Homegrown Radical Extremism in the West: Measures for Violence Prevention

Zahraa Akhwand

The final capstone research project for the Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences is an independent study experience. The paper is expected to:

• Present a position that is unique, original and directly applies to the student’s experience
• Use primary sources or apply to a primary organization/agency
• Conform to the style and format of excellent academic writing
• Analyze empirical research data that is collected by the student or that has already been collected
• Allow the student to demonstrate the competencies gained in the master’s program

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. https://repository.upenn.edu/mbds/1
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.
Homegrown Radical Extremism in the West: Measures for Violence Prevention

Abstract
The United States national strategy for counterterrorism highlights political needs to protect American interests both at home and on foreign land through direct physical combat, resource limitation, and recruitment prevention. The plan prioritizes identification and thwarting of rising threats against national security interests within and outside the United States. Efforts to understand terrorist organizations and address foreign threats have been extensive. More recent trends of terrorism point to domestic sources of radicalization. In a testament before the United States Senate Judiciary Committee, Federal Bureau of Investigation director Christopher Wray stated, “A majority of the domestic terrorism cases we’ve investigated are motivated by some version of what you might call white supremacist violence.” He noted domestic terrorists and homegrown violent extremists to be “persistent threats to the nation and U.S. interests abroad.” Research places the shift in national demographics and increased diversity as central motivations in the adoption of violence among non-immigrant American, white males, a group long ignored in anti-terror efforts. To effectively reduce extremist behavior, counterterrorism measures must reflect behavioral trends of terrorism, more specifically the demographics and motivations of extremists radicalized within the United States. This document highlights the changing dynamics of terrorism and calls for prevention measures that address motivations that drive violence. Further, this document notes the use of findings from the field of behavioral science as prevention measures against homegrown extremism. Findings-Demographic shifts within the United States are linked to the rise of extremism,- Addressing psycho-social drivers that lead to radicalization has potential to reduce extremist violence on a national and international scale. Recommendations -The United States national strategy for counterterrorism must address motivations for homegrown extremism among non-migrant males,- Capacity to discuss implications of shifting demographics must be built within non-migrant communities,- Further research into deradicalization interventions that address up-to-date extremist groups demographics are needed. Conclusion: The United States national strategy for counterterrorism aims to reduce violence and protect American interests both at home and abroad. Noting growing trends of radicalization on western soil, research and intervention within the nation must be included as a means of counterterrorism.

Disciplines
Social and Behavioral Sciences

Comments
The final capstone research project for the Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences is an independent study experience. The paper is expected to:

- Present a position that is unique, original and directly applies to the student’s experience
- Use primary sources or apply to a primary organization/agency
- Conform to the style and format of excellent academic writing
- Analyze empirical research data that is collected by the student or that has already been collected
- Allow the student to demonstrate the competencies gained in the master’s program
Homegrown Radical Extremism in the West: Measures for Violence Prevention
Zahraa Akhwand
Summer 2019

Written under the guidance of Enrique Fatas, PhD

Acknowledgments
I want to express immense appreciation for the faculty and staff at the University of Pennsylvania’s Masters of Behavioral and Decision Sciences Program. I extend my gratitude to Professor Fatas, without whom none of this would have been possible.
Executive Summary

The United States national strategy for counterterrorism highlights political needs to protect American interests both at home and on foreign land through direct physical combat, resource limitation, and recruitment prevention. The plan prioritizes identification and thwarting of rising threats against national security interests within and outside the United States.

Efforts to understand terrorist organizations and address foreign threats have been extensive. More recent trends of terrorism point to domestic sources of radicalization. In a testament before the United States Senate Judiciary Committee, Federal Bureau of Investigation director Christopher Wray stated, “A majority of the domestic terrorism cases we've investigated are motivated by some version of what you might call white supremacist violence.” He noted domestic terrorists and homegrown violent extremists to be “persistent threats to the nation and U.S. interests abroad.”

Research places the shift in national demographics and increased diversity as central motivations in the adoption of violence among non-immigrant American, white males, a group long ignored in anti-terror efforts.

To effectively reduce extremist behavior, counterterrorism measures must reflect behavioral trends of terrorism, more specifically the demographics and motivations of extremists radicalized within the United States. This document highlights the changing dynamics of terrorism and calls for prevention measures that address motivations that drive violence. Further, this document notes the use of findings from the field of behavioral science as prevention measures against homegrown extremism.

