

House Committee on Financial Services

Subcommittee on National Security, International Development, and Monetary Policy

Dollars against Democracy:

Domestic Terrorist Financing in the Aftermath of Insurrection

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Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Hill, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee: On behalf of Valens Global, it is an honor to appear before you to discuss domestic violent extremism and the threat it poses to our country. My testimony examines the current domestic violent extremism landscape and explores what can be done to mitigate this threat, particularly from a financial perspective.

The Department of Homeland Security's October 2020 *Homeland Threat Assessment* states that, among domestic violent extremists, "racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists—specifically white supremacist extremists (WSEs)—will remain the most persistent and lethal threat in the Homeland."¹ The threat has been made clear through repeated lethal acts perpetrated by WSEs. The most prominent and deadly of these recent attacks was an August 2019 mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, that killed 22, making it the third deadliest domestic extremist attack in 50 years.² Beyond lone acts of terrorism, organized networks such as Atomwaffen Division and The Base are dedicated to overthrowing the U.S. government and bringing about race war.

The attack on Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021, cast a spotlight on the WSE movement, as some people associated with WSE groups were involved, and some white power symbols were displayed. Prominent among these symbols was a now-infamous "Camp Auschwitz" sweatshirt.³ Though the events of January 6 should not be over-interpreted as driven by WSEs—multiple protesters, grievances, and belief systems were involved—the insurrection spoke to how WSEs can exploit our fractured political environment.

More generally, in 2020-21, there has been discernible movement throughout the United States toward armed politics and violent activism, in which multiple factions and movements resorted to violence or the threat of violence to pursue their objectives. The country witnessed scenes it had previously not seen for decades, such as armed citizens patrolling the streets in Georgia, Kentucky, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and other places.⁴ The involvement of WSEs in the Capitol Hill attack and other events during this tumultuous national period points to their ability to exploit societal fractures and the general rise in extremism.

This move toward armed politics raises the risk of an uptick in extremism-related violence across the political spectrum. At worst, the divisions we now face could plunge the United States into conflict and civil war or fragmentation. Even if this country does not descend into civil war—which is surely

¹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Homeland Threat Assessment October 2020," October 2020, pages 17-18. This testimony employs the term *white supremacist extremism* because this terminology is consistent with that currently employed by the U.S. government. Scholars and analysts employ various other terms to define the movement. Of particular note is Kathleen Belew's advocacy of the term *white power*. See Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), page ix.

² Mark Pitcavage, "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2019," Anti-Defamation League, 2020, page 15. (<https://www.adl.org/media/14107/download>) The two attacks that Pitcavage identifies as deadlier are the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and Omar Mateen's 2016 attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando.

³ A.C. Thompson and Ford Fischer, "Members of Several Well-Known Hate Groups Identified at Capitol Riot," PBS, January 9, 2021; Mallory Simon & Sara Sidner, "Decoding the Extremist Symbols and Groups at the Capitol Hill Insurrection," CNN, January 11, 2021.

⁴ Benjamin Fearnow, "Armed Black Militia Challenges White Nationalists at Georgia's Stone Mountain Park," *Newsweek*, July 5, 2020; Ryan Van Velzer, Jess Clark & Kate Howard, "Three Injured by Gunfire During Black Militia Demonstration," *WFPL News*, July 25, 2020; Jared Goyette, "Citizen Patrols Organize Across Minneapolis as Confidence in the Police Force Plummet," *Washington Post*, June 7, 2020; Stephen Montemayor, "Inside Minnesota's Boogaloo Movement: Armed and Eager for Societal Collapse," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis), July 18, 2020.

a maximalist outcome—there remain many potential negative outcomes for a nation in the throes of extremism and armed politics that would result in greater loss of life. It is therefore helpful to view the current domestic violent extremism landscape in part through the lens of counterinsurgency. As we confront the possibility of growing violence and division, *it is important to thin the pool of potential recruits who can be drawn upon by nefarious actors*. This lens influences my policy prescriptions, which are designed to empower authorities to disrupt bad actors while at the same time being protective of civil liberties and avoiding stigmatization that can increase violent extremists' pool of potential recruits.

The first portion of my testimony is designed to provide an overview of the current WSE threat landscape. It addresses key WSE ideologies, major domestic and foreign WSE groups, the nature of the WSE threat in the United States, and transnational WSE activity. I then transition to exploring a different part of the domestic extremist spectrum, looking at militant anarchist and anti-fascist groups. Militant anarchists and anti-fascists see themselves as responding to an oppressive state and the rise of fascist organizing. They see themselves as willing to meet violence with violence. I include these groups in the report not because they pose an equivalent threat to militant WSEs—individuals and groups affiliated with the WSE movement pose an unambiguously greater danger today—but because they illustrate the nationwide move toward armed politics, which occasions mutual fears and recriminations. While militant anti-fascists and anarchists view themselves as the protectors of marginalized communities, other militant actors see anarchist and anti-fascist groups as the aggressors to whom *they* are responding. Further, when fashioning policy solutions to violent extremist threats, it is important to ensure that these solutions are neutral with respect to ideology. Discussion of the militant anarchist and anti-fascist movement will help us to contextualize how the policy recommendations in this testimony might apply across a range of movements. I conclude with a set of policy recommendations.

I should caution at the outset that the universe of domestic violent extremist actors is large, regionally varied, and constantly in flux. That being said, this testimony should provide a solid foundation for understanding the threat as it exists today, how it is likely to evolve, and how to combat it.

WSE Ideologies: Global Trends

Global WSE movements are bound by shared ideologies, which generally emphasize a belief in the necessity of white power and the superiority of the white race, and are often driven by fears of cultural and ethnic extinction, irrelevance, or subjugation. Many WSE leaders explicitly call for violence against the movement's enemies, arguing that violent activism is necessary, and characterizing likeminded but nonviolent groups as weak and unable to create social change. Other WSE leaders and groups view public association with violence as a threat to their ability to operate, fearing that it will attract the interest of law enforcement, interfere with their ability to recruit and retain members, and hamper their fundraising efforts. Some leaders and groups officially disavow the use of violence but tolerate, tacitly accept, or are unable to control its use by group members.

The transnational character of WSE ideologies is evident in the manifestos and social media posts of WSE terrorists who have carried out prominent recent attacks. Brenton Tarrant attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in a mass shooting on March 15, 2019, killing 51. Before the shooting, he posted a manifesto to the web forum *8chan*, in which he cited Anders Breivik (perpetrator of the 2011 attacks in Norway that claimed 77 lives) as an inspiration, along with Dylann Roof (perpetrator of the 2015 shooting at a black church in South Carolina, in which nine people died) and other WSE

perpetrators of mass attacks.⁵ John T. Earnest also published a letter to *8chan* before launching an April 2019 attack on the Chabad of Poway synagogue in Poway, California, which claimed one life and injured three people. In the letter, Earnest claimed inspiration from the actions and manifesto of Brenton Tarrant.⁶ Patrick Crusius published his own manifesto to *8chan* with a similar reference to Brenton Tarrant before carrying out the aforementioned August 2019 shooting at an El Paso Walmart. Crusius wrote: “In general, I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto. This attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas.”⁷ A shooter who attacked a mosque in Bærum, Norway, in August 2019 posted on social media that he was directly inspired by Brenton Tarrant, and also praised Patrick Crusius’s attack.⁸



Anders Breivik, left, and Dylann Roof, center, were cited in the manifesto of Brenton Tarrant, right.

These examples illustrate two central dynamics of the contemporary WSE movement. First, it is transnational. Terrorists and other attackers motivated by WSE beliefs draw inspiration from attacks across the globe. Second, online discourse, particularly on social media, cements successful



Brenton Tarrant was subsequently cited in the manifestoes of both John T. Earnest, center, and Patrick Crusius, right.

attackers as movement heroes. The most prominent killers are routinely described as “saints” in online forums, with accompanying iconography underscoring this depiction. As part of the movement’s effort to lionize Tarrant, his manifesto has been translated into several European languages and widely distributed, along with footage from his livestreamed attack.⁹ A bound edition of a Ukrainian translation has been printed and sold in Eastern Europe.¹⁰ This constitutes a deliberate effort to sacralize Tarrant and his attack and to convince others to follow his example.

⁵ Brenton Tarrant, “The Great Replacement: Towards a New Society We March Ever Forwards,” distributed via Twitter, 8Chan, and email, March 15, 2019. As further background on the previous attackers whom Tarrant praised, Anders Breivik bombed a government complex in Oslo, Norway, and attacked a youth camp affiliated with Norway’s Labor Party on Utøya Island on July 22, 2011, killing 77. Before the attack, Breivik published a 1,518-page manifesto decrying the “Islamisation” of Europe. He pinned the blame for this phenomenon on multiculturalism, political correctness, and left-wing political leaders. Anders Breivik, manifesto, 2038: *A European Declaration of Independence* (independently published, 2011). Dylann Roof attacked the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. His writings, both before and after the attack, show that he was motivated by the belief that the growth of non-white groups in America would do great harm to the white race. Dylann Roof, Manifesto [labeled “Text”], *The Last Rhodesian*, archived June 20, 2015; Dylann Roof, “Dylann Roof Jailhouse Journal,” published by *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), January 5, 2017.

⁶ John T. Earnest, manifesto, “An Open Letter,” April 27, 2019. (Available via SITE Intelligence Group)

⁷ Patrick Crusius, manifesto entitled “The Inconvenient Truth,” *8Chan*, August 3, 2019. (Available via SITE Intelligence Group)




⁸ Jason Burke, “Norway mosque attack suspect ‘inspired by Christchurch and El Paso shootings,’” *The Guardian* (U.K.), August 11, 2019. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/11/norway-mosque-attack-suspect-may-have-been-inspired-by-christchurch-and-el-paso-shootings>)

⁹ See discussion in “Social Media Account Disseminates Translations of Christchurch Manifesto, Livestream,” SITE Intelligence Group, February 5, 2020.

¹⁰ “The Russians and Ukrainians Translating the Christchurch Shooter’s Manifesto,” Bellingcat, August 14, 2019.

Despite a generally shared canonization of its “saints,” the transnational WSE movement is not an ideological monolith. WSE groups, while existing within the same broad ideological milieu, can differ from their counterparts in various ways, which are summarized in the following graphic:

Major WSE Ideologies

<p>Neo-Nazism / National Socialism</p>  <p>Key Tenets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Establishment of a fascist political system, based on the organization of the German Third Reich. » Extermination, removal, or domination of non-white ethnic groups. » Elimination of a purported Jewish conspiracy. <p>Notable Proponents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » National Action » National Socialist Movement 	<p>Great Replacement / White Genocide</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>"It's the birthrates. It's the birthrates. It's the birthrates." -Brenton Tarrant, Manifesto</p> </div> <p>Key Tenets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Non-white ethnic groups are replacing whites as the dominant ethnic group through immigration, higher birthrates, race mixing, and cultural destruction. <p>Notable Proponents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Brenton Tarrant » Dylann Roof 	<p>Accelerationism</p>  <p>Key Tenets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » A revolutionary overthrow of the current political system is necessary to bring about white power. » Violent, high-visibility actions by lone wolves and small cells can accelerate the inevitable race war, often called the "boogaloo." <p>Notable Proponents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Atomwaffen Division and offshoots » The Base
<p>White Power Skinheads</p>   <p>Key Tenets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Adoption of Nazi aesthetics, symbology, and racism. » Emphasis on "warrior culture" and physical violence, including street violence, assault, and murder. <p>Notable Proponents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Hammerskin crews » Rise Above Movement (R.A.M.) 	<p>White Nationalism/ White Separatism</p>   <p>Key Tenets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Primary goal is the establishment of white power in a particular geographic region, through the creation of a new state or takeover of an existing one. <p>Notable Proponents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Nordic Resistance Movement » Azov Battalion, National Corp, and National Militia 	

Neo-Nazi and National Socialist Beliefs

Neo-Nazi, national socialist, and fascist ideologies are a core component of the WSE movement, though not all WSE groups adhere to fascist beliefs, and many even eschew overt connections with the Third Reich’s symbology or ideas. Neo-Nazi and fascist groups espouse core beliefs derived from Third Reich ideology, including emphasizing racial and cultural purity, scapegoating Jewish people, subscribing to exterminationism, and espousing devotion to the establishment of an ethnic homeland.

White Genocide and the Great Replacement

The belief in an ongoing *white genocide*, or *great replacement* of white European-origin populations by non-white immigrants, is widespread among WSEs and the broader white power movement. It perceives

an existential threat from non-white immigration, multiculturalism, and associated trends. Groups adhering to this belief typically point to 1) patterns of mass migration into Western countries, 2) the low birth rates of European-origin families compared to the high birth rates of immigrants from non-European states, and 3) perceived cultural destruction at the hands of immigrants. Renaud Camus's *The Great Replacement*, published in 2012, popularized this idea in Europe.¹¹ Other iterations of these beliefs employ anti-Semitic conspiracy theories to explain the forces driving the purported white genocide. Some WSEs argue that a Jewish conspiracy rules the United States through a shadowy "Zionist occupational government" (frequently abbreviated ZOG) that seeks to eliminate the white population via immigration, race mixing, and cultural destruction.¹²

These theories have become an important component of many transnational WSE groups and attackers, including attacks perpetrated by Anders Breivik, Dylann Roof, Brenton Tarrant, John Earnest, Patrick Crusius, and Robert Bowers. Numerous groups that do not employ violence and generally confine their activities to the political sphere, such as the "Identitarian" movement, also embrace such ideas, though in a less extreme manner. One should not assume that an individual who harbors concerns centered on demographics or white ethnic marginalization will have a greater proclivity for violence or criminality.

Accelerationism

Accelerationism is the most inherently violent ideology circulating in the global WSE community. There are various non-WSE forms of accelerationism, and WSE groups subscribing to accelerationism generally fuse it with at least one other WSE ideology, such as neo-Nazism. Nonetheless, given the violence associated with WSE accelerationist groups, it is worth treating this idea in some detail.

WSE accelerationists believe that a race war is not only inevitable but also the only path to achieving white power. They believe that only a violent, revolutionary overthrow of the "System," and victory in the subsequent civil war, can achieve the white power movement's goals.¹³ WSE accelerationists typically emphasize the importance of "leaderless resistance," calling on individuals or small cells to perpetrate revolutionary acts of violence without centralized leadership. The purpose of such attacks is to force the white population to recognize its enemy, join a revolutionary uprising, and destroy the System.¹⁴ This style of organization is intended to be resistant to law enforcement infiltration.¹⁵

WSE accelerationists are influenced by a shared corpus of texts, disseminated through internet fora and other channels of communication.¹⁶ The ideology is clearest in James Mason's *Siege*, which draws on Charles Manson, Adolf Hitler, and prominent American neo-Nazi author William Pierce to promulgate an accelerationist worldview called "Universal Order."¹⁷ *Siege* was originally a series of newsletters authored by Mason for the National Socialist Liberation Front beginning in 1980. He

¹¹ While Renaud Camus's theories have been explicitly and repeatedly cited as a motivating force by WSE terrorists, Camus does not advocate violence, and has expressly denounced the WSE movement.

¹² See, for example, David Lane, "White Genocide Manifesto," *Der Brüder Schweigen Archives & David Eden Lane's Pyramid Prophecy*, archived May 21, 2020.

¹³ See, for example, James Mason, *Siege* (ironmarch.org, 2015), pages 31-33 and 59.

¹⁴ James Mason, *Siege* (ironmarch.org, 2015), pages 53-55.

