Pro-violence and anti-democratic messages on the Internet

Swedish Media Council
Foreword

The standard media image of violent extremism may seem to be far from the ordinary work of the Swedish Media Council. While extremism is often described in dramatic terms of terrorism, attacks and riots, the Council’s work concerns more everyday things, such as age limits for cinema films and media awareness teaching in pre-school. But no person is born to be a perpetrator of violence for political or religious purposes. Being recruited to and radicalised within the framework of pro-violence and anti-democratic extremist groups is a question of adopting, more or less uncritically, an image of the world where hate is the driving force and violence the legitimate means. In today’s information society, the Internet has become, to an ever increasing extent, the tool for spreading anti-democratic messages for the purpose of recruiting new members. This fact places great demands on people young and old to retain a critical view of information and sometime sharply angled messages that we come across in both traditional and digital media.

In October 2011, the Government mandated the Swedish Media Council to describe the presence of anti-democratic messages on the Internet and in social media. The focus is on messages aimed at young persons, and that encourage violence for political or ideological reasons. The aim is to create broader knowledge about extremist Internet milieux, their content, and how recruitment strategies are formulated and communicated. The overall purpose is to strengthen young persons in preparation for encounters with such messages.

To carry out the work, the Swedish Media Council has employed three researchers, each of whom has contributed one constituent study about three different extremist Internet milieux. The editorial framework was then written by the Swedish Media Council in consultation with the three researchers. A reference group has also been associated with the work, with representatives from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå), Fryshuset Exit, the Living History Forum, the National Swedish Police Board, the Swedish Security Service and the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs. During the survey work, ongoing discussions have also been held with the two simultaneous inquiries within the framework of the Government’s action plan, Utredningen om ett effektivare arbete mot främingsfientlighet (Inquiry into more efficient work against xenophobia) and Utredningen för ett förebyggande arbete mot våldsjälskande extremism (Inquiry into preventive work against pro-violence extremism).

This survey is in several ways unique from an international perspective. This also applies to the proposals for action that we make in the report. The observations made in the three constituent studies are pioneering work relating to the use of the Internet as a channel for disseminating pro-violence and anti-democratic messages. Ahead of reading, I would emphasise the importance of reading all three constituent studies in their entirety, in order to understand the special features that characterise each milieu and how their messages are formed.

Stockholm, May 2013

Ewa Thorslund, Director, Swedish Media Council
Contents

Summary .................................................................................................................................................. 9
Assignment and delimitations ................................................................................................................ 9
Results ................................................................................................................................................... 11
Common features of the Internet milieux ............................................................................................ 12
The unique messages of the Internet milieux ....................................................................................... 14
Mechanisms of recruitment and radicalisation ................................................................................. 17
Proposed measures ............................................................................................................................ 21

1. Assignment and delimitations ........................................................................................................... 28
   1.1 Practical implementation of the studies ....................................................................................... 33

2. Introductory definitions ....................................................................................................................... 36
   2.1 Defining violence and pro-violence ............................................................................................ 36
   2.2 Defining extremism ...................................................................................................................... 38
   2.3 What are anti-democratic messages? .......................................................................................... 41

3. Mechanisms for radicalisation ........................................................................................................... 45

4. Pro-violence and antidemocratic right-wing extremist messages on the Internet ......................... 49
   4.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 49
   4.2 Previous research ......................................................................................................................... 50
      4.2.1 Scientific contributions .......................................................................................................... 51
      4.2.2 Extrascientific examination of right-wing extremist milieus ................................................ 53
      4.2.3 Research into the Internet, new media, and right-wing extremism .................................... 55
   4.3 Who are the extreme right? .......................................................................................................... 57
      4.3.1 The right-wing extremist milieu of the Internet .................................................................. 62
   4.4 Outline and methodological delimitations .................................................................................... 63
   4.5 An overview of the right-wing extremist actors’ Web-based communication ............................ 67
      4.5.1 The Swedish Resistance Movement (Svenska Motståndsrörelsen) ........................................ 68
      4.5.2 Nordfront.se ......................................................................................................................... 69
      4.5.3 Nordic National Socialists (Nordiska nationalsocialister) .................................................... 70
      4.5.4 The Party of the Swedes (Svenskarnas Parti) ....................................................................... 72
      4.5.5 The National Youth Association (Förbundet Nationell Ungdom) ....................................... 74
      4.5.6 Nordic Youth (Nordisk Ungdom) ......................................................................................... 74
      4.5.7 Other Internet milieus ........................................................................................................... 77
   4.6 Right-wing extremist communication on the Internet – qualitative analyses ............................. 81
      4.6.1 News broadcasting as ideological propaganda tool .............................................................. 81
   4.7 Communication forms and strategies in social media .................................................................... 91
      4.7.1 Twitter ................................................................................................................................. 92
      4.7.2 Right-wing extremist material on YouTube ......................................................................... 94
      4.7.3 YouTube and the right-wing extremist movements’ visual front line .................................. 98
4.7.4 User interaction and the significance of the YouTube comments ..............................................112
4.7.5 The importance of being seen – video activism and the kinetic/cognitive dimension of
YouTube videos ..........................................................................................................................114
4.7.6 Facebook as recruitment platform ..........................................................................................117
4.8 Comments and conclusions ........................................................................................................122
4.8.1 Characteristics of right-wing extremist communication and its recruitment potential .........124
4.8.2 Masculine community ............................................................................................................127
4.8.3 Radicalisation tendencies .......................................................................................................128
Abbreviations ....................................................................................................................................131

5. Pro-violence and anti-democratic left autonomist messages on the Internet .........................132
   5.1 Introduction, purpose, and starting points ..............................................................................132
   5.2 Outline and methodological delimitations ..............................................................................134
   5.3 Who are the autonomists? ..........................................................................................................135
      5.3.1 What do autonomists want? ..............................................................................................136
   5.4 Previous research .....................................................................................................................140
      5.4.1 Violence and masculinity ..................................................................................................141
      5.4.2 The scene ..........................................................................................................................142
      5.4.3 Research into the internet, new media, and autonomist movements..............................144
   5.5 An autonomist scene on the Internet? .....................................................................................146
   5.6 Examples of pro-violence communication on the Internet ..................................................149
   5.7 Web presence in active networks and action names in Sweden ...........................................153
      5.7.1 Antifascist Action ..............................................................................................................154
      5.7.2 Revolutionär Fronten ........................................................................................................155
      5.7.3 Djurens Befrielsefront ......................................................................................................158
   5.8 Social movement or subculture? ..............................................................................................159
   5.9 The autonomist milieu on YouTube .......................................................................................160
      5.9.1 Genres and messages in the video material ......................................................................162
      5.9.2 Popularity of the videos ....................................................................................................163
      5.9.3 Repression and vulnerability ............................................................................................165
      5.9.4 Political decisiveness ........................................................................................................167
      5.9.5 Images of adversaries .......................................................................................................171
      5.9.6 “Us” and “them” .............................................................................................................174
      5.9.7 Martyrdom and rewards ..................................................................................................176
      5.9.8 Self-reflectivity and humour ..............................................................................................177
   5.10 Categories of message in the video material ..........................................................................179
      5.10.1 Pragmatic violence ..........................................................................................................180
      5.10.2 Affective violence ............................................................................................................180
      5.10.3 The importance of not being seen ..................................................................................181
      5.10.4 Police as enemy ...............................................................................................................182
      5.10.5 Identity and masculinity ..................................................................................................183
6. Pro-violence and anti-democratic Islamist messages on the Internet ........................................ 191
   6.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 191
   6.2 Jihad and jihadism ...................................................................................................................... 192
      6.2.1 The jihadist framework narrative ....................................................................................... 193
      6.2.2 Central concepts of jihadism ................................................................................................ 197
   6.3 Salafism and its variations ........................................................................................................... 199
   6.4 Definitions of violence ............................................................................................................... 203
   6.5 The Swedish context of the study ............................................................................................ 203
   6.6 Categories of Web material ....................................................................................................... 205
   6.7 Reading tendencies of Web material ........................................................................................ 206
   6.8 Film, aesthetic dimensions and forms of appeal ...................................................................... 207
   6.9 The da'wa of Swedish Internet preachers ............................................................................... 212
      6.9.1 Worldly success versus real success ................................................................................... 213
      6.9.2 Propaganda and (cultural) war on Islam .......................................................................... 213
      6.9.3 Interpretation of the messages: the listener's prior knowledge ........................................ 214
      6.9.4 Summarising discussion ..................................................................................................... 215
   6.10 Examples of expressions of cultural violence ......................................................................... 217
      6.10.1 Anti-Shiism ......................................................................................................................... 217
      6.10.2 Anti-Sufism .......................................................................................................................... 221
      6.10.3 Anti-Semitism ...................................................................................................................... 224
      6.10.4 Summarising comments .................................................................................................... 226
   6.11 Examples of pro-violence messages ......................................................................................... 227
      6.11.1 References to jihadist ideologists ..................................................................................... 227
      6.11.2 "Victory": a lecture by Anwar al-Awlaki ........................................................................... 230
      6.11.3 Islam-tawhid.se .................................................................................................................. 236
      6.11.4 A film by “al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) ....................................................... 240
      6.11.5 A film by Jabhat al-Nusra .................................................................................................. 242
      6.11.6 Svenska Mujahedeen Fi Ash-Sham .................................................................................... 244
      6.11.7 Facebook ............................................................................................................................. 247
   6.12 Concluding comments ............................................................................................................. 252
      6.12.1 The format and address of the messages ........................................................................... 256
      6.12.2 Masculinity ........................................................................................................................ 259
      6.12.3 Solidarity and identification ............................................................................................... 260
Glossary ................................................................................................................................................. 262
7. Summarising conclusions .................................................................................................................. 264
  7.1 The size and design of the web milieux .......................................................................................... 264
  7.2 The common features of the milieux ............................................................................................ 266
    7.2.1 Sharp dichotomies .................................................................................................................. 267
    7.2.2 Rhetoric of self-defence ........................................................................................................ 267
    7.2.3 Conspiratorial framework narratives ...................................................................................... 268
    7.2.4 Fixation on action and contempt for discussion .................................................................... 268
  7.3 The unique messages of the milieux .............................................................................................. 269
    7.3.1 Views on sex and gender ........................................................................................................ 270
    7.3.2 Golden ages ............................................................................................................................ 270
    7.3.3 The view of democracy .......................................................................................................... 271
    7.3.4 Anonymity .............................................................................................................................. 272
    7.3.5 The view of the media ............................................................................................................. 273
    7.3.6 Relationships with other extremist milieux ............................................................................. 273
    7.3.7 Views on the police .................................................................................................................. 274
    7.3.8 Views on leadership ............................................................................................................... 274
    7.3.9 “Us” and “them” ...................................................................................................................... 275
  7.4 Mechanisms of recruitment and radicalisation .............................................................................. 275
    7.4.1 Personal and collective victimisation ...................................................................................... 275
    7.4.2 Political dissatisfaction ............................................................................................................ 277
    7.4.3 Normalisation .......................................................................................................................... 277
    7.4.4 Group radicalisation ................................................................................................................. 279
    7.4.5 Martyrdom ............................................................................................................................... 279
    7.4.6 Rewards .................................................................................................................................... 280
    7.4.7 Reaching identity-seekers ....................................................................................................... 280
    7.4.8 Reaching brooders ................................................................................................................... 281
    7.4.9 Reaching enactors .................................................................................................................... 282

8. Measures against pro-violence messages on the Internet ............................................................... 283
  8.1 Limiting violent extremism ........................................................................................................... 283
    8.1.1 Neighbouring commissions .................................................................................................... 284
    8.1.2 Evaluating measures .............................................................................................................. 287
  8.2 Preventing media influence .......................................................................................................... 287
    8.2.1 Limiting the occurrence of messages ..................................................................................... 288
    8.2.2 Preventing access to messages ............................................................................................. 290
    8.2.3 Strengthening the resistance of users .................................................................................... 291
  8.3 What is media and information literacy? ...................................................................................... 293
  8.4 Proposals for measures ............................................................................................................... 297

References ........................................................................................................................................ 304
Summary

Assignment and delimitations

This summary is a concentrated résumé of the survey as a whole. It does not do justice to the three subsidiary studies in relation to the complexity of the extreme milieux, and interested readers are therefore recommended to read them in their entirety.

On 22 September 2011, the Swedish Government tasked the Swedish Media Council to carry out a study of anti-democratic messages on the Internet and social media that are aimed at young persons and that encourage the use of violence for a political or ideological cause, and how to equip young persons to resist such messages. The study is one of a total of 15 measures in the Government’s Action Plan for Protecting Democracy against Pro-Violence Extremism (Regeringskansliet 2011).

In previous studies (see, for example, Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009, Säkerhetspolisen 2010), it was established that the Internet has developed into an increasingly important arena for movements with anti-democratic ideals. In these studies, three milieux were defined as the home of violent anti-democratic activities in Sweden: the extreme right, the extreme left (also called the autonomous left) and militant jihadism. The present survey also concerns these three milieux, and is delimited to only concern messages produced within a Swedish context for Swedish target groups.

The purpose is to map and analyse extremist Internet milieux, in accordance with the Government mandate, focusing on the design and content of political and religious propaganda, and how recruitment strategies can be identified and be understood in various communicative contexts. The extreme pro-violence milieux are fairly large and multifaceted, which requires well-defined delimitation in the selection of material. An initial starting point has been to include material from movements and Web milieux that:

1. Encourage, defend, excuse or otherwise manifest politically and religiously motivated acts of violence. This does not only refer to express encouragement to use violence against concrete individuals or groups in society, but also to wordings that implicitly promote violence.
2. Clearly distances itself from fundamental democratic values. This refers both to the constitutional side of democracy (i.e., the democratic representative form of government) and the fundamental civil rights that relate to respect and tolerance for other people (i.e., relating to the social and cultural dimensions of democracy). Such a delimitation thus makes it possible to identify groups, networks, Web sites, etc. that may be classed as anti-democratic and encourage violence.

As opposed to the previously mentioned studies, which investigated who the violent extremists are, and what they do, this study focuses on how they present themselves and their view of the world; in other words, what they say. The purpose here is not to describe what the three extremist milieus look like, or what is included in their respective ideologies. The study is concerned with the messages that are directed outwards, available to the general public, and that can be regarded as tools for recruitment and radicalisation. For this reason, only open communication milieus have been mapped – Web sites and discussion forums that are open to the general public and social media that do not require any special invitation. The internal communication that takes place in closed milieus (password-protected or only for invited members) is not included in the survey.

The fieldwork was carried out between September 2012 and April 2013, using primarily a qualitative approach. The main aim has been to study what the messages look like and in what way they can be thought to attract an audience, not how widespread they are. Nor is the study a comprehensive survey of Swedish extremist Web milieus. The Web sites and the content in social media that have been studied have been assessed as being representative of the milieus as a whole, but do not constitute all messages during the period studied.

The current study uses concepts that require special explanation; these concepts are also used exclusively to describe matters that are relevant to the survey, although they may have another meaning in other contexts. In order to make the text manageable, the full designations have been abbreviated. Below follows descriptions of these concepts.

The three milieus of relevance for the study can be said to be the extreme right, the extreme left and Islamist ideologies.

In the text, the expression right-wing extremists and derivatives of this are used synonymously for those who spread “anti-democratic pro-violence extreme right-wing messages”; autonomous and left-wing
extremists and derivatives of these for those who spread “anti-democratic pro-violence extreme left-wing messages; and jihadists and derivatives of this for those who spread “anti-democratic pro-violence Islamist messages”. In this survey, the concept of Islamism includes both militant jihadism and puritanical Salafism, where the latter distances itself from the use of physical violence.

Results

The most tangible difference between the three Web milieux is their difference in size. When the fieldwork started in the autumn of 2012, there was only one Swedish Web site, revfront.org, that could be regarded as being pro-violence left-wing autonomous. This was only updated sporadically. Since then, activity has increased and the inactive Web site of Antifascistisk aktion (AFA) (“Anti-Fascistic Action”) has been reactivated. The militant jihadist Web milieu in Sweden is also small. In practice, there is one Web site, islam-tawhid.se, and a handful of personal blogs. In order to contextualise the ideologies that form the basis of the pro-violence and anti-democratic messages within the autonomous and Islamist Internet milieux, we have therefore also gathered material from a number of other Web sites that are ideologically close, but that do not encourage the use of violence for political or religious purposes. When it comes to the autonomous milieu, these are Web sites such as yelah.net and socialism.nu, and for the Islamist milieu, a handful of puritanical Salafi Web sites (see also the subsidiary study Pro-violence and Anti-democratic Islamist Messages on the Internet). In comparison, the Swedish right-wing extremist Web milieu is much greater in scale, and therefore only part of the output has been analysed in detail. A comparison of the number of visits per day further underlines the differences between the three milieux.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Swedish Web sites</th>
<th>Number of page views/day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right-wing extremist</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-wing extremist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jihadist (Salafi)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Number of Swedish Web sites in the survey with visitor statistics. Social media not included. The visitor statistics are gathered from www.freewebsitereport.org for Feb–Apr 2013.

¹ Visitor statistics are lacking for one Salafi Web site, one Salafi blog and one jihadist blog.
The reliability of these figures cannot be assessed, and they should therefore only be regarded as a rough comparison of the scales of the milieux. Using this as the starting point, it can be established that the right-wing extremist pro-violence Web milieu researched has around 40 times as many daily visits as does the left-wing autonomous Web milieu, and just over 1,600 times as many as does the jihadist. The jihadist Web milieu does, however, appear to be concentrated to Web sites outside Sweden, and these figures do therefore not constitute any measurement of how many Swedish citizens take part of jihadist messages. Another central difference is that the two autonomous Web sites and all of the right-wing extremist sites, apart from one (the independent news page nationell.nu), belong to organisations or networks. In the jihadist material, no clear links to such formal collectives are visible.

**Common features of the Internet milieux**

The three extremist Web milieux differ in many respects, but they also display great similarities, in at least four thematic areas: they include sharp dichotomies, a clear self-defence rhetoric, the world is explained through conspiratory framework narratives and there is an idealisation of direct action coupled with contempt for discussion and consensus solutions.

A central feature of all three extremist milieux is a sharp division between those who constitute “we/us” and “them”. In the case of the right-wing extremists, it is a race ideology-influenced dichotomy between on the one hand Swedes – or what they call “the Nordic race” – and on the other hand non-Nordic immigrants in general and Jews in particular. The jihadists’ dichotomy differentiates between orthodox Muslims and unbelievers, *kafir* or *kufr*. A jihadist identifies exclusively with the *ummah*, the perceived global community of orthodox Muslims. The unbelievers include not just individuals belonging to faiths other than Islam. Also other Muslim groups, such as Shia Muslims and Sufists, are rejected. In the most extreme interpretations, the proponents distance themselves from all Muslims who do not support jihad in the meaning of armed fight. The autonomous left wing bases its fundamental dichotomy on a simple power analysis: “we” constitutes the oppressed, who fight against the oppressors. In present-day society, this refers particularly to workers against capitalists (not infrequently referred to as the “upper class”). Other groups considered to be subordinate are also included in the own collective: immigrants, undocumented aliens, LGBTQ persons, women and immigrant and working-class youth. The oppressors include the
police, which maintain the supposedly unfair financial system, as well as Nazis and fascists, whose existence is considered to be a logical conclusion of the capitalist economy. It is clear that a politically or religiously extreme milieu must create and maintain a clear dichotomy between the good and the bad, between us and them, in order to market their messages.

Linked to the clear distinction between friends and enemies is the idea that the group is under attack from an all-powerful enemy, who wants to crush the group. The violence carried out by the various extremist groups is described by them in principle never in terms of aggression, but as self-defence. Among right-wing extremists, the use of violence is justified either as a response to aggression from the autonomous left wing, or to protect the Swedish people and the Nordic race against Jewish conspiracies or racial mixing with disastrous consequences.

The autonomous consider that the capitalists and the upper class attack workers and other oppressed groups, and that it is therefore necessary to defend oneself and these exposed minorities. In more concrete terms, it refers to self-defence against what is described as the assault of the police and the fascists. Finally, among jihadist extremists, there is an idea that there is a war against Islam. Who is leading this war and why is not always quite clear, but countries such as the USA, the United Kingdom and Israel, infidel regimes in Muslim countries, other Muslim groupings (such as Shiites) and Jews are mentioned in the arguments about the war on Islam.

In all three milieux, there are also conspiratorial framework narratives that are used as cover-all explanations for the unfairness and problems that are considered to characterise the current era. Both among right-wing extremists and among jihadists, there is an idea that the development of the world is secretly governed by a Jewish conspiracy, with world domination as its goal. The framework narrative of the autonomous left wing reduces processes to interpretations based on a strict economic and political analysis, where the capitalist structure and the actions of capitalists functions as an explanatory model for all processes. Clear examples are, for example, how the police are primarily the protector of capitalism, and how the existence of the Nazis is a logical consequence of capitalism.

In parts of all milieux, there is contempt for discussion and theorising. Just talking about something does not lead to any change; instead, action is what changes the world. Among both right-wing and left-wing extremists, there is the same distancing from theoretical and intellectual discussion, although in places advanced theoretical discussions are held. Direct action is romanticised, while
discussion and striving for consensus is seen as objectionable. To act politically within the framework of parliamentary democracy is seen as pointless. Also among the jihadists, a warrior is valued more highly than someone learned in the holy texts. Among intellectual jihadists, however, the ideal is “the warrior shaykh”, i.e., a person who both fights and is learned in the holy texts.

The unique messages of the Internet milieux

One of the ambitions of this survey has been to compare the three extremist milieux as far as possible. It is possible to draw parallels between ideological elements or strategies in their use of the Internet in several respects, even if the differences are often greater than the similarities. There are, however, special characteristics in each individual milieu that lack any equivalent in the other two.

The right-wing extremists’ conceptions about the central importance of the race, the people and the nation do not exist in the other milieux. Their idea is that the people are a community that must at all costs be protected and preserved from any outside influence. The greatest threat is neither ideological nor religious, but consists of other (non-desirable) ethnic groups.

The autonomous left differs in this context from both the other milieux in two ways. Firstly, they neither distance themselves from democracy as a political idea nor from democratic citizen rights for all. On the contrary, they think that the capitalist market economy must be fought because it leads to an undemocratic society. Secondly, they do not express solidarity with any particular ethnic group. While the right-wing extremists are only interested in their own race, and the jihadists feel exclusive solidarity with orthodox Muslims, the autonomous left takes the part of several fragmented social groups, such as workers, immigrants, women, LGBTQ persons, immigrant and working-class youth and prison inmates. The common factor for these groups, they think, is that they hold a subordinate position in society and are used by capitalists and the upper class.

The jihadist extremists demonstrate three characteristics that lack comparisons in both the other milieux. Firstly, there are religious texts which are perceived as the absolute truth and the ideological-religious answer to all questions. Secondly, there are religiously conditioned rewards that are lacking in both the other milieux. A jihadist is forgiven all his sins and receives the blessing of God in Paradise after death. Thirdly, jihadism is a global and transnational milieu. The Swedish right-wing and left-wing extremists are primarily active in Sweden, and concerned with changing Swedish circumstances. The jihadist messages relate to Swedish conditions to only a small extent, and instead relate primarily to conflict zones, such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. The final goal is the creation of a Muslim world state.
The view of democracy

None of the milieux consider that parliamentary democracy in its current form is acceptable. Their justifications for this view differ significantly, however. Left-wing extremists criticise the system based on it not being democratic enough. The capitalist system is the root of all evil in society, and a political system that tolerates it is undemocratic, they think. Parliamentarism is dismissed and, by means of direct democracy, their ideal society would be considerably more equal than the system we have today.

Right-wing extremists are more splintered, but it is clear that all actors want to restrict citizen rights for certain groups (such as immigrants, Jews, and homosexuals). While some, such as Svenska motståndsrörelsen, have a racially pure nation under a strong leader as their goal, others are at least formally traditional political party organisations, such as Svenskarnas parti, and do not expressly distance themselves from parliamentary democracy. However, all right-wing organisations in this survey consider that democratic principles and rights should be disregarded as soon as they are applied to anyone other than themselves and “real Swedes”. Elected persons are described as “traitors of the people”, or in terms of serving the interests of the Jewish world conspiracy.

Jihadists distance themselves entirely from the democratic process. Democracy is a human invention, and any attempt to rule a society in any way other than according to the words of God is condemned. According to the jihadists, a good Muslim therefore distances him/herself entirely from any political commitment.

