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Capacity Building Through Exchange of Good Practices & Research in the Security Domain

Module 3: Propaganda

**Topic: The various extremist ideologies and how propaganda
works**

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1. Introduction

This report provides the topic syllabus for the *Propaganda* topic for Module 3 of the Internal Security Fund (ISF) project *Capacity building through exchange of good practices and research in the security domain* led by the European Institute Foundation. This report provides the aim, objectives, reading list, presentation notes, topic content and sources of information for delivery of this topic.

2. Aim

The aim of the topic *“The various extremist ideologies and how propaganda works”* is:

“Learn about the different phenomena of extremist ideologies, in particular left-wing extremism, right-wing extremism and religious extremism. Distinguish between their mechanisms and understand how propaganda is used by extremist groups in the aforementioned phenomena.”

3. Topic syllabus

To ensure that all students attending have a clear understanding of “Extremist Propaganda Strategies”. Therefore, this topic is divided into parts as follows:

- **Part 1: General information** – Introduction of the speakers, their previous professional experience, including an explanation of their current professional context (organisation, current challenges, etc.)
- **Part 2: Left-wing extremism and left-wing terrorism** – Explanation of the various phenomena of left-wing extremism, their origins and development, each backed up with current practical examples from the speakers' everyday police work.



- **Part 3: Right-wing extremism and right-wing terrorism** – Explanation of the various phenomena of left-wing extremism, their origins and development, each backed up with current practical examples from the speakers' everyday police work.
- **Part 4: Religious extremism and religious terrorism** – Explanation of the various phenomena of left-wing extremism, their origins and development, each backed up with current practical examples from the speakers' everyday police work.

4. Learning objectives

The primary learning objectives of the extremist *propaganda* topic are to:

1. Understand why the issue of 'extremist propaganda' is such a high priority from a police perspective.
2. Recognise that the influence of extremist propaganda is becoming increasingly relevant to police work.
3. Understand the effects of left-wing extremist, right-wing extremist and religious propaganda
4. Learn the core elements of left-wing extremist propaganda
5. Learn the core elements of right-wing extremist propaganda
6. Learn the core elements of religious extremist propaganda
7. Distinguish between the different forms of extremist propaganda

5. Learning outcomes

At the completion and conclusion of the *Propaganda* topic presentation, students will be able to:

- Understanding the influence of left-wing extremist, right-wing extremist and religious propaganda on their current everyday working lives
- The students will be better able to recognise the various forms of extremist propaganda within and outside your respective professional environment at an early stage.



- Explain the key rules to follow to create a comprehensive counter terrorism strategic approach
- Increased understanding of the social consequences of extremist propaganda
- Understanding the link between extremist propaganda and its direct influence on radicalisation processes

6. Reading list

The following list of reports, papers, websites and articles are recommended reading on the wider topic of *Counter Radicalisation Strategies* which complement the topic presentation and will add value to the students learning experience and includes:

Scientific Sources:

1. **Wojdon, J. (2021). *Communist Propaganda at School: The World of the Reading Primers from the Soviet Bloc, 1949-1989*.** Routledge. This comprehensive analysis examines over sixty reading primers from nine Soviet bloc countries, demonstrating how educational materials were laden with communist propaganda targeting the youngest schoolchildren
2. **Cioflâncă, A. (2010). *The communist propagandistic model: towards a cultural genealogy*.** *Studia Politica*, 10. This study analyzes the cultural and political sources that contributed to the formation of communist propaganda models in Eastern Europe.
3. **Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. (n.d.). *Left-wing extremism*.** This German federal agency report examines left-wing extremist ideologies, goals, and organizational structures.
4. **Misik, R. (2024). *The case for a radical, liberal left*.** *Social Europe*. This analysis argues for countering radical right movements not with left-wing populism but with reason-based approaches, discussing propaganda techniques on both sides of the political spectrum.
5. **International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. (2024). *A Strategic Communications Approach to Tackling Current, Emerging and New Violent Extremism*.** This policy brief explores communications approaches to reduce threats from all forms of violent extremism in Europe, including the dynamics of extremist messaging.
6. **George Washington University Program on Extremism. "Anarchist: Left-Wing Violent Extremism in America."** This report examines American left-wing extremist movements, their propaganda, and impacts on domestic security.



7. **Narayanaswami, K. (2011). Analysis of Nazi Propaganda:** A Behavioral Study. Harvard University. This behavioral study analyzes key cognitive and psychological drivers in Nazi propaganda posters, identifying techniques used to instigate social and cognitive biases.
8. **Blessing & Roberts. The Rhetoric of White Supremacist Terror:** Assessing the Attribution of Threat. Syracuse University. This research examines how White Supremacist terror groups portray different populations as threats through propaganda rhetoric.
9. **Mitts, T., Phillips, G., & Walter, B. F. (2022). Studying the Impact of ISIS Propaganda Campaigns.** *The University of Chicago*. This large-scale analysis uses machine learning to detect recruitment messages in ISIS online propaganda and quantify user reactions.
10. **Radicalisation Awareness Network. (2017). Audiences of right- and left-wing violent extremists.** **European Commission**. This paper analyzes target audiences of extremist propaganda, their vulnerability factors, and the narratives employed to reach them.
11. **European Commission. (2019). Current and future narratives and strategies of far-right and islamist extremism.** This work identifies prevailing extremist narratives and situational developments that may be exploited by extremist groups.
12. **European Commission. (2021). Contemporary Violent Left-Wing and Anarchist Extremism (VLWAE) in the EU.** This report examines main narratives, campaigns, and recruitment tactics of violent left-wing extremist groups in Europe.
13. **Rieger, D., Frischlich, L., & Bente, G. (n.d.). Propaganda in an insecure, unstructured world:** How psychological uncertainty and authoritarian attitudes shape the evaluation of right-wing extremist internet propaganda. This laboratory experiment examines how authoritarian attitudes and psychological uncertainty affect responses to extremist propaganda videos.
14. **Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. (2022). Right-wing extremism: Symbols, signs and banned organisations.** This publication analyzes the visual propaganda strategies of right-wing extremist movements.
15. **Bundeskriminalamt. "Propaganda 2.0"** This research examines how young adults in Germany respond to right-wing and Islamic extremist videos found on the internet.
16. **Bundeskriminalamt. "Psychological Effects of Right-Wing and Islamic Extremist Internet Propaganda."** This study investigates the psychological impacts of exposure to extremist content online.
17. **Mareš, M., & Larys, M. (Eds.). Militant Right-Wing Extremism in Putin's Russia: Legacies, Forms and Threats.** Routledge. This book addresses Russian right-wing extremism, its historical context and resurgence, with particular focus on militant extremism and propaganda techniques.



7. Presentation notes

The following chapter contains a sample presentation that can be used as the basis for a training session lasting at least 90 minutes on the topic: “Ideologies of Terrorism & Extremism Causes, Recruitment and Propaganda and possible Counterstrategies”. This presentation is based on the training course successfully conducted in February 2025 by Col. Holger Schmidt and Dr. Holger Nitsch (Bavarian Police/Germany) for senior officers of the Bulgarian police. The training material is structured as follows:

- 1) Example of a presentation page (slide)
- 2) Explanations of the content presented, including supplementary background information

Important note: The case studies presented are all anonymised, but are based on actual cases. Further additional detailed information can be found in the scientific publications listed in section 6.

SLIDE 1/2 – Welcome & Introduction



The 90-minute training session begins with a welcome address by the speaker to the participants. The speaker introduces the title and main topic of the upcoming training session. It is recommended that an initial question be asked at this point to break the ice, for example: Who among you has had contact with the topic of ‘propaganda’ in the past or currently in your job? Experience shows that there is very little feedback to the first question. However, it is all the more important to involve the participants in the presentation right from the start. In the second step, the speaker introduces themselves in detail. In doing so, they refer to and explain their own practical background. This is the only way for participants to recognise the speaker as a real expert. At the same time, emphasis should be placed on the prepared mix of theory and practice right from the start of the presentation. Practical examples in particular increase the interest of the participants.



