

TABLE TALKS | RIGHT WING TERRORISM

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- Right Wing extremism is rather hard to define, and actually there are over 20 different “definitions” that have been used to describe “right wing terrorism”.
- The reason it is so hard to define is because Right Wing terrorist groups have many different goals and ideologies. Many of the common themes revolve around xenophobia, racism, nationalism, and the desire of a strong state.
- They're highly political, trying to reduce the role of the government or dealing with social issues, such as abortion and gun control. Their focus is often to protect the status quo of society. In this sense then, extreme right-wing groups are often opposed to change.

IT'S WHAT GOD WOULD HAVE WANTED...

- There is also often a religious tone that goes along with right wing extremism.
- These groups take a firm stance against things that aren't found in the Bible, such as homosexuality and abortions.
- Such groups can also seek to establish Christian values as law. Some Right Wing groups also target other religions, holding that they are at war with Christianity.
- A common theme with right wing extremism is that it can playing a mimicry role; looking like religious terrorism at times and acting like a hate crime

WHY HAVEN'T I HEARD ABOUT THIS KIND OF TERRORISM?

- Before the San Bernardino and Orlando attacks in 2016, the death toll from Right Wing attacks was higher than any other kind of terrorism.



DID YOU KNOW?

18 of the 28 reported deadly homegrown terrorist attacks in the United States since 9/11 were done by right wing extremists? Think about this. Almost two thirds of all terrorist attacks in the United States have been committed by extreme-right wing offenders. Do you think this is reflected in the amount of attention they receive?

TRY IT FOR YOURSELF: Here is a little experiment. Ask 5 people you know (friends, family, even your teachers), what percentage of terrorist attacks are conducted by Right Wing terrorist offenders. Do you think they will guess correctly? And if not, why do you think that is?

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HATE CRIME OR TERRORIST ATTACK?

- Not all hate crimes are terrorism and not all terrorist attacks are hate crimes, however you see a fair amount of them overlap. The reason for this is that many of the Right Wing groups we see have a specific grievance against a certain demographic of the population.
- For example, groups like neo-Nazis, Aryan Nation, Klu Klux Klan, Army of God, and the Phineas Priesthood (who operated throughout the United States) all targeted different demographics of the population.
- The history of the Klu Klux Klan is one that is close to the history of America.
- The birth of the Klan originated around the time of the first civil rights movement in this country in the mid to late 1800's with hopes of holding down the African American community and protecting American society from the danger they saw.
- Their movement has been active for over a hundred and fifty years with hopes of returning American society to its pure form. Their way of doing this is by protecting the status quo, using violence against those they oppose.
- The Klan has been very influential throughout the years and they're still active today, although not as centralized and strong as they once were.

A QUESTION FOR YOU: So it makes you think, were the actions of the Klan in the late 1800's acts of terrorism? Is it taught as terrorism?

SKINHEAD CULTURE

- There is a particular style that comes along with many far right groups.
- Tattoos displaying different racist images and depictions are often found on their body and the most visual and symbolic of their wear are the green flight jackets and black Doc Martens. This is typically topped off with a shaved head to grade 0.
- These are as much of a symbol to the group as a swastika.
- Music also plays a massive role in their culture, where many of the meetings and networking done by the far-right groups are at black metal concerts, sometimes held at their compound and communities.



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RIGHT WING TERRORISM: DO WE KNOW IT WHEN WE SEE IT?

- As we have discussed, pinpointing right wing terrorism is hard. Let's look at the Charlestown Church Shooting that happened in the summer of 2015. Dylann Roof killed 9 people when he walked into the church during a prayer service.
- He immediately confessed to the shooting and said that he had hopes of beginning a race war.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? While many people in media called this an act of terrorism, Roof was convicted on 33 hate crime charges and not on any terrorism charges. Does this mean he was not a terrorist? What do you think?



Answer: Just because Roof was not charged with any counts of attempted or acts terrorism the way that the “Boston Marathon Bomber” was, it is important to remember back to our “What is terrorism?” Table Talk. Because Roof has a political motivation, saying that he has the hope of starting a race war, this attack against one of the oldest black churches in the country would qualify as a right wing terrorist attack, not just a hate crime.

TABLE TALK TAKEAWAY

If anything can be taken from this Table Talk, it's that disengagement and deradicalization are not the same thing. Both are important, but they are subtly different. Deradicalization is a process that can take a long time. Think of this in a way that doesn't involve terrorist. It is very hard for someone who is Catholic to leave their Catholic values or thinking when they believed in them passionately for so long. Former terrorists who aren't involved but still believe in what the group is doing aren't deradicalized but just disengaged.