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UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN
HONORS PROGRAM

2020-2021 Honors Thesis

Combating the Recruitment and Radicalization of
Potential Terrorists: A State-Based Methods and
Effectiveness Analysis for Application to Counter
White Supremacy Terrorism in the USA.

Francesca Pimenta

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Undergraduate Honors
Program at the University of New Haven.

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Abstract

For approximately the past twenty years, the United States (US) government has focused on combating terrorist threats from abroad like Islamic terrorism. However, in recent years, terrorism has transitioned from an external threat to an internal threat. Some people in the US only realized how large a threat white supremacy terror poses to the nation's security following the insurrection in the Capitol on January 6th, 2021. Despite this newly gained knowledge, the threat of white supremacy terror in the US has been growing for years. This study looked at the ways foreign governments have combatted white supremacist terrorism, recruitment, and radicalization methods. Quantitative analysis was performed to assess whether those same tactics would effectively lower the number of attacks related to white supremacy terrorism within the US by combatting recruitment and radicalization efforts. There was insufficient data available to identify correlation between the number of white supremacy-related attacks and the nations' efforts to prevent attacks and address white supremacy. Overall, many of the methods used by the nations in this paper would not be legal in the US due to violations of the First Amendment. This showed two things. First, there is a major gap in research and data collection and second, there needs to be legislative reform in the US.

Key words: White supremacy, terrorism, terror, recruitment, radicalization, extremism, far-right, right-wing, radical right, United States, government.

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Bottom Line: Violent white supremacists pose a severe threat to the national security of the US. Although this has become a growing transnational problem, there needs to be domestic federal law reform and legislative action taken to decrease the threat that white supremacist violent extremists pose against US national security. This includes holding accountable individuals both domestically and abroad who know or should know that they are creating and spreading false information online that could lead to imminent risk or harm to national security.

Introduction

In recent years, violent acts tied to white supremacy have been on the rise in the United States (Guterres, 2021). The culmination of several factors has contributed to this phenomenon; these include the election of Barack Obama and the counter point election of Donald Trump, the Coronavirus outbreak, and inspiration from foreign acts of white supremacy (Ray, 2021). This study looked at the ways foreign governments have combatted white supremacist terrorism recruitment and radicalization methods. Quantitative analysis was performed to assess whether those same tactics could be applied to combat white supremacist terrorism recruitment and radicalization efforts within the United States. Finally, this study aimed to provide researchers in the Intelligence Community with information to enhance their focused analysis of the threat of white supremacy domestic terror.

Hypothesis

If the same tactics used to combat the recruitment and radicalization of foreign white supremacy terrorists were applied to white supremacy terrorism recruitment and

radicalization efforts in the United States, they will have scalable effectiveness in reducing the number of related domestic attacks.

Null Hypothesis

The same tactics used to combat foreign white supremacy terrorism recruitment and radicalization will not be effective in reducing the number of domestic attacks if applied to counter white supremacy terrorism recruitment and radicalization efforts within the United States.

Literature Review

This section includes a literature review of white supremacy terror both in the United States and internationally. The section serves in part to inform the public about the recently elevated concern of white supremacy terror in the US. Furthermore, due to the substantial lack of data available to the public, this section aims to prove to the Intelligence Community that more research and data collection needs to be performed concerning white supremacy terror in foreign nations and its consideration as a transnational security concern.

Background

Many people in the United States (US) view terrorism as an overseas problem, particularly Islamic terrorism in the Middle East. Islamic terrorism can be defined as “any terrorist act or campaign which is committed by individuals or terrorist organizations who openly proclaim Islamic motivations behind their acts” (JPOST). For approximately the past twenty years, the US government has focused on combating terrorist threats from

abroad like Islamic terrorism; however, in recent years, terrorism has transitioned from an external threat to an internal threat.

In 2019, the FBI released a report which revealed that from 2008 to 2018, “far-right extremism was responsible for 73% of all extremist murders in the U.S., whereas Islamic extremism only accounted for 23% of fatalities during that same period” (FBI, 2019). Despite this, the FBI still delegated “80% of its field agents to stopping international terrorism while just 20% to stopping domestic terrorism, including homegrown far-right and white supremacist terrorism” (FBI, 2019).

The far-right extremism that the FBI mentioned is also known as right-wing extremism, extreme right, or right-wing terrorism. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the extreme right is “used to describe right-wing political, social and religious movements that exist outside of and are more radical than mainstream conservatism” (ADL, 2021). While Islamic terrorism still poses a cognizable threat to the security of the US, it is not nearly as extreme as the current threat of far-right and white supremacy acts of terrorism (FBI, 2019).

The majority of people in the US have only recently realized how large a threat white supremacy poses to the nation’s security due to ignorance, denial, or a combination of the two (Kendi, 2021). It took the insurrection in the Capitol on January 6th, 2021 to bring attention to the severity of this threat in the US; nevertheless, the threat of white supremacy terror has been growing since 2015 (Cai, 2019).

Despite the lack of awareness about this threat in the US, the threat has persisted for decades. Many other countries, mainly in Europe, have also been dealing with the threat of white supremacy terror for decades (Auger, 2020). Moreover, in February 2021,

the United Nations secretary-general, Antonio Guterres, said that white supremacy and neo-Nazi “extremist movements represent the number one internal security threat in several countries “and that there needs to be “global coordinated action to defeat this grave and growing danger” (Reuters, 2021).

