Eviane Leidig, eds. (Oslo: C-REX, 2020), 62-64, https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compendium/c-rex-compendium-print-version.pdf.

27 By way of example, "eco-fascist" and environmental agendas put forward by the likes of Pentti Linkola (d. 2020) and Savitri Devi (d. 1982), often fused with the anti-tech animus of the "Unabomber" Ted Kaczynski (b. 1942). See, for example: Graham Macklin, "The Extreme Right, Climate Change and Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2022), https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2022.2069928. For a brief primer on the role of environmentalism in the far right, see: "The Far-right and Environmentalism Overlap is Bigger than You Think — and Growing," *NPR,* April 1, 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/04/01/1089990539/climate-change-politics.

28 While authoritarianism is glorified through plethora of neo-Nazi and neo-fascist texts the anti-government, anti-tax currents of RWE point more in an anarchic direction. See, for example: Cody Butler, "Suspect has History of Anti-government Social Media Posts," *WILX,*

Even among transnational ideological currents that are ostensibly part of the same movement—like the "New Right"—there is considerable variance between its European and North American exponents with regards the place of biological racism and antisemitism which are far more prevalent amongst the latter than the former.[29]

As well as disagreement over these diagnostic elements, there is disagreement on prognosis too. Whilst notions of "violent extremism" certainly suggest all actors within RWE have accepted violence, the degrees and ways in which they have done so varies significantly.[30] Indeed even at the overtly violent end of the spectrum, movements and organizations can offer several distinct repertoires of contention.[31] Some groups may, for instance, endorse or partake in street violence without advocating or participating in more serious and lethal politically motivated violence and terrorism.[32] Even in groups that do engage in terrorist violence – for instance the NSU in Germany – not every member of the group or its wider support network directly engaged in killing. Others, in turn, may openly advocate terrorism and mass murder while seeing their own role as one of propaganda and proselytization, without direct involvement in violence. Indeed, even spaces characterized by "violent talk" are not necessarily good predictors of intent since many of those engaged in such activity will never graduate to "violent action."[33] Participation in or development of various non-violent roles—including virtual roles—that are seen as meaningful within RWE ecosystems, paradoxically, may even limit individuals' propensity to progress towards violent action. Conversely, individuals with only the most rudimentary ideological understanding have committed acts of extreme right terrorism.[34]

RWE's eclectic ideological composition necessitates a broad set of definitions as to what they constitute. Most academic definitions converge around the "minimum" definition outlined by Elisabeth Carter who described RWE as encompassing "authoritarianism, anti-democracy and exclusionary and/or holistic nationalism."[35] Other scholars have offered more expansive definitions that go beyond (but are still consonant with) this "minimum" definition. Miller-Idriss, for instance, defined the far right as incorporating "four separate but overlapping categories: antigovernment and antidemocratic practices and ideals, exclusionary beliefs, existential threats and conspiracies, and apocalyptic fantasies." It is a "fluid spectrum of groups and individuals who represent more extreme and less extreme versions of the anti-democratic and illiberal ideals […] with "exclusionary and dehumanizing language" at their core.[36] Ahmed

2020, https://www.wilx.com/2020/10/09/suspect-has-history-of-anti-government-social-media-posts/ (as of October 2020).

29 For more on these differences, see: Graham Macklin, "Greg Johnson and Counter-Currents" in *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy,* Mark Sedgewick, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 204-23.

30 Gilbert Ramsay and Donald Holbrook, "The Representation of Violence by Insurgent Political Actors: The 'Violent' Part of 'Violent Extremism'?" *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 7, no. 1 (2014): 84-96.

31 Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow*, Contentious Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

32 Jason M. Blazakis and Colin P. Clarke, *From Paramilitaries to Parliamentarians: Disaggregating Radical Right Wing Extremist Movements* (Washington, D.C.: RESOLVE Network, 2021), https://doi.org/10.37805/remve2021.2.

33 Simi and Windisch referred to this as the "performative nature of extremism." See: Pete Simi and Steven Windisch, "The Culture of Violent Talk: An Interpretive Approach," *Social Sciences* 9, no. 7 (2020): 120, https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci9070120.

34 Donald Holbrook and John Horgan, "Terrorism and Ideology: Cracking the Nut," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13, no. 6 (2019): 2-15.

35 Carter, "Right-Wing Extremism: Reconstructing a Concept."

36 Cynthia Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 4.

and Pisoiu similarly defined the far right "as a spectrum or continuum which spans varying degrees of extremism and activism, ranging from racial supremacy to cultural exclusion," recognizing that in Europe at least, "there are many overlaps at various levels: people, institutions, and discourse."[37]

Definitions drawing from other geographic contexts, which encompass a range of actors not found in Europe, nonetheless emphasize a similar plurality. Authors of a study on right-wing extremism in Canada for instance defined the term as:

> *a loose movement, characterized by a racially, ethnically and sexually defined nationalism. This nationalism is often framed in terms of white power, and is grounded in xenophobic and exclusionary understandings of the perceived threats posed by such groups as non-Whites, Jews, immigrants, homosexuals and feminists.*[38]

Given the heterogeneity of movements, actors and ideas that are associated with RWE, several authors have pointed to more general characteristics that these elements appear to have in common. These include a rejection of social equality and diversity and promotion and protection of the rights of perceived "native" or non-immigrant populations (defined by culture and ethnicity or biology, and sometimes both), the defense of which in the eyes of some RWE adherents legitimizes anti-democratic means and, in some instances, violence.[39]

Government agencies and departments have similarly sought to detect key ingredients that appear to unite disparate elements associated with this realm. The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism, for instance, notes that:

> *In the UK and Europe, extreme right-wing groups, including neo-Nazis, seek to exploit any anxieties around globalization, conflict and migration […] in an attempt to broaden their appeal. These groups may vary considerably in their rhetoric, but they share the racist view that minority communities are harming the interests of a "native" population.*[40]

Despite any potential commonalities, however, a consistent hazard in demarcating the conceptual boundaries of RWE and related movements, as noted above, is that the labels attached to them tend to be abstract, reflecting views and perceptions of external observers rather than any common bonds that members of these categories would recognize themselves.

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37 Reem Ahmed and Daniela Pisoiu, *How Extreme is the European Far Right? Investigating Overlaps in the German Far-Right Scene on Twitter* (Vox-Pol Network of Excellence, 2019), 15.

38 Jacob Davey, Mackenzie Hart and Cécile Guerin, *An Online Environmental Scan of Right-wing Extremism in Canada* (Interim Report) (London: ISD, 2020), 10.

39 Norberto Bobbio, *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Cas Mudde, "Right-Wing Extremism Analyzed: A Comparative Analysis of the Ideologies of Three Alleged Right-Wing Extremist Parties (NPD, NDP, CP'86)," *European Journal of Political Research* 27, no. 2 (1995): 203-22; Blee and Creasap, "Conservative and Right-Wing Movements." See also: Ravndal and Bjørgo, "Investigating Terrorism from the Extreme Right."

40 HM Government, *CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism* (London: Home Office, 2018), 16.

# Mapping RWE

Summarizing and building on this knowledge base we can envisage rightwing extremism as incorporating various dimensions that are mutually inclusive. We can divide these into three key components: "ideas", "outcomes", and "actors".