SLIDE 3/4 – Why is this topic relevant?



To explain why the topic of propaganda is particularly relevant in connection with extremist ideologies, it is recommended to start with a current example. Ideally, participants in a conference on this topic should be able to immediately recognise themselves and at the same time have a personal example from their private lives in mind.

In the present example, the speakers chose the recent terrorist attack in Munich on 13 February 2025. An 18-year-old Afghan man drove his car, a BMW Mini, into the end of a demonstration organised by a large German trade union. The driver was stopped by two shots fired by a police officer and was slightly injured. Two days later, a mother and her infant, who was in a pram, died in the attack.

Less than an hour after the news of the deaths was published, the speaker received the propaganda shown in the example via a WhatsApp channel from an acquaintance. In this specific case, the propaganda message consists of three images:

- Image 1 shows the terrorist's vehicle with the caption 'Child (2) and mother died after attack in Munich'.
- Image 2 shows a candle in front of a dark background with the caption 'Munich is mourning.'
- Image 3 shows an AI-generated image of a fictional burning house with lots of black smoke. The image is accompanied by the following text: "Every attack we accept opens the door to the next. Accustoming ourselves to it is the beginning of indifference. Indifference is the end of freedom."

The above example impressively shows how quickly and precisely right-wing populist propaganda can be used and disseminated via WhatsApp in specific cases.



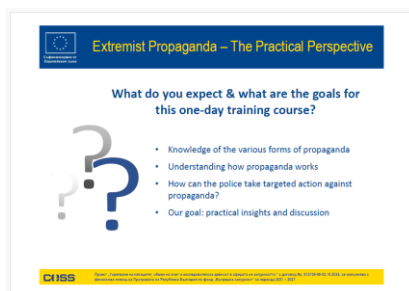
There is a strong suspicion that professional organisations are behind the propaganda in this Munich terror case, which took place in the heated phase of the German federal election campaign. However, there is no evidence to support this.

Starting with such an example serves the purpose of immediately capturing the participants' attention. At the same time, they learn how right-wing populist propaganda is currently being used in a member state of the European Union.

Recommendation:

If not all participants are fluent in English, it is recommended to translate the text of the propaganda message and display it on an additional slide (see slide 4) so that participants can read it at their leisure. This will make the presentation more effective for the participants.

SLIDE 4 – Aim of the session



After introducing the speakers and providing an introduction to the topic using a specific practical example, the speakers should first outline the objectives of the upcoming training session.

The aim of the training is to provide participants with a comprehensive insight into the topic of propaganda. They will learn about the different forms of propaganda and understand how these mechanisms work. Another focus is on how the police can take targeted action against propaganda. The training emphasises practical insights and encourages active exchange and discussion among participants. In addition, the following objectives are pursued: raising awareness of the effects of propaganda on society and strengthening participants' own media literacy in dealing with manipulative content.



Summary of objectives:

- (1) Becoming familiar with different forms of propaganda
- (2) Understanding how propaganda works
- (3) Developing possible courses of action for the police in dealing with propaganda
- (4) Practical insights and promotion of discussion
- (5) Raising awareness of the social impact of propaganda
- (6) Strengthening media literacy in dealing with manipulative content

Recommendation:

Since this presentation is part of an approximately one-day workshop, the participants' expectations should be clarified at the beginning. Depending on the size of the group, moderation cards can be used for this purpose (for up to 10 participants). For larger groups, it is recommended to ask participants to express their expectations verbally. However, it should come as no surprise if only a few or no participants respond. This also sends a signal to participants that they are expected to actively participate.

SLIDE 6 – Session syllabus

Extremist Propaganda – The Practical Perspective	
Agenda	
1	General Overview of the Munich Police
2	Ideologies of Terrorism & Extremism Causes
3	Recruitment, Propaganda & possible Counterstrategies
4	Table Exercise 1 – The 18 years old Terrorist
5	Table Exercise 2 – The 29-year-old imprisoned Islamist Extremist
6	Summary & Final Remarks

It is also important in the initial phase of the presentation or training session that participants are given a brief overview of the planned agenda for the day. This way, they know which area of the training they are currently working on. Particularly if there is a lengthy theoretical input, it is advisable to let participants know that practical content will also be covered in detail during the training session. The first part of the one-day training course, which deals with the theoretical content of extremist propaganda, is therefore divided as follows:

- Part 1: General Overview of the Munich Police
- Part 2: Ideologies of Terrorism & Extremism Causes



SLIDE 7 – General Overview of the Bavarian Police / Munich Police



Slide 7 is intended to give participants an initial understanding of the context in which the speakers work. This is useful because, particularly in the field of policing, participants (in this specific example, from Bulgaria) will be able to compare the organisation of the speakers with their own at any time during the training.

This is all the more important because the size of a country, the respective police organisation, the number of police officers working and other parameters can vary considerably. Responsibilities in particular vary in some areas. The aim of this slide is therefore to enable participants to better place the following content in their own context.

However, the second objective of the slide is also to use the opportunity to promote and support international police cooperation in a European context and in a European project. It is therefore interesting and helpful for participants to learn more about another large European police organisation. This may be helpful in the coming months and years if participants seek or need contact with German police departments in their own departments.

Brief summary of the German police organisation:

1) Structure of the German police

The police in Germany is organised on a federal basis and is divided into police authorities in the 16 federal states (state police forces) and federal police forces (Federal Police, Federal Criminal Police Office, Police of the German Bundestag).

State police forces (state police):

- According to the Basic Law, the main responsibility for the police lies with the federal states (Art. 30 GG).



- Each state police force is subordinate to the respective state interior ministry and is responsible for averting danger, prosecuting crimes and maintaining public safety within the state.
- The state police forces consist of the protective police (including patrols and traffic police), the criminal investigation department (investigations), the riot police (including large-scale operations), the state criminal investigation offices and other specialised units and administrative offices.
- The exact organisation varies from state to state.

Federal police forces:

- The Federal Police (BPOL) is subordinate to the Federal Ministry of the Interior and performs special tasks nationwide, including:
 - Border protection and control
 - Rail and air traffic safety
 - Protection of federal institutions and important federal buildings
 - Support for state police forces in special situations
 - Police tasks at sea and abroad within the framework of international missions.
- The Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) is responsible for fighting crime nationwide, especially serious and organised crime and terrorism, and coordinates cooperation between the state criminal investigation offices.
- The German Bundestag Police is responsible for protecting the parliament.

Key responsibilities at a glance / Level Main tasks and responsibilities

State police:	Hazard prevention, law enforcement, general security in the respective federal state
Federal police:	Border protection, rail and air security, protection of federal institutions, support for state police forces
BKA:	Combating serious, organised and international crime, terrorism, Coordination (only in special cases!)
Bundestag police:	Protection of parliament and its buildings

Total number of police officers in Germany

A total of around 330.500 police officers are on duty in Germany, of whom around 273.600 work for the state police forces and around 56.900 for the federal police (as of 2024, full-time equivalent).



2) Bavarian Police

As the speakers are members of the Bavarian police force, the position of the Bavarian police as one of the largest regional police forces is briefly discussed. It is interesting to note that the Bavarian police, which is responsible for more than 13 million inhabitants, is considerably larger than the Bulgarian police. However, the Bavarian police is not a national police organisation, but is only responsible for the federal state of Bavaria.

The Bavarian Police is the state police force of the Free State of Bavaria and, after the North Rhine-Westphalia Police, the second largest state police force in Germany. It employs over 45,000 people (as of September 2023), around 34,000 of whom perform police enforcement duties. By 2028, the number of police positions is to be increased to around 47,000.

Structure:

Since the 2009 police reform, the Bavarian police force has been organised into three levels. The highest authority is the Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, for Sport and Integration. Below this are the Bavarian State Criminal Police Office, the Police Administration Office, the Presidium of the Bavarian Riot Police and ten regional police headquarters, which are responsible for operational police work on the ground. The organisation is regulated by the Police Organisation Act.