¹⁵ This facet of leaderless resistance can be discerned in the seminal essay on the topic by theorist Louis Beam, a Vietnam veteran who became a major Ku Klux Klan leader upon his return from Southeast Asia. Louis Beam, "Leaderless Resistance," *The Seditonist*, February 1992. See also Mason, *Siege*, pages 91-92 and 505.

¹⁶ The specific communications channels used by WSE accelerationists shift frequently, as internet service providers and other companies frequently deny movement adherents' access.

¹⁷ Mason, *Siege*, pages 34-37 and 228.

continued publishing the newsletters after the Front collapsed in 1982, printing them through 1986. Mason collected these writings into a single book in 1992, which today is a defining text of major WSE accelerationist groups. Potential recruits into groups such as Atomwaffen Division and The Base are instructed to read the book.¹⁸ William Pierce's dystopian and ultraviolent novel *The Turner Diaries* is also a guiding text.¹⁹

WSE accelerationism's call for armed resistance and hastening of society's collapse into civil war has produced violent results. The manifestos of both Brenton Tarrant and John Earnest espouse key concepts of WSE accelerationism in describing their motivations or calling for further action.²⁰ Law enforcement has foiled other plots by WSE accelerationists.²¹

WSE accelerationists often organize into small cells, as called for by the concept of leaderless resistance, to minimize government infiltration and facilitate direct action over a wider geographic area.²² Cells often facilitate activities such as physical exercise and paramilitary training. An example of this small-cell model is Der Harte Kern, a small cell in Germany with transnational connections and WSE accelerationist beliefs, which planned attacks on 10 mosques in 10 different German states, with the goal of provoking retaliatory attacks and triggering a civil war.²³

White Power Skinheads

White power skinheads are a violent, racist iteration of the British skinhead subculture that emerged in the 1960s.²⁴ The global white power skinhead community holds few consistent political beliefs in common. The movement is heavily influenced by national socialism, though many white power skinheads may embrace the aesthetics, underlying racism, and calls to violence of the historical movement rather than its formal political ideology.²⁵ White power skinhead groups are defined by their embrace of racism and usually emphasize working-class empowerment, "traditional" masculinity (including homophobia), and a "straight edge" culture (with "hostility to any form of drug-taking—except tobacco and alcohol").²⁶ Violence is a key component of white power skinhead subculture.

¹⁸ "Prominent American Neo-Nazi Terror Group Establishes Official Communication Platform, Posts Evidence of Flyering Campaigns," SITE Intelligence Group, November 8, 2019.

¹⁹ For an extended treatment of *The Turner Diaries* and other works of racist dystopian fiction, see J.M. Berger, *The Turner Legacy: The Storied Origins and Enduring Impact of White Nationalism's Deadly Bible* (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, 2016).

²⁰ See Tarrant, "The Great Replacement" (in a section titled "Destabilization and Accelerationism," Tarrant urges that "stability and comfort are the enemies of revolutionary change.... We must destabilize and discomfort society where ever possible"); Earnest, "An Open Letter" (proclaiming that "The Day of the Rope [a reference to violent fictional events in *The Turner Diaries*] is here right now—that is if you have the gnads to keep the ball rolling").

²¹ See, for example, U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Nevada, press release, "Las Vegas Man Pleads Guilty to Possession of Bomb-Making Components," February 10, 2020.

²² Both AWD and The Base are organized using this structure. See, for example, A.C. Thompson, Ali Winston & Jake Hanrahan, "California Murder Suspect Said to Have Trained with Extremist Hate Group," *ProPublica*, January 26, 2018; Ryan Thorpe, "Homegrown Hate," *Winnipeg Free Press* (Canada), August 16, 2019.

²³ Group members were arrested in February 2020 before they could carry out the attacks. "German far-right group 'planned attacks on mosques,'" *BBC* (U.K.), February 17, 2020. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51526357>)

²⁴ The term *skinhead* alone does not imply that an individual or group has an affiliation with white power or national socialism. The subculture originated as a multiethnic phenomenon among both native-born and immigrant British working-class youths. A movement of anti-racist skinheads, sometimes referred to as Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice, or SHARP, seeks to reject racist elements of the subculture today.

²⁵ John Pollard, "Skinhead Culture: The Ideologies, Mythologies, Religions and Conspiracy Theories of Racist Skinheads," *Patterns of Prejudice*, Volume 50, Issue 4-5, 2016, page 406. (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0031322X.2016.1243349>)

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pages 402-403 and 406-407.

Accordingly, street fighting is a core cultural element of American and European white power skinhead crews.²⁷

While white power skinhead violence is a persistent criminal threat, it is usually limited to street brawls and targeted assaults. While they are the exception rather than the rule, there have been notable instances in which white power skinheads engaged in terrorism and political assassinations. These include Wade Michael Page's 2012 attack on a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, which claimed six lives, and Revolution Chemnitz's plots against German politicians and civil servants, which authorities uncovered and thwarted in 2018.²⁸

White Nationalism and White Separatism

While many WSE movements emphasize a global white racial identity and the establishment of white power worldwide, white nationalist and separatist groups seek the creation of a white nation in a particular geographic area. Groups with these beliefs usually draw on a cultural history tied to a particular region or state and emphasize the importance of their perceived home region over national or transnational political order. The envisioned fate of non-white residents of these homelands varies, with options generally ranging from the subjugation of non-white individuals under white power to the total exclusion of non-white individuals through ethnic cleansing or forced migration. While many white nationalist and separatist groups refrain from using or explicitly advocating violence, others, including those discussed below, are willing to employ or encourage violence.

White nationalist and separatist ideologies are not inherently transnational, as their emphasis on a specific geographic area may limit the desirability of cooperation with foreign WSE groups. For example, ultranationalist Ukrainian WSE groups share significant ideological overlap with ultranationalist Russian WSE groups through shared beliefs in white power, but their commitments to the territorial integrity and power of their respective homelands, coupled in many cases with direct participation on opposite sides of the Ukrainian separatist conflict, leaves little room for cooperation. However, specific white nationalist and white separatist groups may have transnational aspirations or view themselves as part of a global movement. For example, the League of the South, a neo-Confederate movement in the American South, promotes the secession of former Confederate states, but also networks with foreign white power groups.²⁹

Major Domestic and Foreign Groups

Neo-Nazi and National Socialist Groups

National Socialist Movement. This group advocates for the establishment of national socialism in the United States.³⁰ Though the National Socialist Movement officially disavows the use of violence, it has previously called for the forceful removal of all non-whites from U.S. territory.³¹ An individual

²⁷ Ibid., page 403.

²⁸ See "Profile: Wisconsin Sikh temple shooter Wade Michael Page," *BBC* (U.K.), August 7, 2012; Andreas Burger, "Germany uncovers terrorist group which attacked foreigners in Chemnitz," *Reuters*, October 1, 2018.

²⁹ See Michael Hill, "League Rep Meets with Suidlanders in South Africa," *League of the South*, January 3, 2019.

³⁰ "About Us," National Socialist Movement, archived June 21, 2020.

³¹ Compare the National Socialist Movement's "Commanders Desk," which states that "Acts of Violence & Terrorism are Dishonorable & will Not be Tolerated!" with the group's "25 Points of American National Socialism," which states that "we demand that all non-Whites currently residing in America be required to leave the nation forthwith and return to their land of origin: peacefully or by force." "Commanders Desk," National Socialist Movement, archived August 3, 2020; "25 Points of American National Socialism," National Socialist Movement, archived November 27, 2012.

affiliated with the group attempted to derail an Amtrak train and attack black passengers on board in 2017.³²

National Action. National Action was a relatively small (estimated 100 to 200 core activists) U.K.-based group that advocated for national socialism. Britain added the group to its list of proscribed terrorist organizations in December 2016.³³ Its members continued to organize under various aliases after the group was banned, including Scottish Dawn, NS131, and the System Resistance Network. British authorities proscribed all of them.³⁴ The group's multiple attempts to subvert the ban suggest that members will continue to try to convene covertly.

Accelerationist Groups

Atomwaffen Division (AWD).³⁵ AWD is a WSE group with an international membership that seems to have emerged in 2015 from the now-defunct internet forum Iron March, though AWD's founder claims the group was organized several years prior. AWD is organized into cells that appear to operate with a high degree of independence.³⁶ The organization has explicitly violent aims and seeks to



Logos of WSE accelerationist groups: the Sonnenrand or Black Sun of the Sonnenkrieg Division (left); the logo of the Feuerkrieg Division (top right); and the logo of The Base (bottom right).

³² Plea Agreement, *United States v. Wilson*, 18 CR 3005 (D. Neb., July 12, 2018). (https://www.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.ned.78514/gov.uscourts.ned.78514.27.0_1.pdf)

³³ "Far-right group National Action to be banned under terror laws," *BBC* (U.K.), December 12, 2016.

³⁴ See, for example, "Two neo-Nazi groups added to banned list," *BBC* (U.K.), September 28, 2017. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41430740>); "Extremist neo-Nazi group to be banned under terror laws," *BBC* (U.K.), February 24, 2020. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-51618248>)

³⁵ In March 2020, Atomwaffen Division's ideological figurehead James Mason announced that the group was "officially" disbanded. For discussion of Mason's announcement, see "As Atomwaffen Division Disbands, European Branch Announces It Will 'Remain Active,'" SITE Intelligence Group, March 17, 2020. On July 25, an author posted a blog entry on *The American Futurist*—a neo-Nazi blog that promotes the ideas of James Mason—claiming that a new group known as the National Socialist Order "is founded and led by the remaining leadership of the Atomwaffen division," and that it would carry on Atomwaffen's program "to build an Aryan, National Socialist world by any means necessary." See "National Socialist Order Announcement!," *The American Futurist*, July 25, 2020. This attempted rebranding of AWD under a new name followed the arrest of several prominent Atomwaffen members. Despite the attempted rebranding, this testimony continues to use the name Atomwaffen Division or AWD for three reasons. First, militant groups attempt to rebrand constantly, and it is not always clear that a new name will stick. Second, the name Atomwaffen Division continues to be used internationally by ideologically-aligned groups. Third, the name Atomwaffen Division continues to be used in reporting on the group.

³⁶ Cells and individual members have been identified in several U.S. states and European countries. See, for example, Affidavit in Support of Criminal Complaint, *United States v. Russell*, 17 CR 0283 (M.D. Fla., May 20, 2017); A.C. Thompson et al., "Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student," *ProPublica*, February 23, 2018; Maik Baumgärtner et al., "Neo-Nazi 'Atomwaffen Division' Spreads Fear in Germany," *Der Spiegel* (Germany), November 13, 2019.

instigate a race war that will lead to the destruction of the U.S. political system. That being said, the specific ideas and ideologies of AWD's members vary somewhat, as the "leaderless" model that the group follows makes it difficult for AWD to craft as cohesive an outlook as some other militant groups. However, AWD members have repeatedly showed their commitment to advancing societal breakdown through violence. Their forums and chat groups circulate a core set of texts, most prominently Mason's *Siege*.³⁷ AWD has inspired a number of related organizations with which it sometimes shares membership, including Feuerkrieg Division and Sonnenkrieg Division, which this testimony discusses subsequently.

AWD is primarily active in the United States. Since the group's formation, AWD members have been identified in several states. The group's social media and propaganda output reveals that it has held paramilitary training camps in Texas, Nevada, Illinois, and Washington.³⁸ These camps feature live-fire weapons training and firearms instruction, as well as hand-to-hand combat training, instruction in survival skills, and physical fitness activities.

Group members have plotted or discussed terrorist attacks. One cell in Florida acquired explosive materials and may have intended to target the electrical grid or a nuclear power plant.³⁹ Other activities by AWD members include the murder of a gay Jewish college student in California and an intimidation campaign targeting journalists and political figures.⁴⁰

In addition to its activity in the United States, AWD appears to have a presence in Germany and members in Canada.⁴¹ U.S.-based members have reportedly traveled to England, Poland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, and Germany.⁴²

Sonnenkrieg Division. Sonnenkrieg Division is an AWD-inspired, U.K.-based WSE group that shares AWD's accelerationist ideology, including its commitment to violence. Members have distributed propaganda encouraging terrorist attacks and have acquired bombmaking instructions. Like AWD, Sonnenkrieg's members have advocated online for mass violence. Its membership includes former members of National Action, the previously discussed neo-Nazi organization currently banned in the United Kingdom. In February 2020, Britain's home secretary announced that Sonnenkrieg would also be banned as a terrorist group.⁴³ In private forums, Sonnenkrieg members have discussed traveling to

³⁷ A now-defunct iteration of the group's website provided a list of texts explaining its ideology. These works included *Siege* and *Mein Kampf*, as well as a work posted to an online neo-Nazi web zine that describes the necessity of violence for bringing down the System. See "Reading List," Atomwaffen Division, archived February 12, 2018; Max Macro, "Violence," blog entry, *Rope Culture*, March 6, 2017.

³⁸ See A.C. Thompson et al., "California Murder Suspect Said to Have Trained With Extremist Hate Group," *ProPublica*, January 26, 2018; A.C. Thompson et al., "Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student," *ProPublica*, February 23, 2018; Affidavit in Support of Criminal Complaint, *United States v. Russell*, 17 CR 0283 (M.D. Fla., May 20, 2017). (<https://www.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.flmd.337844.1.0.pdf>)

³⁹ Dan Sullivan, "National Guard 'neo-Nazi' aimed to hit Miami nuclear plant, roommate says," *Tampa Bay Times*, June 13, 2017.

⁴⁰ A.C. Thompson, Ali Winston and Jake Hanrahan, "California Murder Suspect Said to Have Trained With Extremist Hate Group," *ProPublica*, January 26, 2018; U.S. Department of Justice, press release, "Arrests in Four States of Racially Motivated Violent Extremists Targeting Journalists and Activists," February 26, 2020.

⁴¹ See Mack Lamoureux and Ben Makuch, "An American Neo-Nazi Group Has Dark Plans for Canada," *Vice*, July 10, 2018. (https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ev847a/an-american-neo-nazi-group-has-dark-plans-for-canada)

⁴² Maik Baumgärtner et al., "Neo-Nazi 'Atomwaffen Division' Spreads Fear in Germany," *Der Spiegel* (Germany), November 13, 2019.

⁴³ Jamie Grierson, "UK to ban neo-Nazi Sonnenkrieg Division as a terrorist group," *The Guardian* (U.K.), February 24, 2020. (<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/feb/24/uk-ban-neo-nazi-sonnenkrieg-division-terrorist-group>)

the United States to meet with members of AWD.

Feuerkrieg Division (FKD). Feuerkrieg Division is an AWD-inspired group founded in the Baltics, with purported members in several European countries and a U.S. presence.⁴⁴ The group’s propaganda reveals that FKD, like AWD and Sonnenkrieg, explicitly embraces violence to bring about a race war. FKD has been implicated in terrorist attacks and plots in the United States and Europe. The scope of the group’s U.S. presence is unclear from open sources. However, Conor Climo, a Las Vegas resident convicted of possession of an unregistered firearm after being found with bomb-making materials in his home, “was communicating with individuals who identified with the white supremacist extremist group Feuerkrieg Division” while discussing attacks on Jewish and LGBT targets in Las Vegas and conducting surveillance in support of potential plots.⁴⁵

The Base. Organized in 2018 by an individual who refers to himself as “Norman Spear” and “Roman Wolf,” The Base is a U.S.-based WSE group with international membership. Spear formed the group with a similar goal to that of AWD’s founders: preparing adherents of WSE ideology to commit acts of terrorism and participate in an anticipated civil war. While Spear has attempted to publicly disavow violence—describing The Base as a “survivalism & self-defense network”—he has acknowledged that members of his group are “militant” and seek to foment an insurgency. Spear has also tacitly justified the use of terrorism to achieve his movement’s goals. For example, he commented in a June 2018 Gab post: “It’s only terrorism if we lose—If we win, we get statues of us put up in parks.”⁴⁶

The majority of the group’s activity takes place in the United States, where cells and individual members have been identified in Maryland, Georgia, New Jersey, Michigan, and Wisconsin. The group has held paramilitary “hate” camps in Georgia and elsewhere in the United States, and has reportedly sought to hold similar camps in Canada.⁴⁷

Members explicitly advocate mass violence in their online communications. While The Base has not successfully executed a terrorist attack, members from Maryland and Canada were indicted in January 2020 in connection with a plot to stage an attack at a gun rights rally in Richmond, Virginia.⁴⁸ Three other members were charged the same month in Georgia with conspiracy to commit murder based on a plot to kill anti-fascist activists, while other members of the group have been charged for vandalizing synagogues in Michigan and Wisconsin.