- Ideas refer to the primary outlook, the guiding principles or frames of reference and interpretation.
- Outcomes are shaped by ideas and refer to prognoses where solutions or ways forward are articulated and repertoires developed to meet those goals.
- Actors, meanwhile, refers to the array of agents or social forces through which ideas and outcomes are actioned.

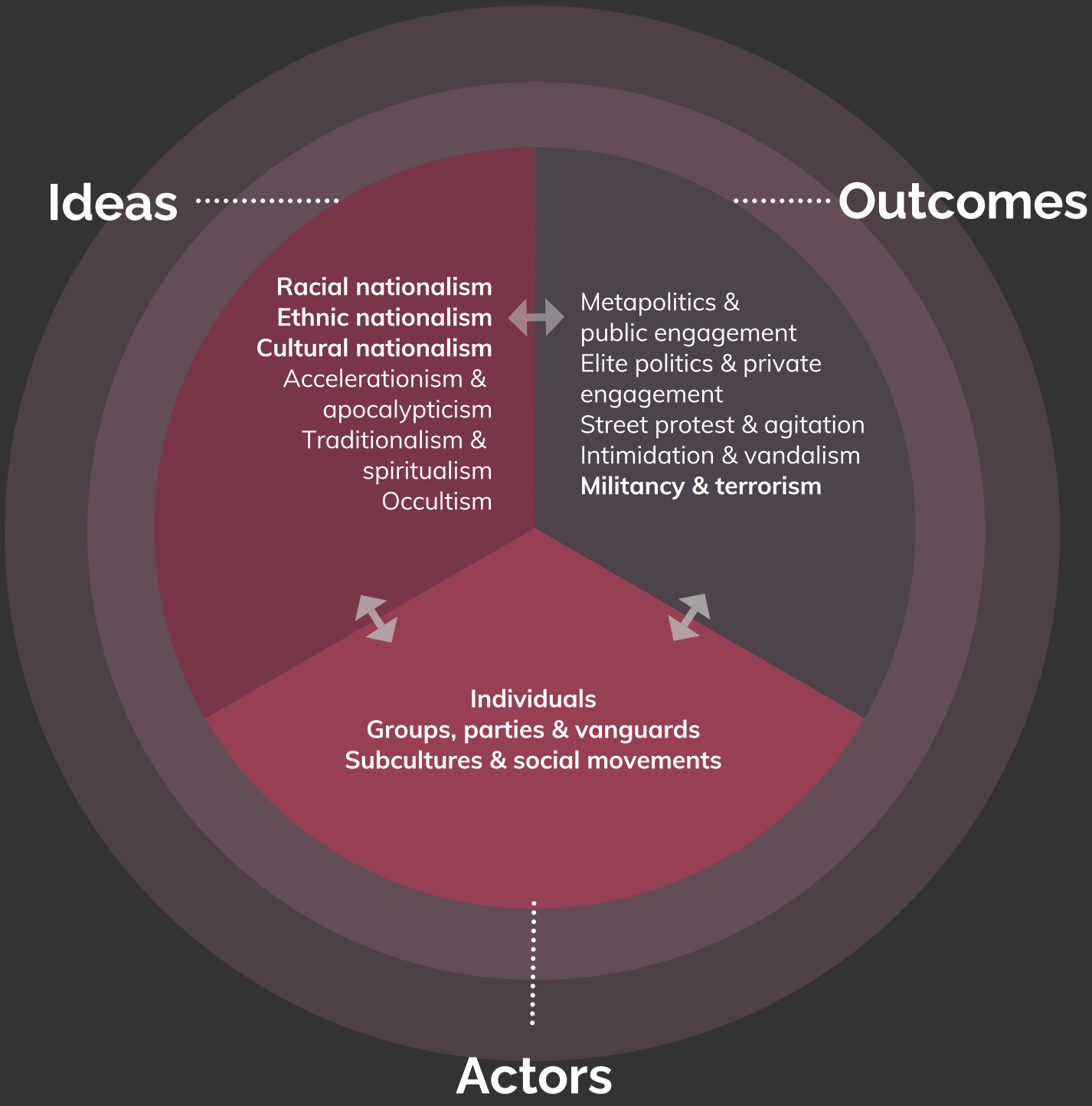
We can visualize this overview of RWE as a circle with three "slices" reflecting these dimensions where each slice influences the other to varying extents (Figure 1). In that sense the relationship is not static from ideas to outcomes to actors, but rather cyclical, whereby individual or collective actions and interpretations shape the core ideas that in turn may shape prognoses and so on.

Such simplifications, of course, always come with caveats. Notions of "extreme", for instance, are hard to pin down, as already mentioned. In the figure below, therefore, we include various types of legal political protest on a spectrum of action that at the other end includes extreme violence – which is not to suggest any form of causal link between participating in protest and engaging in violence.

Incorporating differing dimensions into a schema of rightwing extremism, however, can help us visualize the heterogeneity and complexity associated with this domain and the multiple manifestations of threat associated with it. These different manifestations of threat, in turn, require different responses: from wide-ranging civil-society initiatives to more specific counterterrorism efforts. Outcomes, as mentioned previously, are diverse, which presents challenges for our assessment of risk associated with RWE. An individual who sympathizes with the ideas of cultural nationalism, for example, may either endorse or reject violence and illegal methods of protest. Simply understanding the ideas associated with RWE gives us no *a priori* sense of what types of actions they may spawn. Indeed, the mainstreaming of many aspects of these ideas means that some of these actors may now find an outlet through mainstream rather than "extreme" politics. Concentrating on principal grievances, in turn, such as supposed "white genocide", tells us little about how those grievances would be articulated and actioned, by whom, or indeed when. We need to comprehend these added dimensions to gain a fuller understanding of the RWE landscape the different threats and challenges it can pose.

Such diversity, of course, is not limited to RWE, but highlighting it underlines our caution against treating RWE as a catchall category of political protest, and innately "extreme" by virtue of the ideas being promoted. Teasing out its various dimensions will enable us to gain a more complete understanding of RWE, the varied risks associated with it, and the different parts of the state and civil society that can best be mobilized to address it.

**Figure 1:** Deconstructing Rightwing Extremism



Let us unpack each dimension in turn.

Ideas: We can identify six key ways in which contemporary RWE actors frame their universe.[41] The first three sets of ideas, based upon racial, ethnic and cultural interpretations of nationalism, represent the foundation of RWE belief systems, from which other ideas flow. These categories are not necessarily exclusive or static, but rather are fluid and overlapping, though racial nationalism is most commonly associated with the extreme right and cultural nationalism with radical right actors.[42] Forms of ethnic nationalism span both political camps.[43] Major RWE belief systems based on racial nationalism such as Nazism have incorporated multiple elements from these categories of ideas. The baseline RWE ideas can be defined as follows:

- Racial nationalism: ideas supporting the primacy of a particular race or ethnicity in biological terms that are characterized by their anti-democratic opposition to equality. These include ideas of white supremacy and national socialism.

- Ethnic nationalism: ideas that advocate the separation of cultures and ethnicities based on the preservation of cultural and ethnic "plurality" rather than racial supremacy. These include ideas promoting ethnic "homelands" or "ethnostates".[44]

- Cultural nationalism: ideas that warn against corruption of perceived values, norms and traditions, such as Christian values and traditional norms of sovereignty, real or imagined. These include representations of Islam as incommensurable with Western culture.

