

## I. Articles

### Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe: Introducing the RTV Dataset

by Jacob Aasland Ravndal

#### **Abstract**

*What is the record of right-wing terrorism and violence (RTV) in Western Europe post-1990? To date, RTV incident data suitable for temporal and cross-national comparisons have been lacking. Consequently, few comparative studies of RTV exist, and we generally have limited knowledge about the most recent evolution of RTV in Western Europe. To help fill these gaps, this article introduces a new dataset covering RTV incidents in Western Europe between 1990 and 2015. Including the most severe types of incidents only, the dataset comprises 578 incidents, including 190 deadly incidents causing 303 deaths. Each incident has been manually researched by the same person and coded on a range of variables, including time and location, perpetrator and victim characteristics, organizational affiliations, weapon types, and number of casualties. The article also proposes six hypotheses aiming to explain the perhaps most puzzling finding emerging from the RTV dataset: that the number of deadly incidents has declined considerably under conditions commonly assumed to stimulate RTV. These conditions include increased immigration, enhanced support to radical right parties, Islamist terrorism, and booming youth unemployment rates.*

**Keywords:** right-wing extremism; terrorism; violence; Western Europe; database

#### **Introduction**

In Western Europe, right-wing terrorism and violence (RTV) is commonly portrayed either as a marginal problem or as an imminent threat. Political motives aside, the coexistence of these two opposing views originate in a lack of systematic incident data showing variation in attack frequencies over time or between countries. This lack of good incident data limits our knowledge about the extent of RTV in contemporary Western Europe, including whether it is a rising or declining phenomenon, whether some countries are experiencing more RTV per capita than others are, and who the main perpetrators and victims are. Especially important, it constrains the potential for making causal inferences based on temporal and cross-national variation.

To help fill these gaps, this article introduces a new dataset covering RTV incidents in Western Europe between 1990 and 2015. Focusing on the most severe types of incidents, that is, attacks with a lethal or near-lethal outcome, attacks involving the active use of deadly weapons, and extensive plots and preparations for armed struggle, the new dataset offers a modest yet relatively consistent account of RTV in post-1990 Western Europe. In particular, an effort has been made to include all relevant deadly incidents (the dataset comprises 578 incidents, including 190 deadly incidents causing 303 deaths). The dataset can therefore be used to compare frequencies of such incidents across time and space, and also serve to make causal inferences from these patterns with reasonable confidence. The entire dataset is exclusively based on open sources; all data and corresponding sources will become freely accessible online upon the publication of this article via the C-REX website.[1]

To illustrate the need for fresh RTV incident data, the article first reviews existing terrorism databases and relevant incident chronologies. Part II introduces the RTV dataset, explains how it has been built, discusses its strengths and weaknesses, and presents some key findings. Finally, part III proposes six hypotheses aiming

to explain the perhaps most puzzling finding emerging from the RTV dataset: that the number of deadly incidents has declined considerably under conditions commonly assumed to stimulate RTV. These conditions include increased immigration,[2] enhanced support to radical right parties,[3] Islamist terrorism,[4] and booming youth unemployment rates.[5]

### ***Reviewing Existing Incident Data***

Why do we need fresh RTV incident data? One reason is that public opinion about the extent of RTV in Western Europe tends to polarize towards two opposing ends: at one end, various domestic intelligence agencies and other governmental bodies tend to downplay the RTV threat. These actors' position is epitomized by Europol's Terrorism Trend and Situation Report (TE-SAT), based on annual reports of terrorist incidents from EU member states.[6] Since Europol started reporting terrorist incidents systematically in 2006, only nine right-wing incidents (four attacks, five plots) have been reported, two of them happened in Western Europe. By contrast, Europol registered 2,111 "ethno-nationalist and separatist" terrorist incidents during the same period. The discrepancy between right-wing and ethno-separatist incidents may reflect a true yet probably smaller difference in attack frequencies. However, it likely also reflects EU member states' interest in reporting certain types of terrorism and not others. Furthermore, many right-wing attacks remain below these governments' radars, either because they are registered as hate crimes rather than terrorism, or because they are never registered at all.

At the other end of the spectrum we find various anti-racist organizations, policy-oriented think tanks, journalists, and other interest groups. These actors tend to exaggerate the RTV threat, typically by use of anecdotal evidence rather than through a systematic incident analysis.[7] They portray Europe as facing rising levels of right-wing militancy and violence – a situation that if one could believe some accounts, even resembles the interwar period in and around Germany.