Findings

- Demographic shifts within the United States are linked to the rise of extremism,
- Addressing psycho-social drivers that lead to radicalization has potential to reduce extremist violence on a national and international scale.

---

1 The White House, 2018
Recommendations

- The United States national strategy for counterterrorism must address motivations for homegrown extremism among non-migrant males,
- Capacity to discuss implications of shifting demographics must be built within non-migrant communities,
- Further research into deradicalization interventions that address up-to-date extremist groups demographics are needed.

Conclusion

The United States national strategy for counterterrorism aims to reduce violence and protect American interests both at home and abroad. Noting growing trends of radicalization on western soil, research and intervention within the nation must be included as a means of counterterrorism.
Background

Traditionally, the United States has held a singular identity centered around “white, male, Protestant Christians.” By 2050, projections by the U.S. Census Bureau predict a demographic shift in the United States such that the majority of the nation will consist of non-white individuals. The Pew Research Center reports highest yet diversity rates among 6-21-year-old youth in the country, with a rising 48% nonwhite population.

Population changes can be the source of immense instability and can “overburden infrastructure to growing ethnic imbalances.” When asked about the shift in demography, 28% of whites say changes will be harmful to the country, and 49% percent of the adult population note that having a majority non-white population will “lead to more conflicts between racial and ethnic groups.”

Demographic changes have also been perceived as threats to national identity. Many worry that newcomers limit accessibility to economic resources and that racial and religious minorities threaten white dominance. The fears are inclusive to rising minorities as well as migrants.

Changing Demographics and Threats to a Nation

By 2050, white individuals, a once demographic majority is projected to be only 48% of the United States population. The changes are palpable and viewed as determinants of reduced racial power. A survey by the Rockefeller Foundation found that Americans believed the nation was 49% nonwhite, 12% higher than the reality. Overestimation of nonwhite populations is an indicator of heightened sensitivity to the increasing minority population. Another study found that changing demographics was seen as a risk of “losing our identity as a nation.”

“The ultimate threat to personal significance is one’s imminent mortality.”

---

2 U.S. Census Bureau, 2017
3 Nichiporuk, 2000
4 Parker, Morin, Horowitz, 2019
5 Foner & Simon, 2015
6 U.S. Census Bureau, 2017
7 Teixeira, et al., 2013
8 Kruglanski, & Orehek, 2011
Changes in culture along with perceptions of reduced political and social power signal insignificance, loss of stature of white males in American society, and a weakened authority of the nation in the international community.

Homegrown radicalism is a quest for significance\(^9\). Fear of extinction, a form of psychological identity-based loss aversion, empowers not only defense of worldviews, but an offensive fight for existence. “The quest for significance is the fundamental desire to matter, to be someone, to have respect.” Perceptions of marginalization and cultural alienation are irrespective of reality \(^{10}\). Homegrown extremists are motivated by their need to assert competence and control over systems they have long held power over \(^{11}\).

Lacking Infrastructure

Traditionally, the United States has lacked social cohesion measures at the federal and state levels. However, the United States has no national integration policy or agency whose primary aim is to drive immigrant integration. At the federal level, integration is the result of programs that signal and communicate the importance of citizenship. Existing programs have been unilateral enforcement of values upon minorities and migrants. Norms are enforced on migrant and minority populations, calling on them to “make sacrifices for the public good, obey laws, and pay taxes.” One such program is under the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Newly naturalized citizens undergo a mandatory citizenship ceremony in which they take an oath of allegiance in judicial or administrative service\(^{12}\). The ceremony is “a venue to recognize the rights, responsibilities, and importance of citizenship”\(^{13}\).

Efforts to drive collective identity are mainly lead by local community-based institutions. Migrants and minorities alike are taught *American* values through education and civic centers. Low-cost clinics, language classes, and occupation training are examples of services provided in

---

\(^{9}\) Kruglanski & Orehek 2011
\(^{10}\) Hafez & Mullins, 2015
\(^{11}\) Fiske, 2010
\(^{12}\) USCIS, Naturalization Ceremonies
\(^{13}\) USCIS, Administrative Naturalization Ceremonies
aims of improving opportunity for new members of society and aiding the integration of migrants and minorities into a more substantial “American” identity\textsuperscript{14}.