As well as shaping perceptions of “race” in distinct ways, each of these streams of thought also places different emphasis upon gender and sexuality. Opposition to abortion and homosexuality can be situated across the RWE spectrum though such ideas are also found outside RWE. The same is true with respect to views of women, which range from traditionalist patriarchal beliefs about the place of women in society to murderous misogyny. There is for instance a significant overlap between racist beliefs and assumptions and parts of the “incel” community and the “manosphere” whilst the violent ideation evident within some of their digital subcultures share similar dynamics with those found in “accelerationist” subcultures.[45]

41 Erving Goffman referred to these frames as “schemata of interpretation”. See: Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974). This is something offered by interlocutors in order to mobilize support. Framing, in short, refers to process whereas ideology refers to the content that is being conveyed. See: Pamela E. Oliver and Frank Johnston, “What a Good Idea! Ideologies and Frames in Social Movement Research,” *Mobilization: An International Journal* 4, no. 1: 37-54.

42 Bobbio, *Left and Right*; Mudde, “Right-Wing Extremism Analyzed”; Blee and Creasap, “Conservative and Right-Wing Movements.” See also: Ravndal and Bjørgo, “Investigating Terrorism from the Extreme Right.”

43 Tore Bjørgo and Jacob Aasland Ravndal, “Extreme Right Violence and Terrorism: Concepts, Patterns, and Responses,” *ICCT Policy Brief* (September 2019): 3, https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2019/09/Extreme-Right-Violence-and-Terrorism-Concepts-Patterns-and-Responses-4.pdf.

44 Tamir Bar-On, “Richard B. Spencer and the Alt Right”, in *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy,* Mark Sedgwick, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 224-41.

45 Laura Bates, *Men Who Hate Women: The Extremism Nobody is Talking About* (Simon & Schuster: London 2020), 20. See also: Emily K. Carian, Alex DiBranco, and Chelsea Ebin, eds., *Male Supremacism in the United States: From Patriarchal Traditionalism to Misogynist*

Regarding the wider RWE landscape, these three forms of nationalism carry the greatest weight amongst the majority of RWE actors though racial nationalist beliefs often predominate. This is not to argue, however, that these categories are mutually exclusive. Individual activists often incorporate elements of all three into their belief systems, which are not necessarily "fixed". That said this report also highlights three further ideological tributaries that have become a pronounced part of the ideological matrix for a subset of contemporary RWE actors at present. These three sets of ideas are:

- Accelerationism & apocalypticism: ideas centered on the notion of a coming apocalypse including, in some cases, the idea that a post-apocalyptic rebirth can be accelerated by fomenting discord through acts of provocation and violence.[46]
- Traditionalism & spiritualism: ideas infused by non-Western spirituality and philosophies rejecting modernity and materialism.
- Occultism: esoteric networks or new religious movements celebrating ethnic or racial heritage, purity, the destruction of corrupting influences, and related rituals.

None of the six categories elaborated here are mutually exclusive and nor, one should emphasize, are the latter three – spiritualism, apocalypticism and occultism – either unique to RWE or indeed "far-right" viewpoints. They only become so in combination with either racial, ethnic or cultural forms of nationalism. Incorporating such outside influences into their core ideological cosmology allows for new and novel combinations of RWE ideas. For instance, in recent years, a small subset of RWE actors motivated by racial supremacist views have also identified with the occult and esoteric views, combining these with accelerationist or apocalyptic visions of the world and on occasion other forms of spiritualism too.[47] The resulting ideological position has been contentious for many RWE adherents and should not be considered representative of RWE as a whole.[48]

Temporality is also a central preoccupation of each of these prisms, though it frequently manifests itself differently depending upon the actor involved.[49] It can range from nostalgia or elevation of a mythologized past to the urge to precipitate cataclysmic events or even wholesale rejection of progress and linear time in favor of cyclical notions that divide the universe and human history into recurring cycles, epochs or eons.[50]

There is also nothing certain about the types of outcomes or prognoses that can be associated with these ideas. While our notion of rightwing *extremism* concentrates on the use or promotion of lethal

*Incels and the Alt-Right* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022).

46 Miller-Idriss, "Hate in the Homeland," 13.

47 Kelly Weill, "Satanism Drama Is Tearing Apart the Murderous Neo-Nazi Group Atomwaffen," *Daily Beast,* March 21, 2018, https://www.thedailybeast.com/satanism-drama-is-tearing-apart-the-murderous-neo-nazi-group-atomwaffen (as of February 2022).

48 Ibid.

49 For an introduction, see: Fernando Esposito and Sven Reichardt, "Revolution and Eternity: Introductory Remarks on Fascist Temporalities," *Journal of Modern European History* 13, no. 1 (2015): 24-43.

50 Teitelbaum, *War for Eternity.*

political violence, we need to recognize that many of the ideas associated with RWE, described above, call for a much wider repertoire of action where violence is only one component. As the discussion about "violent talk", above, alluded to, engagement with deeply prejudiced and violent ideas may also result in various forms of non-violent action such as sharing thoughts on forums or seeking to withdraw from active engagement with multicultural societies rather than using violence to attack them. Much of the counterterrorism focus on new RWE movements in the UK, for instance, focused on groups and networks that elevated the *promotion* and *incitement* of violence over actual participation in such acts.[51] At the same time, we have seen several examples of ideas originally intended to broaden the political appeal of RWE (which therefore eschewed any direct references to violence) nonetheless being used to inspire or justify acts of mass murder.[52]

The outcomes that these ideas shape and inform, in other words, are diverse. We divide these into five key categories:

- Metapolitics & public engagement: Metapolitics refers to the idea—derived largely from Gramscian thought—that before the masses can be mobilized to upturn the current world order, first they need to be educated about its properties and their place in it.[53] By public engagement we mean broader types of mass outreach or public political action which encompasses but is not limited to party politics.

- Elite politics & private engagement: Elite politics refers to ideas attributed to key thinkers such as Julius Evola who rejected the notion the masses had to be mobilized to usher in change, in favor of a far more targeted mobilization of the enlightened few.[54] We include here other types of targeted political engagement, such as private or clandestine networks of activists sharing their thoughts and ideas, often in the online space.

- Street protest & agitation: this refers to demonstrations, protests and publicity "stunts", such as placing provocative banners and stickers to promote a particular cause.

- Intimidation & vandalism: here we include more aggressive street protest, including street violence, intimidation and acts of vandalism, both premeditated and spontaneous, which are not intended to be fatal. The line between various violent acts can be hard to discern, and much depends on the intention of the perpetrator. Arson attacks on buildings believed to be empty, for instance, are different in character to attacks that are intended cause fatalities.

51 This is reflected in sentencing of RWE offenders, see: Home Office/John Flatley, "Statistics on the Operation of Police Powers Under the Terrorism Act 2000 and Subsequent Legislation," December 10, 2020.

52 The manifesto of the Christchurch terrorist is a case in point.

53 For more, see: Chamila Liyanage, "The Metapolitics of the Far Right," *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right,* February 7, 2020, https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2020/02/07/the-metapolitics-of-the-far-right/.

54 For an introduction to his ideas, see: Patrick Furlong, *Social and Political Thought of Julius Evola* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

- Militancy & terrorism: Here we define "militancy" as the use of confrontational or violent methods in pursuit of an ideological cause, which includes pre-meditated acts of lethal political violence or coercion and acts of domestic or international terrorism.

