

Blind Spot? Security Narratives and Far-Right Violence in Europe

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Abstract

This paper discusses the challenges of countering far-Right political violence in the wake of the terrorist attack carried out by Anders Behring Breivik in Norway in July 2011. With brief case studies of Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium, it argues that classic neo-Nazi groups are being supplemented by new 'counter-jihadist' far-Right movements, which use various modes of political action, including participation in elections, street-based activism and terrorist violence. Building on recent interest among scholars and practitioners in the role of narratives and performativity in counter-terrorism, this paper argues that official security discourses tend to hinder efforts to counter far-Right violence and can unwittingly provide opportunities for counter-jihadists to advance their own narratives. When leaders and officials of Western European governments narrate issues of multiculturalism and radical Islamism in ways that overlap with counter-jihadist ideology, it suggests a need for reflection on the unintended side-effects of their security discourse. The paper concludes with a discussion of how governments can rework their security narratives to oppose far-Right violence.

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Introduction

On 22 July 2011, as news emerged of a major terrorist attack taking place in Norway, the *Wall Street Journal* went to press while the identity of the perpetrator was still unknown. On the presumption that only a Muslim could be responsible, the newspaper's editorial claimed that Norway had been targeted because it is 'a liberal nation committed to freedom of speech and conscience, equality between the sexes, representative democracy and every other freedom that still defines the West'.¹ The reflexes entrenched by nearly ten years of 'war on terror' rhetoric led the editorial writer to feel confident the attacker's motivation could already be known.

As it turned out, the worst terrorist attack in Europe since the Madrid bombings of 2004 – a car bomb in Oslo, followed by a shooting spree on the island of Utøya, leaving 77 dead – had been carried out in the name of a 'counter-jihadist' rather than jihadist ideology. Anders Behring Breivik, whose 1,500-page manifesto, *2083 – A European Declaration of Independence*, was published online on the day of the attacks, believed that European elites were pandering to multiculturalism and enabling an 'Islamic colonisation of Europe'. Like the *Wall Street Journal* editorial writer, he believed that Norway's liberal values were under threat from 'radical Islam'.

The newspaper's error was an extreme case of a much wider problem not only among journalists but also within the world of counter-terrorism policy-making and practice – that the ways in which counter-terrorism is narrated leads to a focus on particular threats, conceived in particular ways, while potentially neglecting others, and that in doing so openings may be provided for unexpected new forms of violence. While a number of scholars have begun to explore how the 'war on terror' meta-narrative is itself appropriated by jihadists to win new recruits, there has been no exploration of similar effects in enabling far-Right violence. Yet there is strong prima facie evidence that new far-Right 'counter-jihadist' movements use the meta-narrative of a global struggle against 'radical Islam' to legitimise themselves to their audiences. If this is the case, what strategies can be adopted by governments that wish to reverse this effect? How can security policies be developed and communicated to oppose both jihadist and far-Right violence?

Official security narratives in Europe are multiple, complex and contested. It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully explore the plurality of this terrain. However, across a number of contexts since 2005, a shared way of thinking has emerged that underlies various different positions taken by government ministers, security officials and other commentators. This way of thinking is reflected in a **values-identity narrative of terrorism**, which establishes fundamental ideas about how to identify the 'we' that is countering terrorism, the 'them' that is engaged in terrorism, and the terms on which the conflict between 'us' and 'them' is to be understood. There has been a debate since 9/11 as to whether terrorism is related to Islam or to a particular misinterpretation of Islam. But both sides in this debate agree that the substantial problem is a conflict between liberal values and religiously-inspired 'extremist' values and that the question of Muslim 'integration' into 'our' values is therefore part of the security picture. Thus, the official narrative, in whatever particular form it takes, tends to focus on the question of values within Muslim populations, and claims that counter-terrorism requires initiatives aimed at a wider transformation of the Muslim population beyond those who actually perpetrate or advocate violence. The case studies in this paper will examine the prevalence of this narrative in counter-terrorism thinking in four countries: Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium.

How these narratives are received by different audiences is again not a straightforward matter. In this paper, two audiences for official security narratives are discussed. The first is those professionals working within the counter-terrorist systems themselves, which, since 2004, include not just police and intelligence officers investigating terrorism cases but teachers, youth workers, social workers, community activists, local authority managers and civil society groups who have been drawn into the counter-terrorist project as actors with a

¹ 'Terror in Oslo', *Wall Street Journal* (22 July 2011).

preventative role. It will be argued that, for this group, recognition of the threat of far-Right violence has often been hampered by its lack of fit with the prevailing values-identity narrative of terrorism – would-be perpetrators were seen as one of ‘us’ rather than ‘them’. In addition, there is the simple matter of resource allocation and prioritisation in counter-terrorism practice. Unlike jihadist terrorism, far-Right violence is generally not seen by European security officials as a strategic threat, only as a public order problem. For example, in its 2011 *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*, Europol states that right-wing extremist incidents ‘raised public order concerns, but have not in any way endangered the political, constitutional, economic or social structures of any of the Member States. They can, however, present considerable challenges to policing and seriously threaten community cohesion.’² Shortly after the Breivik terrorist attack in Norway, it emerged that a German neo-Nazi group – the *Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund* (NSU, National Socialist Underground) – had operated for thirteen years without arrest, during which time eight people of Turkish origin, a Greek man, and a policewoman had been killed, despite federal and regional intelligence services reportedly having infiltrated the group. It remains unclear why the NSU was not intercepted earlier. However it appears that part of the problem was that efforts to counter right-wing violence rested with regional states, which did not consider it a priority, in contrast to initiatives to counter the threat of jihadist violence, which were well-resourced and centrally co-ordinated at the federal level.

The second audience for official security discourse is the far-Right milieu itself. This paper proposes the thesis that, in some contexts, the circulation of the values-identity narrative of terrorism has the unintended consequence of creating discursive opportunities for far-Right actors who are able to blend official narratives into their own discourses, enabling them to creatively update their existing belief systems and draw renewed legitimacy by bringing their ideologies into closer proximity to mainstream views. Breivik is one example. His manifesto makes clear that he believes Islam to be a totalitarian political ideology that aims at infiltrating national institutions to impose sharia law on Muslims and non-Muslims, and that this process of ‘Islamisation’ has been enabled by elites in Western countries, through their weakening of immigration controls and introduction of multiculturalist policies – views that, as we shall see, have significant overlaps with official discourse. He hoped his violence would ‘penetrate the strict censorship regime’ of ‘cosmopolitan’ elites, so that European citizens would see the need to defend their liberal values against multiculturalism.³ Others, such as the English Defence League (EDL), share the same definition of the ‘problem’ but employ different tactics, favouring demonstrations and street-based activism, often involving public disorder, racist violence and incitements to anti-Muslim hatred. Both examples demonstrate how the ideological basis for far-Right violence has grown more complex, as new actors appropriate narrative elements from official security discourses in innovative ways, potentially making far-Right threats harder to identify.

Every perception has a blind spot, the area that cannot be seen because it is part of the mechanism of perception itself. This paper considers whether, since 9/11, the far-Right has been the blind spot of counter-terrorism, the problem that could not be perceived clearly because it had begun to absorb significant elements from official security narratives themselves. After the Breivik case, it has become harder to believe that these unintended consequences can be ignored. Moreover, as demonstrated in Annex 1, if the level of threat is measured in terms of the number of people who have lost their lives as a result of far-Right violence, it is incorrect to see jihadism as representing a greater danger to European citizens. Since 1990, at least **249** persons have died in incidents of far-Right violence in Europe, compared to **263** who have been killed by jihadist violence, indicating that both threats are of the same order of magnitude.⁴ That both these numbers are tiny relative to the

² Europol, *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report* (2011), p. 29.

³ Anders Behring Breivik, *2083 – A European Declaration of Independence* (2011), p. 822.

⁴ The total for jihadists is based on adding the murder of ‘Abd al-Baqi Sahraoui in Paris in 1995, the killing of 8 persons in the bomb attack on the Paris metro in 1995 (although it remains disputed on whose behalf this attack was carried out), the murder of Stephen Oake in Manchester in 2003, the 191 persons killed in Madrid in 2004, the murder of Theo Van Gogh in Amsterdam in 2004, 52 persons killed in the 7/7 attack in London in 2005, two US servicemen killed at Frankfurt Airport in 2011 and 7 persons killed in Toulouse in 2012. This list was compiled with the help of the chronology in Petter Nesser, ‘Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994–2007: planned, prepared, and executed terrorist attacks’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (Vol. 31, 2008).

population of Europe suggests perceptions of the threat of jihadist violence have been over-inflated and should now be brought down to the same level as that of far-Right violence.

1. Conceptualising far-Right violence

1.1. Current trends in far-Right ideology

In April 2012, Kenny Holden, of South Shields in north-east England, used his mobile phone to post on Facebook a threat to carry out a pipe-bomb attack on the town's Ocean Road, a street with a number of Asian convenience stores and restaurants. His post included the line, 'Give me a gun and I'll do you all Oslo style', a reference to Anders Behring Breivik, who was then on trial in Norway.⁵ Breivik no doubt hoped to use the trial to further publicise his cause and Holden's threat suggested an audience among some in England.

Holden is an activist with the EDL, an organisation formed in Luton, Bedfordshire, in 2009, ostensibly to combat Islamist 'extremism'. In March 2009, Anjem Choudary – the leader of a small radical Islamist group that has had various names since its original incarnation, al-Muhajiroun, was disbanded in 2004 – organised a protest against a parade through Luton town centre of British troops recently returned from Afghanistan. There was a furious reaction from bystanders; a coalition of angry locals, members of football 'firms' and seasoned far-Right activists came together and soon grew to form the EDL. Making good use of the online and offline networks that already linked football firms and the far-Right across the country, and picking up a significant number of young people who seemed to relate, via Facebook and YouTube, to its style of politics, the EDL was soon organising demonstrations in several towns and cities, attracting up to 2,000 people.

The 'counter-jihadist' ideology of the EDL differs markedly from the traditional far-Right. Its two main targets are Islam, which it regards as an extremist political ideology, and multiculturalism, which is presented as enabling 'Islamification'. Rhetorically, the EDL embraces values of individual liberty, freedom of speech, gender equality and gay rights, and rejects colour-based forms of racism and anti-Semitism, in favour of a civilisational discourse – talking of defending Western values rather than the white race.⁶ Indeed, fairly wide sections of the English population which would have rejected neo-Nazism and overt colour-based racism are nevertheless supportive of this discourse.

The EDL has become Europe's most significant 'counter-jihadist' street movement, inspiring copycat Defence Leagues in a number of other countries and prompting an attempt to form a European Defence League, launched, somewhat feebly, at Aarhus, Denmark, in March 2012. Since its formation in 2009, there have been Nazi salutes, racist chants and incidents of racial violence at EDL demonstrations.⁷ Activism for the EDL overlaps significantly with membership of the racist British National Party (BNP). Indeed, both of the EDL's senior leaders, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) and his cousin Kevin Carroll, are former members of the BNP and have been convicted of criminal violence. Members of the 'West Midlands Division' of the EDL have taken photographs of themselves standing in front of Ulster Volunteer Force flags, carrying imitation firearms.

At a demonstration on 3 September 2011 through the largely Muslim area of Tower Hamlets, east London (a favourite location for far-Right mobilisation since the 'Battle of Cable Street' in 1936), Yaxley-Lennon told the crowd:

'We are here today to tell you, quite loud, quite clear, every single Muslim watching this video on YouTube: on 7/7, you got away with killing and maiming British citizens. You got away with it. You better understand that we have built a network from one end of this country to the other end.'

⁵ Paul Clifford, 'Shields man arrested over Facebook "threat" to bomb town's Muslims', *Shields Gazette* (23 April 2012), <http://www.shieldsgazette.com/news/crime/shields-man-arrested-over-facebook-threat-to-bomb-town-s-muslims-1-4475638>.

⁶ English Defence League mission statement, <http://englishdefenceleague.org>.

⁷ Ryan Erfani-Ghettani, 'From portrayal to reality: examining the record of the EDL', *IRR News* (8 December 2011), <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/from-portrayal-to-reality-examining-the-record-of-the-edl/>.

We will not tolerate it. And the Islamic community will feel the full force of the English Defence League if we see any of our citizens killed, maimed or hurt on British soil ever again.⁸

This threat of violence against all Muslims in Britain used the same implicit logic as that of his purported enemies. Mohammed Siddique Khan, leader of the suicide bombers who carried out the 7/7 attacks on London's transport system, told the British people: 'Until we feel security, you will be our targets.' In this way, both Khan and Yaxley-Lennon seek to justify violence against a whole community which they hold collectively responsible for the violence of some of its members.

In Breivik's manifesto, *2083 – A Declaration of Independence*, he praises the EDL for being the first youth movement to transcend the old-fashioned race hate and authoritarianism of the far-Right in favour of an identitarian defence of Western values against Islam. He urges 'conservative intellectuals' to help ensure the EDL continues to reject 'criminal, racist and totalitarian doctrines'. But he also considers their faith in democratic change 'dangerously naïve'.⁹ Breivik claimed to have hundreds of EDL members as Facebook friends and there has been speculation over his links to members of the organisation.

Certainly, his manifesto shares with the EDL a counter-jihadist ideology. Claiming to be a member of a secret group of new 'crusaders' founded in London in 2002 by representatives from eight European countries, he says his aim is to 'free indigenous peoples of Europe and to fight against the ongoing European Jihad'.¹⁰ Much of the document consists of advice to fellow far-Right terrorists on weapons, bomb-making, body armour, physical training and the potential use of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. One section of *2083* describes the ranks, organisational structure, initiation rites, uniforms, awards and medals to be used by this secret 'Knights Templar' group. These parts of the manifesto – and a section in which he interviews himself, narcissistically listing his favourite music, clothes and drinks – appear to be its only original content.

The bulk of the document constitutes a compilation of texts mainly copied from US far-Right websites. Its opening chapters are plagiarised from *Political Correctness: a short history of an ideology*, a book published online in 2004 by the Free Congress Foundation – a Washington-based lobby group founded by Paul Weyrich, one of the most influential activists of the US Christian Right. In this section, Breivik has replaced references to 'America' in the original text with 'Western Europe'. Apart from this, the writers Breivik cites most often are prominent counter-jihadists: Robert Spencer, the American Islamophobic blogger whose *Jihad Watch* website, a subsidiary of the David Horowitz Freedom Center, receives close to a million dollars of funding from wealthy backers;¹¹ Ba'et Yor, the Swiss author of the 'Eurabia' conspiracy theory, which claims that the European political establishment is involved in a secret plot to facilitate Muslim immigration and transform the continent into an Arab colony;¹² and 'Fjordman', a Norwegian, who blogs for the US-based *Gates of Vienna* and *Jihad Watch* websites. These writers are paranoid conspiracy theorists who claim Islam is a totalitarian political ideology that aims at infiltrating national institutions in order to subject society to sharia law. Like Breivik, they blame Western elites for pandering to multiculturalism and enabling 'Islamic colonisation of Europe' through 'demographic warfare'.

This multiculturalist elite, says Breivik, has prevented the possibility of democratic opposition and the clock is ticking: 'We have only a few decades to consolidate a sufficient level of resistance before our major cities are completely demographically overwhelmed by Muslims.'¹³ Hence, he justifies his violence as 'a pre-emptive war'.¹⁴ In a 2007 blog post by Fjordman, entitled 'A European Declaration of Independence', which Breivik reproduces and whose title he borrows, Fjordman writes: 'We are being subject to a foreign invasion, and aiding

⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAGnzu5V3zE>.