These two opposing accounts can only be tested with more systematic incident data. However, existing terrorism databases do not satisfy this demand. Larger and well-known terrorism databases, such as the Global Terrorism Database (GDT) and the RAND Worldwide Database of Terrorism Incidents (RDWTI), both US-based, do not code for the political profile of an attack's perpetrator. Using these American databases, it is virtually impossible to effectively distinguish right-wing attacks from others. A handful of relevant incidents can be found using relevant search queries. However, these incidents appear to have been registered haphazardly, they often lack source references, and substantial information about perpetrators and context is often missing – or even misleading.[8]

Among the top 20 terrorism databases reviewed by Alex Schmid's *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, only four databases allow isolating right-wing attacks in Western Europe from other attacks.[9] Two of these – the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS) and the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (TKB) – recently became unavailable, thereby leaving us with *Terrorism in Western Europe: Events Data (TWEED)*, and Europol's annual *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT)*.

As already explained, TE-SAT offers scarce information about right-wing terrorism, which, if we are to interpret the reported attack frequencies literally, is close to being non-existent in Western Europe. By contrast, the 648 right-wing terrorist attacks registered by TWEED [10] have proven helpful for identifying and categorizing key right-wing terrorist actors and events in post-WWII Western Europe.[11] However, TWEED only covers the period 1950-2004, and is not helpful for capturing more recent developments. TWEED also relies entirely on a single news source: *Keesing's Record of World Events*. A single source ensures data consistency, but many incidents most likely never made it to the news headlines *Keesing's* daily news digest relies upon. TWEED is therefore helpful for painting the larger picture but less helpful for detailing

lower-scale incidents – a type of violence that may be more characteristic of contemporary right-wing militants.

Another relevant database (not included in Schmid's *Handbook of Terrorism Research*) is the Domestic Terrorism Victims Dataset (DTV) covering terrorist killings in Western Europe 1965-2005.[12] DTV includes two (of five) relevant perpetrator categories: "Extreme-right" and "Neonazi" [sic]. The DTV codebook fails to explain why these two categories were kept apart. It does, however, state that "it was much more difficult to find reliable information about the perpetrators of these killings" (extreme-right and neo-Nazi) and that "the information we have obtained about these killings is, in general, of worse quality than the one on nationalist and leftwing [sic] terrorism." [13] In other words, the main problem with the 250 extreme-right and neo-Nazi murders registered by DTV post-1990 is that they rely on poor sources. Many sources are no longer available online, and those that are available generally include few details about each incident.

While compiling the RTV dataset, the author of this article thoroughly researched every single extreme-right and neo-Nazi murder listed by DTV. This investigation revealed that many incidents should not have been included, either because the target selection was not primarily based on right-wing beliefs or by anti-minority biases, or because their circumstances remain extremely vague. In the creation of a new dataset, the author also came across murders that should have been included in the DTV dataset but were not. Furthermore, by excluding non-lethal incidents and terrorist plots, DTV misses out on important elements of the larger RTV universe. Thus, while DTV can be useful for comparing the modus operandi linked to different perpetrator's ideologies, it is less relevant for analysing contemporary right-wing terrorism in more depth.

In addition to existing terrorism databases, a handful of relevant incident chronologies have been compiled for some countries. Most notably, right-wing murder chronologies have been compiled for Germany,[14] the UK,[15] Spain,[16] and Sweden [17] – some of which were used as key sources for the DTV dataset. Relevant incident chronologies have also been compiled for countries such as Spain,[18] Italy,[19] and Greece [20] by anti-racist activists. However, some of these chronologies have rather broad and vague inclusion criteria. Having checked all registered incidents thoroughly, this author noticed a tendency to include incidents that either cannot be corroborated by credible sources, or whose target selection turned out not to have been primarily based on right-wing beliefs or anti-minority biases.

Potentially more credible sources are the various hate crime statistics published annually in a number of West European countries. Some of these statistics are of great value, such as the annual reports from the German [21] and Austrian [22] domestic intelligence services. These reports distinguish between different types of violence – murders, bomb attacks, arson attacks, and physical assaults – committed by right-wing activists. They do not, however, provide contextual information about each incident.

The majority of official hate crime reports are, however, less helpful for analysing right-wing violence. Some of them, such as the UK statistics, do not distinguish violent from non-violent hate crimes.[23] Instances of racist graffiti or verbal racial abuse are included in the same category as violent attacks. Another problem is that some official hate crime statistics, for example those from Finland, do not distinguish racist crimes (some of which are committed between minority groups) from crimes committed by right-wing activists. [24] In the Danish statistics, left- and right-wing attacks have recently been compiled together.[25] The latest German report no longer distinguishes between different types of right-wing violence, and mixes politically motivated attacks with apolitical crimes such as robberies. Another limitation of many national hate crime statistics is that they only include incidents reported to the police. A considerable number of attacks therefore remain unreported.

Yet the most important reason why most of these statistics are of limited value is that they are ultimately incomparable. Each country uses different definitions, different registration methods, and different inclusion criteria. Some countries also tend to change their methods and criteria from time to time, making time-series

analysis difficult. Some countries do not provide official hate crime statistics at all, including Spain, Greece, Italy, and Portugal.