⁴⁴ For examples of local activity, see “Neo-Nazi Group Announces ‘Florida Cell Activism,’ Calls for New Recruits,” SITE Intelligence Group, October 1, 2019; “Neo-Nazi Group Conducts Postering Campaign in Philadelphia,” SITE Intelligence Group, October 1, 2019; “Neo-Nazi Group Announces Meetup in the United Kingdom,” SITE Intelligence Group, January 8, 2020; “Offshoot of Neo-Nazi Group Shares Violent Propaganda and Attempts Recruitment,” SITE Intelligence Group, December 19, 2018; “Neo-Nazi Group Posts Flyers with Violent Incitement in Netherlands,” *SITE Intelligence Group*, December 30, 2019.

⁴⁵ U.S. Attorney’s Office, District of Nevada, press release, “Las Vegas Man Pleads Guilty to Possession of Bomb-Making Components,” February 10, 2020.

⁴⁶ Quoted in “The Base,” Anti-Defamation League, accessed November 3, 2020. (<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/the-base>)

⁴⁷ Ryan Thorpe, “Homegrown Hate,” *Winnipeg Free Press* (Canada), August 16, 2019, (<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/homegrown-hate-547510902.html>); affidavit in support of the arrest warrant for Luke Austin Lane, Floyd County Police Department, published as part of the press release “Three Men Charged with Murder Conspiracy, Anti-Government Activity,” January 19, 2020. (<https://floydcountypolicedept.files.wordpress.com/2020/01/media-release-affidavit.pdf>)

⁴⁸ U.S. Attorney’s Office, District of Maryland, press release, “Three Alleged Members of the Violent Extremist Group ‘The Base’ Facing Federal Firearms and Alien-Related Charges,” January 16, 2020.

White Nationalist and White Separatist Groups

In the United States, militant white nationalists and white separatists organize around one of two aims: the replacement of the current U.S. government with a white-dominated regime or the creation of a new white state within the geographic United States. The most notable group in the former category is Patriot Front, which seeks to transform the country into a white ethno-state. In contrast to explicitly violent groups, and despite a shared origin with AWD that traces back to Iron March, Patriot Front eschews overt violence, perhaps to make its ideology more palatable.⁴⁹ The group has relied on predominantly nonviolent demonstrations to draw attention to its movement. However, Patriot Front selectively targets its ideological foes—including anarchists and other left-wing activists—with intimidation and threats of violence.

The factions of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) currently active in the United States are not as large or well-organized as earlier iterations of the Klan, but the current movement continues to advocate for white power. Most contemporary KKK factions typically refrain from violence. But some, particularly the Loyal White Knights, the largest Klan group in the United States, have repeatedly threatened violence against non-whites, and individual group members have plotted terrorist attacks.⁵⁰

Few significant white separatist WSE groups currently exist in the United States. The most prominent is the League of the South, though its ability to operate has been limited by its public involvement in violent clashes at the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, as well as by the increasingly militant statements of its leadership. Its recent activity has consisted of participation in protests and demonstrations. While these activities have been mostly peaceful, several members have been arrested or convicted of violence at these events.⁵¹

In Europe, one of the most salient militant transnational white nationalist groups is the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM). NRM is a Sweden-based group that advocates for a halt to non-white immigration to Nordic countries and, subscribing to a pan-Nordic ideology, favors the creation of a single Nordic nation.⁵² The group has tried to organize as a political party in Sweden.⁵³ NRM also has offshoots in Norway, Finland, Iceland, and Denmark, though Finland officially banned it. Members have been involved in bombings, as well as street brawls with opposition groups.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Carol Schaeffer and Fritz Zimmermann, “They Are Racist; Some of Them Have Guns. Inside the White Supremacist Group Hiding in Plain Sight,” *ProPublica*, November 8, 2019.

⁵⁰ For example, see Jason Rantala and Neal Bennett, “KKK Flyers Threatening to Beat Black Men Who ‘Make Eyes’ at White Girls Show Up in Jax Neighborhood,” *First Coast News* (Jacksonville, Fla.), October 9, 2017; Chris Barker, “Ilia Calderón Comes Face to Face with Hate in Interview with KKK Leader,” *Aquí y Ahora*, Univision, August 22, 2017; U.S. Department of Justice, press release, “New York Man Sentenced to 30 Years for Plot to Kill Muslims,” December 19, 2016. (<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/new-york-man-sentenced-30-years-plot-kill-muslims>)

⁵¹ Ian Shapira, “Ex-white nationalist found guilty in beating of black man in Charlottesville parking garage,” *The Washington Post*, February 8, 2019; Jerry Iannelli and Isabella Vi Gomes, “White Supremacist Arrested for Charging Crowd at Hollywood Confederate Street-Name Protest,” *Miami New Times*, August 30, 2017. (<https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/white-supremacist-arrested-at-hollywood-florida-confederate-street-sign-protest-9631690>)

⁵² “Our Path,” Nordic Resistance Movement, November 17, 2018.

⁵³ “What is the Nordic Resistance Movement,” Nordic Resistance Movement, March 8, 2019.

⁵⁴ See Daniel Dickson and Johan Sennero, “Three Swedish men get jail for bomb attacks on asylum centers,” Reuters, July 7, 2017; “Kärntorp clashes: Four neo-Nazis jailed,” *The Local* (Sweden), June 5, 2014. (<https://www.thelocal.se/20140605/karrtorp-clashes-four-neo-nazis-jailed>)

White Power Skinheads

Major transnational white power skinhead groups include the British-origin Blood & Honour (B&H), the affiliated Combat 18 (C18), and the U.S.-origin Hammerskins. B&H originated as a loose association of white power music groups and affiliated racist skinheads in Britain in the 1980s.⁵⁵ While expanding into an international movement, the group splintered several times. B&H now claims affiliates throughout Europe, the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand.⁵⁶ Several countries have proscribed the group, including Germany, Spain, Russia, and, most recently, Canada.

C18 is closely tied to B&H and is sometimes described as its armed wing.⁵⁷ The *18* in the group's name is an overt reference to Adolf Hitler, as *A* is the first letter of the alphabet while *H* is the eighth. C18 has been tied to murders and firebombings in North America and Europe, among other acts of violence.⁵⁸ The group purports to have no official leadership structure, saying that it adheres to a leaderless resistance model.⁵⁹



Logo of a U.S.-origin skinhead group, the Hammerskins.

In contrast to the loose structure initially adopted by B&H, the Hammerskins originated as a nationwide umbrella for U.S. skinhead groups. While the primary central organization, Hammerskin Nation, is now defunct, Hammerskins chapters continue to operate throughout the United States, and there is at least one annual national event, a music festival known as Hammerfest.⁶⁰ The current level of organization beyond local chapters is unclear, as skinhead activity primarily takes place underground and two of the major public websites associated with the Hammerskins are now defunct. Hammerskins crews have also been established in Europe and Australia. Supporting organizations affiliated with Hammerskins crews and made up of prospective members go by the name Crew 38.⁶¹ The rest of the skinhead movement in the United

States is organized primarily into small regional and community groups: Past regional and national-level organizations, including the Vinlanders Social Club and the Blood and Honour Council (also known as the Council of 28), do not appear to be active. However, white power record labels and inter-group associations help bind the current movement together.

U.S.-based racist skinhead groups have served as a source of recruits for more organized WSE groups, including the Rise Above Movement (RAM), which has drawn recruits from Hammerskins factions. RAM has established itself as an independent WSE group. While it has shed some of the overt cultural

⁵⁵ "History," *Blood & Honour Worldwide*, archived August 7, 2020.

⁵⁶ See the organization's website for a list of current chapters. "B&H Worldwide Contacts," *Blood & Honour Worldwide*, archived October 28, 2020.

⁵⁷ See "Listed Terrorist Entities: Currently Listed Entities," Public Safety Canada, accessed November 3, 2020 (describing C18 as B&H's "armed branch"); Ben Knight, "Combat 18: The neo-Nazi network facing a ban in Germany," *DW* (Germany), July 5, 2019. (<https://www.dw.com/en/combat-18-the-neo-nazi-network-facing-a-ban-in-germany/a-49493000>)

⁵⁸ These violent crimes are discussed in "Listed Terrorist Entities: Currently Listed Entities," Public Safety Canada, accessed November 3, 2020. (<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrct/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-en.aspx#59>)

⁵⁹ Discussed in "Combat 18," Blood & Honour Canada, archived June 21, 2019 ("Combat 18 is the leaderless resistance. This means that there are no members, no rosters and no orders to be passed down.").

⁶⁰ The most recent identified iteration of this event was hosted in Southern California in October 2018. Birthrite, *Facebook*, May 9, 2018.

⁶¹ Discussed in Vegas Tenold, *Everything You Love Will Burn* (New York: Nation Books, 2018), pages 178-80.

markers of the WSE skinhead movement, RAM maintains the movement's emphasis on street violence, participating in numerous brawls during political protests in its place of origin, California, and elsewhere in the United States.⁶² RAM emphasizes physical fitness and martial arts, emphases designed to prepare its members to use violence against opponents. The group relies on this focus and its affiliated clothing brand, The Right Brand, to gain a broader following within the white power movement.⁶³ RAM has sought to establish international ties. In spring 2018, members of the group's leadership traveled to Italy, Germany, and Ukraine to establish connections with a variety of European groups, including the Ukraine-based Azov Battalion (which is discussed in further detail in this testimony's "Foreign Fighters and the Ukrainian and Russian Nexus" section).⁶⁴ More recently, RAM may have rebranded, seemingly changing its name to Revolt Through Tradition.

Domestic Activities

Violent Activity

American WSE groups are divided over the use of violence. While some view terrorism and mass killings as essential tools for achieving their goals, others are more commonly implicated in unplanned assaults and murders.⁶⁵ Still others view overt violence as a potential threat to the movement's growth.

Most of the successful WSE terrorist attacks in the United States have been perpetrated by lone attackers such as Robert Bowers, Patrick Crusius, John Earnest, and Dylann Roof, though several disrupted plots have involved small cells. The groups most closely associated with these plots include AWD, its offshoots, and The Base. WSE groups have also perpetrated murders and assaults, generally motivated by the victim's race, ethnicity, religion, or other identity.

Some WSE groups seek out confrontation at rallies and demonstrations, with the intention of engaging in street brawls. Violence at such events can originate not only with WSE groups, but also their opponents, whether anti-fascist protesters or other opposition groups. It can frequently (though not always) be difficult to discern who showed up looking for a fight and who engaged in legitimate self-defense; the true responsible party may not be identifiable. However, some WSE groups that eschew terrorism, mass violence, targeted murders, and assaults do prepare for and intentionally encourage or incite street brawls. Street violence of this nature may be spontaneous, expected, and welcomed, but not intentionally plotted beyond establishing conditions likely for it to occur. Multiple WSE groups notably arrived at the 2017 Unite the Right Rally anticipating violence and prepared for it, armed with makeshift weapons and shields. These groups include the League of the South, one of whose leaders aggressively charged into a group of counter-protesters, and RAM, several of whose members were later convicted of conspiracy to riot for assaulting opposing protesters in Charlottesville and also during protests in Huntington Beach, California, on March 25, 2017, and

⁶² See, for example, Sentencing Memorandum, *United States v. Daley*, 18-CR-00025 (W.D. Va., July 15, 2019).

⁶³ "Backgrounder: Rise Above Movement (R.A.M.)," Anti-Defamation League, accessed November 3, 2020. (<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/rise-above-movement-ram>)

⁶⁴ Affidavit in Support of Complaint, *United States v. Rundo*, 18 MJ 02791 (C.D. Cal., October 20, 2018).

⁶⁵ Belew has criticized the tendency to see acts of violence by WSEs as disconnected or random, writing that the movement's "deliberate obfuscation" of its activities "has clouded many journalistic and scholarly accounts. Press coverage too often portrayed organized white power violence as the work of lone gunmen driven by grievance and mental illness." Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), page 12. With this criticism in mind, it is worth acknowledging that some of these attacks may have been less random and more strategic than they appear on the surface.

Berkeley, California, on April 15, 2017.⁶⁶ In those cases, RAM members trained for and anticipated violence before the protests, and afterward openly celebrated their assaults on opposition activists.⁶⁷

In addition to physical violence, WSE groups frequently use intimidation tactics, including explicit or implicit threats they deliver through property destruction, vandalism and graffiti, flyering, and physical intimidation. Patriot Front has engaged in such “gray-area” behavior, as have the Loyal White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Accelerationists, typically associated with more extreme violence, have also been involved in this activity. Richard Tobin, an alleged member of The Base who lived in New Jersey, was charged with coordinating the vandalism of synagogues in Michigan and Wisconsin via online platforms and encrypted communications with two members of The Base in the Great Lakes region.⁶⁸

Preparations for Violence

Members of WSE groups may also participate in paramilitary training camps or other activities that prepare adherents for violence. The level of preparation can vary, including defensive tactics and the construction of shields, as executed by the Shield Wall Network, to shooting drills.⁶⁹ Both AWD and The Base have held training camps for their members—referred to by The Base as “hate camps”—throughout the United States, including in Nevada, Georgia, Illinois, and Washington.⁷⁰



Members of Atomwaffen Division gathered for a three-day hate camp in Nevada in January 2018, dubbed “Death Valley Hate Camp.”

Hate camps represent a critical step for this newer generation of extremist groups, serving as a steppingstone from online activity to real-world action. *ProPublica* reported on an early Atomwaffen hate camp held in the Shawnee National Forest in southern Illinois in 2017:

At least 10 members from different states attended, with some driving in from as far away as Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and New Jersey. In the Pacific Northwest, cell members had converged on an abandoned cement factory, known as “Devil’s Tower” near the small town of Concrete, Washington, where they had screamed “gas the kikes, race war now!” while firing off round after round from any array of weapons, including an AR-15 assault rifle with a high capacity drum magazine. The training sessions were

⁶⁶ See Sentencing Memorandum, *United States v. Daley*, 18-CR-00025 (W.D. Va., July 15, 2019).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Affidavit in Support of Complaint, *United States v. Tobin*, 19-MJ-05644 (D. N.J., November 12, 2019).

⁶⁹ NBC Left Field, “Path to Radicalization: A Mother Turns to Hate,” *YouTube*, April 17, 2018. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4hZn_i-2nl)

⁷⁰ See, for example, Floyd County Police Department, affidavit in support of the arrest warrant of Luke Austin Lane, published as part of the press release, “Three Men Charged with Murder Conspiracy, Anti-Government Activity,” January 19, 2020; A.C. Thompson et al., “Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student,” *ProPublica*, February 23, 2018.

documented in Atomwaffen propaganda videos.⁷¹

These camps serve many functions. They allow groups to engage in tactical training, hold sensitive offline discussion, build group trust, and further indoctrinate members. The camps also provide raw material for future propaganda.