⁹ Anders Behring Breivik, *2083 – A European Declaration of Independence* (2011), pp. 1241, 1436.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 817.

¹¹ Wajahat Ali, Eli Clifton, Matthew Duss, Lee Fang, Scott Keyes, and Faiz Shakir, *Fear, Inc.: the roots of the Islamophobia network in America* (Center for American Progress, August 2011).

¹² Matt Carr, 'You are now entering Eurabia', *Race & Class* (Vol. 48, no. 1, 2006).

¹³ Anders Behring Breivik, *2083 – A European Declaration of Independence* (2011), p. 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 766.

and abetting a foreign invasion in any way constitutes treason. If non-Europeans have the right to resist colonisation and desire self-determination then Europeans have that right, too. And we intend to exercise it.¹⁵

In the conventional neo-Nazi doctrine of ‘race war’, whites are called upon to rise up against governments seen as secretly controlled by Jews and whose aim is to dilute white racial purity by enabling black immigration. Breivik reframes this doctrine by substituting culture for race, Muslims for blacks, and multiculturalists for Jews. Rejecting the ‘race war’ concept, he calls instead for a ‘cultural war’ in which ‘absolutely everyone will have the opportunity to show their loyalty to our cause, including nationalist European Jews, non-European Christians or Hindu/Buddhist Asians’.¹⁶ Yet he also speaks of his ‘opposition to race-mixing’ and wants to prevent the ‘extinction of the Nordic genotypes’.¹⁷ Of Jews, he writes that ‘we must embrace the remaining loyal Jews as brothers’ and that there is no ‘Jewish problem in Western Europe’ as their numbers are small. Yet he goes on to say that the UK, France and US do have a ‘considerable Jewish problem’.¹⁸ Casting Jews as both potential allies (if they join in fighting Islam) and a demographic threat (if there are too many), Breivik is simultaneously anti-Semitic and supportive of right-wing Zionism.

The Breivik case demonstrates that the new counter-jihadist far-Right is as compatible with terrorist violence as older forms of neo-Nazism. And, whereas neo-Nazism is a fringe phenomenon, many elements of the counter-jihadist ideology attract wide support, including among mainstream politicians, newspaper columnists and well-funded think-tanks. The major theme of Breivik’s manifesto is the argument that multiculturalism has weakened national identity and encouraged Islamist ‘extremism’, bringing European nations to a crisis point. As Breivik himself correctly noted in the first week of his trial, this view is held by ‘the three most powerful politicians in Europe’ – Nicolas Sarkozy, Angela Merkel and David Cameron.¹⁹ The uncomfortable truth is that the central plank of a terrorist’s narrative is shared by heads of Western European governments – an unprecedented situation that begs the central questions of this paper: Has mainstream security discourse created an enabling environment for counter-jihadist violence? And does the proximity of the counter-jihadist narrative to views that are acceptable in mainstream discourse make it harder to identify persons willing to carry out violence in its name?

1.2. Historical background

The content of far-right narratives has continually evolved since the end of the second world war, while maintaining a consistent formal structure. The post-war neo-fascism of groups such as Britain’s National Front (NF) was never just a matter of hating minorities. It was also an ideology that sought to explain and exploit social dislocation felt by working classes, through a rival narrative to that of the Left. To achieve this, it presented non-white immigration as corrupting the racial purity of the nation; but it paid equal attention to the ruling elite that had allowed this to happen, a betrayal which far-Right ideology explained in terms of a Jewish conspiracy theory. What appeared to be a national ruling class was, according to this narrative, a mirage; real power lay with the secret Jewish cabal that pulled the strings of international finance, the media and the revolutionary Left, as supposedly revealed in *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, the forged Tsarist document purporting to show how Jews manipulated world events to their advantage.²⁰

While far-Right street activism involved racist violence against non-whites, far-Right ideology saw the real problem as lying elsewhere: the Jews and their hidden agenda of destroying national identity by fostering the immigration and mixing of other races. As David Edgar put it in his 1977 analysis of the politics of Britain’s NF, the far-Right ‘blames the Jews for the blacks’.²¹ Even as popular racism against Asian, Middle Eastern and African

¹⁵ Fjordman, ‘Native revolt: a European declaration of independence’, *The Brussels Journal* (16 March 2007), <http://www.brusselsjournal.com/node/1980>.

¹⁶ Anders Behring Breivik, *2083 – A European Declaration of Independence* (2011), p. 1259.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1161, 1190.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1163.

¹⁹ Helen Pidd, ‘Anders Behring Breivik claims victims were not innocent’, *Guardian* (17 April 2012).

²⁰ Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: the myth of the Jewish world conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970).

²¹ David Edgar, ‘Racism, fascism and the politics of the National Front’, *Race & Class* (Vol. 19, no. 2, 1977).

immigrant communities was the means by which young people were recruited, anti-Semitism remained a necessary ideological component, because only Jews could play the role of the secret source of economic and political power that had weakened and corrupted the nation. To this extent, post-war fascist parties such as the NF were correctly described as Nazi in their ideology. For the same reason, the far-Right, with an ideology that had been completely discredited by its association with the holocaust, struggled to advance in the post-war period.

However, from the 1980s, the French *Front National* (FN) began to achieve a higher level of support by downplaying its neo-Nazi legacy and speaking of the need to preserve cultural identity, defined as an unchanging national 'way of life', rather than in overtly racial terms. In this 'New Right' narrative, identity was seen to be under threat from a ruling elite that enabled excessive immigration of persons with different cultures and that promoted policies of multiculturalism, giving immigrants licence to maintain their own cultural identities. The FN argued that this process of *mondialisation* (globalisation) was being imposed by an 'all-powerful oligarchy', which, with the end of communism, was advancing a new utopianism: instead of a 'red paradise', the aim was a 'society without differences ... a *café au lait* paradise ... a melting pot'.²² Thus, instead of explicit talk of a Jewish conspiracy, there was the idea that those in power were too 'cosmopolitan' to have the real interests of the native people at heart. This message resonated effectively with many voters and soon other far-Right parties in Europe began to emulate the FN strategy. The success of this approach largely depended on the extent to which far-Right parties could convincingly distance themselves from their neo-Nazi pasts. Thus, in the 1990s, an analyst of trends in far-Right politics distinguished two different kinds of groups:

'One type is nostalgic, backward-looking neo-fascist aggregations, parties whose raison d'être is a revival of fascist or Nazi ideas. ... The other type consists of a class of parties described as right-wing populist – such as France's National Front, the Austrian Freedom Party, Flemish Bloc in Belgium, and the various Scandinavian Progress parties – that have done relatively well at the polls.'²³

Following 9/11, a new version of this identitarian narrative began to circulate, first in the Netherlands and later in other European countries, often promoted by new political actors without the usual neo-Nazi baggage. In the 'counter-jihadist' narrative, the identity that needs to be defended is no longer a conservative notion of national identity but an idea of liberal values, seen as a civilisational inheritance. Islam becomes the new threat to this identity, regarded as both an alien culture and an extremist political ideology. Multiculturalism is seen as enabling not just the weakening of national identity but 'Islamification', a process of colonisation leading to the rule of sharia law. European governments are regarded as weak and complicit in the face of this totalitarian threat. Old-style racism, anti-Semitism and authoritarianism are rejected; right-wing Zionism is taken to be a potential ally. Unlike the traditional far-Right, these new movements rhetorically embrace what they regard as Enlightenment values of individual liberty, freedom of speech, gender equality and gay rights. In moving from neo-Nazism to counter-jihadism, the underlying structure of the narrative remains the same, but the protagonists have changed: the identity of Western liberal values has been substituted for white racial identity, Muslims have taken the place of blacks and multiculturalists are the new Jews.

The counter-jihadist narrative has been advanced by a trans-Atlantic movement, including think-tanks, bloggers, street-based movements and political parties. At the heart of the movement are websites such as *Gates of Vienna*, *Politically Incorrect* and *The Brussels Journal*, and think-tanks, such as the International Free Press Society and the David Horowitz Freedom Center, which fund and facilitate international linkages for the movement. In both the Netherlands and Denmark, counter-jihadist political parties have firmly entered the political mainstream; until recently in both countries, their support was necessary for governments to secure a working parliamentary majority. Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (PVV, Freedom Party),

²² Front National, *300 Mesures pour la renaissance de la France: programme de gouvernement* (Paris, Editions Nationales, 1993).

²³ Jeffrey Kaplan and Tore Bjørgo, *Nation and Race: the developing Euro-American racist subculture* (Boston, Northeastern University Press, 1998), p. 10.

shares with other counter-jihadist groups the same core beliefs but is careful to reject the methods of non-state violence or extra-parliamentary agitation favoured by street-based movements like the EDL. With a similar stance, the *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF, Danish People's Party) continues to be the third largest political party in Denmark. In Belgium, the *Vlaams Belang* (VB, Flemish Interest) has sought to move away from an older tradition of far-Right politics with roots in neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism to embrace counter-jihadist rhetoric. In Germany, the *Bürgerbewegung Pax Europa* (Pax Europa Citizens' Movement) is a counter-jihadist social movement and think-tank.

Just as the older far-Right narrative had a structural need for a Jewish conspiracy theory in order to explain the purported complicity of national governments with their enemies, so too the counter-jihadist movement tends towards conspiracy theory. After all, one might ask, why the need for popular mobilisation for the counter-jihadist cause when European governments already take a tough stance on fighting 'radical Islam'? The answer must be that government rhetoric about fighting Islamist 'extremism' is mere appearance; behind the scenes, ruling elites are secretly in league with the Islamic enemy. Hence the indispensability of the Eurabia conspiracy theory, outlined in Bat Ye'or's 2005 book *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab axis*. Her claim is that the Euro-Arab Dialogue – a programme initiated by the European Community's political establishment following the 1973 oil crisis, to forge closer links with Arab nations – was actually a secret plot by European politicians and civil servants to facilitate Muslim immigration, subjugate Europe and transform the continent into an Arab colony, Eurabia. Like the Jewish conspiracy theory of the *Protocols*, no evidence is offered. Nevertheless, through the mainstream conservative writing of Oriana Fallaci, Niall Ferguson and Melanie Phillips, the term 'Eurabia' has been associated with an image of Europe as cowardly and weak in the face of Islamic intimidation, allowing itself to be 'colonised' by an increasing Muslim presence.²⁴ The focus of such conspiracy theories is the moral corruption of the West's own leaders, academics and journalists, who are accused of a lack of pride in Western culture, which has led to relativism and appeasement of radical Islam. As the counter-jihadist Ned May puts it on his *Gates of Vienna* blog: 'the Jihad is just a symptom ... the enemy lies within. This war is a civil war within the West, between traditional Western culture and the forces of politically correct multicultural Marxism that have bedevilled it for the last hundred years.'²⁵

For the new conspiracy theorists, Islamist terrorism is just the visible tip of a hidden jihad iceberg. Alongside the use of violence is the strategy of 'stealth jihad' which aims at the infiltration of national institutions and the assertion of Muslim demands through the legal system. Muslims advocating for their civil rights or seeking to win political office are therefore to be regarded not as fellow citizens but as agents of a secret plan to impose totalitarian government on the world. Non-Muslims who stand with Muslims in challenging discrimination are 'dhimmis', the twenty-first century equivalent of the Cold War's 'fellow travellers', who have already internalised the status of second-class citizenship within an 'Islamofascist' state. The provision of halal food, sharia-compliant finance or prayer breaks in workplaces is 'creeping sharia', the first steps towards a society ruled by Islam. And since the Islamic doctrine of *taqiyya* supposedly sanctions systematic lying to non-Muslims to help advance sharia government, Muslims who say they interpret Islam as a religion of peace and tolerance are not to be trusted.

For neo-Nazis, members of other races could never be integrated; for counter-jihadists, Muslims can only be tolerated if they explicitly reject their Islamic culture and embrace 'our' values; until then, they are considered suspect at best, agents of sedition at worst. For both neo-Nazis and counter-jihadists, members of ruling elites are viewed, with few exceptions, as traitors who have betrayed Western civilisation. And whereas neo-Nazis view mixing with Jews and non-whites as undermining racial purity, counter-jihadists view them as potential allies so long as they declare their allegiance to 'our' values.

²⁴ Matt Carr, 'You are now entering Eurabia', *Race & Class* (Vol. 48, no. 1, 2006).

²⁵ 'The emperor is naked', *Gates of Vienna* (26 September 2006), <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.com/2006/09/emperor-is-naked.html>.

Thus, counter-jihadism exists alongside more familiar forms of neo-Nazi discourse and, within the wider far-Right milieu, there is a continuing debate about ways forward: where to hold on to long-standing principles and positions, and where to compromise and adapt to new trends. For some, Jews are still the prime enemy; for others, Jews are now seen as allies in opposing Islam. For still others, counter-jihadist themes and neo-Nazi narratives merge in a cocktail of hatred.²⁶

It has normally been assumed that the threat of far-Right violence is predominantly from those with a neo-Nazi ideology, whereas right-wing populists, rhetorically focusing on culture and identity rather than race, engage in the democratic process. In other words, hardcore racial identity politics is seen as fostering violence while the 'extremism lite' of values-based identity politics is thought to go hand in hand with democratic participation. What is striking about Breivik and the EDL is that, in their different ways, they have used violence to advance a values and identity ideology, rather than old-style racism.

2. Narratives and performativity

Narratives are the stories we tell ourselves and others about the world in which we live. We can use the term 'meta-narrative' to refer to the larger public narratives that persist over a longer period of time and which appear in a wide range of different settings. For example, the Cold War, the 'war on terror' and the monotheistic religions are all meta-narratives. The first two of these are also security meta-narratives in that they tell stories that are primarily about the threats we face and how to protect ourselves against them. And they are official meta-narratives because they are produced by states and embodied in government policies.

Narratives have plots, within which events are given significance and explained in terms of particular causes. They also have protagonists who are given particular identities. Events and protagonists are relational, in that they only make sense in relation to other actual and potential protagonists and other actual and potential events. And narratives are necessarily selective, reflecting choices about what is relevant and irrelevant, and foregrounding particular events and protagonists as opposed to others. Usually, narrative plots involve their protagonists being confronted with a disturbance or conflict which needs to be resolved through some course of action.

Recent scholarship in terrorism studies has stressed the question of what governments can do or not do to undermine jihadist narratives. For example, in June 2009, the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism in the Netherlands and the Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism at Leiden University convened an expert meeting to examine the narratives that jihadists use and what kinds of counter-narrative might be effective in response. While the exact causal relationships between narratives and acts of violence are highly opaque, this work proceeded on the assumption that some kind of relationship was plausible and that therefore governments could expect to reduce the potential for violence by advancing counter-narratives crafted with this aim in mind. President Obama's Cairo speech in the same month was cited as an example of the kind of counter-narrative that governments could deploy against al-Qaeda.²⁷

A related question that has recently come to the fore is the performative power of counter-terrorism, by which is meant the intended and unintended consequences of the ways that governments communicate their security policies to the public. Official security narratives 'set the tone for the overall discourse regarding terrorism and counterterrorism – thereby mobilising (different) audiences for its purposes'. Beatrice de Graaf and Bob de Graaff argue that this communicative component to counter-terrorism may ultimately determine its effectiveness.²⁸ This is because the messages generated by counter-terrorism policies are themselves

²⁶ José Pedro Zúquete, 'The European extreme Right and Islam: new directions?', *Journal of Political Ideologies* (Vol. 13, no. 3, 2008).

²⁷ National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives* (2010), p. 8.