Finally, a handful of academics have compiled relevant datasets, all of which have been used as background sources for building the RTV dataset. Daniel Köhler has created a database of German right-wing terrorist groups and incidents for the period 1965-2015.[26] Jan Oskar Engene has compiled an extensive dataset of political violence in Norway from 1945 to 2012 (unpublished). René Karpantschhof has registered violent and non-violent protest events from the Danish right-wing scene for the years 1990-1997.[27] Aron Kundnani has compiled right-wing murder incidents for post-1990 Europe, largely based on the murder chronologies discussed above.[28] In addition, Kundnani has collected some incident data. However, the number of incidents included in Kundnani's study is limited, and the data have not been systematically organized and categorized, thereby making temporal and cross-national comparisons difficult.

Summing up, existing databases and incident chronologies are outdated (TWEED, DTV), understate right-wing incidents (TE-SAT, GDT, RDWTI), lack contextual information (TWEED, DTV), rely on poor or no longer available information (DTV, GTD), omit terrorist plots or non-lethal incidents (DTV), apply overly lax inclusion criteria (anti-racist incident chronologies), or contain incomparable data (national hate crime statistics). As a result of all this, a new dataset was created by the present author.

### ***Introducing the RTV Dataset***

Counting 578 incidents only, the RTV dataset is smaller than most other terrorist databases. However, compared to most other terrorist databases, RTV includes more information about each incident, including all corresponding sources. This information has been used to code a range of variables such as date, location, incident type, perpetrator's organizational structure, perpetrator's organizational affiliation, target group, type(s) of weapon used, and number of casualties.

#### *Inclusion Criteria*

Each RTV incident has been carefully selected, using the following criteria: The dataset includes only incidents whose target selection – minority groups, political adversaries, or the government – is based on right-wing beliefs.[29] Incidents resulting from physical confrontations initiated by the victim, or violence caused by disputes within or between right-wing groups, are not included.

Furthermore, the dataset includes only violent incidents of a certain severity or those with a terroristic quality. More specifically, the dataset includes (1) attacks with a lethal or near fatal outcome, (2) attacks involving active use of deadly weapons such as knives, firearms, and bombs, (3) major attack plots involving use of deadly weapons, (4) discoveries of bomb-making materials or major arms depositaries belonging to right-wing activists, and (5) other violent incidents that unmistakably qualify as acts of terrorism.[30] Vandalism and other attacks causing material damage only, such as fire bombs targeting empty buildings at night, are not included.

#### *Sources, Strengths and Weaknesses*

The RTV dataset is based on many different sources. A majority of incidents are based on online newspaper articles. Other key sources include activist autobiographies, official and unofficial RTV chronologies and datasets, anti-fascist blogs and bulletins, personal communication with RTV experts, court documents, online videos, and in some cases secondary literature. Multiple sources have been gathered for nearly all incidents, most of which are available online from links embedded in the publicly available dataset. As a general rule, poorly documented incidents whose motivation remains unclear are not included. The number

of incidents that has been considered but not included in the dataset is much larger than the number of incidents that has been included.

The use of multiple sources entails both advantages as well as disadvantages. One advantage is that the number of incidents included is higher than it would have been using only one or a handful of sources, thereby strengthening the potential for making precise descriptive inferences. A disadvantage is that the potential for making causal inferences based on comparisons across time and space is somewhat weak, because the data are skewed towards countries and time periods that are better documented by available sources. For example, regular reports on right-wing violence in Italy have been found only from 2003 onwards, leaving the period 1990-2002 underreported in this particular case.

Because of this inherent limitation, it might be more fruitful to use deadly RTV incidents rather than all RTV incidents as a basis for explanatory analysis (all incidents should, however, be included when descriptive inference about RTV more generally is the main goal, such as exploring hypotheses about operational patterns, targeting, and organizational dynamics). Considering the severity of political and racist murders, such incidents rarely go unnoticed. We may therefore assume that the dataset covers (nearly) all relevant deadly RTV incidents between 1990 and 2015. While compiling the RTV dataset, this author also made an effort to include all incidents with a fatal outcome by asking RTV experts across Western Europe to provide information about relevant cases.[31]

Furthermore, RTV killings arguably constitute a reasonably good indicator of right-wing violence more generally. Political and racist murders rarely occur in complete isolation from less severe forms of violence. In many cases, violent perpetrators have been groomed through other violent episodes before committing a murder. We may therefore expect to find higher levels of right-wing violence in places and during periods with higher murder frequencies.

In addition to attacks and killings, the RTV dataset also includes major plots and preparations for armed struggle, unlike many other terrorist incident databases. Such incidents arguably constitute important elements of the RTV universe because they might have caused considerable harm had they not been discovered in time by the police.

