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of the

European Expert Network

on Terrorism Issues

(EENeT)

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EENeT – Working Paper Series

About the European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues (EENeT)

The EENeT is an independent, non-partisan consortium of terrorism experts from European law enforcement agencies / relevant authorities and the field of science.

It is dedicated to a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency analysis and research which is seen as a prerequisite to provide comprehensive insights into the complexity of the phenomenon "terrorism". For more information, please visit www.european-enet.org

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Preface

Dear readers,

This report reflects the various presentations and discussions during the

EENeT – Conference 2023

held in September in Prague/Czech Republic, with a focus on aspects of both research and practice in the fields of radicalisation, extremism, terrorism and its prevention.

On the initiative of the Faculty of Social Studies of the Masaryk University in Brno the EENeT Conference was conducted for the first time in the Czech Republic, with the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic kindly offering the historical Liechtenstein Palace in Prague as a conference site.

While the Faculty of Social studies of the Masaryk University hosted our conference this year, with the support of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, both hosting partners co-financed the event together with Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community.

The organisation of the event, which led to the success of the Conference, was facilitated by the excellent cooperation between the Faculty of Social Studies of the Masaryk University and the EENeT Secretariat.

The programme consisted of the input and presentations of our EENeT participants, including the Keynote speakers, along with two Podium Discussions and the World Café as round table discussions. The aim of the Conference was to allow the sharing of information and insights across various aspects of the field to enhance the international, interdisciplinary and interinstitutional exchange of knowledge.

A special thank you to the hosts, all the active presenters and panelists, Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community for their financial support and the support team of the EENeT Secretariat who made our Annual EENeT Conference 2023 in the Liechtenstein Palace in Prague possible and a remarkable event.

Dr. Richard Warnes,

Research Fellow and Steering Committee member, United Kingdom

Mr. Uwe Möws,

Head of the EENeT Secretariat at the Federal Criminal Police Office of Germany

1. Welcome and Introduction
Mr. Tomas Pojar and Prof. Miroslav Mareš

Currently, the Czech Republic is fortunate to hardly be affected by terrorism. Nevertheless, it was the decision of Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala to co-host this conference with the renowned MUNI Masaryk University in the Liechtenstein Palace in Prague, as further research and knowledge is needed to successfully combat terrorism.

Terrorism is a global phenomenon. Consequently, the best way to combat terrorism is through international cooperation in terms of attending events like the Annual EENeT Conference, in order to exchange valuable knowledge and information on the subject.

One specific issue needs to be highlighted: It is very important to continue to label and refer to terrorists as well as terrorist institutions as such in research and public debates rather than distinguishing and labeling between social, political or military entities and beings, as this undermines their actual existence and threat.

Mr. Pojar thanked all the organisers, and Germany's Ministry of the Interior and Community, and wishes all participants fruitful discussions and a successful conference.

2. Keynote Speakers

2.1. Trends in Violent Extremism and Terrorism in the Czech Republic: An Academic Perspective
Prof. Miroslav Mareš and Dr. Petra Mlejnková

Prof. Mareš and Dr. Mlejnková introduced their keynote presentation, which sought to describe historical legacies of violent extremism and terrorism on Czech territory, identify contemporary terrorist and violent extremist trends in the Czech Republic, and explain academic interest and involvement in Counter-terrorism (CT) and Counter Violent Extremism (CVE), before outlining three relevant cases. The main goal of their contribution was to analyze violent extremism and terrorism in the Czech Republic within the research framework of contemporary studies on extremism and terrorism.

They initially outlined the historical development of violent extremism and terrorism on Czech territory. This included the legacy of totalitarian regimes, such as the training of PLO Force 17, right wing extremism and violence, left wing militancy, and foreign terrorist threats related to an Iraqi plot to attack Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty and Libyan threats. More recently there has been the return of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) from Ukraine and Islamist groups in the Middle East and violent demonstrations during the Covid-19 period. There have also been violent attacks associated with Neo-Nazis and right-wing extremists, small levels of violence by the 'Czechoslovak Sovereign Citizens' and New Religious Movement (NRM) communities.

Year	Terrorism	Hate Crimes
2020	15	134
2021	10	108
2022	16	149

Fig 1: Crimes related to terrorism and hate crimes in the Czech Republic

These examples include the Balda case of 2017, which was a 'false flag' attack to blame Muslims, where trees were cut onto a railway line to derail a train, but it failed. In 2021 a Czech youngster motivated by Timothy McVeigh planned to plant bombs by an embassy. Within the wider field, there is some level of cooperation between the academic spheres and security institutions in such areas as joint projects, expert witness reports, special training and workshops or conferences. However, there are challenges to the academic research of terrorism.

An example of academic research on terrorism includes the Vrbětice munitions depot, where there was an explosion in 2014 which killed two workers. At the time it was considered an accident, but in 2021, the Czech government named Russian GRU Colonels Anatoli Chepiga and Alexander Mishkin, as responsible. They were also both identified as being behind the 2018 Salisbury Novichok nerve agent attack against the Skripals. As a result of the incident, academics were involved in political and media discussions about state terrorism and the analysis of hybrid campaigns. But it also highlighted the differences between legal and social scientific understanding of terrorism and covert actions.

Another example of research they raised was Project EXKYB – 'Experimental research on individual responses to threats in cyberspace'. The research by Masaryk University examined the limited number of Islamist attacks in the Czech Republic to ascertain 'whether people respond differently to stimuli featuring cyber and conventional terrorism'. The results showed that cyberterrorism is not innocuous in terms of people's emotional responses as it still elicits negative emotions, such as anger, fear, disgust and anxiety only slightly weaker than terrorism itself.

A current violent extremist trend in the Czech Republic is due to the ongoing tensions between parts of the Roma community and the Ukrainian community. Following the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, there was a strong wave of Ukrainian migration into the Czech Republic. This led to tensions around employment, accommodation and social services, which escalated following the killing of a young Roma by a Ukrainian in Brno during June 2023. This has led to demonstrations and violent incidents in other regions, resulting in a mediation platform, including academic participation.

In conclusion, Prof. Mareš and Dr. Mlejnková stated that the territory of the Czech Republic had a long history of violent extremism and terrorism, including state terror. Currently, the situation was relatively 'quiet', despite worrying trends, in particular the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Although a challenging field, the academic community cooperates intensively with the security sector.

2.2. Medical Intelligence
Prof. Marco Lombardi

Prof. Marco Lombardi introduced his keynote presentation by asking 'What is MEDINT'?
He presented several definitions including an official definition of medical intelligence as 'The application of medical and biological knowledge to national defence'. However, he pointed out that this and other definitions tend to have a military approach. A more precise definition will help set parameters and criteria for evaluation, standardise and avoid misinterpretation, legal and ethical issues. So, there is still no effective coherent definition that fully captures the aspects of medical intelligence and there is only a rather vague idea of what MEDINT really is.

Earlier in 2023 the US Department of Defence (DoD) released its Biodefense Posture Review, which highlighted the importance of medical intelligence and impacts on defence strategy. This calls for an improvement in the Biothreat intelligence collection, analysis and sharing. Nevertheless, there is a peculiarity of intelligence and very vague identification, despite the new threat scenarios we are going to face.

With an increasingly connected health-care system, another aspect to consider is the security of medical records and the data breach of such sensitive data. Between 2009 and 2022 there were 5, 150 healthcare data breaches of 500 or more records reported to the HHS Office for Civil Rights. These resulted in the theft and exposure of 382, 262, 109 healthcare records. This has an impact on health, and we must balance the vulnerability and the risk to data on modern IT systems. Italy is 4th with regards to the level of data breaches and Prof. Lombardi and his team conducted interviews with several health-care workers and found out that data security often seems to be neglected in health-care institutions… no one is taking care of associated IT security.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a turning point. Italy was badly affected and there was a Russian team of 400 'experts' helping Italy, collecting data on the COVID impact. They were embedded at various hospitals and there was no control of what they did, or what information they obtained. That includes information from the Lazio Region, which covers Rome, allowing access to the medical records of leading politicians, senior officials and military. Consequently, the topic of MEDINT is crucial, since strategic information – such as models of how the Corona-Virus has spread during the pandemic and when or where political figures tested positive for COVID – is not protected and might be relevant intelligence for hostile state actors and third parties with malicious intent.

There is also a threat posed by medical or health-related technology which can be particularly vulnerable. Apple Watches can reveal health related data and information, while Vice President Dick Cheney asked cardiologists to remove the wireless function from his defibrillator as he was worried about remote interference. So, there is fear of the potential to hack and interfere with medical systems. You might be able to target an individual remotely through an electronic computerised prosthesis, which may also include interference with robots being used for surgical operations. This technical interference is an emerging threat in an increasingly digital and connected environment, so the cyber threat is a reality.

Within the field there are a lot of emerging threats and issues. These include the obtaining of sensitive health data and its elaboration to identify the health status and medical vulnerabilities of key actors. Another potential threat is the malicious modification of the health data of key individuals such as politicians, officials or senior military personnel. There is also a lack of communication awareness amongst healthcare personnel and the potential manipulation and hacking of medical machines and prosthetics. Consequently, there is great vulnerability, and it should no longer be just a military focus. As a result, we need a new definition of what medical intelligence is.

The old definition of MEDINT had restricted scope to national defence and military issues, ignoring its application in civilian and public health domains. It is applied in a defensive and preventive perspective, neglecting proactive and offensive uses. Finally, it does not consider it a multidisciplinary process that goes beyond 'medical and biological knowledge' and 'human and animal health information'. Consequently, there needs to be a re-balancing of perspective and a more appropriate definition of MEDINT, such as *'all sources information process about medical and health related issues, that produces actionable intelligence relevant to national and*

organisational interests and decision-making processes at any level in alignment with ethical and legal principles. Often MEDINT is unbalanced in favour of Med (Medical), but we have to re-balance it to take care of INT (Intelligence). Intelligence (INT) manages information and in this case, it is applied to the medical (MED) domain to obtain information related to national security.

3. Presentations of the EENeT Experts

The following abstracts were sent to the EENeT Secretariat by members as summaries of their presentations. They were divided into four categories: Digital environment, Case studies/Empirical Data Analysis, Spotlights in Terrorism Research and Dealing with Extremism and Terrorism. The presentations were delivered in parallel in four rooms at the Liechtenstein during the Conference event.