Ultimately, these outcomes described above involve numerous disparate individuals or collectives—actors—who put ideas into action and interpret them as they do so. These actors have diverse objectives, from violent subversion to long-term identity building, as traced above. We can define three key categories:

- Individuals: many of the most impactful expressions of RWE are perpetrated by single actors whether they be lone terrorists trying to foment change through violence or political leaders and ideologues leading political parties that mobilize through democratic channels though both face a range of external constraints upon their actions.

- Groups, parties and vanguards: like-minded individuals frequently coalesce in groupings or social movement organizations of various sizes, with varying degrees of formality and structure that often adopt their distinct branding to differentiate them from rival groups and encourage in-group loyalty.[55] Latterly, such groupings have combined a virtual and physical existence and encouraged a variety of distinct outcomes, both violent and non-violent.

- Subcultures and social movements: at the broadest—macro—level we find subcultures and social movements associated with RWE. These are loose social groups organized around shared interests and practices; a collective of interrelated individuals, groups and organizations gathered to promote or resist social change.[56] The bonds that bind individuals together can be even looser than those that demarcate the boundaries of a social movement. As we discussed above, RWE does not constitute a single social movement. However, it does contain several such movements including, for instance, "Generation Identity", a collective of identitarian activists connecting together groups and networks of like-minded individuals in Europe campaigning against immigration, especially from Muslim-majority nations.[57] RWE subcultures, in turn, have increasingly become virtual, where shared interests and practices exist primarily in the online space; where adherents are not "members" in any conventional sense, but are drawn to online milieus, often multiple ones, as they identify with their symbols, worldviews, and fellow followers.[58] Here we might place conspiracy theories such as Q-Anon, which overlaps with RWE adherents, though not exclusively.

55 Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Tim Bartley, "Social Movement Organizations," in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology,* George Ritzer, ed. (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2007), https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeoss158.

56 Sarah Thornton, "General Introduction," in *The Subcultures Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), 1; Donatella della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10.

57 Certain European governments have either banned, investigated, or classified Generation Identity as extremist. For more, see: Jules Darmanin, "France Bans Far-right Group Generation Identity," *Politico,* March 3, 2021, https://www.politico.eu/article/france-bans-far-right-group-generation-identity/.

58 For a study of one of the more militant online communities, see: H. E. Upchurch, "The Iron March Forum and the Evolution of the 'Skull Mask' Neo-Fascist Network," *CTC Sentinel* 14, no. 10 (December 2021), https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-iron-march-forum-and-the-evolution-of-the-skull-mask-neo-fascist-network/.

There is a good deal of fluidity to these categories, which represent the broad gamut of RWE collective activity. These categories intersect and interact with one another, often to the extent of collapsing into one another to generate hybrid forms like movement-parties,[59] or lone actor terrorists who, whilst acting alone, are nonetheless embedded in virtual subcultures.[60]

With RWE, therefore, we have a complex web of actors, ideas and outcomes. A comprehensive understanding of rightwing extremism needs to incorporate an understanding of all three of these dimensions as they play out across different localities.

What are the practical implications of this diversity? Whilst RWE ideologies coalesce around a common nativist core that opposes egalitarianism, they do not represent a single, universal, doctrine, let alone a set of ideas, outcomes and actors that are internally consistent across various distinct geographical regions or across time and space. This has implications for our assessment of risk. Particular ideas can spawn variously violent and non-violent outcomes, with short or long-term implications, that can inspire different types of human interaction, both individual and collective.

This complexity is best illustrated by way of example, or rather a detailed case study where we see this diversity play out in different forms. One of the most illustrative examples concerns the way in which different elements of RWE have responded to Islam and Muslims, who have been the target of not only mass-scale violent attacks, but also various forms of RWE political activism and propaganda.[61] Islam is a central preoccupation of many of the most prominent actors and ideas associated with RWE.[62] Muslims have been the target of a variety of hostile outcomes, ranging from individual harassment to organized intimidation to violent attacks.[63] To complicate things further, violent actors claiming inspiration from acts of anti-Muslim terrorism like the Christchurch attacks have themselves gone on to target other groups such as Jews and Mexicans rather than Muslims.[64] Yet, this example is also illustrative since the position adopted by innumerable RWE actors towards Islam varies considerably. Some have sought inspiration from their understanding of Islamic doctrine or political currents, while others have modified their worldviews to incorporate Islam in their existing hierarchy of grievances and threat.[65]

59 Manuela Caiani and Ondřej Císař, eds., *Radical Right Movement Parties* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

60 Lars Erik Berntzen and Sveinung Sandberg, "The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism: Anders Behring Breivik and the Anti-Islamic Social Movement," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 5 (2014): 759-79.

61 Daniel Koehler, "Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism in Europe Current Developments and Issues for the Future"; Catherine Fieschi, *Muslims and the Secular City: How Right-wing Populists Shape the French Debate over Islam* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 2020), https://www.brookings.edu/research/muslims-and-the-secular-city-how-right-wing-populists-shape-the-french-debate-over-islam/.

62 Toby Archer, "Breivik's Mindset: The Counterjihad and the New Transatlantic Anti-Muslim Right," in Extreme Right-Wing Political Violence and Terrorism, Max Taylor, Donald Holbrook, and P.M. Curie, eds. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 169-86.

63 Koehler, "Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism in Europe Current Developments and Issues for the Future."

64 Graham Macklin, "The El Paso Terrorist Attack: The Chain Reaction of Global Right-Wing Terror," *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 11 (2019), https://ctc.usma.edu/el-paso-terrorist-attack-chain-reaction-global-right-wing-terror/.

65 For an overview, see: George Michael, *The Enemy of My Enemy: The Alarming Convergence of Militant Islam and the Extreme Right* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas, 2006).

# **PART 2:** CASE STUDY

In part 2 of this report, we explore these dynamics in detail with the purpose of illustrating different manifestations of RWE, focusing on the varied ideas, actors and outcomes—as laid out above—and variations that emerge in differing localities and time periods. We see how these three elements of RWE fuse together, reinforcing its dynamic rather than static nature, and how the divergence in positions (temporal, ideological and geographic) underscores the multimodal nature of RWE, as traced above. It is not a single movement with a clearly articulated agenda or specified enemies and ideological inspirations that are shared consistently within, but rather something more complex, messier and multifaceted. This diversity, as we have already highlighted, necessitates tailored and dynamic approaches to understanding the different elements of RWE, the threat it poses and the way in which we can respond to those threats.

We begin by tracing anti-Islamic hostility that is entrenched in many elements of RWE, while exploring different types of idea construction where alternative approaches have featured. This includes elements of Traditionalism and other forms of anti-Christian spirituality, as well as more superficial attempts by racial nationalists to ape Islamists extremists through their "white jihad". It also explores how different parts of the anti-Islamic RWE have variously focused on wide-reaching metapolitical campaigns of public relations as well as self-perceived "vanguardist" acts of terrorism before emphasizing that these different approaches have also evolved, especially with regard to the emergence of the "counter-jihadi" movement and the different ways in which other RWE actors responded to it.