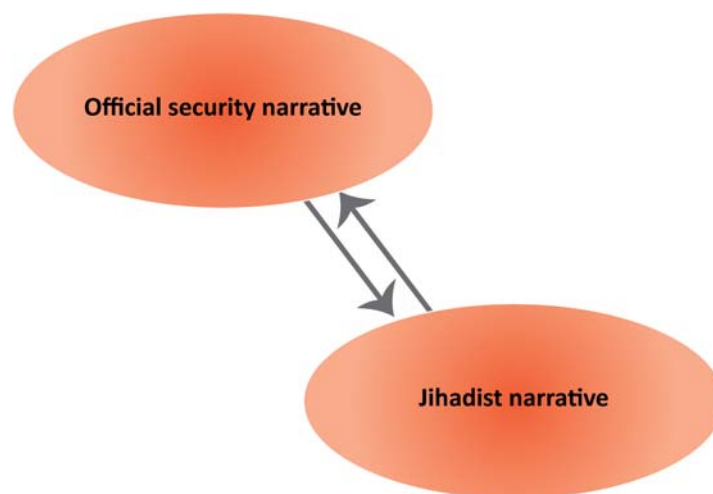
²⁸ Beatrice de Graaf and Bob de Graaff, 'Bringing politics back in: the introduction of the "performative power" of counterterrorism', *Critical Studies on Terrorism* (Vol. 3, no. 2, 2010), p. 267.

appropriated by terrorists who ‘try to distort them and subsequently use them to fuel sentiments of oppression and injustice’ in a battle of legitimacy engaged against governments.²⁹ From this perspective, terrorists and states are conducting ‘a battle to convince and persuade different target audiences to rally behind them’.³⁰

In a historical survey of the communicative aspects of counter-terrorism, Beatrice de Graaf defines the performative power of counter-terrorism as ‘the extent to which the national government, by means of its official counterterrorism policy and corresponding discourse (in statements, enactments, measures and ministers’ remarks) aims to mobilize public and political support and in the last instance, wittingly or unwittingly, assists the terrorists in creating social drama’.³¹ Performative power can be measured by considering the extent to which terrorism is high on the political agenda and the level of perceived crisis; whether the terrorist threat is considered temporary and limited or wide-ranging and ongoing; whether governments attempt to mobilise society in opposition to terrorism; whether social conventions are seen as needing modification to deal with terrorism; and whether there is dialogue and the potential for recognition of terrorists’ demands or government intransigence.³² She concludes that a low-key approach to counter-terrorism which minimises perceptions of injustice and oppression in the population being targeted for recruitment is most likely to ‘take the wind out of the sails that keep terrorists afloat’.³³

The interactive narrative relationship between official security policies and jihadists is represented in figure 1 – arrows flow in both directions to represent the influence of government security narratives on jihadists and vice versa.

Figure 1



Terrorism studies scholars have also recently identified the danger of ‘cumulative extremism’ – the possibility that right-wing extremism and radical Islamism reinforce each other through a dynamic in which each one’s narrative encourages support in the opposing group, in a spiral of fear and mutual demonisation.³⁴ Others use the term ‘tit for tat radicalisation’ to describe the same process.³⁵ For example, a key part of the EDL’s counter-jihadist narrative is the need to oppose the threat of radical Islamist groups such as al-Muhajiroun and its

²⁹ Beatrice de Graaf, *Why Communication and Performance are Key in Countering Terrorism* (International Center for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, February 2011), p. 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³¹ Beatrice de Graaf, *Evaluating Counterterrorism Performance* (London, Routledge, 2011), p. 12.

³² *Ibid.* p. 12.

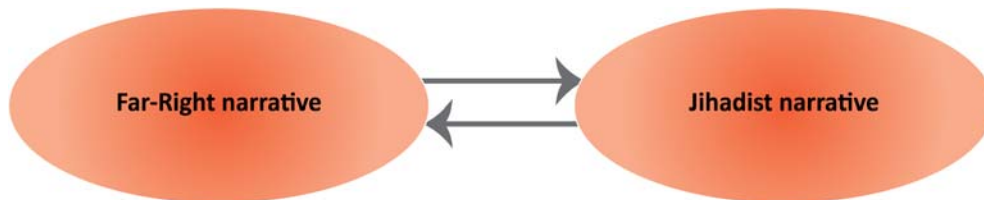
³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 248–50.

³⁴ Roger Eatwell and Matthew J. Goodwin, eds, *The New Extremism in 21st century Britain* (London, Routledge, 2010), p. 243.

³⁵ Paul Jackson, *The EDL: Britain’s ‘new far Right’ social movement* (University of Northampton Radicalism and New Media Research Group, 2011).

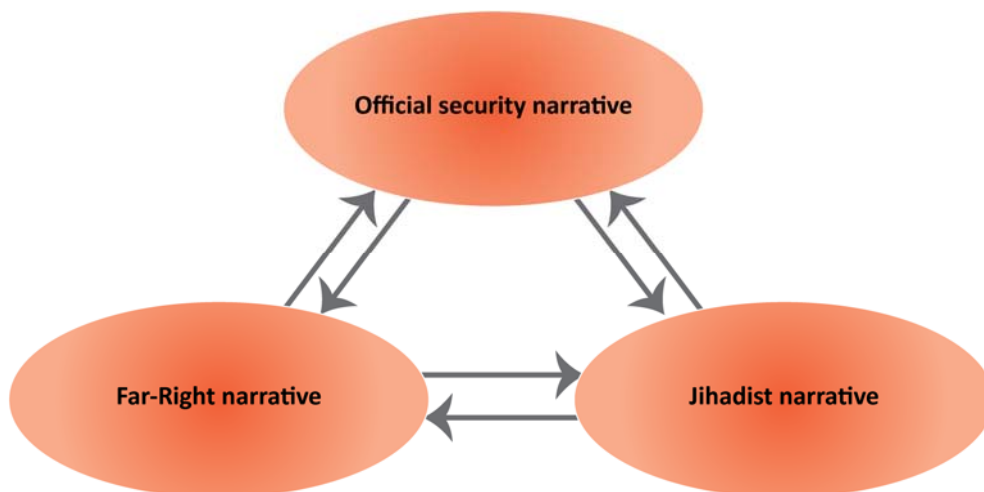
descendants. These groups, in turn, win support with the narrative that they need to exist to defend Muslims against the kind of Islamophobia represented by the EDL. The narratives of the EDL and radical Islamist groups therefore become mutually reinforcing – as represented in figure 2. As counter-jihadist narratives become more prominent among far-Right networks, this phenomenon becomes more relevant.

Figure 2



While there has been substantial research on counter-narratives to challenge the messages of jihadists, there has been little consideration given to counter-narrative strategies to undermine the far-Right. One way of opening up this question is to combine the notion that counter-terrorism has a crucial performative dimension with the concept of cumulative extremism to produce a complex relational picture of the mutual influences between the narratives of government security policy, jihadists and right-wing counter-jihadists. Represented graphically, this would mean combining figures 1 and 2 and adding a third side to a triangle of influences between the three actors, as shown in figure 3, with arrows representing lines of influence from one actor's narrative to another actor.

Figure 3



On this triangular model:

- Government security activity is influenced by the narratives of the jihadist terrorists it is attempting to counter, and to a lesser extent the narratives of the far-Right;
- Jihadist activity is influenced by official security narratives and by counter-jihadist narratives;
- Counter-jihadist activity is influenced by jihadist narratives and by official security narratives.

As we have seen, existing research has explored two sides of the above triangle – that between official and jihadist narratives and that between jihadist and counter-jihadist narratives. But the third side – that between official security narratives and counter-jihadist narratives – has not been explored. Consideration has not been given to whether the discursive frames of counter-terrorism policies are encouraging or discouraging far-Right narratives and whether governments could contribute to reducing far-Right violence by changing the way that counter-terrorism is narrated. This research paper seeks to pose these questions.

The relationship between counter-jihadism and security narratives is complicated by the probability that counter-jihadists respond not just to counter-terrorism narratives on far-Right violence but also to counter-terrorism narratives on jihadism. For example, support for the EDL may be influenced by government communication about the threat of ‘radical Islam’ as well as by government communication on the threat of far-Right violence. If terrorists and states are conducting ‘influence warfare’, then, given the above triangle of relationships, it is important to ask whether counter-terrorism policy narratives, in aiming to tackle jihadism, are leading to unintended consequences by reinforcing far-Right counter-jihadist narratives.

A precedent for such a triangular relationship between the state and opposed violent actors existed in Northern Ireland, at least during the 1970s and 1980s, when the narratives of the Provisional IRA, Ulster Unionist terrorists and the UK state were mutually reinforcing. While the UK government condemned the violence of both nationalists and Unionists, its rhetoric until the early 1990s – that there could be no negotiation on the basic question of sovereignty – reinforced the Unionist narrative of ‘no surrender’; in addition, there was direct collusion between elements of the UK state and Unionist terrorist groups. Another example is the ‘strategy of tension’ employed in the 1970s by elements of the Italian security apparatus, which involved sponsoring right-wing terrorist groups in an effort to discredit and undermine the Left.

In a context in which society faces various forms of political violence, politicians and officials ought to be aware that the implicit ‘stories’ they tell about security policies and practices have audiences among potential jihadist supporters who are the target of the policy as well as among far-Right groups who may appropriate these ‘stories’ to reinforce their own message of violence.

Of course, in an information age, states are very far from having a monopoly on public communication. All those who are involved in communicating about terrorism (journalists, think-tanks, bloggers, civil society groups) share the same responsibility to reflect on the ways in which the narratives they circulate encourage or discourage violence. But states are responsible for a society’s counter-terrorism policy and practice, and are the dominant force in shaping the ways society understands terrorism. Even in an age of new media and transnational integration, nation-states remain the critical actors in determining what points of view are considered sensible, realistic and legitimate.

3. Case studies

In an effort to explore the narrative relationships described above, in each of the four brief case studies under consideration (Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium), the following questions are posed:

- **Official narratives:** What are the ways in which the problem of terrorism is narrated in official discourse? How are the protagonists and ‘plots’ in these narratives constructed? To what extent is terrorism seen as a political priority? How far is terrorism seen as causing a state of crisis in society? Is the terrorist threat perceived as limited or a wide-ranging problem? Do governments attempt to mobilise society to oppose terrorism? Are existing conventions seen as needing to be amended to oppose terrorism? Is there any recognition of the terrorists’ political demands?
- **Far-Right narratives:** How do different far-Right actors narrate their political aims and strategy? How are the protagonists and ‘plots’ in these narratives constructed? Have official security discourses been appropriated by

the far Right? Have official security discourses contributed to far-Right violence being neglected as an issue? If far-Right ideology has developed beyond familiar forms of neo-Nazism to include ‘counter-jihadist’ and ‘crisis of multiculturalism’ elements borrowed from official security narratives, has it become harder for government agencies to recognise it and respond to it?

As well as examining counter-terrorist policy documents, ministerial statements and far-Right campaign material in each country under consideration, interviews were conducted with a small number of analysts and civil servants in each case.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider the underlying causes of the emergence of counter-jihadist and ‘crisis of multiculturalism’ discourses. Such an analysis would have to include a much broader historical account of racism and nationalism in Europe and their reworking in an age of neoliberalism.³⁶ However, it is suggested that, in some contexts, official rhetoric has played a role in encouraging far-Right narratives and that, where there is an overlap with government discourse, the state’s ability to reduce the threat of far-Right violence is inhibited.

3.1. Britain

3.1.1. *Official values-identity narrative strongly asserted and reflected in counter-terrorism policy*

In the UK, the government considers the most serious terrorist threat to be from ‘Al Qa’ida, its affiliates and like-minded organisations’ and resources are targeted accordingly, whether in terms of the institutional focus of policing and intelligence agencies, government funding of preventative measures or ministerial leadership.³⁷ Until recently, the UK’s counter-radicalisation policy was entirely focused on tackling Islamist ‘extremism’.³⁸ (Although, over the last decade, more deaths probably resulted from the conflict in Northern Ireland than from jihadist violence in the UK.³⁹) The threat from Islamist ‘extremism’ has been narrated in a series of ministerial speeches over the last six years. Speeches by Prime Minister Tony Blair (2006), Home Secretary Jacqui Smith (2008), Communities Minister Hazel Blears (2009) and Prime Minister David Cameron (2011) have been the major statements of government thinking on security matters since the 7/7 terrorist attacks on the London transport system in 2005. All these speeches present essentially the same story-line, despite a change in government in 2010 and some differences over policy details.⁴⁰ The key elements of this story-line are that:

- Our identity is based on liberal values of gender equality, freedom of speech, secularism, etc.;
- There are two kinds of Muslims: moderates who practise their religion in a peaceful way and share our values, and extremists/Islamists who interpret Islam as a political ideology, believe in rejecting our values and aim to impose sharia law on Muslims and non-Muslims;
- Political correctness and multicultural tolerance have weakened the defence of our values and thereby aided extremist Muslims;
- We have suffered terrorism because of Islamist extremism;
- We now need to put aside multicultural sensitivities, assertively defend our liberal values and be tougher in opposing Islamist extremism.

³⁶ This question is explored further in: Liz Fekete, *A Suitable Enemy: racism, migration and Islamophobia in Europe* (London, Pluto Press, 2009); Arun Kundnani, *The End of Tolerance: racism in 21st century Britain* (London, Pluto Press, 2007); and Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism: racism in a neoliberal age* (London, Zed Books, 2011).

³⁷ HM Government, *Prevent Strategy* (June 2011), p. 5.

³⁸ Arun Kundnani, *Spooked: how not to prevent violent extremism* (Institute of Race Relations, 2009).

³⁹ The Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) at the University of Ulster lists 62 deaths probably related to the conflict in Northern Ireland from January 2002 to December 2011. There have been 53 deaths as a result of jihadist violence in the UK over the same period. See <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/>.

⁴⁰ Tony Blair, speech to the World Affairs Council in Los Angeles, 1 August 2006; Jacqui Smith, ‘Our shared values – a shared responsibility’, speech to the International Conference on Radicalisation and Political Violence, 17 January 2008; Hazel Blears, ‘Many voices: understanding the debate about preventing violent extremism’, speech to London School of Economics, 25 February 2009; David Cameron, speech at Munich Security Conference, 5 February 2011.

The 'we' in this values-identity narrative is defined differently depending on the context – the people of Britain, the people of Europe or the people of 'the West' – but since 'our' identity is defined in terms of 'liberal values' which are assumed to be shared across Western societies, these distinctions are of limited importance. The significance of this narrative is that it introduces three protagonists (us, moderate Muslims and extremist Muslims), whose identities are defined in specific ways (whether or not they share our values), a disturbance (terrorist violence), an explanation for the cause of the disturbance (extremism) and a suggested resolution (rejecting multiculturalism and asserting our values more forcefully).

Among the policy impacts of such a narrative are immigration rules that seek to exclude foreign nationals from the UK on the basis of their not sharing 'our values'. The Prevent counter-radicalisation policy, introduced from 2007, embeds this narrative in a range of local settings, making available hundreds of millions of pounds of public money for initiatives to counter the circulation of Muslim 'extremism' and to encourage professionals such as teachers, lecturers, health workers and youth workers to be aware of the content of such ideology.