Anonymity

Both the left-wing autonomous and the jihadists protect the anonymity of their activists to a greater extent than do the right-wing extremists. On the Web sites of the autonomous, no individuals within their own milieux are named. All persons shown in images are masked or have been made unidentifiable. In the jihadist films being disseminated across the Internet, it is relatively unusual to see any recognisable faces, apart from those of the leading ideologists. The right-wing extremists differ in this respect: leading persons are shown with their names, and sometimes also with a picture by-line. In films that document social activities, the participants are usually fully recognisable. Nor are the right-wing extremists masked in confrontation and action videos, as the autonomous and jihadists are. However, anonymity is more the rule than the exception in the right-wing extremists’ forums and comment fields.
**The view of the media**

In their views of mainstream media, the three extremist milieux are in principle united: they serve the interests of the enemy. Right-wing extremists regard the media as propaganda instruments hostile to Swedes, that only serve the interests of Jews and Marxists. The left-wing autonomists consider that the majority of the media output is bourgeois propaganda in service to capital. The jihadists also describe mainstream media as full of lies and controlled by the enemies of Islam. The critical attitude does not stop either of the three milieux from using material gathered from mainstream media, which is then provided with their own contextualisation in order to confirm their own images of the world.

**Relationships with other extremist milieux**

The extreme right-wing and left-wing milieux have a symbiotic relationship in many respects as each other’s arch-enemy. A large part of their propaganda concerns the reprehensibility of the opposite side. Monitoring of each other’s Web sites appears to be continuous, and planned actions and manifestations from one side are therefore met with counter-actions from the other side. There are observations that indicate that when right-wing extremist groupings establish themselves locally, left-wing autonomous opponents soon grow strong, and vice versa (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009:15).

The jihadists are isolated from the other Swedish extremist milieux. There are several reasons for this. Neither the left-wing autonomists nor the right-wing extremists regard the jihadists as enemies. Nor do the jihadists act in the same physical space – the street – as do both the other milieux. Finally, the right-wing and left-wing extremists fight mainly about conditions in Sweden and a particular Swedish political orientation. Although there is international cooperation in both movements, the actions are noticeably often directed locally or nationally. The jihadists, on the other hand, constitute a transnational milieu, where there is seldom a call for action on Swedish territory, as the fight is mainly carried out abroad.

**“Us” versus “them”**

Swedish right-wing extremists are strongly racist in the original meaning of the word. Jews are generally the most hated group, but non-Nordic immigrants in general are also very much disliked, which often expresses itself in de-humanising and seriously offensive use of language. Among the “ethnopluralists”, it is claimed that no people or ethnic groups are inferior to others, but that they must be kept apart to avoid purported negative consequences.
In the Islamist Web milieux, there is strong condemnation of Muslim groups that are considered as not living in an orthodox way. There are also anti-Semitic expressions, but these are not as prominent as with the right-wing extremists in the material that has formed the basis for this report.

The left-wing autonomists do not express any contempt for any minority groups (except the extreme right-wing). On the contrary, they emphasise that they are fighting against sexism, homophobia and racism/fascism in all their forms.

**Mechanisms of recruitment and radicalisation**

Of great importance for how a message is interpreted is how the recipient is addressed, and how the messages and the communicative structures are designed in order to attract sympathisers. The following section describes strategies for Internet communication, social processes in this communication, particularly receptive target groups and how messages are designed to reach them.

**News reporting**

In all of the three milieux, there is news reporting, both in the form of self-produced reportage and as news features from established media which have been re-contextualised based on the own ideology. Among the autonomous and the jihadists, such news dissemination occurs sporadically, while the right-wing extremists have several Web sites that are continuously updated, on a daily basis. Taking news from the mainstream media and rewriting it in terms of a right-wing extremist ideological framework appears to be a propaganda strategy. Right-wing extremists engage in an alternative news dissemination, where events are passed through a racist/nationalist/national-socialist filter before it is presented to the audience. They describe themselves as the only tellers of the truth in a corrupt society, where the established media are lying to the people.

**Website designs**

There are also differences when it comes to the design of the various Web sites: The right-wing extremist Web sites have both a more advanced Web design and more advanced functions than those of the autonomous, and in particular those of the jihadists. Both the right-wing extremists and the left-wing autonomous have logos for their organisations, and uniform graphic identities and layout. Although the Web sites of the autonomous have a less professional appearance than those of the right-wing extremists, they are working at packaging their messages in an attractive format. In comparison, the Swedish jihadist Web sites appear amateurish. However, the lack of functionality and advanced design found in this milieu may just as well be an expression of a deliberately anti-aesthetic image. The materials produced by the media organs of international jihadist movements, and
republished on Swedish-language Web sites, give a professional impression, however. There are also big differences in the opportunities for interaction in the different Web milieux. Whilst the opportunities for visitors to the Web sites to comment or otherwise give feedback are limited in the autonomous or jihadist milieux, user interactivity receives high priority in the right-wing extremist Internet milieu. There are open comment fields on most right-wing extremist Web sites, and they are also used very diligently. The right-wing extremists have clearly chosen to open up to great user interactivity as a stage in their recruitment operation, while both the other milieux trust more in traditional one-way communication or recruitment paths outside the Internet. For four out of the five right-wing extremist organisations and one of the autonomous, it is possible to apply for membership via the Internet. Among the jihadists, recruitment information is limited, probably for security reasons, to email addresses where more information may possibly be offered.

Personal and collective victimisation

All three milieux include references to victimisation, where the fellow-feeling of the recipient is appealed to, either with exposed movement itself, or with the suffering brothers and sisters.

In right-wing extremist discussion forums, there are often discussion subjects concerning how “innocent Swedes” have been robbed and/or assaulted by “immigrant gangs”. The purpose of these recurrent stories is to create an image of systematic violation, where all Swedes may be subjected to assaults from elements hostile to Swedes. In this context, the race ideological movement is portrayed as the only functioning protection against such violations. Stories about how immigrants are raping Swedish women are also common on the right-wing extremist Web sites. Another type of victimisation that is relatively common with the right-wing extremists is to portray the own movement as a victim of unfair suppression of opinion and Government-sanctioned persecution.

For several years, autonomists have documented confrontations with the police on video, and then presented these as police brutality. The autonomous often come into conflict with the police when the police are protecting the right-wing extremists’ right to demonstrate from attacks by the autonomous left-wing. In several of the video films studied in this report, police action is portrayed as on an equal footing as that of the right-wing extremists.

Among the jihadists, the victimisation is related to Islam. There are lots of stories about how “our brothers and sisters” are exposed to discrimination, violence and injustice in different parts of the world. A good Muslim shall feel solidarity with the ummah, the perceived global community of Muslims, and therefore also with those who are subjected to these violations. Showing solidarity with
vulnerable persons does not have to equate to encouraging the use of violence, but both the jihadist and the puritan Salafi propaganda talk about the “war on Islam” and the opponents’ will to “exterminate Islam”. Conflicts where Muslims are involved are reduced to being exclusively about religion, and all other explanatory models (such as ethnic conflicts, territorial claims or financial interests) are subordinated the religious explanations.

Normalisation
A very prominent phenomenon in the extremist Web material is how an aggressive, dismissive and dehumanising use of language that in other social contexts would be unacceptable is normalised in the various milieux. This is done primarily in comment fields and forum discussions – at the editorial level, the use of language is more moderate, probably to avoid prosecution. In the fairly closed interest community that the extremist milieux constitute, the extreme views are rarely challenged, nor the extreme use of language. Instead, they are constantly confirmed, as the milieux consist only of like-minded persons. This effect has variously been described as an echo chamber (as you call, so you hear back) and an ideological greenhouse (views are cultivated and reinforced). Both concepts indicate the same phenomenon – a unanimous community without addition of outside perspectives results in cultivated and radicalised opinions, which in a less homogenous discussion milieu would have been balanced by contrary opinions.

As the left-wing autonomists see their primary enemy in a social structure and not in different ethnic groups, the dehumanisation in their forum is not as palpable as in the other milieux. It does exist here too, however, particularly when it comes to the description of right-wing extremists. In its capacity as the prime defender of the current social order, however, the police receive the harshest treatment.

The tone of the right-wing extremist Web sites is considerably cruder, and here hate is directed against ethnic groups, politicians, journalists, feminists and the left-wing autonomous. Those forum participants who distance themselves from such statements do not consider that they are wrong in fact, but justify their distance for tactical reasons. They are of the opinion that it does not benefit their case to express it in such terms.

Also in the puritan Salafi and jihadist milieux, there is considerable dehumanisation that normalises a hateful attitude to persons with different opinions. Persons who believe in other forms of Islam, such as Shiites and Sufists, political representatives of worldly regimes and non-Muslims are described with derogatory and dehumanising invective.

The use of derogatory and dehumanising language is a method of normalising the hateful view of enemies and opponents. When groups of people have been established that are of less value or even non-human, the threshold for using physical violence against them is lowered.
**Reaching identity-seekers**

One of the reasons for approaching an extremist group may be that the individual feels a lack of a social context. Persons who feel little connection with their immediate surroundings and/or society at large may find a group affiliation in the closely knit extremist milieux (Munton et al. 2011). Those individuals who can be characterised as identity-seekers might therefore be attracted by a message that shows that a given extremist milieu has a strong internal unity.

Among the pro-violence autonomous left-wing, such messages are lacking. In the left-wing extremists’ action-centred message, no everyday activities are shown besides the struggle, and therefore no inter-group sociality. All activities are shown as directed towards the class struggle and the fight against fascism and capitalism.

Among the right-wing extremists, on the other hand, a large proportion of the material aims to show social activities within the group. Apart from purely political activities, such as handing out flyers, social activities are also shown: people practicing martial arts, doing survival training in the wilderness, or helping out at a farm. The “us” of race ideology (which only includes the own ethnic group) is considerably narrower than the “us” of the left-wing autonomous, which includes the majority of the citizens in society (excluding fascists, capitalists and the police). Considering the quantity of right-wing extremist propaganda aimed at showing a strong comradeship and good sociality within the group, it can be assumed that this is considered an important recruitment strategy.

The jihadists take something of a middle position in terms of the description of the social cohesiveness of their own group. The films show men camping out, exercising and cooking food together. The focus is not primarily to display good fellowship and social relations, as with the right-wing extremists, though; instead, the central theme is training to be good soldiers.

**Reaching brooders**

Philosophically inclined individuals seeking historical and ideological explanations for the nature of things are offered these in all three milieux. The autonomous left wing starts from a historical materialist economic analysis that describes history in terms of the relationship between oppressors and the oppressed, and that also offers a solution to these unequal relationships through the overturn of capitalism. The framework narrative of the extreme left is less complicated than the theories that explain the views of the world of right-wing extremists and jihadists. If the narrative of the left-wing autonomous is materialist, the theories of the right-wing extremists have both biological (racist) and idealistic features. National Socialism and nationalism are described as natural and healthy ideologies, where all social and political problems can be solved through the implementation of racial and ethnic separation. The jihadist framework narrative asserts its legitimacy with the aid of holy and
unquestionable documents representing absolute truth, something that lacks any equivalent in both the other milieux. It is noticeable that the more existential and philosophical features of both the pro-violence parts of the autonomous left and the jihadists are simplifications of arguments that exist within the non-pro-violence sectors of closely related milieux. To the extent the brooders are attracted by such issues, they would therefore be drawn to these non-pro-violence milieux to a greater extent.

Reaching thrill-seekers

Here, it is not the search for truth, but physical activity, excitement and the opportunity to act out aggressive impulses through violent behaviour that are attractive. The type of affective message that can be thought to have these thrill-seekers as their target group is disseminated primarily in the form of video clips. All milieux contain video material that presents street fights (among the right-wing and left-wing extremists) or armed struggle (among the jihadists) as an adrenalin kick. The jihadists’ depiction of fighting is at a different level from both other extremist milieux. While they limit themselves to street fights and riots, the jihadists show fighting with automatic weapons, bombings and killings, with close-ups of dead bodies.

In summary, the survey shows that there is a multitude of strategies, mechanisms and processes that may lead to radicalisation and the embrace of pro-violence messages. Trying to counteract each of these by itself is not meaningful, and the proposed measures are therefore at an overarching structural level, aimed at reinforcing individuals’ ability to critically evaluate and interpret media messages.

Proposed measures

The preventive measures proposed in this report are general approaches, aimed at as many as possible. More specifically, they are about reinforcing young persons as conscious users of media. This entails reinforcing media users’ abilities to evaluate critically, to analyse and understand both online and offline material, to teach children and young persons to question and compare different information sources, to partake of independent investigations and to be able to evaluate texts, audio and image material (Stevens & Neumann 2009:38). The international designation of these abilities is media literacy. In Sweden, it has variously been translated as media knowledge, media pedagogics, media literacy, etc. In a newly published curriculum from UNESCO (Carlsson 2013), the concept of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) was launched.

In today’s information society, it is vital that citizens are media and information literate; that they can find, analyse, critically evaluate and create information in various media and contexts. Both
UNESCO and the EU Commission have established that MIL is a prerequisite for democratic participation and full citizenship (Carlsson 2013, 2009/625/EC). In the present-day media landscape, the boundaries between text and image and between producer and consumer have become unclear, and it could be said that what is required of citizens is a form of multi-literacy. When our perception of the world around us is ever more based on media reporting, it is also important that children and young persons learn MIL at an early stage. Surveys of current day violent extremism emphasise the Internet as a very important, or even the most important, tool for recruitment and radicalisation. The need for measures promoting critical use of the Internet and social media is also established. Despite this, major practical MIL projects aimed at preventing extremism are lacking. Successful preventive work aimed at reinforcing the resilience of young people against pro-violence and anti-democratic messages should begin by stimulating their general critical and analytical thinking abilities. Trying to counteract extremism through campaigns where government actors inform young people about the objectionable features of certain ideologies can easily lead to the opposite – a radicalisation of those individuals who are attracted by extremist thinking. When the state condemns an ideology, this works more as a further argument for the extremists repudiation of the society of the majority. Teaching young people to understand how messages are constructed for propaganda purposes provides them with the tools to see through false or angled information themselves. For the purpose of strengthening young people in their ability to resist recruitment messages, this is also a more logical and effective method than claiming that certain opinions are incorrect. It is the assessment of the Swedish Media Council that it is currently only through school that all children and young people can be reached by good MIL teaching. There are good examples at the local and regional levels, but these lack the resources to reach everybody at the national level.

In the directives for this study, the task of the Swedish Media Council is defined as:

[...] to propose suitable measures to help young persons in particular to become well-informed media users and other preventive measures to combat pro-violence behaviour linked to anti-democratic values disseminated via the Internet. (Ju2011/6776/D)

The proposed measures therefore do not aim to stop or prevent violent extremism as a phenomenon, or to limit the presence of or access to anti-democratic and pro-violence messages on the Internet. Within the framework of the Government’s action plan against pro-violence extremism, there is also Utredningen för ett förebyggande arbete mot våldsbejakande extremism (“Inquiry into preventive work against pro-violence extremism”), which will be published on 13 December 2013. This has the broader aim of stopping pro-violence anti-democratic extremism altogether, which means that they will be submitting proposals for measures that stretch beyond the susceptibility to messages disseminated via the Internet.
The Swedish Media Council proposes six measures – two short-term proposals that can be implemented straight away, two proposals that can guarantee broader and more in-depth MIL teaching for pupils in all schools in the country in the longer term, and two proposals aimed at reinforcing knowledge about recruitment to extremist milieux and MIL as a didactic tool.

1. Financial support to local and regional MIL operations

**Proposal:**
The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is tasked to administer financial support to existing MIL activities at the local and regional levels in order to show good examples. A support decision is taken by a special expert team led by the Swedish Media Council in consultation with the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs. A total of SEK 15 million, to be distributed over 3 years, should be ear-marked for this purpose.

There are various local and regional MIL initiatives around the country. These are sometimes carried out within the framework of schools, but also by charitable associations or as regional resource centres with support from municipalities and county councils. The operations with which the Swedish Media Council has been in contact are unanimous about what the main problems with teaching Media and Information Literacy are today: the needs are great both among pupils and among the teachers, who need further training to equip them to use MIL at school, but the resources are too small. In the short term, financial support to existing operations could result in both increased teacher competence and also a more widespread operation directly aimed at children. In order to enable the projects to carry out long-term planning and build up a larger operation, the support should be available for at least three years. The projects granted support should also be continuously evaluated in terms of didactic methods and pedagogical results in order to enable identification and further development of particularly effective methods.
2. **Coordination of MIL activities**

**Proposal:**

A public authority suited for the purpose is tasked to work out a strategy for coordinating the different actors working with Media and Information Literacy at the national, regional and local levels.

Within the public authority sphere alone, there are around ten actors, universities and colleges excluded, that carry out work within the MIL area. Also outside the public authority sphere, there are a number of national actors, and at the regional and local levels, there are many more who work with MIL – private and municipal schools, specialist culture schools, libraries and associations.

Coordination between these actors is, at best, weak.

Coordination of the various MIL actors could improve the results of the measures and reduce costs, as some of the activities currently overlap each other. As the Swedish Media Council has already been tasked to map and carry out an inventory of these operations, the Council is well suited to carry out the coordination task.

3. **Support material for the elementary school and upper secondary school curricula**

**Proposal:**

The Swedish National Agency for Education should be tasked to produce support material for the curricula LGR 11 and GY 11, providing examples for how teachers can teach MIL at the elementary school and upper secondary school levels.

Almost one in every three lower secondary school pupils does not receive any teaching in source criticism, and four out of ten teachers feel a need for competency development in this area (Skolverket 2013:61). The Agency is currently working to produce commentary material for the parts of the knowledge requirements for Year 6 in various subjects (Swedish, Biology, History, Religion) that concern pupils’ ability to assess the usefulness of sources. There are also plans to produce support material based on the commentary material to provide examples for teachers of how to teach
in order to support pupils’ ability to evaluate sources and information critically. For resource reasons, these plans currently apply only to Year 6. Given the perceived failings in the area, the Swedish National Agency for Education should be tasked with producing corresponding material for all years in elementary school and upper secondary school.

4. Obligatory MIL as part of teacher training

**Proposal:**

Media and Information Literacy should be an obligatory part of teacher training. An inquiry should be set up with the task of proposing new wordings in the Higher Education Ordinance aimed at making MIL obligatory in the training of elementary and upper secondary school teachers.

In order for pupils to receive broad-based MIL teaching, teachers who have learnt how to teach the subject are needed. The Higher Education Ordinance stipulates what must be included in the various courses at the country’s universities and higher education colleges. The current wording in the Higher Education Ordinance only establishes that media and digital tools may be used in teaching, not that they should be the subject of teaching. To ensure that the country’s newly qualified teachers have full competency in the subject, we propose that an inquiry be set up with the task of proposing new wordings in the Higher Education Ordinance aimed at making MIL obligatory in the training of elementary and upper secondary school teachers.

5. Reception research into pro-violence and anti-democratic messages on the Internet

**Proposal:**

The Government should allocate funds for research (for example, via the Swedish Research Council) into how pro-violence and anti-democratic messages on the Internet are received and interpreted by young persons. In order to further develop methods for preventing violent extremism, systematic reception research into how the audience for the messages receives them is needed.
This study only investigates the presence of messages and what these messages look like. The issue of how children, young persons and adults interpret the messages cannot be stated based on this survey. Proper international research into the area is also lacking. In order to deepen our understanding of how recruitment to violent extremist milieux occurs, and to further improve the measures against it, more research is needed into how the messages are received and the role the recipients give to messages on the Internet, compared to other media messages and non-media social contacts.

These issues cannot be answered unless comprehensive reception studies are carried out, focusing on the recipients of the messages instead of the messages themselves. Such studies are more labour-intensive and costly than the type of qualitative analysis that has formed the basis for this report. In an ideal situation, a major quantitative questionnaire study could be combined with qualitative in-depth interviews.

6. A national resource centre for MIL

**Proposal:**
The government should set up a resource centre for Media and Information Literacy, with a didactic aim.

Good teaching in MIL must be based on good research, irrespective of whether it is teaching at the elementary, upper secondary or higher education level. There are good examples both within pedagogic research and in media and communication science aimed at MIL, but no established research centre in Sweden. In the long term, it is extremely important to set up a stable research environment that can be used as the basis for pedagogic development in the MIL area. It is also extremely important that such a research environment has the tasks and resources to disseminate the research findings to practitioners in the area. A possible model for the creation of such an environment is the national resource centres for Mathematics, Natural Science and Technology supported by the Swedish National Agency for Education. These centres are subject-specific for Technology, Biology and Biotechnology, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics, and are linked to the universities in the country. Their task is to support teachers and work for the development of education and pedagogy within each subject.
Even if MIL is not a subject by itself, and nor should it be, a national resource centre would be of great importance, both for disseminating research-based pedagogic models for teaching and to create an environment that stimulates further research in the area.

Increased investment in MIL will do as little as other individual measures to suppress the existence of pro-violence and anti-democratic extremism. Such an investment would, however, provide young persons with the cognitive abilities that make it possible to see through the angled propaganda messages and the distorted information that are central elements of the extremists’ recruitment strategies. An important success factor for this work is that it aims to reinforce the individual’s ability to engage in critical thinking and analysis. To instead describe certain views – however extreme and repugnant one may think they are – as wrong has proven to be directly counter-productive from an extremism prevention point of view.

Giving young persons the tools to form their own, well-informed opinion is not just a way of strengthening their resilience against pro-violence extremism. It is also a way of strengthening them in their roles as active members of the democratic process.
1. Assignment and delimitations

On 22 September 2011, the Swedish Government tasked the Swedish Media Council to carry out a study of anti-democratic messages on the Internet and social media that are aimed at young persons, that encourage violence for a political or ideological cause, and how to equip young persons to resist such messages (Regeringsbeslut 22 Sep 2011, Ju2011/6776/D). The study is one of a total of 15 measures in the Government’s Action Plan for Protecting Democracy against Pro-Violence Extremism (Regeringskansliet 2011).

The assignment comprises five subsidiary objectives, in which the Government has tasked the Media Council to:

- describe the prevalence of anti-democratic messages on the Internet and social media that are aimed at young persons and that encourage violence for a political or ideological cause,
- describe how organisations, movements or networks use the Internet to influence and disseminate an anti-democratic message,
- describe the process by which young persons in particular can be influenced by anti-democratic messages disseminated over the Internet and how such messages can contribute to the acceptance of pro-violence behaviour,
- compile lessons learned, research findings and good examples of preventive measures from Sweden and other relevant EU countries, and
- propose suitable measures to help young persons in particular become well-informed media users and other preventive measures to combat pro-violence behaviour connected to anti-democratic values that are disseminated over the Internet.

The assignment was prompted by the findings of previous studies on pro-violence extremism in Sweden (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009, Säkerhetspolisen 2010), that established that the Internet has developed into an increasingly important arena for movements with anti-democratic ideals. In these studies, three milieux were defined as the home of violent anti-democratic activities: the extreme right, the extreme left and militant jihadism, and these three are also the focus of the present analysis. One additional milieu where violence and/or threats are used for political and ideological reasons is the militant animal rights movement. In protest against inhumane animal keeping, testing on animals and fur animal breeding, actions have been carried out that have primarily entailed damage to property (such as vandalising street kitchens and fur shops) or threats against persons. Animal rights activism has had a close link to the autonomous left wing, but has the
character of one-issue activism – a political foundation is not necessary in order to commit to animal rights issues. While its culmination occurred during the late 1990s, militant animal rights activism appears to have lost ground in recent years (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009:113). Djurens befrielsefront (“Animal Liberation Front”) was previously perhaps the most radical animal rights movement. Their Web site (www.djurensbefrielsefront.com) has not been updated since May 2010. The movement thus leads a languishing life on the Internet, and is therefore touched upon very summarily in this survey.

Another type of politically motivated violence that has not been included in this survey is separatist violence. Sweden is relatively unscathed by this type of criminality, probably because there are no serious domestic separatist strivings. In Europe as a whole, separatist violence constitutes the most common type of politically motivated attacks; according to Europol, these represented 63 % of all terrorist attacks carried out, prevented or planned of which the police gained knowledge in 2011, and 70 % in 2012. (Europol 2012:36, Europol 2013:9). Separatist-motivated acts of violence have occurred on Swedish soil; for example, the murders of defectors from the Kurdish liberation army PKK in 1984 and 1985. However, these separatist attacks were not caused by any dissent against Swedish conditions or the Swedish political system, nor were they directed against these. The fact that these deeds took place in Sweden was primarily due to the antagonists having been present in the country and they can therefore not be considered as attacks against Swedish democracy. As there does not appear to be any separatist Internet propaganda produced with a Swedish audience in view, there is no such material included in this survey.