A final strength of the RTV dataset is that all incidents have been researched and coded by the same person, using explicit and standardized inclusion criteria. This method ensures a degree of data familiarity and consistency that is hard to achieve in larger databases counting thousands of incidents.

### *Incident and Perpetrator Types*

The RTV dataset distinguishes between four incident types: (1) premeditated attacks, (2) spontaneous attacks, (3) attack plots, and (4) preparation for armed struggle. Attacks in which perpetrators have actively pursued a pre-defined person or target group have been coded as premeditated. Attacks triggered by random confrontations between perpetrator(s) and victim(s) associated to some pre-defined target group have been coded as spontaneous. Planned but not completed attacks by an identifiable group or individual involving the use of deadly weapons have been coded as plots. Finally, discovery of bomb-making materials or major arms depositories belonging to right-wing activists have been coded as preparation for armed struggle.

In many cases, the level of strategy and organization behind an attack or plot is hard to determine based on the available sources. Distinguishing terrorist incidents from other types of incidents has therefore been intentionally avoided because of the inherently blurred nature of such incidents. Yet a considerable number of the incidents included in the dataset would indeed satisfy most standard definitions of terrorism.

Building on Ravndal’s typology of right-wing terrorism and violence,[32] RTV perpetrators are categorized into seven types: (1) perpetrators acting on behalf of *organized groups* (known entities with five or more members whose association primarily relies on a strong commitment to right-wing politics), (2) *affiliated members* of organised groups acting on their own, (3) *autonomous cells* (clandestine entity of two to four members whose association primarily relies on a strong commitment to right-wing politics), (4) *gangs* (informal constellations of three or more acquaintances with a general right-wing commitment, but whose loose association primarily relies on social bonds, e.g. skinhead gangs and racist youth gangs), (5) *unorganized* perpetrators (two or more perpetrators with no known association to any specific right-wing group, cell, or gang), (6) *lone actors* (single perpetrators who prepare and sometimes also carry out attacks without anyone else knowing about it beforehand), and (7) *shadow groups* (unresolved attacks claimed by formerly unknown groups).

Having introduced some key features of the RTV dataset, we can now turn to some key findings.

**Key Findings**

Table 1 shows the distribution of incident types across the seven RTV perpetrator types:

Perpetrator type	Type of Violence				Sum
	Premeditated attacks	Spontaneous attacks	Plots	Preparing for armed struggle	
Organized groups	30	4	8	9	51
Affiliated members	37	6	1	5	49
Autonomous cells	19	1	8	4	32
Gangs	117	40	-	-	157
Unorganised	47	34	-	-	81
Lone actors	96	25	11	8	140
Shadow groups	6	-	-	-	6
Unknown	61	-	-	1	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>578</b>

Table 1. RTV Violence and Perpetrator Types

The perhaps most striking pattern from Table 1 is that premeditated attacks have been predominantly carried out by gangs (117 incidents) or lone actors (96 incidents), and less frequently by organized groups (30 incidents) or their affiliated members (37 incidents). Spontaneous attacks are mainly carried out by gangs (40 incidents), unorganized groups (34 incidents), and lone actors (25 incidents).

Next, consider the number of fatalities. Table 2 shows that the majority of killings have been committed by gangs, unorganized groups, and lone actors – and not by organized militants. However, autonomous cells have a much higher kill rate per attack than all other types – almost 1:1. Note that in Table 2 two cells in the lone actor row contain two numbers. The second number represents an outlier incident: the 22/7/2011 attacks committed by a lone actor in Norway in 2011, leaving 77 persons dead and 151 persons severely wounded.

<i>Perpetrator Types</i>	<i>Attacks</i>	<i>Casualties</i>	
		<i>Killed</i>	<i>Wounded</i>
Organized groups	34	5	86
Affiliated members	43	10	76
Autonomous cells	20	18	34
Gangs	157	76	247
Unorganised	81	55	77
Lone actors	121	56 (+77)	218 (+151)
Shadow groups	6	2	9
Unknown	61	4	29
<b>Sum</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>226 (303)</b>	<b>776 (927)</b>

Table 2. RTV Perpetrator Types, Attack Frequencies and Casualties

Turning to victims, two groups stand out as these are by far most frequently targeted: immigrants (249 incidents) and leftists (138 incidents). Other significant target groups include Muslims (28 incidents), government representatives (25 incidents), homeless people (25 incidents), and homosexuals (23 incidents). Jews have been less frequently targeted (7 incidents), while Muslims appear to be increasingly targeted. This observation resonates well with a general ideological reorientation by many extreme-right groups, who no longer consider their main enemies to be Communists or Zionists, but rather Islam and Muslims.[33]

Finally, RTV perpetrators most often resort to knives (119 incidents), unarmed beating and kicking (108 incidents), explosives (86 incidents), firearms (85 incidents), and blunt instruments such as iron bars, bats, or wooden sticks (68 incidents). In addition, firebombs (38 attacks) and arson (20 attacks) have also been frequently used. Truly complex terrorist attacks that combine explosives and firearms have so far happened only once (the 22/7/2011 attacks in Norway).