This paper aimed to identify the combative techniques that foreign countries have used to address white supremacy terrorism. Then, it was assessed whether those same methods would be effective if applied to counter white supremacy terrorism in the US. This paper provides members of the intelligence community with information regarding counterterrorism efforts towards domestic white supremacy terror. More specifically, this paper relayed information such as suggestions for data collection, key trends to track while studying terrorist activity, and recommendations to improve national security.

Types of far-right movements

There are currently two overlapping spheres of right-wing extremism along with several single-issue movements in the US (ADL, 2021). The single-issue movements are movements that are typically associated with the far-right, such as the anti-abortion, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim movements (ADL, 2021). The Southern Poverty Law Center claims that “intimidation and other acts of violence are increasingly accepted on the right” (SPLC, 2021). A study conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) confirmed this claim and found that the far-right was responsible for 90% of all terrorist attacks in the US during 2020 (CSIS, 2021).

White supremacist movement

One sphere of right-wing extremism includes the white supremacist movement. The white supremacy sphere includes submovements such as neo-Nazis and racist

skinheads, among others. Unlike how the Ku Klux Klan white supremacy group is exclusive to the US, many neo-Nazi and racist skinhead groups are global entities.

Anti-government movement

The other sphere includes the anti-government movement, which is commonly referred to as the Patriot movement (ADL, 2021). The anti-government movement includes submovements such as the militia movement and sovereign citizens (ADL, 2021). The ADL describes the militia movement as a “relatively new right-wing extremist movement consisting of armed paramilitary groups, both formal and informal, with an anti-government, conspiracy-oriented ideology” (ADL, 2021). A differentiating factor between the white supremacist movement and the Patriot movement is that there are people of color within the sovereign citizen movement within the Patriot movement (ADL, 2021).

Forms and tenets of white supremacy

There are multiple forms of white supremacy within the far-right extremist movement; in the US, two prevalent forms of white supremacy are white separatism and white nationalism.

White separatism

White separatism is the belief that there should be communities exclusive to white people. The separatism form of white supremacy emphasizes the idea that all non-white, and therefore inferior, people should exist separately from white people (ADL, 2021).

White nationalism

The other common form of white supremacy is white nationalism. The ADL explained that the term white nationalism is a “euphemism” for white supremacy that

originated from white supremacists (ADL, 2021). The SPLC explained that there are currently two different tracks of white nationalism, trump-supporters and accelerationists.

Trump-supporters

One track of white nationalism consists of people who are focused on Trump's loss in the 2020 election, of whom "do not belong to groups and likely will not join any in the near future" (SPLC, 2021).

Accelerationists

The other track is made up of people who "believe(s) in the strategies of accelerationism" (SPLC, 2021). The Foreign Policy Institute describes accelerationism as "the most inherently violent and dangerous ideology circulating in the global white supremacist extremist movement" because accelerationists "believe that a race war is not only inevitable, but desirable, as it is the only path to achieving white power by bringing about the downfall of current systems of government" (Gartenstein, 2020).

The most notable group with accelerationist beliefs is the Atomwaffen Division (AWD), that can be found in places such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Another prominent group with strong accelerationist beliefs is the Base. People in this group hold white nationalist ideas and the majority believe that the US is headed toward a second civil war and hope to accelerate its anticipated timeline (SPLC, 2021).

Tenets of white supremacy

The ADL identified four key tenets that white supremacists typically believe. The first tenet is that "whites should have dominance over people of other backgrounds, especially where they may co-exist." The next tenet is that whites should live by themselves in a whites-only society." This tenet is aligned with the concept of white

separatism. The third tenet is that “white people should have their own ‘culture’ that is superior to other cultures.” The last tenet is that “white people are genetically superior to other people” (ADL, 2021).

Sociological and psychological factors that drive susceptible individuals to domestic violent extremism.

According to the renowned sociologist and author of *Healing from Hate: How Young Men Get Into-and Out of-Violent Extremism*, Dr. Michael Kimmel, feeling emasculated and entitled are two of the leading factors that drive young white men to extremist groups (Kimmel, 2018).

How feelings of emasculation and entitlement increase recruitment susceptibility

Dr. Kimmel stated in a 2018 interview that “the feeling of being emasculated comes from a feeling of entitlement” and that white supremacy organizations prey on these feelings to increase recruitment (Gilson, 2018). Dr. Kimmel claimed that “almost every one of the guys I talked to was downwardly mobile, lower-middle class,” referring to a study he conducted where he interviewed former extremists about the factors that drew them into violent white supremacy groups (Gilson, 2018).

The feeling of being emasculated is derived from the men’s perceived failure to provide for their families, claims Kimmel. This feeling is paired with a sense of entitlement due to the belief that white men are more worthy and deserve to be more successful than all other groups of people (Gilson, 2018). On top of this sense of entitlement, there is the fear that whites are being forgotten or overpowered by other races due to the uptake in political correctness and equal rights, particularly in the US.

Factors such as the perceived right to a particular lifestyle, the insecurity from not providing this lifestyle to your family, or the fear of being overpowered or forgotten are what drive young white males to join violent extremist groups (Kimmel, 2018).

Risks of unmet psychological needs

Similarly, the FBI created a page directed towards teenagers that explained how unmet psychological personal needs could lead to radicalization and violent extremism.