The inquiries by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet) and the Swedish Security Service (Säkerhetspolisen) primarily relate to the actors within pro-violence right-wing, left-wing and jihadist extremism, how these movements are constructed and the type of crimes for which they are responsible. This study concerns the same three milieux, but differs from the previous surveys in that its focus is on the messages, not on the actions. Whilst the previously mentioned reports investigated who the violent extremists are, and what they do, this study focuses on how they present themselves and their view of the world; that is, what they say. The purpose here is not to describe what the three extremist milieux look like, or what is included in their respective ideologies. The purpose is to analyse how they present themselves on the Internet, the ideas and world view they express, not the untold values on which this expressed world view is based. The focus is on the message, not on actual conditions. This does not mean that the extreme milieux have been ignored in this report. As the meaning of a message is dependent both on the context in which it is produced and the context in which it is consumed, an analysis that did not take these factors into account would be incomplete. In simple terms: the interpretation we give of an expression such as “blackhead and criminal” depends both on our own attitudes and on our understanding of the
context in which the expression is used. If it is used on a right-wing extremist Web site, it has a clear racist meaning; if it instead is the name of a song by the Stockholm rappers Mohammed Ali, it instead has more of the character of anti-racist social criticism. To understand the messages that are used within the various extremist milieux, a basic understanding of how these milieux function is necessary. The descriptions of the milieux found in the three constituent studies are not attempts at providing comprehensive images of the extreme and pro-violence organisations, networks or action groups. They serve only as the ideological context against which the meanings of the messages appear more clearly.

The Internet can be said to fill at least three functions when it comes to recruitment to violent extremist milieux and the radicalisation of these. Firstly, the Internet is a channel for disseminating the ideological or religious ideas that justify and legitimise anti-democratic violence. Secondly, it functions as an anonymous social meeting place for like-minded people. Thirdly, it can be used as a communications channel for planning and coordinating actions (Silber & Bhatt 2007:83).

The first of these functions, the Internet as a distribution channel for messages that encourage ideologically-motivated violence, is the main focus of this study. These messages take many forms, such as news items, music, films of actions, manifestations or social activities within the movement, preaching or debate articles. Although there are often opportunities for the recipient of these messages to comment on the content, the material is primarily produced with one-way communication in mind: a text producer has packaged ideological content of which a recipient will partake.

For the second function, facilitating anonymous communication between like-minded individuals and groups, the social functions of the Internet are central. The Internet then functions as an interface for a community of interests (Roots of Violent Radicalisation 2012). The Internet’s function as a social contact-creating tool is probably very important for those movements that encourage violent struggle, as it permits a high degree of anonymity in their interactions with other sympathisers. The Internet makes it possible to cultivate an identity as an extremist without having to disclose this to the world around you, which is crucial as pro-violence extremism is something very few individuals want to expose in public. The current survey deals with this social function only to a limited extent. That does not mean that it is not relevant. There is good reason to study the social functions of Internet communications separately, both to understand and to counteract violent extremism.

The third main area of use of the Internet within the framework of pro-violence anti-democratic movements – planning and coordinating actions – is only touched upon superficially in this report.
The reason for this is that the planning of violent, illegal activities does not take place in the public forums and the open Web sites that are the subject of this survey. Where there are calls to take part in various activities, they usually lack a violent purpose.

Within the framework of the survey, we have studied Web sites and forums that are open to the public, not closed forums or social media that require an invitation or Web sites that are password-protected. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the focus is on the outward-directed messages, those that are intended to attract new sympathisers and recruit them for the anti-democratic cause. A report from the FBI establishes that the Internet possibly has its greatest impact as an interface for persons who have not yet been recruited or radicalised. Individuals can find material and chat with others who lead them into an extremist pro-violence milieu. Once individuals have embraced the extreme ideology, physical meetings probably become more important in their further radicalisation (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2006:7, see also Roots of Violent Radicalisation 2012:15).

Secondly, a survey of closed/password-protected sites on the Internet would entail infiltration work that would require both skills and resources beyond the framework of this assignment. Thirdly, there is reason to suspect that the publication of what has been found in closed forums could have negative consequences for the activities carried out by the Swedish Security Service and the military intelligence service.

A considerable part of previous research into violent extremism – in particular jihadist milieux – has an express terrorist perspective on the area. As this survey is not concerned with terrorist activities, but rather with messages that may attract young persons to anti-democratic movements, we have used terror research very sparingly. It is not fruitful to try to look at the Web site of Revolutionära fronten in the light of the acts of terror in New York on 11 September 2001, or on Utøya in 2011.

Parts of the research also emphasise the increasing globalisation of violent extremism. According to Europol, transnational cooperation between violent extremist groups is increasing, mostly as a result of developments within communication technology. This makes possible both improved information dissemination about activities and coordination of activities, which implies that others may be inspired by actions that have been documented and disseminated online (Europol 2012:10–11). This survey concerns messages aimed at young Swedes. The transnational operational cooperation therefore lies outside the subject area, as do those parts of the global information flow that are more aimed at active members in the extremist groupings than at new recruits.

The survey assignment concerns anti-democratic messages on the Internet and social media aimed at young persons. As the study focuses on the messages and not on the recipients of these messages, it is not possible to make any statement about the age of the audience. The fact that the users of
discussion forums or in the YouTube comment field usually are anonymous makes it even more
difficult to try to discern their age. However, several previous studies have established that the
recruitment base for the pro-violence right wing and left wing to a large extent consists of young
persons (see, for example, Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009, Säkerhetspolisen 2010,
Ramalingam et al. 2012). Among militant jihadists, recruitment appears to be of more mixed age, but
also in this group the number of young men is large (Säkerhetspolisen 2010). On the basis of
previous research, we can thus assume that some of the recipients of the pro-violence anti-
democratic messages are young, but we do not know how young, or how many are young.

For the same reason, it is difficult to “describe the process by which young persons in particular can
be influenced by anti-democratic messages disseminated via the Internet” as stipulated in the
assignment. In order to state with any safety how people are affected by messages, a reception study
would have to be carried out to study how these persons interpret and receive the messages. This we
have not done, and we can therefore not make any statement about how young persons are affected.
It is, however, possible to draw conclusions about how the senders want to influence their audience,
based on the construction of the messages themselves. When right-wing extremists present national
socialism as “the biological world view”, this implies that a reader will find the ideology to be natural
and inevitable, while current-day culture is felt to be degenerate and decadent. The Revolutionära
fronten claims “We consider fighting anti-democrats using democratic means to be idealistic and
naive. We have instead chosen to be militant and resolute in our resistance to state and
extraparliamentary racism.”, they are addressing an imagined reader who prioritises actions before
words and thinks that the end justifies the means. Using the current survey, it is therefore not
possible to make any statement about how the recipients of the messages are affected by them. On
the other hand, it is possible to conclude how the sender wants to affect the recipient from the way
the messages are addressed, and to draw speculative conclusions about how the recipients may be
affected. Specific forms of address are further discussed in Chapter 3, Mechanisms for radicalisation.

The current study uses concepts that require special explanation; these concepts are also used
exclusively to describe matters that are relevant to the survey, although they may have another
meaning in other contexts. In order to make the text manageable, the full designations have been
abbreviated. Below follows descriptions of these concepts.

The three milieux of relevance for the study can be said to be the extreme right, the extreme left and
Islamist ideologies. In the text, the expression right-wing extremists and derivatives of this are used

2 (http://revfront.org/?page_id=10)
synonymously for those who spread “anti-democratic pro-violence extreme right-wing messages”; autonomous and left-wing extremists and derivatives of these for those who spread “anti-democratic pro-violence extreme left-wing messages; and jihadists and derivatives of this for those who spread “anti-democratic pro-violence Islamist messages”. In this survey, the concept of Islamism includes both militant jihadism and puritanical Salafism, where the latter distances itself from the use of physical violence.

All quotations from the study material are reproduced verbatim. This means that all the spelling, attribution, punctuation and sentence-construction errors in the reference material have been kept.

1.1 Practical implementation of the studies

In order to carry out the three constituent studies, three researchers were contacted: Linus Andersson, PhD in Media and Communication Studies at Södertörn University, Mattias Ekman, PhD in Media and Communication Studies at Stockholm University, and Simon Stjernholm, PhD in Islamology at Lund University. Ulf Dalquist, PhD and Head of Research at the Swedish Media Council, managed the study. A reference group has also been associated with the work from the start, with representatives from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå), Fryshuset Exit, the Living History Forum, the Swedish National Police Board, the Swedish Security Service and the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs. The three constituent studies were designed jointly to ensure the greatest possible comparability between the different milieux. The comparative approach has also meant that it has been possible for thinking and phenomena that appear in one milieu but not in another to be analysed further; the comparative approach has thus not just provided opportunities for comparisons, but has also resulted in the differences between the milieux being accentuated further. Andersson, Ekman and Stjernholm are the sole authors of each constituent study. The editorial framework – all the text apart from the three constituent studies, including conclusions and proposals for measures – was then written by the Swedish Media Council in consultation with the three researchers.

The practical delimitations of the Web sites studied have their basis in two opposing problems in the three study areas. The prevalence of Swedish right-wing extremist Web sites is so great that a selection had to be made to produce a surveyable study. Of the seven Web sites included in this survey, six belong to organisations that disseminate pro-violence and anti-democratic political
messages. The seventh, www.nationell.nu “Det svenska motståndets nättidning” (“The net newspaper of the Swedish resistance”), lacks any direct organisation association, but disseminates similar messages. There are considerably more Web sites that express ideas that are very close to those of the extreme right wing, but where the pro-violence and anti-democratic features are unclear or lacking.

If the right-wing extremist Internet milieu is too large to be included in its entirety in this survey, the situation is the opposite when it comes to Web representation of the extreme left wing and the jihadists. There are just a handful of active Swedish Web sites that disseminate anti-democratic and pro-violence messages in each milieu. As a result of this, material from Internet forums and Web sites that are ideologically close, but not explicitly pro-violence, has also been used to describe the different worlds of ideas. For the left-wing autonomous milieu, discussions from general socialist/anarchist/autonomous forums have been included, such as www.socialism.nu and www.yelah.net. These include theoretical discussions that border on those used to legitimise violent action in the more anti-democratic milieux, but there is no encouragement to use violence.

The Swedish jihadist Web sites included in the material are also few, consisting in practice of one Web site and one private blog. Jihadist messages can also be found to a limited extent on social media. There are also a number of Web sites that can be described as puritanical Salafi. The choice of Web sites with pro-violence Islamist content is complicated by the similarities between jihadist and Salafi ideas.

Pro-violence jihadism and puritanical Salafism share their world of ideas to a large extent, even if the latter distances itself from the former’s use of physical violence. Within parts of Salafism, however, there is express cultural violence in the form of a forceful rejection of unbelievers (see also Chapter 2.1). Behind the Salafis disavowal of physical violence lies a different understanding of how and when Muslims should take part in jihad.

The puritanical Salafi messages condemn idolatry and unbelief and encourage dissociation from groups associated with these. In this way, the messages offer identification with the “orthodox believers”. A person who is convinced by the argumentation in such messages and tries to act accordingly can thus imagine him/herself to be included in the group saved from the wrath of God thanks to pure living, obedience and the scrupulous compliance with religious decrees. The focus here is on individual salvation, based on careful avoidance of sins rather than active deeds.

The jihadist messages offer another type of identification. Of course orthodox faith and personal salvation from the wrath of God are prominent here too, but an action-oriented identification with a struggling advance troop said to defend Islam against attack is also offered. The jihad fighters claim
to take their religiosity one step further than all others, as they are unselfishly sacrificing themselves in the fight for God’s cause. *Acting forcefully* overshadows the avoidance of sins.

In general terms, it could be said that Salafism and the ideological standpoint that we have chosen to call jihadism in this report in many respects share a world of ideas, but they differ in the aspect that in this mapping is the most important of all – the Salafis do not promote the use of physical violence.
2. Introductory definitions

In the Government’s assignment to the Swedish Media Council (Ju2011/6776/D), three closely linked concepts are used: anti-democratic messages, pro-violence messages and extremism. The meaning and internal relationships between the concepts are defined below.

2.1 Defining violence and pro-violence

In its most basic sense, violence can be understood as a physical attack with intent to harm another person. However, to limit the analysis to only relate to direct encouragement to use physical violence is to disregard central parts of the anti-democratic message that is disseminated via the Internet. A large part of the propaganda studied here legitimises a view that certain groups of people are less valuable, or that the democratic system is a dysfunctional system. These messages do not directly encourage violence for political or religious purposes, but their function is to legitimise direct encouragement of violence. In an article from 1990, the Norwegian peace and conflict researcher Johan Galtung presents a distinction between three different, but closely related, forms of violence: direct violence, cultural violence and structural violence (Galtung 1990).

**Direct violence** does not just refer to physical attacks, such as murder or assault, but also to threats of physical attack and physical limitation of freedom of movement, such as internment and displacement of populations.

The concept of **structural violence** refers to when social structures or institutions refuse people the satisfaction of fundamental human needs. This might be various types of marginalisation or exploitation, motivated by, for example, institutionalised racism, sexism or nationalism. Apartheid is one example of structural violence; classifying homosexuality as a disease is another.

**Cultural violence** is those aspects of a culture that can be used to justify and legitimise direct or structural violence. These might be ideologies, religion, art, science or the media, for example. It concerns ideas that justify violence, irrespective of whether it is structural or direct. In the main, this report concerns cultural violence; the task is to map anti-democratic and pro-violence messages on the Internet, not actual physical/direct violence or the organisations that act in a pro-violent way.

In all national states, there are legitimate expressions for all these three forms of violence. Through what is usually called the state violence monopoly, the police, military – and to a more limited extent private guard companies – can legitimately use direct violence under certain conditions. State institutions, such as the prisons and probation service and social services, have the task of depriving
individuals of their freedom, which is one example of structural violence. There are also ideas and concepts that can be characterised as cultural violence: television programmes where heroes justifiably shoot criminals, the idea that self-defence is legitimate or coffee-break discussions where the view is that paedophiles should be forcibly castrated. These institutions, structures and ideas are socially accepted to a varying degree, but their common feature is that they approve the use of violence. Yet they can hardly be considered to be pro-violence. The concept is clearly limited to extreme points of view, outside the political centre ground.

The three types of violence thus fulfil different functions and are exercised at different positions in society by different actors. The continuity of the types of violence also varies:

Direct violence is an event; structural violence is a process with ups and downs; cultural violence is an invariant, a “permanence”. (Galtung 1977)

Using Galtung’s concept of violence as the starting point, “pro-violence” can be defined as follows: when the use of violence (direct violence) is accepted or promoted for ideological or religious reasons, or when it is accepted or promoted for the same reasons that groups of persons are exposed to discriminatory treatment or refused citizen rights (cultural violence). The Security Service use the same definition, but with a different wording:

The Security Service use the adjective pro-violence to differentiate actions and operations that may be a threat to security – such as supporting or taking part in ideologically-motivated acts of violence – from those that are not pro-violence but may be problematic from other perspectives. The latter category includes anti-democratic actions, for example, such as not acknowledging the equal value of all persons, but without using or supporting violence. (Säkerhetspolisen 2010:26)

In the field studies, “directly encouraging violence” has been used as a synonym for “encouragement to direct violence” and “cultural violence toleration” as a synonym for “cultural violence”. Far from all messages that display “cultural violence toleration” encourage direct physical violence against those depicted as inferior individuals: Jews, homosexuals, Nazis, or unbelievers. On the other hand, the opposite is true: messages that directly encourage violence always depict the objects of aggression as inferior. The concept of structural violence, however, is less useful in this survey. Structural violence is found in broader social structures and institutions, and generally concerns the exploitation and marginalisation of minority groups by the majority of society. It thus has little to do with the anti-democratic ideas of extreme milieux, but instead involves expressions of general ideas about “the Other” and its supposed shortcomings compared to the “normality”.
There are other organisations and networks that are indubitably pro-violence and that do not act according to any democratic game rules, such as the mafia and criminal motorcycle gangs. Without diminishing the fact that they constitute a social problem, they still fall outside the focus of this report, as they lack any expressed political/ideological agenda, and do not express any will to change the constitution or the parliamentary system.

2.2 Defining extremism

In previous studies of pro-violence political and religious milieux in Sweden, the concept of “pro-violence extremism” has been used (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009, Säkerhetspolisen 2010). The concept of “extremism” is used “to describe movements, ideologies or persons who do not accept a democratic social order” (Säkerhetspolisen 2010:27), and “pro-violence” to point out that certain extremist movements are prepared to use physical violence to achieve their ends. The mandate of the Security Service only covers the pro-violence parts of extremist movements. It is thus not illegal to give voice to opinions that are against democracy, on condition that they do not fall under the various limitations to free speech that exist in Swedish law.

In parts of the international research into violent political and religious milieux, there are two concepts that are closely related to extremism: radicalism and terrorism. Radicalism and terrorism could be said to exist on opposite sides of extremism. Radicalism usually has nothing to do with ideologically or religiously motivated violence. Nor does a radical necessarily distance him/herself from democracy as a system. Radical ideas are thus not the object of this survey. Radicalism can be said to convert into extremism when violence is used as a method.\(^3\) Finally, terrorism can be defined as extremism where violence is not only used against expressed ideological opponents or against representatives of the state, but also against the civilian population and/or other individuals, who consider themselves as being outside the conflict in question. Much of international research into violent political and religious milieux consist of terrorism research, and is difficult to apply to the context of Swedish extremism. The terrorist concept is also diffuse. The fighting in Syria is a current example, where some of the combatants are regarded as a militia fighting against an oppressive regime, while the religiously motivated guerrilla groups are often described as jihadist terrorists. The fact that Syria’s actions against the instigators of the rebellion and the civil population have been described as “state terrorism” (as by, for example, Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in September 2012) indicates how flexible the concept is. While those who travel to Syria or Somalia to

\(^3\) The generally accepted term of “radicalisation”, which describes how extreme ideas are cultivated and lead to the use of violence, is fairly illogical in this context. “Extremisation” would really have been more apt.
“help their brothers” are regarded as terrorists, volunteers who fought on Finland’s side in the Winter War, or on the side of the republicans in the Spanish Civil War, were considered to be freedom fighters. Terrorism is an ideological and propagandistic concept, the meaning of which depends on who is using it, and we will therefore avoid it in this survey.

Properly speaking, “extremism” denotes only the outermost points on an ideological scale; some types of extreme ideologies are neither expressly pro-violence nor opposed to constitutional democracy, if it is even considered. For example, many of the most conservative Muslims distance themselves from both democracy and the use of violence to destroy it. Violence is a sin, and under the present circumstances a good believer should not become involved in it. They are therefore possibly extremists in the sense that they want to replace Western democracy with a theocracy, but they do not promote the use of physical violence. There are also political currents within the autonomous left that accept the use of violence and methods that lack any acceptance in a traditional constitutional democracy, but where the ultimate goal is said to be to increase the democratic influence on society, as the current social order is not considered to be a true democracy. Using the Security Service’s definition, these would then be pro-violence, but not extremists. There is reason to discuss how “extremism” relates to the concepts of “anti-democracy” and “anti-constitutionalism”.

In the book *Political Extremes*, the German political scientist Uwe Backes presents a history of the use of the concept of extremism and, based on this, a definition of extremism as the opposite of constitutional democracy. According to Backes, a constitutional state rests on four fundamental ideas. Firstly, a constitutional state is pluralistic instead of monistic. A multitude of religious views, ethnic groupings or economic production forms are permitted, instead of a single one within each category. Secondly, the constitutional state is oriented toward the best interests of the general public, instead of towards an “egoistical execution of interests”. The basis for decisions is that they shall result in the greatest possible happiness for the greatest possible number, and not just have the interests of a few in mind. Thirdly, a constitutional state is a state governed by law, and not a despotic state. A political order must consist of rules for how power is to be shared, allocated and limited that are obeyed by all, including those who currently have a governing position. Fourthly, a constitutional state must be governed through self-determination and not through decisions that lack legitimacy from citizen participation. The political system must guarantee the opportunity to take part in decisions and in the exercise of power, so that the will of the majority rules (Backes 2006:181-2).

A functioning constitutional democracy is a system where the struggle for influence, power and positions of power is carried out by peaceful means. Such a system assumes the existence of several competing parties and interest groups (pluralism), a legitimate political opposition, institutional mechanisms for interaction between majorities and minorities – for example general elections and
parliamentary representation – and fundamental citizen rights that protect against repressive measures on the part of the state – such as freedom of speech, freedom of information and freedom of meeting (Backes 2006:183).

Backes also considers that a differentiation must be made between anti-democratic and anti-constitutional. While the former idea rejects the idea that all persons are created equal, the latter rejects the constitutional set of laws and ordinances that aims to guarantee equality between and freedom of citizens. As the concept of democracy generally is used in a broader context than just as a designation of equality/sex equality, the opposite pair egalitarian/anti-egalitarian is really more correct. Anti-democratic messages are the collective concept for ideological and religious expressions that are either anti-egalitarian (deny the equal value of everybody) or anti-constitutional (want to overthrow the democratic constitution) or both. Extreme ideas do not have to be both anti-egalitarian and anti-constitutional. Backes considers that anti-egalitarian and anti-constitutional views can be seen as two different dimensions of an extremist field.

![Figure 2.1. Political extremism in a two-dimensional political space (Developed from Backes 2010)](image)

Based on this distinction, the ideological currents that are the subject of this survey can be theoretically located, in accordance with the above. The autonomous left-wing groupings are democratic in the sense that they prescribe total equality for all citizens, but undemocratic in their rejection of the constitution in its liberal democratic form. They represent egalitarian anti-

---

4 One problem with Backes’ model is that constitutional democracy by definition is synonymous with liberal constitutional democracy, and all divergences from this will by necessity be anti-democratic. This means that Backes’ system is static, and all political change to liberal democracy is an assault on the same. According to Backes, nationalisation of the means of production would thus be undemocratic, even if it was done following a referendum.
constitutional ideas. The extreme right and the jihadists oppose both the constitutional state and equality for all. They are thus anti-egalitarian and anti-constitutional ideologies. Whether there is such a thing as constitutional, but anti-egalitarian, ideas is a matter for discussion. Backes proposes that the USA during slavery or South Africa during apartheid could represent such an ideological construct.

As all constitutional states to some extent include some form of structural and cultural violence aimed at some marginalised group, however, it is difficult to regard the “anti-democratic” constitutional states as essentially different from the “democratic” ones. In actual fact, all states always include some elements of inequality/sex inequality (Backes 2006:186-8).

Using Backes’ terminology, the extremist autonomous left wing should thus not be regarded as anti-democratic in the same sense as the pro-violence right wing or jihadism, as the former expresses egalitarian ideas.

Totalitarian states have existed for considerably longer than constitutional democracies. They have existed since time immemorial, and have continued, side by side with the various waves of democratising processes, right up to the present day (Backes 2006:191). From a more long-term historical perspective, the constitutional democracies many of us today take for granted are a chimera. To ensure they do not just become a historical parenthesis, we do not just have to defend the democratic ideals and fight their opponents – the opportunities of all citizens to participate in a well-informed manner in democratic processes must also be the subject of continuous reinforcement.

2.3 What are anti-democratic messages?

Nor is there any fully accepted definition of what democracy entails, even if Backes’ reasoning in the previous section takes us some of the way. In this survey, we have used a pragmatic definition of “anti-democratic messages”, using the pro-violence ideological/religious currents studied as the starting point. A distinction has already been made between different types of anti-democratic ideas, anti-egalitarian and anti-constitutional ones. It is now time to differentiate between the anti-democratic messages that promote the use of anti-democratic means and those that promote an anti-democratic goal.

Anti-democratic means are here understood as promoting violence, threats or other methods of action aimed at preventing people from exercising their democratic rights, while the anti-democratic goals are
understood as expressions that either promote the abolition of the constitution and the introduction of a totalitarian/theocratic government (anti-constitutional goal) or that promote the abolition of the citizen rights of certain population groups (anti-egalitarian goal). While both right-wing extremists and militant jihadism have the goal of overturning representative democracy and the abolition of citizen rights of certain population groups (such as Jews, homosexuals or “unbelievers”) as their goal, the left-wing autonomous groupings lack such an anti-egalitarian end goal. The latter think that today’s society lacks equality, and they therefore reserve the right to use extra-parliamentary violent methods to hasten what they consider to be a democratisation process, or to prevent the growth of anti-democratic movements. Based on the distinction between pro-violence and anti-democratic goals, it is possible to construe yet another four-field table, with the axes pro-violence and anti-democratic.