## Divergent Positions on Islam

RWE responses to and attitudes toward Muslims and Islam are heterogeneous. These range from admiration and emulation to exclusion and political violence. The roots of these elements of RWE run deep. The French European New Right—a strain of European nativism from the 1960s which rejected capitalism, egalitarianism and modernity—spawned a school of thought that has presented Islam as the principal threat to European ethno-cultural identity.[66] The central contention of the current crop of Identitarian groups that grew from this base is that Europe is being overwhelmed by immigration and that "Europeans" are facing a "Great Replacement," though this belief and variants of it have been promulgated for decades under various other guises.[67] The idea of white racial eclipse and extinction continues to animate and inspire populist political platforms, cultural nationalist social movements focused on metapolitics, as well as individual acts of terrorism including, notably, Brenton Tarrant whose manifesto, *The*

66 For an overview, see: Tamir Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).

67 Jacob Davey and Julia Ebner, *'The Great Replacement': The Violent Consequences of Mainstreamed Extremism* (ISD: London, 2019), https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Great-Replacement-The-Violent-Consequences-of-Mainstreamed-Extremism-by-ISD.pdf. These ideas are not new and stretch back to at least as far as the mid-nineteenth century and the writings of Arthur de Gobineau, a racist French aristocrat who warned against the decline of European civilization. More recently, they have been popularized through fictional racist jeremiads like Jean Raspail's novel *Les Camp des Saints* (1973).

*Great Replacement*, explicitly drew upon such ideas to justify his mass murder of Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand on 15 March 2019.[68]

Other actors assumed a different role. A key ideologue, whose career spanned from New Right to the Identitarian milieu, was Frenchman Guillaume Faye (1949-2019), who died a few days before the Christchurch attacks. In series of books including *La Colonisation de l'Europe* (2000), *Why We Fight: Manifesto of the European Resistance* (2001) and *Comprendre l'islam* (2015), Faye depicted Islam as a "colonising" and "invading" force in Europe. His book, *Ethnic Apocalypse: The Coming European Civil War* (2019), published posthumously, is styled as "a wake-up call aimed at making Europeans aware of their increasingly dire situation — before it is too late." This stance was by no means confined to Identitarian figures like Faye—who adopted a more overtly racist position than peers such as fellow Frenchman Alain de Benoist (b. 1943)—but was promoted by other actors and ideas associated with "counter-jihad" narratives too. Writers like Gisèle Littman (a.k.a. "Bat Ye'or") and Peder Jensen (a.k.a. "Fjordman") propagated similar anti-Muslim ideas, which were then absorbed by numerous online campaign groups and street movements.[69] This "counter-jihad" milieu has inspired divergent outcomes, both violent and non-violent. While Fjordman limited himself to writing blogs, for instance, his ideas featured prominently in Anders Breivik's manifesto and fueled his belief that he, and others like him, were "defenders" against this perceived threat.[70] Tarrant conceived of himself in identical terms.[71]

But the way in which RWE has approached Islam is varied and complex and has changed over time and in response to particular events. Unpacking this complexity illustrates the heterogeneity of RWE ideologies and movements and, by extension, the hazards of associating universal notions of risk and threat to different elements of RWE, including varied ideas, actors and outcomes.

## Idea Construction

Hostility towards Islam is not universally present in RWE thought. One strand that has influenced parts of RWE—which itself reaches well beyond that domain—is Traditionalism, a complex philosophical and spiritual belief system, adhered to by groups from the West to the Islamic world. Traditionalists reject liberal modernity, egalitarianism and the scientific way in favor of a spiritualism animated by what they believe to be the transcendent and perennial truths behind all major world religions.[72] This is often coupled with a belief that human history moves in recurrent cycles, each dominated by a caste of people.[73]

68 Graham Macklin, "The Christchurch Attacks: Livestream Terror in the Viral Video Age," *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 6 (2019), https://ctc.usma.edu/christchurch-attacks-livestream-terror-viral-video-age.

69 Mattias Gardell, "Crusader Dreams: Oslo 22/7, Islamophobia, and the Quest for a Monocultural Europe," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 1 (2014): 129-55.

70 Matt Carr, "You Are Now Entering Eurabia," *Race & Class* 48, no. 1 (2006): 1-22; Paul Jackson, "The License to Hate: Peder Jensen's Fascist Rhetoric in Anders Breivik's Manifesto 2083: A European Declaration of Independence," *Democracy and Security* 9, no. 3 (2013): 247-69.

71 See note 60.

72 Mark Sedgewick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Teitelbaum, *War for Eternity.*

73 Ibid.

Such ideas have appealed to extreme right ideologues, notably Julius Evola (d. 1974) and Savitri Devi (d. 1982) who drew upon Traditionalist thought to underpin or inform strands of racial and ethnic supremacism and radicalism that see the destruction of the liberal order as heralding a new golden age.[74] Traditionalism has also overlapped with elements of Islamic thought.[75] Its founding father— a French thinker called René Guénon (d. 1951)—for instance was initiated into Islamic esotericism and advocated Sufism, as did some of his followers. Russian ideologue Alexander Dugin, a strong proponent of the Russian Orthodox Church, also developed a keen interest in Shia Islam and Iran through his pursuit of "Eurasianism" – a Russian-dominated counterweight to the "West".[76] The principal foes of these Traditionalists, as noted in part 1, are Western individualism, secularism, liberalism, globalization, capitalism and materialism and Christian egalitarianism. Some of its proponents have been willing to present Islam as a vehicle to prevent the spread of these ills and realize a "new" way to order society.[77]

Other spiritual domains of RWE have similarly presented their version of Islam as a source of inspiration, even solidarity. Ben Klassen, the founder of a white supremacist movement in the 1970s called the World Church of the Creator – later renamed The Creativity Movement – urged his followers to take inspiration from the Ottoman conquest of Europe, which contemporary Identitarians of course use to rally support against Muslim culture and immigration. Klassen wrote:

> *We can learn from this Moslem surge of power what a tremendous influence an aggressive, well-directed religion can have on a scattered and disorganized group of people […] Not only did Mohammed found a new religion of which the Koran is the holy book, but he built a Moslem Empire, and with it a whole Arabian culture that survives to this day […] I cannot emphasize too strongly what a tremendous fountain of energy religion can create when it is matched properly to the people that embrace it. Let the White Race learn this lesson again, and learn it well.*[78]

More apocalyptic, accelerationist and cultic corners of RWE have also dabbled with Islam. The most notable example is the Order of Nine Angles (ONA), an obscure web of esoteric Satanists formed in Britain in the 1970s that has since been revitalized via online support networks, including proponents of neo-Nazi groups such as Atomwaffen Division (AWD) and its derivatives, though the incorporation of such ideas alienated many followers and caused AWD to fracture.[79] ONA's association with the far-right is further highlighted through the biography of one of its key advocates, David Myatt, though he has periodically denied such links.[80] Myatt was a major figure in the British neo-Nazi milieu during the 1990s, having been

74 Both Evola and Savitri Devi were prominent thinkers of the Traditionalist persuasion who vocally supported Nazi Germany. A range of RWE outfits have since promoted their works, including the "Siege culture" milieu that emerged around groups like Atomwaffen Division.

75 See note 65.

76 Marilene Laruelle, "Alexander Dugin and Eurasianism," in *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy,* Mark Sedgwick, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 155-70.

77 Ibid.

78 As can be found in Ben Klassen's *Nature's Eternal Religion* (World Church of the Creator, originally written in 1973, republished in 1992), pages 227-28.

