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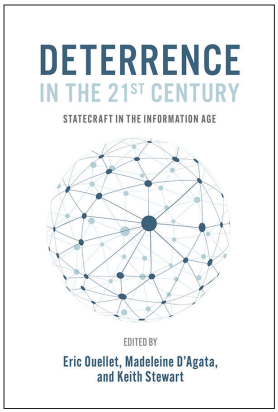

DETERRENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: STATECRAFT IN THE INFORMATION AGE

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Deterrence for Online Radicalization and Recruitment in the Twenty-First Century

Anne Speckhard and Molly Ellenberg

In comparison with other Western countries, Canada may be considered relatively lucky in terms of its history of violent extremism. The Canadian Incidents Database identified 1,405 terrorist or extremist incidents occurring in Canada between 1960 and 2014, in addition to 410 Canadian-affiliated (perpetrator or target) terrorist or extremist incidents occurring outside of Canada during the same period. These incidents include bombings (46 per cent), facility or infrastructure attacks (24 per cent), threats (18 per cent), thefts (3 per cent), armed assaults (2 per cent), unarmed assaults (2 per cent), and others (5 per cent), and were linked to groups representing or claiming to represent a myriad of ideologies (Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society, n.d.).

Canadian Militant Jihadists

Canadian militant jihadists became a focus in the twenty-first century, especially after the events of 11 September 2001. Indeed, Canada had its own landmark terrorist event inspired by al Qaeda that thankfully was thwarted before being carried out by the so-called Toronto 18. The global "war on terror" consumed counterterrorism experts in the West, including in Canada, though, aside from the thwarted Toronto attacks, which would have been of the same magnitude of those of 9/11, there have been only 6 militant jihadist-inspired attacks perpetrated in Canada over the past two decades, with all of them inspired by ISIS and committed during ISIS's heyday between 2014 and 2018. All were committed by so-called lone actors as well; these individuals did not have direct contact with ISIS members but were

inspired to commit violence after engaging with the group's content online. Prior to September 2014, there were no successful jihadist-inspired attacks on Canadian soil, though 5 plots were foiled, and 25 people were arrested in connection to those plots, including the Toronto 18. Another 3 jihadist-inspired plots were thwarted between 2014 and 2020, with 4 people arrested. Harris-Hogan, Dawson, and Amarasingam (2020), whose research on violent extremism in Canada is paramount to any relevant literature review, note that only 3 of the 14 executed or planned jihadist attacks in Canada over the past twenty years targeted civilians, with the majority targeting police, the military, or the government. They also note that all of the attacks involving a single actor using an edged weapon or firearm were successfully executed; Canadian security services were able to thwart planned attacks using explosives, but not smaller-scale attacks that did not require as much preparation. These plots, successful and thwarted, involved 36 individuals who were arrested or killed in the course of the attacks. Another 14 Canadian domestic jihadists have been arrested since 2000 on other terrorism charges, including financing or assisting international attacks. In total, Harris-Hogan, Dawson, and Amarasingam identified 50 Canadian domestic jihadists active over the past twenty years (Harris-Hogan et al., 2020). This number pales in comparison to the approximately 185 Canadian citizens and residents who left Canada to join ISIS in Iraq and Syria as foreign terrorist fighters (FTF), including one who returned and infuriated Canadians by his claims made in the *New York Times*' *Caliphate* podcast series.

In many ways, Canadian FTFs are similar to those of other Western countries, though a far greater number left from western Europe than from North America and their reasons for travel differ in important ways. Western Europe has also faced attacks perpetrated by people who trained with ISIS in Syria before returning home, while Canada and the United States have not. This is despite the fact that somewhere between 10 and 60 Canadian FTFs have returned home since 2017 (Wickson, 2019). Both European and North American ISIS members were also recruited by the ISIS *emni* (intelligence) to train in Syria and then later return to carry out attacks at home. Interviews with Canadian FTFs, family members, friends, and other connected parties conducted by Dawson, Amarasingam, and Bain (2016) found that many Canadian FTFs were radicalizing and travelling to join ISIS in clusters of friends, primarily from larger cities. They also found that Canadian FTFs seemed to cite more "pull" than "push" factors in their decisions to travel to

join ISIS. That is, they did not feel marginalized or discriminated against in Canada, as many Muslims do in the West, but rather joined because they believed that it was their religious duty to make *hijrah* and fight jihad (Dawson et al., 2016). Indeed, many left at a time when ISIS was advertising itself as a functioning state. ISIS cadres were sending around pictures of themselves hanging out in villas with pools and eating well, while claiming that Canadians holed up in snow needed to come help their Muslim brothers and sisters suffering under Assad's atrocities.

Canadian White Supremacists

Of course, militant jihadists are not the only terrorists who have posed a threat to Canada in the past, nor are they the only terrorists who will pose a threat to Canada in the coming decade. White supremacists and other far-right violent extremists are a growing threat in Canada, and indeed throughout the Western world. These groups have been active in Canada for decades but have long been underestimated. As a case in point, a study in the *Canadian Review of Sociology* (conducted in 1993 and published in 1997) concluded that "the political consciousness of skinheads is rooted in extreme violence and lacks coherence: this, combined with the structure of their groups and their histories of [personal] oppression, serves to inhibit long-term political activity" (Baron, 1997, p. 125). Even in 2015, another study concluded that the Extreme Right was a "negligible" force in Canada (Ambrose & Mudde, 2015).

More recent research, and the testimony presented in this chapter, demonstrate that these predictions were wrong. There is evidence that increased anti-immigrant and Islamophobic rhetoric in Canadian local and national politics may have contributed to a "climate of hate" that empowered some far-right extremists, and that police and security services in Canada, as in other Western countries, have underestimated the threat of far-right extremists in comparison to militant jihadists (Perry & Scrivens, 2018). Likewise, with their neighbour having a president seemingly encouraging white supremacists and groups like the Proud Boys, vulnerable Canadians were undoubtedly also influenced to have a less dim view of such groups. Indeed, one study attributes the rise of white supremacist violence and hate crimes in Canada, which paralleled trends in the United States, to the rhetoric and election of former president Donald Trump, with a flyer posted on the McGill University campus reading, "Tired of anti-white propaganda? It's time to MAKE CANADA GREAT AGAIN!" The article acknowledged, however, that Canada has an

insidious far-right history, specifically the neo-Nazi skinhead movement that began to arise in the 1970s, influenced by the British white power music scene (Perry et al., 2018). Perry and Scrivens (2015) note that far-right violent extremists in Canada, who include more traditional white supremacist groups (including Canadian chapters and offshoots of American groups) as well as sovereign citizens and some single-issue groups, often engage in non-ideological criminality, such as drug dealing and fighting (Perry & Scrivens, 2015). This is a key difference between white supremacist violent extremists and militant jihadists who may have histories of non-ideological crime. Whereas the former continue their criminality, the latter often refrain from drug use and criminality that is not related to the militant jihadist cause. However, there are plenty of non-ideological criminals who have been recruited into militant jihad and whose recruiters encouraged them to continue their criminal activities against the *kuffar* (unbelievers), giving a share of the proceeds to the jihadist cause. It is also critical to note that not all white supremacy in Canada is imported. The Proud Boys, a far-right group that has recently gained a great deal of media attention, is typically identified as an American group, yet its founder, Gavin McInnes, is Canadian (Leichnitz, 2020). Finally, involuntary celibates, or incels, are often identified as part of the Far Right, given their misogynistic views and the overlap between participation on incel and white supremacist web forums. However, the incel ideology, the "blackpill," does not have any white supremacist connotations (Speckhard et al., 2021). Canada has experienced a few incel-related attacks, including Alek Minassian's 2018 Toronto van attack, which killed ten people, and the government deciding in 2020 to charge a minor with a terrorism offence after he fatally stabbed a woman (Hoffman et al., 2020).