![Figure 2.2. Pro-violence and anti-democratic ideologies](image)

On an ideological level, it can be claimed that the extreme left wing has a less anti-democratic goal than both the two other milieux. In terms of this survey, however, the central feature is pro-violence messages promoting the use of anti-democratic means, and in this respect the extreme left wing does not differ from the other extremist milieux.

The expression “pro-violence” can be used to describe both the content of a certain communication (such as a speech, a text or a film) and the behaviour of people. (Säkerhetspolisen 2010:27)

Previous surveys have been based on the various organisations, networks, campaigns or actions, where collectives have acted in a violent way or at least encouraged violent acts for political reasons (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009, Säkerhetspolisen 2010). As indicated, this survey focuses on the messages, rather than the milieux. It is clear that the Internet has not just increased the opportunities for individuals with unusual interests to reach out to like-minded persons, but it has also to some extent disconnected the ideological elements from their physical social context. Previously, an aspiring national socialist was forced, physically, to seek out like-minded persons in order to get access to their propaganda. Today, he/she can partake of all the propaganda material at any time via the Internet. For this reason, the term “self-radicalisation” is used increasingly. Anders
Behring Breivik is one such example. There is little evidence he had any real contact with like-minded persons when planning his ill deeds. At the same time, it is clear that he was greatly impressed by the anti-democratic and pro-violence ideas he encountered via the Internet and in the literature. Self-radicalisation means that people develop an interest in and adopt a pro-violence ideology on their own, without any previous contact with pro-violence milieux. Self-radicalisation usually occurs through the adoption of pro-violence messages on the Internet (Säkerhetspolisen 2010:40). However, there is much indication that self-radicalisation in the sense that individuals adopt a pro-violence and anti-democratic image of the world exclusively through exposure to such messages on the Internet is extremely unusual (Stevens & Neumann 2009:12, Säkerhetspolisen 2010:40–1, Gable & Jackson 2011).

Even if the self-radicalising process starts off individually, very few persons remain alone with their conviction. Self- or Internet-radicalised persons usually seek out like-minded persons at a later stage, and in this way often come into contact with more established pro-violence milieux. (Säkerhetspolisen 2010:41)

Even through Breivik to all appearances both planned and executed his attacks entirely on his own, he had, apart from his considerable participation in right-wing extremist Internet forums, also a past in the youth wing of Fremskrittspartiet. Not even Breivik can thus be said to have been radicalised without social contacts outside the Internet. Even though self-radicalisation is very unusual, this does not prevent both right-wing extremist and jihadist pro-violence milieux to encourage it in direct terms.

Both of the American right-wing extremists Tom Metzger and Alex Curtis are considered to have mythologized “lone wolf terrorism”, an extremely decentralised form of violent activism. The fight for the cause should not just be carried out through organisations and networks, which can be infiltrated far too easily, but it is the duty of every true race hater to use violence on his own (Gable & Jackson 2011). Similar ideas can be found in certain jihadists’ claim that jihad is an individual duty (fard ‘ayn) and not a collective duty (fard kifaya) (see also Chapter 6.2.1 in this report). Self-radicalised extremists, or free-lance terrorists, are difficult to discover using traditional intelligence methods, and have also been described as the most serious terror threats by bodies such as the CIA (Pantucci 2011).

Even if the threat should not be underestimated, self-radicalisation via the Internet is to some extent misleading. It assumes that Internet use lacks any feature of social contact. In actual fact, engaging in social interaction is one of the most popular activities on the Internet, and today’s young persons emphasise that they do not see any great difference between sociality on the Internet and in physical reality – online and offline (Bucht & Edström 2012). An individual is not alone or socially isolated on the Internet (unless he/she chooses to be so), he/she is only using different social communication
tools than body language and the spoken word. The question is whether self-radicalisation in the
sense of ideological radicalisation without social contacts via the Internet can even exist in a digital
milieu that has increasingly become characterised by multi-way communication and social media.
Self-recruitment and self-radicalisation via the Internet without any kind of physical social contacts
whatsoever is very rare, and very few – if any – of the perpetrators of violence described as lone-wolf
terrorists have been radicalised entirely on their own (Gable & Jackson 2011, Stevens & Neumann
2009:12). On the other hand, the final planning and execution of the violent deeds that have
transformed them from theoretical extremists to terrorists may have been done without contact with
other persons, even if this too is unusual.

The Internet has been of great importance in terms of opportunities for pro-violence extremism to
reach out to potential sympathisers.

The IT competence of the extremist milieux has also made it possible for them to
establish themselves in the virtual world. The combination of a stable physical and virtual
presence means that the extremist milieux no longer are dependent on single individuals
for their existence. Even if the activities decline in certain regions when leading activists
leave the milieux, they remain on the Internet and in other places in the country. In this
way, the extremist milieux in Sweden cope with generation shifts or when leading activists
are deprived of their freedom. (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009:141)

The Internet has made it possible to build structures for information dissemination and social contact
that are separate from physical contact. If a leading person within an extremist milieu is arrested or
otherwise loses control over his or her physical contact with the sympathisers, the communication
structure on the Internet still remains. The establishment of the extremist milieux on the Internet also
means that the reach of the messages has increased – it is much easier to use a search engine to find
texts that are illegal in large parts of the world than to try to access them in paper form.
3. Mechanisms for radicalisation

When compared to the population as a whole, only a few persons engage in pro-violence extremist movements. Within the extreme right-wing and the pro-violent autonomous left, the number of criminally active persons is estimated as “amounting to around one hundred in each milieu” (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009). The militant jihadists are estimated by the Swedish Security Service to amount to around 200 individuals (Säkerhetspolisen 2010). There is a considerable amount of research into what characterises the persons who involve themselves in these movements, but no single cause for such an involvement (Bjørgo 2011). Several different phenomena and experiences have been mentioned as risk factors for radicalisation. It has been claimed that susceptibility towards pro-violence and anti-democratic messages is greater among young persons, persons on low incomes, persons exposed to discrimination or harassment on religious or ethnic grounds, and persons who define themselves as in conflict with other groups (Roots of Violent Radicalisation 2011).

The primary purpose of this report is to map the existence of pro-violence anti-democratic messages on the Internet. It is not to investigate the type of personality that is attracted by such messages, how various types of pro-violence extremism arise, or what the movements look like. It may, however, be important to try to see to what perceived needs among the recipients the various types of message respond. If an individual feels alienated from society, he/she is also more receptive to messages that underline and provide an explanation for this alienation; if he/she feels a grievance with a policy pursued, then criticism of this policy and the statement of alternative ideologies also appear more attractive. The question is then to what needs, personal characteristics or experiences these messages can be thought to appeal? Previous research has identified a number of such factors as appear to increase the susceptibility to pro-violence and anti-democratic messages. It must be emphasised that nothing of what is presented below on its own constitutes the reason why people seek out pro-violence extremism. Nor is it more than a small minority of the individuals who share these experiences that are actually attracted by extremist ideologies. Instead, it appears to be a combination of several of these factors that may be a prerequisite for recruitment to and radicalisation by such ideologies. There are also other factors, but they are not applicable in relation to messages disseminated via the Internet.

McCauley & Moskalenko (2008) identify twelve different mechanisms for how political radicalisation may occur. As this report concerns messages conveyed via the Internet, not all of these twelve mechanisms are applicable. For example, the well-documented phenomenon that persons join violent extremist movements due to love of someone who is already a member is hardly a meaningful
category when it comes to Internet propaganda. Nor is the fact that extreme movements in violent conflict are radicalised through condensation, i.e., less radical members tending to be “frightened away” from the movement, so that only the most extreme remain, relevant to this analysis. The mechanisms presented below are broad analytical categories. It is, for example, a truism that there is an element of political grievance in politically extreme movements. The fact that we have used these mechanisms in the analysis does not mean that we claim that specific messages have specific effects on the recipient. As this survey has not studied the audience for the messages at all, it is not possible either to state how this audience receives, interprets or is affected by the messages. The purpose of using these categories as analytical tools is to use them as a filter for sorting the messages into specific forms of appeal. For example, when specific messages are found to refer to victimisation or action, this does not mean that they would have an effect on individuals who have experienced victimisation or who feel a need for active behaviour. The purpose is only to establish that the messages are constructed so as to effectively address individuals with such experiences or needs.

Five of the mechanisms described by McCauley & Moskalenko are of importance for this report:

**Personal victimisation** concerns individuals who have themselves experienced discriminating or offensive treatment, or been subjected to violence or assault. Persons who have experienced this are probably more receptive of messages that refer to similar experiences. For example, if an individual has been assaulted by members of a specific or generalised ethnic group, there is probably a greater propensity to identify with similar stories and/or messages that describe these in terms of enemies. In the empirical material of this report, it turned out to be difficult to differentiate references to personal victimisation where individual experiences are at the centre (“I was mugged by immigrants”/“the Nazis knocked me over”, etc.) from stories of collective victimisation where a solidarity aspect with those exposed appears (“immigrants are mugging Swedes”/“the Nazis assault comrades”). For this reason, hereinafter the concepts of **personal victimisation** and **collective victimisation** will both be used.

**Political grievance** on an individual level can lead to violent actions. This refers to single individuals who feel a strong grievance with what they feel to be a negative political development and who act in opposition to this. The Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, who for 18 years sent letter bombs to people he felt represented a hateful technological development, is one example. Anders Behring Breivik is another. This type of violent extremist is relatively unusual, and psychopathological features appear to be more common among them. Despite the fact that such perpetrators are rare, their existence indicates that violent extremism does not have to be linked to movements – the ideological milieu created by pro-violence anti-democratic ideas can lead to violence through so-called self-radicalisation.
A normalisation process can occur within the framework of an extreme group. Within the framework of a relatively closed social group, the limits of what is “normal” behaviour, and the definition of what is “extreme”, tend to be constantly moved forwards. What a new group member might perceive to be extremely radical will after some time appear to be everyday behaviour and something that everybody does. The same view can be applied to the messages that are the subject of this study: once ideas about a Jewish world conspiracy or that Nazis must be driven off the streets using violence have been repeated often enough, they appear to be completely natural. The relatively closed milieu on the Web sites that market such ideas and the constant repetition of these mantras mean that in the end they are perceived to the inevitable truths. The same can be said about a use of language that is unthinkable in a broader social context, words such as “nigger” or “Jewish swine”.

Group radicalisation under isolation and threat refers to the cohesion that arises in an isolated group under external pressure. Well-documented examples are the exceptionally strong loyalty with the comrades that develops in fighting military units or active terrorist cells. This cohesion places great demands both on internal discipline and obedience, and also on a common set of values. Achieving this strong group cohesion is one of the purposes of all military training. It is not really possible to claim that the Internet activities that are the subject of this study in practice are comparable to fighting military units. On the other hand, parts of the propaganda refer to such circumstances: the movement’s own brave force is romanticised as fighting against an all-powerful enemy, and a spirit of self-sacrifice and willingness to fight are encouraged as virtues.

The role of martyrdom as an image of the ideal in violent extremism is well-known. Within militant jihadism, martyrdom – offering one’s life for the cause – is one of the greatest achievements of a human being. Although this concept of a reward after death for martyrdom is lacking among the violent right-wing and left-wing extremists, those who have been injured or died during the struggle are honoured both as brave fighters and as symbols of the enemy’s evil. In Salem outside Stockholm, the neo-Nazi Daniel Wretström was beaten to death in 2000 by a gang of youths, some of whom had an immigrant background. Wretström’s death was honoured for ten years by means of the so-called Salem March, in which nationalists and Nazis carried torches, eagerly attended by their ideological opponents on the left. Within the (extreme) left, the memory of the syndicalist trade union official Björn Söderström, who was murdered by neo-Nazis in 1999, is honoured. In addition to these five radicalisation mechanisms, Munton et al (2011) describe a further two factors that are relevant to this survey.

5 McCauley & Moskalenko call this mechanism “joining a radical group – the slippery slope”. We use the term “normalisation processes”.

47
Rewards in the form of capital or status have been observed to be a motivating factor among militant jihadists, where these rewards may be monetary (salary, bonus for successful actions, contributions to the surviving families of martyrs), or status-dependent (the pro-violence extremists are regarded as heroes). Among right-wing extremists, a propensity for violence has been found to be a status-marker within the own group. However, rewards of this type appear to be conspicuous by their absence in the pro-violence left-wing milieux.

The pro-violence extremist groups may also fill functions in individuals’ identity-seeking. All humans have a fundamental need for a group identity. Persons who feel low social cohesion with their immediate milieu and society as a whole may be attracted by the strongly knit extremist milieux, where persons are defined as being in opposition to the majority of society. The movements here fill the function of the group of friends or the family the individual has been lacking. The fact that the surroundings often distance themselves from the extreme groups strengthens the cohesion further (Høigård 2012).

Finally, two types of routes into radical extremism that are of relevance for this report are mentioned in Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009.

The *brooders* are ideologically motivated individuals who seek explanations of perceived problems, or who are looking for an explanation why the world works the way it does. Political grievance is close to, or can even be said to be a part of, the brooder’s route to radicalisation. However, the grievance differs from the brooding in that in the latter case the ideological or religious conviction fulfils an existential function. A dogmatic philosophy of life with conspiracy-theory features provides the individual with answers to all possible questions. The brooders who are drawn into extremist movements are as a rule those who become the most ideologically convinced.

In the *actors*, the ideological/religious conviction is conversely low – at least initially. Instead, it is the excitement, the violent action and the danger that attract. The type of extremist movement such thrill-seekers end up in may appear haphazard, and there are examples of individuals who have left one extreme movement and instead allied themselves with the former enemies. Those who choose to stay will, however, be socialised over time into the movement’s ideological/religious justifications for the use of violence. Messages that are aimed primarily at actors focus on the exhilarating actions, the excitement and physical use of violence, while philosophical, ideological or religious elements are lacking.
4. Pro-violence and antidemocratic right-wing extremist messages on the Internet

Mattias Ekman

4.1 Introduction

In the wording of the assignment from the Ministry of Justice to the Swedish Media Council the authority is to “describe the prevalence of anti-democratic messages” and messages “that encourage violence for a political or ideological cause”. Initially, this implies that certain concrete distinctions are made between the key concepts “anti-democratic messages”, and messages that “encourage violence for a political or ideological cause”. In the following report on the right-wing extremist presence on the Web and in social media, the document containing the assignment is distilled into the following primary objective:

The purpose is to map and analyse right-wing extremist Internet milieux, focusing on the design and content of political propaganda, and how recruitment strategies can be identified and be understood in various communicative contexts.

Right-wing extremist milieux are extensive and multifaceted, necessitating a well-defined and well-argued delimitation of the selection of Internet material to be covered in the study. Initially, the strategy has been to focus on material from particular movements and on Web milieux that:

(1) encourages, defends, excuses or otherwise manifests politically motivated acts of violence. This refers not only to express encouragement to violence against actual individuals or groups in society, but also to formulations that implicitly promote violence. The Swedish Security Service came to a similar conclusion in their analysis of how the pro-violence aspect should be understood (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009:36). Additionally, there is a focus on political and ideological violence in a Swedish political context.

(2) clearly distances itself from fundamental democratic values. This refers both to the constitutional side of democracy (i.e. the democratic representative form of government) and the fundamental civil rights that relate to respect and tolerance for other people (i.e. relating to the social and cultural dimensions of democracy). Such a delimitation thus makes it possible to identify groups, networks, Web sites, etc. that can be classed as anti-democratic and encourage violence.
One problem identified early in the present study relates to the relationship between extreme-right Web material, on the one hand, and extreme-right organisations, on the other. In the field of tension that exists between Web material and organisation/senders, there would appear to be at least two ways of dealing with the research practicalities involved in of implementing the two primary criteria. In a narrow interpretation of the assignment, the research should focus exclusively on the messages that meet the two criteria “pro-violence” and “anti-democratic”. Given such a restricted interpretation, however, the large majority of organisation-related material would remain outside the study’s focus. If the interpretation instead took the view that all messages (regardless of character) from movements, organisations and parties that meet the two criteria (pro-violence and anti-democratic) are potentially relevant, the material would be more extensive and multifaceted. The broader interpretation would imply that what might appear to be innocent, or downright positive, material from a pro-violence and anti-democratic movement would be relevant to the overall aim of the assignment – combating recruitment to anti-democratic, violent extreme-right movements. For this reason, the initial methodological determination is adapted in accordance with the latter interpretation. Both the Swedish Security Service’s assessment of the Swedish extreme-right milieu (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen, 2009:44) and research on the European extreme right (see for example Caiani, della Porta & Wagemann 2012; Kundnani 2012; Fekete 2012b; Zimmerman 2003) indicate that violent actions are part and parcel of the action repertoire of extreme-right milieux. This does not imply that all organisations are violent; however, the historical development of the Swedish extreme right milieu (Lööw, 2000), and the contemporary situation (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention & the Swedish Security Service (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen), 2009:44) demonstrate that violent actions and pro-violence rhetoric are still present.

4.2 Previous research

The primary aim of this section is to analyse key sectors of the research field that relate to the present analysis; on the other hand, the chapter will not provide a complete overview of international research on the right-wing extremism or a detailed presentation of research on the Swedish situation. The chapter will begin by discussing examples from the scientific research field of contemporary Swedish right-wing extremism, as well as investigations and analyses produced outside the academic milieu. There are two main sources of knowledge about extreme-right movements, individuals and practices: academic research and non-academic studies (such as investigative reporting, and reports from government authorities and actors in civil society). While the former may be more exact, having satisfied rigorous scientific tests and standards of precision, the latter is better at tracking and documenting the changes that characterise the milieu. The chapter ends with a summary of the
conclusions and insights from research focusing specifically on the significance of the Internet and of new media for extreme-right propaganda and recruitment. While the overview cannot presume to cover all research on the pro-violence extreme right in Sweden, it can serve as a theoretical and analytical sounding-board for our understanding of the Internet milieux analysed in the present contribution. The section also shows in what respects the analysis may contribute new knowledge about Sweden’s extreme-right milieu.

4.2.1 Scientific contributions

The scientific research field of Swedish right-wing extremism is relatively limited. However, there have been significant individual research projects in specific areas. Historian Heléne Lööw’s (1990, 2004) historical overview of Swedish Nazism, neo-Nazism and right-wing extremism is a key starting-point for the understanding of the organisations’ rise, development and ideological and political content. Most of Lööw’s (2000) research extends only to the millennial shift, however, and only briefly touches on the significance of new media in relation to political recruitment and the creation of ideological propaganda. In relation to the present study, however, Lööw’s research contributes to an important historical understanding of the content of extreme-right propaganda, its format and modes of distribution.

The sociologist Jens Rydgren has contributed extensive research on the portion of the extreme-right field that is typically referred to as the “populist radical right” (Rydgren 2003), or “radical right-wing populism” (Rydgren 2005, 2006, 2010). Rydgren’s research deals primarily with the rise of established political parties such as the Sweden Democrats, the Danish People’s Party, the Front National, etc. Several of the theoretical premises and empirical conclusions of Rydgren’s research are also useful for our understanding and explanations of the more extreme forces on the right. The political ideological demarcation between populist nationalist parties and the more extreme right-right groups are shifting and diffuse. Prominent members switch organisational or party affiliation, and democratically elected politicians have, as we have witnessed, changed their affiliation with the Sweden Democrats to the Party of the Swedes. Parties and groups on the far right differ in several ways, but use similar social circumstances, phenomena and events as fuel for their recruitment processes and to mobilise activists and sympathisers. There are several points of contact between Rydgren’s analysis of populist parties and the analysis of the more extreme players focused on by the present contribution.

---

6 The editors of the research anthology Det vita fältet (“The white field”) go so far as to claim that scientific research on “the radical components of the extreme-right field is […] entirely undeveloped” (Deland, Hertzberg & Hvitfeldt 2010:12).
The anthology *Det vita fältet* (Deland, Hertzberg & Hvitfeldt 2010) (“The White Field”) is a relatively recent contribution to research on Swedish right-wing extremism. Its contents focus specifically on the Internet’s significance for the creation of opinion-based groups and the dissemination of political propaganda within right-wing extremist milieux (see, for example, Wåg 2010; Welk 2010).7 The anthology also touches on the rise of social media, such as blogs, and their role in the production and distribution of ideological views (Lundquist 2010). The entry by Mattias Wåg8 (2010) also outlines the development of extreme-right propaganda and information since the White Power music scene of the 1990s. Wåg describes how certain parts of the right-wing extremist milieu develop a metapolitical strategy (approximately: “culture war”)*9, much of which utilises information technology to build an ideological infrastructure. This infrastructure is largely based on the Internet’s communicative advantages. A case in point is the nationalist forum Nordisk.nu (which has over 20,000 members), a result of an investment in new platforms for identity creation and communication within the right-wing extremist milieu (Wåg 2010).

In international research, American masculinity researcher and sociologist Michael Kimmel’s work is worthy of note. Taking an ethnographic approach, Kimmel (2007) touches upon some of the social and individual factors that affect recruitment to the Swedish racial-ideology milieu. Kimmel’s analysis is based on interviews with former Swedish neo-Nazis who have defected.10 He notes that the ideological dimension has little significance for the recruitment process to neo-Nazi milieux. The recruitment factors are associated more with events and development-related processes, often linked

---

7 Welk’s (2010) entry concerns Germany, but also contains an account of the Internet’s significance for right-wing extremist actors in general.

8 Mattias Wåg, an anti-racist activist, also appears in the present report in the section on the autonomous movement (see Chapter 5 in this publication). Wåg takes the approach of an investigative journalist with the primary focus of surveying the milieu of the extreme right. The text by Wåg (2010) referenced above is a scientific and peer-reviewed chapter in the anthology *Det Vita Fältet* (Deland, Hertzberg & Hvitfeldt 2010:12).

9 The metapolitical strategy amounts to a sort of right-wing reading of Italian marxist Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony. By stressing the culture war, this strategy attempts to change the conditions of the content of politics and of its framework of action. It is about changing the perceptions and frameworks that constitute the conditions for the political (cf. Badiou 2005; Wåg 2010; Lundquist 2010). For the ethnopluralistic part of Swedish right-wing extremism (see below), the metapolitical strategy is based on a displacement from the biological to the cultural field, among other things. Instead of focusing on the super- and subordination of what the proponents view as biological races, the strategy focuses on the differences between different cultures, which it contends should not be intermixed. Cultures are considered to represent specific, essential characteristics that are common to the entire group. In discourses of cultural racism, proponents may respect other cultures (at least in theory), but advocate a social separation of cultures considered too distant from one another. On right-wing extremist Web pages, there is ongoing debate as to where and how the boundaries of cultural tolerance should be drawn.

10 Kimmel’s (2007) informants are recruited from the defector organisation Exit, which is based at the Fryshuset building in Stockholm.
Kimmel (2007) finds that involvement in the racial-ideology milieu serves as a masculine rite of passage. The focus of the racial-ideology milieu on masculine strength and a historicised masculine ideal (the warrior, the Viking, etc.) often constitutes key elements in the search for identity of young, often alienated, men. The analysis contributes in-depth knowledge and understanding of the contributing mechanisms and conditions that lead to certain individuals winding up in neo-Nazi organisations. In relation to the present study, this is particularly relevant in light of the projected outline of the analysis of the propaganda material. Perhaps it is more important to look at (popular) cultural and social elements connected to identity creation (music, style, community-building practices, masculine attributes, etc.) as particularly significant for the examination of the recruitment potential of the extreme right, rather than political discourse and conventional propaganda? Trends in right-wing extremist communications and propaganda also suggest that cultural discourses have acquired a more prominent role compared to more explicitly political discourses. This is reflected in how the movements choose to frame, construct and communicate their opinion-based groupings (see, for example, Wåg 2010). It is possible to understand the right-wing extremist milieu in the light of the general process called the culturisation of politics (see, for example, Zizek 2008). In its liberal version, this culturisation manifests itself in the ideology of multicultural tolerance; in its right-wing extremist version, in cultural discrimination, as well as in the super- and subordination of one’s own culture and that of “the Other”, respectively. Despite the obvious differences between the positions, they can be understood as two sides of the same development – a shift from the social and economic dimensions of politics to the domain of culture. In this shift, the forces of the extreme right are in several respects at the forefront (see, for example, Yilmaz 2012), particularly through the development of what some right-wing extremists call “metapolitics” (see, example, Wåg 2010).