SLIDE 8 – Overview & Statistics – Munich Police

Extremist Propaganda – The Practical Perspective

Overview & Statistics – Munich Police

- 7,400 employees in total
- 5,400 of which are police officers
- 101,007 crimes in 2024
- 703 cases of robbery
- Decrease for many types of crimes in comparison to pre-pandemic levels (2019)

CHSS

Similar to slide 7, slide 8 attempts to explain the professional background of the speakers to the participants and draw parallels to their own capital city, Sofia. Specifically, the cities of Sofia and Munich are not dissimilar in terms of population, police force size, etc. This gives the presentation an even clearer focus.



Key figures from the 2024 Security Report

Crime trends:

In 2024, 100,330 crimes were reported to the police in Munich, representing a slight decrease compared to the previous year (2023: 101,539 crimes). The clearance rate was around 62.2%. Munich thus remains the safest major city in Germany for the 49th time in a row compared to other metropolitan areas.

Homicides:

The number of homicides (murder, manslaughter) in Munich remains traditionally low. Exact figures for 2024 are not explicitly stated in the security report, but the trend has remained consistently low for years.

Robbery:

There was a slight fluctuation in robbery offences in 2023 and 2024. However, the overall level remains low in a ten-year comparison. The Munich police regularly report declines in robbery offences, partly due to targeted prevention and investigation work.

Special features:

- With around 5,934 crimes per 100,000 inhabitants, Munich continues to have the lowest crime rate among major German cities.
- Violent crime (including robbery, dangerous/serious bodily harm, homicide) rose in 2023 compared to 2021, but remains stable in a long-term comparison.
- The police are focusing more on prevention, cooperation with youth welfare services and targeted measures against property and fraud offences.

Conclusion:

The Munich Police Headquarters is one of the largest and most modern police authorities in Germany, ensures a very high level of security and continues to have one of the lowest crime rates among major German cities.

SLIDE 9 – Major current topics in law enforcement (general)



As in the previous slides 7 and 8, slide 9 is intended to establish the specific police context. In particular, by presenting the current challenges, it is important in such a police context and training situation to see whether the same level of communication can be established with the participants. At the same time, however, the participants should understand that the speakers have sufficient technical background. The aim is therefore to raise awareness once again.

The following particular challenges exist in the fight against crime:

- Increase of digital pieces of evidence
- Challenge: Mass data analysis
- German data retention laws
- Increase of several crime phenomena, e.g. cases of child sexual abuse, fraud
- Employee acquisition & lack of experts in Germany
- Increase of youth violence crime in different local areas
- Less “classic” street crime, more focal point crime
- The internationalization of fighting crime
- Increase of extremism (right, left, religious)

The final point, the challenge posed by extremism with its three phenomena – left-wing extremism, right-wing extremism and religious extremism – provides a direct introduction to the subject matter and rounds off the first chapter of the training course. The speakers briefly explain the particular challenges posed by extremism in Europe. It is precisely at this point that the European context should be highlighted in a European police project:

1) The triple threat of extremism: Current challenges for European police authorities

In 2025, European police authorities will face a complex and escalating threat from various forms of extremism. The rise in extremist activities from the left, right and religiously motivated circles poses complex challenges for security authorities, requiring new strategies and resources. Particularly worrying are the increase in violent acts, the technological evolution of extremist methods and the growing social polarisation that provides a breeding ground for further radicalisation.



Overview of the current threat situation

The security situation in Europe has deteriorated significantly in recent years. According to Europol's Terrorism Report, a total of 120 terrorist attacks (98 completed, 9 failed and 13 foiled) were recorded in seven EU member states in 2023 alone, representing a significant increase compared to previous years. The terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent Israeli military action in Gaza triggered additional movements in all extremist and terrorist ideological scenes and further exacerbated the security situation.

The Global Terrorism Index 2025 shows a worrying trend: the number of countries affected by terrorism has risen from 58 to 66, marking a reversal after almost a decade of improvement. In Western countries, lone actor attacks are increasingly prevalent, accounting for 93% of deadly attacks in the last five years.

Challenges in dealing with left-wing extremism

The threat posed by left-wing extremist violence has increased significantly in recent years. In Germany, the number of people with left-wing extremist tendencies and the number of violent acts committed by left-wing extremists rose sharply in 2023 compared to the previous year. Particularly alarming is the drastic increase in violent acts against the police and security authorities: 481 cases were recorded in 2023, compared to 292 in 2022.

Europol assesses the threat posed by violent left-wing extremism in the EU as 'low but increasing'. This assessment is based on the observation that more Member States are affected by this type of violence. Between 2006 and 2020, 414 violent acts with a left-wing extremist or anarchist background were carried out or attempted, with Italy, Spain and Greece being the most affected. A particular problem for the police is that they themselves are increasingly becoming the target of left-wing extremist violence. Demonstrations and protests that lead to violent clashes pose a particular tactical challenge. The events in Leipzig in 2023, which saw one of the largest police operations in recent years, illustrate the scale of this problem.

Challenges in dealing with right-wing extremism

Right-wing extremism is classified as the 'greatest extremist threat' in many EU countries. The phenomenon of infiltration of security agencies is particularly worrying: in Germany, disciplinary proceedings or investigations are being conducted against around 400 police officers on suspicion of right-wing extremist views.



The Federal Police Representative of the German Bundestag, Uli Grötsch, warned: 'We are living in times in which right-wing extremists are deliberately attempting to destabilise the police. The danger is greater than ever before. For the whole country. And therefore also for the police.' This internal threat poses a particular challenge as it undermines trust in the integrity of the security authorities. North Rhine-Westphalia's Interior Minister Herbert Reul emphasised the urgency of this problem: 'Police officers who do not uphold the constitution but pursue extremist views are a great danger to democracy and the rule of law.'

2) Challenges in dealing with religious extremism

Religiously motivated extremism, especially jihadist terrorism, continues to pose a serious threat. Islamist-motivated violence has increased worldwide in recent decades and has a direct impact on the security situation in Europe.

Of the 14 jihadist terrorist attacks in Europe in 2023, five were fully carried out and were the deadliest, with six fatalities and twelve injured. EU law enforcement authorities arrested 426 suspects for terrorism-related offences, 334 of whom were linked to jihadist terrorism.

Particularly challenging for the police is dealing with so-called 'lone actors' – individuals who become radicalised online and then carry out attacks without any direct connection to a terrorist organisation. The Global Terrorism Index 2025 shows that in Western countries, 93% of deadly terrorist attacks in the last five years were carried out by lone actors.

3) Overarching challenges for the police

In addition to the specific challenges of dealing with different forms of extremism, European police authorities face cross-cutting problems:

Technological change and digital threats

Developments in artificial intelligence and other technological innovations are increasingly being used by terrorists and violent extremists to amplify their messages and facilitate their operations. Large language models (LLMs) and deepfakes are being exploited to create false identities, spread disinformation and amplify propaganda campaigns. This technological evolution challenges security agencies to keep pace with rapid developments and develop appropriate countermeasures. In response, Europol's Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU) plans to expand its focus on violent left-wing extremism and violent anarchism in 2025 and to adapt its monitoring capabilities, referral processes and analytical procedures for this crime phenomenon to other areas of online terrorism and violent extremism.



Polarisation and mutual radicalisation

The increasing polarisation of society and the phenomenon of mutual radicalisation of different extremist groups pose a particular challenge. The rise in anti-Semitic and Islamophobic hate crimes worldwide – in the US, a 200% increase in anti-Semitic incidents was recorded in 2024 – highlights the scale of this problem.

This places an increasing burden on the police, who are increasingly called upon to mediate and intervene between entrenched fronts during demonstrations and counter-demonstrations. The risk of violent clashes between extremist groups of different ideological orientations is growing.

3) Structural and organisational challenges

The multitude and complexity of extremist threats pose considerable structural challenges for the police. The need to combat different forms of extremism simultaneously requires specialised personnel, extensive resources and effective international cooperation. The European Union is stepping up its efforts in this area. In 2025, Europol will produce the Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) 2025, which will serve as a basis for the Council's decision on the EMPACT priorities for the following phase. This underlines the importance of a coordinated European approach to combating extremism and terrorism.