Digital environments
3.1. Digital communication ecosystems: exploring radicalisation processes and extremisms in the new relational environments
Dr. Barbara Lucini

The EU H2020 Counter project (https://counter-project.eu/) is aimed at developing an innovative tool to detect and prevent forms of extremism with different ideological backgrounds. The project has made it possible to systematise some reflections on the broader topic of on/off-line ecosystems and radicalisation processes. In accordance with the analysis of some online and offline ecosystems representative of extreme right-wing ideology and Islamic extremism, carried out within the framework of the EU H2020 Counter project, it is possible to propose some reflections on the typologies of these radical ecosystems and the transition from virtual communities of practices (VCoP) to communicative digital ecosystems. Specifically, a clear focus will be on the links and the attractive factors that characterise the membership and persistence of these radical and extremist communities. Moreover, the analysis will make evident the practices of adaptation and resilience that the same digital communities put in place to overcome conflicts, criticalities and vulnerabilities both internal and external to their ecosystem of reference. In conclusion, the results of this analysis can be read in the light of two innovative methodological and practical perspectives: on the one hand, the consideration of these ecosystems as a context in the sense of a proactive non-human actor, interdependent on the extremist communities themselves; on the other hand, it will be possible to highlight some reflections on current terrorism risk assessment tools – TRA-Is and their appropriateness in the rapidly changing social -extremist context. In particular, the results are operationally useful in that they indicate a methodological shift in the consideration and interpretation of risk from the consideration of the individual extremist and specific characteristics to the consideration of the individual relationships and communications in the new digital relational contexts.

3.2. Bytes not waves: information communication technologies, global jihadism and counterterrorism
Prof. Patrick Bury

Rapoport's conceptualization of the last, religious wave of four global waves remains highly influential. But it, and other typologies, have placed too little emphasis on the influence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) on the evolution of global jihadist activities. This article makes two new contributions by developing both a new ICT-based typology for understanding jihadist evolutions, and by focusing on successful attacks. Our central argument is that ICTs' impact on global jihadism has facilitated dramatic transformations of its strategy,

organization and tactics since the 1990s, and that these can be understood as four overlapping iterations. 'Jihadism 1.0' describes the hierarchical, top-down directed and overseas financed and trained terrorist organisations that conducted iconic attacks at the turn of the millennium. Jihadism has since evolved into 'Jihadism 2.0' and then 'Jihadism 3.0'. Jihadism 2.0 recognizes that a number of smaller, coordinated attacks can have a global impact. Jihadism 3.0 is inspired terrorism that has no links to the central terror organization, utilizing individuals and crude tactics. Finally, jihadism is evolving toward 'Jihadism 4.0', or cyberterrorism. We argue this typology provides a useful basis for scholars and practitioners to conceptualize the ICT dynamics influencing global jihadism, and these may be applicable to other global terrorists. The conclusion analyses how counter-terrorism services can respond to these evolutions and charts areas for future research.

3.3. Is online Islam a religious, political or identity speech?
Dr. Pierre-Alain Clément and Ms. Noura Ouerghi

Online Muslim speech has emerged and rapidly expanded in the past decade. The top ten French-speaking channels today have 500 million views and 5 million subscribers. This popularity is often framed as a problem, either because of some problematic views expressed by these "online imams" (e.g. Antisemitism, sexism) or because the growing visibility of Islam is ill-received in contemporary France (in 2020 and 2022, polls showed that a majority was against the wearing of religious signs in public spaces). The growing assertiveness of a visible Islam is often seen, in the opinion amongst decision-makers and some scholars, as cumulative signs of a political or identitarian agenda. Other scholars consider this a spectacular exception within a trend toward secularisation. Now, studies examining the speeches of Muslim actors are still rare, even more so when popular Muslim actors are concerned. This study aims to analyse what popular Muslim contents are produced online and how it is received. The most-viewed Muslim Youtubers are favoured as they are outsiders in the general Muslim field but they are dominant on the online Muslim field. In the first part, through qualitative content analysis, the study describes the context of production and the themes privileged in the 45 most-viewed videos of 10 youtubers. In the second part, through quantitative speech analysis, the study breaks down the comments of the three most-viewed videos of the 10 youtubers. The presentation will provide preliminary observations and interpretations of this exploratory study.

3.4. 'Based' and 'pilled': Analysing the convergence of far-right and Islamist extremism in online remix cultures
Prof. Kevin McDonald

This paper presents research being undertaken within the Horizon 2020 PARTICIPATION project (2020-23) into contemporary radicalisation and extremism in Europe. An important part of this project is a deeper understanding of the role played by digital cultures and communities in pathways to radicalisation and violent extremism. This is evident in conspiracy theories, meme communities and expressions of hate, all of which became increasingly evident during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The PARTICIPATION research points to the same structuring processes at work across at first what appear very different expressions of extremism and radicalisation. This is particularly evident in the convergence occurring between far-right and Islamist extremism. This extends beyond the more obvious convergences around antisemitism, anti-LGBT and misogyny, and highlights more fundamental structuring processes involved in both subjective transformations and community formation associated with contemporary extremism. This presentation examines this convergence in online communities (Reddit, Twitter, Facebook, and

Telegram) and highlights the ways radicalisation and extremism are increasingly embedded in wider 'remix' and participatory cultures, from the production and circulation of memes to experiences of being 'based' and 'pilled'. Understanding the 'remix' and participatory foundations of online radicalisation is fundamental to responding to the challenge of preventing and policing violent extremism in Europe today, and a critical field of collaboration between researchers and LEAs.

3.5. From Christchurch to Terrorgram: The Role of Eco-Fascism in Perpetrators' Manifestos and Online Propaganda
Dr. Matteo Cantarello

Within online eco-systems, eco-fascism and eco-fascist propaganda have grown significantly in the last half decade. On one side, eco-fascism featured prominently in the manifesto of the perpetrator of the Christchurch attack (2019) and has appeared in other manifestos since – often without significant modifications. On the other side, eco-fascism (and the broader category of eco-terrorism) has become paramount in the propaganda production of right-wing extremists like accelerationists. In this case, however, eco-fascism has proven to be less ideological and more pragmatic. This paper illustrates the converging paths of eco-fascism and eco-fascist (online) propaganda by comparing three manifestos of right-wing perpetrators and three publications of the Terrorgram group. The goal is twofold. On the one hand, the paper highlights the differences between evolving propaganda and violence manifestation of VRWE. In other words, eco-fascist (online) propaganda becomes ideologically more complex and detailed, but this does not reflect in perpetrators' manifestos which are, in terms of content, quite redundant. On the other hand, eco-fascist (online) propaganda shows characteristics in common with eco-terrorist propaganda produced by left-wing extremists and anarchists. This suggests that a less ideologically oriented analysis of the topic would help practitioners from different fields engage better with eco-terrorists, regardless of their position on the political spectrum.

3.6. Evolving Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence (MUAI): A Game changer for Terrorism and Violent Extremism
Prof. Arije Antinori

The rapid evolution of Artificial Intelligence technologies and tools has given life to new opportunities and challenges in various domains, including terrorism and violent extremism. Here, the Evolving Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence (MUAI) represents a game changer for Terrorism and Violent Extremism. It poses significant threats to both Public and National security because of its potential impacts on online engagement, perception of reality, radicalisation, lone actors' capacity, Generative AI (Gen-AI) based propaganda and toxic narratives. MUAI strategies are very adaptive and dynamic, so they can enhance the activities of terrorist groups and individuals. The malicious use of such a powerful technology can identify, target, and exploit vulnerable individuals to radicalisation. It can also be crucial to cyber-social profiling and social media analysis with the aim of engaging people receptive to extremist ideologies not only in the extremist infospheres. Thanks to MUAI, microtargeting is easier and more effective as well as the dissemination of online violent contents, deepfake videos/audios to manipulate citizens, synthetic identities and the spread of digital hate. By analysing user preferences, sentiment analysis, and online behavior, MUAI can deliver tailored messages and manipulate information to re-shape reality and recruit individuals, amplifying the reach and impact of hybrid ideologies. Therefore, it can provide lone actors with access to advanced planning tools, enabling them to carry out attacks with increased autonomy, efficiency and destructive creativity. From a

traditional cyber-security perspective, MUAI can autonomously plan zero-day attacks, facilitate complex cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure, exploit vulnerabilities in security systems, and force AI-driven unmanned vehicles (UAVs), and drones. In conclusion, the evolving MUAI represents a game changer for terrorists and violent extremists. Pro-active and multidimensional approaches to counterterrorism, international cooperation, and the establishment of a strong algorithmic frameworks are needed to deal with such a security threat. EU Member States have to develop new strategies to prevent and counter violent radicalisation, anticipate lone actors' attacks, and mitigate the impacts of AI-based propaganda that can undermine trust in information sources, and foster social divisions and conflicts.

Case studies/Empirical Data Analysis

3.7. Study on Hate and Violence towards local politicians in Germany
Ms. Kirsten Eberspach and Ms. Sarah Bitschnau

Hostility and violence against politicians, scientists, journalists, etc. have increased strongly in recent years - especially during the pandemic. In Germany, reports are accumulating that politicians at the local level are also particularly affected - local politicians, who are considered especially vulnerable. For this reason, the Federal Criminal Police Office, in cooperation with the leading municipal associations, is conducting a nationwide survey of municipal politicians on their experiences with hate, incitement and violence. This is a longitudinal study that will be conducted at six-month intervals until 2024 in order to track current trends and developments in this area. In the long term, the results of the study will serve as a basis for developing evidence-based, targeted preventive measures for municipalities. So far, three waves of surveys could be implemented, and their findings indicate a serious increasing problem concerning hatred and agitation against public persons, which can threaten our democratic coexistence in the long run. The presentation will address the methodological approach, the current findings from the three different waves and more in-depth analyses with demographic data of the surveyed group.

3.8. Managing Disguised Compliance in Deradicalization Programs
Dr. Daniel Köhler

The Competence Center against Extremism in Baden-Württemberg (konex) of the State Office of Criminal Investigation conducted a study on recognizing and managing disguised compliance and deception in deradicalization work together with the Queensland University in Australia in the summer of 2022. Through interviews with counseling staff from various programs in four countries, case studies, and an extensive literature review, recommendations for specific implementations in exit programs were identified. The presentation summarizes the main findings and study methods.