***From Description to Explanation***

Existing RTV research typically covers one of three regions: the USA, Russia (sometimes including Eastern Europe), and Europe (sometimes excluding Eastern Europe). Although RTV perpetrators may share some universal ideological traits, scholars generally tend to agree that context matters. These three regions represent different political, institutional, and cultural contexts from which RTV perpetrators emerge.[34]

Scholars studying the American context have produced some of the most advanced studies to date, partly because they have had access to systematic incident data.[35] While some findings from this body of research come across as highly context-specific, other findings may be more universally valid, such as the strong relationship identified between the number of active militants and groups on one hand, and levels of terrorism and violence on the other.[36]

In Russia, systematic incident data have also been available from the SOVA Center from 2004 onwards.[37] These data suggest that Russian RTV levels exceed those of any other country or region in the world, even when controlling for the population. Despite such high RTV levels, however, the Russian case remains largely understudied, with a few notable exceptions.[38] More research is thus needed to explain this outlier case.

Unlike the United States and Russia, systematic incident data has to date not been available for Europe as a whole, as discussed above. Consequently, much European RTV research consists of case studies covering specific groups, countries, or regions.[39] One notable exception is Koopmans’ study of right-wing violence in Western Europe.[40] However, to establish cross-national and temporal variation of his dependent

variable (right-wing violence), Koopmans compares incident data from different datasets that are ultimately incomparable.[41] The causal inferences presented in Koopmans' study must therefore be read with caution.

For some West European countries – Germany in particular – systematic incident data have been available, thus enabling a number of more rigorous studies. [42] However, one could argue that Germany represents in several ways (e.g. history, size, federal system) an outlier case, and that one should be careful about generalizing findings from Germany to the rest of Europe.

Either way, it is beyond the scope of this introductory article to truly engage with the existing RTV literature and the myriad of different hypotheses and theories proposed therein.[43] For the purpose of this article, it suffices to say that although the number of RTV publications covering (Western) Europe is considerable and growing, the inferences that can be drawn from this body of research remains somewhat limited, due to the heavy inclination towards case studies and a general lack of comparative perspectives. By introducing the RTV dataset, the present author hopes to prepare the ground for more such comparative studies in future research.

As already explained, killing incidents represent the most definitive and reliable measure of RTV. Analysing RTV killing incidents across time and space reveals several interesting patterns for further explanatory analysis. One of them will be briefly elaborated upon here, namely a considerable decline in deadly RTV incidents across Western Europe since the 1990s (Figure 1). In the following, a suggestion is made how this pattern might be further explored in future studies. The idea is just to illustrate how RTV data can be used in explanatory studies. Actually carrying out such an analysis would require considerably more space and rigorous analysis and is beyond the scope of this article.

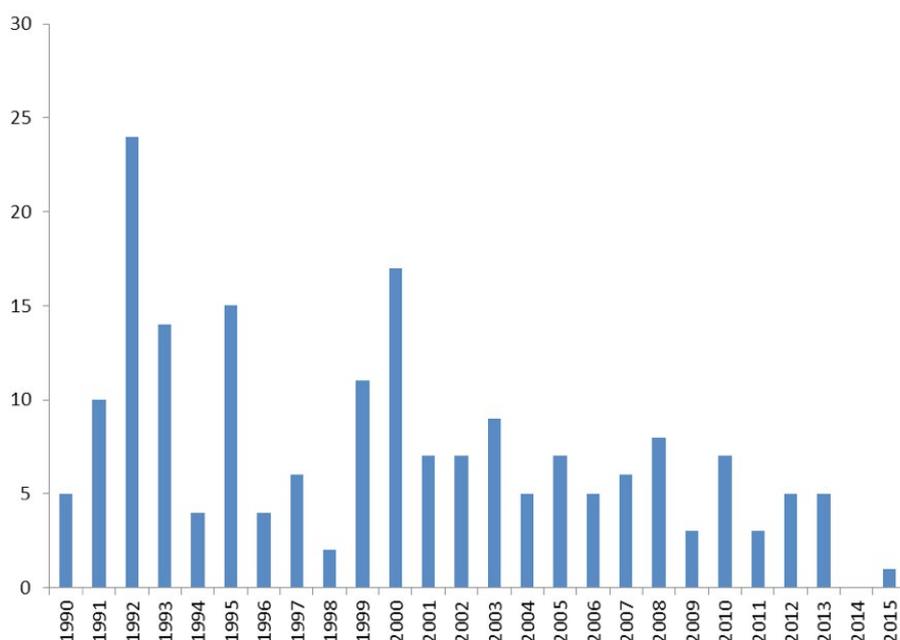


Figure 1. RTV killing incidents, 1990-2015 (N=190)