Prison Gangs and Criminal Activity

Some violent WSE activity is tied to criminal activity and prison gangs. Major WSE prison gangs include the Aryan Brotherhood and the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, an unrelated group based in the Texas prison system. WSE gangs engage in racist violence, often focused on maintaining control over the local criminal or prison power structure, but they are also strongly motivated by illicit economic activities, such as the sale of drugs. The influence of these gangs extends into the streets and is connected to criminal violence in some American communities.⁷²

Transnational Activities and Connections

WSE groups are connected to a global WSE movement through shared ideologies, but many are also connected through joint transnational activities, including participation in protests, historical commemorations, entertainment events, conferences, and—occasionally—combat. Often, the purpose of these activities is to establish cross-border links. Some groups even establish chapters or operate in multiple countries.⁷³ Their transnational activities are sometimes internal to the movement, meant to further connect organizations and adherents. Sometimes they are external, designed to raise public awareness of WSE ideologies and recruit new members. This section introduces some of the activities and events that draw international attendance or support from WSE groups and individuals.

Protests, Demonstrations, and Festivals

Public-facing protests and demonstrations, which connect members and bring attention to the WSE movement, are a significant part of the movement's transnational activities. In addition to raising awareness of WSE ideology, protests and demonstrations serve as internal networking events for the movement. Key dates related to white supremacist extremism—particularly those relevant to Nazism and similar political movements—often serve as the basis for demonstrations, protests, and festivals that draw international attendance. Examples include:

- *Shield and Sword Festival*. Perhaps the most notable historical event celebrated by WSE groups worldwide is April 20, Adolf Hitler's birthday. In 2018, the occasion inspired a large festival called *Schild und Schwert* (Shield and Sword) in Ostritz, Germany. This event was held again in June 2019. The festivities drew attendees from across Germany as well as the Czech Republic and Poland.⁷⁴
- *Lukov March*. The ultranationalist political party Bulgarian National Union hosts a march each February in Sofia, Bulgaria, to commemorate the assassination of Hristo Lukov, a Bulgarian

⁷¹ A.C. Thompson et al., "Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student," *ProPublica*, February 23, 2018.

⁷² For example, see U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Texas, press release, "All 36 Charged Aryan Brotherhood of Texas Members and Associates Have Pleaded Guilty to Federal Racketeering Charges in Southern District of Texas," August 13, 2014.

⁷³ Examples of groups with operations or chapters in other countries include the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM), which has "nests" in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland (after being banned in Finland), and Atomwaffen Division, which has affiliated groups such as Sonnenkrieg Division in the United Kingdom and Feuerkrieg Division in the Baltics.

⁷⁴ "German town braces for neo-Nazi concert on Hitler's birthday," Associated Press, April 20, 2018.

nationalist who worked alongside the Nazi regime during World War II.⁷⁵ The 2018 Lukov March attracted over a thousand participants, including several members of the NRM. The 2019 Lukov March attracted an estimated 2,000 people, including members of NRM and other foreign WSE organizations.⁷⁶ The leader of NRM's Swedish branch, Per Sjogren, said of the 2019 march: "We want to get in contact with other nationalists in Europe, as we strongly believe that free, independent countries are very important. We want to regain the power from the globalists—the people who are running the EU, the people who are devastating Europe."⁷⁷ The 2020 Lukov March was cancelled after Bulgaria's Supreme Administrative Court upheld a ban issued by the mayor of Sofia, who cited concerns about anti-Semitism and hate speech.⁷⁸

- *Festung Budapest/Day of Honor*. Various foreign WSE groups attend Festung Budapest, also known as the Day of Honor, an annual commemoration of the 1945 Siege of Budapest fought between Axis and Soviet troops in World War II.⁷⁹ In 2019, event organizers—the Hungary-based WSE group Légió Hungária—claimed that roughly 600 people attended, many of whom were members of WSE organizations from abroad. Photos posted of the event show the flags and symbols of other transnational and foreign WSE organizations, including the Hungarian Hammerskins chapter and the Hungarian Blood & Honour/C18 chapter.

Entertainment Events

International entertainment events unite WSE groups across borders and offer networking, fundraising, and recruiting opportunities. Entertainment events with an international draw are some of the largest events in the WSE sphere, particularly in Europe. Currently, these events are organized around two major themes: music and mixed martial arts (MMA).

Neo-Nazi and National Socialist black metal (NSBM) concerts provide a platform for songs and lyrics that promote violence towards minorities, romanticize Nazi Germany, and champion WSE beliefs.⁸⁰ Many of these concerts occur in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in Germany and Ukraine.

In Ukraine, tickets for WSE concerts are available for purchase by the public, vetting of attendees is often not required, and the venues are large, with some hosting up to 1,500 people.⁸¹ One of the most notable NSBM concerts, the Asgardrei festival, occurs every December in Kyiv. The 2019 Asgardrei festival hosted NSBM bands from across Europe and beyond, including Goatmoon from Finland, M8L8TH from Russia, and Evil from Brazil. A total of 15 bands from eight different countries performed. Asgardrei was originally founded in Russia by Russian WSE Alexey Levkin, who moved

⁷⁵ Mariya Petkova, "Lukov March: Far-right supporters rally in Bulgaria," *Al Jazeera* (Qatar), February 17, 2018. (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/2/17/lukov-march-far-right-supporters-rally-in-bulgaria>)

⁷⁶ "2,000 torch-wielding nationalists march through Sofia to honor pro-Nazi general," *The Times of Israel* (Israel), February 17, 2019. (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/nationalists-with-torches-march-through-sofia-to-honor-pro-nazi-general/>)

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ "Cancellation of 2020 Lukov March welcomed," *The Sofia Globe* (Bulgaria), February 23, 2020. (<https://sofiaglobe.com/2020/02/23/cancellation-of-2020-lukov-march-welcomed/>)

⁷⁹ See "Russian Far-Right Group Advertises Hungarian Neo-Nazi March," SITE Intelligence Group, January 29, 2020.

⁸⁰ See, for example, the discussion in, for example, Bernhard Forchtner, "Fancy a show? Neo-Nazi concerts in Germany," Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, September 24, 2018. (<https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2018/09/24/fancy-a-show-neo-nazi-concerts-in-germany/>)

⁸¹ We discerned this, for example, from experimenting with the (now defunct) websites of Asgardrei (<https://asgardrei.zone/checkout/>) and Bingo Entertainment (<http://bingo.ua/>).



The AWD flag, bottom right, seen at the Asgardrsrei concert in Ukraine as Russian NSBM band M8L8TH plays.

to Ukraine to fight with the Azov Battalion and brought the festival with him.⁸² Asgardrsrei now plays a large role in the broader Azov movement's publicity efforts. In addition to Asgardrsrei, Kyiv also hosts Fortress Europe, which was scheduled to be held on May 22 and 23, 2020, at the same venue as Asgardrsrei: the Bingo club, with a maximum capacity of 1,500. Like Asgardrsrei, tickets to Fortress Europe were available for public purchase, with no vetting required. The international NSBM lineup that had been scheduled for 2020 included M8L8TH, the Russian NSBM band that played at Asgardrsrei.⁸³

In Germany, WSE concerts and other music events have been steadily increasing in frequency and attendance over the past four years. The German government reported 199 neo-Nazi and WSE related music events in 2015, 223 events in 2016, and 259 events in 2017.⁸⁴ Some of Germany's largest WSE concerts take place in the southeast state of Thuringia. Unlike the WSE concerts in Ukraine, WSE concerts in Germany face government scrutiny.

Mixed martial-arts (MMA) events play a smaller, but increasingly prominent, role in forming transnational connections for the movement. An MMA "fight night" was held prior to the Asgardrsrei concert in Kyiv, and the 2018 Shield and Sword festival featured fights held by German MMA group Kampf der Nibelungen. The festival organizer said that its goal was to provide an event that "united everything: politics, art, music, and sports."⁸⁵

Conferences

WSE groups and individuals often participate in international conferences organized by and intended for the broader white identity politics movement, including non-violent groups. These conferences serve as networking events, help disseminate relevant ideologies, and foster the transmission of political tactics. Notable international fora that have attracted transnational WSEs include the London Forum and the annual Scandza Forum. Though these conferences attract a broad cross-section of participants interested in white identity issues, specific speakers and participants have been linked to violent groups or themselves have advocated for violence.

⁸² Michael Colborne, "Most Neo-Nazi Music Festivals Are Closely Guarded Secrets—Not This One in Ukraine," *Haaretz* (Israel), December 12, 2019. (<https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/.premium-most-neo-nazi-music-festivals-are-closely-guarded-secrets-not-this-one-1.8260218>)

⁸³ "Ticket Fortress Europe 22-23.05.2020," *Svastone.com*, archived April 22, 2020. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20200422191240/https://svastone.com/fortresseurope-2020>); "Contact," *InterNational Festival Fortress Europe*, accessed April 22, 2020. (<https://fortresseurope.in.ua/en/contacts>)

⁸⁴ Germany Bundesministerium des Innern, "Verfassungsschutzbericht 2016," July 2017, page 66; Germany Bundesministerium des Innern, "Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017," July 2018, page 64. (<https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/vsbericht-2017.pdf>)

⁸⁵ Tim Hume, "German neo-Nazis are trying to go mainstream with MMA and music festivals," *Vice*, April 24, 2018.

Foreign Fighters and the Ukrainian and Russian Nexus

Ukraine and Russia are a major center of transnational WSE activity. The ongoing civil war in Ukraine's Donbas region has attracted fighters from Europe and North America, who travel to join the ranks of Ukrainian military and paramilitary groups. Excluding Russians, more than 2,200 foreign fighters are estimated to have participated in the Ukrainian conflict between 2014 and 2019, including 35 from the United States.⁸⁶

The Azov Battalion is a Ukrainian nationalist organization formed in 2014 to combat the Russian-backed separatist movement in eastern Ukraine. As a military unit, the Azov Battalion has been incorporated into the Ukrainian National Guard as the Azov Regiment. The Azov Regiment is linked—through both origin and leadership—with the National Corps political party and the paramilitary group National Militia, which remain independent of the Ukrainian state and have been the subject of controversy. The three groups are considered by many experts to be elements of a single movement, though the precise links between the organizations are disputed and indeed may be deliberately opaque.⁸⁷

National Corps and the Azov Battalion have sought to establish ties with ultranationalist groups in the United States and Europe, and they have connected with members of multiple extremist groups in the United States, including RAM.⁸⁸ Statements by the leadership of National Corps have suggested that the group seeks to export its ideology and movement, espousing a vision of a modern “Reconquista” that begins with Ukraine and Eastern Europe. As the director of international outreach for Azov Civil Corps described it, the project of Reconquista is intended to “defend not only the Ukrainian nation, national identity, but also the Slavic element, the European element, and in the end—the white race.”⁸⁹ The Azov Battalion and National Corps have sought to recruit foreign fighters from Europe and the United States.

Right Sector forms another element of the Ukrainian nexus. The organization's leadership seems to share the vision of a European Reconquista espoused by National Corps leaders.⁹⁰ Unlike the Azov Regiment, Right Sector's military arm has not been fully absorbed into the Ukrainian military. The group's factions maintain a somewhat combative stance toward the central government and have been targeted in government crackdowns.⁹¹ Right Sector has continued to attract foreign fighters from

⁸⁶ *White Supremacy Extremism: The Transnational Rise of the Violent White Supremacist Movement* (New York: The Soufan Center, September 2019).

⁸⁷ For a discussion of differing viewpoints on the links between the current Azov Regiment and the National Corps, see Oleksiy Kuzmenko, “The Azov Regiment Has Not Depoliticized,” Atlantic Council, March 19, 2020, and Anton Shekhovtsov, “Why Azov Should Not be Designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization,” Atlantic Council, February 24, 2020.

⁸⁸ See Christopher Miller, “Azov, Ukraine's Most Prominent Ultranationalist Group, Sets Its Sights on U.S., Europe,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 14, 2018; Affidavit in Support of Complaint, *United States v. Rundo*, 18 MJ 02791 (C.D. Cal., October 20, 2018).

⁸⁹ Quote translated from the original Russian by Bellingcat. Oleksiy Kuzmenko, “‘Defend the White Race’: American Extremists Being Co-Opted by Ukraine's Far-Right,” *Bellingcat*, February 15, 2019; Olena Semenyaka, “Azov W Family - Olena Semenyaka about Azov.Reconquista,” *Azov FM*, accessed November 3, 2020; Olena Semenyaka, “Reconquista Live - Олена Семеняка, руководитель проекта Azov.Reconquista,” *Azov FM*, accessed November 3, 2020. (https://www.mixcloud.com/a_radio/azov-fm-reconquista-live-олена-семеняка-руководитель-проекта-azovreconquista/)

⁹⁰ Jordan Green, “The lost boys of Ukraine: How the war abroad beckoned American white supremacists,” *Triad City Beat*, January 19, 2020. (<https://triad-city-beat.com/the-lost-boys-of-ukraine/>)

⁹¹ Alexander Clapp, “Why American Right-Wingers Are Going to War in Ukraine,” *Vive*, June 19, 2016.

western Europe and the United States, some of whom have espoused WSE ideologies or have connections to the movement.⁹²

Despite the stalemate and reduced number of military engagements following the Minsk II Accords in 2015, Ukraine remains an attractive destination for WSE fighters seeking combat experience, including Americans. In fall 2019, the leader of The Base described the conflict as an opportunity to train group members and transfer combat skills from the front lines to his organization.⁹³ Two members of Atomwaffen were deported from Ukraine in October 2020 after having traveled there with the intention of joining the Azov Regiment.⁹⁴

Russian extremist groups, most notably the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM), are also connected with the global WSE movement. RIM is an ultranationalist Russian political movement that embraces monarchism. It maintains a paramilitary arm, the Imperial Legion, that has fought alongside separatists in Ukraine.⁹⁵ Despite its monarchist stance, RIM is tolerated by the Russian government, likely because the group's recruitment of Russians to fight in Ukraine serves the government's foreign policy interests. The group maintains connections with other European WSE groups, including NRM. Two members of NRM who attempted to bomb a home for asylum seekers trained at RIM's "Partisan" paramilitary training course before their attack.⁹⁶ The leader of RIM has also spoken at one of NRM's summits, and donated money to the party.⁹⁷ RIM has cultivated connections with U.S.-based WSE groups, co-organizing a 2015 conference in the Russian city of St. Petersburg that invited attendees from the U.S. white power movement. RIM also met with Matthew Heimbach, leader of a now-disbanded U.S.-based WSE group called the Traditionalist Workers Party.⁹⁸ In April 2020, the U.S. State Department listed RIM as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT), the first WSE group to be designated as such in U.S. history.⁹⁹ State's designation noted that RIM has trained European WSEs who later went on to commit acts of terrorism in their own countries.¹⁰⁰

The next portion of my testimony turns to the other side of the political spectrum, specifically militant anarchism and anti-fascism. Adherents to these ideologies are part of the move toward armed politics domestically. As I noted earlier, the threat of lethal violence from adherents to WSE ideologies greatly eclipses that posed by adherents to militant anarchism and anti-fascism.

Militant Anarchism and Anti-Fascism

⁹² Ibid.; see also Green, "The Lost Boys of Ukraine."

⁹³ Ben Makuch and Mack Lamoureux, "Neo-Nazi Terror Group the Base Discussed Training Pipeline to Ukraine War," *Vice*, October 15, 2020.

⁹⁴ Christopher Miller, "Ukraine Deported Two American Members of a Neo-Nazi Group Who Tried to Join a Far-Right Military Unit For 'Combat Experience,'" *BuzzFeed*, October 8, 2020.