3.9. Who are Reich Citizens and Self-Governors? - Empirical analyses of data on politically motivated crime in Germany from 2017 to 2022
Dr. Holger Stroezel

The presentation deals with knowledge of the law enforcement agencies on Reich citizens and self-administrators, whereby the lecture is divided into two parts. In the first part, a definition of this subject area is presented in order to learn more about these two extremist groups. After a definition, a short presentation will follow on how data on this topic area is collected in Germany via the "PMK" (Politically-Motivated Crime) as bright field statistics. In doing so, since the inclusion of this topic area in 2017, the distribution in the PMK for Germany is presented. Furthermore, the

order of magnitude for the Federal Republic of Germany, the identification characteristics, and the respective activities of Reich citizens in Germany, are presented. In the second part, further descriptive analyses are carried out, in which particular attention is paid to the PMK phenomenon areas, previous police knowledge, the age and gender distribution, as well as multiple perpetrations.

3.10. Right-Wing Extremism in Slovenia: A Case Study of the recently Created Paramilitary Structure
Prof. Iztok Prezelj

Slovenia is a country with a low level of organized crime and not a single successful terrorist attack in its history. Nevertheless, there have been all kinds of radicalisation, and this presentation focuses on a very recent case of a right-wing paramilitary group, its formation, leader, goals, and activities. This group is not the first paramilitary structure of this kind in the country: two such groups were founded in the 1990s.In the first part, we will present the multidimensional personality and cognitive world (including his conspiracy ideas) of Andrej Šiško, the leader, criminal, politician, former soccer fan leader, presidential candidate in the elections, etc. We will present the moment of the creation of Varda (the paramilitary unit), related public scandal, the training of its members, the public statements of its leaders and their aspirations to be included in the national security system. Additionally, we will also discuss the group leaders' links to politics and other extremists. In the final part, we will discuss the government's response and the court process. The presentation provides a lot of illustrative material and details. At this stage, we can say that this case represents a dangerous escalation attempt by a right-wing leader to mobilize the nation by using a paramilitary group to protect the nation. On the other hand, this case is also an example of a successful response by the Slovenian government to such an escalation of extremism. The case is offered as an instructive example of a threat in a society that is generally not threatened (by terrorism) and of a successful government response.

3.11. Structures and Streams: Firearms and terrorism in Central Europe
Prof. Oldrich Bures, Dr. Alexandr Burilkov and Prof. Stephan Humer

This project builds on existing research (presented at the EENeT Conference 2022 and currently under review at TPV) on the relationship between firearms availability and the incidence of terrorism. While the strictness of gun control legislation does not appear to have a significant impact in reducing terrorism, firearms availability instead has a strong correlation with terrorism, indicating that the ease of acquiring guns enables terrorists and violent groups to more easily and frequently commit attacks. This is particularly notable for both mass casualty attacks – more frequently committed wholly or partly with guns – and for lone wolf terrorism, especially right-wing extremist (RWE). This project seeks to examine in depth these dynamics by focusing on three Central European countries: Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. All three have a history of RWE as well as particular gun cultures that play a role in the type and number of firearms available in society. Furthermore, the conflict in Ukraine has led to an unprecedented flow of advanced weapons into Europe. Previous incidences of conflict in Europe, such as the Balkan wars, eventually led to an outflow of guns to the rest of Europe, ending up in the hands of organized criminals, terrorists, and extremists. There are already signs that Ukraine might function as a similar "arsenal of anarchy." The two foci of the project are the structures, which are existing networks of RWE groups and domestic gun culture, and the streams, which are transnational arms trafficking patterns as well as the foreign fighters from these countries that have taken part in the Ukrainian conflict since 2014.

3.12. "Information Disorder" campaigns as Hybrid Threats – A Russian Weaponization of social media? Two Case Studies in West Africa

Dr. Felipe Pathé Duarte

This presentation concerns the consequences of "information disorder" campaigns and influence operations through social media in West Africa. The objective is to understand how Russia weaponizes social media as part of a campaign in regions where peace is fragile – such as Mali or Burkina Faso, where there are evidences of Russia-sponsored "information disorder" campaigns – to spark violence for civil unrest or bolster insurgent narratives about the enemy's supposed atrocities. "Information disorder" campaigns are a non-kinetic form of hybrid threat. It has to do with activities that, through words, images and coordinated actions, aim to change the perception and behaviour of the target audience. The aim is to subvert social and political dynamics or even a military campaign. It intends to question the decision-making process and change a specific established order. Here, social media plays a crucial role which, through narrative- oriented operations, can be transformed into weapons accessible to almost all types of actors. Information is multiplied at high speed and low cost, allowing the dissemination of information disorder campaigns to cement political and social division and influence different decision-making procedures. Nevertheless, this type of operation is more than a question of strategic communication. It places communication at the heart of a geopolitical and security strategy.

Spotlights in Terrorism Research

3.13. The Transnational Nexus of Violence-Oriented Right-Wing Extremism, Terrorism, and Organized Crime

Mr. Alexander Ritzmann

During this presentation, the findings of a current research report by the Counter Extremism Project (CEP) concerning the patterns of cooperation between right-wing extremism (RWE) and organized crime will be discussed. Various RWE individuals and groups in Europe and the United States engage in or maintain ties with organized crime. Many of the cases identified by CEP have a transnational dimension, for example, through cross-border activities like the acquisition of illegal drugs or parallel memberships in RWE and transnational organized crime groups. These linkages range from mere operational contacts to a full-scale transformation of RWE structures into organized crime structures that follow an RWE ideology. There is a lack of up-to-date and in-depth analyses of the financial strategies employed by RWE stakeholders. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and sharing practices related to combating organized crime activities and strategies by RWE should be improved. On the operational level, joint national and multilateral RWE -organized crime task forces could be established to enable targeted investigations.

3.14. Trends of leftwing Violence and Terrorism Potentials in Germany

Mr. Matthias Mletzko

Databased research on leftwing violence in Germany is almost non-existent! A long-term look at the amount of violent actions (2001-2022) classified by the German PMK (crimes with political motivation)-statistics, shows a wave type course with sharp ups and downs – reflecting a typical pattern of short term mobilisation topics and (riot-)opportunities. Rightwing violence in comparison is more stable and only peaks during heated migration policy episodes. Since 2005 the number of leftwing violent actions was constantly, sometimes significantly higher than rightwing, with the exception of last year (2022). Dominant and continuous target areas of

leftwing violence are rightwing and police actors, other topics vary according to political cycles – like recent climate politics. A closer look at qualities of action is mandatory and shows severe differences between left- and rightwing – which underline some leftwing specifics: 1) Terrorism: Since the decline of German leftwing terrorism classic groups Red Army Faction (RAF) and Revolutionary Cells (RZ), no leftwing militant group chose the MO of systematic lethal attack (firearms, explosives) – in contrast to rightwing terrorism (NSU group, lone actor firearms attacks). 2) Violence intensity: The number of rightwing homicides is unequally higher and the percentage of bodily injuries (face to face violence) is consistently higher than leftwing. Nevertheless, recent cases of organized leftwing violence in the field of 'antifascist' action indicate leftwing terrorism potentials. Some militant groups realized an older idea of 'bonebreaker'-type-punishment actions scarcely below lethal violence: Attempts with hammers or similar heavy equipment, aiming to cause permanent physical damage for the targeted rightwing wing actors. This type of action is a reminder of escalation episodes in the late 80s and early 90s: In 1986 the Revolutionary Cells (RZ) used .22-Pistols for 'anti-racist' kneecapping 'punishments' of judges responsible for expulsions of illegal migrants. Some years later, during the wave of rightwing xenophobic violence and after the downfall of the Red Army Faction (RAF), the idea of an 'Antifa-RAF' was brought up, but never realised.

3.15. Medical Intelligence in Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency Operations
Prof. Mark Harrison and Dr. Richard Warnes

While medical intelligence (MEDINT) is now regarded as critically important across a broad spectrum of security concerns, its usual functions are either in force protection (evaluating risks to personnel at the tactical and operational levels) or in considering threats to the health and stability of nation states (the strategic level). The uses of MEDINT in counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN) have received little attention except in so far as they overlap with these concerns, i.e. where they involve matters of force-protection or the threat of bioterrorism. But this was not always so. In the past, information relating to health and medicine was considered intrinsic to COIN operations, if not to domestic terrorism. By adapting some of these techniques to contemporary practice, and utilising technologies that were not available in former times, we can use MEDINT in innovative ways to exploit the vulnerabilities of hostile groups and to isolate them from surrounding populations. This paper indicates some of the ways in which intelligence from a range of sources can be utilised to engage with communities more effectively; to anticipate the behaviour of target groups/individuals; to determine their whereabouts, interactions and supply-chains; and ultimately to exploit their vulnerabilities. The paper is not intended as definitive but as a starting point to a conversation as to how MEDINT could or should contribute to CT and COIN operations.

3.16. Mental Health: Islamist Perpetrated Attacks Associated to Mental Health
Mr. Andrin Raj

Mental Health issues have been a growing problem globally. However mental health issues within Islamist perpetrated attacks have never been explored. The general consensus on terrorist attacks based on mental health issues have raised concerns and individual attackers arrested or detained have been in most cases referred for psychological assessment based on western medical sciences. Mental health issues related to Islamist Perpetrated Attacks by religious Jihadist can be linked towards the Mujahadah, Riyadhah and Takiyatunnafs methods to achieve mental health in the needs of counseling guidance. The findings are based on content analysis techniques used in

psychodynamics based on the thoughts of Iman Al-Ghazali. The reverse of these concepts based on Islamic thought are where the radical thought of perpetrated jihadism takes precedents as radical Islamist are aware of these concepts in order to recruit and radicalize a perpetrator to carry out attacks under the name of Allah. Human spirituality crisis can be narrated to allow the perpetrator to be convinced that what is provided within the context of the three tenants can solve their mental illness by following false narratives from the three tenants accordingly to an Islamist approach in radicalism and violent extremism within the Muslim community. In Islam, mental health is achieved based on faith and piety. The presentation will cover the above aspects on mental health linked to Islamist perpetrated and motivated terror attacks and why we must understand that in general `mental health' related attacks perpetrated by Islamist individuals differ from the general norm of psychological assessment of individuals detained or captured for acts of jihadist threats under the western normative of psychological assessment.