Strategies and approaches to address the challenges

To address these complex threats, European police authorities are developing various strategies and approaches:

International cooperation and information exchange

The cross-border nature of extremist networks requires enhanced international cooperation. EU law enforcement agencies are increasingly working together to exchange information and carry out joint operations. Europol plays a central role in this regard as a coordinator and platform for the exchange of information and best practices.

Preventive approaches and deradicalisation

In addition to repressive measures, prevention is becoming increasingly important. The aim here is to identify and interrupt radicalisation processes at an early stage and to deradicalise individuals who have already been radicalised. This requires close cooperation between the police, social services, educational institutions and civil society organisations.



Technological upgrading and specialised units

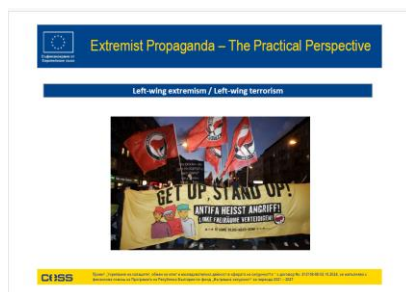
In order to keep pace with the technological evolution of extremist methods, police authorities are investing more in modern technologies and the training of specialists. Combating online extremism, analysing social media and monitoring the darknet require specialised know-how and appropriate technical equipment.

Conclusion and outlook

European police authorities face the complex task of simultaneously combating various forms of extremism – a challenge that is further exacerbated by technological change, social polarisation and international conflicts. The rise of extremist activities from the left, right and religiously motivated circles requires a coordinated, multidimensional approach that includes both repressive and preventive measures.

Developing an effective balance between security measures and the protection of civil liberties will remain one of the key challenges. Only through a holistic approach that promotes cooperation between different authorities and social actors can the diverse threats posed by extremism be effectively combated.

SLIDE 10 – Left-wing extremism / Left-wing terrorism



The first slide on the topic of 'left-wing extremism' begins by defining the term and explaining its origins. The following key points are first addressed and explained in general terms in this slide.

1) What is left-wing extremism?

Left-wing extremism is a collective term for political movements that oppose the free democratic basic order and seek to replace it with a different, usually socialist or anarchist form of society. Left-wing extremists reject the existing state-capitalist social order, see it as the cause of social ills and strive for fundamental, often revolutionary change.



Depending on their ideological orientation, the goal may be a communist, classless society or a non-hierarchical, anarchist order.

A central feature is the rejection of the parliamentary representative system and the capitalist economic order. Violence is considered by parts of the scene to be a legitimate means of achieving political goals, especially in revolutionary situations or for self-defence against the state, which is perceived as repressive.

2) Where does left-wing extremism come from?

The ideological roots of left-wing extremism lie in the 19th century and can be traced back primarily to Marxism and anarchism. Both movements take up the values of freedom and equality proclaimed in the French Revolution, but radicalise them and demand the liberation of humanity from all political and economic dependencies. While Marxism and communism aim for a classless society through revolutionary transformation and often a transitional phase (such as the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'), anarchism fundamentally rejects any form of rule and strives for an immediate order free of authority.

Historically, modern left-wing extremism developed in Germany after the Second World War, particularly through the student movement of the 1960s and the groups that emerged from it, such as the Red Army Faction (RAF). Today, the scene is ideologically and organisationally very heterogeneous and includes both dogmatic communist parties and autonomous anarchist groups.

3) How can left-wing extremism be recognised?

Left-wing extremism can be recognised by several characteristics:

- **Ideology:** Radical rejection of the existing social and state order, striving for a socialist or anarchist alternative, internationalism and anti-capitalism.
- **Enemy stereotypes:** 'Capitalism', Western democracies, especially the USA and its allies, police and security authorities.
- **Symbols:** Frequently used symbols include the hammer and sickle, the red star (communism), the black circle around the letter 'A' (anarchism), the Antifa flag (red and black flag), and letter combinations such as A.C.A.B. or A.F.A.
- **Forms of action:** From demonstrations, civil disobedience and blockades to property damage, arson attacks or violent clashes with political opponents or the police.



- **Structures:** The scene is heterogeneous, ranging from dogmatically organised parties (e.g. DKP, MLPD) to autonomous, loosely organised groups.
- **Self-image:** Many actors reject the term 'extremism' and describe themselves as 'radical leftists' or 'anti-fascists'.

According to studies, typical supporters are predominantly young adults, often with interrupted education, who are mainly active in large cities and university environments. In summary, left-wing extremism is a radical, anti-capitalist and anti-state movement characterised by a revolutionary desire for change, specific symbols and forms of action, and a heterogeneous scene.

4) Current forms of left-wing extremism worldwide, in Europe and specifically in Bulgaria

Worldwide and in Europe, left-wing extremism today manifests itself in several distinct forms, which differ in terms of ideology, organisational structure and methods of action. The most important developments are:

Militant autonomous groups and the 'Black Bloc'

- In Europe, the violence-oriented autonomous scene is particularly influential. These groups fundamentally reject state and social norms and use violence as a legitimate means of overthrowing the 'ruling system'.
- The 'Black Blocs' are loosely organised, internationally networked groups that appear in large numbers and wearing masks at major demonstrations (e.g. the G20 summit in Hamburg). They are known for their high level of violence and property damage.
- These groups are becoming increasingly professional and cross-border, with targeted attacks on the police, political opponents and critical infrastructure such as rail, electricity and telecommunications networks.

Anti-fascist networks ('Antifa')

- The 'anti-fascist struggle' is a central unifying element of European left-wing extremism. Violence is directed not only against right-wing extremists, but also against the state, the police and political opponents described as 'fascist'.
- The international 'Antifascist Action' (AFA) is the most active network within the anarchist-autonomous scene and is represented in many European countries.

Anarchist and anti-capitalist movements

- Anarchist groups are particularly active in countries such as Italy, Spain and Greece, often with a long tradition of militant action, including attacks and arson.



- The scene is ideologically diverse: in addition to classic communists and Trotskyists, environmental and anti-globalisation movements with extreme left-wing elements are also represented.

Attacks on critical infrastructure and companies

- A recent development is the targeted sabotage of infrastructure (e.g. railways, electricity, telecommunications) in order to cause social disruption and economic damage. Such actions are on the rise in Germany and other European countries.

Internationalisation and cross-border actions

- Left-wing extremist groups are increasingly operating internationally. One example is the involvement of German left-wing radicals in attacks on suspected neo-Nazis in Hungary around the 'Day of Honour' in Budapest. This demonstrates a willingness to carry out militant actions outside one's own country.

Increase in the propensity to violence and radicalisation

- The number of violent left-wing extremists and the severity of violent acts are increasing in many European countries, especially in Germany. New militant groups and networks are forming, becoming more radical and professional.

5) Special situation in Bulgaria

Bulgaria differs from Western European countries in that left-wing extremism there is currently less influenced by militant autonomous groups and more by political parties and coalitions:

- The political coalition 'Lewizata!' (Bulgarian: Левицата! – 'The Left!'), founded in 2023, unites various socialist, social democratic and progressive parties and groups. It sees itself as an alternative to the ruling parties and opposes arms deliveries to Ukraine and supports social issues such as higher wages and poverty reduction.

- Unlike in Western Europe, there are no indications of a strong, violence-oriented autonomous scene or internationally networked militant groups such as the 'Black Bloc' in Bulgaria.

- The left-wing scene in Bulgaria is primarily organised at the parliamentary and socio-political level. Its focus is on social justice, poverty reduction and criticism of neoliberal economic structures, not on violent actions.

6) Conclusion

- In Europe, militant autonomous groups, anti-fascist networks and anarchist movements currently dominate the picture of left-wing extremism, with increasing willingness to use violence, internationalisation and targeted attacks on infrastructure.