Local infrastructure which aid minorities and migrants in assimilating into the educational and social systems of society are unilateral and built upon assumptions that newcomers hold the sole responsibility to adapt to the majority culture. The programs assume that possible negative implications of changing demographics are from the newcomers and that adaptation of the majority to changing social climate is minimally needed.

Contrary to existing beliefs, recent literature suggestions that the white majority is in more need of aid in integration and adaptation to changing social dynamics. A May 2019 study by Richard McAlexander found that as immigration increases, so does the number of right-wing terror attacks. Moreover, strong correlations were found between right-wing terrorism and increased immigration from non-European nations \textsuperscript{15}.

Also, in May of 2019, in testimony before the U.S. House Committee, the assistant director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) counterterrorism division Michael Garrity noted the rise of homegrown extremists radicalized within the United States. Garrity stated “Last year, nearly all extremism-related murders in the United States were committed by right-wing domestic terrorists,” and furthered, “we are most concerned about lone offenders, primarily using firearms, as these lone offenders represent the dominant trend for lethal domestic terrorists. Frequently, these individuals act without a clear group affiliation or guidance, making them challenging to identify, investigate, and disrupt.”

As of his testimony, the FBI has 850 open domestic terrorism cases- 50\% of which are violent forms of protest against the government. Garrity noted, “with homegrown violent extremists, [the velocity of cases] is much quicker than it's ever been before, both domestically and internationally\textsuperscript{16}. Daesh recruits were more likely to be individuals born in the United States of Caucasian, African American, or Latino ethnicities with little to no religious inquiry\textsuperscript{17}. A reported 250 Americans attempted to join Daesh - 150 of which were successful.\textsuperscript{18} An additional 130 traveled from Canada to Syria to join local terrorist organizations\textsuperscript{19}.

\textsuperscript{14} Hipsman & Meissner, 2013
\textsuperscript{15} McAlexander, 2019
\textsuperscript{16} Canadian Government briefing (October 29, 2015)
\textsuperscript{17} Teixeira et al, 2013
\textsuperscript{18} The Soufan Group, 2015
\textsuperscript{19} Bloom, 2016
McAlexander’s research further notes homegrown extremism “may simply be a product of cultural grievances,” findings consistent with the conclusions of anthropologist Scott Atran who called terrorists of Western origins “bored, under-employed, overqualified and underwhelmed” men who were inspired “not so much by the Quran or religious teachings as a thrilling cause and call to action that promises glory and esteem in the eyes of friends, and through friends, eternal respect and remembrance in the wider world”.20

Behavioral Models as Guides for Prevention

While many studies profile terrorist groups and aim to decipher motivations that drive radicalism, there is no central study that can capture all antecedent factors that lead to radicalization21. Nonetheless, existing models can aid policymakers in defining the most vulnerable psychological motivations that drive individuals to adopt extremist behavior. Moreover, these models can shed light on mental states prime for preventative interventions.

Two notable models which can be used to understand cognitive motivations for homegrown extremism are Moghaddam’s Staircase to Radicalism and Wiktorowicz’s Theory of Joining Extremist Groups. These models were isolated among the existing paradigms as they were theorized using empirical examination within the West.

Moghaddam’s Staircase to Radicalism

The base of Moghaddam's model is the evaluation of justice in the social surrounding. “People strive for justice and feel distressed when they experience injustice.” According to Moghaddam, those who climb the staircase to extremism first are frustrated with injustice or perceptions of deprivation relative to others. Deprivation can be positioned relative to others in a group (egoistical) or feelings of discontent in the position of one’s group relative to other groups (fraternal). While Moghaddam presents, the two as independent, fraternal and egoistical relative deprivation are bilateral in transformation such that individual failings are generalized to all ingroup members. Social justice research notes that compared to egoistical relative deprivation which causes frustration, fraternal relative deprivation motivates action22

20 Senate Hearing 111-822
21 Gill et al., 2013
22 Smith & Ortiz, 2002
Once injustice has been felt, individuals must then choose a means by which to address it. Step one of the model is one in which individuals evaluate mobility within normative responses to injustice. Relief is first sought within existing social and political systems. If those avenues are deemed insufficient in meeting needs, distress advances to aggression.