A decline of deadly right-wing incidents may come as a surprise at a moment in time when experts are warning about rising levels of right-wing militancy and violence across Europe.[44] Yet several annual reports on right-wing violence over the past 10-15 years show low, stable, or decreasing levels of violence. Such reports can be found from around 2000 onwards for Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Austria, and Switzerland (see Appendix 1).[45]

It should be noted, however, that these patterns may change in some countries following the ongoing irregular migrant flow crisis in Europe. It is still too early to say anything certain about the effects of this crisis on RTV, partly because many suspicious attacks remain unsolved. Many reported attacks have targeted empty buildings and other symbolic targets and would therefore not be included in the RTV dataset. Furthermore, few if any deadly incidents directly related to the migrant crisis have been reported thus far, although such incidents may of course have happened without attracting any media attention. With this minor limitation in mind, the reader should be aware that the RTV dataset and the following brief discussion is limited to the period 1990–2015, and that only a handful of incidents related to the ongoing irregular immigration crisis have been included in the dataset, most of which occurred in Germany in 2015.

The stable or declining patterns of right-wing violence that may be inferred from the RTV dataset and other relevant sources (see Appendix 1) challenge widespread assumptions regarding the conditions under which RTV is expected to occur—such as increased immigration,[46] enhanced support to radical right parties,[47] Islamist terrorism,[48] and substantial youth unemployment rates.[49] The fact that these macro variables have generally increased while right-wing killings and violence have decreased or remained stable gives us reason to believe that they may be less important than is often assumed. Clearly, more sophisticated causal analysis is needed before drawing any conclusions with confidence. However, we might benefit from looking at other explanatory variables, in addition to these four “usual suspects.”

What other variables might help explain a general decline in West European RTV since the 1990s? Based on a broad reading of existing research, I propose the following six hypotheses as points of departure for future research:

#### *H 1: Less Activism*

The first hypothesis states that contemporary West European youths may be less politically active than their predecessors were. As mentioned previously, existing research suggests a strong relationship between the number of political activists on the one hand, and political violence and terrorism on the other.[50] Thus, when the total number of political activists drops, we should also expect a drop in the number of political activists who radicalize and eventually turn to violence and terrorism. This trend can be observed through indicators such as youth electoral participation or youth memberships in political parties. While scholars seem to disagree about whether contemporary youths are actually less interested in politics, or whether they only express their political interest differently, there appears to be a broad consensus that they participate less in traditional political activities.[51]

#### *H 2: More Internet Activism*

The second hypothesis is that contemporary youths who do participate politically use different arenas and channels of influence from which direct violence is less likely to emerge. Most notably, street activism has been largely replaced by internet activism. Existing research suggests that “keyboard warriors” operating at the transnational level are less likely to carry out violent attacks than radicalized street gangs operating on the national or local levels.[52] At the same time, the Internet clearly represents a platform for radicalization. However, it remains unclear whether the Internet mainly pacifies and keeps most radicalized youths off the streets, or rather pushes them into the streets (and to conflict zones) to commit violent acts.[53] More systematic research is therefore needed to better understand the effects of internet activism on violent radicalization.

### H 3: Less Crime

A third hypothesis is that RTV may be caused by similar factors as apolitical violent crimes. Such factors as the quality of policing, social cohesion, the existence of illicit markets, and the existence of a legitimate state authority, have been found to significantly influence homicide rates in Europe.[54] Paramedic capabilities have also improved, which may influence death rates. When general homicide rates drop, one would expect a similar drop in RTV killings. Matching homicide rates (Figure 2) with RTV killing rates, one finds that the patterns largely overlap, suggesting that RTV may in part be explained by societal factors beyond mere politics and ideology.