Online Radicalization and Recruitment

ONLINE VIOLENT EXTREMIST ACTIVITY IN CANADA

Unsurprisingly, given the ubiquity of social media in people's daily lives and the increasing evidence of terrorists' adept use of social media for radicalization and recruitment, social media has played a role in Canadian radicalization and recruitment. A 2018 study of Canadians involved in militant jihadist terrorism since 2012 found that for at least twenty-one of the thirty-two individuals for whom information on radicalization was available, the Internet played a role in the radicalization process. The authors found that at least

half of the subjects who were converts to Islam became radicalized online, and that at least twenty-six individuals in the sample used the Internet to post support for terrorism or to communicate with other violent extremists after they became radicalized. Combining these data, they concluded that "the Internet played a role either during or after the radicalization process of at least 76 percent (n = 39) of the sample" (Bastug et al., 2018, p. 631).

Scrivens and Amarasingam (2020) examined far-right extremism on Facebook, finding that those individuals whom they identified could be categorized as members of either anti-Islam or "white Canadian pride" groups. Both groups targeted Islam and shared Islamophobic posts, but the latter was more focused on condemning the Canadian government for its stance on immigration more generally, which were supposedly destroying traditional Canadian values. The study also found that these groups were not growing in popularity at any meaningful rate, but that they do not appear to be taken down by Facebook at the same rate as jihadist groups. The authors noted, however, that the more extreme far-right groups may not be using Facebook at all, and are instead promoting their ideology on platforms such as Reddit, 4chan, 8chan, and Gab (Scrivens & Amarasingam, 2020). Likewise, it is notable that immediately following the 6 January Capitol Hill riots, Facebook and other mainstream social media platforms took a more aggressive stance against such accounts.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

There is extensive evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has been linked to increased violent extremist radicalization and recruitment online. Not only are people simply spending more time online during lockdowns, especially young people who might otherwise be in school, but the anxiety regarding public health and the economy has led many to search for some sense of certainty online. Indeed, there is evidence that feelings of personal uncertainty, related to one's health or financial security, for instance, can increase people's tendency to identify with a group that provides them with a sense of certainty (Hogg & Blaylock, 2011). This certainty may be provided by conspiracy theories such as those spread by militant jihadist and white supremacist groups alike. Such conspiracy theories and disinformation were accompanied by a slew of hate crimes, especially against Asian Americans during the early months of the pandemic (Kruglanski et al., 2020). The danger of conspiracy theories morphing from online communities to groups of violent actors was

put on full display on 6 January 2021 on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, where adherents of the QAnon conspiracy were among the rioters attempting to stop the peaceful transfer of power in the United States (Paresky et al., 2021).

In Canada specifically, a large study (n = 644) found that COVID-19 risk perception was similar to that in the United States in that it was highly politically polarized. Despite the fact that no members of the Canadian Parliament were found to be downplaying the seriousness of the virus, as many American legislators did, Canadian conservatives nevertheless viewed the virus as less severe than liberals did. Misperceptions related to a reduced risk perception included conspiracy theories believed by small minorities of Canadians. These included claims that the coronavirus was created in a lab (6.99 per cent), that the coronavirus was created as a bio-weapon (5.66 per cent), that a cure for the coronavirus had already been discovered at the time of the study but was being suppressed by people who wanted the pandemic to continue (3.57 per cent), and that the coronavirus was probably a hoax (0.62 per cent) (Pennycook et al., 2020). Interestingly, while the QAnon conspiracy is largely centred around the United States government, it also has followers in other countries, including Canada. One such adherent was arrested in July 2020 for attempting to assassinate Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whom the perpetrator believed was trying to "turn Canada into a communist dictatorship." One Canadian QAnon social media channel alleged that Hillary Clinton and former Canadian prime minister Paul Martin were working together to sell children, and that Trudeau was aware of their criminal behaviour (Ling, 2020).

Beyond QAnon, the researchers at Moonshot CVE (2020) found that there was a marked increase in engagement with online extremist content in Canada's largest cities since the onset of COVID-19 restrictions. Specifically, weekly searches for violent far-right content increased by an average of 18.5 per cent. Such content included podcasts by purveyors of misinformation and conspiracies such as Alex Jones, a Nazi-glorifying documentary entitled *The Greatest Story Never Told*, forums and social networks favoured by white supremacists, and high-risk searches such as "how to make a Molotov cocktail" and "how to join Ku Klux Klan" (Moonshot CVE, 2020).

The Present Study

It is clear from recent research that both Canadian militant jihadists and white supremacist violent extremists pose a risk that has yet to be fully understood. Over the next decade, online recruitment and radicalization are likely to become even more of a threat than they have been previously, and such online behaviour could translate into violent, in-person crime. Moreover, while the primary militant jihadist threat in Canada, Canadians joining ISIS abroad, appears to have abated with the territorial defeat of the Caliphate, the risk of an ISIS resurgence remains and is in fact growing. Thus, preventing future waves of Canadian domestic attacks as well as FTFs is paramount. The present study examines all of these risks. First, we examine the prevalence of online radicalization and recruitment among a sample of 261 ISIS returnees, defectors, and imprisoned cadres. We then explore the modes by which Canadian FTFs specifically were recruited to join ISIS abroad, and their motivations for doing so. We then provide in-depth case studies of three Canadian FTFs and three Canadian former white supremacists, focusing on what can be learned for future counterterrorism efforts aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism. Finally, we discuss strategies for deterring violent extremist radicalization. We argue that in the twenty-first century, with people more connected than ever through social media, efforts at deterrence must be widespread and well publicized, including through online campaigns. In Canada specifically, deterrence by denial—reducing the perceived benefits of joining a violent extremist group—may be a prudent course of action given that many Canadian violent extremists appear to be pulled toward violent extremist groups by the opportunity to gain a sense of meaning, significance, and purpose, rather than pushed out of mainstream society via discrimination or marginalization.

METHOD

The present study utilizes interview data from two larger projects aimed at understanding the vulnerabilities, motivations, influences, roles, experiences, and sources of disillusionment of male and female ISIS and far-right violent extremist group members. The study sought to gain access to any member of ISIS or a far-right violent extremist group, male or female, whether a defector, returnee from the battleground, or imprisoned ISIS cadre, and to then conduct a semi-structured, video-recorded, in-depth psychological interview with that person. The lead researcher worked with prison officials, fixers,

translators, and research associates, who arranged access to, video recorded, and translated the interviews. Moreover, in six cases, these individuals carried out the interview in the researcher's absence, in one case due to the ISIS cadre arriving unannounced, in the second due to the interviewee refusing to talk to a woman, and in the last four due to the COVID-19 pandemic and technical difficulties of achieving a stable video link-up.

The sample for this study is by necessity a convenience sample, as it is extremely difficult to gain safe access to ISIS cadres and to obtain their informed consent for an in-depth interview; thus, random sampling is not possible. The first author, who served as interviewer, attempted to obtain a representative sample in terms of requesting access to women as well as men and attempting to talk to a wide range of nationalities and ethnicities, age groups, and roles fulfilled within ISIS.

Interview Procedure and Ethical Considerations

The authors of this study are associated with an independent, non-profit think tank with its own internal institutional review board (IRB) modelled after the first author's previous experience with the RAND Corporation's IRB. In all cases, the semi-structured interview started with an informed consent process followed by a brief history of the interviewee focusing on early childhood and upbringing and covering life experiences prior to becoming interested in ISIS or their far-right group. Demographic details were gleaned during this portion of the interview, as were vulnerabilities that may have impacted the individual's decision to join their group. In the case of ISIS cadres, questions then turned to how the individual learned about the conflicts in Syria, and about ISIS, and became interested in travelling and/or joining, as not all of the interviewees actually travelled to live under ISIS; a few acted as recruiters at home. Similarly, members of far-right groups were asked how they first learned about their group and its ideology. Questions explored the various motivations for joining in order to obtain a detailed recruitment history: how the individual interacted with their group prior to joining; whether recruitment took place in person or over the Internet, or both; how travel was arranged and occurred; intake procedures and experiences with other militant or terrorist groups prior to joining their group; and training and indoctrination. The interview then turned to the interviewee's experiences in their group: family, living, and work experiences, including fighting and job history; the positive and negative aspects of the individual's experience

in their group; possible disillusionment and doubts; traumatic experiences; experience and/or knowledge about one's own or others' attempts to escape; being, or witnessing others, being punished or tortured; imprisonment; the owning of slaves; treatment of women and the prevalence of marriages. The interview covered where the individual worked and lived during his or her time in their group and changes over time in orientation to the group and its ideology, which often ranged from strongly endorsing it to wanting to leave. The semi-structured nature of the interview ensured that participants were asked the same questions about their emotional states throughout their trajectories into and out of terrorism, regardless of gender. Moreover, the interviewer found that all interviewees, including men, found it easy to express themselves emotionally when in the presence of a non-judgmental female psychologist.