4.2.2 Extrascientific examination of right-wing extremist milieux

While academic research on Swedish right-wing extremism is highly restricted, the milieux are continuously being investigated by other societal actors. Knowledge about the extreme-right field is produced through investigative journalism, general non-fiction literature and the publications of government authorities, organisations and foundations. In this introduction, only a small portion of this work will be touched upon.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet) annually compiles a report on the incidence of hate crimes, which includes a presentation of violent actions with right-wing extremist motivation. In 2009, commissioned by the Government, the authority published an exhaustive report entitled “Våldsam politisk extremism” (“Violent political extremism”) (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen (2009). The report deals with the survey by
The anti-racist foundation Expo publishes reports on the Swedish right-wing extremist milieux. The reports provide a general overview, and they are descriptive and contain a great deal of information. The report “Den rasideologiska miljon. Årsrapport 2011” (“The race-ideological milieu: Annual Report 2011” (Expo 2012a) is the most recent survey of right-wing extremism in Sweden. Expo has also published two reports on the transnational anti-Muslim counter-Jihad movement, which has branched off into organisations such as the Sweden Democrats (Expo 2011, 2012b). One of the advantages of the investigative reports from Expo is that they tend to be up to date and detailed. One problem with the reports is that due to their investigative character they often lack full source references and a clear methodological apparatus.

The government study on a more effective approach to xenophobia has tabled its findings under the title “Främlingsfienden inom oss” (“The Xenophobe Within”) (SOU 2012:74), which deals with how society might combat xenophobia. The study contains one section on “Organiserad racism och främlingsfientlighet på internet” (“Organised racism and xenophobia on the Internet”, which has certain points of contact with the present report.
4.2.3 Research into the Internet, new media, and right-wing extremism

Historically, alternative media and forms of communication have played a key role in the mobilisation and development of extremist movements on the right. Extremist forces have been quick to utilise technological development in mediated communication (see, for example, Lööw 2000). The American extreme right used BBS boards and email already in the early 1990s and by the middle of the same decade, the movements had a well-functioning infrastructure in the form of Web sites, newsletters, newspapers, etc., on the Internet (Welks 2010). As early as 1990, former Ku Klux Klan leader Don Black started the forum Stormfront (initially as a BBS board and later in 1995 as a Web forum) (Welks 2010). Stormfront is currently a frequently visited and information-heavy node in the international network of right-wing extremist activists and sympathisers. Anthropologist Sophie Statel (2008) thinks that Stormfront serves as an imaginary community for right-wing extremists, a community that fills political and social functions for the participating members. For example, politically marginalised persons may feel a sense of belonging in a large group, and political frameworks of action are constituted on the basis of personal and communal experience and communicated via the Web forum (Statzel 2008). Internationally, the right-wing extremist milieu has been highly successful, particularly in its efforts to broaden its recruitment opportunities (Whine 2012:322).

Even in Sweden, right-wing extremist actors developed digital forms of communication early. The digital communication structures that existed before the breakthrough of the Web were particularly well suited to small open or entirely closed opinion-based groupings in the right-right extremist milieu. Early Internet research shows that there were at least 15 to 20 active Swedish neo-Nazi BBS boards in the beginning of the 1990s (Back, Keith & Solomos 1996:10). The production of propaganda material within the right-wing extremist movements and within the White Power music scene has benefitted significantly from the Internet as new distribution routes have been created and new groups of activists, sympathisers and consumers of racist popular culture have been recruited. The Internet has also opened up new, more extensive identity-building platforms centred around

---

11 “Alternative media” is the usual umbrella term for media that lie outside the commercial media field. Alternative refers to the actual media content, for example, that the media give alternative perspectives and marginalised social groups a voice. British media researcher Chris Atton (2002) feels that alternative media are not only about alternative content, but they are also about expanding the perspective on what characterises media production and what constitutes a media product. Alternative media imply that ordinary (non-professional) actors can be involved in media production (Atton 2002:4).

12 According to the Web analysis site Alexa, Stormfront ranks 19,300 in terms of number of hits (in the world) and 4,447 other Web sites link in to the forum (www.alexa.com, retrieved on 8 April 2013). The forum part that deals with Scandinavia and the Baltic states has around 3,719 unique discussion threads and 38,906 postings (Stormfront, retrieved on 8 April 2013).
White Power music, culture and right-wing extremist politics (Futrell, Simi & Gottschalk 2006:296). In this way, new communication technology and new distribution channels also play a key role in the processes that form political identities (ibid.).

Another aspect highlighted in research on right-wing extremism and digital forms of communication is the right-wing extremists’ Web milieux’ use of symbols and aesthetically designed messages. Based on philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin’s reasoning on the aesthetic dimension of Nazi politics, British sociologist Les Back (2002) finds that Web-based racism must also be understood in the light of the opportunities that the actual communication forms represent. The Internet is the locus of several multifaceted media-specific expressions. Web-based communication enables the development of the aesthetic dimension of racist political ideas. Back thinks that in many ways racist Web sites embody the character of postmodern society, in which ingrained ideas regarding racist identities become loosened up. Racist Web milieux challenge outdated ideas of what racists should look like, what attributes they should adopt and how they should behave. In the light of technological development, other sides of these movements can be revealed and highlighted, visually especially.

While Back’s study of American Web sites in the right-wing extremist milieu relates to a Web milieu that no longer exists, its emphasis on the aesthetic dimension of extremist politics has a bearing on the present study as well.

That the growth of new forms of communication has been highly advantageous for extreme-right movements is obvious when we consider the anonymity aspect. Openly sympathising with socially stigmatised opinions may be difficult, if not impossible, for many individuals. In many ways the Internet has removed the impediments that previously existed in social interaction between extremist movements and their potential sympathisers. Previously, individuals had to take out a subscription to a newspaper or newsletter, or physically visit an extreme-right milieu, to access a concrete point of contact. Surfing on right-wing extremist Web sites or communicating with active members in the extreme-right milieu on Web 2.0 has, potentially at least, removed several of these impediments.

The development of new forms of communication is, however, not only an advantage for extreme-right actors. New and more extensive ways of participating in the political and organisational conversation, for example, by commenting on writings and communicating via social media such as blogs, forums, etc., also increase the real and potential conflicts that have permeated the extreme-right milieu for decades. The growth of an interactive communication structure entails organisational and political problems for the movements. For example, internal conflicts become visible to a larger audience when manifested online (see, for example, Wåg 2010).
4.3 Who are the extreme right?

The term *extreme-right milieu* is used throughout this report. How then can this milieu be identified, and is it possible to find a single workable definition of the movements located to the right of the practices and game rules of traditional parliamentary democracy? The actors in the extreme-right milieu define themselves in several different ways, often using political and ideological terms and designations that initially appear to be dissimilar, but that are in many ways discursively interwoven. The movements and organisations in this survey use terms such as *ethno-nationalists*, *ethno-pluralists*, *identitarians*, *national socialists*, or simply *nationalists*, to describe themselves. One of the functions of these political designations is to distinguish the movements from one another. While the milieu warrants a more extensive research examination, one that would focus on ideological dividing lines and points of difference, it is not possible to analyse the political sociology of the extreme-right milieu in this study. Instead, theoretical definitions will be dealt with when relevant to the analyses of the Web-based communication. For introductory scientific approaches (both theoretical and political/practical) to the understanding and analysis of the development of the Swedish extreme-right milieu, the anthology *Det vita fältet* (Deland, Hertzberg & Hvitfeldt 2010) (“The White Field”) is to be recommended. That said, we still need to establish some concrete ways to identify actors in the milieu who could be considered particularly relevant to the present report.

Within the scientific research field, we try to make distinctions between right-wing populist/radical right-wing parties and streams, and fascist parties and streams (see, for example, Eatwell 2004). The concept of “the extreme right” is sometimes used as an umbrella term for both violent fascist groupings and right-wing radical populists (see, for example, Mammone, Godine & Jenkins 2012; Merkl & Weinberg 2003). Just how useful such an inclusive definition of right-wing extremist is or is not for our understanding of relatively dissimilar movements and political ideas is open to discussion. Let us instead focus on certain characteristics that link up groups within the right-wing extremist milieu. In earlier research on right-wing extremism, the use of violence, promotion of violence or tolerance of violence provide clear lines of demarcation between fascist and right-wing populist groups (Eatwell 2004). This distinction has proved problematic, however, as many violent right-wing extremist groups have changed their political tactics in the past few decades and toned down the violence. At the same time, we have witnessed a proliferation of street-based organisations, such as

---

13 The more commonly used term for national socialism is of course “Nazism”, or “neo-Nazism” (when referring to national socialism in the post-war period). These terms are not used by the movements themselves, however. Throughout this report, the concept of “national socialism” is used synonymously with “Nazism”.

14 Often, the “the national milieu” concept itself is used to designate the movements.
the English Defence League (EDL), that lie close to the right-wing populist milieu. The EDL is a violent anti-Muslim grouping that consists largely of racist activists connected to football hooliganism (activists are recruited from so-called football firms) (Feldman 2012).

Roger Eatwell (2004:8) summarises the efforts by contemporary research field to define the common traits of the actors in the right-wing extremist milieu. He identifies four political components that are common to right-wing extremist movements and that are transferrable to a Swedish context: anti-democracy (1), nationalism (2), racism (3) and advocacy of a strong state (4). The first three criteria are central to the milieu analysed in the present report, while the fourth falls outside the aims of this report. The following distinction implies that the Sweden Democrats and their Web milieux are not included in the analysis, even though several Web sites closely related to the SD display both xenophobia and racism. The Sweden Democrats have been largely transformed from a traditional right-wing extremist party to a radical right-wing populist party that accepts parliamentary democracy (see, for example, Demker 2012). The anti-racism foundation Expo makes a distinction between the “racial-ideology milieu” (Expo 2012a) and the “anti-Muslim milieu” (2011; 2012b), whereby the latter encompasses international networks of actors from different sectors of both the populist right wing and the more traditional extreme right. In Sweden, the anti-Muslim streams are strongest in certain sectors of the Sweden Democrats; accordingly, they also constitute a distinct Web milieu (see, for example, Ekman 2011; 2012; 2013). This Net milieu is discussed in the government report Främlingsfienden inom oss (SOU 2012;74) (“The Xenophobe Within”).

While there are similarities between the positions, it is analytically fruitful to consider these two orientations as partially separate milieux of right-wing extremist politics. This is reflected in the international relations that exist between the actors in the two milieux. To give an example of how they differ, let us examine anti-Muslim racism. The Islamophobic milieu claims that the Western world and Europe are being colonised by Muslims (Carr 2006; Fekete 2012a; Ekman 2013) and that this colonisation has been made possible by “cultural Marxists” who hold positions of power in Western countries. Some Islamophobes go so far as to claim that Muslims already govern Europe via

15 The view of the state is not a prominent element in the right-wing extremist discourses discussed in the report. On the other hand, political idealism would constitute the fourth common trait. There is a strong streak of political idealism in most of the right-wing extremist milieux examined in the report. The proponents express opposition toward a materialistic world view and stress morals, ideas/ideals, the essence of history and nature, the natural order, etc., as central to their own world view.
a number of supranational and international co-operative projects. This is a tenet of the Eurabia theory, among others (Carr 2006).16 The racial-ideology milieu, on the other hand, contends that migration of Muslims to the Western world is merely a symptom of the global Jewish hegemony. In an anti-Semitic discourse on Jewish global hegemony, the Muslims are pawns in a Jewish plot to exterminate the Western white societies. The image of Muslim immigrants and the presence of Islam in the West is thus based on two similar, yet opposite, conspiracy theories. There are many similarities between contemporary anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic discourses, even if their historical conditions differ (Schiffer & Wagner 2011). Anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic views are, however, dissimilar in terms of pragmatic politics: Islamophobia is part of the right-wing populist milieu and anti-Semitism is a framework of the racial-ideology milieu (though anti-Muslim racism certainly does occur in the racial-ideology milieu). Even if all actors in the racial-ideology milieu can be said to partake of anti-Semitism, the degree of explicit anti-Semitism varies between the different organisations.

Is it possible to obtain an overall picture of the messages that proliferate in the racial-ideology part of the right-wing extremist Web milieu, and is there any single framework narrative in which a common view of society appears? There are, at least, a number of political programmes, position-takings, statements and ideological elements that together form a right-wing extremist interpretative matrix. The clearest point of difference between the movements and organisations that this report deals with is the separation, and the superordination and subordination of people based on divisions of race or ethnicity – that is, some form of racism. There are differences between, for example, ethno-pluralists and national socialists; however, in terms of the analysis postulated by the former, ethnicity is still linked to a biological foundation (based on territory). The differences are relatively minor between the various racist positions (Lundquist 2010). That is not to say that the differences are experienced as minor by the various actors in the right-wing extremist milieu; on the contrary, much energy has been spent (and is spent) on distinguishing the two positions from each other (ibid.).

Groups in the extreme right-wing milieu stand for an elitist view of society that is fundamentally anti-democratic and authoritarian, even if representational democracy is accepted for tactical reasons, by

---

16 The Eurabia theory originates in the conspiracy theories of the Egyptian-born British writer Bat Ye’or (whose real name is Gisèle Littman). Ye’or contends that Islam’s influence in Europe is already a reality. This influence is apparent, according to Ye’or, in several supranational co-operative bodies in the EU. One such example is the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation on the Dialogue of Cultures and Civilizations (Carr 2006:6). This conspiracy theory contains the idea that Europe is ruled by Muslim shadow governments, whose aim is to completely islamicise the Western world. All signs of religious tolerance are actually merely masked evidence that Islam is gradually achieving total control over Europe. The Eurabia theory is perhaps the most extreme variant of a larger cluster of conspiracy theories that hold that the Western world is undergoing a process of Islamification (see Ekman 2013).
most of the actors (excluding the Swedish Resistance Movement). They share the view that society should be based on a *people’s community*, which includes Swedes (or Nordic people) and excludes everyone who is not considered to meet the particular definitions. The people’s community is *ethnocratic* as it is based on a racist exclusion of people. People not considered to be “Swedes” or “Nordic people”, or who cannot be said to be “Swedish”, can never be part of the community. Accordingly, this movement advocates a total stop to all non-Nordic, or non-European, immigration, and a policy of repatriation of Swedish citizens (and foreign citizens living in Sweden) who are not considered to belong to the people’s community.

The people’s community assumes an idea of class peace – that is, the idea that work and capital are in conflict in society is rejected. Instead, the people’s community stresses the ethnically homogenous class community, which implies advocacy of a hierarchical social structure. What appears here, then, is a historically rooted right-wing position based on the idea of a natural inequality, or as one race ideological writer expresses it, more frankly, “equality is death!”. Nationalism and the advocacy of a hierarchical society (based on a natural and organic inequality) also implies that the political left (that is, the labour movement) is the historically defined political enemy.

The racial-ideology sector of the Swedish right-wing extremist milieu contains clear elements of the three mythical components that, according to British researcher Roger Griffin (1991), are central to a fascist societal view – populist ultra-nationalism, the idea of society’s decay and its re-birth (Rydgren 2010:23). The idea of a people’s community is in many ways a concrete version of the populist ultra-nationalism that Griffin thinks is central to fascism. The perception that contemporary society is in a state of decay and that it will be reborn is reflected in the idea of the imminent advent of ethnic, cultural, or racially homogenous, nation. The rebirth is based, according to Griffin, on a vision that society’s state of crisis and decay will soon reveal its potential transformation – that is, that we are about to reach a historical turning-point (Rydgren 2010:23). In the racial-ideology milieu this idea appears with clear references to Swedish history, in which the Viking age, popular revolts (Engelbrekt), Sweden’s “Age of Greatness” (Gustavus Vasa, Gustavus II Adolphus, Charles XII) or an ethnically homogenous people’s home, form the historical backdrop in which the rebirth is often reflected. This implies that the struggle for social change also rests on the idea of an idealised past

---

17 Just who should be accepted as a citizen differs among the various groups.

18 Class peace is a frequently encountered term in the racial-ideology milieu.

(Rydgren 2010:17). In this process, the proponents believe, the right-wing extremist milieu (the different movements) leads the “national struggle”. Since the movements have a clear elitist character (albeit to varying degrees), there is also clearly a conflict over which actor in the right-wing extremist milieu is best suited to lead this struggle. In this respect, the racial-ideology milieu is organisationally authoritarian in character (cf. Eatwell 2004).

In their views as to how the racially or culturally homogenous nation is to be realised, differences appear as to how the political struggle is to be conducted. Militant organisations prioritise street activism and propaganda production, whereas others advocate traditional party work and organise themselves as outwardly focused youth organisations with an emphasis on social activities. In the racial-ideology milieu, essentially the same type of targets for political struggle are identified. The focus is on the established political system, mass media and immigration (and multiculturalism). There are different analyses of how social problems are to be understood: some actors stand for an extreme anti-Semitism (in which the Jews are considered to represent the root of the social problems); others represent a more general ultra-nationalism, in which explicit anti-Semitism at least is downplayed.

A more general common denominator of the various organisations and the ideological streams within the racial-ideology milieu is a markedly conspiracy-oriented mentality. Anti-Semitic ideas about Jewish conspiracies are common in certain sectors of the milieu, and in the milieu as a whole conspiracy theories appear in which established political parties and the media are viewed as a unified enemy of the Swedish people (cf. Fekete 2012b; Lööw 2011; Holtz & Wagner 2009; Corte & Edwards 2008; Back 2002).

Yet another component that can be added to the idea of society’s decay is anti-feminism. All movements view feminism, like multiculturalism, as a sign that something is being forced on society that is against nature (biology). Feminism is understood as an institutionalised power factor that threatens the Swedish people’s community (in the same way as does the class struggle); in the more extreme interpretations, feminism constitutes a threat against the “own” people’s reproduction. The vulgar and dehumanising anti-feminism is, however, not unique to the racial-ideological milieu; it is in fact also reflected in a general right-wing political discourse (though here without a racial-ideology dimension). Anti-feminism reflects the specific expressions of masculine ideals and masculine identity markers that exist in the right-wing extremist milieu (as referred to above) (cf. Ferber 2000).

Within the right-wing extremist milieu, masculinity (as both ideal and practice) often touches on what

could be called “hypermasculinity” – that is, an exaggerated, often violence-oriented, masculine identity. Coupled to the masculinity in race ideology is a clear form of victimisation (cf. McCauley, & Moskalenko 2008), in which the white woman (and, indirectly, the white man) is viewed as being under attack by multicultural society (cf. Ferber 2000:41). When we summarise the general framework of the ideological messages and conceptions of society that exist in the racial-ideology milieu, we discern something that could be defined as a racial-ideology framework narrative. The various actors intersect one another on eight points, summarised here:

- Racism
- The advocacy of a hierarchical social system and class co-operation
- Ultra-nationalism
- Society’s decay and rebirth
- Political elitism
- Anti-Semitism
- Conspiracy theories
- Anti-feminism/Hypermasculinity

4.3.1 The right-wing extremist milieu of the Internet

It is difficult to determine how much Swedish right-wing extremist material exists on the Web. There are several reasons for this; however, we shall content ourselves here with stating three factors that hamper our ability to make quantitative statements as to the extent of the material, traffic data for the individual Web sites and their public penetration. Firstly, a characteristic of right-wing extremist initiatives and groupings is that they are subject to time constraints and are dependent on the work of individuals. Organisations tend to change their name, and personnel composition varies more often than in conventional political contexts. This means that individual driving actors change organisational affiliation or sympathies. Secondly, Web-based material is ephemeral, and Web sites, domains, etc., appear and disappear at a rapid pace. A clear example of how right-wing extremist Web milieux can proliferate, only to then disappear, is the online milieu that was built around the *Fria Nationalister* network (“Free Nationalists”) a few years ago: today, there is almost nothing left of it.21 Thirdly, it is difficult to precisely define which sites should be included in a general right-wing extremist/radical right-wing milieu, and which should be included in an extreme racial-ideology milieu: the boundaries are sometimes fluid and diffuse, and there are sometimes links from less

---

21 While the Web site Info14, which has been a central Web site in right-wing extremism, is still on the Web, it has not been updated since 6 January 2011 (www.info14.com) (retrieved 4 Feb. 2013).
extreme Web sites to the racial-ideology Internet milieu. Expo’s annual investigative report from 2011 indicates that there are 125 Web sites belonging to the racial-ideological part of the Swedish right-wing extremist milieu (Expo 2012a). The number of Web sites varies from year to year, but since 2008 it has been around and somewhat over 100 (Expo 2012a). A recently published government report claims that the extreme right-wing presence on the Internet has “grown significantly in the past 10–15 years” and that it continues to grow (SOU 2012;74:175). This assertion is only supported, however, with the information referenced above that the number of Web sites has increased from 96, in 2008, to 121, in 2012 (Expo 2012a), which in itself is not a significant increase. It is not possible to make any statement about the growth rate of the right-wing extremist milieu without presenting more concrete numbers. Moreover, all material on the Web has increased in the past 10–15 years, which means right-wing extremist Web sites must be assessed in relation to the rate of development of the whole Web. Two further circumstances that make it difficult to make any quantitative conclusions are the fact that the number of sites does not say much about the number of visitors. A reasonable assessment would be that for democratic society, three heavily visited right-wing extremist Web sites would be worse than ten Web sites with very small visitor numbers. Moreover, there is plenty of right-wing extremist and pro-violence right-wing extremist material on commercial Web sites, such as YouTube.

Instead of focusing on the number of individual Web sites, it would be more fruitful to look at right-wing extremist material on different types of publication platforms. This would permit the analysis to focus on the content of the material, its scope, degree of professionalism, degree of user interactivity and (where possible) visitor numbers. What is clear, however, from the present study, from Expo’s annual reports and from the report of the government study, the right-wing extremist Web milieu is well-developed, extensive and in many respects professional.

4.4 Outline and methodological delimitations

Given that the purpose of the present report is to describe and analyse right-wing extremist Internet milieux, focusing on the design and content of political propaganda, and how recruitment strategies can be designed, the analyses will be divided into two overall parts. The first chapter will contain a general presentation of the organised right-wing extremist Web material. The second part will contain a more detailed analysis of a selection of the right-wing extremist Web material.

The general part will describe central communication platforms of right-wing extremist movements. This includes Web material from, or with a connection to, the following organisations: Svenska Motståndsrörelsen (Swedish Resistance Movement), Nordiska Nationalsocialister (Nordic National Socialists), Svenskarnas Parti (Party of the Swedes), Förbundet Nationell Ungdom (National Youth
Association) and Nordisk Ungdom (Nordic Youth). Moreover, selected Web milieux that are not explicitly affiliated with any organisation will be discussed briefly. Also included here will be sites such as the independent news page nationell.nu and the Web forum nordisk.nu. The overview will contain a listing of what Web sites and communication platforms each organisation has, followed by a presentation of the content and design of the other parts. The introductory chapter will not contain any qualitative analysis of the content or any specific conclusions; instead, it will present an overview of the character and primary traits of the overview.

The report focuses on the part of the right-wing extremist milieu that incites to, defends, excuses, or otherwise manifests political acts of violence, and that distances itself from fundamental democratic values. This implies that some right-wing extremist, racist and xenophobic Web material falls outside the focus of the report. For example, the populist, right-wing radical milieu is not analysed, as it does not clearly link to the two parameters anti-democratic and pro-violence. If the report had been expanded to include analysis of the radical right-wing populist Internet milieu, the material would have been too extensive. It is therefore not possible to deal with Web sites such as avpixlat.info and friatider.se, despite their obviously racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic content.

Another aspect of the delimitation relates to general right-wing extremist Web material – that is, content with no clear sender. Since the report is mainly concerned with the recruitment and radicalisation potential of the Web material (primarily in relation to young users), material with a sender and particularly with an organisation-affiliated sender takes priority over general racist Web material. Another delimitation involves the right-wing extremist discussions in the largest Swedish-language Web forum Flashback. In this case, there are apparent limitations in time and space rooted in the difficulty of identifying content that meets the purpose of the report within in a vast collection of material that does not necessarily meet selection criteria. This entails a limitation in the study as a whole. Flashback’s section on right-wing extremism is well-visited and filled with racist, xenophobic entries. However, it is difficult to determine what significance to give to the right-wing extremist communication on Flashback. We content ourselves by noting that the entries in the forum

---

22 For scientific analyses of and comments on the islamophobic and radical right-wing populist Web milieu, see, for example, Ekman (2011; 2012; 2013) and Gardell (2010). For other investigations of the milieu, see, for example, Expo (2012b) and the government report Främlingsfienden inom oss (SOU 2012:74) (“The Foreign Enemy within Us”).