The major policy disagreement in the UK in this area has been over how to define the 'moderate' Muslims whom the government wants to recruit to a project of defending 'our values'. Some civil servants at the Home Office, departing from the narrative articulated by ministers, have argued privately that some of the most effective Muslim partners in preventative work are Salafi Muslims, who may hold 'extremist' values but nevertheless oppose violence in the UK. On this dissenting view, the 'us' that is to be united against 'them' is constituted by all those who oppose violence against Britain, rather than defined in terms of sharing British values. Since June 2011, however, when a review of Prevent policy was published, that analysis has been firmly rejected and the values-identity narrative of counter-terrorism now completely dominates official discourse.⁴¹

One consequence of the foregrounding of a values-identity narrative is that questions of identity, values and multiculturalism have been strongly linked to the issue of national security. David Cameron's speech at the Munich Security Conference in February 2011, given on the same day that the EDL marched through Luton, conveyed this strong sense that Britain was facing a generational problem of jihadist violence because of a legacy of misguided 'multiculturalist' policies that had failed to 'integrate' young Muslims into mainstream society. In this way, the terrorist problem was constructed not as consisting of a few individuals engaged in violence but as a symptom of a much deeper cultural malaise in the British Muslim population. This implied that the solution must involve not just a focus on a small number of Muslims but a mobilisation of a broader population to embrace a stronger sense of national identity based on 'muscular liberalism'. Hence the Prevent policy adopted a very broad approach, directed at the entire Muslim community, not just specific individuals or a few neighbourhoods. The values-identity narrative had already led funding for Prevent projects to be allocated in proportion to the number of Muslim residents in each local authority area – reflecting the policy's sole focus on Muslim 'extremism' and the assumption that it needed to address the entire Muslim population.⁴² Like the previous ministerial statements, Cameron's speech also spelled out that existing conventions of 'multicultural tolerance' needed to be weakened to deal with the perceived crisis of identity and values.

In these ways, the official security narrative in the UK has a high degree of performativity: it presents the problem of terrorism as a major generational crisis, as rooted in a wide-ranging problem of identity, and as needing to be fought by mobilising whole sections of society and dispensing with existing social conventions.

3.1.2. *Far-Right movements appropriate values-identity narrative*

The main far-Right political party in the UK, the British National Party (BNP), enjoyed an increase in support from 2001 onwards – driven by multiple factors. In 1999, Nick Griffin assumed the leadership of the party and sought to downplay its neo-Nazi legacy, which included his own 1997 pamphlet claiming that Jews secretly controlled the

⁴¹ HM Government, *Prevent Strategy* (June 2011).

⁴² Arun Kundnani, *Spooked: how not to prevent violent extremism* (Institute of Race Relations, 2009).

media.⁴³ Re-modelling the party along the lines of more successful European counterparts such as the *Front National* in France, he used the language of defending British cultural identity (rather than white racial identity) against a ruling elite that wants to destroy it through immigration and multiculturalism. Instead of talk of a Jewish conspiracy, there was the idea that those in power are too 'cosmopolitan' to have the real interests of the British people at heart; and, after 9/11, Islamic militancy was invoked to illustrate the alleged dangers of immigration.

Despite the BNP's active membership remaining dominated by long-standing neo-Nazis and violent racists, from 2001 it was able to dramatically increase its electoral support. In June 2004, the BNP secured 808,200 votes across the UK in European elections; by 2009, the BNP had won two seats in the European parliament. From 2003 to 2010, the BNP had at least ten councillors in office at any one time, with the real possibility of winning control of a borough or city council, such as Burnley's. However, in the last few years, the BNP's organising capacity has been severely reduced, firstly by the leaking of its membership list and, secondly, by the financial burden of defending itself against a legal challenge to its racist membership policy. But these tactics targeted the organisation not the message, allowing other far-Right groups to pick up from where the BNP had left off.

As it turned out, the English Defence League (EDL) was well placed to do so. It does not organise as a conventional political party and has no formal members, so it is less vulnerable to the tactics that have been partially effective against the BNP. More significantly, the EDL has been able to better tailor its ideology to current circumstances, because it owes its entire outlook to the 'war on terror'. The BNP's opportunistic exploitation of Islamophobia after 9/11 carried it to a level of electoral support unimaginable in the 1990s. But, by virtue of its core membership, the party remains tethered to the neo-Nazi tradition and so, unlike the EDL, cannot fully realise the potential of the post-9/11 context.

There are multiple strands of opinion within the EDL, including conventional colour-based racism and straightforward opposition to the presence of Muslims in Britain. But the narrative it seeks to foreground, for example in its mission statement, has a different character. It can be summarised as follows:

- The West is at war against Islamic extremism;
- Unlike other groups in society, among Muslims, there is a problem of those who reject modern Western liberal and democratic values;
- It is wrong to assume that this is true of all Muslims. Rather, there is a conflict going on within Muslim communities between reformists who oppose orthodoxy and radicals who believe in a fundamentalist form of Islam;
- These radicals dominate Muslim organisations, remain key figures in British mosques, and are steadily increasing their influence;
- Cultural diversity is to be welcomed but parts of other cultures that conflict with liberal values cannot be tolerated in the name of multiculturalism;
- People of all races, religions and lifestyles should unite to oppose the growing power of radical Islam;
- The government has systematically failed to oppose Islamic extremism in Britain.

This narrative constructs subject positions of who 'we' are (those who share liberal values) and who 'they' are (those Muslims who reject them) and attempts to unite a diverse range of groups against Islamic extremism. It sets out a relationship of conflict between 'us' and 'them'. And it sets out the obstacles to victory in that conflict, such as failed government policies. And with this, the street activism of the EDL is legitimised: demonstrations against mosques, marches through Muslim communities, demands for tougher action against 'Islamic extremism'.

The EDL narrative differs from that of the traditional far-Right (for whom the 'we' is members of the 'white race') and even recognises a distinction between 'moderate' Muslims and 'extremist' Muslims. 'Race war'

⁴³ *Who are the Mind Benders? The people who rule Britain through control of the mass media* (London, Steven Books, 1997).

has been swapped for the idea of a global conflict between Western liberal civilisation and ‘radical Islam’. For the EDL, Western civilisation is liberal, secular and modern. And this civilisation is open to Muslims to join; it does not completely close the door on them. Indeed, the question for the EDL is whether Muslims choose to join this civilisation or whether they choose to remain locked into what the EDL regards as the barbarity of traditional Islamic culture. If they do embrace Western liberal values, they can be seen as moderate Muslims. If they do not, then they are extremists. And passing this test is hugely significant, because moderates are potential allies, while extremists are people against whom a war is being fought. The EDL thus sees Muslims as people whose Islamic identity determines their whole being unless they can prove that they have freed themselves from it and embraced liberal civilisation. Politics can therefore be reduced to a conflict between the regressive cultural identities of traditional Islam and Western liberal values. And the only acceptable agency for Muslims is the rejection of their cultural practices in order to become ‘free like us’.⁴⁴

Of course, having to pass this values test is a flimsy basis for equality, as it means acceptance of Muslims as fellow citizens is conditional on meeting the moral or political approval of others who regard you with suspicion. And using the language of culture and values to define a ‘Muslim problem’ can produce the same outcomes that more obviously racial discourses once achieved; cultural tropes, such as wearing a hijab, can serve as signifiers of who belongs and who does not, in the same way that skin colour does. Yet precisely because this narrative differs from familiar patterns of racialisation, it can present itself as the defence of a liberal ‘way of life’ and appear ‘post-racial’. This explains the paradox of a far-Right organisation that is able to tentatively include supporters from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and invoke ‘liberal ideals’, such as women’s rights, gay rights, and ‘democratic accountability’.

With its focus on whether Muslims share ‘our values’, the EDL’s definition of the ‘problem’ is strikingly similar to Britain’s official security narrative. The EDL takes literally government statements that there is a conflict between ‘our values’ and ‘Islamic extremism’. From counter-terrorism programmes, it absorbs the notion that the enemy in this conflict is not a few individuals engaged in violence but an ideology embedded in Muslim communities. Likewise, the notion that Muslims can be categorised as extremist or moderate, according to their allegiance to Western values, has been taken from the official narrative. And from ministerial speeches, the EDL borrows the belief that ‘state multiculturalism’ is holding back the fight against Muslim ‘extremism’. The EDL would take a tougher view on the extent to which Muslim communities embrace liberal values, seeing a more widespread rejection than official discourse would allow. But the main difference between the EDL narrative and the official narrative lies elsewhere: the EDL holds that the politicians running the domestic ‘war on terror’ are too soft and cowardly, still too caught up in multicultural platitudes to fight it properly; this is where a new far-Right street movement will fill the gap with its own form of militancy. It is this last element – government failure – that justifies the need for a social movement willing to fight the enemy on the streets, and gives the EDL its militancy and distance from the liberal state.

This suggests that Britain’s official security narrative has been strongly performative, providing discursive opportunities for new far-Right actors whose ideologies significantly overlap with government discourse, and which are therefore harder to counter. The claim is not that, in drafting their mission statement, EDL leaders studied ministerial speeches and policy documents. Rather, the argument is that the government, through its leadership role in public discourse on terrorism, has been able to entrench a values and identity narrative as the prevalent way in which terrorism is understood in society, and that this narrative – amplified by popular newspapers, such as the *Mail*, *The Sun* and *Star*⁴⁵ – has been ripe for appropriation by the far-Right.

⁴⁴ Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism: racism in a neoliberal age* (London, Zed Books, 2011).

⁴⁵ For example: Ruth Dudley Edwards, ‘Will Britain one day be Muslim?’, *Daily Mail* (5 May 2007). See also further examples listed in Ryan Erfani-Ghettani, ‘Strangers in our own land’, *IRR News* (23 March 2012), <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/strangers-in-our-own-land>.

3.1.3. *Far-Right violence neglected in official security narrative*

In post-7/7 Britain, there has been a consistent problem of ‘fitting’ the threat of far-Right violence into official security narratives. For most of its existence, Prevent policy has completely neglected the far-Right as an issue. Prevent practitioners interviewed in the first half of 2009 were unable to cite any examples of work specifically aimed at tackling the far-Right.⁴⁶ As of the end of 2010, less than 10 per cent of individual interventions designed to prevent radicalisation, as part of Prevent’s Channel programme, were directed at the far-Right; over 90 per cent of the programme’s focus was on Muslims.⁴⁷ The June 2011 Prevent policy review publicly recognised the existence of a far-Right threat but it was strongly downplayed: there was only a ‘small number of relevant cases’ and there were no ‘extreme right-wing terrorist organisations and formal groups’.⁴⁸ Above all, the far-Right threat was not conceived to be part of a wider social drama; whereas Islamist terrorism was seen as symptomatic of a generational conflict over values, multiculturalism and identity, far-Right violence was seen as involving no more than a few isolated ‘lone wolves’.

With regard to the EDL, there is a reluctance by many officials and advisors to recognise the group as a significant threat. For example, in April 2011, Adrian Tudway, the police’s National Co-ordinator for Domestic Extremism, wrote in an email to Muslim groups that: ‘In terms of the position with EDL, the original stance stands, they are not extreme right wing as a group, indeed if you look at their published material on their web-site, they are actively moving away from the right and violence with their mission statement etc.’⁴⁹ Similarly, in January 2011, Douglas Murray, the associate director of the Henry Jackson Society, which influences the government on national security policy, stated that, in relation to the EDL: ‘If you were ever going to have a grassroots response from non-Muslims to Islamism, that would be how you’d want it, surely.’⁵⁰ Both these statements suggest that ‘counter-jihadist’ ideologies, through reworking far-Right narratives and appropriating official discourse, are able to evade categorisation as a source of far-Right violence.

3.2. Netherlands

3.2.1. *Official values-identity narrative strongly asserted and reflected in counter-terrorism policy*

Like in Britain, counter-terrorism discourse in the Netherlands has strongly focused on jihadist terrorism, understood largely through a values-identity narrative in the public and political debate, in which ‘lack of integration’ with purported ‘Dutch liberal values’ such as gender equality, freedom of speech and secularism is seen as causing a generational problem of ‘polarisation’ between young Muslims and the rest of Dutch society, which in turn is thought to create a breeding ground for violent extremism. While some Dutch counter-terrorism officials and politicians have spoken more about ‘grievances’ than about values, they have done so in the shadow of a prevailing security narrative of ‘polarisation’, understood as a problem of values and identity. A mainstream public debate has taken place on whether terrorism is the product of Islam itself or of particular extremist interpretations of Islam. But both sides in this public and political debate have held a common set of assumptions:

- Our Dutch identity is based on liberal values of gender equality, freedom of speech, secularism, etc.;
- Either all followers or some minority of followers interpret Islam as a political ideology (Islamism), believe in rejecting our liberal values and aim to impose sharia law on Muslims and non-Muslims;
- Political correctness and multicultural tolerance have weakened the defence of our values and thereby aided the polarisation that leads to Islamist extremism;
- We have suffered terrorism because of Islamist extremism;

⁴⁶ Arun Kundnani, *Spooked: how not to prevent violent extremism* (Institute of Race Relations, 2009).

⁴⁷ Home Office, ‘Channel data 2007–2010’, document released under the Freedom of Information Act, May 2011.

⁴⁸ HM Government, *Prevent Strategy* (June 2011), p. 20.

⁴⁹ Vikram Dodd and Matthew Taylor, ‘Muslims criticise Scotland Yard for telling them to engage with EDL’, *Guardian* (2 September 2011).

⁵⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wgAliHwrNo>.

- We now need to put aside multicultural sensitivities, assertively defend our liberal values and be tougher in opposing Islamist extremism.

The more radical voices in this public debate, such as the politicians Geert Wilders and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, have argued that Islam can only be interpreted in an extremist fashion, whereas most other politicians and commentators have held that a moderate Islam, compatible with Dutch values, is possible and that only a minority of Muslims are extremists. This latter view has allowed for a narrative with three protagonists (us, moderate Muslims and extremist Muslims), while the former leads to a simpler narrative in which the ‘moderate’ protagonist is dropped from the story-line. But both narratives define the identities of their protagonists on the basis of whether or not they share ‘our values’, give an explanation for the cause of the terrorism ‘disturbance’ (it is a product of Islamist extremism bred in a context of polarisation) and suggest a resolution (rejecting multiculturalism and asserting ‘our values’ more forcefully).

While these narratives became especially important following the murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in 2004, the groundwork had already been laid some years earlier. Indeed, the Netherlands was a pioneer in advancing this kind of ‘new realism’ narrative in Europe.⁵¹ In 1991, a speech by Frits Bolkestein, the leader of the *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD, Liberal Party), on the need for minorities to integrate to the values of Dutch liberalism, prompted a national debate on cultural integration.⁵² The *Partij van de Arbeid* (PvdA, Labour Party) also began to quietly move towards a more restrictive immigration policy and away from multiculturalism while it was in government in the 1990s.⁵³ In 1997, Pim Fortuyn published his book, *Tegen de islamisering van onze cultuur* (*Against the Islamisation of our Culture*), which provided the clearest statement yet of the values-identity narrative.⁵⁴ His subsequent electoral success in municipal elections in Rotterdam, before his murder in 2002, demonstrated its potential appeal to a section of voters. Geert Wilders ploughed the same furrow after he left the VVD in 2004 to establish his own party. Other parties responded to the emergence of this new ‘radical Right’ with a good measure of emulation, following Wilders in a lot of his rhetoric. While they did not embrace full-on Islamophobia, the other parties did largely support the notion that ‘multiculturalism’ is in crisis because of the failure of Muslim immigrant groups to ‘integrate’, placing a values-identity narrative firmly in the mainstream. Over the last decade, a series of new ‘integration’ measures directed at Dutch Muslims have been proposed, culminating in the recently drafted niqab and burka ban, new barriers to immigration have been brought in, for example through tighter rules on family reunion, and multiculturalism has been officially pronounced a failure.⁵⁵ Though not specifically focused on counter-terrorism, these developments have further entrenched a values-identity narrative in relation to Dutch Muslims.