Dealing with Extremism and Terrorism

3.17. On the Impact of Bans on Right-wing Extremist Groups and Associations
Prof. Fabian Virchow, Dr. Karsten Wilke and Dr. Carl Melchers

In the time from 1.1.2023 to 31.12.2026, Duesseldorf University of Applied Sciences (HSD) and the School of Economics and Law (Berlin) will conduct the research project 'On the Impact of Bans on Right-wing Extremist Groups'. In this presentation, the research concept, the research methodology, and first findings will be introduced. In the federal republic of Germany - contrary to other Western democracies - bans are a widely used political instrument in countering right-wing extremism. The legal foundations for these bans are article 9 of the constitution (*Grundgesetz*) as well as the statutes for registered associations (*Vereinsgesetz*) from 1964.Due to their elaborate position in the political decision-making process, broad and controversial public debates can be observed when it comes to bans of political parties. However, the bans on groups and associations rarely receive lasting attention. The bans on right-wing extremist groups and associations, frequently implemented since the early 1950s, are widely a desideratum within research, specifically in terms of reasons, decision-making processes, implementations, and in particular the impacts of these governmental bans. The research project VerRexVer, which is political science and contemporary history oriented, takes up at this point. Its aim is to explore empirically how the institutions involved in the banning processes come to decisions, if, when, following which reasoning, and with which intended impact bans were imposed. In addition, the project aims to find out whether, and if so to what extent, the intended impacts happened, whether unintended impacts occurred, and - if applicable - how the institutions involved in the decision-making processes evaluate them. Regarding the impacts, the perspective of those affected by the bans is relevant as well: How do they discuss the sanctions, and what reactions occurred?

3.18. Understanding non-involvement in political violence: Why individuals do not cross the threshold to engage in political violence?
Ms. Jennifer Dowling

Understanding how and why individuals become involved in terrorism is a question that has drawn attention from scholars of terrorism and political violence, as well as practitioners dedicated to confronting and combatting terrorism globally. Insights from within the field of terrorism studies and beyond its disciplinary boundaries have significantly advanced our understanding of this complex psychological process and have demonstrated that it is never a one size fits all approach to understanding how and why individuals come to become involved in this

form of political violence. Instead, it has been argued that it is necessary to not only look to factors that manifest at an individual level but also to the broader social and structural contexts in which these processes take shape. Despite all this progress, there has been far less attention devoted to understanding why individuals who follow seemingly similar pathways do not become involved in terrorism or political violence. Thus, the question central to this research asks why individuals who may be exposed to similar risk factors and presented with opportunities to engage in political violence do not cross the threshold themselves? The relevance of this study is underpinned by its academic relevance; in that it builds on a bourgeoning field of research within the field of terrorism and political violence research that explores barriers and protective factors that buffer against violent extremism. The study also bears practical relevance for practitioners and policymakers as it explores an under-researched population which crucially allows us to understand the context to which extremist groups and movements survive and thrive. By looking to those who did not cross the threshold it contributes to measures that seek to build resilience at a communal and societal level, and better understand the factors that might keep individuals from becoming involved in political violence more broadly.

3.19. The aftermath: responding to Terrorism
Dr. Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn

How societies respond to terrorist attacks is still a relatively understudied topic in the field of terrorism studies. If terrorism scholars wish to get a better understanding of this phase after an attack takes place, there is much that can be learned from adjacent disciplines such as crisis management, sociology or symbolic politics. This presentation aims to demonstrate how this can be done in practice, by using the concept of meaning-making to understand responses to terrorism. It looks at four different jihadist attacks in Western Europe and discusses how both authorities and societies engaged in forms of meaning-making in the first year after an attack. By doing so, it zooms in on rituals, symbols and frames used by different actors.

3.20. MOTRA-Research Monitor (FoMo) – Dynamics, Evidence, Network
Dr. Benjamin Heimerl

On the basis of the highly dynamic processes in the field of radicalisation research, a drastic increase in research projects and studies has been observed in recent years, which makes it sometimes difficult to keep track of this dynamic field. Along with this, there was a growing need for a platform that provides an overview of the current research landscape. It required a single point of contact, embedded in MOTRA; an information platform that informs scientists (and the public) as promptly and comprehensively as possible about current and completed research projects from universities, civil society and/or the government and security sector. This is what the MOTRA-Research Monitor FoMo project is about. With this goal in mind, FoMo wants to contribute to a more direct exchange of research findings between science and practice, as well as within the research community. Similarly, an interdisciplinary dialogue between university, (security-focused) governmental and civil society research should be strengthened. FoMo is therefore open to all organisations and scientists who are involved in radicalisation research as well as practitioners active in the field and the interested (professional) public. The FoMo network, which has been acquired, structured and standardised over the past 2 years, extends to university, (security-focused) governmental and civil society research institutions. The lecture provides a structured overview of the history of the project, its current findings and the workflow of the network partners.
https://www.motra.info/wissenstransfer/fomo-forschungsdatenbank

3.21. Hybrid War's Challenge to Law Enforcement – Domestic Violent Extremists

Dr. Peter Kiss

Hybrid war is a relatively recent term-of-art in western military science, and a subject of research for the best part of two decades. In a very small and oversimplified nutshell it is the use of all instruments of state power to attack a targeted state's identified vulnerabilities and achieve warlike gains without the risk of war. The phenomenon it describes is not terribly new, but information technology has made it a quite effective form of prosecuting a conflict today. Western military organizations and academics have been studying it for the best part of two decades now and have amassed a very extensive body of research. That does not seem to be the case with law enforcement organizations. I recently reviewed several volumes of police science journals in English, German, Hungarian and Italian, and did not find a single article on the challenges a campaign of hybrid attacks may pose to law enforcement. (However, to be entirely fair to law enforcement professionals, recently I came across a CEPOL call for instructors for a course on hybrid warfare.) It is all the more surprising, because very often the police are the first responders: they have to deal with the initial phases of a hybrid campaign. Law enforcement officers (and the senior law enforcement leadership) must recognize when the incidents they are dealing with are in fact a series of hybrid attacks, and that the domestic violent extremists are incited and supported by a foreign power. If they fail to do so, they are likely to treat each incident in isolation, rather than as parts of a something far more insidious and a threat to national security. The presentation will focus on the characteristics of hybrid warfare, and the challenges for law enforcement, and as a case study it will review Ukraine's experience with the violent extremists that Russia employed prior to annexation of the Crimea and the Donbas region.

4. Podium Discussion

4.1. Podium Discussion 1
Evaluation of P/CVE and deradicalization initiatives: State of art and ways forward
Moderator: Dr. Leena Malkki, Director Centre for European Studies, University of Helsinki, Finland

Panellists:
Assoc. Prof. Teresa Silva, Mid Sweden University
Ms. Natalia Jarmuzek-Troczynska, Polish Platform for Homeland Security, Poznan, Poland
Ms. Tarja Mankkinen, EU Commission

The podium discussion focused on the current state of evaluation in the P/CVE field and how to improve it. It is commonly agreed that it would be important to have more evaluations. At the same time, there is only limited common understanding of how evaluations should look like and how to address those challenges that may discourage policymakers and practitioners from engaging in evaluation. This is a summary of some of the points raised during the podium discussion.

In this discussion, evaluation refers to evaluation of P/CVE initiatives (policies, strategies, programmes, interventions etc.). Such evaluation is conducted to find out how a P/CVE initiative is working and/or what kind of results it is producing. It is not the same as, for example, risk assessment, which focuses on determining individual's risk of radicalisation.

Evaluations of P/CVE initiatives are considered important, because they provide more information about what kind of P/CVE work is impactful and under which conditions. Why have we not seen

more evaluations? The panellists brought up several explanations. Policymakers and practitioners sometimes lack necessary skills and knowledge to engage in evaluation, so more training is needed. One clear challenge is also lack of resources – it is still quite common that when funding is allocated for P/CVE initiatives, it does not include funding for evaluation. Without dedicated resources, it is very hard to conduct good-quality evaluations.

Engaging in evaluations can also be seen as a risk. Practitioners sometimes fear that evaluations are used as a control tool and their results may have a direct impact on whether their work will be funded in the future. Such fears can have an impact on practitioners' willingness to participate in evaluations, which, in its turn, may have an effect on the reliability of evaluation results. Evaluations are more useful when conducted with learning, rather than control, in mind. Therefore, it is recommended that evaluations are conducted in the middle of the funding period and without any direct connection to funding decisions.

Evaluations may also not seem like an attractive idea because of the perceived political risks. There are fears about how evaluation results may be used for political purposes, especially in today's polarised societies and politics. For this reason, evaluation results are not always published even when they are conducted. This means that we do not know about (and therefore cannot learn from) all evaluations that have been completed.

What could be done to improve the situation? The panellists shared the view that the long-term goal should be to establish an evaluation culture in the P/CVE field. This means that evaluations should become a standard part of policies and practices – something that would be seen as a part of their lifecycle and not something extra. It will take time to get there, but one clear step towards it would be to just start doing more evaluations and thereby gradually familiarising all stakeholders in the P/CVE field with evaluation.

It would also help if more attention was directed at planning evaluations. Ideally, evaluations should be planned together with the initiative itself. Evaluations are impossible without having access to relevant data and many types of relevant data cannot be collected at the time of the evaluation. This is the case especially with outcome/impact evaluations. Without having data about the situation at the beginning of the initiative, it is very hard to determine what kind of impact the initiative has had. Planning the evaluation together with the initiative is the best way to ensure that all necessary data will be available when the time for evaluation arrives. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that the first moment for evaluation already comes at the beginning of the initiative. It is possible to conduct a formative evaluation of the initiative plan or its pilot implementation.

In the long run, good-quality outcome/impact evaluations are needed to identify what works and what doesn't work in the P/CVE field. Once there are enough individual studies, it is possible to conduct systematic reviews of their results, something like Campbell Collaboration reviews. There are already evidence-based reviews on the P/CVE field, but their usefulness is somewhat limited because there have been relatively few studies that fit the criteria of these reviews. It would also help to have more studies that use control groups, although such studies are difficult in the P/CVE field due to ethical and methodological challenges.

The most acute challenge is to improve the knowledge about evaluations among practitioners and policymakers. More training and instruction are needed. It was also brought up that it would help if the academic education, for example in sociology and criminology, was more geared towards problem solving and supporting evidence-based policymaking and practice. This would also

involve engaging in evaluations of policies and practices. What is also good to notice is that while full-scale external evaluations are important, more limited internal (self-)evaluations can also be very helpful. They require less resources and can still be good for learning from one's own experiences. They cannot replace external evaluations, but can be a good first step towards building evaluation culture in the organisation.