The seven personal needs and their risks if not fulfilled are the following:

- *Power*: Those who wish to control or feel superior to others may be attracted to violent extremism.
- *Achievement*: Those who want to make a positive difference in life may falsely think that they can do that by taking part in violent or hateful attacks.
- *Affiliation*: Those who are looking for new friends may wrongly believe that they can find beneficial companionship in violent extremist groups.
- *Importance*: Those who seek recognition and attention may turn to violent extremism, even if it means hurting other people.
- *Purpose*: Those looking for purpose in life may be drawn to the clear-cut yet twisted ideologies of violent extremism.
- *Morality*: Those who are afraid of different viewpoints and lifestyles may be attracted to violent extremism or hate groups.
- *Excitement*: Violent extremism may offer a false promise of excitement and glamour to those who are bored with life.

In summary, violent extremists often target people “who lack a sense of purpose or identity” or by “tapping into your [their] personal problems” (FBI, 2019).

Violent extremism recruitment methods and tools

Even though there “remains no sole radicalization method attributed to white supremacy extremism,” white supremacist extremists become radicalized most often through a combination of online and in-person methods (Blazakis, 2019).

Online recruitment

The most common way white supremacist extremists recruit is with propaganda. The ADL reported that white nationalist ideology accounted for nearly 80% of all 3,566 extremist propaganda incidents in 2020 (Johnson, 2020). Extremist propaganda is biased and misleading information used as a tool to compel and trick susceptible persons into believing a particular ideology or point of view. Extremists create this propaganda by “twisting facts” to fit their agenda (FBI, 2019).

Violent extremist propaganda can typically be found in places online such as “e-mail, social media, websites, forums, and blogs” (FBI, 2019). Other online tools include chat rooms, internet games, and apps (FBI, 2019). Some of these websites include DLive, Twitch, and Facebook (Rotella, 2021). The SPLC divulged how the internet has enabled groups like racist skinheads, for example, to “communicate and link up as never before” (SPLC, 2012). Additionally, the former director of the SPLC Intelligence Project said that “the dynamics that created today’s growing accelerationist terrorist problem originated in cyberspace” (SPLC, 2020).

Appeal of online recruitment

There are numerous reasons why an extremist recruiter would find online recruitment appealing. Some of these reasons include legitimacy and appearance, unconventional opportunities, convenience, and anonymity and secrecy.

Legitimacy and appearance

First, a recruitment operation appears more legitimate with social media accounts and a webpage, compared to an operation where information is passed through word-of-mouth. In addition, recruiters can make their organization seem a lot bigger and more established than it truly is. Finally, recruiters can mask their real website and make the site appear like a different type of web page at first glance.

Unconventional opportunities

Second, recruiting online provides recruiters with opportunities they would not typically have, such as talking to a young teenager. While recruiting in person, it is sometimes difficult for recruiters to reach a younger audience due to the usual places where they scope out susceptible individuals. Some of these places include bars or “white power” concerts, which teens would be too young to attend.

Convenience

Next, recruiters can use mobile devices to connect with someone at any time of the day and from anywhere in the world. For this reason, transnational recruitment and radicalization is a constantly evolving threat and a large concern. Lastly, online recruitment is appealing to recruiters because it is convenient. Recruiting online allows you to have multiple conversations simultaneously. Online recruiting does not demand an immediate response like in-person conversations do, which is helpful for conversations from two different time zones.

Anonymity and secrecy

Finally, as mentioned, recruiters have the option to remain anonymous and protect their identity. Recruiters can pose as whomever they want online and can “catfish”, or

trick, unsuspecting teens. Anonymity helps a recruiter keep their online activity a secret. It also keeps them safe from people finding out private information like where they live, their workplace, and their family. Lastly, according to the National Institute of Justice, anonymity makes police tracking more challenging and at times impossible (National Institute of Justice, 2020).

Inspiration from manifestos and other writings

The CSIS reported that “white supremacists draw inspiration from individuals abroad and at home” (CSIS, 2020). Individuals may develop radical ideas or become inspired by manifestos written by other violent extremists. Recent violent white supremacist attackers who wrote manifestos include Patrick Crusius, the shooter at a Walmart in El Paso; Brenton Tarrant, the shooter in Christchurch in New Zealand; and Dylann Roof, the shooter in Charleston church in South Carolina (Engel, 2020). Patrick Crusius, for example, cited Brenton Tarrant as inspiration for his actions.

Finally, in addition to manifestos, violent extremists may also become inspired by writings that are not directly linked to attacks. One well-known example is William Luther Pierce’s 1978 novel, *The Turner Diaries*. According to the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, this novel has inspired over 200 killings and was also cited by the Oklahoma bomber, Timothy McVeigh (ICFCT, 2020). These manifestos are online, which contributes to the increasing threat of domestic and transnational recruitment and radicalization.

COVID-19’s effect on recruitment and radicalization

The Department of Homeland Security’s Homeland Threat Assessment of October 2020 explained how the pandemic was speeding up the radicalization process

and how “the COVID-19 pandemic creates an environment that could accelerate some individuals’ mobilizations to terrorism... and willingness to engage in acts of targeted violence” (DHS, 2020). Some of the causes behind this rapid breeding environment for extremism include increased internet usage, mistrust of the government, and fear.