Like in Britain after 7/7, the Van Gogh murder was interpreted as both an individual act of terrorism and symptom of a wider problem – the failure of significant numbers of Muslims to integrate and adopt Dutch values. For example, *From Dawa to Jihad: the various threats from radical Islam to the democratic legal order*, a major policy study published in 2004 by the *Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst* (AIVD, General Intelligence and Security Service), argued that Dutch democratic values are under threat from Muslim ‘extremists’ and that Muslim ‘moderates’ who share these values need to be assisted by wider society to defend them.⁵⁶ In response, alongside the investigative efforts of the police and intelligence agencies focused on individual criminals, counter-radicalisation policies were implemented by municipal authorities in an attempt to mobilise a wide range of ‘partners’ to address Muslim ‘extremism’ at the community level. Thousands of ‘front-line’ workers, such as teachers, police officers and youth workers, were given training on spotting the ‘warning signs’ that a young person was rejecting Dutch values and embracing an ‘extremist’ Islamic identity.

⁵¹ Baukje Prins, *Voorbij de onschuld: het debat over integratie in Nederland* (Amsterdam, van Gennep, 2004), pp. 34–6.

⁵² Rob Witte, ‘The Dutch Far Right: from “classical outsiders” to “modern insiders”’, paper presented at CSTPV Workshop, 16–17 May 2011.

⁵³ Tim Bale, Kurt Richard Luther, Christoffer Green-Pedersen, André Krouwel, Nick Sitter, ‘If you can’t beat them, join them? Explaining social democratic responses to the challenge from the populist radical Right in Western Europe’, *Political Studies* (Vol. 58, 2010), p. 416.

⁵⁴ Pim Fortuyn, *Tegen de islamisering van onze cultuur. Nederlandse identiteit als fundament* (Utrecht, Bruna, 1997).

⁵⁵ Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, ‘Aanbieding visie op integratie’ (June 2011).

⁵⁶ Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service, *From Dawa to Jihad: the various threats from radical Islam to the democratic legal order* (2004).

By 2010, some individual practitioners were arguing privately for a separation of the questions of values, identity and polarisation from the discussion of counter-terrorism, and questioned the direct connection between lack of Muslim integration and terrorism.⁵⁷ However, they did so against the continuing backdrop of a political context in which Muslim 'lack of integration' was seen as driving a generational problem of jihadist violence.

3.2.2. *Far-Right violence neglected in official security narrative*

The counter-radicalisation initiatives introduced from 2004 were at first focused entirely on Muslim communities. In parliament, a White Paper discussing the policy had been questioned because of its failure to address other forms of extremism. However, in implementing the policy, at least initially, there was often insufficient interest in seeing the far-Right as a problem. For example, Rotterdam city council did not initially believe it had a problem of right-wing extremism, even though it is known to be home to a strong far-Right movement.⁵⁸ Other municipal authorities informed ministries that the far-Right was, in fact, the only problem of extremism in their area. But civil servants reportedly believed that the professionals working on counter-radicalisation, being predominantly white, would find it straightforward to identify 'warning signs' of right-wing extremism, as they would have a sense of what is 'normal' and what is not for white young people, whereas they would find it hard to distinguish mainstream Islamic theology from the radical fringe. For these reasons, they felt there was no need to introduce specific training programmes to tackle far-Right ideology.⁵⁹ However, the assumption that far-Right extremism is familiar enough for most people to identify and challenge becomes less plausible in a situation where mainstream political leaders and perpetrators of far-Right violence share much of the same counter-jihadist narrative.

Counter-radicalisation initiatives appear to have focused 90 per cent of their resources on Muslim extremism from 2004 until 2008, when the policies began to lose funding.⁶⁰ Efforts by at least one civil society counter-radicalisation partner to persuade civil servants that the far-Right also needed to be addressed were rebuffed because such concerns did not fit with the prevailing focus on Muslim extremism. According to some observers, there is an additional problem in that, among local police officers and municipal authorities, there is a tendency to downplay the problem of far-Right violence because of a fear of their town acquiring a negative association with right-wing extremism. Instead, far-Right violence is labelled as a 'youth problem' of delinquency and public order, and its political dimension downplayed.⁶¹ For this reason, even where national resources are available for tackling far-Right extremism, municipal authorities are reluctant to make use of them, due to this desire to protect a town's reputation.

Today, the office of the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security has a small programme of work on far-Right extremism but it is marginal to the organisation as a whole, which continues to focus predominantly on Islamist extremism. To the extent that there has been attention directed towards the far-Right, it has largely been couched in terms of the 'lone wolves' model, which emphasises individuals with mental health problems, rather than addressing the wider social and political context. Whereas officials have investigated how jihadist narratives might be publicly countered in various ways, there has been no attempt to pursue counter-narrative initiatives in relation to far-Right violence. In general, the political influence of the *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (PVV) has been an additional barrier to focusing more attention on the question of far-Right violence.

3.2.3. *Counter-jihadist politics in the mainstream*

According to the Dutch intelligence service, the AIVD, there are no more than 300 active followers of 'right-wing extremism and the extreme right' in the Netherlands.⁶² This refers to activists in the classic neo-Nazi and racial

⁵⁷ Interview with counter-terrorism policy-makers, Den Haag, 7 July 2011.

⁵⁸ Jaap van Donselaar and Peter R. Rodrigues, eds, *Racism and Extremism Monitor Eighth Report* (Anne Frank Stichting/Leiden University, 2008), p. 12.

⁵⁹ Interview with counter-terrorism policy-maker, Den Haag, 10 May 2012.

⁶⁰ Interview with counter-radicalisation practitioner, Netherlands, 9 May 2012.

⁶¹ Interviews with counter-radicalisation practitioners, Netherlands, 4 April 2012, 1 May 2012, 9 May 2012.

⁶² General Intelligence and Security Service, *Right-wing Extremism and the Extreme Right in the Netherlands* (March 2011), p. 11.

supremacy tradition. The emergence of informal counter-jihadist networks has begun to attract some limited official attention following the Oslo-Utøya attacks in July 2011 but is considered largely a matter of ‘keyboard activism’ at present. A recent attempt to establish a Dutch Defence League on the model of the EDL did not succeed, and it folded within a year. There was little enthusiasm among Dutch right-wingers to attend the Aarhus counter-jihadist meeting in March 2012. While a civil war narrative is circulated online, officials say there is no evidence of individuals acquiring weapons in anticipation, as has happened in other countries. However, unlike in Britain, a counter-jihadist narrative is strongly articulated in the mainstream political process by the PVV.

Prior to the emergence of the new ‘radical right’ of Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders’ PVV, the most successful far-Right parties came from the ‘Centre movement’ of the 1990s, which included the *Centrum Democraten* (CD, Central Democrats), *Centrum Partij* (Central Party), CP’86, *Nationale Alliantie* (National Alliance), *Nieuwe Nationale Partij* (New National Party) and *Nieuw Rechts* (New Right). The CD won a seat in parliament in 1989 and achieved 2.5% of the national vote in 1994, including 12% of the vote in Rotterdam. However, it was plagued by internal rifts and fell foul of Dutch laws on the incitement of discrimination.⁶³ In 1993, five leaders of the breakaway CP’86 were arrested for conducting a campaign of racist violence in the name of the ‘Nijmegen Liberation Front’.⁶⁴

As analyst Rob Witte has argued, many of the issues these classic far-Right groups pioneered – such as asylum-seeking, immigration and cultural integration – became increasingly prominent in mainstream political and public discourse during the 1990s, often using similar terminology and arguments.⁶⁵ By the turn of the millennium, the classic far-Right parties, such as the Centre Democrats, had dropped out of the picture for the most part and new political parties such as the *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF, Pim Fortuyn List), and later the PVV, were able to pick up the themes they had focused on. Like the classic far-Right parties, these parties argued that elite ‘multiculturalism’ had allowed ‘immigrants’, particularly Muslims, to undermine Dutch identity. With Wilders, a fully counter-jihadist narrative emerged that viewed Islam as a totalitarian ideology intent on introducing sharia law through violence and subversion. However, the new parties did not emerge from the existing far-Right milieu, and differed in how they defined Dutch identity, which they described in terms of cultural values of freedom of expression, secularism and gender equality, rather than in terms of race. Because this new counter-jihadism did not fit the usual image of neo-Nazism, it was able to normalise an Islamophobic, identitarian discourse within the mainstream political process.⁶⁶ The older far-Right vote was largely swallowed up by the new parties, which nevertheless took care to ensure that neo-Nazis and old-fashioned racists were excluded from active participation. Wilders’ strong support for the Israeli right-wing helped to demarcate a clear distinction between himself and the far-Right tradition; since the end of the Second World War, anti-Semitism had been considered the key test in the Netherlands of whether far-Right politics had crossed the line into public unacceptability.

By 2010, the normalisation of the new far-Right was completed with the establishment of a government that depended on the support of the PVV for a parliamentary majority. Though not a member of the cabinet, Wilders was able to strongly influence policy on security, integration, migration and asylum. In this new climate, attempts to label the PVV a far-Right party became increasingly difficult in the public sphere. An annual academic speech due to be given by the historian Thomas von der Dunk was cancelled when it emerged that he intended to draw an analogy between the PVV and pre-war pro-Nazi parties in the Netherlands. Similarly, the punk band *Jos en de Tosti’s*, scheduled to play at the annual festival commemorating Dutch liberation from Nazi occupation, was reportedly asked not to perform its song ‘*Mussolini van de Lage Landen*’, which placed Wilders within the history of fascism. Rob Witte notes that these attempts to silence critical voices came from ‘members of established political elites, uncomfortable with outspoken criticism of the extremist elements’.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, with stunts such

⁶³ Marcel Lubbers, *Exclusionistic Electorates: extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe* (Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 2001), pp. 16–17, 185.

⁶⁴ Liz Fekete, ‘Centrum Partij ’86 and racial violence’, *European Race Bulletin* (March 1994).

⁶⁵ Rob Witte, ‘The Dutch Far Right: from “classical outsiders” to “modern insiders”’, paper presented at CSTEPV Workshop, 16–17 May 2011.

⁶⁶ Tjitske Akkerman, ‘Anti-immigration parties and the defence of liberal values: the exceptional case of the List Pim Fortuyn’, *Journal of Political Ideologies* (Vol. 10, no. 3, 2005).

⁶⁷ Rob Witte, ‘The Dutch Far Right: from “classical outsiders” to “modern insiders”’, paper presented at CSTEPV Workshop, 16–17 May 2011.

as his call for banning the Quran and his video *Fitna*, Wilders became an international icon of the counter-jihadist movement. He declared himself an admirer of Ba'et Yor's 'Eurabia' conspiracy theory and received support from Islamophobic movements in Europe, Israel and the US. According to Dutch newspaper reports, Wilders receives substantial funding from the US-based David Horowitz Freedom Center, which, with an annual budget of around \$5million, is a major financier of the counter-jihadist movement, including websites such as Robert Spencer's *Jihad Watch*.⁶⁸

In the short-term, it appears that the success of the PVV in mainstream Dutch politics has stolen the thunder of the street-based far-Right movements. Immigration and identity are now central debates within the democratic process. But mainstream acceptability also brings with it greater dangers. Margaret Thatcher's incorporation of National Front rhetoric into her 1979 general election campaign rendered the NF irrelevant in British politics, reversing its rise in popularity over the previous decade. But by opening political space for the NF's narrative within her party, she also helped contribute to the social acceptance of cultural racism.

In the Netherlands, the costs of Wilders' presence at the centre of Dutch politics may prove similarly damaging. Some observers express concern that young Muslims are withdrawing from political engagement after Wilders' success, leading to a generation of Dutch Muslim citizens who are alienated from public life, constantly talked about but never talking back. A 2010 survey of young Muslims in Amsterdam found that the 'increasing anti-Islam climate' and 'public insults' associated with Wilders 'have led to fear, frustration and anger'; almost all of the participants had 'at some point in their lives experienced feelings of injustice, stigmatization and discrimination'.⁶⁹ In general, there is a lack of Dutch Muslim voices in the public sphere able to articulate the community's experiences and advocate on its behalf.

At the same time, the problem of racist and Islamophobic harassment and violence continues.⁷⁰ The sociologist Ineke van der Valk documented 117 attacks on Dutch mosques from 2005 to 2010.⁷¹ Halim el Madkouri, a programme director of Forum, the Institute for Multicultural Affairs, estimates the actual number to be much higher – perhaps five attacks on mosques each month in the Netherlands – and says verbal abuse against women wearing headscarves is common, particularly in smaller towns. He is clear that Islamophobic violence is fuelled by the rhetoric of mainstream politicians: 'I have never seen Islam on the street – I see only Muslims. So if you say you want to get Islam out of Europe, it means getting rid of Muslims.' Media and public interest in the victims of such violence is minimal and, in the absence of an official response, el Madkouri notes, young people experiencing it have taken to defending themselves. Because of a fear of publicity, these conflicts are classified by authorities as generic 'youth problems' and their racial dimension ignored.

The official security narrative in the Netherlands has had a high degree of performativity: like in the UK, the problem of terrorism has been presented as a major generational crisis, rooted in a wide-ranging problem of identity, and as needing to be fought by mobilising whole sections of society and dispensing with existing social conventions of tolerance. The salience of this 'story-line' in policy-making discourse has been sustained both by the PVV and other political parties that have absorbed a values-identity narrative. One consequence has been counter-terrorism policy neglecting the threat of far-Right violence, which does not 'fit' the official narrative. There have been some positive signs of change following the Breivik case in Norway and the decreased direct influence of Wilders after the collapse of the coalition government in April 2012. For example, in its latest annual report, the AIVD has added a category of 'anti-Islam(ism)' in its section on 'radicalism and extremism'.⁷² However, it remains to be seen whether the ways in which counter-terrorism is understood in the Netherlands are amenable to substantial change.

⁶⁸ Tom-Jan Meeus, 'Grote geld voor Wilders ligt in VS', *NRC Handelsblad* (25 January 2012).

⁶⁹ Mare Stijntje Visser, 'Consequences of the PVV: an immigrant perspective', *Re-public: reimagining democracy* (16 January 2012), <http://www.re-public.gr/en/?p=5194>.

⁷⁰ Rob Witte, *Racist Violence in the Netherlands* (European Network Against Racism, 2011).

⁷¹ 'Ruim 100 geweldsincidenten bij moskeeën', *De Telegraaf* (30 December 2011).

⁷² Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, *Jaarverslag 2011* (April 2012), p. 17.