79 Weill, "Satanism Drama is Tearing Apart the Murderous Neo-Nazi Group Atomwaffen."

80 Nick Ryan, *Into a World of Hate: A Journey among the Extreme Right* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004).

active for several decades.[81] In 1998, however, Myatt converted to Islam (temporarily), supported Osama Bin Laden and the Taliban, and authored a theological defense of suicide bombing.[82] ONA's association with Islamist militancy, in turn, emerges primarily through its prescribed "insight roles" that form part of a complex chain of initiations for individuals, whereby they endeavor to provoke and promote the sinister via the adoption of different forms of violent extremisms.[83] Supporting jihadism, if temporarily, can thus become part of the ultimate provocation, symbolizing the adherents' dedication to ONA's apocalyptic vision.

Other actors, including Neo-Nazis and related extremists have paid more superficial tributes to jihadists through varied political engagement. These have included meme campaigns and other propaganda advocating the "white jihad", mimicking gestures and flags of militant Islamists and even Arabic script. One of the outfits to have pioneered this campaign was the British neo-Nazi group National Action (NA), founded in 2013 and since proscribed. Benjamin Raymond, one of the group's founders (who was jailed for 8 years in 2021), appears to have conceived of the concept of "white jihad" initially as a provocative way to garner attention. But he also saw it as a means of highlighting what he perceived as inconsistencies in government counter-extremism policies within the UK, whereby Islamist radicals were guided towards more palatable ways of expressing their grievances, while members of white supremacist groups were told to abandon their politics altogether.[84]

However, like many ironic jokes, the term may well have taken a life of its own. NA members would go on to use jihad terminology—greetings, and phrases—in conversation, and when Jack Renshaw, one of its followers, announced his plans to murder his local member of Parliament, he claimed the attack would be an act of white jihad. He even suggested he could wear a fake suicide vest, thus committing "suicide by cop" once armed police arrived, as has happened in several successful acts of Islamist terrorism in the UK and elsewhere.[85]

81 Despite his association with ONA, Myatt subsequently claimed that by the late 1990s he had come to realize that National Socialism and occultism were "fundamentally, and irretrievably, incompatible and opposed to each other," as a result of which he abandoned such contacts and cooperation, as found in his book, *Myngarth: Some Reflections of a Wyrdful and Extremist Life* (2013), page 96.

82 Robert Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (Random House: New York, 2010), 1410-11 [e-book page numbers].

83 Jacob Senholt, "The Sinister Tradition: Political Esotericism and the Convergence of Radical Islam, Satanism and National Socialism in the Order of the Nine Angles," conference presentation, *Satanism in the Modern World, Trondheim* (November 2009).

84 As found in Michael McCabe, "National Action Conference 2016 Notes" [as of November 2020]. See also: Matthew Collins with Robbie Mullen, *Nazi Terrorist: The Story of National Action* (London: HNH, 2019); Graham Macklin, "Only Bullets will Stop Us" – The Banning of National Action in Britain," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 6 (2018): 104-22. (Note: This footnote serves as a source for the entire paragraph in which it is located.)

85 Ibid. (Note: This footnote serves as a source for the entire paragraph in which it is located.)

# Rightwing and Islamist Extremism

The fascination of some RWE actors with their varied perceptions of Islam and particularly Islamist extremism date back at least to the 1930s.[86] For some there is a genuine interest in ideas emanating from non-Western belief systems that have also produced revivalist strands that similarly reject aspects of modernity, individualism and materialism and, in some quarters, democracy and equality too. For other actors, such as the cruder and more militant components of RWE, the focus is arguably more on outcomes. In particular, the appeal may simply be because Islamist extremists have developed comprehensive theological and political justifications rationalizing the actions of prominent organizations such as the Islamic State group and Al-Qaeda that have carried out campaigns of terrorism, participated in foreign wars and seized territory, which generally-speaking, is beyond the capabilities of most contemporary RWE actors.

RWE actors, however, also share some of the prejudices and justifications underpinning Islamist extremism, particularly anti-Semitism, but also issues such as homophobia, common in many—though not all—elements of RWE, and even a desire to bring down existing governing orders whereby acts of Islamist terror can be framed as part of a common struggle. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the US in 2001, for instance, Harry Lloyd, then Pittsburgh coordinator of the aforementioned World Church of the Creator (WCC) wrote an email to his colleagues with the heading "wonderful news brothers!!" in which he welcomed the attacks as the catalyst that would spark revolution. He concluded his email saying: "let's kick some Jew a**."[87] Matt Hale, Klassen's successor as leader of WCC later offered an alternative interpretation, condemning the loss of life during 9/11 whilst blaming the attacks on Jews.[88]

At the same time, of course, 9/11 mobilized other RWE sympathizers against Muslims amidst a huge spike in anti-Islamic hate crime and violence. Some white supremacists and neo-Nazis initially appeared confused as to how they should react. They dismissed the Al-Qaeda attackers as racially inferior whilst simultaneously expressing their admiration for the scale of violence and its impact. One leader of a white nationalist group attempted to reconcile these conflicting positions, commenting: "we may not want them marrying our daughters… But anyone who is willing to drive a plane into a building to kill jews [*sic*] is alright by me. I wish our members had half as much testicular fortitude."[89]

RWE actors have therefore celebrated Islamist extremism when its outcomes are perceived as mutually beneficial. But in some areas, there has been a deeper convergence of ideas. Anti-Semitism has prompted numerous RWE actors and ideologues to express sympathy with causes that also appear prominently in Islamist extremist discourse, particularly animosity towards Israel. Both white nationalists and Islamist

86 For one such case, see: Graham Macklin, "A Fascist 'Jihad': Captain Robert Gordon-Canning, British Fascist Antisemitism and Islam," *Holocaust Studies* 15, no. 1-2 (2009): 78-100.

87 Daniel Levitas, *The Terrorist Next Door: The Militia Movement and the Radical Right* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2002), 335. Profanty removed per RESOLVE editorial guidelines.

88 As presented in his book, *The Truth about 9-11: How Jewish Manipulation Killed Thousands* (2002).

89 Levitas, *The Terrorist Next Door,* 336.

extremists have promoted identical conspiracy theories, including the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.[90] Indeed, this convergence stretches further back than the more recent mobilization of other RWE advocates against Muslims and Islam. For instance, in *The Turner Diaries*, perhaps one of the best-known works of post-war white supremacism, the eventual fall of Israel, a pivotal moment in William Pierce's 1978 dystopian fiction, is brought about not by white supremacists but rather (in the author's words) by "humiliated" Arabs liberating "occupied Palestine."[91]

## Evolution and Inconsistencies

RWE ideas, the actors who promote them, and the varied political outcomes that these prescribe, are dynamic and evolve in each given locality over time. RWE's response to Islam is no exception, which has added to its heterogeneity. Anti-Muslim strands of RWE solidified in the early twenty-first century in the wake of 9/11 and have arguably come to replace immigration as the "key driver" of such groups – though the two (anti-Muslim prejudice and opposition to immigration) are often synonymous.[92] This animosity towards Muslim and Arab diasporas in Europe was further fueled by the growth of these populations through higher birth rates and immigration; their perceived cultural incompatibility with European norms; and rising fear over Islamist extremism.[93] Within this context, the "counter-jihad" movement and anti-Muslim groups within it like the English Defence League (EDL), founded in 2009, began to mobilize primarily through street protest and anti-Muslim agitation.[94]