The podium discussion is related to an ongoing Horizon 2020 funded INDEED project (www.indeedproject.eu).[1]

4.2. Podium Discussion 2
Impact of Russian aggression against Ukraine on violent extremism and terrorism in Europe
Moderator: Dr. Petra Mlejnkova, University Brno, Czech Republic
Panelists:
Ms. Hana Sebova, National Police Force, Slovakia
Mr. Alexander Ritzmann, CEP, Germany
Mr. Gert Vercauteren, CUTA, Belgium

Ms. Mlejnkova:
Dr. Petra Mlejnkova introduced the panel and the topic for discussion which focused on the impact of Russian aggression in Ukraine on violent extremism and terrorism in Europe.

Mr.Ritzmann:
The violent transnational Extreme Right Wing (XRW) in Germany and beyond is weaker, but in other ways more of a threat. Previously with various networks such as the Russian Imperial Movement and Ukrainian Azov Battalion, there was wide unity in relation to the 'Great Replacement Theory' which overcame petty nationalism. However, when war came, the XRW groups were asking whose side they should support… pro-Russia, pro-Ukraine or remain neutral. However, while this weakened their unity, the conflict has also made the situation more dangerous resulting in an increased access to weapons and an increase of individuals with PTSD. The militant left-wing extremists are supporting the Ukrainians, but I'm not sure if there are many Extreme Left Wing (XLW) fighting on the Ukrainian side. With Germans of Russian origin, how many are supporting Russia?

Ms. Sebova:
It's difficult. We see them as both Slavic countries and now there is increasing Russian propaganda in Slovakia. It changed after a couple of months of fighting, with Slovaks becoming more pro-Russian. But that is also thanks to the Politicians who are feeding this information. There is not a very positive image of Ukrainians in Slovakia, and some of the same narratives as Russia regarding de-Nazification have been used. The politicians from extremist milieus are now more subtle in their ways of presenting ideas.

Mr. Vercauteren:
There is confusion in the XRW. They talk of replacing Eurasia with strong nation states, but not the EU, and Putin and Russia are seen as leading this drive. There is a narrative of ethnic Russian

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oppression in the Donbas and more tendency too support the Russian side. Now many groups have backed off from Russian support. Most have decided to remain neutral but retain their support for concepts of a right-wing extremist 'nation'. However, there is still a French Belgian XRW group supporting Russia.

Mr. Ritzmann:
There is also the issue of Foreign Fighters… with recent XRW propaganda asking, 'Aren't your warrior tattoos itching?' Germany officially states that there are 38 Germans fighting in Ukraine – as far as they know? How are they supposed to know. Many of those involved are more professional than Islamist Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF).The French by comparison are stating that there are 120 XRW fighting in Ukraine. The EU want to play down XRW volunteers who went to Ukraine. There is a response to returning FTF for Islamists, but no one is preparing for XRW returnees from Ukraine and the associated weapons smuggling etcetera.

Ms. Sebova:
The volunteers are on the Russian side, with one allegedly dead and a number wounded. In Slovakia individuals can ask for permission, and permission has been given for eight out of 60 to go to fight. There is no de-radicalisation process, and we don't know if there are any returnees, so I cannot give any information.

Mr. Vercauteren:
In Belgium there were less than 200 interested and Ukraine gave us the list. Of all these, only 47 actually departed to Ukraine. The majority came back, but there are a few remaining, including one Belgian of Chechen origin who changed sides. They are contacted by the intelligence services when they come back. If there are worrying signals, psychology or war crimes, an eye will be kept on them. Most have no extremist ideology, a few were known for XRW ideology, and we have a couple of jihadists of Chechen origin.

Mr. Ritzmann:
The Wagner Group was recruiting in the Czech Republic, sometimes through combat sports clubs. There is also a Russian Volunteer Corps, with Russians fighting on the side of Ukraine, and they are actively recruiting. There is a German Corps and Ukrainian International legion as well as Russians in the Donbas. The Rusichgroup has Wagner links and is training Russians, Germans and Finns in St. Petersburg. Allegedly there are 38 Germans involved, but I think its more.

Ms. Sebova:
I think everyone is all over them in Slovakia.

Mr. Vercauteren:
There is limited propaganda for Wagner and as far as known, no Belgians are fighting for them.

Mr. Ritzmann:
I am not sure now if there are fewer FTF. It may take time to get specific details. 150 went to fight on the separatist side in 2014, so it could be that there are many more than that.

Mr. Vercauteren:
If Belgian nationals fight for the International Federal Corps – or indeed for the Russian Army – we won't prosecute. But with PMCs and war crimes then it is different. It's a mixture of adventure and wanting to help, with around 5-6% known to be linked to extremism. Out of the 47 who returned, all were interviewed by the police and intelligence services, so they were not hiding from what they did.

Mr. Ritzmann:

For the moment, those coming back from Ukraine are not the same as Islamic FTF, however, there is the weaponisation of the conflict. Weapons from the Ukrainian conflict are starting to end up in the hands of extremists. Some will come back via Organised Crime Groups (OCGs). They are also bringing back military skills, so we will have to carefully monitor. In an XRW antisemitic attack in Halle, the attacker was stopped by the wooden door of the Synagogue. I don't think that would stop someone with military training!

Mr. Vercauteren:

There is a ferocity in current narratives, XRW, XLW, anti-vax movement etcetera. And a 'New World Order' conspiracy theory, which is anti-establishment, anti-establishment thinking, populist and anti-everything.

Ms. Sebova:

With the election on 30th September, we will see what has happened.

Question/ Input (Mr. Bury):

With the expanded use of drones in Ukraine, including First Person View (FPV) and modifications, use of 3D printers etc. there is the fear that such skills could be exploited for terrorism. In terms of UK fighters in Ukraine, at least ten have been killed and 30 injured, with the number of 'volunteers' believed to be in their hundreds.

Ms. Mlejnkova:

Dr. Mlejnkova concluded the podium discussion and thanked the panellists for their contributions.

5. World Café

5.1. World Café 1: Medical Intelligence

Moderator: Dr. Barbara Lucini, Italy and Prof. Mark Harrison, United Kingdom

The discussions concerning Medical Intelligence (MEDINT) were facilitated by Dr. Barbara Lucini and Prof. Mark Harrison, who focused on three key questions: **What** exactly is MEDINT and how can we develop an accurate definition? **Why** MEDINT, what is the point of its application and… **How** can we apply it, what sort of data, legal and ethical aspects need to be considered?

What:

The reason it is so difficult to define MEDINT is because it is not source based and covers the whole domain. One proposed definition might be *'The collection, evaluation and analysis of health-related data for intelligence purposes.'* However, it was questioned whether the collection of health-related information on others, whether individual or collective, should really be the business of national public health? Is that intelligence or statistics, and should that really be national data? In addition, MEDINT takes in broader societal data, such as food security, water supplies and human behaviour, and consequently there are political sensitivities and vulnerabilities associated with it.

At a practical level, MEDINT has historically included combat medics training to counter insurgencies and understanding the enemy's behaviour in relation to needs. This has been linked to obtaining information on the medical status of individuals, groups and/or populations for security purposes and to gain insights. The question is to what extent MEDINT should be

considered part of National Security as opposed to Human Security, which seldom includes medical issues. What purpose is the data being used for and can it be abused for black-mailing?

Why:

MEDINT can relate to an individual, group or population. With regards to its purpose, it can be used for military, civilian, insurance or business purposes, as well as for malicious purposes with the abuse of data. In the case of the latter, this might not only include criminals, but also exploitation by terrorist groups or hostile state actors. More recently such intelligence has included the number of citizens vaccinated against COVID-19 and spread of the disease nationally, in order to gain national security advantages. Consequently, we need to understand both how health data can be exploited, including mental health issues, and the importance of understanding the medical needs and vulnerabilities of an enemy, including terrorist groups. We also have to consider the potential crisis management of sensitive MEDINT, exploited or accidentally released.

How:

Aspects of MEDINT can be obtained and applied through technology, stakeholders and open-source analysis. But when does obtaining personal health information become legitimate and legal? We need to consider data protection and the ethical and legal frameworks that protect personal data. We also need to be aware of cyber vulnerability and other types of sources, such as HUMINT. There is also the consideration of wireless technology hacking in relation to medical sensors, trackers and prosthetics. In conclusion we need to consider under what conditions could or should MEDINT be accessed?

5.2. World Café 2: Political Islamism
Moderator: Dr. Nacer Lalam, IHEMI, France and Dr. Nick Petropoulos, Greece

The World Cafe sessions regarding Political Islamism were led by Dr. Nacer Lalam and Dr. Nick Petropolous, who pointed out that although we can look back to the Muslim Brotherhood at the start of the 1920s in Egypt, the issue of Political Islamism was not really popular or researched before 9/11. There was consequently no awareness of the level of threat. The threat developed because religion became instrumentalised, and the instrumentalisation of religion can be a problem. But what is the current perception of the threat and what is the actual level of threat?...

Political Islamism is actually currently quite marginal in Europe and it appears there is low mobilisation in most EU countries. However, although in many countries Political Islamism is not a threat, it may well be perceived as such. In addition, it seems important to place the issues in their historical and national context. Indeed, countries such as France or the United Kingdom have long-standing links with Islam, and their populations include a Muslim component that must not be essentialised.

With the influence of Religion in politics, we need to distinguish between cultural and political and the confusion between Islamic behaviour and Political Islam. There is a lack of knowledge about Islam and Islamism and the definition has to be clear between political Islam and political Islamism In Europe. There is also the use of Sharia Law and the impact of funding for Political Islam to consider, from such countries as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey. However, Islamaphobia likely feeds the problem, with labelling increasing tensions, generating polarisation and creating Islamists. Although there should be a separation between the state and religion, we need to explore the possibility of integrating Political Islam in the democratic system to build bridges, despite the fact that such an approach is challenged and questioned by certain political and societal entities throughout Europe. We can also look to develop influence and engagement

through NGOs. Ultimately, we need greater research on this subject and there is a lack of knowledge among national law enforcement agencies, and consequently a greater need for awareness and training for practitioners, which may be an opportunity for academics.