3.3. Denmark

3.3.1. Official values-identity narrative strongly asserted and partially reflected in counter-terrorism policy

Since the 1980s, Danish politics has been progressively transformed by far-Right anti-immigrant and Islamophobic movements, which have constructed a narrative of Danish liberal identity threatened by Muslim immigrants seen as bringing an incompatible set of cultural values.⁷³ Beginning with the formation of the *Den Danske Forening* (DDF, The Danish Society) anti-refugee protest group in 1986, led by the priest Søren Krarup, through to the 2001 election, in which the far-Right *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF, Danish People's Party) became the key partner of the Liberal-Conservative governing coalition (an arrangement that lasted until 2011), a values-identity narrative has been fully normalised in Danish public culture. From the 2001 election, the DF placed culture and values at the centre of its programme, arguing that Denmark had been betrayed by a political elite that had favoured multiculturalism and immigration, threatening the very substance of Danish identity by importing a Muslim culture that was incompatible with European modernity. As analyst Susi Meret notes:

‘After 9/11, the Danish People's Party clearly radicalized its rhetoric against Islam. The difference between Islam and Islamism (radical Islam) at times disappeared from the party political discourses and Islam was more and more often directly associated with a totalitarian and violent ideology, whose destructive effects were seriously jeopardising Western democratic principles and values from within.’⁷⁴

By 2007, Krarup, by then a DF member of the Danish parliament, was advancing the counter-jihadist notion of Islam as a form of totalitarianism: ‘The (Muslim) veil is a totalitarian symbol that can be compared to the symbols we know from the Nazi swastika and from communism.’⁷⁵ However, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the then Liberal Party prime minister, was also advocating a values-identity narrative in a slightly different form, claiming in 2005 ‘an aggressive practice of Islam as the greatest challenge to the cohesive force in Danish society’.⁷⁶ He had earlier spoken of the need to launch a ‘cultural war of values’ to transform Danish society in a neoconservative direction, a project for which influential allies existed in the print media.⁷⁷ Brian Mikkelsen, the Conservative Party minister of cultural affairs, already announced a crisis of multiculturalism in 2005: ‘We have gone to war against the multicultural ideology that says that everything is equally valid.’⁷⁸ He added: ‘In Denmark, we have seen the appearance of a parallel society in which minorities practise their own medieval values and undemocratic views. This is the new front in our cultural war.’⁷⁹ Analyst Peter Hervik notes that the process of other parties absorbing narratives from the far-Right had already begun in the 1990s with social democrats adopting the rhetoric of the DF's predecessor, the Progress Party, in order to retain voters or capture new support.

From 2001 to 2011, the DF was able to directly influence policy-making, particularly on matters of integration and immigration, as the government was dependent on its consent to secure a working majority. For example, following the election, a new Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration was established and tighter restrictions on immigration policy were brought in, especially with regard to family union. Reflecting the DF's identitarian politics, new ‘integration contracts’ for permanent residents were introduced, requiring would-be immigrants to declare their allegiance to ‘Danish values’ of self-sufficiency, gender equality, freedom of

⁷³ Karen Wren, ‘Cultural racism: something rotten in the state of Denmark?’, *Social & Cultural Geography* (Vol. 2, no. 2, 2001).

⁷⁴ Susi Meret, *The Danish People's Party, the Italian Northern League and the Austrian Freedom Party in a Comparative Perspective: party ideology and electoral support* (Aalborg University, SPIRIT PhD Series Thesis no. 25, 2009), p. 127.

⁷⁵ ‘Outrage in Denmark after MP compares Muslim veil to swastika’, *Agence France Presse* (19 April 2007).

⁷⁶ Quoted in Ferruh Yilmaz, *Ethnicized Ontologies: from foreign worker to Muslim immigrant: how Danish public discourse moved to the Right through the question of immigration* (University of California, San Diego, PhD Thesis, 2006), p. 194.

⁷⁷ Peter Hervik, ‘Ending tolerance as a solution to incompatibility: the Danish “crisis of multiculturalism”’, *European Journal of Cultural Studies* (Vo. 15, no. 2, 2012), p. 218.

⁷⁸ Stefan Theil, ‘The end of tolerance: farewell, multiculturalism: a cartoon backlash is pushing Europe to insist upon its values’, *Newsweek* (6 March 2006).

⁷⁹ Martin Burcharth, ‘Capture the flag’, *New York Times* (12 February 2006).

speech, and so on. The Danish Centre for Human Rights, the Board for Ethnic Equality and the Documentation Centre on Racial Discrimination were all closed by the government.⁸⁰

While integration policy is highly performative in Denmark and completely dominated by a values-identity narrative, the picture with counter-terrorism policy is more complex. In ministerial speeches on terrorism, a familiar values-based story-line has often been articulated. For example, Prime Minister Rasmussen spoke in 2006 of terrorism being an aspect of 'a global value struggle' between 'sensible enlightenment and fundamentalist darkening'. This 'global value struggle takes place in Denmark too' where:

'fortunately ... the great majority of Danes with an immigrant background ... are contributing positively to the Danish society. But there are also a few extremists who seem to hate the society which has secured their political freedom and material safety. ... We must demand respect for the very fundamental rules of the game in Danish society ... We must not, out of naïve and happy-go-lucky tolerance, show understanding towards or facilitate religious fanaticism or political extremism.'⁸¹

Here we have the usual narrative with protagonists of 'us', 'moderate Muslims' and 'extremist Muslims' defined in terms of allegiance to 'our values', the explanation of terrorism as a problem of 'fanaticism' or 'extremism', and the danger of excessive 'tolerance' allowing extremism to advance. Earlier Rasmussen had stated that an 'active integration policy at home' was a part of the counter-terrorism strategy, underlining the perceived linkage between rejection of Danish values and terrorism.⁸² Unsurprisingly, where this values-identity narrative has been in the foreground, the question of far-Right violence has not arisen. For example, the Danish government's 2011 report on counter-terrorism only names one form of terrorist threat, that from 'networks, groups and individuals that subscribe to a militant Islamist ideology', and none of the initiatives it mentions under its 2009 action plan to 'prevent radicalisation' are explicitly directed at the far-Right.⁸³ (Interestingly, the majority of terrorism prosecutions in Denmark listed in the report relate to groups that are neither Islamist nor far-Right, but Leftist national liberation movements, but this is not reflected in the report's overall narrative.⁸⁴)

However, in practice, Danish counter-radicalisation policies have not focused solely on Muslims and the language of values has been less prevalent in policy-making discourse than in the Netherlands or Britain. Counter-radicalisation policy literature written for local partners and practitioners rather than for a political audience is fairly rigorous in giving equal weight to different forms of extremism, focusing on left-wing, right-wing and 'Islamist' extremisms. Civil servants note that the particular focus will vary by location. The emphasis is less on cultural values and integration, and more on personal relationships, belonging and participation.⁸⁵ Until the new government of 2011, the DF had 'quite a heavy voice in policy-making', as one civil servant put it, and there was strong pressure to focus policies more on 'Islamists' and to link the issue of terrorism to the wider issue of the perceived failed integration of Muslim communities.⁸⁶ But this seems to have been partially resisted. Analyst Ulrik Pram Gad suggests that Danish counter-radicalisation policy has tried to position itself as a third way between a parliamentary opposition that favours 'self-reform' of Muslims and the DF, which does not believe Muslims even capable of reform. The resulting strategy has been to promote reform of Muslim values through engaging in a process of 'two-way dialogue'. Although this 'dialogue' has strict limits, it opens a space for a values-identity narrative to be partially challenged, even if it remains the basic framework within which the policy is conceived.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Peter Hervik, 'Ending tolerance as a solution to incompatibility: the Danish "crisis of multiculturalism"', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* (Vo. 15, no. 2, 2012), p. 216–7.

⁸¹ Quoted in Ulrik Pram Gad, 'It takes two to tango: Danish concepts of dialogue as counterterrorism' (Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt, Working Paper 747, 2008), p. 5.

⁸² Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸³ *Government Report on Counter-Terrorism Efforts* (Danish Government, May 2011), p. 4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸⁵ *A Common and Safe Future: an action plan to prevent extremist views and radicalisation among young people* (Government of Denmark, January 2009); *Preventing Extremism: a Danish handbook series* (Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration, 2011).

⁸⁶ Interview with counter-terrorism policy-maker, Copenhagen, 10 May 2012.

⁸⁷ Ulrik Pram Gad, 'It takes two to tango: Danish concepts of dialogue as counterterrorism' (Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt, Working Paper 747, 2008), p. 19.

3.3.2. *Counter-jihadist politics in the mainstream and on the streets*

Under the new government which is no longer dependent on the DF, and in the aftermath of the Breivik case in Norway, civil servants say it has become easier to focus attention on the far-Right. They believe the old neo-Nazi networks have become marginal in the far-Right milieu and are finding it difficult to recruit new members. Counter-jihadist groups, on the other hand, are thriving, although there appears to be a high turnaround of supporters. The Danish Defence League, modelled on the EDL and based in Aarhus, is growing and was able to host the attempt to launch a European Defence League there in March 2012. With a similar politics, Stop the Islamisation of Denmark has organised several demonstrations in Denmark against 'Islamism' and against mosques. Its founder, Anders Gravers, is also leader of the Stop the Islamisation of Europe organisation which seeks to co-ordinate similar efforts across Europe.

The *Vederfølner*, an anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim group of around 200 to 300 members, has also gained ground and is strong in Aarhus. It includes ex-members of White Pride, a neo-Nazi group linked to football supporters. The newly formed *Danskernes Parti* (Danes' Party) also includes former members of neo-Nazi parties and focuses on Islam. The narrative of these street-based far-Right groups appears to be a more radical form of the counter-jihadist narrative of the DF. It is unclear whether the presence of counter-jihadist politics in the mainstream of the political process for at least the last ten years has helped these groups to legitimise themselves to wider audiences, or whether the success of the DF has dragged support away. It is possible that, with the DF no longer playing a supporting role in government, the attraction of the street-based far-Right will increase.

Denmark has also been an intellectual centre for the international counter-jihadist movement. A key organisation has been the Danish Free Press Society, founded by Lars Hedegaard, which has strong links with the DF, with US neoconservatives and with Geert Wilders. First established in 2005, it has since branched out to other countries under the name of the International Free Press Society since 2009. Its aim is to informally influence public debate, in order to entrench a counter-jihadist narrative, using its connections with leading politicians and journalists. Its board of advisors includes conspiracy theorist Bat Ye'or, Belgian counter-jihadist blogger Paul Beliën, US-based 'sharia' conspiracy theorists Frank Gaffney, Daniel Pipes, Robert Spencer, Allen West and Mark Steyn, and leader of the Dutch PVV, Geert Wilders.

Denmark's integration narrative has involved a high degree of social drama, polarisation and calls for existing 'multicultural' conventions to be swept aside. This trend has, to some extent, carried over to counter-terrorism policy, although there have been counter-currents which have sought to de-link questions of identity and values from counter-terrorism, and recognise a range of different extremisms. However, these counter-currents have run up against the wider prominence of the values-identity narrative in Danish politics, promoted not only by the DF but by other mainstream parties and prominent journalists connected to counter-jihadist networks. With the values-identity narrative dominating Danish public culture, it seems unlikely that the ways in which counter-terrorism is understood will be substantially changed. The prospect of a growing street-based far-Right milieu, fuelled by over a decade of anti-Islam, anti-immigrant rhetoric, is a potential danger for the future, especially if the DF begins to lose electoral support.

3.4. Belgium

3.4.1. *Official values-identity narrative asserted and partially reflected in counter-terrorism policy*

Like the other European countries considered in this paper, a values-identity narrative of Muslim 'failed integration' has pervaded the Belgian public sphere for at least a decade. From the late 1990s, a policy of *inburgering* (making citizens) came to be premised on the idea that immigrants and their descendants, irrespective of their actual citizenship status, needed to undergo a cultural transformation to acquire support for

European values of gender equality, freedom of expression and secularism.⁸⁸ The debates in the Netherlands and France on 'integration' had a strong influence in Belgium, too, which, at around the same time as France, introduced a ban on women wearing the niqab in public. Analyst Sami Zemni notes that, over the last decade:

'[T]he idea of a failure of integration – presumably caused by Islam's rejection of, or resistance to, modernity – emerged. The idea of a failure of integration and multiculturalism is now widespread across the political spectrum and is popular with opinion leaders and other intellectuals. ... The proponents of this thesis share the conviction that the root causes of specific societal problems are to be found in the cultural permissiveness and naive cultural relativism that lay at the heart of Belgium's multicultural policy and that this is what made Islam thrive.'⁸⁹

Belgium has developed a number of initiatives to respond to the security implications of this perceived failure of integration. A recurring pattern has been a government search for 'moderate Muslims' who could partner with the state to counter extremism while, at the same time, acting to undermine the possibility of such partners emerging. The Belgian case illustrates the tendency of policies based on a values-identity narrative to both call for 'moderate Muslim' partners, defined by their embrace of European values, while also paradoxically casting suspicion on whether those partners actually subscribe to these values.

Uniquely among western European nations, Belgium has sought to foster the creation of a national representative body of Muslims, with officially administered elections to decide its leaders. This Belgian Muslims' Executive (EMB) was to become the key partner organisation for the Belgian state in its efforts to integrate Muslims and prevent extremism. However, the partnership was not entirely equal. In 2004, Justice Minister Laurette Onkelinx demanded fresh elections to the EMB because of concerns that elected leaders were 'extremists' who did not embrace European values, and a system of vetting of candidates by state security was initiated.

The emergence in Antwerp of a genuinely popular youth movement, the Arab European League (AEL), prompted similar concerns. Led by its charismatic leader Dyab Abu Jahjah, the AEL advocated a proud pan-Arab and Islamic identity inspired by Malcolm X rather than the Islamist tradition. Following the racist murder of a teacher, the AEL established local self-defence patrols. The authorities responded by attempting to criminalise the movement, accusing its leaders of links to Hizbullah and of inciting street violence. It took five years before they were acquitted, after which a demoralised Abu Jahjah decided to leave Belgium for Lebanon. During this time, newspaper articles published a series of false claims that he was involved in money laundering and child pornography, and AEL leaders' bank accounts were frozen. A movement that was able to articulate the political demands of a marginalised section of Belgian society, and present its own version of 'integration', was broken. As Sami Zemni notes: 'What should have been seen as a good example of integration, a well-organised group democratically demanding members' rights within a participatory public sphere, was thus criminalised and depicted as proof of the failure of integration.'⁹⁰ Some observers argue that the criminalisation of the AEL left a vacuum that has now been filled by radical Salafi groups such as 'Sharia4Belgium', modelled on Britain's al-Muhajiroun and its successor networks.

More recently, the Belgian government has developed 'a comprehensive anti-radicalisation plan' which, as in the other countries examined in this paper, seeks to establish partnerships between municipal authorities, local police, social workers, schools and 'moderate Muslims' to combat different forms of extremism. According to Rik Coolsaet and Tanguy Struye de Swielande:

'Belgian authorities have gone to great lengths to make clear that Islam is not being targeted, but instead extremist and terrorist acts of whatever origin or justification. The plan concentrates on

⁸⁸ Sami Zemni, 'The shaping of Islam and Islamophobia in Belgium', *Race & Class* (Vol. 53, no. 1, 2011), p. 31.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 37–8.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

the surveillance of violent, racist, xenophobic and anti-Semite messages, conveyed through the internet, radio, television programmes, imams, cultural centres, propaganda and groups.⁹¹

Alongside, the Belgian federal police has developed a training programme for police officers that aims to help them recognise signs of radicalisation ‘signals’, whether it be in the form of ‘Islamist’, right-wing, left-wing or animal rights extremism. This Community Policing and Prevention of Radicalisation (COPPRA) programme began as a Belgian initiative before becoming an EU-wide project. These initiatives seem to recognise an equal threat of far-right violence and appear to avoid explicitly narrating their efforts in terms of values and identity, although such conceptions are implicit in the wider political context from which they emerge.