Increased internet usage

Once people were stuck at home in quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic, online activity and internet usage increased (Wolf, 2020). The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate reported that distance learning for school children has “led to a dramatic increase in unsupervised internet activity among young people, who could be exposed to terrorist messaging” on various online platforms (CTED, 2020). Furthermore, the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point reported that “the prowess of extremist groups to recruit online...is only amplified in a period of physical distancing and social isolation” (Cruickshank, 2020). Therefore, the pandemic allowed terrorists and extremists to conduct disinformation campaigns and spread radical ideas to a larger audience than before the pandemic (Cruickshank, 2020).

Distrust of the federal government

Secondly, the widespread distrust of the federal government also contributed to the rapid increase of online extremist recruitment and radicalization. At the beginning of the pandemic, there was an elevated level of distrust of the US federal government (Donna, 2021). Some people lost trust in the government because they felt that mandating masks and declaring shutdowns were infringements upon their rights as free citizens. However, others lacked trust in the science that the government was using to make

informed decisions. Terrorists preyed on this belief that the government's services and information were becoming less important.

Heightened level of fear

Finally, the heightened fear that exists during the pandemic also added to the threat that violent extremist recruitment and radicalization pose online. The pandemic caused millions to lose their jobs, which made people "anxious about the future, eager for a sense of community and purpose, and looking for belonging and answers," according to a study conducted by the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2020). As a result, these individuals were susceptible to recruitment because terrorist recruiters "have the skills to develop close bonds over the internet and to incite people to violence without ever meeting in person" (Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2020).

President Trump's influence on hate and the insurrection in the US Capitol on January 6th, 2021

An FBI data collection from 2019 shows that hate crimes increased in the US by nearly twenty percent during President Trump's term. Data revealed that 57.6% of hate crime attacks in 2019 were racially or ethnically biased. Moreover, over half of the known offenders of these racially or ethnically motivated attacks were white (FBI, 2019). Additionally, white nationalist hate groups increased by 55% throughout Trump's term. Another study found that counties that voted for Trump had the most significant marginal increases in white supremacist attacks (Katrina, 2021).

In addition, Trump's presidency also involves possible charges of sedition in connection to the insurrection in the Capitol. However, President Trump's level of

involvement in the insurrection is still under investigation. During the first presidential debate on September 29th, 2020, President Trump was asked to condemn violent white supremacist and militia groups. Instead, he addressed the Proud Boys on live national television and said, “stand back and stand by” (Collins, 2020). The Proud Boys were one of the groups that were later involved with the insurrection (Moffitt, 2021). Additionally, for weeks leading up to the insurrection, Trump had been telling his supporters that there was going to be a “BIG protest rally” in D.C. on that day and that they needed to fight (Sherman, 2021).

On January 6th, 2021, thousands of Trump supporters showed up for a Trump rally in Washington D.C. Meanwhile, Congress was in the Capitol building to certify the results of the 2020 US presidential election. During the speech, President Trump claimed the election was “stolen” from him and his supporters (Kahn, 2020). Immediately after the speech, hundreds of white supremacists joined the rally mob and stormed the US Capitol building. This was the first the building was breached by force since the war of 1812 (AOC, 2012).

Following the insurrection, attention turned towards the threat of white supremacist terror. As anticipated by the Department of Homeland Security, domestic violent extremists posed a severe threat to the national security of the US. Senior advisor at RAND, Brian Jenkins, stated that “a branch of the federal government has not been so seriously threatened since 9/11,” referring to the takeover of the Capitol (RAND, 2021).

On March 22, 2021, the federal prosecutor in charge of leading the criminal investigation into the assault on the Capitol, Michael Sherwin, revealed that he

“believe[s] the evidence is trending towards” sedition, and that “the facts do support those charges” (CBS, 2021).

Foreign Country Comparisons

This section provides background information about the white supremacy violence that the following five countries have experienced within the past decade: Germany, Russia, Canada, United Kingdom, and France.

Germany

Racism in Germany is still prevalent, despite the reform efforts after WWII. A distinguished German journalist, Ferda Ataman, brought attention to some of the mistreatment and inequity that exists throughout the country. Ataman revealed that over 90% of German state and federal lawmakers are white, even though more than a fifth of the population is immigrants (Nicholson, 2021). Moreover, she said racism there exists in a “wide-range from everyday microaggressions to institutionalized discrimination and racial profiling in policing to de facto segregation in schools” (Nicholson, 2021).

Other race-related issues in Germany include violent opposition to immigration, white nationalist groups, and neo-Nazis (Stanley, 2018). Race-motivated crime rates soared in Germany in 2015. This elevated rate was due to the mass migration of hundreds of thousands of Syrians who were seeking asylum during the Syrian Refugee Crisis (Gehrsitz, 2017). There is a similar mindset that exists among a small community within the US (Ekins, 2021).

White nationalists, neo-Nazis, and skinheads frequently come to Germany from places like the US and Europe to listen to “hate rock” music and share their extremist

“ideas and strategies” (Engel, 2021). One prominent group in connection to this neo-Nazi music was Combat 18. Interior Minister Horst Seehofer stated that the Combat 18 Germany chapter “enjoys great respect within the far-right extremist scene” and is regarded as a symbol of violent extremism (NBC, 2020). This group participated in firearms training, illegally transporting ammunition, and the murder of a German politician (NBC, 2020).