In accordance with American Psychological Association guidelines and United States legal standards, a strict human-subjects protocol was followed in which the researchers introduced themselves and the project, explained the goals of learning about ISIS and/or the Far Right, and noted that the interview would be video recorded with the additional goal of using video-recorded material of anyone willing to denounce the group to later create short counter-narrative videos. These videos use insider testimonies denouncing ISIS and white supremacist groups in order to disrupt these groups' online and face-to-face recruitment and to de-legitimize the groups and their ideologies. The subjects were warned not to incriminate themselves and to refrain from speaking about crimes they had not already confessed to the authorities, but rather to speak about what they had witnessed inside their groups. Likewise, subjects were told they could refuse to answer any questions, end the interview at any point, and could have their faces blurred and names changed on the counter-narrative video if they agreed to it. Subjects' real names are used in both the counter-narrative videos and the present study only for those individuals who gave explicit consent to do so. Subjects who did not explicitly agree to use their real names in counter-narrative videos and in research papers were given pseudonyms. Prisoners are considered a vulnerable population of research subjects, so careful precautions were taken to ensure that prisoners were not coerced into participating in the research and that there were no repercussions for not participating. The interviewer also made clear to the participants that she was not an attorney or country

government official and could not provide them with legal advice or assistance regarding their situation.

Risks to the subjects included being harmed by members of their respective groups for denouncing the group, although for those who judged such punishment to be a significant risk, the researchers agreed to change their names and blur their faces and leave out identifying details. Likewise, there were risks of becoming emotionally distraught during the interview, but this was mitigated by ensuring that interviews were conducted by an experienced psychologist who slowed things down and offered support when discussing emotionally fraught subjects. The rewards of participating for the subjects were primarily to protect others from undergoing a similar negative experience with their respective groups and having the opportunity to sort through many of their motivations, vulnerabilities, and experiences in the group with a compassionate psychologist over the course of an hour or more. The majority of interviewees thanked the researcher for the interview.

Statistical Analyses

The data presented in this chapter are both qualitative and quantitative. The researchers used the interviewer's notes, transcribed interviews, and video-recorded interviews to perform a comprehensive thematic analysis, which, along with the interview questions, decided a priori, was then used to create 342 variables on which the semi-structured interviews were coded. The 342 variables related to the participants' demographic information, life experiences, motivations and influences for joining their groups, travel to Syria or Iraq if applicable, roles and experiences in the group, sources of disillusionment with the group, and present feelings about the group and each participant's actions within the group. The second author coded the interviews on 342 variables and conducted the data analysis for this chapter in the SPSS data-analysis software.

Quantitative Results

ONLINE RECRUITMENT

The full sample. Of the 263 ISIS returnees, defectors, and imprisoned cadres interviewed by the first author, 260 are analyzed herein. This number includes 211 men and 49 women. Of those, 50.8 per cent were influenced or recruited to join ISIS, at least in part, over the Internet. This includes watching videos

produced by ISIS, other groups, or by Syrian civilians online, communicating over social media with friends or family who had already joined the group, or communicating directly with ISIS recruiters. Of the entire sample, 20.0 per cent were *solely* influenced or recruited to join ISIS via these online methods. Even if their online communication was with people they already knew, they had never spoken to these friends or family members in person about ISIS or its ideology. Of course, such recruitment does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in the psychosocial context of push and pull factors motivating individuals' decisions to join.

Foreign terrorist fighters. When people living in Iraq and Syria ("locals") were excluded from the sample, the prevalence of online recruitment and radicalization grew. Of the 260 analyzed interviews, 162 were with foreigners, though not all actually travelled to join ISIS—they either became recruiters at home or were thwarted before making it to Syria. Of the 162, 122 were men and 40 were women. Any online recruitment or influence was reported by 74.1 per cent of the foreigners, and 29.0 per cent reported being influenced and recruited to join ISIS solely over the Internet.

Westerners. In approaching the specific numbers of Canadians influenced or recruited to join ISIS over the Internet, we may first narrow the sample down to Westerners. This sample includes those from the United States, Canada, Australia, and Europe, including Turkey and the Balkan countries, which are aspiring or candidate European Union members. Non-EU European countries, including the United Kingdom and Switzerland, are also included. This sample includes 114 people (86 men and 28 women). Once again, this narrowing of the sample increased the prevalence of online influence and recruitment, with 77.2 per cent reporting any Internet influence or recruitment and 29.8 per cent reporting sole Internet influence and recruitment.

Canadians. The final sample includes only those who were living in Canada at the time that they joined ISIS (one man was a dual British-Canadian citizen and is not included because he did not live in Canada). Three men and 1 woman were therefore included. Of those, 3 reported any online influence or recruitment (75 per cent) and 1 (25 per cent) reported sole Internet influence and recruitment. Two of the men and the woman's stories are explored in depth in a later section of this chapter. The third man's story is not reported out of respect for his privacy.

MOTIVATIONS

The full sample. Regardless of how they were influenced and recruited to join ISIS, the ISIS defectors, returnees, and imprisoned cadres varied in terms of their reasons for actually joining. Of the full sample of 260, the most commonly reported motivations were the desire to pursue or solidify their Islamic identity (31.5 per cent), the desire to help the Syrian people, whom ISIS claimed to be defending (30.8 per cent), and the desire to build and live under a true Islamic Caliphate (23.1 per cent).

Foreign terrorist fighters. Among the 162 foreigners, the most commonly reported motivations were also the desire to help the Syrian people (48.1 per cent), the desire to pursue or solidify their Islamic identity (43.2 per cent), and the desire to build and live under the Caliphate (29.0 per cent). The higher prevalence of these motivations among foreigners as compared to the entire sample can be attributed to fewer foreigners being motivated by ISIS's promise to fulfill their basic needs (15.0 per cent in the entire sample versus 4.9 per cent for foreigners) and to give them employment (17.3 per cent for the entire sample versus 4.3 per cent for foreigners).

Westerners. Narrowed down even further, the 111 Westerners were primarily motivated by the desire to help the Syrian people (52.6 per cent), pursue or solidify their Islamic identity (48.2 per cent), and the desire to build and live under the Caliphate (30.7 per cent). Once again, the proportion of people motivated by basic needs and employment shrunk, though other motivations were more common among Westerners than foreigners in general and the entire sample—namely, the "push" factor of discrimination in their home countries (10.0 per cent for the whole sample versus 15.4 per cent for foreigners and 20.2 per cent for Westerners).

Canadians. None of the Canadians were motivated by basic needs or employment. Two of the 4 were motivated by the desire to pursue or solidify their Islamic identity, and 3 of the 4 were motivated by the desire to feel personally significant. Three were also motivated by the desire to help the Syrian people. One Canadian each was motivated by the prospect of adventure, the prospect of romance, the desire to pursue or solidify their masculine identity, the desire to pursue or solidify their feminine identity, anger at the Assad regime, the desire to build and live under the Caliphate, the desire to engage in jihad, belief in the *takfir* ideology, and the belief that they would be redeemed or forgiven in God's eyes by joining ISIS. Notably, none of the Canadians were

motivated by any societal push factors: discrimination, harassment by the police, or arrests related to their ideology.

Qualitative Narratives

The above-mentioned data regarding Canadian ISIS members cannot be considered representative, and the authors' current sample of white supremacists remains too small to glean meaningful quantitative data. However, a great deal can be learned from case studies of Canadian violent extremists of different genders, ages, religious and ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and ideologies. What follows are the personal narratives describing the trajectories into and out of violent extremism of three Canadian ISIS members and three Canadian white supremacists.