23 Flashback’s forum section for “National socialism, fascism and nationalism” contains 250,762 entries on 9,570 subjects https://www.flashback.org/f34 (retrieved on 7 Feb. 2013). In view of Flashback’s size and its history, the Web forum is, strangely enough, an unresearched milieu.
contribute to a xenophobic, racist and sexist Internet community and that there is a relationship between the forum and the right-wing extremist Web milieu, through the entries that link to right-wing extremist Web sites.

There is also a methodological problem that relates to the assessment of the political dimensions of the Web content. Dividing lines drawn between opinions that can be classified on the basis of the criteria defined in the report, and those that fall outside those criteria, can be fuzzy and hard to define. Expressing racist opinions does not necessarily entail a rejection of democratic values; nor does it mean that a person who expresses such values is advocating violence for a political/ideological purpose. On the other hand, it is possible to consider explicit expressions of racism as a form of “cultural violence” (cf. Galtung 1990). Racist statements devalue, stigmatise and dehumanise the populations upon whom they are projected; in this way, racism becomes a discursive element of a potential violent action aimed at the objects of the racism (“immigrants”, “the darkie”, “the Jew”, “the Muslim”, “the wog”, etc.). Racism can excuse or justify concrete use of violence, therefore, racist statements must be analysed and assessed in relation to the context in which they appear. It is difficult to determine the potential recruitment dimension of general racist (news-) material – that is, content with no clear sender. A general reflection is that the users who visit right-wing extremist Web sites on the Internet probably come into contact with organisational material and generally racist material.

The second part of the report contains in-depth, thematic analyses of a selection of right-wing extremist Web material. Qualitative content analysis of Web-based political communication and political propaganda has both benefits and limitations. One of the advantages is that the analysis make it possible to gain deeper insight into what the discursive production and distribution to a larger public audience looks like for specific movements and actors. The analysis can give us insight into how political ideology and propaganda are designed, in terms of both form and content, to attract and interest a larger audience and, ultimately, sympathisers and activists to the political activities. At the same time, the analysis contribute knowledge of how persons active in right-wing extremist milieux communicate with each other and in various ways confirm, legitimise and reinforce political views and identities within their own milieu. The right-wing extremist milieu is a politically marginalised and socially stigmatised opinion-based community; for this reason, the Internet’s communicative characteristics fill this double function, therefore constituting a particularly significant infrastructure for active and presumably active users. Qualitative analysis are simultaneously burdened with a number of limitations. These limitations relate partly to the fact that the researcher is obliged to select sites and content, and partly to the fact that the analysis will focus on certain aspects of the content. It is not possible to encompass the entire milieu or to analyse the content in terms of all potentially relevant perspectives.
The methodologically oriented limitations constituted by time and space, and the financial conditions in which research exists, entail that the qualitative analysis of the right-wing extremist Web milieu have been delimited on the basis of several criteria. In the following analysis, the delimitations are justified by the formulation in the assignment to “describe the occurrence of anti-democratic messages” and to investigate messages “that incite to violence for a political or ideological cause”, with particular focus on the recruitment potential of the Internet. The section is based on three delimitations that also produce the analysis material of the qualitative study.

1. The focus will be on the parts of the right-wing extremist Internet milieu that are characterised by ongoing activity and continuous updating.
2. The milieus and sites with the greatest recruitment potential will be focused on. This refers primarily to the possibilities for direct communication and interaction with users and the public.
3. The analysis will deal with some of the leading organisations’ propaganda, focusing on material that is multidimensional (i.e., that contains visual and text elements).

These delimitations entails that the qualitative analyses will deal with Web material of varying qualities. The section begins with an analysis of the content of the relatively extensive new production and distribution that exists in some of the largest right-wing extremist Internet newspapers. This refers particularly to the Svenskarnas Parti (“Party of the Swedes”) newspaper Realisten.se (“The Realist”), and the “independent” news site Nationell.nu. The aim is to provide a picture of the general thematic character of the content and to investigate the content in terms of the criteria anti-democratic message and incitements to political violence. The news pages function as ideological platforms and propaganda tools of the right-wing extremist political struggle. In conjunction with this section there is an analysis of the Web site of Svenska Motståndsrörelsen (SMR) (“the Swedish Resistance Movement”), Nordfront.se. Nordfront.se functions as a combined news page and organisational site. The Web site mixes news, organisational propaganda and recruitment material.

The second part analyses how social media are used by the right-wing extremist movements. This involves a focus on how Twitter, YouTube and Facebook are used by the movements, as well as how different types of Web-based communication can be understood. Here there is a possibility to analyse visual propaganda and to investigate the recruitment potential of these sites and their interactivity with the users.
4.5 An overview of the right-wing extremist actors’ Web-based communication

The following sections present the main traits of the Web-based infrastructure (Web sites, social media, etc.) built around five right-wing extremist movements. Non-organisationally affiliated Web sites that warrant a general examination are presented here. These include the social networking page and online forum nordisk.nu, the extremist Internet newspaper nationell.nu, and some online stores that sell racial-ideology material. The five organisations’ political home base and positions within the right-wing extremist field are presented briefly (for a longer report on the actors in the milieu as a whole, see, for example Expo 2011; 2012a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Org. page</th>
<th>Online newspaper</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>YouTube</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Publisher/Store</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMR</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>MotståndsMedia</td>
<td>Nordfront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NNSMedia</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SvP</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Realisten</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>SvPMedia</td>
<td>Folkfronten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNU</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Förbundet-Media</td>
<td>Nationell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NU</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Etnopluralist</td>
<td>NordiskUngdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Computer-mediated communication platforms of five prominent right-wing extremist groupings.
### Table 4.2. Page view statistics for several right-wing extremist Web sites (20 Feb. 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Daily page views</th>
<th>Swedish ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realisten.nu</td>
<td>48,814</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationell.nu</td>
<td>37,909</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordfront.se</td>
<td>36,222</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svenskarnasparti.se</td>
<td>15,666</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordisk.nu</td>
<td>2,424</td>
<td>704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordiskungdom.se</td>
<td>1,921</td>
<td>8,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordikanationalsocialister.com</td>
<td>1,912</td>
<td>7,499</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.5.1 The Swedish Resistance Movement (*Svenska Motståndsrörelsen*)

*Svenska Motståndsrörelsen* (SMR) is probably the most militant right-wing extremist organisation in Sweden. The Swedish Security Service finds that “the Swedish Resistance Movement is an organisation whose aim is to establish a national, totalitarian government, by means of revolution. The military influences are clear and the organisational structure is strictly hierarchical, closed and characterised by discipline” (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009:44). In the assessment of the Security Service, SMR is pro-violence, as they consider “violence as a necessary part of the struggle.” (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009:36). Consequently, SMR fulfils both criteria – pro-violence and anti-democratic. Several SMR activists have been convicted of weapons-related crime and violent crime. SMR has few official spokespersons, and when activists appear

---

24 The daily page view information is based on data from FreeWebsiteReport (http://www.freeWebsitesitereport.org, retrieved on 20 Feb. 2013).

25 The ranking information (where one is the main page with the most daily page views) is based on data from Alexa (www.alexa.com, retrieved on 20 Feb. 2013).

26 These figures are highly uncertain and should be viewed with customary critical scepticism regarding their source. The results are based on information from two (free) Web analysis sites, FreeWebsiteReport (http://www.freeWeb sitereport.org, retrieved on 20 Feb. 2013) and Alexa (www.alexa.com, retrieved on 20 Feb. 2013).

with their names they do so without mention of any organisational position. SMR refers to their local organisations as “nests”. However, there is little evidence that SMR functions as a conventional social movement; instead, the organisation exhibits elements of a leader cult, an elitist organisational perspective and a strictly hierarchical organisational structure. In many ways it is the opposite of a social movement (cf. della Porta & Diani 1999).

SMR has a Web site called Nordfront, where the Resistance Movement (which is known as both the Nordic and as the Swedish Resistance Movement) publishes an abundance of material of varying character. There is a Twitter account associated to Nordfront, as well as a YouTube channel called Motståndsmedia. The independent online newspaper Nationell.nu Det svenska motståndets Häfte also published material linked to SMR. The Swedish Resistance Movement uses the Old Norse rune Týr, or Tiwaz, as its symbol.

4.5.2 Nordfront.se

The main SMR Web site is a combined organisational and news page. The Web site is extensive, involving several sections and levels. The primary navigator consists of two main rows containing internal links. They lead to the sections Motståndsrörelsen (the Resistance Movement), where the visitor can express interest in a membership in, or write a message to, SMR; Nordfront, which contains information about the Web site itself; Nordfront förlag (Nordfront publishing), which leads to SMR’s publishing operations; Motståndsmedia (Resistance Media), which leads to a page containing embedded YouTube film clips; and a page containing tips and one for contact information. The remainder of the primary navigator contains internal links to the following sections: News, The Resistance Movement, World View, Culture, History, Nature, Society, Science, and Lifestyle. Under each internal link are additional links to internal pages with specific content corresponding to the various primary categories. Under the link on World View, for example, are the categories Philosophy, The Jewish Question, Nationalsocialism, The Race Question and Religion.


29 Characteristic of social movements include that they are informal interactive networks, collective action and collective fields of knowledge (della Porta & Diani 1999; Eyerman & Jamison 1991).

30 Nationell.nu is described in the section on online newspapers (see below).

31 The Týr rune is also used by the NSDAP (http://skola.expo.se/symbollexikon.html, retrieved 15 March 2013).
The main page of Nordfront.se is dominated by visually oriented material including extensive pictorial material, picture captions, illustrations and large headlines. The main page is multimedia, containing embedded video clips, posters, Twitter feed, news updates, interactive reader voting, and clickable images. In several respects, the Web site functions as a conventional news site (such as, for example, Aftonbladet.se or SVT.se). Its visual construction is also reminiscent of contemporary news sites. In that respect, nordfront.se creates a professional impression.

SMR in social media

SMR has a YouTube channel called MotståndsMedia (Resistance Media), where video material is published regularly. There are 128 published videos, and these have attracted a total of 848,913 views. The channel is subscribed to by 1,041 registered YouTube users (9 March 2013). The content is dominated by videos of various types of activities (demonstrations, town square meetings, wilderness excursions, etc.); however, there are also video clips of interviews, communiqués, audio recordings of court proceedings, taped telephone calls (including conversations with the Swedish Security Service), and photo collages with sound recordings. Nordfront also has a Twitter account that is used exclusively to link to the Nordfront.nu Web site. Individual members of SMR also have active Twitter accounts.

4.5.3 Nordic National Socialists (Nordiska nationalsocialister)³²

Nordic National Socialists (NNS) is a relatively newly started organisation (Expo 2012a:13). The NNS presents itself as a heir to the now-defunct Nordic National Party (NRP) and has essentially assumed the NRP’s declaration of party principles. Visitors to the Web site can read the following description of the organisation:

Nordic National Socialists strive to promote classical, traditional national socialism. National socialism is not only a collection of political ideas, but also a holistic ideology and world view that encompasses all areas of public life. National socialism is Nature’s own philosophy of life, and is based on biological reality. Building awareness and acceptance of this ideology, and by extension introducing a society characterised by national socialism, is the Nordic National Socialists’ primary goal […] What Sweden needs is more Swedes with fervent national socialist convictions. Swedes with deep

³² As this report goes to press, the NNS has just announced it will shut down its political operations. “In practical terms, the decision implies that Nordic National Socialists will be dissolved unconditionally and that it is up to the organisation’s previous members to engage themselves in whatever way they desire, but that the organisation’s leadership and its members and probationary members have decided to shut down operations in favour of the national socialist organisation Nordic Resistance Movement, so as to ensure that Sweden will have a single unified and strong national socialist option.” (http://nordiskanationalsocialister.com/ retrieved on 16 May 2013). The NNS decision illustrates the temporariness that characterises the actors in the right-wing extremist milieu.
knowledge of and insight into their own people’s biological and cultural legacy. Swedes who make themselves aware of our enemies’ nature and strategy. Swedes who have the knowledge and the courage to take up the struggle against the international conspiracy that is ever more rapidly pushing the Western world toward its demise.33

Nordic National Socialists’ programme declaration corresponds to the “three mythical components that [are] central to fascism – populist ultra-nationalism [...] the myths about [society’s] decay and rebirth” (Rydgren 2010:23). The NNS does not specify further how “the enemies’ nature” is to be understood in more concrete terms, but the connotation is implicit. Since the movement is relatively new, not much has been written about its political activities and strategies. According to Expo’s (2012a) investigation, the NNS attempts to net activists seeking an explicitly national socialist movement, after the National Socialist Front (NSF) re-established itself as a more general national socialist party called Svenskarnas Parti, the Party of the Swedes (see below). The chair of the NNS is Richard Ekman, former leading member of the National Democrats, and politically active in the aforementioned NSF/Folkfronten.34 Nordic National Socialists have a Web site of a limited character. The NNS also have a Facebook account and a YouTube account on which two videos have been published (9 Mar 2012).

Nordiskanationalsocialister.com
The main Web site of the NNS is a simple organisational page. The visual interface and the technical qualities are outdated. The main page has a primary banner with the organisation’s logo over a photograph of a landscape with fields, country houses, forest and a lake. To the left is a navigational banner with internal links to the sections Start page, Activities, Articles, About the NNS, Programme, The Symbol, Links, Support the NNS, Store and Contact us. The main page consists of only a short text presentation of the organisation. Under the section Activities is a chronologically ordered log of NNS activities. This section also contains pictures, and an embedded video clip.

NNR in social media
The Nordic National Socialists also have a Facebook account started on 20 March 2012. The page is used primarily as a bulletin board for the organisation’s activities. The account has 315 Likes (1 Apr 2013).

4.5.4 The Party of the Swedes (Svenskarnas Parti)

The Party of the Swedes (SvP) was formed in November 2009 from the People’s Front (Folkfronten), which in turn was formed from the National Socialist Front (Nationalsocialistisk Front) in 2008. According to the Swedish Security Service, this was primarily a tactical name change and the organisations is considered to still want to abolish democracy and introduce totalitarian rule.35 The party describes itself as follows:

[…:] which puts Swedes first. The other parties select a particular social class or interest group they strive to promote, at the cost of the other classes, and their agenda also includes (for all parties in the Riksdag) the protection of other peoples in Sweden. The Party of the Swedes is the party of the Swedes. We are on the side of the Swedish people and refuse to compromise on that point. We put Swedish interests first and all of our points originate in what is best for the Swedish people.36

SvP’s programme declaration has toned down its national socialist legacy and presents itself instead as a modern nationalistic party. In the 2010 election, SvP won a seat on the municipal council of Grästorp in Västergötland, but lost the seat since the only party representative on the party’s candidates’ list was registered as a resident in another municipality. SvP has obtained parliamentary representation, however, as former Sweden Democrats have left that party and joined SvP.37 SvP has a Web site with the same name as the party, an online newspaper called The Realist (Realisten), a Facebook account, a publishing operation called Arminius, a radio channel called Radio Forward (Radio Framåt), a YouTube channel and a Twitter account under the name People’s Front (Folkfronten). The Realist and Arminius also have separate Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Svenskarnasparti.se

The Web site of the Party of the Swedes is constructed as a conventional party Web site, with information about SvP’s political agenda and organisation The main page is dominated by visual elements such as photographs, banners, illustrations, headers, teaser paragraphs and video clips. The navigation banner contains internal links to the sections Our party, Our political agenda, Our party leaders, Help, Media and Contact us. Just under the navigator on the main page is a blue banner with

---


a picture of party leader Stefan Jacobsson and a quotation from the party’s “programme points”. The main page also contains banners with links to online newspaper The Realist and to the publishing operation, Arminius.

Realisten.nu

The Party of the Swedes operates an online newspaper called The Realist (Realisten). The online newspaper’s interface is contemporary and professional; the same applies to its visual design. The main page of the Web site is constructed around a number of clickable “news bites”, most of which are accompanied by photographs. The primary navigator contains links to conventional news genres, such as culture, the world, public opinion, etc. The news on the main page is dominated by texts the relate to events associated with immigration and immigrants as a common denominator, and to the Party of the Swedes. The main page also contains clickable ad banners for Arminius, SvP, Radio Forward (Radio Framåt), and to a current White Power concert (18 Sept 2012).

Arminius

Through its publishing arm Arminius, SvP sells racist, anti-Semitic and pseudoscientific literature, as well as propaganda, music, videos and right-wing extremist paraphernalia. In addition to the publishing operation’s Web site, the party is also on Facebook and Twitter. The accounts in social media are used primarily to link in to the publishing operation and to promote new publications and material that is for sale.

SvP in social media

The Party of the Swedes has a channel on YouTube called SvPMedia. The channel contains 31 video clips of material connected to the party’s activities and to the online newspaper, The Realist. The 31 films have been shown 198,023 times. The channel is subscribed to by 329 registered YouTube users (9 March 2013). The video material consists of taped party activities, but also contains videos representing confrontations with political opponents and with other actors in society. SvP’s more ambitious newspaper project has the name The Forward Newspaper (Tidningen Framåt). It, too, has a Facebook account. SvP has an official Twitter account that is used to link to the party’s Web site and to the online newspaper, The Realist. The account has 439 followers (1 Apr 2013).

The Party of the Swedes has a Web radio channel called Radio Forward. On the Web site, the visitor can listen to live broadcasts and older archived programmes The radio channel’s Web site also contains a blog that is linked to the radio broadcasts. The main page presents three persons: Dan Eriksson, Magnus Söderman and Jonas De Geer (all known figures in contemporary Swedish right-wing extremism). These three are also described as being the producers of the radio channel.
SvP has a Facebook account with 2,818 "likes". The account was created on 22 November 2008 (1 Apr 2013). The account is used as a bulletin board for the party’s activities and it contains photographs, posters, links, etc. At the top of the main page of the account is the logo and a picture of the party leader, Stefan Jacobsson.

4.5.5 The National Youth Association (Förbundet Nationell Ungdom)

The National Youth Association (FNU) was formed in 2011 by a group of individuals who had been active in various areas of the racial-ideology milieu. The FNU has organisation co-operation with the newspaper National Day (Nationell Idag, NI), which receives a government press subsidy. The FNU’s Web site is inactive (24 Nov 2012); however, the movement has an active Facebook account and a YouTube channel. The organisation has the older Germanic rune Jeran as its symbol.38

FNU on Facebook and YouTube

The National Youth Association’s Facebook account has 663 Likes (1 Apr 2013) and serves primarily as a platform for media exposure of the organisation’s actions and activities. The account was created on 18 July 2011. The account contains around 30–40 photographs of activities and meetings. The page also contains four short video clips of outdoor activities. The page contains mainly material from wilderness exercises, self-defence training and political meetings. The account is informative and emphasises outdoor activities (hiking, wilderness exercises, running, self-defence training, etc.) but contains very little material or information that is directly political. The only information that contains anything that explicitly suggests the political orientation can be found in a reference to the Web site “National Youth is a nation-wide federation with the primary goal of fostering new Swedish youth – the future of Sweden!” (24 Nov 2012).

National Youth’s YouTube channel is called Association Media (FörbundetMedia) and contains ten video clips that have been viewed 40,384 times in total (9 Mar 2013). The channel is subscribed to by 97 YouTube users. The clips contain mainly sequences of images from the organisation’s outdoor activities and clipped sequences from various political activities.

4.5.6 Nordic Youth (Nordisk Ungdom)

Nordic Youth (NU) is a relatively newly launched organisation, the core of which consists of members of the disintegrating National Democrats and their now-defunct youth federation NDU (expo.se). On their Web site Nordic Youth write that they:

---

38 Jeran is part of the elder Futhark (rune alphabet/rune row) and is translated as harvest or good harvest.
“[…] want to see a Swedish Sweden in a free Europe... a Swedish Sweden in a free Europe of independent states... a world in which different peoples and cultures live and develop in accordance with their own desires and abilities... a world free of imperialism and oppression” and that they “want to create a society in which the best interests of the Swedish people come first. Where class struggle yields to the people’s community and the insight that both workers and academics are necessary for a properly functioning society. A society characterised by national solidarity and community over individualism and materialism. We want to create a society in which healthy living is something that goes without saying [...] We want to create a society in which the ethnic and cultural survival of the Swedish people is prioritised above all else. Where immigration occurs only on such a level that it cannot eventually threaten the continued existence of the Swedish people. We want to create a society that is in balance with nature. In which a sustainable situation for animals and nature always takes precedence over profit-hungry large companies. A society in which people live in harmony with the sustainable and do not over-exploit the resources that exist in the milieu.”

Nordic Youth’s political programme leans more in a radical right-wing populist direction compared with the other organisations in this study; however, there are also several formulations here that echo the thought patterns of fascist ideology. The formation of NU can be understood as an attempt to incorporate ideological elements and political strategies from Italian social fascism, and reshape them in relation to a Swedish context. There is an organisational exchange with the Italian organisation Casa Pound and with the German NPD’s youth federation, Junge Nationaldemokraten. NU also started, on the Italian model, the first fascist social centre in Sweden. The centre, called Stacken (“The Stack”) is in Täby municipality north of Stockholm.

NU has made itself known through spectacular actions, some of which have resulted in some degree of media exposure. Some of the actions also contain threats, harassment and violent acts. Both the explicit youth profile and the character of the actions make NU particularly relevant for analysis on the basis of the two primary criteria. Nordic Youth is represented by six men in their late 20s and the Web site mentions Gothenburg, Stockholm and Västerås as communities in which the organisation conducts operations. Nordic Youth has a Web site with the same name, a campaign page for member recruitment with the name bliaktiv.nu, a YouTube channel called Etnopluralist, and Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Nordiskungdom.se

The Web site of NU is constructed as an organisational Web site, with sections relating to the organisation’s activities. The main page has the organisation’s logo in the upper left corner.

Immediately below is the navigation banner containing clickable links to the sections Nordic Youth, Becoming a member, Be active, Publish, Contact us and Support Nordic Youth. The main page also contains a box for NU’s Twitter feed, a Social Stream from the organisation’s Facebook account, and a feed containing the most recent comments. Both the Twitter feed and the feed from the Facebook account contain clickable links and pictures. The remainder of the main page consists of the section Recent News, in which the organisation’s activities are described in chronological order. Alongside each posting is a clickable picture. Visitors can leave comments on the postings. To comment on a posting, the visitor must enter name and a functional email address. The postings are about completed actions and other activities, such as mountain hiking. In 2011, NU launched a recruitment campaign on the Internet. On the bliaktiv.nu Web site, the visitor is met with information about NU, interview with activists in the movement and information on how to start one’s own Twitter account. There are also links to the organisation’s Web site, to the student organisation Swedish Student (Svensk Student), to NU’s Twitter account, to internally produced videos (embedded from YouTube), and an picture account on Flickr. The latest update was done in January 2012. After that there seems not to have been any activity on the campaign side. Instead, a member-recruitment campaign was created on NU’s Facebook account (see below).

NU on Facebook and YouTube
Nordic Youth’s Facebook account has 2,425 Likes and serves primarily as a platform for media exposure of the organisation’s actions and activities (1 April 2013). The account was created on 7 June 2010 and the first posting was also created then. There are in total about a hundred pictures from the organisation’s activities, as well as embedded video clips. Yet another account connected to the organisation is “The Stack” (Stacken). The Stack is a social centre and a pub run by Nordic Youth in Täby, north of Stockholm. The Stack account functions as an interactive bulletin board for the groups’ activities. Among the right-wing extremist organisations in the overview, Nordic Youth has the most frequent Facebook activity. Nordic Youth runs a YouTube channel called Etnopluralist. The channel contains a total of 52 video clips and has garnered 292,926 views. The channel is subscribed to by 520 YouTube users 9 Mar 2013). The clips contain mainly filmed actions in public milieux, but there are also a few interviews with activists in the organisation.

42 In February 2013, bliaktiv.nu leads to NU’s main page (www.bliaktiv.nu retrieved on 21 Feb 2013).

43 According to the newspaper Arbetaren (“The Worker”), the Stack’s lease in Täby was cancelled in December 2012 (http://arbetaren.se/artiklar/nazilokal-i-norra-stockholm-stangs/) (retrieved on 22 December 2012).
4.5.7 Other Internet milieus

In addition to the Web sites listed here, there are other Web sites, Web pages, blogs, online stores, etc., of various characters within the right-wing extremist milieu. Expo estimated the number of Web sites in the racial-ideology milieu to be 125 in 2011 (Expo 2012). This report presents Web sites that are not affiliated with any organisation but that are still relevant to the report. This implies the selection for this presentation must also be limited. The presentation concludes with comments on some online stores that provide race ideological music, films, literature, etc.