Sources of aggression are placed on outgroups that have been psychologically demonizing\(^{23}\) — displacement of aggression and increased perception of intergroup differences signal movement to step two of the staircase\(^{24}\). Individuals who move beyond the second floor, Moghaddam notes, display support for authoritarianism directly or indirectly.

Active mentalization of aggression signals movement to step three. The individual begins to align definitions of morality in support of actions that would normatively be regarded as violent or extreme. Non-normative violent acts are justified as a means of achieving a greater good.

Once a group of likeminded individuals is linked through a network in step four, group-think dominates. The secretive and isolated nature of extremism tighten interpersonal links and reduces the influence of ideologies that question justifications of violence. The final conciliation of violent extremism in Moghaddam’s model is one in which opportunities to leave the group are

\(^{23}\) Gemmill, 1998

\(^{24}\) Kruglanski & Orehek, 2011
limited to those that endanger individual life. Acts of violence are carried out in fear of group members and in return lead to a “sidestepping of inhibitory mechanisms” that once made violence taboo.

Wiktorowicz’s Theory of Joining Extremist Groups

Quintan Wiktorowicz theorized motivations for joining extremist groups by studying recruits in the United Kingdom-based radical group, Al-Muhajiroun. With extensive quantitative interview of members of the Al-Muhajiroun movement, Wiktorowicz posits a four-stage linear, emergent model that leads to individual participation in radical movements. Joining an extremist group entails immense disadvantages. Wiktorowicz notes that “participation entails enormous costs and risks,” especially since “less controversial options are typically available.” First and foremost, such groups are regarded negatively in the international community, especially in the West. Thus, individuals who take part in ideologies are faced with the cost of social isolation.

Previous to the official adoption of group identity, Wiktorowicz posits three necessary steps that build up to socialization into radical groups. In a preliminary stage, individuals undergo a “cognitive opening” as a result of an adverse experience. Adversity can be economical (loss of money, job, or even perceived “blocked mobility”), sociocultural (racism, racial humiliation), political (repression) or personal (psychological). “Exogenous conditions frequently emerge that lead individuals to question their beliefs or contemplate values,” thus “cognitive opening” is the result of a myriad of external forces over time that is coherent enough to bring about uncertainty in existing belief systems.

![Diagram](Figure 2. Adapted from Joining the Cause: Al-Muhajiroun and Radical Islam by Quintan Wiktorowicz)
To make sense of their experiences, people will then seek meaning, preferably one that is beyond their actions. In his original model, Wiktorowicz highlights the role of social connections in this stage. For one to be exposed to radical ideologies, they must have some contact with information. This can be through physical network connections or non-physical sources of information such as the internet. The direction of seeking is dependent on a priori existence of exposure or belief. In stages of “religious seeking” and “frame alignment,” individuals actively seek more information and interpret said information based on their cognitive needs. Wiktorowicz notes that only those who have passed the first three-stage of the model are likely to be actively socialized into a radical movement. Within the socialization stage, one internalizes new beliefs and becomes susceptible to peer influence leading to the use of violence.

Learning from Moghaddam and Wiktorowicz

Models of radicalization highlight four key factors that act as the basis for extremism: ideology, grievance, network, and environment\(^\text{25}\). It must be recognized that these factors need not exist in reality, but are subjectively defined by actors.

Both Moghaddam and Wiktoricz note underlying ideological beliefs that shape individual attitudes. Moghaddam highlights authoritarian ideologies within individuals who later go on to justify violence upon civilians. Moghaddam’s model is discrete in defining authoritarianism as an ideology; Wiktorowizs is more implicit. He labels the second step in his model “religious seeking,” which implies the existence of some religious ideology that justifies the use of violence to achieve a goal. Following a crisis, individuals undergo a “cognitive opening” in which they evaluate their experience. They seek to find meaning in their experience and aim to find sources to their adversity. A stage of religious seeking in which attention is turned toward religious content as a means of resolving discontent. The Wiktorowicz model was created through the study of recruitment in Al-Muhajiroun, a self-proclaimed religious entity, in which recruits were inspired through the diffusion of so-called religious content. Active