PROFILES OF CANADIAN ISIS MEMBERS

Mohammed Khalifa was thirty-six years old at the time of his interview in an SDF (or Syrian Democratic Forces) prison. Born in Saudi Arabia to an Ethiopian family, he moved to Canada at age five. He describes his family as happy, and he has a college degree in computer systems. At eighteen, he became more religious, and at twenty-three he intently watched the arrests of the "Toronto 18," fourteen adults and four minors who were plotting to enact al Qaeda–inspired attacks in southern Ontario. A few years later, he says, "I was listening to lectures by Anwar al Awlaki." He was inspired by "the fact that he was approaching the life of the Prophet Mohammed and bringing it into a modern context and interspersing it with a jihad narrative." At the same time, in 2013, "I started following Ahrar al Sham on [a] website and [watched] videos . . . of going out to battle, shooting a tank, firing off a tank artillery, stuff like that. I knew what was going on [in Syria]; I supported the cause." The combination of his support for the Syrian cause and believing the jihad narrative as being the authentic interpretation of Islam inspired by al Awlaki's lectures drove Khalifa to decide to travel to Syria.

He reached out to different sources online and finally found an article describing a hotel in Reyhanli, Turkey, where men with long beards who looked like jihadis were gathering before crossing the border into Syria. Khalifa saved his money, and, in the spring of 2013, he boarded a flight to Cairo. From there, he says, "I took a flight to Hatay. From Hatay, it was close to the border, I thought I'd look around and I took a taxi to Reyhanli. I talked to the driver, he made it seem easy to cross, so I went straight to the border gate." From

there, he was taken by bus to the Syrian side, where he told someone that he wanted to join Jaish alMuhajireen walAnsar, a group consisting of foreigners, most from the North Caucasus, that in 2015 pledged allegiance in Syria to Jabhat alNusra. As he explains, "I was there to fight the Syrian regime, ISIS was not even on my mind until it actually came up itself. They had already expanded into Syria, but even then, it was not on my mind." His unit within Jaish alMuhajireen walAnsar pledged itself to ISIS in November 2013, and Khalifa did the same.

In the early days of ISIS, the group was less organized. Khalifa did not undergo any weapons training or ideological indoctrination, though he says, "In Raqqa, I attended a [shariah] course out of my own volition." In January of 2014, "the whole conflict kicked off," and Khalifa served as a fighter and a guard but subsequently decided he wanted to focus on his religious studies. Later, "the ISIS media heard I knew English and Arabic and they took me to Raqqa." In ISIS's media department, Khalifa translated the group's propaganda material and did voiceovers for videos to be posted on Telegram. Around the same time, in the summer of 2014, he got married to a woman from Kenya who was studying medicine in Sudan. Explaining how he met her, Khalifa says, "There was a friend in Muhajireen walAnsar, he was Portuguese, he knew my wife online. . . . We were talking online, and I helped her with the process, setting it all up. She was happy when she came." Khalifa and his wife had two children, the first in a hospital in Raqqa and the second at home, assisted by a midwife. Their life was happy, and Khalifa's wife hoped to finish her medical training at an ISIS-run school in Mayadeen. She was not able to do so, as she and her family fled from village to village trying to avoid bombings by the Syrian regime. Still, Khalifa admits that he did not become disillusioned with ISIS until after he was captured, and that he and his family were some of the last to remain in ISIS's last stronghold of Baghouz, where Khalifa left his media job to fight until the end. He recalls, "Basically, during the last offensive from Hajin to Baghouz . . . I decided to go out and fight instead of staying with media. [I was] in a gun battle [and was] taken by [the] SDF. Basically, they called us to surrender. I was out of ammo, so I came out."

Working in the media department, it was his job to make ISIS look good, but Khalifa states that when he met men in prison who had actually experienced the atrocities he had previously dismissed as "baseless rumours," he began to think more critically about ISIS, though he still appears to deny many of ISIS's atrocities. Khalifa explains, "That ISIS was committing a lot

of injustice and oppression behind the scenes [I was] not aware of. To a certain degree, based on what I've heard, the way they operated in their prison is not Islamic." He goes on, "Even though I don't support them anymore, I don't want to speak out against them. . . . Maybe there is the hope that they would realize what they were doing and change for the better." The remorse he feels now relates to the fact that "I ignored what was going on. I ignored the warning signals. I dismissed prematurely." Seemingly failing to grasp the power and influence of ISIS's propaganda in fomenting violence both in Syria and Iraq and worldwide, he says, "I hope I didn't take part in [the atrocities]."

Henricki is another Canadian man in his late thirties. Born in Vancouver, Henricki is of Trinidadian-Indian descent. Henricki's parents separated when he was a baby, and after his mother remarried a strict prison officer, Henricki spent much of his time with his grandparents in Trinidad. Henricki graduated from college with a degree in business and civil engineering and was briefly married, though he and his wife divorced before he left for Syria. Henricki describes his process of deciding to travel to Syria for what he says were purely humanitarian purposes. He recalls that a work colleague knew he was Muslim and asked him about Syria:

> She was telling me about the news she was hearing. [I thought] let me take a look and see what it's about. I watched the news to keep tabs on it. [In] 2012 or 2013, I saw a [video on] YouTube of a little girl bombed and she was crying and her whole family [had been] killed. It affected me. My older brother, he was working in Africa with kids, we are all humanitarian.

In December of 2014, Henricki saw a video in which Syrians were calling out for the Muslims of the world to come and help them, that the regime was killing their sons, fathers, daughters. In March of 2015, Henricki flew to Turkey with a group of friends. By 2015, ISIS's actions were well-known, and Henricki therefore kept his travels a secret. When his mother found out about his plans a few days before he left, Henricki told her, "You see what's going on there, we can't sit and not help the people. I told her I'll be back. I'll be there for a short while." This statement, along with the way he claimed to have used his money in the first five months he was in Syria, suggest that Henricki did intend to offer humanitarian aid in Syria. He says that before he was "taken" by ISIS, he spent $6,000 paying a man he met in Aleppo to

procure "medication for the kids, Pampers, baby food, milk, rice, flour, . . . tablets to treat the water."

Henricki's later experience with ISIS was highly disillusioning: "In 2016, I was accused of being a spy and put in prison." In prison, he was tortured by being beaten while suspended such that he was forced to stand on his toes. He was starved and waterboarded before being released after "they found nothing on me." It was during this time that the ISIS *emni* approached Henricki and tried to recruit him to return home to enter the United States to conduct an attack. Henricki claims he refused the offer. Later, he and his wife (who is profiled later in this chapter) tried to escape. They were caught and put in prison. His wife was tortured in prison and suffered a miscarriage after being released. The pair could not afford to pay a smuggler to take them out of ISIS territory, and they remained in the Caliphate until Baghouz. It was there that Henricki's hatred for ISIS grew stronger:

> People were sleeping in the street, no food. If there was food, you couldn't afford it. The ISIS fighters had food. I was angry, I actually developed a hate for this organization, for the people on top. They don't know the religion. I'm not a scholar; I can't read a book in Arabic, but they interpret Islam as they want to suit their ways, which is extremism, and . . . if you are against them, you will be killed. I believe [the ISIS leadership] escaped. They were generating $100,000 a day by oil; they could afford to feed the people, and it was not happening. Women were asking for money to buy milk for their kids, women whose husbands have passed away, and they are supposed to be taking care of them, but they are begging on the street.

Eventually, Henricki, his wife, and a group of other disillusioned people found an abandoned van and drove to an American checkpoint, where they surrendered. He insists that if he had known the truth about ISIS, he never would have joined, and he encourages others to "seek knowledge that will give you the best of advice and the truthful knowledge, not how this organization made propaganda." He says that the only positive aspect of his time with ISIS was that he met his wife during this period, "who I really love," and that he wants to go back to Canada with her. When told by the interviewer

that she would try to talk to his wife, Henricki responded, "Tell her every day I pray for her."