Since 2009, concerns about Salafism have been prominent in the way that the chief of state security, Alain Winants, has narrated counter-terrorism. In September 2009, an Imam from Antwerp, Nordin Taouil, made a statement defending the right of women to wear a veil: ‘If you ban the veil then we have no other choice but to open up our own schools.’ The statement quickly provoked a public controversy. Interviewed by a television journalist, Winants commented that: ‘Monsieur Taouil is an extremist Muslim and a dangerous man.’ The journalist responded by asking: ‘Is Monsiour Taouil accused of something?’ To which Winants replied: ‘No, but I can tell you that he is a Salafist, he is an extremist Muslim and a dangerous man.’ Taouil’s wife lost her accreditation to run a nursery school soon afterwards. Four years earlier, he had failed the security vetting to be a candidate for the EMB, due to his allegedly ‘extreme’ views.⁹²

In 2011, Winants gave another interview in which he stated:

‘I believe that political Salafism is something that, in the long run, is a greater danger than Salafism of the terrorist tendency. Its destabilising effects are being felt now: women are being spat on because they do not wear the veil in public; a teacher is kicked by a 10-year-old child because she gives a lesson on the theory of evolution and the parents take the child’s side; traders are threatened because they sell alcohol [...] In some quarters or districts, a completely separate life is led, with schools, a banking system, weddings, shops, separate media [...] Moreover, this extremism can beget another.’⁹³

These comments suggest an alternative conception of security that helpfully pays attention to the need to protect citizens from the low-level harassment of community agitators. But they also frame these concerns within the familiar narrative of failed integration. Moreover, efforts to tackle these kinds of security issues are hampered by viewing autonomous community initiatives such as the AEL, not as potential partners in a process of political empowerment but as ‘extremist’ threats, because they do not ‘fit’ the official security narrative.

3.4.2. Counter-jihadist politics in the mainstream

Far-Right politics in Belgium has been dominated by the *Front National* in the French-speaking region and by the more successful *Vlaams Blok* (Flemish Block) and its successor, the *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest, VB), in Flanders. The neo-fascist *Vlaams Blok* was opposed to the Belgium state and favoured the creation of an independent Flanders with Brussels as its capital, eventually to include the Netherlands and South Flanders (a small area of northwest France). From the later 1980s, its programme focused on immigration, with the slogan ‘*Eigen volk eerst*’ (‘Our own people first’). In November 1991, on what came to be known as ‘black Sunday’, the *Vlaams Blok* achieved an electoral breakthrough, securing 6.6% of the vote (10.7% of the Flemish vote). By 1999,

⁹¹ Rik Coolsaet and Tanguy Struye de Swielande, *Belgium and Counterterrorism Policy In The Jihadi Era, 1986–2007* (Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations, 2007), p. 22.

⁹² *Islamophobia, Human Rights and the Anti-Terrorist Laws*, (Institute of Race Relations, 2011), p. 10; ‘Schade-eis van imam Taouil tegen Staatsveiligheid afgewezen’, *Gazet van Antwerpen* (7 October 2011).

⁹³ Marie-Cécile Royen, ‘Alain Winants « Le salafisme politique est plus grave qu’un attentat »’, *Le Vif-L’Express* (8 April 2011). Author’s translation.

the party was achieving 15% of the Flemish vote and had become the largest party in Antwerp, winning 33% of the vote there in the 2000 municipal elections.⁹⁴

Unlike in the other countries considered here, the mainstream political parties in Belgium responded to the rise of the *Vlaams Blok* by declaring a *cordon sanitaire* around the party, refusing to enter into coalitions with it at either the municipal or national level. The strategy has remained in place since it was launched in the 1990s and, though it has been criticised as ‘anti-democratic’, there is good reason to believe it has been important in blocking the advance of the far-Right. In 2004, anti-racist groups successfully used racial discrimination laws to prevent not-for-profit foundations from funding the *Vlaams Blok*, which effectively rendered it ineffective. The party then had to reconstitute itself with new supporting foundations and give itself a new name – the *Vlaams Belang*.

The VB’s leader, Filip Dewinter, has sought to circumvent accusations that his party is fascist and racist by reinventing it as a counter-jihadist movement focused on Islam. By building links with the Israeli Right, he has even succeeded in gaining the support of a minority of Antwerp’s Jewish voters, despite the party’s roots in anti-Semitism and neo-Nazism: in 1988, Dewinter paid his respects to the tens of thousands of Nazi soldiers buried in Belgium and, in 2001, he opened a speech with an oath used by the SS.⁹⁵ There continue to be old-style racists and anti-Semites among VB activists. But counter-jihadism has substituted for anti-Semitism as the chief mobilising message and Dewinter makes visits to Israel to meet right-wing members of the Knesset. In 2005, he told the Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz*:

‘Islam is now the No. 1 enemy not only of Europe, but of the entire free world. After communism, the greatest threat to the West is radical fundamentalist Islam. There are already 25–30 million Muslims on Europe’s soil and this becomes a threat. It’s a real Trojan horse. Thus, I think that an alliance is needed between Western Europe and the State of Israel. I think we in Western Europe are too critical of Israel and we should support Israel in its struggle to survive. I think we should support Israel more than we do because its struggle is also very important for us.’⁹⁶

While the *cordon sanitaire* has offered some resistance to the promotion of this new far-Right narrative, it nevertheless overlaps with much mainstream discourse. Belgian social democrats and liberals tend not to mount a definitive riposte to such views, and Islamophobic rhetoric can be found even in quality newspapers. For example, Wim van Rooy, author of the bestseller *The Malaise of Multiculturalism*, wrote in an op-ed article for *De Standaard* that: ‘Muslims are people like non-Muslims, but they are conditioned to hostility towards non-Muslims by the ideology that Mohammed captures in the Qu’ran.’⁹⁷

Faced with recent competition from the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* (New Flemish Alliance) party, which is picking up its Flemish nationalist agenda, while softening its outright racism, the VB has become more militant and provocative in its Islamophobia. A recent campaign featured Dewinter’s 19-year-old daughter, An-Sofie, posing in a niqab and bikini. The poster for her father’s ‘Women against Islamisation’ campaign urged women to choose between freedom and Islam, and appeared on billboards on the streets of Antwerp.

Within the ranks of the VB, there remains a more militant strand, the *Vlaamse Militanten Order* (Flemish Militant Order). Though officially illegal, it is said to still function with a small number of members who appear on VB demonstrations.⁹⁸ In 1993, the group sent a letter to various newspapers, warning that they plan to take unspecified action against their opponents. Following a police raid on a fascist cafe in Antwerp, left-wing centres were attacked by the far-Right.

Belgium is also home to a leading outlet of counter-jihadist online propaganda, *The Brussels Journal*, edited by Paul Beliën, the husband of a leading figure in the VB. Breivik’s manifesto took its title from an article by

⁹⁴ Marcel Lubbers, *Exclusionistic Electorates: extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe* (Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 2001), p. 14.

⁹⁵ Adar Primor, ‘The unholy alliance between Israel’s Right and Europe’s anti-Semites’, *Ha’aretz* (12 December 2010).

⁹⁶ Adi Schwartz, ‘Between Haider and a hard place’, *Ha’aretz* (28 August 2005).

⁹⁷ Wim Van Rooy, ‘Islamofobie en waar ze vandaan komt’, *De Standaard* (29 January 2009).

⁹⁸ Interview with analyst of far-Right, Belgium, 23 April 2012.

'Fjordman' published on this website, which defined 'multiculturalists' as traitors to Europe and called for 'resistance'.⁹⁹ Beliën is a Catholic conservative with strong links to counter-jihadist movements in the US, the Netherlands and Scandinavia. In 2006, he wrote an op-ed article for *De Standaard*, entitled 'Give us arms', in which he wrote that: 'Muslims are predators who have learned from childhood ... during the yearly feast of the sacrifice ... how to slaughter warm herd animals.'¹⁰⁰ The article was a response to the robbery and murder of a young schoolboy, Joe van Holsbeek, in Brussels, initially thought to have been carried out by North Africans. It was later discovered that the perpetrators were in fact Polish.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The foregoing has demonstrated that, to varying degrees, Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium have narrated their counter-terrorism efforts according to a framework of values, identity, Muslim generational crisis and high social drama. In each case, security has been largely understood through a lens in which 'Islamist' terrorism is the primary threat, its cause has been taken to be a culture of extremism within Muslim communities, facilitated by multicultural policies that have undermined European values; in response, a stronger assertion of liberal values against extremism has been called for, brushing aside what are perceived to be conventions of political correctness and naïve tolerance of cultural difference.

The communication of this narrative of the 'Islamist' terrorist threat has had two consequences. First, security practitioners have tended to neglect the danger of far-Right violence, failing to take the threat seriously in their analyses and not allocating sufficient resources to countering it. While the jihadist threat is seen as 'strategic', the far-Right threat is regarded more as a public order problem, a problem of 'lone wolves' or disturbed individuals; governments have thus absolved themselves of a broader reflection on the social and political contexts from which far-Right violence draws its sustenance. Whereas the murder of Theo Van Gogh, for example, was taken to be symbolic of a wider problem with young Dutch Muslims, murders carried out by the far-Right have been seen as one-offs that are not indicative of social issues.

With the Breivik case and groups like the EDL, we see a trend of groups and individuals who have appropriated the official narrative of the 'war on terror' and chosen to open a domestic 'front' against fellow citizens. With the prevalence of a similar values-identity narrative in its thinking, the counter-terrorism system has provided the far-Right with an enabling environment and is itself in danger of becoming an unintentional ally of the new counter-jihadist movements.¹⁰¹ The proximity of these new far-Right narratives to official security discourse means they occupy a blind spot in the vision of the counter-terrorism system. While the propaganda of classic neo-Nazi groups is easily condemned by everyone, the emergence of the counter-jihadist far-Right, overlapping with mainstream politics of all shades, is in general publicly accepted.

In the following, a series of recommendations are made to address these problems. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the wider social causes of far-Right violence; as such, the recommendations presented here are principally focused on reconceptualising security threats and how they are communicated by politicians and officials.

4.1. A new approach to assessing security threats

It is time to engage in a process of rethinking security from an objective and neutral standpoint. The cursory survey of deaths resulting from far-Right violence since 1990, presented in Annex 1, suggests that, in Europe as a

⁹⁹ Fjordman, 'Native revolt: a European declaration of independence', *The Brussels Journal* (16 March 2007), <http://www.brusselsjournal.com/node/1980>.

¹⁰⁰ Sami Zemni, 'The shaping of Islam and Islamophobia in Belgium', *Race & Class* (Vol. 53, no. 1, 2011), p. 38.

¹⁰¹ Luk Vervaet, *Le Making-Of D'Anders B. Breivik: Oslo-Utøya 2011: islamofobie et sionisme, les nouvelles guerres de l'extrême droite* (Egalité Editions, 2012).

whole, there is no reason to elevate the harm of jihadist violence beyond that of far-Right violence – both have taken about the same number of lives in Europe.¹⁰²

What reasons might be given for conceptualising jihadist violence to be a fundamentally different order of threat from the far-Right, despite involving a similar level of murderous violence? It may be that the threat of jihadism is considered more serious, because it overlaps with strategic military interests overseas – for example, British troops combating the Taliban in Afghanistan. The problem with this is that the stated reason British troops are in Afghanistan is to reduce the threat of terrorism in the UK, so the argument is circular. Alternatively, it might be argued that the 9/11 attacks, though they did not occur in Europe, nevertheless demonstrated the willingness of jihadists to carry out violent attacks against civilians in Western cities on a much larger scale than the far-Right. However, while this argument might have been plausible ten years ago, the tactical differences between al-Qaeda and the far-Right have since diminished, as the Breivik case demonstrates, and especially as jihadists have focused more recently on low-level targets. Finally, it could be held that jihadist terrorism warrants a higher priority because it is an international problem, whereas the far-Right is solely a domestic matter. Yet the far-Right thrives through multiple international connections across Europe, the United States and elsewhere.

Even before the Breivik case, terrorism studies scholars Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-Mazer made a similar argument about the need to take the far-Right threat more seriously, specifically in relation to the UK:

‘Arguments we have heard from politicians and public servants involved in Prevent policy that the threat from violent extremist nationalists in the UK is local and lesser when compared to the al-Qaeda threat which is global and greater are not compelling now and likely to become less so during this new decade as it unfolds. In fact, the evidence is already sufficiently clear to conclude that violent extremist nationalists in the UK take inspiration from propaganda that is every bit as global in nature as that which promotes al-Qaeda. More importantly, violent extremist nationalists in the UK have a present capacity to inflict death and destruction on a scale that is broadly comparable to their UK counterparts who are inspired instead by al-Qaeda. Whereas the latter group sometimes have links to al-Qaeda affiliates or franchises in countries in the Middle East, Gulf and South East Asia that may assist them in terrorist training so too can members of the former group sometimes rely on long-standing links to violent extremist nationalists in countries in Europe, Scandinavia and North America.’¹⁰³

Ultimately, the decisive difference between the far-Right and jihadist threats is not the harm they are each capable of inflicting on the people of Europe, or the geographical spread of their activities, but the fact that jihadist movements are using violence to radically oppose the foreign policies of European governments, whereas far-Right groups are using violence to pressure for demographic and cultural changes to European societies. It is for this reason that the former is considered a ‘strategic’ threat whereas the latter is considered a ‘public order’ threat. Yet this distinction is only valid if one holds foreign policies to be more sacrosanct than the rights of minority ethnic citizens. If one takes the preservation of the constitutional democratic order as the baseline for defining security threats, then violence aimed at removing the rights of minorities is at least as serious a threat to the fundamental well-being of European societies as violence aimed at opposing foreign policies. But neither jihadist nor far-Right violence represent strategic threats to the survival of European democracies in their current forms. The dramatic, fear-inducing ‘crisis’ rhetoric of much counter-terrorism discourse of the last ten years has been unwarranted and unhelpful.

A more objective approach to counter-terrorism would move away from the current state-centred agenda, and shift to an approach that calibrates threats on the basis of how politically motivated violence

¹⁰² Of course, this comparison does not take account of a significant number of jihadist terrorist plots that have been intercepted in Europe since 1990.

¹⁰³ Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-Mazer, *Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: UK case studies 2010* (University of Exeter and European Muslim Research Centre, 2010), p. 79.

impinges on the people of Europe in their everyday lives. With such an approach, the concept of social solidarity would be more important than national identity in narrating security, and issues such as organised racist violence or the intimidation of women by community agitators would attract more visibility.

4.2. Recognise racist violence as potentially a form of terrorism

Minority ethnic communities victimised by far-Right violence contend not only with occasional spectacular campaigns of violence directed at them, such as the David Copeland nail-bombing campaign in London in 1999, but also with ongoing low-level harassment which inflicts a different but no less powerful form of terror. There are strong arguments for considering all racially motivated violence as a kind of terrorism; it certainly fits the standard definition of terrorism as violence aimed at instilling fear in a population to advance a political cause (in this case, the preservation of a racially unequal society or the creation of an ethnically homogenous society). Analyst Randy Blazak has written that terrorists and perpetrators of hate crimes work in the same way. They select their targets randomly:

‘to make a political, social, or religious point (workers in the World Trade Centers or black residents in a White neighborhood) and actors (who are often anonymous) violate the law in hopes of advancing some larger goal (removing US military bases from Saudi Arabia or getting black residents to move out of White neighborhoods) and send a larger message of fear to the wider community (of Americans or African-Americans). Cross burnings, gay bashings, and spray-painted swastikas are all designed to send a terroristic message.’¹⁰⁴

Blazak points out that the Ku Klux Klan was the first group recognised as a terrorist organisation by the US federal government (although effective action against the Klan did not occur until relatively recently).

From this perspective, racial violence would appear to be a deep and perennial problem of terrorism in European societies that certainly matches in scale other categories of threat. In fact, the majority of perpetrators of racist violence are not directly affiliated with far-Right groups or networks.

In addition, violence motivated by Islamophobia should be recognised as a form of racism, analogous in many ways to anti-Semitism, and combated forcefully. A first step is the compilation of robust data on racial and Islamophobic violence, if necessary by properly resourced independent monitoring groups, backed up with research on the impact of such violence.