**Nationell.nu – Online newspaper of the Swedish Resistance**

Nationell.nu is an unaffiliated online newspaper run by Richard Lanéen. The main page of the Web site is constructed around a number of clickable “news bites”. The primary navigator contains links to conventional news genres, such as Debate, National, International, Culture, Business, etc. The news on the main page deals with issues in domestic politics (with a focus on immigration-related events). There is also news related to the racial-ideological milieu. Nationell.nu has an explicitly anti-Semitic character. Nationell.nu has a modern, professional visual structure reminiscent of a conventional news page. Comments can be left for all articles and the articles generally have 10–50 comments. The Web site is multimedia, containing embedded video clips, interactive reader voting, clickable images, links, and a visitors’ chat forum. Thanks to its visual presentation and interface the Web site gives a professional impression.

**Nordisk.nu**

In April 2007, the now-inactive project Nordic Federation (Nordiska Förbundet) launched the social network Nordisk.nu (Wåg 2010:114). Nordisk describes itself as “the portal with Nordisk identity, culture and tradition as its theme”, a portal meant to bring together “Nordic youth in an atmosphere of uncensored speech and enthusiasm to take aim at the future without politically correct restrictions!” The social network is one of the most successful Internet-based projects that have grown out of the right-wing extremist milieu and at the time of this writing the social Internet community had 22,414 registered members (1 April 2013). It is difficult to estimate how many of these accounts are active and how many belong to organisations and groups within the right-wing extremist milieu. At a few visits during a week between 19 and 25 November, there were 250–400 users online (27 Nov 2012). In total, 669,305 postings had been entered in discussions threads on 37,171 topics (1 Apr 2013). In a comparison with the left-wing forum socialism.nu, nordisk.nu would appear to be much more extensive. On socialism.nu, a total of 245,686 postings have been entered on 7,900 topics (8 April 2013).
Nordisk.nu has various sections, most of which are closed to visitors who do not have an account. The parts that are open to all visitors are the extensive discussion forum, a section consisting of user blogs, and a picture gallery. The forum section is divided into themes and sub-themes, under which are discussion threads about topics related to the various themes. The parts of the forum include themes such as politics and society, identity and culture, lifestyle, food and drink, technology, etc. The forum is constructed as a conventional Internet forum. The forum also has an elite section referred to as Idavallen, to which only certain members have access and may post entries. The Idavallen section appears to be an ideological platform for the more well-read forum participants.

One of the interesting aspects of Nordisk.nu is the part of the discussion forum devoted to actions and concrete political practices. Under the theme of “opinion-making” are two divisions that deal with “strategy and development” and “manifestations”. In these sections, the reader can read activity reports and learn about projected demonstrations and events. There is also discussion about how political debate should be conducted and what types of political strategies the movement ought to adopt or develop. So the forum also functions as a platform on which personal and organisational experience and knowledge regarding mobilisation and strategy is exchanged among the users.

At first glance it is difficult to see the connection between the right-wing extremist milieu and Nordisk.nu. Aside from the name itself and the fact that a picture on the landing page represents the Spanish fascist and dictator Franco, the visual design of the landing page is general (it contains pictures of users, a readers’ vote, and banners for Nordisk.nu’s Facebook page, as well as to the Nordic Youth student organisation with the name of Swedish Student (Svensk student). To make a more explicit connection to right-wing extremism, the visitor must scan the posts listed on the page, information is displayed about the Nordic National Socialists’ manifestation in honour of King Charles XII, on 30 November (28 Dec 2012).

The forum also probably functions as a platform for opinion-based community on classical right-wing extremist political issues, such as immigration, race, culture and nationalism; however, the forum’s conventional layout means that even extrapolitical themes relating to lifestyle, taste, family life, etc., become part of right-wing extremist forms of communication. On nordisk.nu, the user can discuss football and music, then wind up in a conversation on racial biology and political fight strategies, with the same user. In the same way, the forum constitutes a normalised communication

interface, where extreme political opinions appear in the light of “neutral” and non-political discussions and topics. The discussion threads also contain racist jargon, and extreme comments are normalised in the forum milieu. For example, the user Shakes writes the following in a discussion thread entitled “Bullied on the job by immigrants”.

“Yeah, that's what you actually want. Slaughter. But you gotta have income. Putting my foot down doesn't help. I've already done that. They only have what they call “respect” for other Turks who live in the ghetto so they're just a bunch of little ass kissers, goddamn sickening cowardly cockroaches”.45

Nordisk.nu was started as an initiative of the identitarian sector of the Swedish extreme right, 46 but it contains information, opinions and actors from the entire right-wing extremist spectrum. However, the only links on the main page go to motpol.nu (a blog portal for identitarian bloggers) and metapedia.nu (a right-wing extremist encyclopaedia), both initiatives of the now-defunct Nordic Federation (see also Wåg 2010).

Nordisk.nu also has a Facebook account with 350 Likes (1 April 2013). The Facebook page is used to link to updates and information on Nordisk.nu. The account does not contain much user interactivity, however.

Racist online stores

On the Web there are also international and Swedish online stores selling different types of racist material. The Swedish store Midgärd, which has been in operation since 1994 (previously as a traditional bricks-and-mortar shop but nowadays as a Web shop), sells material linked to the race ideology section of Swedish right-wing extremism. The shop purveys racist and race ideological music, literature and video, but also clothing and other accoutrements of a race ideological character. On the Web site, the owner describes his shop using political arguments. For example, the


46 This refers to the stream of Swedish right-wing extremism that is inspired by the French New Right (Nouvelle Droite) and the philosopher Alain de Benoist’s ethno-nationalism (Mammone & Peace 2012), as well as the stream that is usually referred to as the Third Position (with representatives such as the Italian new fascist Roberto Fiore from Forza Nuovo). The latter grouping is distinguished by its emphasis on culture rather than race, and on cultural communities across national boundaries (a type of Euro-fascism) or within transcontinental regions (such as in the pan-Russian idea of Euroasia (Peunoa 2012)). The identitarian movement is active in the border zone between traditional fascism, ethno-nationalism (cultural racism) and national conservatism. However, even though this movement has been in conflict with the neo-Nazi part of Swedish right-wing extremism, the differences between them are “relatively minor” (Lundquist 2010:154).
presentation paragraph is concluded as follows: “Midgård provides visions and dreams. But do not
forget that there is a bitter reality out there. You can now help to change that. With you in the
struggle...”

There are a few other active Internet shops that can be mentioned here. The *Sniper Records* shop
exclusively deal in race ideological music, literature, film, clothing, and more. The visitor is met with a
logo representing an illustration of a masked face (covered in a balaclava), aiming a rifle at the
viewer. Inserted at the rear in the left and right corners in the background are the Swedish and British
flags. The main page contains the following text:

BEFORE PROCEEDING FURTHER, READ THIS!

Sniper Records is a national-socialistic foundation for the promotion of Swedish/White
ethnicity, which implies that all products, text and other content on or closely linked to
the page is aimed at already dedicated national socialists, or to their sympathisers. Note
also that certain products, text or other content on the page are not necessarily
representative of national-socialist ideology, appearing instead simply for the sake of
entertainment, and should in no way be taken as exemplary, but rather as an outlet for
the particular creator’s frustration and discontent with the prevailing social climate. This
also means that you as customers should be aware that certain articles sold by Sniper
Records should not be used outside closed communities as they can trigger contempt
from certain individuals. Consequently, all items are sold on the premise that it is the
buyer’s responsibility to use them with care. If you know that you are an easily offended
person who will feel angry or distressed by the content of this page, you should
immediately leave this page. Therefore, if despite the above you choose to proceed to
this page, you are responsible for your own reactions to what you find on the page in
question and cannot hold Sniper Records responsible. You have hereby been warned.

There is also an identitarian Web shop under the name of *Arktos*, which constitutes the residual
publishing operation of the now-defunct Nordic Federation. It is claimed on the shop Web site that
the shop sells primarily literature and music associated with branches of the Euro-fascist movement
(the French New Right, the Italian Third Position, etc.), but they also sell literature about tradition,
religion, mysticism, history, philosophy, biology, etc. They also run a publishing operation that
publishes works by Alain de Benoist, Alexander Dugin, Julius Evola and Oswald Spengler, as well as
the Swedish writer and musician Lars Holger Holm. The shop has a wide range of conservative,

48 The balaclava has a certain symbolic value in the right-wing extremist milieu. In the 1990s, national-socialist
activists posed with automatic weapons, masked with balaclavas (see, for example, Lööw 2000).
nationalist, pseudo-scientific and racist literature. The shop also has an active Twitter account called Arktos Media, with 775 followers (23 Jan 2013). Arktos’ range appeals presumably to the more intellectual elements within Swedish right-wing extremism.

Whether or not the online shop that sells racial-ideological and racist products is important for the right-wing extremist milieu is difficult to answer. Given that the movements have distanced themselves from the White Power music scene, the shops’ significance is likely to be less now than previously. On the other hand, they fill a function in the dissemination of popular-culture artefacts with racist content and can thus contribute identity-forming elements that can in turn strengthen racist opinions and patterns of action (Corte & Edwards 2008). Racist music remains a component of the right-wing extremist milieu, despite the collapse of the race ideological music movement. Not only is a significant portion of the racist music sold through Midgård and Sniper Records racist; it also lauds and advocates violence (for more in-depth descriptions of the racist music movement, see, for example, Corte & Edwards 2008; Futrell, Simi & Gottschalk 2006; Lööw 2000). The present report will also discuss the circulation of racist music on the video-sharing service YouTube.

4.6 Right-wing extremist communication on the Internet – qualitative analyses

The following chapter consists of qualitative analysis of right-wing extremist Web material, focusing particularly on the thematic character and expressions of the content (visual, textual, and media-specific). First, right-wing extremist news production in three online newspapers is analysed. Then, we discuss the analysis of how right-wing extremist actors use social media to distribute propaganda and to mobilise and recruit sympathisers and activists. Here, we discuss how the actors use commercial Web site platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook in their communications repertoire.

4.6.1 News broadcasting as ideological propaganda tool

A key part of right-wing extremist Web propaganda is alternative news production. There are several news pages with more or less daily publishing and that are largely devoted to second-hand commentary on commercial Internet news (from established dailies and other news organs). This is rarely a matter of conventional news production, but rather a remediation and recontextualisation of
already published news. This is something that established media companies also engage in (particularly evening tabloids), a large portion of the material published on the Web sites of, say, *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* is not independently produced but rather based on news from news agencies and other international news actors.

The analysis of right-wing extremist new publication focuses on independent *nationell.nu* and on SvP’s online newspaper, *The Realist*. It also deals with SMR’s Web site *Nordfront*, as the latter contains a certain amount of news publication. The analysis does not purport to discuss theoretical demarcations between journalistic content and pure political propaganda; instead, all Web material on the three pages is considered as right-wing extremist communication with a political purpose, regardless of whether individual texts have a journalistic framing or not.

There right-wing extremist news content reveals recurrent thematic characteristics, and the analysis is intended to discuss the significance of the news pages for political recruitment to the right-wing extremist milieu, and also to help us understand the relationship of the content to the constitutional and cultural dimensions of democracy. In the latter case, the material can also be analysed in relation to potential radicalisation processes. Since all three Web sites allow comments, the news publication can be considered in relation to actual readers, and hence to the utterances that derive from an active readership. Some of the recurrent news themes dealt with and recontextualised through a right-wing extremist discourse are events involving immigration or persons defined as immigrants, what they call “Jewish power” or “Jewish conspiracy”, the hegemony of the established media, and news that relates to right-wing extremist parties and organisations. Within the framework of the production of right-wing extremist opinion, there are differences between Realisten, *nationell.nu* and *Nordfront*. The differences warrant a separation of the three Web sites in the analysis. All three Web sites have a large number of daily visits and the analysis is organised on the basis of how the visit statistics are distributed among them. The Realist has 48,814 daily visits, *nationell.nu* has 37,909 and *nordfront.se* has 36,222. To place the visit statistics in relation to commercial news producers, we can compare the figures with the number of daily visits to the online versions of the two largest dailies (print version), that do not belong to the three largest cities (TU 2012). For example, *Helsingborgs Dagblad’s* online newspaper, *hd.se*, has 27,828 daily visits, while the online version of *Dalarnas Tidning*, *dt.se*, has 19,905 daily visits. If we compare the most popular Web site of the autonomous left, which belongs

51 The National Democrats’ newspaper *Nationell Idag* is not included here, partly because NI produces significantly fewer hits than do the three included pages, but also because the news page has a lower updating and publication frequency, and undated articles.

52 The daily visit information is based on data from FreeWebsiteReport (http://www.freeWebsitereport.org, retrieved on 23 Feb 2013)
to the Revolutionary Front (revfront.org), we find an even greater difference. Revfront.org has less than one-tenth of the visit traffic of Nordfront. Thus, we can say that the three right-wing extremist Web sites have a significant level of daily traffic. We cannot, however, say who visits them, nor can we safely say why they inspire such high visit numbers.

Realisten

The online newspaper of Svenskarnas parti, Realisten, is visually similar to a conventional online news site. There are the categories typical for the genre, subdividing the news into the categories Sweden (domestic), the World, Politics, Opinion, Science, Culture, Crime & Punishment, and so forth. Upon closer inspection, however, the reader finds a highly selective range of news categories. To take a concrete example: on a random visit (22 Feb 2013), seven of the ten most recent articles were about immigrants, and of these seven, five articles related to crimes connected with perpetrators described as “immigrants”, “Thais”, “Syrian citizens”, “Gypsies”, and “dark-skinned youths”. The majority of the news analysed from Realisten connects “immigrants”, or other racialised or ethnicised persons, with adverse events, often crimes, but also with public unrest, social problems and economic costs. In this way, Realisten follows the nowadays familiar tactic adopted by the right-wing extremist and racist Web sites – remediation and recontextualisation of a highly selective sampling of news from established news producers (see, for example, Ekman 2011).

The racist news commentary can also be considered in the light of how (for example) British commercial media exploit xenophobic opinions for a commercial purpose, presenting immigrants as criminal, dangerous and uncivilised (see, for example, Poole & Richardson 2006 and van Dijk 2000). This “news racism” has no commercial counterpart in Sweden. Consequently, Swedish right-wing extremist news production can be considered a similar, albeit more extreme, xenophobic news discourse created in the interface between conventional online news and organisationally affiliated racist Web material. Accordingly, the racist news sites utilise what, seen in an internal perspective, is a well-developed news practice that has not gained a foothold in Swedish commercial news production. The great difference between the reporting in the right-wing extremist online newspapers and in the commercial news media such as The Daily Express, Daily Star, The Sun, or the Danish Ekstra Bladet, is the quantity of news about “immigrants”, and the actual phraseology used in the recontextualised articles. Right-wing extremist newspapers such as Realisten consistently use pejorative language. Let us look at a concrete example. On 15 February 2013, the newspaper of the Swedish Union of Journalists, Journalisten, published an item about an Ethiopian journalist who had been persecuted and threatened by the Ethiopian regime, and who had now obtained temporary (2 years)
asylum in Sweden.53 On the same day, Realisten published an article with the headline “Addis Negro Journalist Gets Asylum in Stockholm”.54 In Realisten’s version, the text is significantly shorter than in the original version and the reader learns that the journalist “hopes to stay in Sweden once the two years have expired. He is content here, which is perhaps not so strange given that he was welcomed with a ceremony paid for by the City of Stockholm”. So, through a few small editorial amendments, an article about a journalist persecuted for his opinions, a political refugee, is transformed into a “Negro journalist” who even looks forward to burdening Swedish taxpayers. Selective extraction and reformulation of specific paragraphs from already published Internet news items is a tactical ploy in which “neutral” news events are recontextualised by means of a racist framework. In the comments published under the article, the language has become even more brutalised. For example, the user Knut Persson writes of “parasites” and “wretches”, in a few comments. The analytical point of the above example is to show how a news item that does not contain descriptions of, for example, crimes committed by “immigrants”, can nevertheless be transformed into a discursive minefield of racist invective and pejorative descriptions of people considered not wanted in Swedish society. If we instead decide to investigate the comments published in connection with articles that describe, for example, crimes in which the perpetrator is identified as a ”non-Swede” or “immigrant”, the use of language become considerably more coarse, racist and threatening.55 In other words, what appears is a clear form of cultural violence (cf. Galtung 1990).

Realisten also serves as a recruitment platform for the Party of the Swedes, as all advertising on the news page belongs to SvP. The links go to the party’s main page or to one of the party’s outwardly focused operations. So, the connection between the news platform and the political party is entirely open. News publication serves as an ideological propaganda tool for the political activities of the Party of the Swedes. The selective and racist news reporting helps create a sense of a Sweden in decay, and against this overall picture of society, SvP presents itself as the solution (cf. Griffin 1991). In this respect, the newspaper is probably an important and prioritised recruitment platform for SvP. One interesting detail is that Realisten has a campaign to reach a sufficient number of subscribers to be eligible for a government press subsidy.


55 See, for example, the 116 comments under an article about the robber shot by Police in Södertälje (https://www.realisten.se/2013/01/05/hasan-guven-den-skjutne-ranaren-i-sodertalje/, retrieved 22 Feb 2013).
The news site nationell.nu is run by an independent profile in the right-wing extremist milieu, and the site has a narrower focus than Realisten. A large proportion of the articles contain attacks on established media actors (both publishers and individual journalists), elected politicians and established political institutions, as well as immigrants, feminists and actors who have in some way been involved in combating racism. The articles are coarse, often with a latent pro-violence tone, and make frequent use of the term “betrayers of the people”, which is used against politicians or others in a public position. The Web site also expresses the opinion that the “white race” is being eradicated. Nationell.nu uses an express anti-Semitic rhetoric and a large number of articles contain classic anti-Semitic representations of Jewish conspiracies and Jewish power. On nationell.nu there is a special section that deals with “The Jewish question”. Here, the reader can read about “The Jewish revolution in Russia in 1917”, “Broadcast media and film in Sweden owned by Jews”, “Jewish media companies in the US”, “Jewish companies in Sweden”, and so forth. On nationell.nu there is also a section called “The human races”, that briefly outlines a pseudo-scientific discourse based on race biology, eugenics and modern brain research. A particularly interesting part of the Web site lies under the tab “Vulnerable Swedes”. It contains “authentic stories” from “Swedes writing freely about being assaulted, raped and abused”. Here are presented stories, allegedly submitted, from “Swedes”, who in various ways have experienced violence, insults and abuse from “wigs”, Arabs, “blacks”, “negroes”, “foreigners”, “non-natives”, “immigrants”, etc. This section is relevant as it is designed to elicit emotional reactions in the reader. Through eye-witness accounts – from a “16-year-old boy in Norrköping”, an “18-year-old-girl from Linköping”, a “14-year-old boy from Falkenberg”, a “14-year-old girls from Västerås”, and so on, a coherent network of stories is constructed, in which Swedes are represented as victims of the “multicultural Sweden”. The Web site contains over a hundred such testimonies, exclusively from young people. Under the heading “A 16-year-old girl from Eskilstuna writes”, the reader hears the following “testimony”:

56 “Betrayers of the people” is a common phrase in race ideology contexts. The term usually refers to subjects considered within the movement as political enemies – see, for example, the article “People’s betrayer Jimmie Åkesson strikes SDU from the Almedalen list: Gustav Kasselstrand barred from speaking” on nationell.nu and “Action against betrayal of the people” at nordfront.se (http://www.nationell.nu/2012/05/10/folkforradaren-jimmie-akesson-petar-sdu-fran-almedalen-gustav-kasselstrand-far-ej-tala/ & http://www.nordfront.se/aktion-mot-folkforraderi.smr) (both retrieved on 2 Jan 2013).


One evening I was walking downtown after a party, on my way home. When I was halfway home, I met a gang of Turks on the road and they checked me out right away just because I’m Swedish and was wearing an NDU sweater. When they had passed, they started hollering *Fucking racist* and things like that, over and over...and finally I told them to shut up, while walking away, but then they turned around and came toward me. I started to walk faster but since I was slightly drunk they caught up with me pretty quickly! When they were right beside me they started pushing me and I gave them a few small punches, and it all ended with them dragging me into the bushes where they gang-raped me. You feel so goddamn powerless cause you can’t do anything, ’cause there were five of them. I have such enormous HATE for them! Just want every single one sent home. But Sweden today is so fucking nuts that they don’t see what is happening to our society – they don’t even see that there has been a huge rise in crime over the past years, about 90% of it is committed by foreigners... SWEDEN BETTER WAKE UP SOON...PREFERABLY NOW!!!

The victim narrative is a concrete example of the mechanism that in social psychology research on terrorism is referred to as personal victimisation (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008), and that once published becomes part of a narrative on the theme of collective victimisation (i.e., the Swedes as victims of the “multicultural society”). This mechanism can have a radicalising function on certain individuals. On nationell.nu, the right-wing extremist discourse becomes a concrete response (and solution) to the feeling of helplessness expressed in the victim narratives and can thus be said to have a potential recruitment function. The stories play on the reader’s empathy and the Web site offers the visitor concrete options for action (through the exhortations expressed in articles, comments, etc., to “do something”, etc.)

Nationell.nu contains both racism-coded news commentary and a significant number of articles that play on fear, hate and contempt for multicultural society. What conclusions can we draw from a race ideology propaganda page that accompanies the Web user’s emotional register in a fairly effective manner? If we observe the comments (which remain visible for seven days before being deleted), an aggressive and racist opinion-based community appears. In all material considered in the analysis of right-wing extremist Internet communication, some of the comments on nationell.nu are by far the coarsest, the most violent and the most threatening. Here we see racial hatred, the latent pro-violence attitudes and invective in uninhibited combination. Let us briefly consider how the user dialogue develops in an article that shows a video clip in which a boy of junior high-school age is assaulted (slapped in the face) by several boys of about the same age. The clip begins with the boy looking into


Prior to the extensive debate on “Internet hate” that arose at the end of 2012, the comments were not erased; however, after Aftonbladet Kultur’s investigation of the right-wing extremist milieu, the potential legal consequences of racist and pro-violence comments for the publisher were criticised. After the investigation, nationell.nu’s publisher changed course and reverted to complying with the rule on comment moderation. (http://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/article15947850.ab, retrieved on 25 Feb 2013).
the camera and explaining, in broken Swedish, that “these are guys from Köping. Wog beats up Swede”, and then the clip shows how several boys, while laughing scornfully, take turns slapping the seated “Swede” in the face. The video is unpleasant to watch, for obvious reasons. In the published article, nationell.nu writes “FILM: Jeering immigrants take turns hitting “Swede”, An immigrant gang from Köping published a video on the Internet in which they take turns hitting a “Swede”. The Swedish kid does not hit back. One of the immigrants introduces the film, which was published today, with: “These are guys from Köping: wogs beat up Swede”. The article attracts a total of 87 comments and the following extract from the dialogue shows how the conversation develops among the readers and how the linguistic violence appears with increasing intensity (the entire dialogue not published here). At first a few affective comments are published, comments that capture the readers’ reactions on the basis of racist-sounding expressions:

“Scum!”

“Darwin’s theory captured on film.”

“Death to multiculturalism!”

After some of the comments, entries begin to appear that in different ways describe or urge the reader to take violent action. Racist epithets are used to describe the perpetrators in the video clip.

“Goddammit but my knuckles are itching! Hope the kid found the courage to start fighting.

“You’re not alone with that itch. Someone in Köping should get hold of those snotty-nosed kids and slap ’em hard under the header: Swede wacks raghead.”

“I recognize the fat raghead who hollers at the start of the film - if I see him out again I’ll do it!

Gradually comments start to appear that in different ways, often in highly detailed form, describe how the anticipated violence should be carried out, and how one can avoid possible legal consequences. Here we depart from the affective language and begin to see a more calculating language, in which the use of violence of the common thread.

“All you have to do is hit back. Hitting someone in the solar plexus, breaking their nose, knocking out their teeth, etc., are effective ways to neutralise a violent opponent without causing any serious injuries. It’s often sufficient to just show you’re not a wimp who’ll

put up with a beating, but someone who can stick up for himself, to make it so they wouldn’t dare fight”.

“To the boy who gets beaten: Surely you’re not criminally responsible – you can’t be more than 15–16 years old. If you were to put a fistful of rocks in a plastic bag, twist the bag once around your hand and then at school sneak up behind the wog, swing the plastic bag and hit him with all your might on the back of the head, NO-ONE would ever slap you up again. Never again. And your “punishment” would be a few conversations with a guidance councillor/old bag of a social worker and some dialogue cop. The principal would make some useless speech at assembly, and some *Aftonbladet* journalist creeps would call and ask a few stupid questions. If you were “convicted” the sanction would be 100 hours of community service, in which you’d be cutting lawns and raking leaves in your free time, such as evenings or weekends, and that’s it. A pretty easy choice actually. That is, if you have any courage, if you have any balls.”