Kimberly Pullman married Henricki after travelling to Syria. Her life was fraught with trauma prior to joining ISIS. Her father was addicted to amphetamines and died of leukemia when Kimberly was nineteen. She has three children, some of whom were the result of rape. After having her children, Kimberly converted to Islam in 2004, when she was thirty. She married a Kuwaiti man and moved to the Middle East with her children, but her new husband mistreated her children and threatened her with violence. She returned to Canada, where she met an Egyptian imam who counselled her and her children, even taking them on picnics with his wife, but he raped her as well. During his trial for a series of rapes, in which Kimberly did not testify, Kimberly experienced deeply distressing PTSD symptoms and had to stop taking university classes. Her children moved out and she was about to lose her home when she came across a man on Twitter. He asked her why she had gotten divorced, and she told him what happened in Kuwait. He responded that when Kuwait is "back in actual Muslim hands, we will go and restore you and your children's honour." Kimberly recalls, "That is something I haven't had. Giving back a purity that was taken away was something I wanted so badly, that is something that he didn't hold against me, and then that pulled me in."

Kimberly was deeply suicidal at the time she married this man over the Internet; during this time, he continued to recruit her, telling her she should come join in ISIS's Caliphate, and threatening divorce if she didn't travel. She remembers, "We are taught in Islam that your husband is the emir of your life." He husband continued to lure her in: "Come where you are loved, your children don't even see you, you have skills, you shouldn't be alone." Kimberly was suicidal at the time and was taking medication to help with her insomnia. She says that she could not afford therapy. Seeing videos of suffering Syrian civilians, she thought, "If I was going to die, at least I could die helping children. . . . I felt if I did something good, it would overwrite the bad that had happened." In 2015, Kimberly flew to Antalya, Turkey, and was brought to Raqqa. Shortly after she left Canada, a letter arrived indicating that she had qualified for disability benefits due to her severe mental illness. Kimberly now states she would never have left Canada had she known she would be adjudicated as mentally disabled and provided for.

Kimberly's new husband was emotionally abusive, although she claimed that he did not need to hit her because she was so weak and vulnerable. He later *takfired* her (declared her an apostate) and left her in a *madhafa*. To leave the *madhafa*, Kimberly remarried, this time to Henricki, in 2016. True to her desire to do humanitarian work, Kimberly worked in a hospital in Raqqa as a nurse but was horrified by the injuries she saw from bombings and was also becoming deeply disillusioned by ISIS's un-Islamic actions. Henricki and Pullman tried once to escape and were thrown in prison. In the ISIS prison, Kimberly was raped yet again. She recounts, "They accused me of being a spy. The first night, they pulled me out and you could hear the screams down the hallway, and they made me watch. They said if I didn't start giving [them] information, this was going to happen to me too." Before being released from prison with "a massive concussion," Kimberly was forced to sign her name in blood on a statement saying that she would be killed if she tried to escape again. She did not tell Henricki exactly what happened to her in prison, as she did not trust him to not react violently to the fact that she had been raped.

By the time they got to Baghouz, Kimberly had completely lost her will to live. She claims that she kept going in order to save the lives of the orphaned children for whom she was caring. Eventually, they made it to SDF territory. Sick with lupus and hepatitis, she yearns to go home and feels "abandoned by the Canadian government." She says that ISIS never established a true Caliphate, and that she has turned away from the group completely. Indeed, Pullman's case is of a severely mentally disturbed individual suffering from repeated rapes and violence prior to her travel to Syria in a suicidal state, with her mental condition continuing to worsen over time as the traumas continued to pile up. She has many times expressed suicidal ideation to the first author and requires medication for her mental suffering and emotional anguish, if not immediate psychiatric hospitalization, none of which are possible while she remains in SDF detention.

PROFILES OF CANADIAN MEMBERS OF THE FAR RIGHT

Brad Galloway, aged forty, is a prominent former white supremacist from Toronto who is now active in trying to pull others out of the world of violent extremism. Adopted as a baby, Brad never felt as though he had a solid identity or secure attachment to his adopted family, where he didn't feel that he fit in. Early in his high school years, he began selling drugs and fighting, landing in the juvenile justice system, which, he says, was not yet focused on harm

reduction and prevention. Brad says his risk-taking behaviours stemmed in large part from the traumatic experience of hearing about a friend dying in a car accident when he was twelve years old. He recounts, "I got into risky behaviour because I didn't care. If she could be killed, maybe I'll die, maybe I won't." He recognizes now that this "was my way of processing sadness. She was a very good person. I thought death was for bad or old people." Brad was also into the rave and punk music scene of the 1990s. Though Brad had friends of different races growing up, he had also grown up hearing his grandparents make racist comments and jokes. He had been inured to racism and was attracted to the culture of white power music after being introduced to it be a friend he met in a bar. He trusted this man and instantly accepted the white supremacist ideology of the group he was invited to join so that he could fit in. Brad claims that he didn't become a Holocaust denier, but "I thought we should stop immigration and create a white enclave." He thought random acts like vandalism of synagogues did not advance the white cause, and yet he admits that he was wearing a shirt with a swastika on it on the day he got into a violent fight and was subsequently treated by a Jewish doctor, an event on which he later reflected when he decided to leave the movement. Looking back, Brad describes his continued involvement with the group as an addiction to a peer group that gave him a sense of freedom, belonging, and empowerment.

Brad became a major recruiter for the white supremacist cause, utilizing early Internet chatrooms and web forums like Stormfront. In 1995, he established a Canadian chapter of Volksfront, originally started in Portland, Oregon. Volksfront's mission was to buy land in the United States and Canada in order to create a white ethno-state. They also raised money for and wrote letters to imprisoned hate crime offenders, people they called "prisoners of war." Brad was a leader in his group but found it stressful and depressing to try to manage violent and unstable people who were always fighting, even with each other. He found it exhausting to wake up with hate in his heart. The cause was about saving the white race, he thought, and yet most of its adherents were simply "getting arrested and doing horrific things." There was also a lot of in-fighting between different groups, and Brad was afraid for his life and his family's safety. Likewise, he began realizing all of the counter-examples to the hatred of minorities he was preaching, including looking back at the kind Jewish doctor who treated him without saying a word while he was wearing a swastika-adorned T-shirt.

When Brad left the movement, he was cut off from all of his friends and once again felt lost. Soon after, he was "doxed," meaning that his personal information was revealed in order to identify him as a white supremacist, and he lost his job as a result. Brad struggled trying to keep his family afloat for two to three years afterward. In 2015, however, he met a representative of a group called Life After Hate. He recalls, "That was a real turning point for me. Now I've met another person who left these groups, and we can talk about it." While Brad had also tried therapy, he felt alienated by the fact that professionals were uncomfortable hearing about his struggle to overcome the traumas and reasons behind his white supremacism. "I couldn't talk in therapy because they were too uncomfortable hearing about the violence," Brad recalls. He has now started telling his story to practitioners and academics, leading to a job as a research assistant, which has given him a new sense of purpose.

Despite all of the progress he has made, Brad still recognizes the journey from disengagement to de-radicalization is a lengthy process. For him, it took four years of work, including intense study of other races and religions. About the newer hate groups prevalent now, Brad says, "People think these groups evolve. I don't think they do. They change their look, their name. We see militia groups, Proud Boys, it's all about the way I got in. . . . They are not really using anything brand new to recruit people, [just] using differences, us and them." He thinks about all of the different aspects that contribute to people joining white supremacist groups: trauma, identity crises, insecure attachment, toxic masculinity. Brad wants the public to understand that even though they have involved themselves in hate groups, these people are human, and that with compassionate interventions, they can change.

Josh Chernofsky is thirty-six years old, born to a Jewish family in Toronto. A tall, skinny child with respiratory problems, Josh was bullied in school for his inability to succeed in gym class. With no friends with whom to bond, he spent most of his time playing video games. Josh went to university for a year and a half before dropping out due to mental health challenges. He then started working as a security guard. As a plainclothes private investigator, Josh was pursuing a shoplifter when he lost his balance and fell. His head was injured, and he experienced post-traumatic stress disorder.