⁹⁵ Andrew Roth, "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin," *The Washington Post*, January 2, 2017.

⁹⁶ Josephine Huetlin, "Russian Extremists Are Training Right-Wing Terrorists from Western Europe," *The Daily Beast*, August 2, 2017. (<https://www.thedailybeast.com/russian-extremists-are-training-right-wing-terrorists-from-western-europe>)

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Caitlin Dickson, "The Neo-Nazi Has No Clothes: In Search of Matt Heimbach's Bogus 'White Ethnostate,'" *The Huffington Post*, February 2, 2018; Anton Shekhovtsov, "Russian Politicians Building an International Extreme Right Alliance," *The Interpreter*, September 15, 2015.

⁹⁹ U.S. Department of State, press release, "United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists," April 7, 2020.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Historical Background: The Origins of Contemporary Anarchism and Anti-Fascism

Different historical conditions in the United States, Europe, and Latin America in the twentieth century produced largely distinct anarchist and anti-fascist movements across these three regions, despite a common ideological origin. Anarchism emerged as a political ideology in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rooted in socialist ideals of class liberation, European anarchism offered an alternative to other constructs of the state: an association of autonomous communities, cooperating together in areas of mutual interest.¹⁰¹ The anarchist movement spread to Latin America and the United States, fueled by immigration and native anti-capitalist and anti-statist sentiments. In the United States and Europe, anarchists sought influence via the labor movement (anarcho-sindicalism) and helped organize militant labor actions.

Central to the anarchist movement's adoption of violence was the emergence of the concept of *propaganda by deed*, which holds that violent action is the best way to draw attention to a political cause and generate momentum.¹⁰² Toward the final decades of the nineteenth century, immigrants from Europe to the United States fostered a new militant anarchist spirit and a historical peak for anarchist violence in the form of assassinations and terrorism. High-profile attacks included the 1886 bombing in Chicago's Haymarket Square and the assassination of President William McKinley in 1902. The federal government subsequently took strong actions to deport foreign anarchists and prevent immigrants with anarchist beliefs from entering the United States. European governments simultaneously cracked down on the anarchist movement, causing the ideology to fade.

Modern anti-fascism is inspired by opposition to fascism in Europe in the inter-war period. The movement of that era included anarchists, communists, socialists, and adherents of other left-wing ideologies. Many, though not all, anti-fascists of the period were explicitly violent, engaging in street fights with similarly violent fascist opponents. As fascist parties took power in Spain, Italy, and Germany, anti-fascism embraced forms of guerilla warfare that persisted through World War II. Among the most notable groups was the German organization Antifaschistische Aktion, the namesake for contemporary "Antifa" groups. Antifaschistische Aktion's fight against Adolf Hitler's genocidal Nazi party in the 1930s contributed to the enduring prominence of the group's name and symbology. German communists and socialists who survived Nazi rule formed Antifa groups immediately after the war's end, but these were – like the modern movement – inspired by the pre-war group rather than direct successors to it. Even so, militant forms of anti-fascism largely disappeared as a result of the Allied victory and subsequent occupation of Germany, as well as the dominance of Soviet communism in Eastern Europe. However, the emergence of neo-Nazi skinheads in Britain and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s led to the return of street-level anti-fascist organizing that persists today.

Anarchist militancy re-emerged gradually, gaining its greatest traction in Southern and Eastern Europe in an insurrectionary form. In Greece, for example, anarchism influenced resistance to the military junta that ruled from 1967 to 1975. In the United States, militant anarchism lay largely dormant until the 1990s. Militant groups regained national prominence thanks to the presence of a violent anarchist formation at the "Battle for Seattle" protests at the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Seattle. The previous year's WTO Ministerial in Geneva had been marked by riotous

¹⁰¹ George Woodcock, "Anarchism," in *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, n.d., accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/anarchism>)

¹⁰² Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* 3d ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), page 5.

violence, but law enforcement saw the problem as “unique to Europe and highly unlikely to migrate to the U.S.”¹⁰³ This proved to be a significant misreading. The raucous anti-WTO protests that gripped Seattle included a contingent of protesters bent on violent disruption. Donning black clothing to obscure their identity (a tactic known as *black bloc*), the protesters seized intersections, started fires, and assaulted officers with chemical irritants.¹⁰⁴ While no deaths or serious injuries occurred during the unrest, the Seattle Police Department acknowledged in an after-action review that “tactically, it was taught a hard lesson by a well-trained and equipped adversary.”¹⁰⁵

Following the WTO conference, anarchist militancy in the United States spent the next 15 years largely unnoticed, save for its involvement in the Occupy Wall Street movement. Organized domestic anti-fascist movements likewise had a quiet start to the millennium. However, both movements became more active and gained national prominence during the candidacy, and then presidency, of Donald Trump. Key events during this period, including the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville and racial justice protests (e.g., following the death of George Floyd), served to galvanize both anarchists and anti-fascists across the United States.

Anarchist and Anti-Fascist Ideology: Key Tenets and Global Trends

Anarchism and anti-fascism, while often conflated with one another, are distinct ideologies and movements. Anarchism is defined by opposition to the modern state, generally seeking to replace it with systems of mutual cooperation and horizontal organization, while anti-fascism is shaped primarily by opposition to perceived fascism and racism. Neither anarchism nor anti-fascism possess universally accepted doctrines, and the movements in some ways lend themselves to variegated definitions. Thus, the definitions that follow should not be construed as *the* anti-fascist or anarchist position. Rather, this testimony describes a collection of beliefs among militant factions of highly diverse and largely decentralized movements. Accordingly, this testimony uses the term *antifa* only in the context of groups that explicitly adopt that label. *Anti-fascism* better encapsulates both the core element of the ideology (that is, opposition to perceived fascism) as well as the range of groups that organize around this principle. This distinction avoids the erroneous implication that there is a single unified Antifa organization within the United States or abroad that shares a coherent structure and defined ideology.

Anarchism

Anarchists, both militant and non-militant, believe that individual freedom is paramount, and that hierarchies of authority and power are generally infringements upon that freedom. They oppose traditional forms of government, instead advocating for decision-making by consensus, direct democracy, and the organization of society by mutual association. Anarchists typically oppose private property rights, which they view as an element of centralized authority.¹⁰⁶

In order to achieve these goals, some anarchists, referred to here as militant anarchists, employ violence. However, **anarchism is not an inherently violent ideology**. Anarchists embrace a wide range of tactics to achieve their goals, the majority of which are nonviolent. Some anarchists eschew

¹⁰³ Seattle Police Department, “The Seattle Police Department After Action Report, World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, Seattle, Washington, November 29 – December 3, 1999,” April 4, 2000, pages 10, 17-18. (<http://media.cleveland.com/pdextra/other/Seattle%20PD%20after%20action%20report.pdf>)

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pages 38-39.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., page 3.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, “To Change Everything: An Anarchist Appeal,” *CrimethInc*, 2018. (<https://crimethinc.com/tce>); David Graeber, “Are You an Anarchist?: The Answer May Surprise You!” n.d., The Anarchist Library, accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/david-graeber-are-you-an-anarchist-the-answer-may-surprise-you>)

violence in any form. Many anarchists only condone violence as a means of self-defense, believing they can dismantle the state through non-violent means. Other anarchists may accept violence as necessary to achieve their political goals, but do not themselves engage in violence or directly support it. Peaceful activities by anarchist groups include civil disobedience, protest, and community organizing.

A key element of many anarchist movements is *direct action*. While the term has multiple overlapping meanings and connotations, direct action can best be understood as an attempt to achieve concrete aims through individual and group efforts rather than by relying on appeals to the state or another external authority or source of power.¹⁰⁷ The term typically indicates a degree of militancy in the actions taken, which stop short of insurrection. As David Graeber writes in a book published by an anarchist press, “if one is doing more than marching around with signs, but not yet ready to take to the hills with AK-47s, then one is a direct actionist.”¹⁰⁸ While direct action can be violent, the term refers to a wide range of political activity, including community organizing and the establishment and operation of mutual aid societies.¹⁰⁹ For militant anarchists, violence against state institutions, private businesses, and other perceived elements of the hierarchy of power can be an element of direct action.

Anti-Fascism

The term *anti-fascism* has diverse meanings. It can describe a coherent movement, an ideology, an identity, an activity, or a political orientation.¹¹⁰ Simply defined, anti-fascism is opposition to fascism and its proponents. However, anti-fascists often target a wider array of political opponents than a literal definition of fascism would imply, either because they adopt an overly broad definition of fascism or because they seek to combat a broader array of ideologies that they identify as “far-right.”¹¹¹ The single-issue nature of the anti-fascist movement brings together participants who embrace a wide set of political ideologies, typically those considered to be on the left of the political spectrum, including socialism, communism, and anarchism.¹¹² Organizers often intentionally keep the movement broad, focusing on combating a limited set of beliefs rather than establishing a particular political program. Because the movement’s interpretation of fascism tends to be broad, it may define numerous objectives as effectively anti-fascist. For example, one organizer and kickboxer with the Anti-Authoritarian Movement in Greece – where the status and treatment of migrants is a



The logo of Anti-Fascist Action, used by many anti-fascist groups. The black flag represents anarchism.

¹⁰⁷ *Direct action* is distinct from *civil disobedience*, which is intended to pressure the state or another entity to take action. Rob Sparrow, “Anarchist Politics and Direct Action,” *The Anarchist Library*, 1997. (<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/rob-sparrow-anarchist-politics-direct-action>)

¹⁰⁸ David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009), page 204.

¹⁰⁹ Rob Sparrow, “Anarchist Politics and Direct Action,” *The Anarchist Library*, 1997. (<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/rob-sparrow-anarchist-politics-direct-action>)

¹¹⁰ Mark Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017), page xv.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Colin Clarke and Michael Kenney, “What Antifa Is, What It Isn’t, and Why It Matters,” *War on the Rocks*, June 23, 2020. (<https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/what-antifa-is-what-it-isnt-and-why-it-matters>)

major issue for the anti-fascist movement – claimed that “if you show solidarity with the refugees, you are an anti-fascist.”¹¹³

Within the broader, and mostly peaceful, anti-fascist movement, militants occupy a small niche. Anti-fascism is not an inherently violent ideology, and not all direct action undertaken even by militant anti-fascists is violent. However, when militant anti-fascists resort to violence, they possess three main rationales for doing so. First, anti-fascists believe that rational debate and government action have historically failed to halt fascism, and therefore violent direct action – sometimes reactive, sometimes preemptive – is justified and necessary.¹¹⁴ Second, anti-fascists argue that militant organizing has historically succeeded in reducing fascists’ activity and disrupting their organizing power.¹¹⁵ Finally, they hold that violent self-defense is appropriate in the face of fascist violence. Militants sometimes justify violence as speaking to fascists “in their own language.”¹¹⁶ The definition of self-defense adopted by militant anti-fascists can be expansive, and they often consider preemptive violence to be self-defense.¹¹⁷

The growing number of domestic anti-fascist and anti-racist groups dedicated to armed self-defense is noteworthy. Numerous anti-fascist “gun clubs” embrace the Second Amendment and carry firearms. The majority of these groups and their members are not violent extremists and are not directly connected to violence. They see guns as an important element in defending themselves and marginalized communities from fascists, racists, and other hostile groups.

Willem van Spronsen, a member of a John Brown Gun Club chapter – one of the more prominent anti-fascist gun clubs – attacked a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center in Washington State, armed with a gun and Molotov cocktails.¹¹⁸ He died in the attack. While the Gun Club chapter with which he was affiliated did not explicitly endorse his methods, the group posted a commemoration of van Spronsen on their website on the anniversary of his death:

He was a hero in many ways. There has not been a single event that we’ve attended where at least one person doesn’t come up to us to tell us how Will has changed their life. Even those who didn’t know him personally but who have read his words say his ideology has become a driving force in their lives. “you don’t have to burn the motherfucker down, but are you going to just stand by?” ... He lives on in those that loved him and those who continue his work. Rest in power, Will.¹¹⁹

Related Movements

The militant anarchist and anti-fascist movements intersect with other forms of political militancy, most notably ecological and animal-rights movements, as well as separatist and indigenous resistance movements. Anarchist movements may embrace ecological militancy as part of a broad program of anti-state and anti-capitalist resistance.

¹¹³ Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook*, page 103.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, page 169.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, page 65.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, page 169.

¹¹⁸ Hannah Allam, “‘I am Antifa’: One Activist’s Violent Death Became a Symbol for the Right and Left,” *NPR*, July 23, 2020.

¹¹⁹ “Rest in Power, Will, One Year Later,” Puget Sound John Brown Gun Club, July 13, 2020. (<https://psjbgc.org/blog/rest-in-power-will-one-year-later/>)

Militant environmentalist and animal rights groups use violence to disrupt business practices and industries they view as damaging the environment. The violence they employ can include direct attacks on infrastructure and facilities, such as laboratories conducting animal research, as well as attacks on government facilities, banks, and other elements viewed as symbolic of the capitalist system.¹²⁰ Some ecological and animal rights militants explicitly embrace anarchist political programs. Moreover, ecological and animal rights militant groups such as the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front circulate announcements of their claimed attacks on anarchist media outlets, and anarchist groups express solidarity with imprisoned ecological and animal rights militants.

Anarchists and anti-fascists also support numerous separatist and indigenous movements. For example, they may act in support of American Indian and First Peoples movements in the United States and Canada. Oil pipelines and other elements of the energy industry – which are frequent targets of both environmental and indigenous activism – are sometimes a focus. American anarchists report that they were involved in protests opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota, at which participants clashed with police and burned construction vehicles.¹²¹ Anarchists in Canada have sabotaged rail infrastructure in solidarity with First Peoples activists opposing the oil industry.¹²² Recently, two women were arrested in Washington state on terrorism charges for placing a series of shunts on railroads, devices which would have interrupted an electrical current that enables the tracks' safety features. The attacks were claimed on an anarchist website in solidarity with the indigenous peoples of Canada.

Overview of Domestic and Foreign Militant Groups

Militant anarchist and anti-fascist networks have historically emphasized local, community level-organizing. *Affinity groups* – small, local groups of individuals that organize actions – typically represent the basic unit of organization for both sets of actors. Within anarchist networks, cells may form only to carry out a limited number of actions, often only one, before disbanding. Thus, attributing violence to a single persistent organization can be difficult. When national or international groups are formed, they are usually (but not always) informal, demonstrating limited coordination over time.

For anti-fascist groups, the level of groups' organization varies within and between countries.¹²³ Prior to 2020, membership numbers that could be attributed to U.S.-based affinity groups have typically been no greater than 15 per group.¹²⁴ However, the recent emergence of militant anti-fascist groups with large online followings that may be able to coordinate larger and longer-lasting militant actions

¹²⁰ For additional information on environmental and animal rights militancy in the United States, see Jerome P. Bjelopera, *Domestic Terrorism: An Overview* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017).

¹²¹ “Report Back from the Battle for Sacred Ground,” *CrimethInc*, November 1, 2016. (<https://crimethinc.com/2016/11/01/feature-report-back-from-the-battle-for-sacred-ground>)

¹²² See, for example, “Toronto: Explorations in Rail Disruption in Solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en (Canada),” 325, January 16, 2020. (<https://325.nostate.net/2020/01/16/toronto-explorations-in-rail-disruption-in-solidarity-with-the-wetsuweten-kanada>)

¹²³ See “Forming an Antifa Group,” *It’s Going Down*, July 2012. (<https://itsgoingdown.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/howtoantifa-revised.pdf>); “How to Set Up an Anti-Fascist Group,” Anti-Fascist Network, accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://antifascistnetwork.org/how-to-set-up-an-anti-fascist-group>)

¹²⁴ Matt Zapposky, Robert Klemko and Jacqueline Alemany, “In Trump’s Campaign Against Antifa, Observers See an Attempt to Distract from Protesters’ Genuine Outrage,” *The Washington Post*, May 31, 2020.

suggests that this model has the potential to change and, in fact, could already be changing.¹²⁵

Militant anarchists, like anti-fascists, organize into small affinity groups.¹²⁶ These groups are sometimes connected to larger, possibly transnational, networks. While some cells may coordinate, others are linked only by violent acts committed under a common name. The broader networks do not appear to exercise centralized control. It is also unclear from open sources to what extent cells communicate with one another beyond public communiqués.

