

IPPSR Public Policy Forum

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February 24, 2021

3 Main Takeaways

- 1 we are not in *new* territory
- 2 potential warning signs
- 3 solutions in sight

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(U//FOUO) Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment

7 April 2009

(U) Prepared by the Extremism and Radicalization Branch, Homeland Environment Threat Analysis Division. Coordinated with the FBI.

(U) Scope

(U//FOUO) This product is one of a series of intelligence assessments published by the Extremism and Radicalization Branch to facilitate a greater understanding of the phenomenon of violent radicalization in the United States. The information is provided to federal, state, local, and tribal counterterrorism and law enforcement officials so they may effectively deter, prevent, preempt, or respond to terrorist attacks against the United States. Federal efforts to influence domestic public opinion must be conducted in an overt and transparent manner, clearly identifying United States Government sponsorship.

Figure 1: <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/rightwing.pdf>

- “rightwing extremists may be gaining new recruits by playing on their fears about several emergent issues ”
- “unique drivers for right-wing radicalization and recruitment”
 - economic downturn
 - election of first African American president
 - new restrictions on firearms
 - return of military veterans
- political climate similar to 1990's which saw growth in domestic right-wing terrorist and extremist groups, violent attacks

“Conspiracy theories involving declarations of martial law, impending civil strife or racial conflict, suspension of the U.S. Constitution, and the creation of citizen detention camps... have been linked with the radicalization of domestic extremist individuals and groups in the past, such as violent Christian Identity organizations and extremist members of the militia movement.”

- 1990's right wing extremists concerned ... “illegal immigrants were taking away American jobs through their willingness to work at significantly lower wages” (specifically Mexico)
- mid to late-2000's “rightwing extremists, including militias and white supremacists, have adopted the immigration issue as a call to action, rallying point, and recruiting tool ”

- Lone wolves/small cells
- Well-armed rural militias (e.g., Alabama, Arkansas, Pennsylvania)
- Current and former military
 - *“DHS/IA is concerned that rightwing extremists will attempt to recruit and radicalize returning veterans in order to boost their violent capabilities.”*
 - echo's 2008 FBI report which found between 2001 & 2007, 203 military personnel/veterans active members in white supremacist groups

“the advent of the **Internet and other information age technologies** since the 1990s has given domestic extremists greater access to information”

- bomb-making
- weapons training/tactics
- increased networking
- encrypted messaging

- 1990s: decline in terrorism only after “*increased government scrutiny*” after Oklahoma City bombing

What happened?

- Framed as political propaganda by conservatives
- Minority Leader John Boehner 2009:
 - “The Department of Homeland Security owes our veterans an apology.” “To characterize men and women returning home after defending our country as potential terrorists is offensive and unacceptable.
 - “Furthermore, the Secretary of Homeland Security owes the American people an explanation for why [the DHS is using] the term terrorist.. to describe American citizens who disagree with the direction Washington Democrats are taking our nation.”
- DHS secretary eventually Janet Napolitano apologized.
Report removed DHS websites
- Unit responsible for the report gutted

*“Ideologically motivated **lone offenders** and **small groups** pose the most likely terrorist threat to the Homeland, with Domestic Violent Extremists presenting the most persistent and lethal threat.”*

Homeland Threat Assessment

October 2020

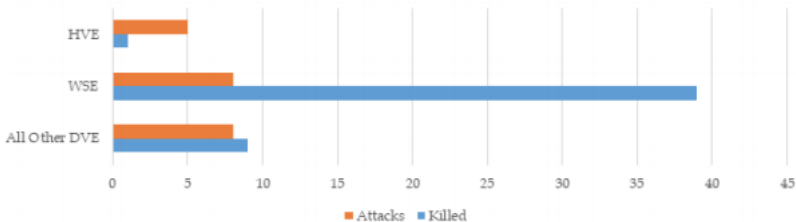


With honor and integrity, we will safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values.

2020 DHS Threat Assessment

*“Among DVEs, racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists— **specifically white supremacist extremists (WSEs)**— will remain the most persistent and lethal threat in the Homeland.”*

Terrorist Attacks Posing a Threat to Life in the United States: 2018-2019



This chart depicts DVE and homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) attacks in the US since 2018 that posed a threat to life, based on DHS data. 2019 was the most lethal year for domestic violent extremism in the United States since the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. We are still evaluating data for incidents occurring in 2020. VEs perpetrated 16 attacks, killing 48, whereas HVEs conducted 5 attacks and killed 1 person. Among DVE actors, WSEs conducted half of all lethal attacks (8 of 16), resulting in the majority of deaths (39 of 48). All the DVE attackers had a dominant violent extremist ideology, with many motivated by multiple violent extremist ideologies or violent extremist ideologies unconnected to global violent extremist groups.

- Other DVE threats may be mobilized by other “political or social issues”
 - immigration
 - environmental
 - “police-related policy issues”
- COVID-19
 - “anti-government” and “anti-authority” extremists
 - anarchists, militias
 - infringement upon civil liberties, government overreach

Current climate likely to facilitate radicalization:

- economic downturn (covid-19)
- election of progressive democrats
- perceived and actual restrictions on firearms
 - 73% Americans support tighter gun restrictions weapons ban;
54% among Republicans (Politico 8/2019)
- tensions around racial justice and immigration
- technological advancements

Current climate is likely to facilitate radicalization:

- radicalization among current/former military
 - Oct 2020 Pentagon report acknowledged the severity of the problem

The screenshot shows the NPR website interface. At the top left is the NPR logo. To the right are links for 'SIGN IN', 'NPR SHOP', and a red 'DONATE' button. Below this is a dark navigation bar with categories: NEWS, ARTS & LIFE, MUSIC, SHOWS & PODCASTS, and SEARCH. The main content area features a social media sidebar on the left with icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Email. The article title is 'Nearly 1 In 5 Defendants In Capitol Riot Cases Served In The Military' under the 'INVESTIGATIONS' section. The date is 'January 21, 2021 - 3:01 PM ET' and it is noted as 'Heard on All Things Considered'. Two hosts are listed: TOM DREIBACH and MEG ANDERSON, each with a small profile picture and a Twitter icon.

How will America confront these inconvenient truths?



RELIGION

Evangelical Leaders Condemn 'Radicalized Christian Nationalism'

February 24, 2021 - 6:01 AM ET



SARAH MCCAMMON



Clark McCauley & Sophia Moskalenko (2008)

Table 1. Pathways to violence: Mechanisms of political radicalization at individual, group, and mass-public levels

Level of radicalization	Mechanism
Individual	1. Personal victimization
	2. Political grievance
	3. Joining a radical group—the slippery slope
Group	4. Joining a radical group—the power of love
	5. Extremity shift in like-minded groups
	6. Extreme cohesion under isolation and threat
	7. Competition for the same base of support
Mass	8. Competition with state power—condensation
	9. Within-group competition—fissioning
	10. Jujitsu politics
	11. Hate
	12. Martyrdom