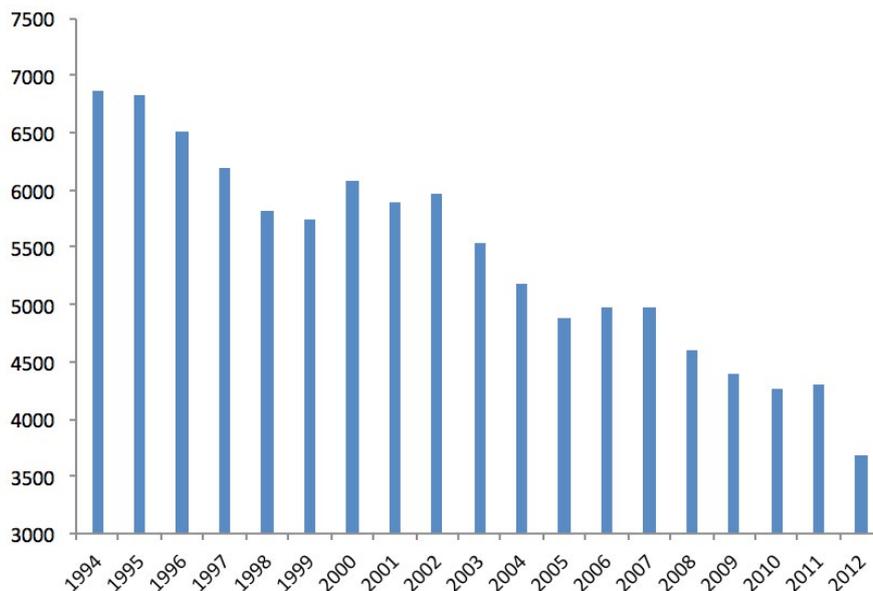


Figure 2. Intentional homicides in Western Europe, 1994-2012

Source: Eurostat: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/crime/database>

### H 4: New Subcultural Trends and Action Repertoires

The fourth hypothesis is that the subcultural trends and preferred action repertoires of contemporary right-wing militants have changed. During the 1980s and 1990s, an inherently violent skinhead subculture emerged throughout Western Europe and beyond. Violence was at the core of the skinhead movement and sometimes became an end in and of itself.[55] Today, the skinhead subculture has been largely replaced by less violent and confrontational subcultural styles in many West European countries. Some scholars refer to the “new right” (*la nouvelle droite*) as a more intellectualized movement that prefers long-term, deliberative, democratic and (social) media-oriented activism over violent street activism and terrorism.[56] We may thus be witnessing the emergence of a new form of right-wing activism that is less focused on violence *per se*, and more focused on a broader repertoire of mostly non-violent forms of action. [57]

### H 5: Political Opportunity Structures

The fifth hypothesis, derived from social movement research, suggests that the use of violence becomes less likely when radical right-wing actors gain access to political decision-making.[58] The underlying mechanism, sometimes referred to as the “pressure cooker theory,” is that when radical right parties obtain substantial electoral support, followed by political influence, this may function as a “safety valve”, releasing pressure from dissatisfied activists who may otherwise have turned to violence. By contrast, when access to

political decision-making is blocked, engaging in violent protest and revolutionary struggle becomes more attractive. Thus, the fact that radical right parties have gained access to political power in a number of West European countries over the past 25 years might have contributed to less violence.

#### *H 6: Multicultural Acceptance*

The final hypothesis is that contemporary Western youths are more accepting to non-Western immigrants than previous generations were. While the youth generations of the 1980s and 1990s experienced large-scale non-Western immigration for the first time and witnessed how this immigration changed the outlook of many cities, towns and neighbourhoods, a larger share of today's youths grow up in multicultural societies. They do not experience the same "cultural shock" that apparently produced so many violent and xenophobic reactions during the 1980s and 1990s.[59] Perhaps it is the case that initial experiences with immigrants in formerly ethnically homogenous societies produce violent responses? This could help explain, for example, why Eastern Germany, which has received far less immigrants than Western Germany, currently experiences much higher levels of anti-foreigner violence.[60]

### **Conclusion**

The dataset introduced in this article offers new and detailed information on RTV perpetrators, their victims, and, more in general, about the evolution of RTV in Western Europe after the end of the Cold War. Drawing on these new data, the article adds two important nuances to existing warnings about rising levels of right-wing militancy and violence in Western Europe:

First, the majority of attacks and killings have not been committed by organized militant groups but rather by unorganized gangs and lone actors. While organized right-wing terrorism in Western Europe has been rare, lone-actor terrorism is more widespread and may be on the rise. This trend is still not very strong, but the number of lone actor incidents per year has increased slightly since the 1990s. More research is therefore needed to better understand why and how some individuals enter such a violent path.

Second, the number of deadly incidents motivated by right-wing beliefs or by anti-minority biases has declined considerably since the 1990s, with zero incidents in 2014 and one incident in 2015. The article proposed six hypotheses aiming to explain this decline: less activism, a shift toward more Internet activism, less crime in general, different subcultural practices and action repertoires, more favourable political opportunities, and acceptance to multicultural societies. To further explore the fruitfulness of these six hypotheses, they might be tested in future comparative research, for example to investigate why some countries have experienced considerably more RTV than others have.

In this article, only bits and pieces from the RTV dataset have been presented. Several aspects have yet to be addressed, most notably cross-national variations in the frequency of (deadly) attacks. Other aspects that may be explored, using the RTV dataset, include the relationships between different perpetrator types and target groups, or between different organizational structures, weapon types, and casualty numbers. The dataset may also be used as a point of departure for more detailed investigations of specific regions, countries, militant groups, and perpetrators types. For example, the dataset includes 140 incidents involving 76 different lone actors whose background and motives could be explored in future research. This author hopes that the RTV dataset will prove useful and stimulate more comparative research, aiming to uncover the conditions under which RTV is most – and least – likely to occur.