Another prominent neo-Nazi group in Germany is the Atomwaffen Division Deutschland (AWD Deutschland). A common misassumption is that the Atomwaffen Division was formed in Germany, but this was not the case. Although the group’s name, “Atomwaffen,” is German for “atomic weapons,” the group was formed in the southern US. The organization spread rapidly due to an online neo-Nazi website, Iron March. The Iron March website was taken down in 2017, but the group had already expanded its reach and established connections in countries such as Germany, Russia, Canada, and the United Kingdom (UK). This group is an example of the growing transnational threat of white supremacy.

Russia

In January 2017, the Office Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), released an assessment on Russia’s activities and intention in the 2016 elections. The ODNI confirmed that the US was the target of Russian disinformation campaigns during the recent elections (United States, 2017).

The Russian Imperial (RIM) poses a severe threat to the national security of the US. The RIM maintains contact with white supremacist groups in the US and aims to fuel the extremist beliefs. They also funded violent extremist activity (MMP, 2021). This has

increased their role in the transnational white supremacist movement (MMP, 2021). Another main concern is that the group has provided paramilitary training to Russian nationals, Germans, and Ukrainians (Al Jazeera, 2020). The Kremlin has done nothing to address the white supremacy within Russia.

Canada

There are many commonalities between the US and Canada regarding deep-rooted systemic racism and white supremacy. Like the US, Canada also has a dark past of the KKK, segregation, and the mistreatment of indigenous people (Hopper, 2021). The trend has continued, and Canada is host to many of the same issues that exist within the US, including white supremacy.

As explained above, President Trump refused to denounce violent white supremacy on live national television and instead addressed the right-wing extremist group, the Proud Boys, and told them to “stand back and stand by.” The US and Canada have several other white supremacy groups in common such as the Base (Rotella, 2021). Paramilitary training is also increasing throughout both nations. One major concern is the anti-government militant group, the Three Percenters. This group has expanded its agenda and now works with white supremacy groups. The main concern is the group’s paramilitary training and stockpiling of weapons.

United Kingdom

On June 23, 2016, there was a referendum on the United Kingdom's membership in the European Union (EU). The United Kingdom voted to leave the EU, in part to control the number of immigrants entering the country from other EU states. There was a spike in racially motivated hate crimes after the campaign due to the spread of disinformation by people such as Nigel Farage (Lee, 2016). In June 2016, Farage insinuated that the migrants from the EU states were a threat to British women because of possible sexual attacks (Elgot, 2016).

Similarly, Donald Trump claimed that Mexican immigrants are rapists because women were "being raped at numbers never seen before" (Salama, 2018). In addition, there was a preexisting high level of "Euroskepticism" that was amplified by the poor performance of European economies. Many people had the misconception that the migrants were there seeking asylum; however, most were coming for school or work due to high unemployment rates in their home nations (Migration Observatory, 2020).

As aforementioned, the Atomwaffen Division (AWD) expanded from the southern US throughout Eurasia. In 2018, the SPLC reported that multiple individuals throughout the UK were "corresponding with AWD members over Discord, an online gaming chat platform" (SPLC, 2020). Currently, the UK is focused on the Atomwaffen Division. The AWD formally disbanded in March 2021 but reemerged as the National Socialist Order on April 20, 2021. The UK Home Secretary moved to proscribe Atomwaffen Division as a terrorist organization (U.K. to Ban..., 2021).

France

Unlike the US, France does not formally collect data about race or religion. Instead, France keeps statistics about things such as socioeconomics (Donadio, 2020).

France turns a blind eye to race, which has made conversation amongst its people challenging. Many people in France deny that systemic racism exists and refuse to recognize the struggles of people of color (Dialo, 2020). Although France does not formally acknowledge racial pluralism within its borders, it does not mean there is a lack of diversity (Onishi, 2020).

Even though white supremacy attacks and online hate speech occur, many people in France still refuse to acknowledge racism within their borders (Dialo, 2020). The two main groups that take part in white supremacist, hateful activity are Les Identitaires and Generational Identity (Counter Extremism Project, 2021). These groups are strong believers in identitarianism, which is “the idea of the nationalist celebration of an ethnic identity” (Counter Extremism Project, 2021). In France, this means the celebration of white Europeans (Counter Extremism Project, 2021).

Methodology

This section discusses the nature of the study, the procedure of data collection, the treatment of data, and possible limitations.

Type of research

This study was based on secondary research. Information was collected from a combination of online open-source intelligence (OSINT) and a dataset from the University of Maryland’s Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) titled the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).

Scope of data collection

Information was extracted from the GTD between the years 2011 and 2019 about the following five countries: Germany, Russia, Canada, United Kingdom, and France. The information utilized from this dataset included attacks categorized by START as “white supremacists/nationalists,” “neo-fascist extremists,” or “neo-Nazi extremists” (START, 2019). These five nations were chosen because the START dataset showed these nations had the highest number of white supremacy-related attacks within the time frame. Moreover, the dataset included the most information about these nations.

Analysis methods

Excel Spreadsheet was used to organize the gathered data. Then, the data were analyzed using Excel’s pivot table feature. Finally, the graphs were created with the pivot chart feature.

Limitations of the study

The main limitation is that it was difficult to find data that fit the study’s criteria. Many countries do not have this type of information available for public usage. Due to the risk of counting the same attacks more than once and nonidentical definitions, only one dataset was used.