- In Bulgaria, on the other hand, left-wing extremism is mainly manifested in the form of new left-wing parties and coalitions such as 'Lewizata!', which focus on parliamentary and social issues and do not stand out for militant violence.

SLIDE 11 – A current case of left-wing extremism in Germany (Munich)

Extremist Propaganda – The Practical Perspective

A current case of left-wing extremism in Germany (Munich)

- Arson attacks for more than four years
- Targets are high-value construction machinery, geothermal plants and police cars
- Total damage: more than 35 million euros
- Professional offenders
- Hypothesis: left-wing, violent criminals
- Investigations are challenging
- Are we confronted with a new generation?

CHSS

After the initial theoretical input on the phenomenon of left-wing extremism, it is recommended to round off the knowledge gained with a current example. The speakers decided on a highly topical criminal case from the Munich region. Specifically, a partially known left-wing extremist group has been carrying out a large number of arson attacks in and around Munich for more than three years. The targets are mainly construction machinery, wind turbines and geothermal power plants. The damage caused now amounts to more than 30 million euros. The speaker describes the highly conspiratorial nature of the left-wing extremists' actions. However, the threshold for attacking people has not yet been crossed.

SLIDE 12 – Left-wing terrorism



Slide 11 is primarily intended to illustrate the development from left-wing extremism to left-wing terrorism.



1) The development from left-wing extremism to left-wing terrorism: ideological roots and radicalisation processes

The development of left-wing extremist ideologies into terrorist acts is closely linked to the fundamental principles of **communism** and **anarchism**. Both movements strive for an egalitarian society, but differ in their methods and radicalisation dynamics.

Ideological driving forces: communism and anarchism

Communist influence

- **Marxist-Leninist theory:** The goal is to establish a classless society through revolutionary overthrow. The state is to serve as a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' during a transitional phase in order to destroy capitalist structures.
- **Practical examples:** Groups such as the *Red Army Faction (RAF)* in the 1970s used terrorist attacks against the state and economic elites to provoke an 'anti-imperialist revolution'. Today, parties such as the MLPD and DKP predominantly advocate non-violent methods, but legitimise revolutionary violence in 'historically necessary' situations.

Anarchist influence

- **Non-hierarchical utopia:** Anarchists reject all forms of government and strive for a direct, non-violent social order. Radical movements such as the **autonomous scene**, however, justify violence as 'direct action' against supposedly repressive systems.
- **Forms of action:** Arson attacks on police vehicles, sabotage of critical infrastructure (e.g. railway tracks) and attacks on right-wing extremists are considered 'anti-fascist self-defence'. In Germany, 8,300 autonomists are classified as violence-oriented, with increasing professionalisation and international networking.

2) Radicalisation factors for left-wing terrorism

- **Political frustration and rejection of the system**
- The perception of the state as a 'capitalist system of oppression' leads to the legitimisation of violence. During the eviction of squatted houses (e.g. Lützerath 2023) or large demonstrations ('Day X' in Leipzig 2023), protests escalated into massive violence against the police, including two attempted homicides.
- **Ideological radicalisation in closed groups**
- Small autonomous groups become radicalised in echo chambers where violence is glorified as the only 'anti-capitalist response'. Expressions of solidarity with imprisoned violent offenders (e.g. through 'prisoner support') reinforce this dynamic.
- **Technological networking**



Encrypted messaging services and darknet forums enable the coordination of cross-border actions. German left-wing extremists, for example, participated in attacks on neo-Nazi meetings in Hungary.

3) The phenomenon of the 'egalitarian society' as a goal

The **egalitarian society** – free of classes, rule and property – is the utopian end goal of both communist and anarchist movements. This vision serves as a justification for extremist violence:

Aspect	Communist perspective	Anarchist perspective
State order	Transitional phase ('dictatorship of the proletariat')	Immediate abolition of all hierarchies
Legitimacy of violence	Revolutionary violence as a 'historical necessity'	'Direct action' against structures of oppression
Potential dangers	State terror (historically: Stalinism)	'Lone actor' attacks and acts of sabotage

4) Conclusion

Left-wing terrorism feeds on the conviction that an egalitarian society can only be achieved by destroying the existing system. While communist groups focus on overthrowing the system in the long term, anarchist-influenced autonomous groups use immediate violence as a 'liberating blow'. Increasing networking and the use of technology are exacerbating the threat, particularly through 'lone actor' attacks, which are difficult to predict.

SLIDE 13 – Left-wing extremism - Ideological Elements – Part I



1. Anti-nuclear - Definition

Opposition to the use of nuclear energy and nuclear weapons.

- **German example**

Large demonstrations against the Brokdorf nuclear power plant in the 1980s.



- **International example**

The international campaign ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons), which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 and campaigns worldwide for the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

2. Anti-fascism - Definition

Active resistance to fascist ideologies, organisations and practices.

- **German example**

Antifa counter-demonstrations against right-wing extremist marches in Germany.

- **International example:**

The Anti-Fascist Organisation (AFO) in Burma, which fought against Japanese occupation and for independence during the Second World War.

3. Anti-gentrification - Definition:

Resistance to the displacement of residents through urban regeneration and rising rents in neighbourhoods.

- **German example:**

Protests and squatting in Berlin-Kreuzberg against luxury renovations.

- **International example:**

The Movement for Justice in El Barrio in New York, a migrant-led movement against gentrification in East Harlem that gained international attention.

4. Anti-globalisation - Definition:

Criticism of and resistance to the negative consequences of economic globalisation.

- **German example:**

Protests against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm in 2007.

- **International example:**

The Battle of Seattle: mass protests and blockades against the WTO conference in Seattle in 1999, which became a global symbol of criticism of globalisation.

5. Anti-imperialism - Definition

Rejection and opposition to imperialist policies and colonialism.

- **German example:**

Protests against the Iraq War in 2003, which was seen as imperialist intervention by the USA.



- **International example:**

Independence movements in Africa and Asia, such as the resistance against French colonial rule in Algeria under Emir Abd al-Qadir.

6. Anti-capitalism - Definition

Rejection of the capitalist economic system and the pursuit of alternative, more social forms of economy.

- **German example:**

The Occupy movement in Frankfurt am Main in front of the European Central Bank.

- **International example:**

The Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico, which rebelled against neoliberal capitalism and the NAFTA agreement in 1994 and became a symbol of the anti-capitalist movement worldwide.

SLIDE 14 – Left-wing extremism - Ideological Elements – Part II



1. Antimilitarism - Definition

Antimilitarism is the rejection of the military, military armament and the use of war to resolve conflicts. Antimilitarists advocate peace and civil conflict resolution.

- **German example**

The Easter March movement in Germany, which has been demonstrating against militarism and nuclear weapons every year since the 1960s.

- **International example**

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in Great Britain, which has been fighting against nuclear weapons and militarisation since the 1950s.

2. Anti-repression - Definition

Anti-repression refers to resistance against state oppression, surveillance and political persecution.

- **German example**



The 'Rote Hilfe e.V.', an association that campaigns for the rights of politically persecuted people and against state repression.

- **International example:**

Amnesty International, a global organisation that campaigns against political repression and for the release of political prisoners.

3. Anti-Zionism - Definition:

Anti-Zionism is the rejection of Zionism, i.e. the ideology and politics that advocate a Jewish nation state (Israel). Anti-Zionism can have political, religious or ideological reasons and is not necessarily anti-Semitic, but is often associated with it.

- **German example:**

Pro-Palestinian demonstrations in Berlin, where participants speak out against Israeli policy and Zionism.

- **International example:**

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which calls for an international boycott of Israel because of its policy towards the Palestinians.

4. Egalitarianism - Definition

Egalitarianism is the pursuit of equality for all people in terms of rights, opportunities and living conditions.

- **German example:**

Demands for equal pay and anti-discrimination laws, such as the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG).

- **International example:**

The Scandinavian welfare states (e.g. Sweden), which strive for a high degree of social equality through progressive social and education policies.

5. Environmentalism - Definition

Environmentalism is the movement to protect the natural environment from harmful human influences and to promote sustainable development.