\(^{25}\) Havez & Mullens, 2015

![Figure 3. Common themes between models of Moghaddam and Wiktorowicz](image-url)
justification, however, is not limited to religious content. This document posits that receptivity need not be solely towards content, but through first interpersonal relationships, and second, information diffused through those relationship networks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staircase to Terrorism (Moghaddam)</th>
<th>Theory of Joining Extremist Groups (Wiktorowicz)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundational Ground Floor</strong></td>
<td>Cognitive Opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness and justice central to perception and evaluation of material conditions</td>
<td>Sociocultural, political or personal adversity raises awareness of normative and nonnormative infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Floor / Second Floor</strong></td>
<td>Religious Seeking / Frame Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions perceived to be deprived relative to out-group</td>
<td>Receptivity directed toward means of “resolving discontent.” (This document posits that this stage need not be religious content)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of us vs. them</td>
<td>Active consideration of extremism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of social and political infrastructure relative to needs and grievances</td>
<td>Justification of the use of violence as a means of achieving goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of non-normative means of addressing needs – Exploration of radicalized behavior</td>
<td>Personal views and views of the radical organization align</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third Floor / Fourth Floor / Fifth Floor</strong></td>
<td>Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral engagement of the chosen group</td>
<td>Radical ideology internalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of active dissent categorizes civilians as out-groups</td>
<td>Extremism ideology adopted as a legitimate means of achieving individual needs and needs of the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification of the use of violence against out-group</td>
<td>Peer influence and group norms maintain violent behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of new behavior through social isolation, secrecy, and fear of exposure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of empathy via psychological distance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Summary of Moghaddam and Wictorowicz models

Ideology also entails social hierarchy or us versus them social definitions between one's identity group and the grouping of other identities. For instance, in the case of white supremacists, nonwhite are deemed inferior\(^{26}\). While such an ideology is largely criminalized in the United States, individuals who hold racist beliefs exist in private. Groupings then create a basis for comparison.

Egoistical and fraternal grievances are perceptions of relative deprivation in social, political, and cultural surroundings. While Moghaddam places justice as central to the evaluation of deprivation, Wiktorocicz labels economic (loss of a job, limited employment opportunity), sociocultural (racial humiliation), political (repression, lacking representation) and psychological adversity as sufficient enough to cause “cognitive openings.” Grievances are motivations to explore social infrastructure inclusive to networks and environment.

Once grievances are conscious, individuals will seek to alleviate their distress. They will examine networks that encompass them with aims to address subjective injustice. Researcher

\(^{26}\) Zanden, 1959
Andrew Papachristos calls lawlessness a “networked phenomena” in which deviant behavior is a function of interpersonal connections and relationships. These connections can be physical or through the interweb.

Normative means of addressing grievances is defined through social connections, or individuals’ social scientists call a “reference group.” This is congruent with research findings that show behavior as a function of what people think others around them are doing. Individuals behave in ways they perceive others in their social group behave, called descriptive norms, or how they believe their social groups think they should act, called injunctive norms. Thus, ingroup norms which perpetuate the use of violence are highly influential in determining acceptable actions in addressing grievances.

Due to the high cost of non-normative actions, individuals will evaluate the extent to which their needs can be met using social and political infrastructure. Reference groups make up social environments. Political and economic environments are also relevant to the uptake of violence. Previous to considering non-normative actions, individuals will address their needs using the social and political infrastructure around them. First, they will evaluate normative signals to define appropriate actions. They will express their concerns to formal and informal agencies to gauge their mobility. If individuals perceive immobility or lack of sufficiency, they will turn to use of means such as violence to achieve their goals. Motivations and definition of feasibility are subjective and can act as catalysts for social withdrawal. Thus, social exclusion is also a risk factor for aggressive behavior.

In his 2019 testimony before the U.S. House Committee, Michael Garrity, stated, “last year, nearly all extremism-related murders in the United States were committed by right-wing domestic terrorists,” and furthered, “We are most concerned about lone offenders, primarily using firearms, as these lone offenders represent the dominant trend for lethal domestic terrorists. Frequently, these individuals act without a clear group affiliation or guidance, making them challenging to identify, investigate, and disrupt.”