Another limitation of this study was that there is no universal definition for many of the key terms used throughout this study. Some of these key terms include white supremacy, terrorism, far-right/right-wing extremism/ right-wing terrorism/ extreme right. Two separate organizations may define “an act of terror” differently, for example.

As a result, the information would not be accurate because two different definitions were used to classify attacks.

The last limitation of this study was that the GTD dataset only included attacks up to the year 2019; however as expected, there have been new attacks linked to white supremacy since then. This dataset also did not include any failed or foiled plots. Additionally, this dataset was missing information for many countries. Compared to several other datasets, it was clear the START dataset was not accurate; however, it contained the most information per single dataset.

Findings

This section contains figures that represent the collected data.

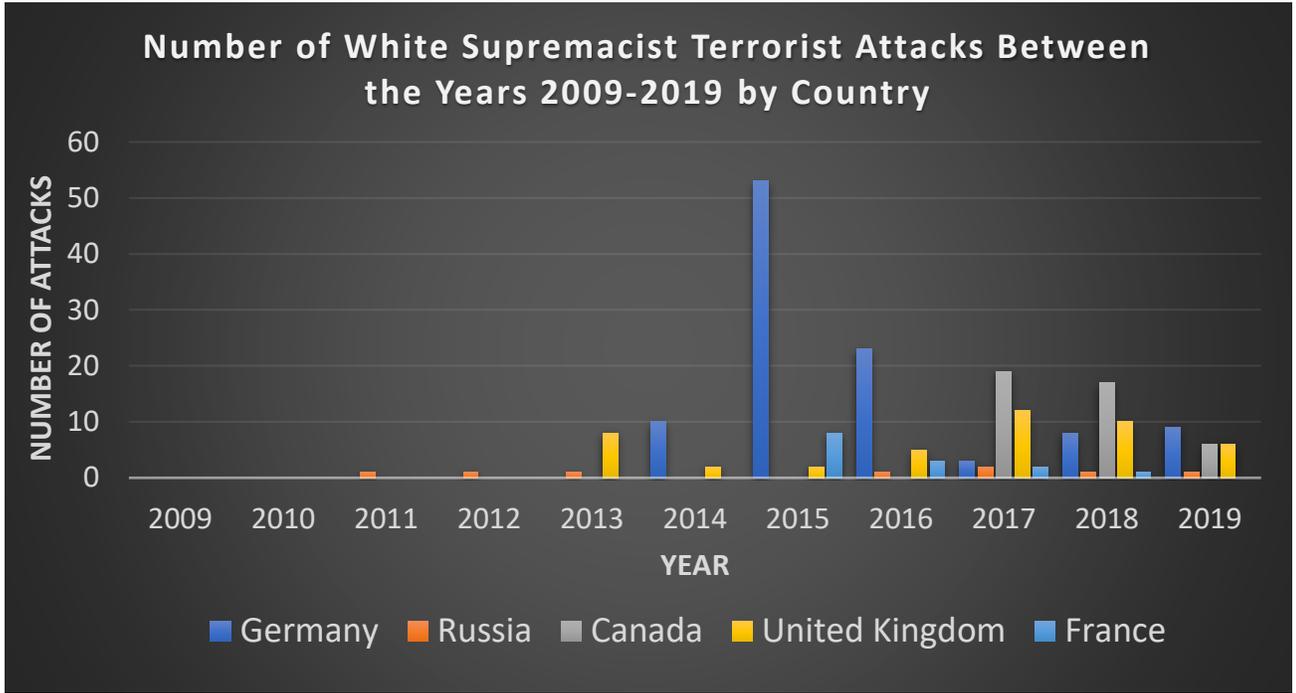


Figure 1.1

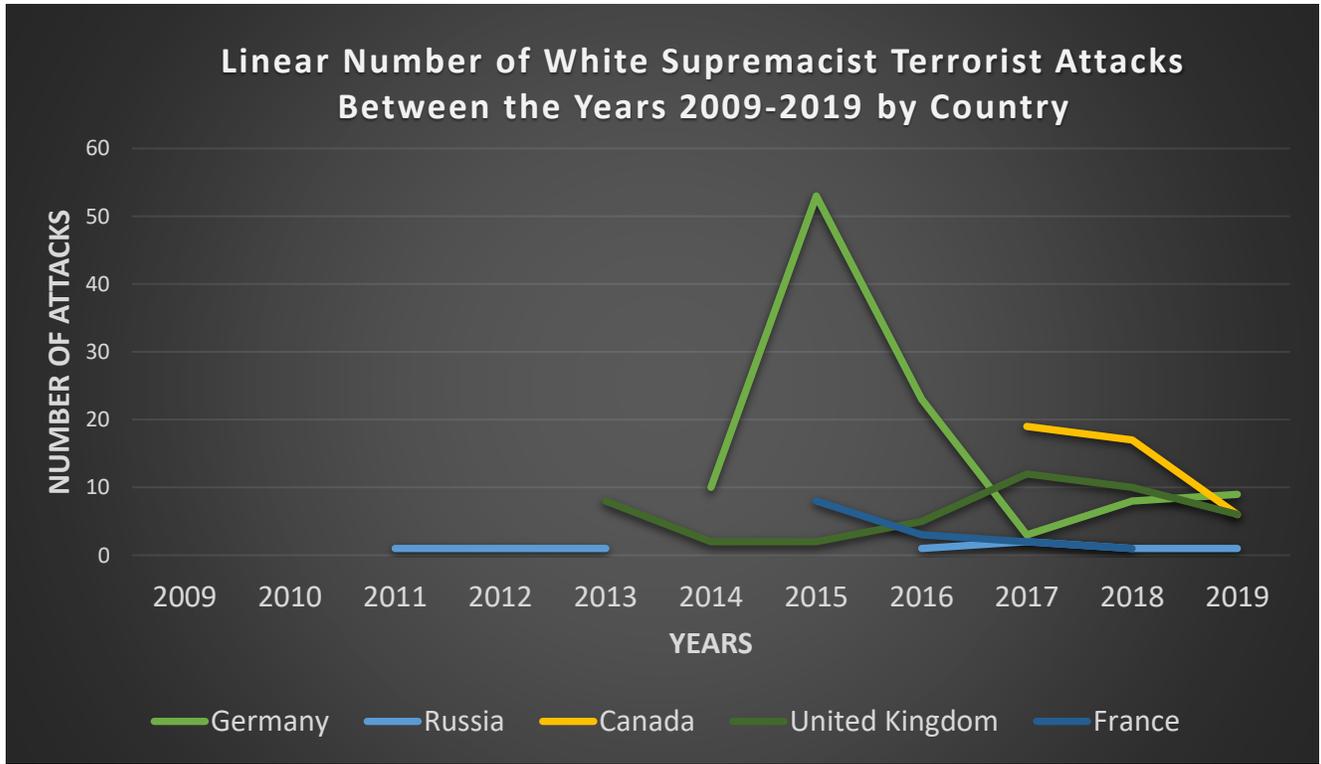


Figure 2.1

Discussion

Many other countries around the world have been experiencing the damaging consequences of white supremacy terror for decades. This study focused on how the following five nations addressed violent domestic white supremacy: Germany, Russia, Canada, UK, and France.

Germany

As shown in figure 2.1, there was a sharp increase in white supremacist extremist attacks in Germany in 2015. This coincided with the mass migration of hundreds of thousands of Syrians seeking asylum in Germany during the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis. “German government does not regularly publish the number of far-right events” and there was highly limited data available (Engel, 2020).

One way Germany has attempted to suppress violent white supremacy is with bans and raids. Many of these bans and raids were used on violent far-right groups such as Combat 18 Deutschland, White Wolves Terror Crew, and Strumbrigade 44. Combat 18 was banned in January 2020. The German police conducted and seized things such as “cellphones, computers, unspecified weaponry, Nazi memorabilia and propaganda material (NBC, 2020). Another way Germany has tried to lower the number of crimes related to white supremacy is by banning alcohol sales during “hate rock” concerts. There is no evidence from this dataset to suggest this has been successful, but a similar case in the German city of Dortmund has proven to work.

According to Dortmund’s chief of police, Gregor Lange, in 2019, “offenses such as sedition, verbal assault, racist propaganda, and damage to property” were down by 50%, and “violent crimes such as arson and bodily assault” went down by 80% after a