After a few years of moving from job to job, Josh was working as a process server when he heard about a protest from a friend. As he recalls it, "Saturday morning, I was bored and antsy, so I decided to check it out." Josh arrived at the protest area and saw members of a variety of different groups carrying

Canadian flags. They were Proud Boys, Josh learned, and they were being surrounded by people in black masks, whom Josh identified as Antifa. He recalls that he "didn't understand why they were attacking these people with the flags. Why were they preventing people from expressing themselves; I was always a really strong proponent of that." After leaving the protest, Josh followed the Proud Boys on YouTube and contacted them in order to find out about future events.

Josh remembers that the second Proud Boys event he attended ended in a violent brawl with Antifa. Josh had never been in a fight before, and after the altercation with Antifa, he explains, "I wanted to get them even more." At the time, Josh claims, the Proud Boys were not talking about their ideology, though he also admits adhering to some of their core beliefs: "I felt like I was standing up for Canada. There were some [members] who weren't white. One guy was Asian." The values they professed, says Josh, were "Judeo-Christian values. They were upset about 'creeping shariah,' that our prime minister is allowing it," Josh explained, referring to fears that some non-Muslims express about Muslims potentially imposing shariah law where they live. Soon after joining, Josh became a sort of intelligence agent for the Proud Boys, helping to dox the group's enemies.

Slowly, however, Josh started to become disillusioned with the Proud Boys, in part through interactions with the organizer of counter-protests against his own group. The catalyst to his decision to leave came when "an activist in Toronto killed herself." The activist had fled to Canada from Egypt after being jailed and tortured for flying a rainbow flag at a concert. Josh had never interacted with her personally but had seen her at events where his group opposed her. His fellow members called her a terrorist, and after she killed herself, they sent messages to her friends suggesting they also should commit suicide. Josh thought those messages were "disgusting," so he reached out to his acquaintance from the other side in order to send the activist's family an anonymous condolence letter. Soon enough he was reaching out to exit organizations.

Josh's story of leaving his group demonstrates the danger of doing so, and the reason why many who are disillusioned may still be hesitant to leave. Josh recounts, "recently I was attacked by someone in my own group, then they all turned on me. It started online. He was attacking [online] and wanted to meet up for coffee to make amends. I believed he was sincere. [In person,] it escalated, and he punched me in the face." The same man spread a rumour online

that Josh had been hired by Antifa to spy on the Proud Boys, which caused Josh so much anxiety that he checked into a hospital. Josh, who was born Jewish but converted to Christianity, was threatened by Proud Boys quoting the far-right extremist Rabbi Kahane, saying, "we have to kill the fake Jews." As Josh explains, "When I first started doubting things, I wanted to gradually exit out, but then I got attacked and it was sudden."

Now that Josh has left the group, he has found it difficult to find a job, since he was doxed. Still, he recognizes, "If you were to search my name online, you'll see all this stuff. You'll see my name. Now that I'm out, I'm fully responsible for what I wrote. . . . I'm ashamed now." Looking back, he has gained a profound insight into why he joined: "I was bullied and alone as a kid. I found these groups of people that welcomed me. [It] felt almost like a family. I got so absorbed into that, but after a while, it gets really dark, really quick, nothing like a family." He continues, "Hate is so consuming. It consumes every bit of your life. It is so much easier not to hate people than to hate people. It takes so much out of you, fighting other people for simply existing or lifestyle choice."

Tony McAleer, who is fifty-three years old, is another well-known "former." Born in England, he moved to Vancouver as a toddler. Tony grew up in a troubled family marked, and the experience left him with feelings of rejection. Tony was physically abused by priests at his Catholic school and developed "a healthy mistrust of all authority figures" as a result. He was sent to boarding school in England, where he felt rejected and humiliated once again. It was in England that he got involved in the punk skinhead scene, which was also flourishing back home in Vancouver. He says of the skinheads, "They became my best friends. My coping [mechanism] was to befriend the bully, become the bully, because I was not big. They had one thing I didn't have, that people feared them. They were tough. I was with them to feel safe, [to gain] attention, acceptance." He explains that after the humiliation he suffered in school, "coming from that void of powerlessness, that false sense of power, the notoriety and fear that created was intoxicating."

Tony also got involved in the white power music culture, but in this period—the late 1980s and early 1990s—the movement was undergoing a shift. The Aryan Nations in Idaho was uniting hate groups under the banner of "The Order." Tony explains, "In 1989, I was dressed as a skinhead, and in 1991, I was in a suit and tie. Mainstreaming myself, I took over an existing Aryan group in Vancouver. . . . [I] started a phone line, Canadian Liberty Net,

versus Aryan [Liberty Net], saying extreme things in a very pleasant way." Eventually, Tony became the leader of the Aryan Resistance Movement. The group's aim was to create a whites-only homeland. He explains the ideology he subscribed to at the time, admitting that he referred to people of colour as "mud people," and said that "Jews were the ones who were engineering the downfall of the white race."

Tony explains, "I don't know if I bought it, but that's how I sold it. . . . Ideology was the pill I had to swallow to get attention, approval, power, but I did swallow it willingly." Looking back, he realizes that his feelings of powerlessness and shame made him vulnerable to the desire wanting to belong, even at such a high cost, and that the violent fights gave him an addictive rush of adrenaline.

In 1998, after over a decade in the movement, Tony began to disengage, choosing to focus instead on raising his children. He admits that he was still dysfunctional at that time: "[I] didn't deal with the issues that made it attractive in the first place. Even though I didn't get in fights, I was still an asshole." Then, he started making more money from his new career as a financial adviser, building relationships, and taking part in personal-growth workshops. Tony went to therapy for the first time and confided to his therapist his previously held beliefs. Tony remembers, "He leans in with a big, huge grin, 'You know I'm Jewish, right?'" This man, for whose annihilation Tony had once advocated, told him, "That's what you did, not who you are. I see you. I see little Tony." Tony realized, "If he could love me, [there's] no reason why I couldn't love myself." Tony went on to help start the exit organization Life After Hate, through which he focused on helping people deal with their internal struggles and histories of trauma.

Lauren Manning, thirty-one, was born just outside of Toronto. Although she has happy memories of her family, she also remembers being "shamed" by her maternal grandfather for her weight and poor grades. According to Lauren, her grandfather had "never wanted a girl. He made that clear to [my mom]." When Lauren was seven, her father was diagnosed with leukemia; he died when she was sixteen. Over time, Lauren saw her strong, police officer father become "weak and dependent." To deal with her grief and loneliness at home and at school, she "started binge drinking and getting in trouble at school. Originally petty things, fighting." From the ages of sixteen to twenty-two, she got drunk daily, sometimes mixing alcohol with opioids. At seventeen, Lauren was exposed to National Socialist black metal music

on Facebook, where she also started communicating with a recruiter. When she turned eighteen, her mother and brother "couldn't take my drinking and newfound belief system, [and] I was given an ultimatum: give this up or find somewhere else to live." Lauren moved in with the recruiter.

Recalling her ideological indoctrination, Lauren admits, "I bought into the anti-Semitic part right away. [I thought Jews] are in control, at fault for everything wrong in your life. I also bought into the white replacement narrative—these people are taking over, we will be wiped out." Lauren relished her new identity as a white supremacist. A loner in high school, "I liked having this taboo label. I was always an outsider. . . . It was also a good feeling to think you have all this secret knowledge that no one else knows or understands." Soon enough, Lauren had shaved part of her head and gotten racist tattoos on her neck and back, all of which have since been removed and covered. Still, she felt alone. The Hammerskins enforced hyper-gendered roles, and Lauren "didn't fit in with the rest of these guys' wives and girlfriends; I'm not feminine, not subservient." She was expected to have children, but the group would not allow her to fight or give her patches to symbolize her membership. Looking back on the relationship she had with her father, who taught her self-defence, she says, "If my dad would come back from the dead, [he] would come back to beat my ass for putting up with this."