In the case of homegrown radical lone offenders, isolation can be self-induced. Withdrawal from the greater society can be the result of perceptions of change social dynamics in which they

27 Papachristos, 2014
28 Neville, 2015
29 Cialdini et al, 1990
no longer feel in control. The changing dynamics, in turn, augment intergroup differences, thus perpetuating a cycle of social exclusion, in reality, or perception.

Ideology, grievance, network, and environment are all factors that need to be addressed to reduce the prevalence of homegrown extremism in the United States. Taken together, the Staircase to Radicalism model and the Theory of Joining Extremist Groups, also note the best time to influence the factors above to reduce the uptake of violence best.

Moghaddam’s model highlights the need for early preventative intervention in stages in which processing of social surroundings is still taking place, the initial three floors. The first three stages of Moghaddam’s model note increased the receptivity of social surrounding. Individuals evaluate the extent to which their social and political systems allow them to alter their status according to their needs. They judge themselves and the situation of their associated groups about others in the greater society. Material conditions are actively processed, and if injustice is perceived, receptivity is transferred to issues of social mobility.

Wiktorowicz’s model notes that socialization only occurs through the coexistence of cognitive opening, religious seeking, and frame alignment. Extremism resulting in violence was not seen in Al-Mouharijoun recruits who lacked one of those above within a short timeline.

Heightened receptibility in the primary stages of the two models are opportunities to both communicate normative information as well as to shift beliefs. Communication of normative details will be discussed within the intervention section of this document.

An Emerging Collective Behavior

Radical extremism can be categorized as an emerging collective behavior. While maladaptive to the wellbeing of the greater society, radical extremism is adopted as an expression of power among right-wing nationalists, prominently white males, who view changing demography in the United States as a threat to their existence.

Homegrown radical extremism has been established as an expression of cultural grievance in response to cultural shifts in the nation. Behavioral motivations to adopt violence as a means of expression are distinct among perpetrators. Homegrown radical extremism consists of two different populations of offenders: those who operate independently of physical, social networks and those who believe extreme action is an expected behavior among their social reference groups.
Lone Offenders

Lone offenders are socially isolated perpetrators of violence. Various personal and ideological motivations have been cited as the basis for their actions, including egoistical and fraternal grievances. There is little consensus on motivations for lone offenders among existing research. One commonality among said offenders is their consistent state of physical, social isolation. Despite their lack of physical connections, lone offenders express moral and ideological inspirations for their actions. They see themselves as first-risers who take a stand against inaction.

The Pittsburgh Synagogue shooter Robert Bowers stated, “They’re committing genocide to my people… I just want to kill Jews.” FBI investigations revealed an online statement saying “I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered," He wrote. "Screw your optics; I'm going in" minutes before his attack. Further investigation disclosed grievances that “President Donald Trump was surrounded by too many Jewish people” and concern that Jews were “helping migrant caravans in Central America.”

Bowers cited “my people” as motivation for his act of violence. Previous to his attack, Bowers expressed a perception that his people are passive and targeted. He saw himself as a trendsetter whose counter-normative action increased social wellbeing. Bowers statements point to the existence of some reference group, upon which he built his "quest for significance." Bowers was not married and was recalled as someone who “kept to himself” by neighbors and coworkers. It is essential to note the subjectivity of motivations that drive violence.

As exemplified in the case of Robert Bowers, lone offenders behave as they believe their reference group thinks they should behave. However, subjective, lone offenders act in ways they believe is normatively expected of them. Their reference group is bound by a fraternal identity classified by race. Moreover, the lack of direct social ties reduces the availability of normative signaling within the larger society.

Network-Based Offenders

Research by Bond and Bushman at Ohio State University finds that violence spreads like a contagious disease. Those directly exposed to violence are 48% more likely to adopt violence,

---

30 McCauley et al, 2013
31 Bicchieri, 2017
32 Heim, 2017
140% more likely to use a weapon, and 183% more likely to physically abuse another person\textsuperscript{33}. Use of violence in network-based offenders falls in line with norm-based collective action. Network-based offenders are individuals who hold an affiliation with a radical group. Examples of networked-based offenders are right-wing groups active within the United States. The Unite, the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, is just one memorable incident of violence perpetrated by network-based homegrown extremist offenders. White nationalists and white supremacists marched the streets chanting, “Blood and Soil. You will not replace us. Jews will not replace us.” The group rallied in protest of the removal of Confederate memorabilia which they believed to be a cornerstone in the identity of white America. The incident resulted in the death of three and the injury of 33 others\textsuperscript{34}.