Through early 2020, violence perpetrated by militant anarchists in the United States has primarily been attributable to individuals or small groups engaged in direct action at protests. Militant anarchists seem to coordinate most heavily when conducting direct action at protests, while isolated cells or individuals are more commonly the perpetrators of arson attacks and bombings. Outside the United States, numerous militant anarchist networks are engaged in overtly violent activities. While some of these networks are strictly national in scope, several have affiliated cells in multiple countries, sometimes on multiple continents. However, it is possible that many cells claiming affiliation with the same network – particularly those operating in different regions and on different continents – do not have direct links and are instead connected largely or entirely by shared ideologies.

Because of the disparity in the domestic threat posed by WSE groups as opposed to militant anti-fascist or anarchist groups, this testimony does not profile individual militant anti-fascist or anarchist organizations. Instead, it explores various kinds of violence employed by this movement, both domestically and internationally.

Violent Activities

Militant anarchists and anti-fascists engage in a range of violent activity. The kinds of violence and the targets against which violence is employed vary by group, location, and ideology. While militant anarchists and anti-fascists in the United States, Europe, and Latin America engage in militant street actions and arson attacks targeting property, U.S.-based anarchists and anti-fascists largely eschew assassinations, murder, bombings, and targeted violence outside of protests. From 1994 to early 2020, American anti-fascists were not linked to any victim deaths in politically motivated attacks.¹²⁷ However, in August 2020 an anti-fascist killed a participant during a rally in support of President Trump in Portland, Oregon.

That killing aside, the use of violence by militant anarchists and anti-fascists may be constrained by their ideological commitments. Militant anarchists and anti-fascists are more likely to engage in what they dub “defensive” violence, or violence intended to protect protesters from interference or harm by political opponents or law enforcement. Militant anarchists target property more often than they target people, viewing such attacks as less violent means of combating capitalism and the state. When using potentially dangerous tactics intended to cause property damage or draw public attention, such as bombings or arson, many anarchist groups do so late at night at locations likely to be devoid of people, thus mitigating the risk of injury or death. These groups sometimes attempt to evacuate

¹²⁵ Joel Finkelstein et al., *Network-Enabled Anarchy: How Militant Anarcho-Socialist Networks Use Social Media to Instigate Widespread Violence Against Political Opponents and Law Enforcement* (Network Contagion Research Institute, 2020). (<https://ncri.io/wp-content/uploads/NCRI-White-Paper-Network-Enabled-Anarchy-25-Sept-259pm.pdf>)

¹²⁶ Jerome P. Bjelopera, *Domestic Terrorism: An Overview* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2017), page 14. (<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/R44921.pdf>)

¹²⁷ Lois Beckett, “Anti-Fascists Linked to Zero Murders in the U.S. in 25 Years,” *The Guardian* (UK), July 27, 2020. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/27/us-rightwing-extremists-attacks-deaths-database-leftwing-antifa>)

potential casualties prior to carrying out bombings. Groups that have employed lethal violence, particularly nihilistic groups such as Individualidades Tendiendo a lo Salvaje (ITS), are generally rejected by the broader anarchist community, including by other militant anarchists.¹²⁸

Street Violence and Riots

The most common anti-fascist and anarchist violence in the United States and Europe is street fighting that takes place at marches and protests. Such activity can be an attempt to advance a cause (e.g., anti-capitalism or environmentalism), to counter political opponents, or to prevent or retaliate against law enforcement interference in anarchist or anti-fascist projects and spaces (e.g., squats).

Street violence is of growing concern in the United States and intersects heavily with the trend toward armed domestic politics. Street violence as a tactic does not necessarily command the fear or destructive power of assassinations or bombings, but its capacity to inflict harm remains potent. In 2016 and 2017, a number of major protests and rallies were disrupted by militant anarchists and anti-fascists assaulting demonstrators and law enforcement. Three people were stabbed in clashes between anti-fascists and Ku Klux Klan members at a rally in February 2016.¹²⁹ Anarchists and anti-fascists participated in violence at protests against the inauguration of President Trump in Washington, D.C., on January 20, 2017. At the protests, anarchists and anti-fascists damaged property, committed arson, and attacked police officers.¹³⁰ During these protests, an anonymous anarchist or anti-fascist demonstrator famously punched white nationalist Richard Spencer in the face as he was being interviewed on television.

The following month, a violent march that prominently included militant anarchists and anti-fascists in Berkeley, California, prevented the controversial right-wing speaker Milo Yiannopoulos from appearing at the University of California at Berkeley. The group destroyed equipment, broke windows, and attacked police officers with fireworks, ultimately leading to the event's cancellation. Five people were injured.¹³¹ The violence in Berkeley was a textbook example of violent deplatforming. Militant protesters physically denied Yiannopoulos a platform from which to speak, viewing him as a fascist spreading dangerous ideas.

Berkeley saw further violence in August 2017, when militant anti-fascists fought Trump supporters at a protest.¹³² That month, the ongoing battle between anti-fascists and their political opponents raged in Charlottesville, Virginia. A coterie of individuals, a number of whom were prominently identified with far-right or white nationalist movements, had gathered in Charlottesville for the "Unite the Right" rally, which was dedicated in part to protesting the removal of a local statue of Confederate General

¹²⁸ See, for example, "'ITS, or the Rhetoric of Decay' (Joint Statement of Insurrectional Groups in Mexican Territory)," 325, July 12, 2017. (<https://325.nostate.net/2017/08/03/its-or-the-rhetoric-of-decay-joint-statement-of-insurrectional-groups-in-mexican-territory/>) In this statement, militant anarchist groups state that "ITS undertook a totally opposite route to the fundamental principles of Anarchy, moving away from the ethics of freedom and the radical critique of power; Renouncing not only the 'air of family' but everything that exalts us as anarchists." They claim that ITS is in fact characterized not by a commitment to anarchist principles, but rather by "proto-fascist decadence."

¹²⁹ Farah Stockman, "Anarchists Respond to Trump's Inauguration, by Any Means Necessary," *The New York Times*, February 2, 2017.

¹³⁰ Ibid.; Keith L. Alexander and Paul Duggan, "Inauguration Protesters Were 'Playing a Role in the Violence and Destruction,' Prosecutor Says," *The Washington Post*, November 20, 2017.

¹³¹ Veronica Rocha and Peter H. King, "UC Berkeley Blames Violent 'Black Bloc' Protesters for 'Unprecedented Invasion,'" *The Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 2017.

¹³² James Queally et al., "Violence by Far-Left Protesters in Berkeley Sparks Alarm," *The Los Angeles Times*, August 27, 2017. (<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-berkeley-protests-20170827-story.html>)

Robert E. Lee. The rally quickly became a national show of force for the far-right and white nationalists. The many counter-protesters, the vast majority of whom were non-violent, included some militant anti-fascists, who used homemade weapons and chemical irritants to fight rallygoers.¹³³

The threat of violence by militant anarchists and anti-fascists at protests has persisted into 2020, most prominently during the civil unrest following George Floyd's death. Portland, Oregon, in particular, was gripped by ongoing violence involving anarchists, as rioters vandalized the city, assaulted police officers, and set fire to buildings. The *Los Angeles Times* has noted that the violence produced tension with black community leaders, who “denounced an arson attack by protesters on a building that houses a police station and Black-owned businesses on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.”¹³⁴ Throughout 2020, it is clear that some perpetrators of violence during the civil unrest were militant anarchists or anti-fascists,¹³⁵ but the amount of violence attributable to anarchists or anti-fascists or to specific networks is unclear.¹³⁶

Militant anti-fascists and anarchists have used a number of low-grade, commercially available weapons or self-modified tools for offensive and defensive purposes. Clubs, poles, and bats of various kinds can serve multiple purposes. Offensively, they can be used to beat opponents. Defensively, they can be used to counter advancing law enforcement or to deflect and counter police batons or similarly styled weapons in the hands of opponents. Bricks, bottles, cans, and other makeshift projectiles are common. Pepper spray or other chemical irritants are sometimes used, both for personal protection and for assault.¹³⁷ Militant anarchists and anti-fascists also frequently make use of shields. Some groups use shields in formation to form a wall.

In addition to these relatively simple weapons, some anarchists and anti-fascists make use of more novel tools, including low-grade explosives or incendiary devices such as Molotov cocktails and fireworks, along with lasers. Fireworks are often used at protests to disorient law enforcement, and can cause bodily harm. Protesters frequently engage in simple arson, burning trash cans, debris, or other objects, often in an attempt to attract attention.¹³⁸ Lasers may be directed at the eyes of opponents, especially law enforcement. This tactic can cause physical harm and is illegal in many places. Lasers are also used against electronic systems. In Chile, for example, lasers have reportedly been used in a coordinated manner to bring down police drones.¹³⁹

¹³³ Near the conclusion of the rally, a white supremacist extremist drove his vehicle into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing one and injuring several more. For an overview of violent activities surrounding the rally, see Joe Heim, “Recounting a Day of Rage, Hate, Violence and Death,” *The Washington Post*, August 14, 2017.

¹³⁴ Richard Read, “Portland’s Anarchists Say They Support Racial Justice. Black Activists Want Nothing to Do with Them,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 2020.

¹³⁵ See, for example, U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Massachusetts, Press Release, “Worcester Man Charged with Civil Disorder and Possession of a Destructive Device,” June 3, 2020. (<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/pr/worcester-man-charged-civil-disorder-and-possession-destructive-device>)

¹³⁶ Alanna Durkin Richer, Colleen Long, & Michael Balsamo, “AP Finds Most Arrested in Protests Aren’t Leftist Radicals,” *Associated Press*, October 20, 2020.

¹³⁷ “Black-Clad Anarchists Storm Berkeley Rally, Assaulting 5,” *CNBC*, August 28, 2017. (<https://www.cnbc.com/2017/08/28/berkeley-protest-rally-stormed-by-anarchists.html>)

¹³⁸ William Gagan, “Black Bloc Protesters Hurl Pepsi Cans at Police, Set Newspaper Boxes on Fire in the Portland Street,” *Willamette Week*, May 1, 2017. (<https://www.wweek.com/news/2017/05/01/black-bloc-protesters-hurl-pepsi-cans-at-police-set-newspaper-boxes-on-fire-in-the-portland-street>)

¹³⁹ Gustavo Rodríguez, “Desde Algún Lugar: Carta a Un(a) Chileno(a) Sobre la Situación Actual (II) (From somewhere: Letter to a Chilean about the current situation (II)),” *contra info*, December 2, 2019. (<https://es-contrainfo.espiov.net/2019/12/02/desde-algun-lugar-carta-a-un-a-chileno-a-sobre-la-situacion-actual-ii/>)

Militant anti-fascists and anarchists committing violent acts at protests often do so as part of *black blocs*. Black bloc refers to an organizational tactic often employed by anarchists and anti-fascists when engaging in protests or direct action.¹⁴⁰ When in black bloc, individuals wear masks, bandanas, and head-to-toe black clothing to project strength and group uniformity while maintaining anonymity.¹⁴¹ The primary rationale for black bloc is to prevent identification of individual actors by the state or other opponents.¹⁴² Black blocs tend to both form and disassemble within the marches and protests in which they appear; they are often formed by a coalition of militant groups, rather than emerging from a single, persistent organization.¹⁴³ Black bloc does not belong to one particular group or ideology. The tactic originated with Germany's "autonomous movement" (Autonomen) during the late 1970s and 1980s, and received widespread attention in the United States following its use at the 1999 Battle for Seattle.



Black Bloc formation at a 2019 rally in Portland, Oregon (Stephanie Keith, Getty Images)

Black bloc has multiple uses for militant actors. Defensively, it protects both nonviolent activists and extremists from surveillance and possible law enforcement action. It allows disparate groups to organize into larger, more powerful units and affords them mobility. Offensively, militant anarchists and anti-fascists can use the anonymity that black bloc affords to carry out various forms of direct action, ranging from vandalism to assaults on law enforcement and political opposition.

Black blocs also facilitate de-arresting tactics. Anarchists, anti-fascists, and other protesters claim to have used de-arresting tactics in the Battle for Seattle in 1999, in protests linked to the Occupy movement in 2012, and in protests in the wake of George Floyd's death in 2020.¹⁴⁴ According to one anarchist, de-arresting, as facilitated by black bloc, "includes the very basic principle of no comrade left behind, that we do not leave people in the police lines and decide to flee, and for that the black bloc is deeply courageous."¹⁴⁵ De-arresting is usually carried out as follows: If law enforcement officers are trying to detain or arrest a member of the black bloc, other members will intervene by engaging the officers, often violently, to make the act of arresting more difficult. This intervention theoretically allows individuals being detained to escape back to the anonymous mass of the black bloc, where they are protected and cannot be identified again.

¹⁴⁰ Mark Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017), page 194.

¹⁴¹ Francis Dupuis-Deri, *Who's Afraid of the Black Blocs?* (Montreal: Lux Editeur, 2007), page 2.

¹⁴² Mark Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017), page 194.

¹⁴³ Francis Dupuis-Deri, *Who's Afraid of the Black Blocs?* (Montreal: Lux Editeur, 2007), page 2.

¹⁴⁴ "A Communiqué from One Section of the Black Bloc of N30 in Seattle," ACME Collective, December 4, 1999. (https://depts.washington.edu/wtohist/documents/black_bloc_communique.htm); "Battle for the Soul of Occupy: Round 7 – The Black Bloc Anarchist Turn," *Adbusters*, May 7, 2012; Blazedroots, "Occupy Congress Protesters De-Arrest Fellow Protester," *YouTube*, January 18, 2012. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFjG7wD8DXQ>); Teetron 9000 News, "BLM Protesters 'De-Arrest' One of Their Own in Portland, OR, on Aug 24 2020," *YouTube*, August 25, 2020. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFaLc7fwOfI>)

¹⁴⁵ Harsha Walia, "10 Points on the Black Bloc," *Rise Like Lions*, n.d., accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120202041954/http://riselikelions.net/pamphlets/14/10-points-on-the-black-bloc>)



A sign marking the boundary of Seattle's Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (David Ryder, Getty Images)

In rare instances, street violence, or the threat of it, may be employed by militant anarchists and anti-fascists to establish and maintain control of small autonomous spaces. These spaces may then be used by activists for protest activities, community organizing, or as a refuge for populations they believe to be victimized (for example, undocumented migrants). Autonomous spaces have been formed in both the United States and Europe. The most prominent in Europe – and the one most closely associated with anarchists and anti-fascists – is the Exarcheia

neighborhood in Athens, an area of the city from which law enforcement is largely excluded, and which has become home to numerous undocumented migrants.¹⁴⁶ On June 8, 2020, ongoing street violence and political pressure led the Seattle Police Department to withdraw from its East Precinct, allowing protesters to occupy the building and establish the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ).¹⁴⁷ The zone was defended by members of the Puget Sound John Brown Gun Club.¹⁴⁸ CHAZ was marred by violence in the absence of law enforcement. While its most visible areas were home to murals and community gardens, teenagers were murdered just blocks away. A 19-year-old and 16-year-old were both shot and killed days apart from one another. In total, four people were shot with firearms in CHAZ during its short existence.¹⁴⁹ In addition to these incidents, a rape, arson, and burglary ultimately drew Seattle police back to the zone on July 1, spelling a quick end to CHAZ.¹⁵⁰

Arson

Beyond using incendiary devices during protests, anarchists in the United States, Europe, and Latin America have employed arson, usually to target property rather than individuals. Some past targets in the United States have included:

- *Vehicles.* In 2012, an anarchist in Portland threw a Molotov cocktail at an empty police cruiser in a precinct parking lot.¹⁵¹ In honor of May Day in 2020, militant anarchists claimed credit for firebombing an Amazon delivery vehicle in Los Angeles County, in retaliation for Amazon's provision of cloud servers to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.¹⁵²
- *Political Offices, Government Officials, and Law Enforcement.* On September 11, 2014, an anarchist attempted to firebomb the local office of a member of Congress in Kansas City using Molotov cocktails that failed to ignite. The attack took place early in the morning, and the office was

¹⁴⁶ Molly Crabapple, "The Attack on Exarchia, an Anarchist Refuge in Athens," *The New Yorker*, January 20, 2020.