5.3. World Café 3:Threat of Single-issue Terrorism/Anti-government extremism
Moderator: Prof. Miroslav Mareš, Czech Republic and Dr. Holger Stroezel, Germany

The sessions on the threat of Single-Issue Terrorism and Anti-government extremism were moderated by Prof. Miroslav Mares and Dr. Holger Stroezel, who highlighted that there is a growing problem of ideologies and movements associated with anti-government extremism, which can pose a threat to the democratic system, delegitimising the state. This includes the German *Reichsbürger* Movement, the Yellow Vest protests in France, the groupings of the so-called sovereign citizens in the Czech Republic not recognizing the dissolution of Czechoslovakia thirty years ago, the Anti-5G Movement, and various Extreme Right Wing and Libertarian groups. Many of these groups are super-spreaders of information, linked to the dissemination of fake news and conspiracy theories. As well as such movements, at the individual level there are also small numbers of lone actors, often young, frustrated people, some with mental health issues. Another challenge to contemporary democracies is posed by the eco-militant movements.

While it has to be acknowledged that government actions can create the motivations behind such groups, how do we deal with these new threats, some of which are very national, some of which are transnational? Some have a very long history, but others have the milestone events of COVID-19 as a trigger. There is no one specific ideology and because of the broad and differing range of ideological motivations behind these threats, part of the problem of dealing with them is the difficulty of categorization in this particular field.

There is also a difficult balance between the legitimate activism of social movements, individual freedoms of speech and the right to protest versus radicalised extremism, criminal damage and violence. There is a long way between legitimate anti-government protest and terrorism and while anti-governmental extremism is not always a threat, the threat is violence. Unfortunately, citizens committed in a wave of legitimate protest, sometimes with emotional and financial troubles, can be exploited and misused by extremist actors. The question is, are they dangerous people and are we at risk of developing polarised societies? What is their longer-term intent, and do they have access to weapons, or is weaponry available? How do we deal with multi-national movements in extremism?

In terms of solutions, we need to consider whether we will be dealing with more extremist approaches in the future and what the democratic reactions should be to multipolar crises? What forms of dialogue and communication are possible with these movements, which often see the world in a two-dimensional black and white vision, and how do we deal with emotionalised discussions in the digital field? Do we need new categories and what do we call them? There are some new categories in the European Union, but clearly there is a need for future coordination between academics and practitioners.

5.4. World Café 4: Right wing Extremism/Terrorism
Moderator: Mr. Gert Vercauteren, Belgium and Mr. Frank Geens, Belgium

The World Café sessions on Right Wing Extremism and Terrorism were facilitated by Mr. Gert Vercauteren and Mr. Frank Geens. They stressed that currently we are seeing extremist nationalist values growing all over the world and spreading in Europe, often as a response to migration and refugees. Multiple right-wing populist parties are becoming more mainstream in the political landscape, while countering non-violent extreme right parties presents an increasing problem. At the same time, extreme right online terminology and thinking is finding its way into mainstream domestic use, such as aspects of the 'Great Replacement Theory'.

However, despite the level of current hate speech and polarisation in society, support for right wing extremism does not appear to have translated into more violent hate crimes. Counter-intuitively, it appears statistically that extreme right-wing violence is in decline, although it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics and the designation of hate crimes by RWX individuals or groups is often problematic, regularly failing to be properly reported.

Nevertheless, there is a growing overlap with anti-establishment movements and conspiracy theories, linked to various political 'Dog Whistles', vigilantism and increased targeting of government and local officials. There are also increasing extreme right links with a variety of subcultures such as various cults, music genres and online gaming. Although some of these subcultures are some distance from the mainstream, they can be very dangerous. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly difficulty to categorise right-wing extremism.

Extreme right actors have developed ways of communicating covertly 'under the surface', while using new technical means through exploiting social media, such as Telegram and the 'Dark Web'. The extreme right-wing are often connected in the virtual world through such networks. These online subcultures have made it increasingly difficult to track their communication. There is an additional concern that if organised criminals are already exploiting the Metaverse for operational planning and training, then so could such extremists and terrorists.

At the same time as these various developments, there has been a generational shift in the extreme right scene, with the average age of those involved dropping and more and more young people becoming active in right wing extremism. So, it is no longer a case of the old Neo-Nazis - the 'Old Bald Skinheads', but technically sophisticated and socially networked young extremists. Clearly this developing and complex threat requires continuing research and cooperation between academics and practitioners.

6. **Business Meeting**
   Moderator: Mr. Uwe Möws, Germany

Mr. Möws opened the business meeting. He stated that the EENeT has currently around 170 members and that Dr. Nikki Sterkenburg from the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) in The Netherlands was suggested by the Steering Committee as a new SC member. Ms. Sterkenburg presented herself and was then formally nominated. The SC members are hereby subsequently the following:

Dr. Uwe Kemmesies, Germany
Dr. Nacer Lalam, France
Prof. Marco Lombardi, Italy
Prof. Miroslav Mareš, Czech Republic
Dr. Nick Petropoulos, Greece
Dr. Nikki Sterkenburg, The Netherlands
Mr. Gert Vercauteren, Belgium
Dr. Richard Warnes, United Kingdom

Mr. Möws informed the participants that the report of the annual conference 2023 will be published in the EENeT's Internet website open source at the end of this year.
Mr. Gert Vercauteren announced the next EENeT Conference 05. – 07.06.2024 in Brussels/Belgium, organized by the Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis (CUTA) in the framework of the Belgium EU Council Presidency in the first half of the year 2024.

7. Evaluation of the event

The EENeT members that participated in the Prague conference were asked 9 questions by means of a questionnaire with a 1 to 5-point system:

1 Excellent 2 Very good 3 Good 4 Room for improvement 5 Poor

Additionally, they were asked to give any comments.

7.1. Overall rating

Networking opportunities, Organizational part of the event, Event Atmosphere and Sustainability of the event location were all rated "excellent".

The presentations, Podium discussions and World Café were rated differently between 1 = Excellent and 4 = Room for improvement.

7.2. Some comments from the participants

"I had the impression during the conference that the emphasis on right- and left-wing extremism conflated violent extremists with those who hold extremist views, but refrain from violence. I realize that this is not without some risk: non-violent extremists can easily turn violent, but until they do, they have every right to hold and express whatever opinion they prefer."

"There should be an effort to include updated police/intelligence - situation reports on all (islamist/jihadist, rightwing, leftwing) fields of terrorism/violent extremism – in order to avoid academic predominance in the range of presentations (remember Sageman: academic research understands everything but knows nothing – intelligence research knows everything but understands nothing)"

"Two panel discussions in a row is a bit much / Comment to the event location: Perfect!"

"The conference was a full success for me – regarding the topics and the networking possibilities. The only thing I would like to "criticize" is the system of the presentations. Means: 4 different presentations at the same time made it sometimes very hard to decide for one single presentation. I several times had the issue to decide for "the most interesting" presentation and could not attend other – potentially also interesting – presentations. But I also see the benefits from this system (best time-using method, high variety of topics). Maybe an additional handout of (missed) presentation slides to interested participants could be good. But in total: well organized, excellent speakers, well election of topics! THANK you to the whole team!"

"Real opportunities to find new professional partners"

"The two presentations of the keynote speakers encompassed novel content and topics to the most and were very well explained and contextualized."

"The World Café: A very good exercise and practice. Some would take advantage of the format to monopolise the conversations and it was a little difficult to hear everyone's voice or at least giving the time to everyone. The time constraint though is a plus and these roundtables shouldn't be longer. Perhaps a maximum of contributions per person per roundtable should be "enforced"."

"Networking opportunity: Truly awesome. Never have I been to an event were networking was so prolific, fruitful and easy-going. The activities organized were also terrific! Thanks a lot!"

"Organisational part of the event: Everything worked amazingly. Kudos to the organizers. Event atmosphere: Another great feature of the event. It felt great everywhere we went or stayed. Suitability of the event location: Unbelievably beautiful, functional and cozy location. The EENeT event was, all in all, the best research event I have ever attended. And I hope it's only the beginning for me. Many, many thanks."

8. Summary, Conclusion and Outlook

8.1. Summary

First Day: After an introduction from Mr. Tomas Pojar, the National Security Advisor to the Government of the Czech Republic, we heard from our hosts Prof. Miroslav Mareš and Dr. Petra Mlejnková regarding 'Trends in Violent Extremism in the Czech Republic'. They examined the historical legacy of violent extremism on Czech territory, including the legacy of totalitarian regimes, such as the training of PLO Force 17, left wing extremism, foreign terrorism threats related to an Iraqi plot to attack Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty and Libyan threats. More recently there has been Extreme Right Wing (XRW) vigilantism and Islamophobia, COVID linked violent demonstrations, concerns over Czech Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) linked to the Russia Ukraine conflict and the Neo-Nazi Balda case in 2017 and young (McVeigh) case in 2021, as well as the 'Sovereign Citizens Movement of Czechoslovakia'. Challenges to academic research included the 2014 Vrbetice Ammo Factory explosion, Project EXKYB linked to the cyber domain and possible cyber-attacks, and recent tensions between the Roma community and Ukrainian refugees, including the murder of a young Roma in Brno.

This was followed by a presentation on MEDINT by Professor Marco Lombardi, who explained the definitional problems associated with 'pinning down' medical intelligence and the fact it had previously tended to be associated with military approaches. He highlighted how a more precise definition would help set parameters, although there would still be legal and ethical concerns. There was a risk to such sensitive data being on modern IT systems and the level of vulnerability that does not seem to be considered. The Pandemic was a turning point with Russian teams of 400 experts helping in Italy. There were subsequent concerns that medical information, particularly from the Lazio Region, which covers Rome, with senior officials, politicians and the military. There are also concerns regarding the hacking and interference of medical treatment and equipment, which is a great vulnerability. Ultimately, we need a new definition of MEDINT, which is not just military.

This was followed by presentations from EENeT members, with the wide range of presentations previously detailed, covering the areas of:

- **Digital Environments**
- **Case Studies/ Empirical Data Analysis**
- **Spotlights in Terrorism Research**
- **Dealing with Extremism and Terrorism**

These were followed by the first podium discussion evaluating P/CVE and deradicalisation, the state of the art and way forward, with the panel moderated by Dr. Leena Malkki. This was based around the work of the INDEED Project regarding evaluations. Initially the panel highlighted the definition and process of evaluation versus risk assessments. Does it work, how much and what cost? There is a problem that some high-level evaluations are not shared because of sensitivity and there is a risk that evaluations will become politicised and used as a weapon. The practitioners are often not aware of the tools and how to conduct evaluations. So, politicisation, lack of knowledge and cost are big issues. Also, policy makers are often concerned that the evaluations will highlight their failings. We need to develop a culture of evaluation, willing to look at the evidence. The Project provides examples of best and worst evaluations and systematic reviews and the development of practical tools and a guide for practitioners to help develop a better understanding. We need to consider a trans-disciplinary approach, drawing on such areas as Psychology and Criminology. However, you also have to consider the risk of 'unintended effects'.