These developments followed a more gradual shift in anti-immigrant sentiment in Western Europe. In Britain, for example, animosity towards "Asian" migration morphed into a more explicitly hostile rhetoric towards "Muslims". In that country, many second-generation immigrants during the 1960s and 1970s had defined themselves not by religious identity or even as "Asian" but as "Black", not as an ethnic label but as a "political badge".[95] This began to change after the Salman Rushdie Affair in 1989 and the controversy surrounding his publication of *The Satanic Verses*, as religious identities came to the fore.[96] Most British extreme right groups articulated their racial animus in similar terms and only slowly, fueled in part by the 1990-1991 Gulf War (though the trend was evident earlier), began to retrain their attention upon "Muslims" who, it was subsequently declared, represented the "mortal enemy" of Europe. Simultaneously, however, there were other extreme right groups during the same period who announced a "New Alliance" with groups like the Nation of Islam, Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran and Gaddafi's Libya. Whilst there was little of substance to such proclamations, they highlight the ongoing diversity of responses to Islam from within the milieu.[97]

90 Donald Holbrook, "The Challenge of Conspiracy Theories for Strategic Communications," *The RUSI Journal* 165, no. 1 (2020): 26-36, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2020.1734384.

91 As derived from the onlne edition of *The Turner Diaries* (page 72).

92 "Islamophobia Behind Far-right Rise in the UK, Says Report," *BBC News,* February 18, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-47280082.

93 Ibid.

94 Joel Busher, *The Making of Anti-Muslim Street Protest: Grassroots Activism in the English Defence League* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); Hilary Pilkington, *Loud and Proud: Passion and Politics in the English Defence League* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

95 Graham Macklin, *Failed Fuhrers,* 392.

96 Kenan Malik*, From Fatwa to Jihad: How World Changed from the 'Satanic Verses' to Charlie Hebdo* (Atlantic Books: London, 2017).

97 Ibid.

Yet, the way in which many RWE actors prioritized perceived threats and sought to reconcile any contradictions between them further compounded the fracturing of this realm. The British scene, again, offers examples. White supremacist and neo-Nazi groups in Britain certainly greeted the EDL with hostility in part for ideological reasons (i.e., because the EDL did not share their anti-Semitism) but also in part due to fear of competition over resources, recruits, and public attention, which the much more prominent EDL enjoyed in its early years. The Racial Volunteer Force (RVF), a group that had evolved from the better-known Combat 18 (C18), even referred to EDL supporters as "traitors to the cause."[98] For Nick Griffin, who led the British National Party (BNP) between 1999 and 2010, his party and the EDL shared a similar anti-Muslim platform but its leadership were, in his view, "Zionist" puppets and he proscribed the group, though doubtlessly political calculations played a role too.[99]

Traditional white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups found it harder to adapt their existing messages to a rise in prominence of anti-Muslim rhetoric that came to prevail across the broader far right, largely because of the centrality of their anti-Semitic narratives.[100] For groups like the BNP, it was a matter of pragmatic political calculation. In the wake of 9/11 "Islam" became the campaign issue *sin qua non* regardless of their views on Jewish populations.[101] Other groups found it harder to reconcile their animosity towards Muslim immigration into Britain with an admiration for jihadist terrorism against Israel. For instance, a January 2002 article in the *White Nationalist Report*, celebrated a public information campaign by the National Front, a major white nationalist organization in the UK, "pointing out the threat to Britain posed by militant Islam."[102] The April edition of the same magazine, however, defended suicide bombings in Israel given the "despair [of] the oppressed Arab people" and called on Britain to "recognise the right of the Palestine people over the area."[103]

To reconcile these conflicting narratives, some neo-Nazi groups began to incorporate hostility towards Islam into their existing white supremacist and anti-Semitic worldview but prompted confusion as a result. One example from the UK is the Aryan Strike Force (ASF), which presented itself as a militant network of far-right extremists and neo-Nazis in the late 2000s. Its leadership disseminated anti-Islamic media content on its forums and other far-right websites.[104] This focus on perceived threats from Islam seems to have attracted new members to ASF forums that otherwise might not have frequented such sites. One discussion thread from early 2009 titled "World's new threat" warned against Islamic culture, migration and militancy.[105] This particular perspective, however, was sympathetic towards Israel, which, the original poster suggested, was the only country that was "actually doing something about this problem."[106] Other members responded with anti-Semitic epithets and the poster was banned from

98 Racial Volunteer Force, "Important Announcement," [on the Racial Volunteer Force website, since removed].

99 Graham Macklin*, Failed Fuhrers,* 501.

100 Graham Macklin, *Failed Fuhrers.*

101 Graham Macklin, *Failed Fuhrers,* 490-91.

102 Eddy Morrison, *White Nationalist Report* (no 1, 15th January 2002).

103 Eddy Morrison, *White Nationalist Report* (no 8, 13th April 2002).

104 Martin Wainwright, "Neo-Nazi Ian Davison Jailed for 10 Years for Making Chemical Weapon," *The Guardian,* May 14, 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/may/14/neo-nazi-ian-davison-jailed-chemical-weapon [accessed November 2020].

105 "General Discussion," archived threads from the ASF website (legion 88 page) [since removed].

106 Ibid.

the forum. The episode provoked a discussion among ASF forum members about the need to highlight that while Islam was seen as a fundamental and growing threat, this was in addition to an existing list of enemies that included Jewish persons and non-whites. The perception of common enemies had to be debunked and existing narrative frames adjusted. One member suggested that Muslims were just "Yids reading a different book."[107] Another remarked: "The best part of the yids been given Israel is that now they and the Arabs kill each other and we can sit back and enjoy the show."[108]

It is only when we reach this level of granular detail and compare and contrast the ways in which different RWE actors and ideas have framed their response to a single but central concern (in this case Islam) that we can appreciate the complexity and contradictions inherent in rightwing extremism. As this section has demonstrated, these positions also evolve over time. Agendas shift and are reprioritized as political entrepreneurs adapt to new circumstances.

## A Plurality of Ideas, Actors, and Outcomes

Drawing on the schema in Part 1, the second section of this report has sought to demonstrate the heterogeneity of ideas, outcomes and indeed actions that RWE has generated in response to perceptions of Islam and Muslims. We should resist making *a priori* assumptions about the similarities between acts of rightwing extremism that on the surface may share some characteristics. For instance, Stephen Balliet, who killed two people in Halle, Germany, in October 2019 after failing to gain entry to a synagogue, combined attacks on Jewish targets with anti-Muslim violence.[109] Brenton Tarrant, Balliet's inspiration, who carried out his attack against Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March the same year, adopted a slightly different approach. While he paid homage to core white supremacist and neo-Nazi references in his manifesto, he also claimed he was not anti-Semitic but wanted Jews to keep to themselves in Israel.[110] In turn, Tarrant's self-proclaimed inspiration, Anders Behring Breivik, went further, claiming in his manifesto to oppose National Socialism, which he described as a "hate ideology."[111] During his subsequent trial, however, Breivik gave a Nazi salute and, from prison, sought to spread a "Nazi-style" ideology whilst maintaining a belief in "fascist revolution" highlighting that even seemingly trenchant ideological positions are not necessarily fixed.[112] Islam, for both Breivik and Tarrant, was the primary threat, which, in the former's case, led him to attack the Norwegian government and young political opponents whom he deemed responsible for Muslim immigration rather than Muslims themselves.