- **German example**

The anti-coal protests by 'Ende Gelände', which campaign against lignite mining and for climate protection.

- **International example:**

The Fridays for Future movement, initiated by Greta Thunberg in Sweden, which demonstrates worldwide for climate protection.



6. Internationalism - Definition

Internationalism is the belief that international cooperation and solidarity between states and peoples are necessary to solve global problems and secure peace.

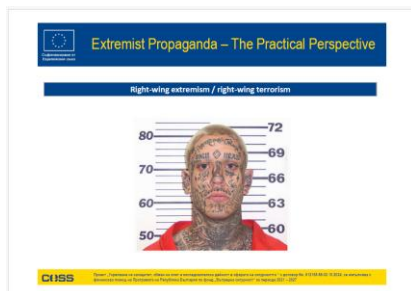
- **German example**

The support of German trade unions for international labour movements and solidarity actions with strikers abroad.

- **International example:**

The founding of the United Nations (UN) after the Second World War as an international organisation to promote peace, security and cooperation worldwide.

SLIDE 15 – Left-wing extremism - Ideological Elements – Part II



The following slide begins to explain the topic of right-wing extremism and right-wing terrorism. The following case is chosen as an introduction:

The Curtis Allgier case – an example of right-wing extremism and its symbolism in the USA

The image shown is taken from a presentation on extremist propaganda and depicts American neo-Nazi Curtis Allgier, one of the most prominent cases of visible right-wing extremism in the USA.

Background to the case

Curtis Allgier is an American white supremacist skinhead who is serving a life sentence in Utah for the murder of a prison officer. On 25 June 2007, he killed prison guard Stephen Anderson during a medical appointment outside the prison. After Allgier was freed from his shackles for an MRI scan, he overpowered Anderson, took his service weapon and shot him in the chest and head. After the crime, Allgier fled the University of Utah Medical Centre, stole a



vehicle and was arrested after a chase at an Arby's restaurant. He is now serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole.

The right-wing extremist symbolism

Allgier is particularly known for his extensive facial tattoos with right-wing extremist content:

- The words 'Skin Head' and several swastikas on his forehead
- A crucified skinhead on his right cheek, symbolising the alleged 'persecution of working-class skinheads by the upper class'
- Three overlapping triangles (Valknut) on his left jaw – a Norse symbol which, among racist followers, means that one is 'ready to be accepted into the ranks of Odin's chosen warriors'
- The number '5150' under the right eye – a reference to the Californian law on the compulsory admission of mentally ill persons
- The name of the hardcore band 'Hatebreed' on the upper lip
- Iron crosses on the temples
- SS lightning bolts on the jawbone – symbol of the National Socialist Schutzstaffel (SS)
- The words 'Blood, Honour, and Loyalty' on the collarbone – a slogan commonly used by racist skinheads

The significance of the case

The Allgier case illustrates several important aspects of American right-wing extremism:

1. The use of prison gangs to spread right-wing extremist ideology: Allgier belongs to a group of white supremacists who use the prison system as a recruiting ground.
2. The symbolism and coding of right-wing extremist messages: His tattoos serve as a visual manifestation of his extremist beliefs and are part of the repertoire of symbols used by the right-wing extremist scene.
3. The explicit display of right-wing extremist symbolism as a sign of identity: Tattoo experts emphasize how unusual it is to wear such provocative and socially stigmatized symbols on one's face.

This case is used by authorities and anti-extremism organizations as teaching material to promote the identification and understanding of right-wing extremist symbolism – which also appears to be the context of the presentation shown.



SLIDE 16 – A current case of right-wing extremism in Germany



The right-wing extremist group around ‘Prince Reuss’ – officially called the ‘Patriotic Union’ – is a suspected terrorist organisation originating from the Reich Citizens' Movement. It was founded in 2021 and became known nationwide at the latest at the end of 2022 through a large-scale anti-terror raid.

Background and plans:

According to the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, the group around Heinrich XIII Prince Reuss was planning a violent overthrow of the German government. The aim was to eliminate the existing state order in Germany and replace it with their own monarchist form of government. To this end, the group wanted to storm the Reichstag building with an armed unit, arrest members of parliament and deliberately accept possible fatalities. The group had a large arsenal of weapons and was well organised.

Investigations and arrests:

On 7 December 2022, in one of the largest anti-terror raids in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany, 25 suspected members and supporters were arrested, including Heinrich XIII Prince Reuss himself. Investigations revealed that the group had contacts abroad and recruited from various social circles, including former soldiers and a former AfD member of the Bundestag.

Current status (May 2025):

- A total of 26 members of the group are currently facing criminal proceedings for membership of a terrorist organisation and preparation of a high treasonous enterprise.
- The trials are taking place at three higher regional courts: Stuttgart, Frankfurt am Main (against Prince Reuss and former AfD member of parliament Birgit Malsack-Winkemann, among others) and Munich.



- By December 2024, more than 60 preliminary investigations had been launched against members and supporters, including individuals who knew about the coup plans but did not report them.
- The group is part of the Reich Citizens' Movement, whose supporters reject the legitimacy of the Federal Republic of Germany and are partly classified as right-wing extremists.

Summary:

The 'Reuß Group' is a prime example of the new dimension of right-wing extremist and anti-state threats in Germany. Extensive court proceedings and investigations are currently underway against the alleged members and supporters who are said to have planned a violent coup.

SLIDE 17 – Right-wing extremism - Ideological Elements



The phenomenon of right-wing extremism

1) What is right-wing extremism?

Right-wing extremism refers to a political ideology and movement characterised by the rejection of the equality of all people, democratic principles and the existing free and democratic constitutional order. Right-wing extremists usually strive for an authoritarian, often ethno-nationalist social order characterised by racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and the rejection of minorities. Violence against those who think differently is often seen as a legitimate means of achieving their goals.

2) Origins of right-wing extremism

Right-wing extremism has its roots in various historical, social and political developments:

- **Historical:**



Its origins date back to the 19th century, when nationalism, anti-Semitism and social Darwinism emerged in Europe. In the 20th century, right-wing extremism manifested itself particularly in National Socialism (Germany), fascism (Italy) and other authoritarian movements.

- **After 1945:**

After the Second World War, right-wing extremism developed in many countries as a counter-movement to democracy, pluralism, immigration and globalisation. Neo-Nazi and white supremacy groups emerged in the USA and Europe.

- **Social causes:**

Economic crises, social upheaval, globalisation and migration can act as catalysts for right-wing extremist attitudes, as they reinforce fears and uncertainties.

3) Characteristics of right-wing extremism

Right-wing extremism can be recognised by certain ideological and organisational characteristics:

- **Nationalism and ethnopluralism**

Exaggeration of the importance of one's own nation or 'race' and rejection of multiculturalism; idea of an 'ethnically homogeneous' society.

- **Racism and xenophobia**

Denigration and exclusion of people of different origins, religions or skin colours; often associated with anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

- **Authoritarianism**

Striving for strong, authoritarian leadership and rejection of democratic decision-making processes.

- **Anti-pluralism**

Rejection of diversity of opinion, equal rights and protection of minorities.

- **Historical revisionism**

Trivialisation or denial of Nazi crimes and relativisation of the Holocaust.

- **Violence**

Justification or use of violence against political opponents, minorities or the state.

- **Conspiracy theories**

Spreading myths about alleged 'world conspiracies' (e.g. Jewish world conspiracy).

4) How can you recognise right-wing extremism?

Right-wing extremism can be recognised by various external and internal characteristics:

- **Symbols and codes**



Use of symbols such as the swastika, SS runes, '88' (for 'Heil Hitler'), '18' (for Adolf Hitler), the Reichskriegsflagge (Imperial War Flag), 'White Power' slogans, Celtic crosses or Thor Steinar clothing.

- **Language and slogans**

Slogans such as 'Foreigners out!', 'Germany for the Germans', 'Lügenpresse' ('lying press'), 'traitors to the people'.

- **Groups**

Membership of or affiliation with right-wing extremist parties (e.g. NPD, Der III. Weg), comradeship groups, skinhead groups, the Identitarian Movement or right-wing extremist online communities.