Internal evaluation is good for some things, but not for everything and we need both. The INDEED Project will end in August 2024.

The second podium discussion panel was moderated by Dr. Petra Mlejnková, examining the impact of Russian aggression against Ukraine on violent extremism and terrorism. In Germany, the violent transnational XRW is weaker in some ways, but more of a threat. There were previous attempts to overcome the rivalry and division between Russia and Ukraine. Some side with Russia, some Ukraine, some stay neutral. But as a result of the conflict we now have individuals with PTSD and greater access to weaponry, some of which has returned to the west in the hands of Organised Crime Groups (OCGs). There are issues of the FTF and officially only 38 from Germany, but this is dubious. They tend to be more professional than Islamists and the Eu want to downplay it. There were 150 from Germany who went to fight in 2014, so it could be more.

In Slovakia it is difficult due to increasing levels of Russian propaganda. Slovaks are becoming more pro-Russian, and this has been exacerbated by politicians who are feeding this information. There is also a historical, and not very positive view of Ukrainians, and people taking onboard the Russian de-Nazification narrative. There are a number of Slovak volunteers on the Russian side, with one dead and wounded. There is permission for eight out of 60 who have gone to fight and there is no de-radicalisation process and we don't know about returnees. In Belgium there is confusion amongst the XRW, although more were tending to support the Russian side before the conflict. However, many are now backing away from Russian support and in general the scene distances itself from the conflict. Originally 200 Belgians were interested to fight on the Ukrainian side, but only 47 actually departed. The vast majority of them were not known to the services, only a few of them had an extremist profile. The majority have now come back, but a few remain, including a Chechen who has changed sides. They are contacted by intelligence when they return, and kept an eye on if there are concerns. If Belgian citizens join the International Federal Corps or Russian Army we won't prosecute, but if they join PMCs or are linked to war crimes it is different. With other countries, there are around 120 XRW from France fighting in Europe, while from the UK, at least ten have been killed and 30 injures, so believe the total number is in the 100s. There is also concern over the Wagner Group and other PMCs recruiting in the Czech Republic, and longer term the human skills and weapons coming back through the OCGs.

Second Day: Mr. Alberto Contaretti briefly introduced the EU-funded project RAN Policy Support (RAN PS) and specifically referred to the first RAN PS Annual Research Conference entitled: "Violent Extremism and Counter-Extremism in Europe: What Next?" and scheduled to take place on 3 October 2023 in Brussels. He also reminded the audience that all EENeT members were invited to timely apply for participation in the event because there were limited available places.

Afterwards, the EENeT members were broken down into four groups for the World Café. Each group rotated around all four subject areas discussing the subject and generating thoughts which were recorded and later briefed to all members. The results of the four subject areas have been examined in more detail previously in this report. These subject areas included:

- **Medical Intelligence** – Led by Dr. Barbara Lucini from Italy and Prof. Mark Harrison from United Kingdom
- **Political Islamism** – Led by Dr. Nacer Lalam from France and Dr. Nick Petropoulos from Greece
- **Threat of Single-Issue Terrorism/ Anti-government extremism –** Led by Prof. Miroslav Mareš from the Czech Republic and Dr. Holger Stroezel from Germany
- **Right Wing Extremism/ Terrorism** – Led by Mr. Gert Vercauteren and Mr. Frank Geens from Belgium

The World Café was followed by the EENeT business meeting, hosted by Mr. Uwe Möws as head of the EENeT Secretariat and then a presentation of the World Café results. Finally, Professor Miroslav Mareš closed the EENeT Conference, and the membership broke to have lunch before departing.

8.2. Conclusion

The Conference appears to have been very successful, with positive feedback, both in comments from the EENeT members and in the returned questionnaires detailed previously. Clearly, there are always going to be some elements of fine tuning that can be improved, but overall, the Conference in Prague seems to have been well received. A number of specific benefits were raised:

- **Sharing of Knowledge:** The Conference facilitated the sharing and dissemination of expert knowledge and information from the presentations, podium panels and World Café workshops, allowing a greater understanding of the current terrorist threat and measures to mitigate it.
- **Sidebar Discussions:** As well as the 'formal' Conference, the organisation and environment encouraged additional sidebar conversations between members during the lunch and coffee breaks and in the evenings.
- **Networking Opportunity:** The Conference provided a great opportunity to network with other specialists on a range of different areas within the wider field.
- **Mixture of Academics and Practitioners:** The Conference provided a great opportunity to bring together academics and practitioners, providing unique insights across a wide range of aspects associated with terrorism and counter-terrorism.
- **Future Collaboration:** The Conference, and associated networking between academics and practitioners provided the potential for future professional collaboration.

8.3. Outlook

Following a very successful Conference in Prague this year, our Belgian colleagues at CUTA/OCAM have very kindly invited EENeT to host next year's Conference in Brussels. To coincide with Belgium's Presidency of the EU, this will be held earlier than normal and will run between 05 - 07th June 2024.

EENeT members will be informed of specific details of the Conference as things develop next year.

9. Annex

Trends of leftwing Violence and Terrorism Potentials in Germany

Matthias Mletzko M.A., Independent Researcher, Mainz

Databased research on leftwing violence in Germany is almost non-existent – more or less recent reports are literally countable on one hand.

A long-term look at the amount of violent actions (2001-2022) mainly carried by the fluid scene of leftwing militant autonomous groups and classified by the German PMK (crimes with political motivation)-statistics shows a *wave type course* with sharp ups and downs – reflecting a typical pattern of short-term mobilization topics and (riot-)opportunities. Rightwing violence in comparison – I prefer this comparison to underline leftwing characteristics - is more stable and only peaks during heated migration policy episodes. Since 2005 the number of leftwing violent actions was constantly, sometimes significantly higher than rightwing, with the exception of last year (2022) and the early 2000s. *Dominant and continuous target areas* of leftwing violence are rightwing and police actors, other topics vary according to political cycles – like recent climate politics or anti-globalisation-protests in the past decade. Side note: The additional grey curve stands for the "other classification" category which gained volume since growing mixed-scene, mainly right wing-leaning anti-government protest-phenomena during the corona pandemic 2020-22.

Figure 1: Trends of left- and rightwing violence 2001-2022
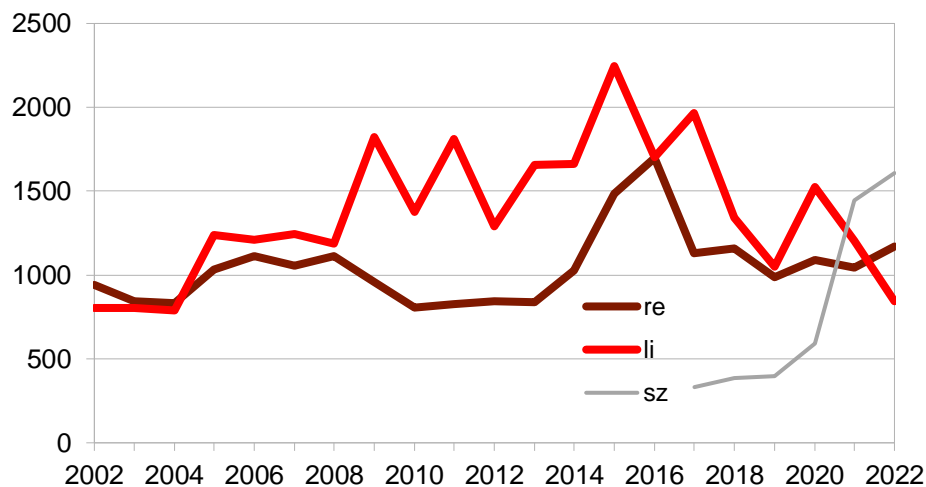
A closer *look at qualities of action is mandatory* and shows severe differences between left- and

rightwing – which underline leftwing specifics. Some basic facts:

- *Terrorism:*

Since the decline of German leftwing terrorism classics Red Army Faction (RAF) and Revolutionary Cells (RZ) completed at the end of the nineties, *no leftwing militant actor chose the MO of systematic lethal attack* (firearms, explosives). This contrasts sharply to rightwing terrorist actions, ranging from the NSU group (1998-2011, ten killings with firearms, two explosive attacks and 15 robberies) to the killing of the administration official Lübcke in Kassel 2019 by an actor with rightwing past and militant scene ties

and online inspired lone actor firearms killings in Munich 2016, Halle 2019 und Hanau 2021 – leaving a death toll of 31 vs. zero leftwing.

- *Violence intensity*:

The total of right-wing *homicides – attempted and accomplished*, including the bulk of actions below terrorism quality - is *significantly higher as well*. The PMK-figures 2001-22: rightwing 145 cases (26 accomplished, 119 attempted) vs. leftwing 72 (2 accomplished, 70 attempted), side note: the two accomplished cases do not match the typical pattern of leftwing action. The lines show that attempted homicides of both camps do not contrast sharply – with the exception of the 2016 rightwing peak during the heated migration policy period.