Right-wing extremists have thus variously presented Islam as their primary or exclusive target, sought to insert Islam and Muslims within their existing hierarchy of threats and grievance—either on par with

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

109 Daniel Koehler, "The Halle, Germany Synagogue Attack and the Evolution of the Far-Right Terror Threat," *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 11 (2019), https://ctc.usma.edu/halle-germany-synagogue-attack-evolution-far-right-terror-threat/.

110 As presented in his manifesto entitled: "The Great Replacement: Towards a New Society, We March Ever Forwards," published online (2019).

111 As presented in his manifesto (under the name "Andrew Berwick"): "2083: A European Declaration of Independence" (self-published, 2011), 1332.

112 Alister Doyle, "Killer Breivik Wants to Spread Ever More Radical Nazi Ideology: Norway," *Reuters,* January 11, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-norway-breivik-idUSKBN14V1HQ.

principal threats or below them—while other groups have ignored Islam altogether, or claimed inspiration from those who associated themselves with Islamic doctrine.

If we look beyond the militant or neo-Nazi realms, the heterogeneity of interpretations as regards Islam is retained. Nativist European radical right political parties have for instance either positioned themselves in opposition to the perceived threat of Islam,[113] or, as was the case with movements like the EDL or the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident (PEGIDA), were founded explicitly to counter such alleged threats. In other parts of Europe, meanwhile, alternative approaches are adopted. Heterogeneity on this issue, therefore, is not solely restricted to RWE, but also radical right politics, although the extent to which both influence one another is not necessarily always clear cut.

Elements of the Hungarian radical right, for instance, pivot East. The Hungarian nationalist Turanist movement advocates the belief that ethnic Hungarians originated in Central Asia[114] and it could be said that its central advocates have been imbued more by Traditionalism and Dugin's notion of Eurasianism than any Anglo-Saxon or Western European influences. Indeed, Jobbik, a radical nationalist party, with elements of oriental thought (including reverence for Islamic spirituality) has, in the past, taken a rather pro-Islamic stance.[115] Gábor Vona, then leader of Jobbik, pushed for closer ties with Iran, Turkey and Central Asia, as well as the Muslim world more generally. During a visit to Turkey in 2013, he even described Islam as "the last hope for humanity in the darkness of globalism and liberalism."[116] However, highlighting the malleability of far-right discourse, attitudes towards Islam and indeed Hungary's small Muslim community hardened in the midst of the so-called "refugee crisis" in 2015 as it has elsewhere in Europe.[117]

# CONCLUSION

Anti-Islamic sentiment has been a particular focus for many cultural nationalist groups and movements. It has also been incorporated into the worldview of racial nationalists and ethnic nationalists who have fixed their gaze on other apparent threats to racial harmony and purity. Meanwhile, accelerationists, racial nationalist provocateurs and members of more spiritual and occultic dimensions of RWE have sought to emulate or claimed to be inspired by their varied views on Islam, including Islamist extremist groups. Other racial nationalists have highlighted a convergence of views with Islamist extremists, especially as

113 Peter Walker, "New UKIP Leader Condemned for 'Virulent Islamophobia'," *The Guardian,* August 12, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/aug/12/new-ukip-leader-condemned-for-virulent-islamophobia.

114 Daniel McLaughlin, "Hungary Letter: Steppe Festival Celebrates Mysterious Origins," *Irish Times,* August 18, 2016, https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/hungary-letter-steppe-festival-celebrates-mysterious-origins-1.2759437.

115 Péter Krekó, Bulcsú Hunyadi, and Patrik Szicherle*, Anti-Muslim populism in Hungary: From the Margins to the Mainstream* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 2019), https://www.brookings.edu/research/anti-muslim-populism-in-hungary-from-the-margins-to-the-mainstream/.

116 Youssef Sourgo, "Hungary: Far-right Party Leader Says 'Islam is the Last Hope of Humanity'," *Morocco World News,* November 7, 2013, https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2013/11/111456/hungary-far-right-party-leader-says-islam-is-the-last-hope-of-humanity/ [as of December 2020].

117 Christopher Adam, "The Hungarian Far-right and Islam," *Hungarian Free Press,* July 27, 2015, http://hungarianfreepress.com/2015/07/27/the-hungarian-far-right-and-islam/.

regards shared anti-Semitism. Movements, parties and groups, in turn, have long engaged in metapolitical campaigns of public outreach, especially in a variety of cultural national domains. Other groups and movements, meanwhile, have focused primarily on campaigns of intimidation and street protest, while some, no doubt tasting new opportunities to exploit the mainstreaming of anti-Muslim prejudice, have sought to move from these overt forms of political agitation to more public-facing outreach. Then there are individuals, often acting in isolation, who see themselves as parts of larger movements, such as the Identitarians, or even obscurer online subcultures,[118] who have sought to target Muslims, including their places of worship, with acts ranging from threats and hate mail to vandalism, arson and violent extremism.[119] These various approaches to Islam thus illustrate the pluralism of ideas and interpretations within RWE that can steer its proponents in diverse directions and result in varied outcomes. RWE consists of a plurality of actors, ideas and outcomes that mobilize different constituencies and require equally varied responses.

As we have demonstrated, not only do right-wing extremists, including those inspired by racial, ethnic and cultural nationalism, adopt divergent positions on core issues such as Islam, their approach ranges widely from co-optation and inspiration, to non-engagement and outright hostility. These divergent positions, in turn, differ depending on local contexts, frames of reference, core beliefs and individuals' interpretations of these factors. This heterogeneity has important implications for practitioners, policymakers and those who study these movements: perceptions of threat are not constant or consistent across these movements and can spawn different types of violence and extremism with a varied and inconsistent list of potential targets, possible allies and perceived constituents. Lessons from one country, region or period may not be applicable to other domains.

Approaches to varied RWE threats, in turn, need to be multifaceted, evidence based, tailored and informed by context. Different parts of state and civil society have varied roles to play in combating right-wing extremism and these must reflect the particular manifestations of RWE that are being countered, as well as an understanding of how they operate within their wider radical right hinterland. This complexity is widely recognized in the literature on RWE. This report serves to further illustrate that complexity, drawing out and visualizing its different dimensions and illustrating, through an empirical case study, how this complexity plays out in practice.

Not only is a one-size-fits all policy ill-suited to conceptualizing the phenomenon of RWE, but it is also ill-suited to efforts to address what is, in reality, a significantly heterogeneous category. Approaches to RWE, therefore, should assess the various ideas, actors, and associated outcomes when tailoring analyses and responses, rather than apply a blanketed approach meant to address and understand the entirety of the RWE ecosystem as a singular, hierarchical unit. Focusing on ideas, outcomes, and actors allows for further analytical and assessment distinctions that would otherwise be missed in assuming homogeneity across RWE stances and actions, including, as a limited example, the heterogeneity that exists in RWE responses to and attitudes toward Islam, as illustrated in this report.

118 Brenton Tarrant made explicit references to his online community in his manifesto and has since inspired further online fandom.

119 See, for example, statistics from: Tell MAMA UK, https://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/infographics/6.jpg (as of February 2022).

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