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Please note the [RTV Codebook](#) and [RTV Dataset](#) are available as supplementary files from the C-Rex website.

## Notes

- [1] The RTV dataset and codebook can be downloaded from <http://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/rtv>.
- [2] Blake Evan Garcia, "International Migration and Extreme-Right Terrorism" (PhD Thesis, Texas A&M University, 2015); URL: <http://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/handle/1969.1/155240>.
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## Appendix 1. Right-Wing and Racist Violence in Seven West European Countries

Year	Sweden 1 <sup>1</sup>	Sweden 2 <sup>2</sup>	Denmark 1 <sup>3</sup>	Denmark 2 <sup>4</sup>	Netherlands 1 <sup>5</sup>	Netherlands 2 <sup>6</sup>	Germany <sup>7</sup>	France <sup>8</sup>	Austria 1 <sup>9</sup>	Switzerland <sup>10</sup>
2000	29				83		998	10		
2001	15				46		709	9		
2002	13				75		772	25		
2003	28		7		60		759	13		
2004	8	41	5				776	39		53
2005		27	6		70		958	23		52
2006		27	9		60		1047	26		64
2007		26	5		57		980	26	37	58
2008		50	13		64		1042	18	8	24
2009		31	9	9	25		891	25	14	32
2010		25	7	6		9	762	5	32	13
2011		14	5	4		3	755	4	41	18
2012		19	14	2		2	802	7	39	25
2013		22	17	2			801	7	11	13
2014		*					990	*	14	10

<sup>1</sup> **Unit of analysis:** Severe abuse motivated by white power ideology. **Source:** Annual reports by the Swedish Security Service (SÄPO); URL: <http://www.sakerhetspolisen.se/publikationer.html>.

<sup>2</sup> **Unit of analysis:** Violent crimes motivated by white power ideology. **Source:** Annual reports by The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå); URL: <http://www.bra.se/bra/bra-in-english/home/crime-and-statistics/hate-crime.html>. \* From 2014 onwards, Brå no longer provides information about violent crimes committed by the extreme right specifically.

<sup>3</sup> **Unit of analysis:** Racially motivated violent incidents – may also include racial violence between minority groups (2003-2006 manually counted by this author). **Source:** Annual reports by the Danish Secret Service (PET); URL: <https://www.pet.dk/Publikationer/RACI-indberetning.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> **Unit of analysis:** Politically (right and left) motivated violent incidents. **Source:** Annual reports by the Danish Secret Service (PET); URL: <https://www.pet.dk/Publikationer/RACI-indberetning.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> **Unit of analysis:** Violent assaults motivated racism and/or the extreme right. **Source:** Annual report (Racism and Extremism Monitor) by the Anne Frank House; URL: <http://www.annefrank.org/en/Education/Monitor-Homepage/Racism-monitor/>.

<sup>6</sup> **Unit of analysis:** Violent assaults motivated racism and/or the extreme right. **Source:** Report by the Anne Frank House, "Second report on racism, anti-Semitism, and right-wing extremist violence in the Netherlands"; URL: <http://www.verwey-jonker.nl/doc/vitaliteit/7352%20Anne%20Frank%20English%20Monitor%20Web.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> **Unit of analysis:** Violent assaults (Gewalttaten) committed by right-wing activists. **Source:** Annual reports by German Security Service, <http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/oeffentlichkeitsarbeit/publikationen/verfassungsschutzberichte>.

<sup>8</sup> **Unit of analysis:** Violent attacks (actions violentes) committed by right-wing activists. **Source:** Annual reports by La Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme (CNCDH); URL: [http://www.cncdh.fr/fr/publications/?f\[0\]=im\\_field\\_theme%3A139&f\[1\]=im\\_field\\_type\\_de\\_document%3A147](http://www.cncdh.fr/fr/publications/?f[0]=im_field_theme%3A139&f[1]=im_field_type_de_document%3A147). \* From 2014 onwards, CNCDH no longer specifies violent acts.

<sup>9</sup> **Unit of analysis:** Bodily injury (Körperverletzung) perpetrated by right-wing activists. **Source:** Austrian Security Service; URL: [http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi\\_verfassungsschutz/](http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi_verfassungsschutz/).

<sup>10</sup> **Unit of analysis:** Violence-related incidents motivated by right-wing extremism. **Source:** Swiss Federal Intelligence Service; URL: [http://www.vbs.admin.ch/internet/vbs/en/home/documentation/publication/snd\\_pub.html](http://www.vbs.admin.ch/internet/vbs/en/home/documentation/publication/snd_pub.html).