Figure 2: Left- and right-wing homicides 2001-2022
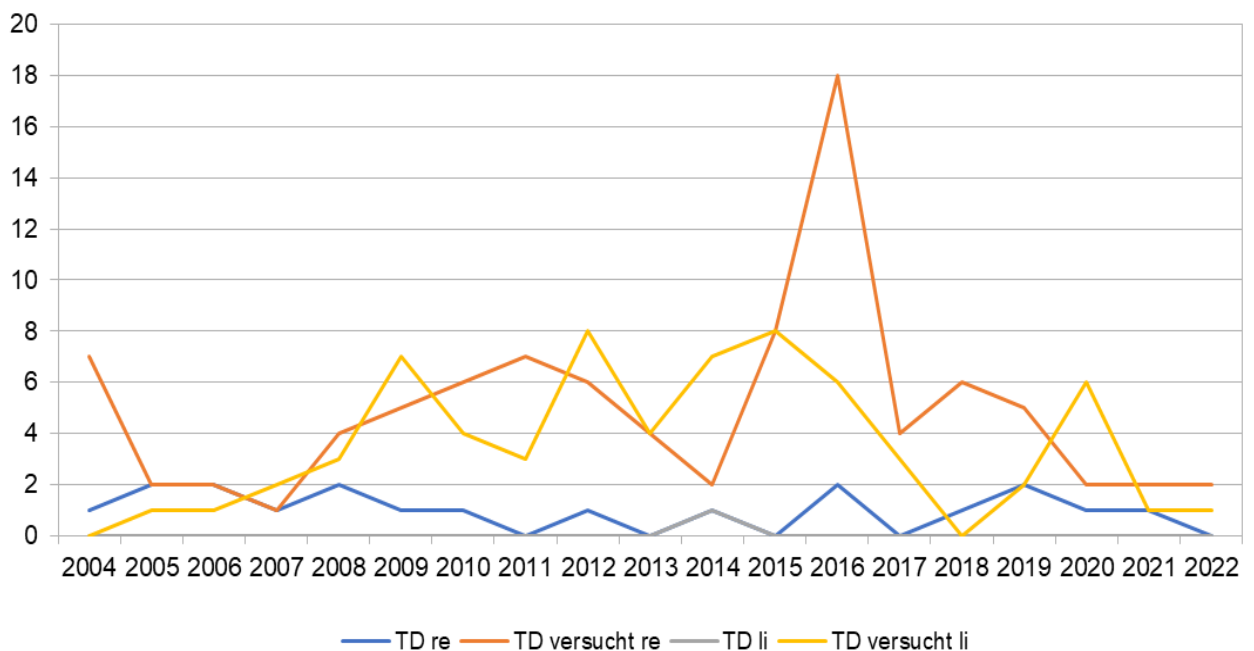
It must be stated that there are *weaknesses in measuring violence intensity* which foster suspicion of under coverage: There is no federal standard on how to classify attempted homicide, the classification decision is delivered by states and differs. There is no registration of actions with life-threatening MO (classics: hits on the head with heavy device, kicks on victim on the ground). Few studies indicate a rightwing overbalance. Furthermore, another important indicator for intensity – *arson and explosive attempts* – remains fuzzy, because data on life-threatening MO's are not generated.

- *Bodily injuries*:

The amount of rightwing *bodily injuries* (face to face violence) is consistently higher than leftwing. This shows a clearcut pattern of rightwing face-to-face-violence preference: Leftwing tends much more to action from a distance. The leftwing portion of offenses by rioting crowds is much higher than rightwing (which fills the gap in Figure 4).
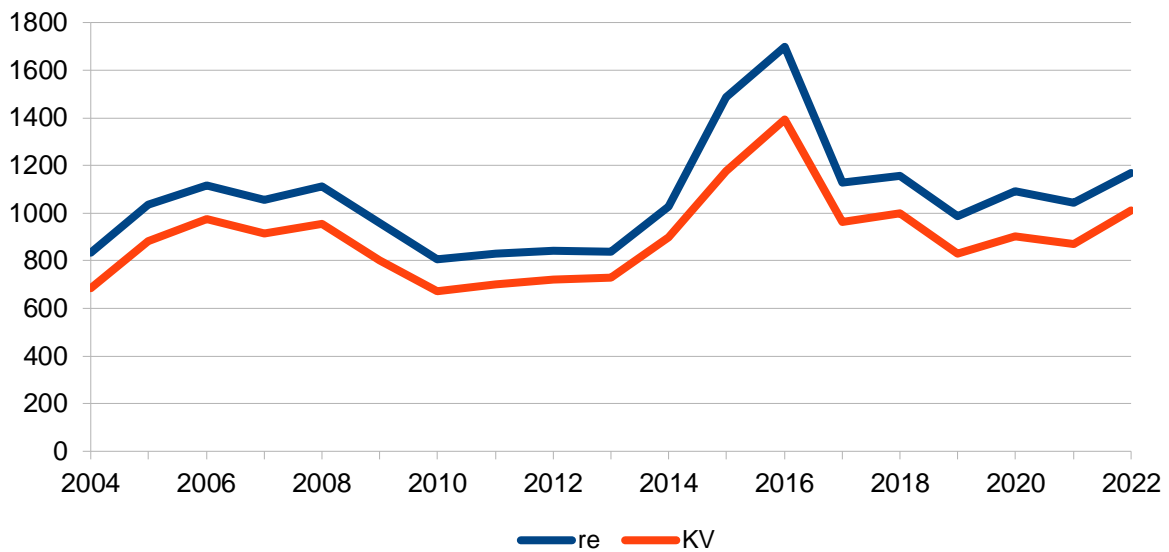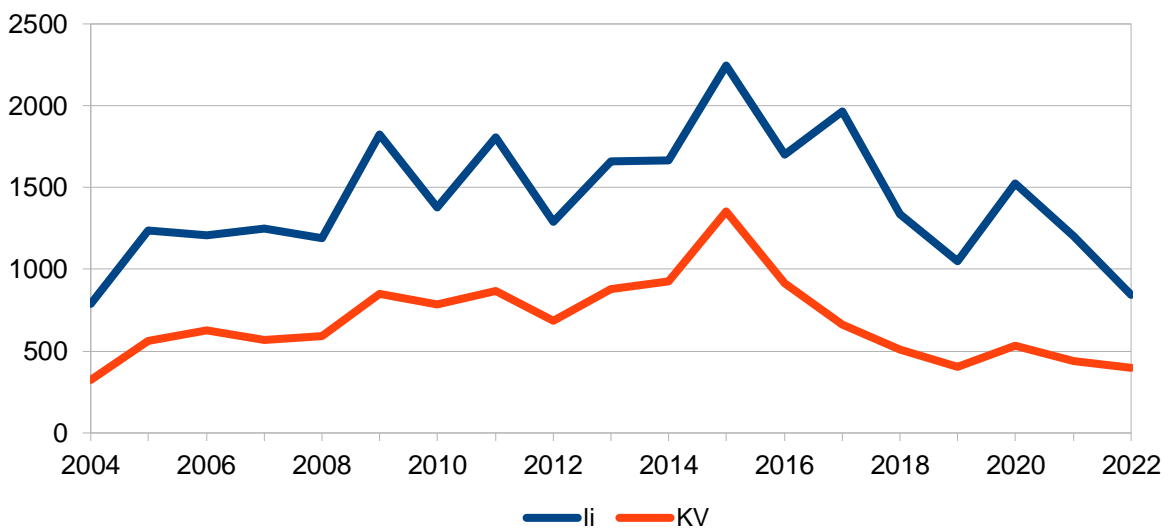
Figure 3: Percentage of bodily injuries, rightwing

Figure 4: Percentage of bodily injuries, leftwing

Now I will take a closer look to the above-mentioned sphere of leftwing attempted homicides, mainly targeting police forces and rightwing actors. Recent cases of organized leftwing violence in the field of "antifascist" action *indicate leftwing terrorism potentials*. Some militant groups realized an older idea of "bonebraker"-type-punishment actions scarcely below lethal violence: Attempts with hammers or similar heavy equipment, aiming to cause permanent physical damage for the targeted rightwing actors. This type of action reminds of escalation episodes in the late 80ies and early 90ies: 1986 the Revolutionary Cells (RZ) used .22-Pistols for "anti-racist" kneecapping "punishments" of judges responsible for expulsions of illegal migrants. Some years later, during the rightwing xenophobic wave of violence and after the downfall of the Red Army Faction (RAF), the idea of an "Antifa-RAF" was brought up, but never realized.

Some exemplary recent cases are:

- *A Leipzig based group around female actor Lina E. (2018-2020)*

The group was prosecuted by the Federal Attorney as a criminal association and sentenced this May 31st. The group was part of a cross-regional network with contacts in other European countries and showed systematic, specialized and clandestine patterns of action. There were sessions of scenario-type ambush and attack training with trainers experienced in street-fighting. The group conducted at least six hit and run-type attacks against well chosen rightwing actors in Leipzig, Wurzen and Eisenach over a period 2018 to 2020. The attackers used heavy striking tools – hammers, blackjacks - for hits on the head or against floored victims – risking lethal injuries. The Eisenach attacks against well-known rightwing actor Leon R. obviously triggered a radicalisation of his own militant group "Knockout 51" – a classical case of interactive clamping (Verklammerung). The latter group is currently trialed as a terrorist organisation. Side-note: The latest issue of *Kriminalistik* holds a detailed analysis on this group, written by colleagues Mikhail Logvinov and Jan Böhme, both from the research unit LKA Sachsen.

- Case 16.05.2020 Stuttgart, paper on "Question of antifascist Violence"

A group of about 20 leftwing militants attacked a smaller group of right-wingers on their way to a manifestation against Corona-pandemic measures, leaving one victim with life threatening head injuries. A cell which was involved in the attack produced a paper on the "Question of antifascist Violence". Upshot: Lethal attacks are currently not intended – but they might become necessary as soon as "the fascist mob is growing, the organisational level is rising". Debates if and under which conditions killings of fascists could be justified are not new – they date back to the late 80ies and early 90ies.

- Cases 11.02.2021 Eilenburg/Sachsen and 28.05.2021 Erfurt/Thüringen

Both attacks showed an identical MO. Well-chosen rightwing actors were ambushed at home, utilizing a surprise effect with police camouflage to enter house and flat, tying up the victim and finally trying to smash joints. The Erfurt attackers claimed revenge for January 2016 rightwing raid, when a group of about 200 ransacked leftwing scene quarters in Leipzig Connewitz – another example of tight interaction.

It is difficult to judge how those groups/actions are perceived by the broader militant scene. Traditionally this kind of hardcore action produces belly ache and problems of justification – it contradicts a picture of "responsible militancy" drawn by many activists. In earlier periods this triggered explicit debates on red lines to be drawn for the use of violence, then settled in writing, i.e. underground literature. It was traceable, which militant section/subscene might lean to hardcore action. Such judgment is much harder nowadays concerning a foggy online sphere.

The question if leftwing small groups/lone actors might choose the path of systematic lethal violence in the light of ongoing successful rightwing mobilisation is open ended and requires close monitoring of hardcore subscenes. Very recent threats remain on the level of announcements, like the "Antifa Frankfurt"-group in August 2023, to make life of AfD-election candidates hell. ///