special task force was set up to focus on combating racists and far-right extremists in 2015 (Goldenberg, 2020). The Dortmund policeforce cracked down on right-wing extremist activity by taking “action against every single offense, even small ones” like “sporting Nazi symbols, waving flags, shouting racist slogans” and prosecuted “every single one...effectively” (Goldenberg, 2020).

Next, Germany has placed a ban on things like Nazi salutes and swastikas, clothing with white power symbols, and flags (Engel, 2020). Wearing or doing any of these things in public is considered incitement to violence and a weapon by German police (Engel, 2020). According to Lange, Neo-Nazi leaders have evolved to blend in better in public (Goldenberg, 2020). Some of the ways they do this is by covering their swastika tattoos with a band-aid, not shaving their heads, and dressing within the law to avoid arrest (Goldenberg, 2020).

In the United States, however, there are no restrictions like these. Americans are free to make any gestures, wear anything, or wave any flag that they wish. Banning any of these things would violate the right to freedom of expression under the First Amendment. Therefore, it is legal for supremacists to do things like wave confederate flags, Nazi salute, or flaunt other white power symbols.

Russia

This dataset did not contain any information for Russia from 2013-2016 and the information available was extremely limited.

Russia has turned a blind eye to paramilitary activity and other extremist activities within its borders. Although the Kremlin does not outwardly support the Russian

Imperial Movement, for example, it has done nothing to combat the group's violent activities (Grimm, 2020). This could be because certain groups pose a transnational threat to the stability of Western countries and US democracy.

While Russia has not addressed its domestic extremism problem, the US has taken steps to address the large transnational threat that Russian white supremacists pose to US national security. The US State Department recently acknowledged the severe threat the Russian group poses and designated the RIM as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in April 2020 (MMP, 2021). Additionally, the intentions of these Russian extremist groups were spread following the Director of National Intelligence's report that confirmed Russia's interference in the 2016 elections.

Canada

This dataset did not contain any information for Canada before 2017 and the information available was extremely limited.

The AWD was also prominent in Canada. In February 2021, Canada listed AWD as a terrorist organization and made membership illegal. In addition, two other neo-Nazi groups, Blood & Honour and Combat 18, were banned. In Canada, banning terrorist organizations permits the police to arrest someone for possession of paraphernalia or for attending any group events (Rotella, 2021). In addition, approximately a month after the US insurrection in the Capitol, Canada designated the Proud Boys as a terrorist entity (Gillies, 2021).