- **Behaviour**

Participation in right-wing extremist demonstrations, violence against minorities or political opponents, spreading hatred on the internet.

- **Publications and media**

Consumption and distribution of right-wing extremist magazines, music (e.g. right-wing rock), videos and websites.

Summary

Right-wing extremism is an anti-democratic, misanthropic ideology characterised by nationalism, racism, a propensity to violence and the rejection of pluralistic societies. Its origins lie in historical and social developments, and its characteristics are recognisable in symbols, language, group affiliation and behaviour. Right-wing extremism poses a significant threat to democracy, human rights and social peace.

The terms from the slide are defined below and supplemented with an intern. example.

Racism – Definition: Racism is discrimination against people based on their ethnicity, skin colour or origin, combined with the belief that certain groups are superior to others.

International example: The apartheid regime in South Africa (1948–1994), which legally segregated the population according to skin colour and systematically oppressed black people.

National People's Community – Definition: A National Socialist concept that propagated a homogenised, 'racially pure' society that excluded minorities and political opponents.

International example

The military junta in Myanmar (since 2021), which excludes the Rohingya as 'foreigners' from the national community and violently expels them.



Collectivism – Definition: An ideology that places the interests of the community above those of the individual and is often associated with authoritarian systems.

International example

The collectivisation of agriculture under Mao Zedong in China (1958–1962), which led to famine and forced resettlement.

Nationalism – Definition: Excessive patriotism that portrays one's own nation as superior to others and is often associated with hostile attitudes towards foreigners.

International example

The Hindu nationalism movement in India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which discriminates against minorities such as Muslims and strives for a 'pure' Hindu nation.

Leadership Principle – Definition: An authoritarian concept of rule in which a single individual ('leader') exercises unlimited power and criticism is suppressed.

International example

North Korea under Kim Jong-un, where the 'supreme leader' is regarded as an infallible authority and opposition voices are brutally persecuted.

Trivialising National Socialism – Definition: The trivialisation or relativisation of the crimes of National Socialism, for example by denying the Holocaust or equating contemporary politics with Nazi practices.

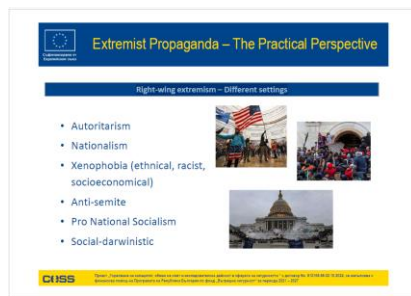
International example

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, who in 2023 publicly described the Holocaust as a 'myth' and compared Israel's policies to those of the Nazis.

These examples show how far-right ideologies and practices appear globally in different contexts.



SLIDE 18 – Right-wing extremism – Different settings



1) Authoritarianism - Definition: A political system where power is concentrated in a single leader or a small elite group, often maintained through coercion and limited political freedoms.

International Example: Russia under Vladimir Putin, where centralized control, suppression of dissent, and manipulated elections exemplify authoritarian governance.

2) Nationalism - Definition: An ideology emphasizing loyalty and devotion to one's nation, often prioritizing its interests above others and promoting cultural superiority.

International Example: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, which promotes Hindu nationalism and policies marginalizing religious minorities like Muslims.

3) Xenophobia - Definition: Prejudice or hostility toward people perceived as foreign, often rooted in ethnic, racial, or socioeconomic differences.

- **Ethnic/Racist Example:** Myanmar's persecution of the Rohingya minority, driven by ethnic and religious discrimination.
- **Socioeconomic Example:** South Africa's periodic xenophobic attacks on African migrants, blaming them for economic struggles.

4) Anti-Semitism - Definition:

Hostility, prejudice, or discrimination against Jewish people, ranging from stereotypes to violent acts.

International Example: Holocaust denial and anti-Jewish rhetoric by political leaders in Iran, including former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

5) Pro National Socialism - Definition: Support for the ideology of the Nazi Party (National Socialism), including authoritarianism, racial hierarchy, and expansionist policies.

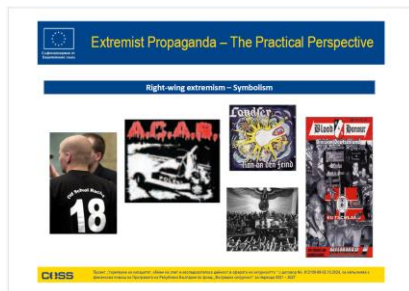
International Example: The now-disbanded Golden Dawn in Greece, a neo-Nazi party involved in violent attacks on immigrants and leftists.



6) Social Darwinism - Definition: The misapplication of “survival of the fittest” to human societies, justifying inequality and opposing social welfare.
International Example: Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro’s rhetoric framing poverty as a “natural” outcome, opposing social programs for marginalized communities.

These examples highlight how these ideologies manifest globally, impacting policies, social dynamics, and human rights.

SLIDE 19 – Right-wing extremism – Symbolism



Here are eight typical symbols of right-wing extremism that are frequently used in right-wing extremist circles:

1. Swastika

Probably the most well-known symbol of National Socialism and right-wing extremism. It stands for the ideology of the Nazi regime and is used by neo-Nazis worldwide. In Germany, it is prohibited to display it in public.

2. SS runes (double sig runes)

The stylised ‘SS’ runes were the insignia of the Schutzstaffel (SS) in the Third Reich and are now used by right-wing extremist groups as a sign of ‘loyalty’ and ‘combat readiness’.

3. Celtic cross

A cross with a ring around it, which was originally an ancient religious symbol but has been appropriated by right-wing extremists as a sign of ‘white supremacy’ and ‘Aryan identity’.

4. Reichskriegsflagge

Historical German war flags, especially the versions from 1871–1918 and 1933–1945, are used by right-wing extremists as a substitute for the banned swastika.



5. '88'

Numerical code for 'Heil Hitler' (H is the eighth letter of the alphabet). Often used as a tattoo, in email addresses or on clothing.

6. '18'

Numerical code for 'Adolf Hitler' (A = 1, H = 8). Also popular as a tattoo or in right-wing extremist codes.

7. Skull

The skull was the symbol of the SS Totenkopfverbände (Death's Head Units) and is now used by neo-Nazis and right-wing extremist groups as a sign of violence.

8. Wolfsangel

An ancient Germanic symbol that was used by various associations during National Socialism and is now used by right-wing extremist groups as a sign of recognition.

Other well-known symbols:

- 'Blood & Honour' lettering (right-wing extremist network)
- 'White Power' fists or slogans
- Black Sun (esoteric right-wing extremist)
- Thor Steinar logo (popular on right-wing extremist clothing)

Note

Many of these symbols are banned in Germany and other countries or are under special observation by the security authorities. They often serve as identification marks and to distinguish right-wing extremist groups.

SLIDE 20 – Religious Extremism & Terrorism



Religious Extremism: Definition, History, and Key Milestones

1) Definition of Religious Extremism

Religious extremism refers to the adherence to radical interpretations of religious doctrines that justify violence, discrimination, or authoritarian governance to impose a divinely ordained order. It rejects pluralism, democratic principles, and human rights, often framing its goals as absolute truths that override secular laws. Key characteristics include:

- **Ideological rigidity:** Literalist interpretations of sacred texts used to legitimize exclusionary or violent actions.
- **Anti-pluralism:** Opposition to diversity of belief, often targeting minorities or dissenters.
- **Use of violence:** Terrorism, coercion, or systemic oppression to achieve religious-political objectives.

2) Historical Overview

Religious extremism has ancient roots but evolved significantly in the modern era. While early examples include the Roman destruction of Carthage (149–146 BCE) as a "genocidal" act driven by supremacist ideology, its contemporary form emerged alongside anti-colonial struggles, geopolitical conflicts, and ideological shifts in the 20th century.