4.3. Recognise the complexity of far-Right ideology

It would be possible for national security practitioners to accept that the threat of far-Right violence is as serious as that of jihadism but nevertheless argue that the same levels of attention and resources are not needed. For example, it could be claimed that, whereas governments need to raise awareness of jihadist ideology in order that civil society can recognise and effectively counter it, no such initiative is required in the case of far-Right violence because European civil society is already familiar with far-Right ideology and actively involved in challenging it, so further intervention from government is unnecessary. Hence, European civil society ‘self-corrects’ for its far-Right movements but does not do the same for jihadism. This appears to have been an argument made in some Dutch counter-radicalisation settings.

But this simplifies far-Right ideology. While many believe that they ‘know racism when they see it’ or that neo-Nazi ideology is straightforward to identify, in fact, organised racism and far-Right politics present at least as many problems of definition and recognition as jihadist ideology. Far-Right politics has not remained static since the post-war period; with the counter-jihadist turn of far-Right ideology, and the significant overlaps of this strand with mainstream views, the problems of definition and recognition have become yet more challenging. For example, Europol’s 2012 *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*, declines to categorise Breivik’s attacks as

¹⁰⁴ Randy Blazak, ‘Isn’t every crime a hate crime?: The case for hate crime laws’, *Sociology Compass* (Vol. 5, no. 4, 2011), p. 248.

'right-wing terrorism', suggesting instead that they were motivated by 'a personal mix of elements from different ideologies'. Europol defines right-wing extremism in terms of neo-Nazism and, presumably for this reason, Breivik does not fall under this category.¹⁰⁵ Yet Breivik is clearly a right-wing terrorist. That the attempt to define Breivik's motivation generates these conflicting official responses indicates there is no consensus on the nature of the far-Right. To believe European civil society conceptually well-equipped to counter far-Right ideology is rather complacent. On the contrary, there is a need for much greater awareness of the complex and changing nature of far-Right movements.

4.4. Embrace a new security narrative

Official security narratives need to be reworked to avoid the performative effects on far-Right movements that have been highlighted in this paper and break the triangle of mutually reinforcing narratives illustrated in figure 3. To achieve this, official narratives that talk of 'war' against 'Islamist extremism', that imply Muslims pass a test of their values before they are considered equal citizens, that see Muslims as presenting a kind of cultural threat to European societies need to be abandoned.

The construction of three 'protagonists' in the prevailing security narrative – 'us', 'moderate Muslims' and 'extremist Muslims' – is unhelpful. Firstly, it positions the 'we' that is leading the fight against terrorism as the non-Muslim majority, while Muslims themselves have to prove they are on the right side by demonstrating they share 'our' liberal values. Secondly, by introducing the concept of national values, it unhelpfully confuses the question of violence with the question of cultural identity.

Counter-terrorism is better narrated by avoiding the distinction between 'moderate' and 'extremist' Islam and instead distinguishing between those who carry out or support acts of violence to advance their cause, and those who do not. The 'we' for this narrative is all those who oppose violence against fellow citizens. The counter to this violence is not an abstract set of 'values' associated with national, European or 'Western' identity but democratic participation and social solidarity. On this view, multiculturalism – as the principle that everyone has the right to full political participation irrespective of their perceived cultural values – is an asset in preventing violence rather than a barrier to be swept aside. An official security narrative on these lines would do a far better job of denying discursive opportunities to the far-Right and minimising the blind spot in Europe's optics of counter-terrorism.

This does not imply that we think of terrorists as 'lone wolves' without enabling environments. On the contrary, it draws attention to the wider conditions in European societies which encourage support for far-Right violence – the demonising rhetoric of the mainstream counter-jihadists who deny Muslims the equal right to shape the societies of which they are a part, the longer legacies of institutional racism in Europe, and the impact of ten years of 'war on terror' rhetoric.

¹⁰⁵ Europol, *TE-SAT 2012: EU terrorism situation and trend report* (2012), pp. 4, 9, 29, 43.

5. Annex – major incidents of far-Right violence in Europe since 1990

In this section, a number of major incidents of far-Right violence or threatened violence in Europe are listed by country.¹⁰⁶ Based on the following cases, it can be provisionally estimated that 249 persons have been killed in Europe as a result of far-Right violence since 1990. For the purposes of this survey, Europe is defined to include the countries that are currently members of the European Economic Area.¹⁰⁷ Cases were included in this count only if all the following conditions were met:

- the incident was reported in a mainstream newspaper or newswire;
- the perpetrator was clearly affiliated with far-Right politics;
- the incident was politically or racially motivated, rather than arising from some other dispute.

The actual number of persons who have died as a result of far-Right violence is likely to be higher than the figure given here, due to reporting that is vague about motive and political affiliation. For example, over this period, there were dozens of Roma victims of racist murders by gangs in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. However, hardly any of these incidents have been included, as newspaper reports tend to describe the perpetrators simply as ‘skinheads’, which, while suggestive of far-Right political views, is insufficient to ascribe a clear affiliation to far-Right networks or groups.

Finally, it should be remembered that the number of persons who have died as a result of racially motivated violence in Europe is higher than the number given here because there are many racist murders carried out by people who are not clearly affiliated to far-Right politics. In Britain, for example, most racist murders are carried out by individuals who are not linked to far-Right groups or networks.

5.1. Austria

In 1993 a letter-bomb campaign was launched, which over the course of four years led to four Roma being killed and a dozen persons injured, including the Social Democrat mayor of Vienna. The perpetrator, Franz Fuchs, was a neo-Nazi who targeted minorities and those supporting them.¹⁰⁸

5.2. Belgium

In Antwerp in May 2006, Belgian far-right activist Hans Van Themsche went on a racist killing spree, first murdering a Malian woman and then the young girl she was looking after, before shooting at a Turkish woman, who was sitting on a nearby bench.¹⁰⁹

5.3. Britain

The neo-Nazi David Copeland carried out a nail-bombing campaign in 1999, targeting African-Caribbean, Asian and gay heartlands in London. He killed 3 people in an attack on the Admiral Duncan pub in Soho and injured more than 100.¹¹⁰

The Institute of Race Relations has documented 109 killings in the UK between 1991 and 2011 with a suspected racial element, although only one of these appears to have been carried out by someone linked to the

¹⁰⁶ The work of Liz Fekete and her colleagues at the Institute of Race Relations’ European Race Audit was an indispensable resource for collating the material in this section.

¹⁰⁷ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Romania and the United Kingdom.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Austrian “Unabomber” convicted of murder commits suicide, police say’, *Agence France Presse* (26 February 2000).

¹⁰⁹ ‘Life for racist murderer of nanny and girl’, *The Times* (12 October 2007).

¹¹⁰ ‘Racist nail bomber found guilty of murders’, *Associated Press* (30 June 2000).

far-Right: in 2000, neo-Nazi Robert Stewart murdered Zahid Mubarek in Feltham Young Offenders Institute, west London, in a racially motivated attack.¹¹¹

As of June 2011, there were seventeen people serving prison sentences for terrorism-related offences who are known to have been associated with far-Right groups.¹¹² These include Terence Gavan, who was jailed in 2010 for assembling 54 explosive devices, including nail bombs, pipe bombs and a booby-trapped cigarette packet, as well as 12 firearms, in preparation for what he considered to be an upcoming 'race war',¹¹³ and the white supremacist Neil Lewington, jailed in 2009 after his bomb-making factory was discovered by chance following his abuse of a train conductor.¹¹⁴ In the summer of 2010, police arrested a 16-year-old in Tamworth who had constructed a viable nail-bomb and possessed literature from the BNP and EDL, together with Nazi emblems.¹¹⁵

5.4. Czech Republic

A 2012 interior ministry report estimates there are 4,000 militant neo-Nazis, who, according to experts, are turning to terrorist campaigns under the influence of far-Right movements in Germany, Italy and Russia. Neo-Nazi gangs have gained access to weapons and firearms training by infiltrating the police force and private security firms, obtaining military-grade explosives. In the six months up to March 2012, there were 23 reported attacks on Czech Roma, which left three people dead.¹¹⁶

5.5. Denmark

In 1997, Danish police arrested seven neo-Nazis accused of organising an international letter-bomb campaign. One was also charged with the attempted murder of a policeman.¹¹⁷ The Danish *Politiets Efterretningstjeneste* (Police Intelligence Service) assessed in November 2011 that 'part of the far-right community is preparing for a future race war in Denmark and in that context is willing to use violence'.¹¹⁸

5.6. France

In 1995, 17-year-old Ibrahim Ali was shot dead in Marseilles when he confronted *Front National* members putting up posters.¹¹⁹ Later that year, four skinheads who had come to Paris for a *Front National* rally killed 29-year-old Brahim Bouraam by pushing him into the Seine.¹²⁰ In July 1995, Philippe Vignaud, an activist in the far-Right *Parti nationaliste français et européen*, and Vincent Parera, a sympathiser, were convicted of kidnapping and murdering a Toulouse car dealer, Guy Levy. They had targeted Levy because of his Jewish name and assumed he was among industrialists who had brought North African immigrants to France in the early 1960s.¹²¹

5.7. Germany

A study by the newspapers *Tagesspiegel* and *Die Zeit* found that 137 people were killed by right-wing extremists from 1990 to 2010, almost three times the official figure of 47, which only counts cases where the motivation has

¹¹¹ Cahal Milmo, 'Prison killer sent boasting letters to racist gangmates', *Independent* (20 November 2004). <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/deaths-with-a-known-or-suspected-racial-element-1991-1999/>; <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/deaths-with-a-known-or-suspected-racial-element-2000-onwards/>.

¹¹² HM Government, *Prevent Strategy* (June 2011), p. 15.

¹¹³ 'Bomb cache bus driver Gavan "obsessed with weapons"', *BBC News* (15 January 2010), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8462205.stm.

¹¹⁴ Sean O'Neill, 'White supremacist Neil Lewington guilty of "non-British" bomb plot', *The Times* (16 July 2009).

¹¹⁵ Nick Britten, 'Boy made nailbombs with chemicals bought on eBay', *Daily Telegraph* (26 June 2010).

¹¹⁶ 'Some 4000 militant neo-Nazis operate in Czech Rep – study', *CTK National News Wire* (1 March 2012); Pavol Stracansky, 'Czech Republic: neo-Nazis taking to terror', *IPS - Inter Press Service* (9 March 2012).

¹¹⁷ Jan M. Olsen, 'Seven neo-Nazis charged with terrorism after police raids', *Associated Press* (18 January 1997).

¹¹⁸ 'Danish right-wing extremists eye "race war": police', *Agence France Presse* (17 November 2011).

¹¹⁹ 'Ibrahim Ali, 17, shot dead', *Independent* (23 February 1995).

¹²⁰ 'French rightwingers jailed for drowning Moroccan', *Agence France Presse* (16 May 1998).

¹²¹ Nivelle Pascale, 'La virée meurtrière d'un Hitler en chambre. Avec un autre militant fasciste, Vincent Parera est jugé pour meurtre', *Libération* (24 June 1998).

been established beyond doubt by a court.¹²² In late 2010, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Germany's domestic intelligence agency, estimated there to be roughly 25,000 right-wing extremists in Germany, of which a third are prone to violence.¹²³

5.8. Greece

In May 2011, far-Right activists in Greece launched a series of pogrom-like attacks on immigrants in the downtown Athens area, leaving one person dead and dozens injured.¹²⁴

5.9. Hungary

Six men, mainly far-Right activists, are currently on trial for the murder of six Roma. For a year from July 2008, they allegedly committed twenty attacks in small towns and villages in central and eastern Hungary.¹²⁵

5.10. Italy

In Italy, far-Right activist Gianluca Casseri gunned down two Senegalese street vendors and wounded three others in Florence in December 2011.¹²⁶ Casseri had links to the far-Right *Casa Pound* organisation, a neo-fascist youth movement founded in Rome in 2003, which mobilises through cultural, sporting and musical activities and takes its name from the poet Ezra Pound, known for his anti-Semitism and support for Mussolini.

5.11. Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the *Anne Frank Stichting* counted 148 incidents of 'racial and right-wing extremist violence' registered by the National Police Services Agency and anti-discrimination bodies in 2009 – almost certainly an under-estimate of the actual total, due to under-reporting.¹²⁷

5.12. Norway

In July 2011, Anders Behring Breivik detonated a car bomb in Oslo before travelling to the island of Utøya and carrying out a mass shooting at a Labour Party youth camp, leaving 77 dead.

Two young Norwegian neo-Nazis were convicted in 2002 of stabbing to death 15-year-old Benjamin Hermansen in Oslo in a racially motivated attack.¹²⁸ In 1997, five neo-Nazis were arrested on suspicion of plotting to assassinate leading Norwegian public figures and attack national institutions.¹²⁹

5.13. Spain

In 2007, 16-year-old anti-fascist protestor Carlos Javier Palomino was stabbed to death in a Madrid metro station by a Spanish neo-Nazi activist.¹³⁰ Earlier, in 1992, Lucrecia Perez was killed by four hooded men who burst into an abandoned Madrid disco and opened fire on her and two other Dominican immigrants. Luis Merino, a policeman accused of firing the shots that killed Perez and seriously injuring one of her companions, had Nazi flags and fascist literature among his belongings.¹³¹

¹²² Frank Jansen, Heike Kleffner, Johannes Radke and Toralf Staud, 'Eine furchtbare Bilanz', *Die Zeit* (16 September 2010).

¹²³ Barbara Hans, Benjamin Schulz, and Jens Witte, 'Facts and myths about Germany's far-Right extremists', *Spiegel Online* (18 November 2011), <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,798682,00.html>.

¹²⁴ Asteris Masouras, 'In Greece, wave of racist attacks on immigrants in Athens', *Ground Report* (13 May 2011).

¹²⁵ Nicholas Kulish, 'Stalked by killers, Hungary's Roma live in fear', *International Herald Tribune* (April 27, 2009).

¹²⁶ Nick Squires, 'Florence street vendors shot dead by lone gunman', *Daily Telegraph* (13 December 2011).

¹²⁷ Jaap van Donselaar and Peter R. Rodrigues, eds, *Racism and Extremism Monitor, Eight Report* (Anne Frank Stichting / Leiden University, 2008), pp. 8, 17.

¹²⁸ 'Appeals court sentences two neo-Nazis in racial killing that shocked Norway', *Associated Press* (4 December 2002).

¹²⁹ 'Neo-Nazis arrested in suspected plot to kill Norwegian leaders', *Associated Press* (12 April 1997).

¹³⁰ Pilar Álvarez, 'Puñalada mortal en el metro de Madrid', *El País* (10 May 2009).

¹³¹ Adela Gooch, 'Murder trial highlights rise of racism in Spain', *Guardian* (11 June 1994).

5.14. Sweden

Peter Mangs was charged in 2010 with conducting a string of racist shootings over a seven-year period. The three murders and ten attempted murders in Malmö bore a chilling similarity to the case of the 'Laserman' gunman who carried out a series of racially motivated shootings in Stockholm in the early 1990s, leaving one person dead and ten others wounded.¹³²

In 1999, a trade unionist, Bjorn Söderberg, was shot dead outside his Stockholm apartment by neo-Nazis. In the same year, three neo-Nazis were accused of killing two policemen during a bank robbery intended to finance their political activities.¹³³ In 1997, Swedish police arrested a 23-year-old member of a neo-Nazi group accused of sending a letter bomb to Justice Minister Laila Freivalds.¹³⁴

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¹³² 'Racist sniper suspect remanded: Swedish prosecutor', *Agence France Presse* (21 December 2010).

¹³³ Carol J. Williams, 'Clerk's killing galvanizes Swedes; inspires backlash against neo-Nazis', *The Record* (12 December 1999).

¹³⁴ 'Man arrested after letter bomb sent to Swedish justice minister', *Agence France Presse* (15 August 1997).

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