Another way Canada has attempted to address recruitment and radicalization is with restrictions to online language. Initially, in 1977, Section 13 was added to the Canadian Human Rights Act as a hate speech clause to prohibit the use of telephones to

communicate hateful messages about a person based on their membership to an identified group (Tunncliffe, 2020). Later, in 2001, this expanded to include internet communication as well. Then, in 2013, Section 13 was repealed from the Canadian Human Rights Act.

As part of his election platform in 2019, Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, proposed to bring back less freedom of speech online. Trudeau said that “we will move forward with new regulations for social media platforms, starting with a requirement that all platforms remove illegal content, including hate speech, within 24 hours or face significant financial penalties.” The Prime Minister listed “racist, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, misogynist, and homophobic” statements as the types of language that would become banned (Goldstein, 2021).

Currently, there is a similar discussion regarding free speech and social media in the US. The prominent issue is that US President Donald Trump has been banned from several mainstream platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram YouTube (The Bullet, 2021). These bans were a response to the insurrection in the Capitol. The ban has triggered questions about the legality of the platform administrations’ actions. Hateful speech in the US is not punishable no matter how offensive or hurtful it may be unless it “threatens or incites lawlessness or...contributes to motive for a criminal act,” claimed the American Bar Association (Wermiel, n.d.).

United Kingdom

As shown by figures 1.1 and 2.1, the United Kingdom’s number of attacks was varying, but overall low on the scale compared to Germany. The number of attacks

peaked in 2017, which was likely due to the referendum on Brexit and the malicious framing of immigrants during this time.

The United Kingdom (UK) has prioritized combatting the recruitment and radicalization of right-wing extremists. Some ways the UK addressed this threat was by banning, proscribing, and outlawing groups. As of April 19, 2021, the UK had banned three neo-Nazi groups. These three groups were National Action, Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD) and Feuerkrieg Division (FKD).

The National Action organization is still prominent and now has an alias titled the System Resistance Network (Homeland Security Today, 2020). The SKD is to be proscribed, which means that group members face up to ten years in prison for being a part of the group (Homeland Security Today, 2020). The FDK, on the other hand, has already been proscribed by the UK as a terrorist group, making its membership illegal (Homeland Security Today, 2020).

On another note, the UK took an uncommon approach to address the hate speech that fuels white supremacy within the nation. Rather than attempting to restrict free speech as other nations have, the UK focused on educating its youth and teaching them about misinformation and disinformation. A study found that 98% of students in the UK were not able to identify reliable news sources in 2018 (Commission, 2018). As a result, there have been lessons added into the public-school curriculum that specifically focus on the spread of fake news.

The phrase, “fake news” became mainstream thanks to President Trump’s repetitive use of the term throughout the past six years. Despite the awareness that fake

news exists, an IPSOS study revealed that US adults cannot identify fake news from legitimate news (Ringov, 2020). Lessons on misinformation campaigns and spotting fake news have occurred in various locations throughout the US, but it is by no means a regular part of the US curriculum. Although US law prevents restrictions to free speech, people can still be taught how to identify reliable sources and legitimate information.

France

This dataset did not contain any information for France before 2015 or in 2019 and the information available was extremely limited.

In France, it is illegal to provoke discrimination, hate, or violence against a person or group because of ethnicity, nationality, or religion (Counter Extremism Project, 2021). One of the main far-right extremist groups, Generation Identity, was recently banned by the French Council of Ministers on March 3, 2021 (Counter Extremism Project, 2021). In 2019, they also banned the group Combat 18.

France has taken several measures to combat terrorism and extremism; however, it targets jihadists, not white supremacists (Counter Extremism Project, 2021). These efforts could be altered to include and target white supremacists as well. Like the United States, France has made efforts to educate its citizens about how to prevent and spot radicalization. France has also segregated its prison system and keeps extremist inmates separated from the rest of the prison population. Lastly, France has an anti-terror law that punishes suspected jihadi terrorists. The law allows France to do things such as rescind passports, censor online websites, and cut welfare benefits (Counter Extremism Project, 2021).

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for the Intelligence Community:

1. Changes to the First Amendment- Federal law reform to hold those accountable who know or should know that they are creating and spreading false information online that could lead to imminent risk or harm to national security.
2. Suppress transnational recruitment and radicalization efforts by removing online propaganda and foreign influence operations and by designating groups as foreign terrorist organizations.
3. Expand data collection, research, and reports about white supremacy terror in foreign nations.
4. Target private militias that are participating in illegal military-related activities and create strict legal consequences for groups that do so.
5. Increase community policing to improve communication and connectivity.

Conclusion

In summary, the Coronavirus pandemic led to a rise in online activity, a breeding ground for susceptible individuals, and an increase in communication with extremists overseas. The combination of these factors created the perfect environment for extremists' recruitment and radicalization capabilities. Under President Trump's influence, the US experienced a rise in white supremacist extremist violence, which created a further divide between the two main political parties.

Ultimately, acts of violent white supremacy in the US have been identified as and will continue to be the most severe domestic threat throughout 2021. White supremacist

violent extremists will remain a severe threat against the national security of the US until executive and legislative action are taken at the federal level. It is crucial to learn from the past successes and failures of the other countries that have encountered white supremacist terrorism and to use that information to our advantage.

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