3) Key Milestones in Religious Extremism

18th–19th Centuries: Rise of Revivalist Movements

- **Wahhabism:** Founded in 1744 in Arabia, this puritanical Sunni movement sought to "purify" Islam of perceived innovations, later influencing groups like Al-Qaeda.
- **Anti-Colonial Jihads:** Movements such as Emir Abdelkader's resistance against French rule in Algeria (1830–1847) framed struggles through religious rhetoric.

1979: The Turning Point

- **Iranian Revolution:** Established a theocratic state under Ayatollah Khomeini, inspiring Shia extremism globally.
- **Soviet-Afghan War:** U.S.-backed mujahideen, including Osama bin Laden, fought Soviet forces, laying groundwork for transnational jihadism.
- **Grand Mosque Seizure:** Islamist militants occupied Mecca, prompting Saudi Arabia to promote conservative Wahhabism internationally.

1980s–1990s: Globalization of Extremism



- **Al-Qaeda's Formation (1988):** Bin Laden's network declared war on the U.S., culminating in the 1998 embassy bombings and 9/11 attacks.
- **Salafist Expansion:** Groups like Egypt's Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya targeted governments and civilians, citing "apostasy".

Post-9/11 Era (2001–Present)

- **War on Terror:** U.S.-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq fueled anti-Western sentiment, aiding recruitment for groups like ISIS.
- **Islamic State (2014–2019):** Declared a caliphate in Syria/Iraq, combining medieval theology with modern propaganda to justify genocide and slavery.

Contemporary Trends

- **Far-Right Syncretism:** White supremacists co-opt Christian iconography (e.g., the Crusader cross) to justify attacks like the 2019 Christchurch massacre.
- **Digital Radicalization:** Social media amplifies extremist narratives, as seen in groups like Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), which incites violence over blasphemy accusations.

4) Impact and Evolution

Religious extremism has shifted from localized anti-colonial resistance to a globalized ideology exploiting geopolitical fissures. While deaths from terrorism peaked in 2014, extremist groups continue adapting, blending religious dogma with nationalist or socio-economic grievances. For example:

- **Hindu Nationalism:** India's BJP promotes majoritarian policies against Muslims, echoing historical Islamophobic tropes.
- **Buddhist Extremism:** Myanmar's 969 Movement incited violence against Rohingya Muslims, leading to ethnic cleansing.

Religious extremism remains a fluid threat, requiring nuanced strategies that address root causes like inequality, governance failures, and identity crises

The Role of Religious Extremism in Contemporary Global Conflicts

Religious extremism has emerged as a critical driver of violence and instability in the 21st century, shaping conflicts from the Sahel to South Asia. Its influence extends beyond theological disputes, intersecting with political, economic, and social grievances to fuel protracted wars, terrorism, and systemic human rights abuses. This report examines the multifaceted role



of religious extremism in modern conflicts, drawing on case studies and regional dynamics to analyze its causes, manifestations, and consequences.

1) Ideological and Doctrinal Drivers

Radical Interpretations of Faith

Religious extremism often arises from rigid, exclusionary interpretations of sacred texts that legitimize violence against perceived "outsiders" or "apostates." For example:

- **Salafi-jihadist groups** like ISIS and Al-Qaeda frame their campaigns as divine mandates to establish caliphates governed by strict Sharia law, justifying atrocities against non-Sunnis and secular governments.
- **Hindu nationalist movements** in India weaponize majoritarian ideology to marginalize Muslims, echoing historical Islamophobic tropes.

These groups exploit theological narratives to recruit followers, portraying violence as a sacred duty. The Islamic State's propaganda, for instance, glorifies martyrdom while distorting Quranic verses to validate slavery and genocide.

Sectarian Divides

Religious extremism frequently exacerbates sectarian tensions:

- In **Syria**, Sunni jihadist factions like Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Shiite militias backed by Iran have turned the civil war into a proxy conflict between Sunni and Shia Islam.
- **Myanmar's 969 Movement**, led by Buddhist monks, incited violence against Rohingya Muslims, framing them as existential threats to national identity.

These conflicts are rarely purely theological; they often mask struggles for political power or resources. For instance, Syria's Assad regime manipulated sectarian fears to consolidate Alawite and Christian support during the civil war.

2) Geopolitical and Socioeconomic Catalysts

State Fragility and Governance Failures

Weak governance creates vacuums where extremist groups thrive:

- In **Nigeria**, Boko Haram exploited poverty and state neglect in the northeast to establish territorial control, imposing its interpretation of Islamic law.
- **Afghanistan's Taliban** regained power in 2021 by capitalizing on public disillusionment with corruption and foreign occupation, then enforcing a rigid Sunni theocracy.



Such groups often provide rudimentary services (e.g., healthcare, dispute resolution) to marginalized communities, fostering loyalty.

External Intervention and Proxy Wars

Foreign states frequently weaponize religious extremism for strategic aims:

- **Iran** has funded Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq, countering Sunni dominance while expanding regional influence.
- **Saudi Arabia** and **Qatar** supported Sunni rebels in Syria, inadvertently empowering jihadist factions like ISIS.

These interventions entrench sectarian divides, as seen in Yemen's civil war, where Saudi-Iranian rivalry fuels Houthi-Zaydi militancy.

3) Case Studies: Regional Hotspots

The Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa

- **Religious Armed Conflicts:** Eight of ten active conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa involve religious dimensions, often blending ethnic and ideological strife. Groups like Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab exploit intercommunal tensions, framing their struggles as defense of Islam against "corrupt" governments.
- **Impact:** Violence has displaced millions, with attacks on churches, mosques, and schools deepening communal fractures.

South Asia

- **Afghanistan:** The Taliban's ultraconservative policies persecute Shia Hazaras, Sikhs, and non-Muslims, while ISIS-Khorasan targets religious minorities to destabilize the regime.
- **India:** Hindu nationalist policies under the BJP have normalized anti-Muslim violence, including mob lynchings and mosque demolitions.

Middle East

- **Syria and Iraq:** ISIS's territorial caliphate (2014–2019) exemplified how extremists exploit sectarianism. Its genocide against Yazidis and Shiites relied on religious justifications, while its remnants continue insurgencies.
- **Israel-Palestine:** Hamas's charter invokes Islamic eschatology to reject Israel's existence, framing resistance as a religious obligation.

4) Consequences and Global Implications



Humanitarian Crises

Religious extremism disproportionately affects minorities:

- **Myanmar's Rohingya:** Over 1 million fled genocide led by Buddhist extremists.
- **Syria's Druze:** Caught between regime loyalists and Sunni rebels, they face retaliatory massacres.

Security Challenges

- **Transnational Terrorism:** Groups like ISIS-Khorasan and Al-Qaeda coordinate attacks globally, leveraging encrypted communications and diaspora networks.
- **Weaponized Migration:** Extremist violence in the Sahel drives migration to Europe, straining international relations.

Erosion of Pluralism

Authoritarian regimes and extremists alike suppress religious diversity:

- **Afghanistan:** The Taliban bans non-Muslim practices and enforces mandatory veiling, erasing decades of progress.
- **China:** Uyghur Muslims face detention in "re-education camps" under the guise of countering extremism.

5) Conclusion

Religious extremism remains a potent force in global conflicts, but its roots lie in political manipulation, inequality, and governance failures-not theology alone. Combating it requires dismantling the myth of monolithic "civilizational clashes" while addressing the socio-economic grievances extremists exploit. As seen in Syria and the Sahel, sustainable peace demands inclusive governance, international accountability, and grassroots interfaith solidarity. Without such measures, the cycle of violence will persist, undermining global security and human dignity.

Citations reflect search result indices provided in the user's context.



8. Remarks

Final remarks on Part 1 of the training: **The various extremist ideologies and how propaganda works:**

The first, theory-heavy part of the one-day training course is designed to lay the foundations for the second part.

Participants should now be able to carry out the practical exercises in the second part of the training course.

The order in which the three extremist movements are dealt with has been deliberately chosen. The immediate effects of religious extremism and terrorism in particular are currently leading to a resurgence of right-wing extremism in Europe, which in turn acts as a catalyst for left-wing extremism.

End of Part 1

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