¹⁴⁷ Ashitha Nagesh, "This Police-Free Protest Zone Was Dismantled – But Was It the End?," BBC, July 11, 2020.

¹⁴⁸ Kim Kelly, "Meet the Gun Club Patrolling Seattle's Leftist Utopia," *The Daily Beast*, June 14, 2020.

¹⁴⁹ Ezra Marcus, "In the Autonomous Zones," *The New York Times*, July 1, 2020.

¹⁵⁰ Deborah Horne, "'This is About Life or Death': City Says SPD Will Return to East Precinct," *KIRO*, June 22, 2020.

¹⁵¹ "Man Who Threw Molotov Cocktail at Portland Police Car Gets 30 Months," *KOMO News*, April 1, 2014.

¹⁵² "Incendiary Attack Against Amazon in Los Angeles County (USA)," 325, May 4, 2020. (<https://325.nostate.net/2020/05/04/incendiary-attack-against-amazon-in-los-angeles-county-ua>)

unoccupied at the time.¹⁵³ Three anarchists were accused by Illinois state prosecutors of plotting to use Molotov cocktails and other incendiary devices to attack law enforcement, President Barack Obama’s campaign office, and Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s home during the 2012 NATO summit in Chicago.¹⁵⁴ The men were ultimately acquitted of the most serious charges they faced – providing material support for terrorism and conspiracy to commit terrorism – but were convicted of mob action and possession of an incendiary device.

- *Infrastructure*. An anarchist group calling itself the Bristling Badgers Brigade set fire to a cell tower at Philadelphia’s Navy Yard.¹⁵⁵
- *Construction Sites*. Housing developments have been targeted in areas where gentrification is a concern. A group referring to itself simply as Some Anarchists claimed responsibility for the February 2014 burning of a housing development under construction in Seattle.¹⁵⁶ In Philadelphia, a housing development fire in May 2017 may have similarly been the work of anti-gentrification anarchists. While no one directly claimed the attack, it was noted in a Philadelphia anarchist periodical in a section entitled “What Went Down.” The attack also occurred around the same time as other anti-gentrification criminal activity likely committed by Philadelphia anarchists.¹⁵⁷

In European countries with significant militant anarchist or anti-fascist activity, arson is more common and is aimed against a more diverse array of targets.

Bombings

Militant anarchists and anti-fascists in the United States rarely use explosive devices beyond the incendiaries described previously in this report (e.g., low-grade explosives or incendiary devices such as Molotov cocktails and fireworks). The most notable plot in the past decade was an attempt by five anarchists to detonate homemade bombs made with C-4 on a bridge near Cleveland, Ohio, in 2012. The plotters had considered numerous other targets, including financial institution signs on rooftops throughout the Cleveland metropolitan area, before settling on their final plan.¹⁵⁸ The plot was foiled by federal investigators.

In contrast, explosives are a frequent – and often preferred – tool of foreign militant anarchists. They are used in attacks targeting both people and property. Most of the explosives are crude improvised explosive devices used to destroy property. Designs vary, but some have been as simple as gunpowder

¹⁵³ Tony Rizzo, “Man Who Threw Molotov Cocktails at Rep. Emanuel Cleaver’s KC Office Gets 10-Year Sentence,” *The Kansas City Star*, June 28, 2016. (<https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/crime/article86417757.html>)

¹⁵⁴ Steve Schmadeke, “NATO 3 Found Guilty of Mob Action and Arson, but Not Terror Charges,” *The Chicago Tribune*, February 6, 2014; “Who Are the ‘NATO 3?’,” *The Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 2014.

¹⁵⁵ Bristling Badger Brigade, “Philadelphia (USA) – Anarchist Group ‘Bristling Badger Brigade’ Burns Cell Tower,” *The Plague and the Fire*, n.d., accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://plagueandfire.noblogs.org/philadelphia-usa-anarchist-group-bristling-badger-brigade-burns-cell-tower>)

¹⁵⁶ Puget Sound Anarchists, “Attack on Seattle ‘Green’ Development,” March 3, 2013. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20130607204925/http://pugetsoundanarchists.org/content/attack-seattle-green-development>); “Anarchists Claim Responsibility for Judkins Park Arson,” *KIRO 7*, March 5, 2013.

¹⁵⁷ “What Went Down,” *Anathema* (Philadelphia anarchist publication), May/June 2017, page 2. (<https://anathema.noblogs.org/files/2017/05/Issue-IV-Print-final.pdf>); Jillian Kay Melchior, “Anarchy in the Streets of Philadelphia,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 2020. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/anarchy-in-the-streets-of-philadelphia-11592264144>); Sam Newhouse, “So-Called Summer of Rage Anarchists Arrested for Allegedly Trashing Developing Block,” *Metro Philly*, May 2, 2017.

¹⁵⁸ U.S. Attorney’s Office, Northern District of Ohio, Press Release, “Cleveland Man Guilty of Trying to Destroy a Bridge with Explosives,” June 13, 2013.

placed inside a fire extinguisher.¹⁵⁹ Some attacks in Latin America and Europe have employed conventional explosives like dynamite. European anarchists have on rare occasion used military hardware, including grenades and rocket-propelled grenades. Anarchists in Europe and Latin America also make use of parcel bombs to target political officials, executives in private financial and energy firms, foreign embassies, politicians, and military bases.

Assassination, Murder, and Targeted Assault

Some militant anarchists and anti-fascists target specific individuals or groups beyond the context of street violence, with varying degrees of harm intended and inflicted. Some groups employ targeted assaults. Other groups, particularly abroad, have targeted their enemies for assassination. In the United States, such incidents are rare. Most assaults and physical violence take place as part of larger protests or other mass actions. When preplanned attacks against specific individuals do occur, they have typically involved militant anti-fascists targeting political opponents (usually perceived fascists) with less-than-lethal violence. The most notable incident was a 2012 assault by members of the Hoosier Anti-Racist Movement against members of a white power political organization meeting in a restaurant in Chicago.¹⁶⁰

Assassinations and targeted assaults are more frequently carried out by insurrectionary anarchists in Southern Europe and Latin America. Common targets for these groups include business executives and employees, political opponents, and politicians and government officials. For example, in Greece two militant anti-fascists who were members of the group People's Struggling Revolutionary Powers murdered two members of the Greece's Golden Dawn party in a drive-by shooting in retaliation for the murder of a popular anti-fascist rapper.¹⁶¹ In Chile, anarchists have broken into the homes of police officers with the intention of attacking them. In one instance, an anarchist stabbed an officer.¹⁶² ITS has attempted to murder numerous individuals in Latin America, including the president of Metro de Santiago in Chile and a priest in Mexico.¹⁶³

Intimidation and Doxxing

Doxxing is a tactic that involves publishing private or personally identifiable information about an individual or organization (such as home addresses, names of the target's children, and the schools they attend). It is commonly used by both violent and non-violent anti-fascists and anarchists in the United States in attempts to neutralize their opponents. There are a wide range of contexts in which doxxing may be employed, not all of them malign. Doxxing can be used to "out" dangerous individuals

¹⁵⁹ Gideon Long, "Chileans Baffled by Persistent Bomb Attacks," *BBC* (UK), August 20, 2014; "Anarchists Claim Explosive Devices Targeting Buses & Gas Station in Chile," SITE Intelligence Group, June 26, 2020.

¹⁶⁰ Mark Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017), page 113.

¹⁶¹ "Greek Leftist Group Claims Golden Dawn Assassinations," *Deutsche Welle* (Germany), November 17, 2013; Colin Clarke and Michael Kenney, "What Antifa Is, What It Isn't, and Why It Matters," *War on the Rocks*, June 23, 2020. (<https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/what-antifa-is-what-it-isnt-and-why-it-matters>) In October 2020, a Golden Dawn supporter was found guilty of fatally stabbing the rapper, Pavlos Fyssas.

¹⁶² Gustavo Rodríguez, "Desde Algún Lugar: Carta a un(a) Chileno(a) Sobre la Situación Actual (II), (From Somewhere: Letter to a Chilean About the Current Situation (II))" *contra info*, December 2, 2019. (<https://es-contrainfo.espiw.net/2019/12/02/desde-algun-lugar-carta-a-un-a-chileno-a-sobre-la-situacion-actual-ii>)

¹⁶³ "Eco-Nihilist Group Claims Responsibility for Attempted Murder of Chilean Mass Transit Official," SITE Intelligence Group, May 10, 2019. (<https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Far-Right/-Far-Left-Threat/eco-nihilist-group-claims-responsibility-for-attempted-murder-of-chilean-mass-transit-official.html>); "(Mexico) Black April for the Catholic Church," *Maldición Eco-Extremista*, May 16, 2018. (http://maldicionecoextremista.altervista.org/en-mexico-black-april-for-the-catholic-church/?doing_wp_cron=1528461790.6676220893859863281250)

to their employer, community, and law enforcement, but it can also be used to incite or invite violence against people solely due to their imputed beliefs.

Doxxing has been utilized across the extremist spectrum. It was used recently in advance of January's Capitol Hill insurrection. A now-banned Facebook page called "Red-State Secession," which helped organize the January 6 protests, featured calls for violence. Page members also sought out the addresses of "enemies," including federal judges, members of Congress, and progressive politicians.¹⁶⁴

While doxxing carries implied threats, militant anarchists and anti-fascists often accompany doxxing with direct threats against individuals and organizations. For example, members of Smash Racism DC, an anti-racism group in Washington, D.C., showed up to Fox News host Tucker Carlson's house, and shouted threats, including: "We know where you sleep at night."¹⁶⁵ The group had previously publicly shared Carlson's home address.

Transnational Connections

The transnational connections among militant anarchists and anti-fascists reflect the role of affinity groups and horizontal organizing in crafting these movements' networks. Bound together by shared ideals, these groups place great emphasis on indirect communication via public statements and the exchange of information at a distance.

Militant anarchists and anti-fascists use violent actions to express solidarity with their comrades. Particular actions and accompanying statements demonstrate commitment to a common cause. The U.S.-based group Bristling Badger Brigade committed arson in solidarity with fugitive British anarchist Huw Norfolk, known as Badger.¹⁶⁶ The group set fire to a Philadelphia cell tower; cell towers and other telecommunications infrastructure were frequent targets of Badger's. The frequency of violent actions on May Day broadcasts a message of support for the labor movement.¹⁶⁷

As is the case with the WSE movement, anti-fascists and anarchists, including some Americans, have traveled abroad to participate in armed conflicts, which attract militants from multiple foreign countries. Connections formed between militant anarchists and anti-fascists fighting in these conflicts may form the basis for future transnational coordination.

Rojava, a geographic space in northeastern Syria with a large Kurdish population, has emerged as the most important foreign nexus for these movements. Anarchists and anti-fascists from the United States and Europe have traveled to Syria to fight with the Kurdish People's Protection Units (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*, or YPG) against the Islamic State (ISIS) and participate in what they call the "Rojava Revolution." Since Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad withdrew his troops from Kurdish areas of Syria in 2012, members of the YPG have been working to establish their own structures of governance. The

¹⁶⁴ Sheera Frenkel, "Facebook Bans a Page Used to Coordinate Pro-Trump Protests After Calls for Violence," *The New York Times*, January 6, 2021.

¹⁶⁵ Brian Stelter, "Police Launch Investigation After Antifa Activists Descend on Fox Host Tucker Carlson's Home," *CNN*, November 8, 2018; Allyson Chiu, "'They Were Threatening Me and My Family': Tucker Carlson's Home Targeted by Protesters," *The Washington Post*, November 8, 2018.

¹⁶⁶ Bristling Badger Brigade, "Philadelphia (USA) – Anarchist Group 'Bristling Badger Brigade' Burns Cell Tower," *The Plague and the Fire*, n.d., accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://plagueandfire.noblogs.org/philadelphia-usa-anarchist-group-bristling-badger-brigade-burns-cell-tower>)

¹⁶⁷ Avi Selk, "Anarchists Crash May Day Rally in Paris, Burning Cars and Smashing Shop Windows," *The Washington Post*, May 1, 2018; Sandhya Somashekhar, "Marches, Sit-Ins and Arrests at May Day Protests," *The Washington Post*, May 1, 2017.

purported organizing principles are direct democracy, feminism, and egalitarianism, drawn from the ideals of the imprisoned Kurdish nationalist ideologue Abdullah Öcalan.¹⁶⁸

Not all foreign fighters who joined the YPG have been anarchists, anti-fascists, or even left of center politically. However, a contingent of left-wing American and European foreign fighters organized into an English-speaking platoon called “Antifa International Tabur.” The Antifa platoon managed to make a name for itself in the fight against ISIS. The platoon’s leader, Karim Franceschi, was allowed to sit in on the YPG’s council of generals, and the platoon played a role in cutting off ISIS from the Euphrates.¹⁶⁹ Even if members of the platoon provided hyperbolized accounts of its importance to ISIS’s geographic defeat in their discussions with media outlets (a common habit for foreign fighters involved in wars far from home), these fighters saw legitimate action in the anti-ISIS push.

A smaller number of anti-fascists and anarchists have traveled to Ukraine and Russian-occupied Crimea to take part in the ongoing fighting, with militant anti-fascist and anarchist fighters joining both sides of the conflict. Some of these fighters who joined the pro-Moscow side have told media outlets that they were motivated by opposition to ultranationalist and fascist ideologies held by some leaders and members of certain pro-Kyiv factions.¹⁷⁰ A few volunteers from the Antifa International Tabur who had fought in Syria have made their way to Ukraine.¹⁷¹

Blurred Lines: Reciprocal Radicalization and Fringe Fluidity

One set of challenges related to the current rise in domestic extremism relates to the way in which extremists interact with each other. In the current polarized climate, the presence of opposite extremes tends to strengthen both sides and provides average people a reason to drift toward extremes. Theories of reciprocal radicalization and fringe fluidity reveal how this dynamic impacts the ecosystem of extremism.

The concept of **reciprocal radicalization** describes how the increased power and success of groups aligned with one extremist ideology will fuel recruitment and encourage activity by groups aligned with ostensibly opposing ideologies, in what becomes a mutually reinforcing cycle. Interactions between groups locked into reciprocal radicalization often result in “a bizarre mixture of cooperation, competition, and overt fighting between different groups.”¹⁷² This phenomenon exists between many forms of political militancy. Reciprocal radicalization can be spurred by opposing groups’ rhetoric.