For long, social learning has been discussed as a mechanism of delinquency. The use of violence as a function of social norms has yet to be examined in the propagation of intergroup conflict. Social norms are rules that individuals conform to based on expectations of their reference group. Expectations can be classified in two ways. First, they can be empirical: others in their group are conforming to it. Second, they can be normative: others in their group think you should submit\textsuperscript{35}. Network-based offenders fall slowly on the action via normative expectations. They are in close contact which their reference group, in person or online, and believe they are expected to use extreme measures to advance the groups needs. Thus, the propagation of violence among networks found by Bond and Bushman are through signaling of violence as a normative means of gaining traction among out-groups.

This document acknowledges a rise of socially isolated homegrown extremists (hereon referred to lone offenders) as well as the existence of individuals who have been radicalized as the result of association with radical groups (hereon referred to as network-based offenders). With the discussion of existing models of radicalization, this document posits a need for preventative measures that call for recognition of homegrown extremism as a national problem. This document further highlights the need for bilateral interventions aimed at increasing social capacity to address shifting demographics.

\textsuperscript{33} Bond & Bushman, 2017  
\textsuperscript{34} Weiner, 2017  
\textsuperscript{35} Bicchieri, 2017
Preventive Measures

The first step in the design of targeted behavioral interventions is to identify underlying motivations. Behavioral interventions must address the psycho-social drivers that justify the use of violence and use them as the basis for behavior change. Figure 4 highlights target populations at risk of adopting extremist behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interventional Aim</th>
<th>Reduction of homegrown extremism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Populations</td>
<td>Lone offenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network-based offenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Factors</td>
<td>Social Isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network-based norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations</td>
<td>Response to social-political-economic crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quest for significance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4. Summary of preventative targets*

The 2018 National Strategy for Counterterrorism Report states We must protect the homeland against the terrorist threat by building strong borders, securing United States infrastructure, and enhancing the preparedness of the American people.”

Counterterrorism has dominated the national agenda at the beginning of the 21st century. In attempts to protect American interest domestically and internationally, an offensive war against foreign agents of terror was announced. The nation was presented as an enemy, radical Islamist groups, and basic tenants of the identity were used to drive national cohesion.

“Through the National Strategy for Counterterrorism, we will achieve the following end states to safeguard our homeland, way of life, and shared interests: • The terrorist threat to the United States is eliminated; • Our borders and all ports of entry into the United States are secure against terrorist threats; • Terrorism, radical Islamist ideologies, and other violent extremist ideologies do not undermine the American way of life; and • Foreign partners address terrorist threats so that these threats do not jeopardize the collective interests of the United States and our partners.”

---

36 The White House, 2018
37 The White House, 2018
Recent trends in terrorism point to a shift in terrorism in the United States. First, there is an increase in white male perpetrators of violence who target nonchristian minorities to restore American values. The source of extremist ideology is no longer foreign; it’s domestic. Next, while network-based radicals continue to exist, violence in the hands of socially isolated individuals is on the rise. For decades, the American people have fought to protect their way of life from foreign influence. Current methods and targets of anti-terror efforts are outdated and unresponsive.

To sufficiently address the increased prevalence of domestic terrorism and homegrown extremism, public policy must take into account (1) the demographics of violent offenders: nonmigrant, right-wing, white males and (2) motivation that drive the perpetuation of violence: changing demographics and quest for racial and individual significance.

The identification of isolated individuals at high risk of engaging in radical violence is complicated. Moreover, isolation of networks promoting violence is limited in feasibility and requires immense resources. While research into homegrown extremism is necessary, addressing radicalization as a national topic of conversation stands independent. Executive and community-based interventions will be proposed within the concluding recommendation portion of this document.

Recommendations

Executive Interventions

This document calls for a comprehensive and proactive national strategy for addressing factors which lead to radicalization in white, male right-wing individuals. In the administration of behavior change interventions, communication strategies are important.