Lauren recounts that her group made an effort to recruit people with military experience. She explains, "There were a few guys that were in the Canadian Forces. One got discharged for his severe PTSD from Iraq; he was out when he joined us. Ex-military have that very tribalist mindset, [so it is] very easy to go to a group like this. There were others who had been in Iraq as well as him. They were valuable." She continues, "They can bring their former combat training and impart those skills."

Lauren began her disengagement and de-radicalization process in 2012, when her friend in the group was murdered in self-defence while "doing collections for bikers." As Lauren describes, "The group was trying to appropriate his death, spin doctor the story into a hate crime against our people, saying he was targeted for being in the group. But he really walked into it himself." Lauren tried to leave the group immediately but was violently attacked by her former comrades. She then took a more gradual approach, getting sober and seeking treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. She used her sobriety and her break-up with her partner as an excuse to distance herself from the group. Despite continued attempts by the group to pull her back in, Lauren

was finally able to cut all ties, and she continues to work every day to control some of the ideological indoctrination that sneaks into her thoughts.

Elisa Hategan was born in Bucharest, Romania, the only child of parents with a thirty-year age gap between them. When she was nine, Elisa's mother defected to Canada and left her with her emotionally and physically abusive father. At eleven, Elisa and her father joined her mother in Canada, but her father returned to Bucharest to be with his mistress; he died soon after. Elisa's relationship with her mother was no better than that with her father: "She wanted to tell me what to do, wanted me to translate. I was backwards, not fitting into Canadian society. She would be angry, hit me, very physically abusive. I ran away at fourteen." Elisa was bullied at school and in the group home where she lived after running away, including by some of the Black residents, whom her mother had already told her were "troublemakers." Skipping school and counting down the days until she could get a job, Elisa saw a clean-cut man on TV: "He was saying what's wrong with being proud of your white heritage?" She wrote to the Church of the Creator in the United States, inquiring as to whether there were any similar groups in Canada. Soon enough, she was meeting a recruiter from Heritage Front at a mall. She recalls, "I was just happy that someone was asking questions about me' [before that] nobody cared. Asking questions [like,] 'What do you want for your future?' He said I was so smart at such a young age to be racially conscious." The recruiter told Elisa that she could become a journalist for their new magazine, and "within a month I was recording messages for the hotline. They cast me as the face of this organization. I was the only female representing the Heritage Front."

Elisa used her young age to "slip into high schools and put flyers in lockers." She gave speeches at rallies, and "really believed there would be a revolution, . . . [that] we are being exterminated." Cracks started to appear in the ideology when the group asked Elisa to terrorize women who were involved in anti-racist groups. Heritage Front leadership wanted her to impersonate the women and to call sex lines, saying, "I want Black men to come to my house and rape me," and then to give them these women's addresses. Elisa recounts, "This was no longer defending our rights." When she asked the leadership why all of the people they were terrorizing were women, she was told that "women are more emotional, easier to break." She realized that Heritage Front thought the same about her. The group's leaders also used anti-gay slurs when describing the anti-racist women, which hit Elisa, who had been denying her own sexuality, to her core.

At eighteen, Elisa was arrested for distributing racist flyers. Heritage Front wanted her to take the fall for the entire group, even though Elisa had not made the flyers, and in fact had actually been using them to warn women to be careful. Feeling that she had no way out of the group, she decided to take her own life by overdosing on pills from her mother's medicine cabinet. Before she died, someone called an ambulance, which brought her to the hospital. Elisa did not know whom to call when the hospital staff told her that she could not leave alone. "I didn't have a mother, couldn't call the Heritage Front." One phone number Elisa remembered was that of the anti-racist woman whom she had once terrorized. When Elisa called, "She thought it was a sting, some sort of set-up. She came with a partner and picked me up. For the next three weeks we met in secret. She did de-programming, [asking] 'Why do you believe this?' She gave me stats that answered each thing. In talking to her, I realized I had no sense of myself anymore."

On 23 November 1993, Elisa went "underground, ran away to this [anti-racist] network," after providing the police with information that they could use to charge Heritage Front members. She eventually needed to return to Toronto to testify but was not given witness protection despite feeling that she was truly in danger: "Through the grace of strangers, I was able to make it through that time. In my short eighteen years, I could count on one hand the people who were kind to me. . . . I stayed on an Indian reservation, with a Black pastor. I used to hate these people, but if it wasn't for them, I don't know what I would have done."

Future Risk

Moving forward into a new decade, it is imperative that researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers take into account past lessons as they make decisions. Much has changed over the past decade, with five lessons from the data and narratives presented here standing out. First, while earlier extremists also used the Internet to recruit and send around their hate propaganda, social media is an increasingly potent tool for violent extremists and terrorists. Nowadays, individuals can build trusting, intimate relationships without ever meeting in person, and global connectivity and awareness can make them sympathize with the plight of victims thousands of miles away. Used strategically, social media can also be a tool for counterterrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism, but it is clear that the field is years behind the terrorists. Second, security services and other professionals'

underestimation of the violent Far Right is apparent and must be remedied. Third, we know that experiences of discrimination and marginalization increase the risks of recruitment into violent extremism, and this effect is amplified as reciprocal radicalization occurs when opposing groups violently fight and attack one another, accelerating polarities and acts of violence. Fourth, culture can be used for good or for bad. In the case of the Far Right, hate music coupled with drinking has been used to draw new recruits in, conferring a sense of belonging that comes at a price. In the case of ISIS and al Qaeda, hijacked and twisted scriptures and revised interpretations of Sunni Islam have been used to draw in new recruits. To adequately counter either of these and redirect potential recruits, one needs to understand the aspects of culture being used to manipulate and draw in new recruits. Fifth, people's desire for a sense of belonging, a feeling of significance, purpose, and dignity are often important vulnerabilities, and they are needs that are met by these groups with promises of family, belonging, purpose, and dignity conferred upon joining. These also lend credence to the Three N model posited by Arie Kruglanski, which holds that needs, network, and narrative are essential to someone becoming a violent extremist (Kruglanski et al., 2019).

ISIS RESURGENCE

With regard to militant jihadist violent extremism, the primary risk for Canada appears to be future waves of FTFs participating in conflicts abroad, and so-called lone wolf attacks called for by these groups and enacted on Canadian territory. Returning FTFs currently held by the SDF may pose some risk, either in radicalizing others in prisons or in carrying out acts of violence if these individuals go free, and they should have access to proper rehabilitation and reintegration services to preclude either happening, though Canada has not yet been the target of any attacks committed by returnees. Rather, it appears more likely that returnees are disillusioned and want to simply return home, face justice if necessary, and pursue normal, low-profile lives. However, ISIS is currently undergoing a resurgence in Syria and Iraq, as well as in other areas where they have established *wilaya* (provinces). They continue to post high-quality propaganda content, encouraging their followers to help them rebuild their once-great Caliphate and telling them to enact revenge at home for its downfall.

There is extensive documentation of diehard ISIS women continuing to enforce ISIS rules, especially surrounding proper dress, in SDF camps,

primarily Camp al Hol. The women have violently attacked and even killed other women who have become disillusioned with ISIS, as well as the guards in the camp. They are indoctrinating their children, teaching them to throw rocks at the guards. Moreover, these women run social media pages through which they fundraise to be smuggled out of the camps. Some women simply wish to escape their dire circumstances and return home, but others aspire to help rebuild the Caliphate. They have also encouraged male followers to commit attacks in SDF territory on their behalf (de Azevedo, 2020). These efforts do not, however, appear to involve Canadian women.

In Syria and their various provinces, ISIS has been continually conducting assassinations, kidnappings, and suicide bombings since the loss of their last stronghold, Baghouz, and the death of Abu Bakr al Baghdadi in 2019. As of 2020, ISIS's remaining war chest was estimated at over US$400 million, a far cry from the US$2 billion they were once estimated to possess, but nevertheless enough to finance attacks with lethal consequences. These attacks and proof of wealth are also useful in showing supporters and potential recruits that ISIS is thriving. The group's propaganda emphasizes the narrative of the "long war" and pushes followers to engage in "digital jihad," thus keeping them engaged even without a territorial Caliphate or iconic caliph (Azman, 2020).