Anti-fascist groups in particular tend to be reactive. They most often emerge and mobilize when a core mass of individuals perceives a fascist or racist threat. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, for example, the United States saw a significant increase in anti-fascist groups that arose to combat racist skinheads and the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁷³ In 2016 and 2017, anti-fascists mobilized in a similar fashion, in response to a host of perceived “fascist” threats. The emergence of the alt-right, the election of President Trump, and the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville all served as catalysts for anti-fascist activity.

¹⁶⁸ Seth Harp, “The Untold Story of Syria’s Antifa Platoon,” *Rolling Stone*, July 10, 2018.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ See, for example, Sara Merger, “War Junkies: Why Foreign Fighters Are Flocking to Ukraine,” *ABC* (Australia), May 3, 2019. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-05-04/ukraine-foreign-fighters-meger/11054728>)

¹⁷¹ Seth Harp, “The Untold Story of Syria’s Antifa Platoon,” *Rolling Stone*, July 10, 2018.

¹⁷² Julia Ebner, *The Rage: The Vicious Circle of Islamist and Far-Right Extremism* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2017), page 215.

¹⁷³ Mark Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017), pp. 66-71

Conversely, right-of-center extremist groups use public awareness of anti-fascism, heightened by the participation of militant anti-fascists at protests that have become violent, to recruit and mobilize their own followers. The Proud Boys, a controversial group that has a history of street violence and describes its orientation as “Western chauvinism,” has been particularly effective, organizing marches and rallies directly themed around countering anti-fascists. White supremacist extremists and militia groups have similarly leveraged anti-fascist activity to hold and advertise public events.¹⁷⁴

Opposing extremists may develop a symbiotic relationship in which they reinforce each other’s worst fears, drive each other’s recruitment, and provoke one another into “tit-for-tat” retaliation.¹⁷⁵ They can confirm one another’s narratives by telling the same stories with the role of *victim* and *demon* reversed. For example, in Europe militant Islamists and far-right extremists have opposing perspectives (i.e., *The West is at war with Islam* or *Islam is at war with the West*), but the story they tell is the same. They depend on each other and provide one another with a *raison d’être*. For this reason, some experts call them opposite “sides of the same coin.”¹⁷⁶

When extremes answer extremes in this manner, society writ large suffers. Neutral parties can be drawn toward embracing or joining militant groups. The media may amplify material that reinforces and provokes the extremes, thus normalizing their narratives. Part of the threat thus lies in extremists’ ability to *dictate the conversation* and push neutral parties into the same dichotomous camps that the extremists inhabit.

Another dynamic at play in the extremist ecosystem is **fringe fluidity**, a radicalization pathway in which individuals who come to accept and act on an extremist ideology transition from the embrace of one form of violent extremism to another. In cases of fringe fluidity, the pathway to the new form of violent extremism can be understood in the context of the individual’s prior ideology. Often, a shared out-group forms an important commonality between the two ideologies.¹⁷⁷

Militant anarchism advocates the violent rejection of the state, capitalism, and most other ordering principles of contemporary Western society. Some forms of militant anarchism intersect with other ideologies that reject similar principles to form hybrid ideologies and provide opportunities for tactical learning. One such hybrid ideology is *national anarchism*, which lays claim to the anarchist label but advocates opposition to the state in order to advance racist ideals—a combination that is antithetical to most other anarchists’ outlook. National anarchists view anarchy as an opportunity to advance an ideology of white separatism and create new white ethno-states from the chaos. They desire racially divided “national autonomous zones.” National anarchists also emphasize elements of environmentalism. The most prominent group in the United States is the Bay Area National Anarchists, which claims to have members from both far-right and far-left political persuasions. National anarchist groups have also previously formed in Europe and Australia.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, “Far-Right Advertises Upcoming Protest in Seattle Against Autonomous Zone,” SITE Intelligence Group, June 15, 2020; “Promoting Police Disbandment, Far-Right Community Calls on Whites to take ‘Defensive Action,’” SITE Intelligence Group, June 15, 2020.

¹⁷⁵ Julia Ebner, *The Rage: The Vicious Circle of Islamist and Far-Right Extremism* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2017), p. 33.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹⁷⁷ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Madeleine Blackman, “Fluidity of the Fringes: Prior Extremist Involvement as a Radicalization Pathway,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (January 2019). (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1531545>)

¹⁷⁸ “California Racists Claim They’re Anarchists,” *SPLC Intelligence Report* (May 2009).

ITS, which defines itself as an anarchist and ecological extremist group, has in its official communiqués repeatedly expressed admiration for terrorist groups and individuals subscribing to very different ideologies. ITS, as previously discussed, is distinct from most anarchist groups in its attitude toward indiscriminate violence. Fueled by nihilism, the group applauds mass violence of all kinds. Thus, ITS has praised members of ISIS and issued calls for jihadist attacks, writing that they “call on the mujahadin to attack indiscriminately. If you lone wolves have the ability, do it, against Christian targets or any other objective of Western civilization.”¹⁷⁹ At the same time, ITS has also celebrated anti-Muslim terrorist attacks, including the March 2019 mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand.¹⁸⁰

Fringe fluidity demonstrates the extent to which extremists may be able to prioritize common grievances and goals even when their overarching ideologies conflict. Individuals may shift between extremist streams before ultimately carrying out violent acts in the name of one. For example, Brenton Tarrant, the perpetrator of the aforementioned March 2019 Christchurch mosque attack, shifted between several extremist ideologies, ultimately declaring himself an ecofascist at the time of the attack.¹⁸¹ In an era of heightened political polarization and violence, extremists may seize the opportunity to draw recruits and mobilize from a growing menu of overlapping and sometimes conflicting militant ideologies

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

To conclude, I offer several potential policies that subcommittee members may consider. The first three potential policies are aimed specifically at countering the financing of violent extremist groups, while the remaining policies contend with the domestic violent extremist threat more broadly. I would like to stress at the outset that *any* policies introduced to combat domestic violent extremism must be narrowly targeted and rights-protective. Policies that unfairly target one subset of domestic violent extremists, or that seek to criminalize constitutionally protected behaviors, may only serve to push the country closer toward deepening conflict.

The U.S. Government Should Consider Designating WSE Groups as Terrorist Organizations.

Designating extremist groups as terrorist organizations is a significant step that the Departments of State and the Treasury do not take lightly. The 2020 designation of the Russian Imperial Movement as an SDGT was a significant step that advanced U.S. policy toward WSE groups. It is worth considering further designations of violent WSE groups and actors that meet the criteria for being designated as SDGTs or else as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs).¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ “ITS Releases Seventy-First Communique, Promising to ‘Indiscriminately Kill’ Until Stopped by Force,” SITE Intelligence Group, January 7, 2019; “Eco-Extremist Says That Groups Should Learn Strategy from Islamic State,” SITE Intelligence Group, November 23, 2016.

¹⁸⁰ ITS-Mexico, “(Mexhico) 77 Comunicado de ITS: Sobre la Macacre Eco-Fascista En Nueva Zelanda,” *Maldición Eco-Extremista*, March 27, 2019. (<http://maldicionecoextremista.altervista.org/mexhico-77-comunicado-de-its-sobre-la-macacre-eco-fascista-en-nueva-zelanda>)

¹⁸¹ Tarrant details his various inspirations and beliefs in his manifesto, where he observed that “when I was young I was a communist, then an anarchist, and finally a libertarian before coming to be an eco-fascist.” He describes inspiration from a number of ideologies, figures, and cultures, some of which are apparently in conflict with one another.

¹⁸² The Department of State has highlighted several key differences between the two designations. Both designations will cause a designated group’s assets to be frozen. However, State notes that “the FTO designation imposes immigration restrictions on members of the organization simply by virtue of their membership, whereas E.O. 13224 [the SDGT designation] restricts travel for persons who meet the criteria contained within the order. In addition, the FTO designation triggers a criminal prohibition on knowingly providing material support or resources to the designated organization.

Consider Introducing a Domestic Designation Statute.

Enacting a statute that allows for designation of domestic violent extremist organizations as terrorist organizations is an option to consider. The creation—and even-handed employment—of such a statute would likely be the most direct way to address and interdict sources of funding for domestic violent extremist organizations. Such designation would potentially criminalize the act of financing these organizations and enable authorities to clamp down on the assets that these organizations may already hold. At the same time, this statute would be fraught with fairness and civil liberties concerns.

The first area of concern is ensuring that this statute is ideologically neutral in conception and application. Designations should correspond to the actual threat of violence that individual groups pose, not simply the ideas that they espouse. The use of a domestic designation statute to target groups adhering to only certain ideologies would potentially *heighten* the risk of extremist violence. The perception of unfair singling out for designation may become a rallying cry, drawing more members to violent extremists' ranks.

Second, this statute must be clear about the predicate acts that could result in designation. Vague or imprecise language about predicate acts would render the statute vulnerable to legal challenges and open the door for bias in its application. Not only must the predicate acts be clearly articulated, but the threshold for designation should be relatively high: For a group to be designated, it must pose a legitimate threat to the lives of others.

Finally, the statute must be accompanied by a redress mechanism to challenge designations since the consequences of being designated as a terrorist organization are severe.

Map Groups and Their Finances.

Even if there existed extensive investigatory and prosecutorial tools to leverage against domestic violent extremist organizations, a dearth of knowledge on how these organizations are funded and structured would hamper efforts to interdict or seize assets. Accordingly, it is important to deepen our understanding of the organizational structures and funding mechanisms common to domestic violent extremist organizations.

The current consensus among experts who study domestic violent extremist organizations is that these groups are relatively fluid and devoid of organizational structure. This may be so. However, I have observed a tendency among those who study militant organizations to see groups as disorganized or non-hierarchical when they in fact have a hidden hierarchy or organizational structure. Past inaccuracies suggest that our current understanding of domestic violent extremist organizations' structure may be incomplete. It is also the case that, in the digital age, fluid organizational structures can quickly morph into more concrete ones. The potential for this rapid transformation increases the need to unearth concealed or loose organizational structures. By understanding how organizations may seek to align themselves in times of conflict, authorities can proactively disrupt sources of funding and mitigate the potential for increased harm. Further research in this area is thus justified.

Another difference is that only E.O. 13224 designations provide the Department of the Treasury the derivative authority to designate additional individuals or entities providing support to already designated individuals or entities." Additional information can be found at: U.S. Department of State, Media Note, "Terrorism Designation FAQs," February 27, 2018. (<https://2017-2021.state.gov/terrorism-designations-faqs/index.html>)

Conduct Messaging Campaigns Aimed at Discrediting Violent Extremist Groups.

The United States has a history of devoting resources to messaging efforts designed to discredit extremist groups. While Washington's record of discrediting jihadist groups through its messaging can most charitably be described as mixed, it would be foolish to cede this ground to violent extremist groups. Propaganda and messaging constitute an inherent part of any armed conflict and are particularly important to sub-state groups. I have long argued for de-bureaucratized teams—something that can be described as “startups within government”—to be given flexibility in the messaging sphere. In the present case, this could be accomplished with a nimble unit of communications professionals and intelligence officers monitoring WSE propaganda in real time and generating up-to-the-minute counter-messaging content that exposes falsehoods in WSEs' messaging, as well as facts that embarrass the movement. Such a model would inhibit WSEs' ability to enter new communication spaces unchallenged.¹⁸³

The point of a “startups within government” approach is that government messaging efforts tend to be overly risk-averse. Most startups in the commercial sphere fail within their first three years of existence, and that is a good thing: Those that survive the Darwinian process confronting new businesses often go on to become highly profitable and accomplished. A “startups within government” model would accept the near certainty of failed experiments, with the understanding that those de-bureaucratized cells that *do not* fail in a competitive environment are more likely to have an outsize impact on the problem they are addressing. It is worth exploring whether this approach would be an innovative and appropriate response to WSE and other violent extremist groups in the realm of messaging.

Work with International Partners to Explore Instances of Transnational Collaboration.

Since many violent extremists are transnational in nature, particularly the WSE movement, the U.S. government should collaborate with international partners to study instances of transnational activity involving violent extremist groups and individuals. The U.S. government should study and prepare for potential new avenues of internationalization and transnational collaboration among violent extremist groups. Such understanding and awareness would also potentially illuminate new pathways for disrupting these groups financially.

Understand the Dynamics of Reciprocal Radicalization and Fringe Fluidity.

As this testimony details, one set of challenges related to violent extremism stems from the way in which extremists interact with each other. In an era of heightened political polarization and violence, extremists may seize the opportunity to draw recruits and mobilize from a growing menu of overlapping and sometimes conflicting militant ideologies, making fringe fluidity an increasingly powerful force. Likewise, evidence of reciprocal radicalization among extremist groups demands attention, as extremists of one political persuasion have no shortage of opposing actors and events to radicalize them. The U.S. government should devote resources to studying fringe fluidity and reciprocal radicalization—both past occurrences and potential future consequences. Doing so would afford the government an understanding of how extremist organizations and ideologies can overlap and interact with each other in the present milieu and could open new avenues for reducing the size of ecosystems of violent extremism.

¹⁸³ For more discussion on how governments may be able to adopt lessons from start-ups in countering WSEs and other violent non-state actors, see: Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Barr, “The Lean Terrorist Cell: How Startup Companies and Violent Non-State Actors are Changing the Old World Order,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 17, Issue 2, Summer/Fall 2016, pages 36-37. (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26396169?seq=1>)

Do Not Show Ambiguity with Groups That Employ Sub-State Violence. Resist the Temptation to Pick Sides Between Extremist Groups.

In recent years, politicians have too often spoken on issues of extremist violence with ambiguity and a lack of clarity. In the context of a broader national move toward armed politics, this is highly problematic. Political leaders should recognize the role they may play in furthering extremist narratives. Reacting to violent extremism by choosing a side serves to prioritize goals and enemies *as the extremist would*. It is important to resist the temptation to pick sides between extremist groups. As political factions and movements in the United States resort to violence or the threat of violence to pursue objectives, the government must be unified and precise in its messaging: Political violence is completely intolerable in a democratic society. Such exacting language would deny any semblance of political legitimacy to groups and individuals seeking to use violence to advance political goals.

Create Architecture for the Age of Mass Attacks.

As discussed, WSEs have conducted mass attacks in public spaces, some of which have left significant numbers dead. In too many mass attacks, the built environment, including architecture, infrastructure, and other human-made features, has aided attackers and worked against those trying to escape from harm's way. Victims have been trapped by limited exits or prevented from securing the room they are in by doors that do not lock from the inside. A solution to this challenge is *crisis architecture*, an architectural paradigm I developed that seeks to maximize the likelihood that individuals will survive a mass attack. It offers a set of design principles that incorporate integrated tactical, psychological, and technological security measures, while preserving the function and aesthetics of buildings to which these measures are applied.¹⁸⁴

The United States and other societies have previously relied on architecture to address significant social problems and threats. This includes efforts to reduce crime through Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, which is the most widely adopted modern theory about the intersection of design and security. Another example is the post-9/11 adoption of external area defense, which was designed to defend buildings, landmarks, and public spaces from terrorist attacks. While external area defense is effective at mitigating the damage that might be done by a bomb blast, the paradigm is not designed to defend against an attacker who has entered the target building—which is where crisis architecture enters the picture. An architecture for the age of mass attacks of all forms is sensible and may sadly be necessary.

¹⁸⁴ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Tadd Lahnert, "Crisis Architecture: Building to Defend Against Active Aggressors," *War on the Rocks*, December 2, 2019. (<https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/crisis-architecture-building-to-defend-against-active-aggressors/>) See also Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "Addressing mass shootings through the built environment," TEDxTemecula Talk, *YouTube*, December 7, 2020. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRkRv314JH8>)