Executive interventions act as top-down intercessions that can mediate lower-level social and political change. Psychologist Gordon Allport notes, “It is easier to change groups attitudes than individual attitudes.” The attitudes of individuals are in large dependent on the beliefs of the group, and the attitude of the group is defined by norms dictated by its leadership. Policy-makers act as opinion leaders and play critical roles in the mediation of “attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors

38 Chavez et al, 2018
of others through their technical expertise, control of communication channels, or positions of authority.” Political leaders, directly and indirectly, have to the power to promote social meaning, or a shared understanding of concepts as right or wrong. Top-down expressions in “rank and file” leaders signal norm change which is followed suite.

Legislative steps against homegrown extremisms define the boundaries of modern terrorism and highlight the need for national infrastructure that addresses behavioral drivers that make the United States fertile ground for radicalization. Legislative interventions coordinate behavior. New normative expectations are communicated, and they signal the social costs of nonnormative actions. Articulation of new trends of terrorism promotes synchrony among lower-level administrative and social entities and increases the attention of thought leaders in addressing the issues of their communities and allow for restructuralization of resources. The strategy should highlight new trends within the realm of domestic terrorism and highlight the adverse effects of homegrown radicalization and violence by right-wing groups domestically, framing homegrown extremists as threats to national security. Moreover, the national strategy should explicitly denounce homegrown grown extremism and violence against minority groups and migrants.

Lastly, a top-down national recognition of homegrown extremism as an American problem removes the need for extensive resources and targeted profiling. Moreover, non-targeted political denunciation of homegrown extremism reduces probabilities of unequal resource allocation (as seen in unilateral integration efforts) and perceptions of racial targeting (as witnessed in the stereotypical labeling of Islamic radicalism).

Community Integration efforts

In addition to top-down, executive interventions, small-scale community-based interventions are needed to bolster the prevention of homegrown extremism. While political and national identity can be primed as a reference group, smaller community-based reference groups can be more useful for norm-based interventions.

Existing community based social integration measures primarily focus on integrating minorities and immigrants into larger communities. They unilaterally allocate resources and fail to address the needs of nonmigrant communities resulting from changing social dynamics. This

---

39 Lessig, 1995
paper calls for holistic community integration measures aimed at promoting personal and social capacities—social cohesion.

In the context of public policy, “the use of the concept of social cohesion is a response to the consequences of the structural changes produced in terms of keeping social ties of the society.” The academic discourse surrounding social cohesion has often discussed its potential for the reduction of intergroup conflict.

Social cohesion is in itself, two tiers: social ties among individuals and ties among individuals and their state institutions. Social cohesion can also serve as an “early warning mechanism against potential social disorder” 40.

Community social cohesion measures act as spaces in which members of a community can build relationships. Social identity is multidimensional and dependent on social reference groups. Individuals will “self-categorize” and adopt norms and behaviors thought to be relevant to success concerning their new social reference41. Parallel to the adoption of normative behaviors, people seek to avoid non-normative behaviors in fear of disapproval from ingroup members42.

With time and repeated interaction, relationships will function as reference groups with which individuals can understand their stature in the larger society and formulate alleviations to their perceived detriment. The creation of new social ties constructs physical reference groups for lone offenders and can act as a restructuration of existing ties for network-based offenders. The creation of the new relations within the direct environment can restructure attitudes and existing ideologies through the exchange of values and beliefs and thus, call into question assumptions of authoritarianism, an ideology Moghadam deemed preexisting in individuals susceptible to radicalization.

Social cohesion interventions can also make at-risk individuals easier to detect and manage. Holistic community-based interventions can allow policy-makers to address social grievances and alleviate threats to identity that empowers the use of violence.

Integration efforts can be the restructuring of already existing civic engagements. For instance, one integration measure can be the inclusion of non-migrants in the naturalization ceremonies in which newly naturalized citizens and their nonmigrant counterparts take an oath of

40 Chan et al, 2006
41 Reicher et al., 2010
42 Chekroun, 2008; Neville 2015
allegiance to the United States. The program can be extended such that members of the ceremony take part in a post-ceremony dialogue session in which members of the service will join in conversations which reduce perceptions in intergroup differences and highlight a collective American identity.
References


Lockwood, David. Civic Integration and Social Cohesion. In Gough I. and Olofsson G. (eds.)


Smith, H.J. and Ortiz, D.J. 2002. “ Is it just me?”. In Relative deprivation,