FAR-RIGHT GROWTH

Canada has recently taken a number of steps that indicated that the government takes the threat from far-right violent extremists seriously. In 2019, neo-Nazi groups Blood and Honour and Combat 18 were added to Canada's list of terrorist organizations, which had never before included white supremacist groups. Around the same time, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service also identified far-right violent extremism as a national security threat (Kaur, 2019). In 2021, following the Capitol Hill riot, Canada added the Proud Boys to its terrorist list, along with a slew of other white supremacist groups. Designating these groups does not simply symbolize a strong stance against white supremacist violent extremism, however, as Canada's *Anti-terrorism Act* allows the government to seize the property and monitor the finances of individuals or entities on the list of terrorist organizations (Li, 2021).

Scholars suggest that the surge in far-right violent extremism in Canada can be attributed to white supremacists having been empowered and emboldened by the far-right rhetoric of politicians all over the world. This

empowerment has led to a greater number of rallies and demonstrations, an increase in the frequency and severity of hate crimes, and the establishment of a number of new groups, including the Proud Boys. As these scholars have explained, a focus on white supremacist violent extremism does not negate the threat of militant jihadism. Rather, we must shift our focus because the understanding of white supremacist violent extremism is far less developed than that of militant jihadism. Likewise, it is important to understand how these groups radicalize in a reciprocal fashion. Especially unexamined is the prevalence of far-right violent extremist activity in rural areas of Canada, which may be more culturally conducive to far-right ideology than urban areas, despite generally higher levels of crime in urban areas. Indeed, a study of far-right violent extremist incidents in Atlantic Canada (which is more rural than the rest of Canada) between 2000 and 2019 identified 156 such incidents. The same study also showed that the frequency of incidents was increasing, with 60 per cent of the identified incidents occurring after 2016. This finding is consistent with previously cited studies positing that 2016 was a turning point for white supremacists in Canada, as it was in the United States (Hofmann et al., 2021). Other studies have found that the number of far-right violent extremist groups active in Canada grew by 30 per cent between 2015 and 2019, and that the number of reported hate crimes increased by more than 60 per cent between 2014 and 2017 (Habib, 2019).

Policy and Practice Recommendations

The quantitative and qualitative data presented in this chapter provide a road map for preventing and countering violent extremism as we move into the new decade. As previously noted, two primary implications of the last decade of research in this field, including that described in this chapter, are the potential for radicalization and recruitment to terrorism to occur solely online, and the increased risk posed by far-right violent extremist groups. The qualitative narratives from Canadian violent extremist themselves, coupled with a meticulous review of the literature, can inform future practice and enable us to counteract both of these threats.

With regard to online radicalization and recruitment, broadly speaking, government and non-governmental efforts at deterrence by denial and counter-speech must parallel the quality and quantity of violent extremist propaganda, which advertises the benefits, both material and existential, of joining violent extremist groups. Essentially, in this case deterrence refers to

denying violent extremist recruiters the opportunity to radicalize potential followers, in addition to denying potential followers the supposed benefits of becoming radicalized. Narratives aiming to counter these messages must be just as emotionally engaging and credible. In many cases, counter-narratives produced by government entities are not trusted by vulnerable audiences. The Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative Project is perhaps an exception. It was created by a non-profit organization and uses actual ISIS insiders to speak out against the group, and it has been found to be credible and emotionally evocative (Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2020a; Speckhard et al., 2018, 2020). Likewise, the Escape Hate Counter Narrative Project encourages former white supremacists to denounce their groups and their ideologies. These counter-narrative projects, as well as others, also produce videos, and then provide resources to help viewers understand the content they've just consumed, including resources for counselling and off-ramping. These resources and action items are key, as violent extremist groups are successful in radicalizing and recruiting online because they immediately provide potential recruits with concrete steps that allow them to act on whatever they have learned from their online content. This could range from attending a rally or protest, to conducting an attack at home, to travelling to Syria to join the Caliphate or help to rebuild it. It also behooves organizations to deploy skilled professionals who can reach out to vulnerable individuals online to answer questions and suggest alternative paths that meet their needs for acceptance, belonging, meaning, and significance.

In Canada specifically, the qualitative testimony from former ISIS members emphasizes the impact of pull, rather than push, factors in their decisions to join the group. Therefore, especially effective counter-narratives for Canadians might emphasize ISIS's lies and the reality of its actions and life under the Caliphate, utilizing the testimony of former ISIS members. Additionally, alternative narratives may be more effective in Canada than they have been elsewhere. A primary criticism of alternative narratives has been that they do not resonate with their target audiences. For example, a video extolling the virtues of a liberal democracy may not be convincing to a Muslim woman in western Europe who has been harassed or discriminated against because she wears a niqab. She will not be convinced that she can practise her religion freely if her daily experience is inconsistent with such claims. While this is not to say that Muslims and people with immigrant backgrounds do not experience discrimination in Canada (the rise of

white supremacism is evidence to the contrary), the research presented in this chapter and elsewhere suggests that Canadian ISIS members were not driven to join the group because they felt alienated and marginalized in Canada. Moreover, the few militant jihadist attacks on Canadian soil have been aimed at hard targets representing the Canadian government and military, not at civilians. These attacks, both successful and thwarted, were horrific and exemplify the militant jihadist view that the West is at war with Islam, but they also demonstrate a lack of anger at Canadian society more broadly on the part of the perpetrators. Thus, exposing adherents to the reality of ISIS and encouraging them to find a sense of purpose outside of militant jihad may be effective in countering such groups' online content. Likewise, the government could take greater care in explaining its foreign policies in ways that ensure that Muslims are not affronted, or, for those already convinced by jihadist narratives, that make clear the West is not at war with Islam.

With regard to the Far Right, the steps that the Canadian government has taken over the past year are in the correct direction, but policy-makers must be judicious in their decisions to designate various groups as terrorist entities. The advantages of doing so, such as the ability to seize property and monitor finances, are great, but such designations also pose a risk of further alienating already marginalized communities. Early counterterrorism efforts in the wake of 9/11 led to the unfair and unwarranted securitization of Muslim communities, thus pushing them out of the mainstream and making some individuals more vulnerable to terrorist narratives. Efforts going forward must be cognizant of these unintended consequences. For instance, the decision to charge a seventeen-year-old incel with terrorism offences, in the absence of a full terrorist designation for the incel movement writ large, risks isolating an already isolated community that is largely non-violent and has yet to be fully investigated with regard to whether it can truly be considered a violent extremist movement (Speckhard et al., 2021).

Other efforts must be made to approach white supremacist violent extremism with the same seriousness as militant jihadist violent extremism. Further research and investigation are needed to fully understand the scope of white supremacist violent extremism in Canada, specifically the risk factors for joining such groups and the best practices for disengagement and de-radicalization. Strategies for countering online radicalization and recruitment must also be pursued with regard to white supremacist violent extremism. There is a great deal of debate as to the utility and efficacy of removing content

from social media, but Scrivens and Amarasingam (2020) found that posts by and on violent far-right groups on Facebook were less likely to be taken down than militant jihadist posts. Regardless of whether governments and social media companies use this as a mechanism for countering radicalization and recruitment online, white supremacist radicalization and recruitment must be considered just as grave a threat to Canadian national security as militant jihadist radicalization and recruitment are.

Lastly, it is important in trying to thwart any type of violent extremism to look at push and pull factors with an awareness that violent extremist recruiters promise a sense of belonging, significance, purpose, and dignity alongside adventure and even perhaps a paid job and housing, as well as an outlet for internal rage. When society is failing to offer all its citizens pathways to success, a sense of significance, belonging, purpose, and dignity, we can be sure that violent extremists will step in to fill that gap. Of course, good governance is the better answer. Deterrence by denial, therefore, can include the provision of benefits that would otherwise be offered by a violent extremist group, thus denying violent extremist radicalizers and recruiters the opportunity to prey on vulnerable people and propagate their heinous views.

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