“I once lit into a real gangster nigger. Afterwards, he found out who I was from the Police. I wasn’t convicted either ’cause I pleaded self-defence at the first hearing. Maybe ’cause he was pissing blood and didn’t want to do that again. The bottom line is you should always whip the shit out of niggers and then claim self-defence immediately in the first hearings. But remember, there can’t be any witnesses to the event”.

At the end of the comments thread the tone has been ratcheted up even more and we find comments saying that the antagonists should be killed. Here, too, there are detailed descriptions of how to carry out the violent acts.

“We need someone to tape your mouth shut, put cement on your feet and sink you and your ilk into the Baltic Sea. That is the “solution”.

“Comrades, this must be avenged! They have no respect at all for our people, so it’s high time we instilled some respect in them. I hope there are some national guys in Köping who will make sure it gets done. If you don’t have the balls to do it, I’ll come up from Skåne, you need only point and I’ll do the deed.

“I’ll come too. Let me just whet my knife a little!”

The comments develop into a kind of downward spiral of violence. They start with tolerance for cultural violence (racism, dehumanisation), then the latent violence appears, and finally we see calls to engage in direct violence and murder, with detailed descriptions of how the violent acts should be done. Here we also find advice on how to behave if confronted in a police hearing after the anticipated use of violence. The article is one concrete example of many of an event that involves “immigrants”’ violence toward “ethnic Swedes”, is used to mobilise feelings in the reader. In the comments field on nationell.nu it is not difficult to find calls to murder both individuals considered enemies of the political cause and calls to murder people with opposite views in general.
“Why has no-one murdered that fucker yet? The only times you read about murder committed by “Nazis” are when some drunken crackheads who’ve never been nationalists have gone berserk. Radical nationalists should start to murder opponents for real.”

In the comments field, the tone of the discussion often escalates steadily, and the discursive violence appears with greater intensity the longer the thread continues. The emotional discourse is a potentially important recruitment element, as it forces out other cognitive registers that are based on common sense and reasoning. One of the characteristics of fascism has been identified as the ability to mobilise affect in the individual. The surge of affective reactions can then be used as fuel to mobilise people – that is, through a sort of emotional politics projected onto the presumed crowd.

Nordfront.se

The Swedish Resistance Movement’s (SMR) Web site Nordfront is very extensive and contains primarily texts that in various ways relate to the movement’s “racial-ideology” struggle. The Web site is permeated by a national-socialist discourse and is located in the intersection between a conventional Web site of an organisation and a right-wing extremist news page. Much of the platform is devoted to SMR’s propaganda material, such as reports from the movement’s outwardly directed activities. There are also race ideology and fascist texts, primarily on racial biology, as well as texts on the Jews and the Third Reich (texts that would likely not attract very many new activists.) In that respect, SMR would appear to be a traditional national-socialist (neo-Nazi) sect with an elaborate anti-Semitic and race-biology oriented stance. Nordfront also has a news section with subsections on the Nordics, Notices, Sweden and the World. Probably the news publication is the reason why Nordfront has such a large number of daily visits. News published on Nordfront is extremely selective and is primarily a matter of comments on Swedish politics – often involving the pillorying of individual politicians in disfavour. This tactic is also used against established journalists. Otherwise, the news reflects the typical right-wing extremist news themes, such as “mass immigration”, multiculturalism, criminality that can be connected to immigration, the established…


64 I use the concept “emotional politics” as a way to describe how shiftings in feelings (caused by personal experiences or by mediated representations), are transformed into political practice and (ideological) awareness by these (concrete feelings) being invested in policies that express (for example) contempt for the Other, or love for the own group (the Swedish people, the own culture, the white race, etc.) (cf. Ahmed 2011). A concrete example of mediated emotional politics, might be how images of assault victims are used to awaken feelings in the observer, and where these feelings are then channeled against, for example, immigrants as a group (negative projection) and Swedes as a group (positive/empathic projection), through the assignment of collective guilt (of immigrants/dark-skinned/muslims, etc.) versus the invocation of a collective victim (the Swedish people).
mass media, etc. The site also published texts about the SMR organisation itself – for example, an item about an ongoing court case involving Nordfront’s publisher who stands accused of incitement to racial hatred. In the comments field, the publisher is praised as being a hero.\textsuperscript{65} Several of the articles refer to indicted or convicted activists, presenting them as victims of an unjust legal apparatus or as role models.\textsuperscript{66}

Like the articles on nationell.nu, a large number of the texts on Nordfront are aimed at mobilising the reader’s emotions and the comments are consistently upbeat, which also helps strengthen the activists’ morale. In this way, the Web site serves as an opinion-based community, in which activists can develop their political identity and have their world view confirmed and reinforced. Nordfront’s scope also enables visitors to easily find their way around in the abundance of pseudo-scientific texts on sociobiology, race biology, mythology, etc., while the movement’s outwardly directed activities and its internal operations are displayed in an advantageous form.

Even if Nordfront is cleansed from explicit violence and direct calls to engage in violence, there are texts commenting on the Swedish Resistance Movement’s attitude toward violent forms of conflict. One article that deals with an internal SMR meeting quotes a speech given by the movement’s leader, Klas Lund. It makes reference to the media image of the organisation as violent:

The talk focused on the organisation’s attitude to violence, to revolution, and to the national movement’s history, from the 1980s on. Lund spoke about the earlier VAM’s operations and aims, and on the nationalist wave that came later. Throughout the talk, there was sharp criticism of the pacifist mentality that had seeped into the movement. Lund stressed that before this began to occur, the movement had been both more radical and more on the offensive. One of the aims of the Resistance Movement is to uphold and further develop this radicalism, without becoming overly internal or subcultural. Much of the speech ended up being about outsiders’ view of the Resistance Movement as a violent or criminal organisation. Lund described briefly why the mass media paint such an untruthful picture of us, and how they operate. He explained how in the case of Ronny Lundin he mass media agitated against him and contributed to a judicial murder of him and two of his companions, who were innocent and were together convicted of manslaughter, in order to “serve as a public example”. Lund went on to explain that in certain cases there may be extenuating circumstances as to why some of the organisation’s member, himself included, have been convicted of crimes. He noted, however, that few or no revolutionary organisations in history have ever been completely “clean”. Lund also pointed out that essentially all so-called crimes committed by members of the

\textsuperscript{65} http://www.nordfront.se/fredrik-vejdeland-misstanks-for-hets-mot-negrer.smr (retrieved 22 Feb 2013).

Resistance Movement have had a political dimension. This comes, for example, from the perpetrators having defended themselves or their friends against attack, or having been convicted of political crimes, such as incitement to racial hatred.\(^{67}\)

It is also interesting to note that the violent and militant profile is apparently important for SMR, and that it has difficulty balancing the cleansing, normalising process that the movement has undergone with the fact that it still advocates violent methods of conflict.\(^{68}\) Upon closer analysis of the article, it becomes apparent that the cleansing of the movement’s image has also had real consequences on the degree of militancy of the actual practitioners. This amounts to the revelation that SMR has here an organisation problem. If the movement’s image has become softer in order to attract more members, its activities would appear to have been influenced in the same direction, which is denounced by the organisation’s leader figure.

Nordfront.se is relevant as it combines right-wing extremist news dissemination, street activism and militant opposition with lengthy race-biology tracts of a rather outmoded – to say the least – character. The Web site makes it clear, on several levels, that outwardly directed propaganda production is a high priority for the right-wing extremist milieu. It is also an example of the high degree of professionalism in right-wing extremist media production, and the well-developed communication strategies. Propaganda production is also something the proponents themselves point to as a key strategy for the recruitment of new members.\(^{69}\)

4.7 Communication forms and strategies in social media

The right-wing extremist organisation presented in the overview all use some form of social media. All five have a YouTube account, all except the Swedish Resistance Movement have a presence on Facebook and all except the Nordic National Socialists have a Twitter account. Over and above this,

\(^{67}\) http://www.nordfront.se/klas-lund-jag-anger-ingenting.smr (retrieved on 4 Mar 2013). It is interesting to note here that Ronny Lundin was murdered in 1986 – that is, eleven years before the founding of SMR. Lund was convicted of manslaughter in the Landin case and subsequently became an activist affiliated with VAM, after which in 1997 he founded SMR (Lööw 2000). This possibly indicates a continuity between VAM and SMR, embodied in Lund, as the movement’s unquestioned leader and authority figure.

\(^{68}\) For more examples of this normalising process, please refer to the section below on SMR’s video-based activism.

there is the Internet forum Nordisk.nu, which gathers activists, sympathisers and other interested individuals across party and organisational lines. There are also blogs connected to the right-wing extremist milieu and many of them are located under the motpol.nu portal referenced above.

We also find that the operations on Facebook are relatively modest and, with the exceptions of Nordic Youth and possibly SvP, it is difficult to describe the right-wing extremist movements’ use of the world’s largest social networking platform as successful. This is partly due to the difficulty of being anonymous on Facebook, and the fact that users thus expose themselves to certain negative risks (for example, on the labour market, in school or in other social milieus). This is also the conclusion reached by the Expo foundation in its report on the racial-ideology Internet milieu (Expo 2012a:40). While the report was being prepared, however, the Facebook activity increased, but it is still too early (30 Mar 2013) to draw any significant conclusions from this increase.

The Twitter accounts are interesting as they enable rapid, quickly updated and flow-oriented communication via linking into the movements’ various computer-mediated platforms. Facebook and Twitter, however, will be touched on more briefly further on in this qualitative analysis. This part of the report will not be particularly extensive since the Facebook material is limited and because the Twitter posts function primarily as links to the milieus, rather than as direct communication with other Twitter users (though certainly movement representatives have private Twitter accounts of their own, which may have a different character).

4.7.1 Twitter

Twitter is a portal for microblogging, and it is utilised to a certain extent by right-wing extremist actors. Given that the communication on Twitter is flow-oriented and fleeting, it is difficult to make detailed and qualitative assessments of the content. We shall restrict ourselves here to assessing which organisations are active users and how the communication might be understood in a general perspective. All Twitter accounts that are open can be read by everyone who has access to the Web. To follow an account (as a subscriber to tweets), however, users need their own registered Twitter account. Consequently, it is impossible to say how many readers a particular Twitter user has; on the other hand, it is possible to investigate a particular user’s impact on the platform itself.

The Party of the Swedes has a Twitter account called Folkfronten, that is mainly used to link to the party’s Web site. Folkfronten is not used particularly often, however. They publish around 10 tweets a month and have 439 followers (1 Apr 2013). The Swedish Resistance Movement’s Nordfront account is active, producing a few published tweets a day, and the account is used only for linking to the movement’s Web site. Nordfront has 285 followers (1 Apr 2013). One of SMR’s leading activists (one of the few visible female activists in the racial-ideology milieu) has 1,934 followers (1 Apr 2013). The
relatively high number of followers can be partially explained by the fact that the user tweets regularly in both English and Swedish. The National Youth Federation (FNU) has a Twitter account with the same name. The account is only used sporadically: only six tweets have been published since year-end 2012. The account has 215 followers (1 Apr 2013). The organisation that is most active on Twitter is Nordic Youth. For one thing, the organisation has an account that is used daily to communicate with other users and to link to the organisation’s Web site, but also to link to NU’s Facebook account. In this respect, NU’s Twitter usage is also more dynamic than that of the other organisations. NU is active across more platforms and utilises its communicative infrastructure in a more active manner. Several leading NU activists also have personal Twitter accounts that are used for both interpersonal and more public organisationally related communication. However, NU’s Twitter account does not have very many followers – only 370 Twitter users follow the account (1 Apr 2013).

Across the board, it is difficult to assess the significance of a presence on Twitter for the right-wing extremist milieu and for society’s political opinions. In relation to the ability to distribute messages, Twitter is limited by its publication form (a single tweet may not contain more than 140 characters); on the other hand, based on the assumption that media visibility is important for the movements’ existence and for their political room for action (cf. Rucht 2004:29), it is advantageous to be an active user of fast-paced social media. A daily usage of social media implies that right-wing extremist forces are co-actors in the constant flow of political exchange of opinion that goes on in the public Internet sphere. On certain issues, one can (potentially) influence the conversation about causes and political solutions, and eventually one can, in relation to other political communication processes, be involved in creating societal opinion on issues that involve, for example, immigration. At the same time, there is a risk of overvaluing (for example) Twitter’s significance for right-wing extremist communication. The mere presence of right-wing extremist actors on Twitter does not imply that they are influencing public political discourses. It is essential to explain a few concrete circumstances in the relationship between social media and overall societal conditions, to make the picture of right-wing extremist communication on Twitter more concrete.

Globally, over 200 million tweets are published every day (Murthy 2012:2) and there are certain specific factors that determine which of them get read, when they reach outside a highly restricted audience and when they reach public impact. There is no scientific research that can show how many people read and absorb right-wing extremist material on social media and how other users relate to the utterances communicated by right-wing extremist sources. The idea that everyone has the same ability to express him or herself (see, for example, Bjurwald 2013:14), says very little about whether

70 https://twitter.com/PaulinaForslund (retrieved on 1 Apr 2013).
what is communicated reaches beyond a restricted audience, or whether it remains primarily as communication between like-minded people (which in itself is also interesting).\textsuperscript{71} All communication on the Internet reflects the existing relationships of power that prevail in society, and scientific research shows that those who primarily benefit from Twitter are commercial actors, and actors who already have an established position in the mediated public arena. Essentially, communication on Twitter is embedded in the relationships of social and economic power that exist in the surrounding society (cf. Fenton 2012:138). It is reasonable to assume that both organised right-wing extremist communication and anonymous right-wing extremist comments/tweets, etc., are viewed on the basis of the impact they achieve in the mediated public arena.\textsuperscript{72}

What we can safely say about organised right-wing extremist Twitter communication is that it serves three main external functions. Firstly, it permits rapid linking into the movements’ various Web-based platforms; secondly, Twitter makes right-wing extremist movements’ activities visible; and thirdly, it creates a potential for network building and recruitment through direct communication with other users. In the absence of more concrete empirical studies, however, it is impossible to say whether the third function is realised, and if so, to what extent.

4.7.2 Right-wing extremist material on YouTube

The movements and the organisations have been significantly more active in their propaganda production on the Web site YouTube. The ability to upload well-produced video clips and allow users to comment on and discuss the videos has generated a lot of activity in terms of numbers of videos, viewings and comments. The simple, dynamic platform that YouTube provides is ideal for groups on the political margins. Actors in the right-wing extremist milieu often have modest financial resources, which also restricts their production and distribution of propaganda. By means of a platform such as YouTube, smaller, more impecunious actors can distribute their propaganda

\textsuperscript{71} The internal added value of the right-wing extremist Twitter communication is probably significantly greater compared with its external added value. Right-wing activists who communicate with each other confirm each others’ opinions and world view, and participate in this way in the Twitter communication of a larger interactive opinion-based community (cf. Statzel 2008; Welks 2010; Caiani, della Porta & Wagemann 2012).

\textsuperscript{72} A significant portion of the hate-filled attacks on public figures come from anonymous users, whose role in the right-wing extremist milieu is impossible to gauge. Based on research from other European countries, we can consider racist discourses in social media (in combination with the tendencies in other mass media) as rhetorical linebackers in a larger political discourse on immigration and users (cf. Kundnani 2008:2012; Lentin & Titley 2011). The anonymous comments contribute primarily to a brutalisation of public debate, and in this way extend the boundaries of acceptable statements in general political discourse. By doing so they also have effects on traditional political actors, for example in that (mainly) right-wing politicians adopt xenophobic phraseology and try to win back voter groups who have migrated to xenophobic parties. Such a development has also favoured right-wing extremist and right-wing populist parties throughout Europe (see, for example, Yilmaz 2012)
without significant overhead. By publishing and distributing films on YouTube, the movements can also reach larger, new audiences than by conventional distribution channels (cf. Askanius & Uldam 2011:81). Moreover, it has never been simpler, has never required fewer resources, to produce one’s own video material than what is the case today. To produce professional or semi-professional political propaganda, all that is needed is digital recording equipment, digital editing software, and basic familiarity with political communication. The following excerpts will analyse the movements’ communication strategies on YouTube and the video material that has been uploaded onto the various movements’ channels. We will begin with some comments as to how the distribution of music with Swedish right-wing extremist content on YouTube can be considered in more general terms. We will also provide concrete examples of the contributions of the Swedish right-wing extremist music scene. As previously mentioned, in the 1990s and on into the first decade of 2000, the nationalist race ideological music movement was a key force in the recruitment of activists to the racial ideology milieu. Mattias Wåg described the racial-ideological music movement as a propaganda weapon that operated independently of individual organisations, but that would at the same time function as a type of over-arching cultural war in which race-conscious activists would be formed (Wåg 2010:99ff). Quite simply, the music would function as ideological training. In this way, race ideological music became a springboard for recruitment into a right-wing extremist political field. Even though the role of this music is considerably weaker today, there are still active artists who attract listeners. This is particularly apparent on the social network page nordisk.nu.

**YouTube as distribution channel for race ideological music.**

Just how wide-spread the right-wing extremist music material is on the video-sharing site YouTube is impossible to estimate. If we examine all of the Swedish music clips that can be related to the messages of the more militant part of the right-wing extremist milieu, we can get an idea of how widely spread they are in a Web milieu beyond the movements’ own platforms and distribution channels. We will here present only a sampling of the Swedish artists and songs published on YouTube. The selection is based on artists who can be related to the contemporary right-wing extremist milieu and who are in various ways discussed and circulated (in the form of embedded clips links, etc.) in the right-wing extremist discussion forum nordisk.nu. Based on what is said in the

---

73 As mentioned previously, the investigator is aware of the distancing that has taken place between the right-wing extremist music movement and the current organisations, and that the latter, in certain cases, have tried to distance themselves from White Power music.

74 It is impossible to know whether the music clips were uploaded and distributed by activists in the right-wing extremist movements; however, none of the 35 clips included here have been published on any of the organisations’ own YouTube channels.
discussion threads, all of the artists in the selection appear to be currently active. If we look at the five most popular clips from seven artists, all of whom have been active in the first decade of 2000 and after, and who are associated with the racial-ideology milieu, we find that these 35 clips generate 4,438,612 viewings (see Table 4.3). All seven artists also appear in various discussion threads in the discussion forum of the social networking page nordisk.nu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Number of viewings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ferox</td>
<td>135,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fyrdung</td>
<td>189,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidrun</td>
<td>90,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothung</td>
<td>131,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saga</td>
<td>2,535,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svensk Ungdom</td>
<td>633,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Völund Smed</td>
<td>722,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (35 clips)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,438,612</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3. The sum total for the five most viewed clips of seven contemporary Swedish right-wing extremist artists on YouTube (2 Mar 2013).

The artist who stands out among the right-wing extremist groups is a national-socialist singer-songwriter who calls herself Saga. Both her musical style and her general presentation differ from the majority of the artists in the older White Power music scene, and her music clips have had significantly greater quantitative impact than those of all other Swedish right-wing extremist artists on YouTube. Saga’s soft ballads and romantic music stands in stark contrast to the styles that characterise most bands in the racial-ideology milieu – styles such as oi punk, Viking rock or other similar sub-genres (see, for example, Furell, Simi & Gottschalk 2006). There are over 100 videos of Saga’s music on YouTube, and in a Playlist created by user jjmt200101, there are 51 Saga videos

---

75 If we were to include video clips showing older, nowadays inactive, White Power artists, the figures would be significantly higher.


77 Saga publishes her recordings through the Midgård Records recording company, but also has a profile with US-based Resistance Records (RR). In 1999, RR bought the Swedish company Nordland Records, and one of Midgård’s founders, Per-Anders “Pajen” Johansson, came from the circle around Nordland. RR is owned in turn by American political party the National Alliance (Back 2002). For a more extensive description of the conflicts surrounding Nordland at the end of the 1990s, see, for example, Wåg (2010).
linked together. Of the Saga clips found, only one is a conventional music video. It contains sequences from live performances and throughout the video the logo of the National Socialist Front is visible in the upper right corner.\(^\text{78}\) Many clips contain photo montages featuring Saga mixed with elements of race ideological or military history character. These are user-generated films that create a pictorial display to accompany Saga’s music. Saga is still active as an artist in the right-wing extremist milieu, and performs at international right-wing extremist festivals (see below).

In an interview video taken from the news channel Discovery Times Channel,\(^\text{79}\) Saga is presented as the right-wing extremist milieu’s answer to Madonna. In the interview, the singer explains that her everyday, stylistically uncontroversial presentation has probably contributed to her success and that she only sings about things that most people agree with, but wouldn’t dare to say, for fear of being considered racist.\(^\text{80}\) Saga is also seen in concert photos from a Blood & honour concert, at which she makes a greeting with her right arm outstretched (a so-called Hitler greeting).\(^\text{81}\) In the interview she also explains that she finds the gesture to be “a very honourable greeting”. The concert video shows some ten bald men mouthing “Sieg Heil” in front of a smiling Saga, and toward the end of the song, which is performed with the English Blood & Honour band *Strike Force UK*, she also salutes the group of chanting men by using the same gesture, five times.\(^\text{82}\)

It is not only Saga who has broken with the conventional style of the race ideological music scene. Artists like Svensk Ungdom, Midgård and Ferox also present a softer musical image. There is much more right-wing extremist music on YouTube that what has been referred to here, particularly involving British and North American artists.

The Swedish right-wing extremist movements have distanced themselves from skinhead culture, and in connection with that have expressed scepticism toward the race ideological music movement. Some of the conflicts that marked the right-wing extremist milieu around the end of the millennium were rooted in personal and financial conflicts between actors in music production and sales (Wåg

---

\(^{78}\) Strangely enough, this clip is not easy to find, but it has been uploaded by at least five users. (See, for example, \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1O1IEMJeO4}, retrieved on 16 Dec 2012).  

\(^{79}\) Discovery Times Channel was a collaboration between the TV channel Discovery and *The New York Times*, and existed between 2003 and 2006.  

\(^{80}\) \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wg_FWqiZaE} (retrieved on 16 Dec 2012).  

\(^{81}\) A greeting gesture that is forbidden in several European countries. The Hitler greeting (the Sieg Heil) is a version of the Roman greeting.  

\(^{82}\) \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgiP1ypXleE}
It is probably one of the reasons that the more politically motivated activists consider race ideological music movements as an organisational error. There are other reasons, however, that refer to political strategy and organisational prioritisation.

Despite this, it is apparent that many people in the milieu still listen to and distribute race ideological music (Swedish and international), particularly on the Web forum nordisk.nu. It would probably be fruitful to consider race ideological music as one element of many in a more extensive process of identity creation (cf. Corte & Edwards 2008). Accordingly, the music videos can be considered as a part of the repertoire of right-wing extremist popular culture that is not affiliated to any particular organisations, but that nevertheless involves users in the right-wing extremist milieu or users who are potential sympathisers. It is obvious, however, that the music no longer fills the same direct function as a recruitment platform as it did in the 1990s. For a more detailed discussion on the significance of the production, distribution and practice of right-wing extremist music in the racial-ideology milieu from the 1980s to the first decade of the new millennium, see, for example, Corte & Edwards 2008; Lööw 2000; and Furell, Simi & Gottschalk 2006.

4.7.3 YouTube and the right-wing extremist movements’ visual front line

This part of the report will focus on the Swedish right-wing extremist movements’ video channels and the video material that the movements publish on YouTube. The Swedish Resistance Movement (SMR), the Nordic National Socialists (NNS), the Party of the Swedes (SvP), the National Youth Association (FNU) and Nordic Youth (NU) all have accounts on YouTube. A total of 223 videos have been uploaded to the official organisational pages (9 Mar 2013). In addition there is a large quantity of material relating to the right-wing extremist movements’ activities that has been uploaded by individual users. Upon comparison with the videos of the autonomous left, it is clear the right-wing extremist material is significantly more extensive and the total viewing numbers for the right-wing extremist actors are thus much higher.

SMR’s channel is the largest, with a total of 128 films, 848,913 unique viewings and 1,041 subscribers (9 Mar 2013). SMR’s channel also contains two links to the Norwegian and Finnish parts of the movement, NordfrontMedia and VastarintaMedia. The two Nordic sister channels, however, have considerably fewer films, viewings and subscribers than does MotståndsMedia. Of the five organisations, it is doubtful whether the NNS channel is official (it contains only two films) and FNU seems not to practise regular uploading of new film clips – the most recent film on its channel, FörbundetMedia, was uploaded on 30 May 2012. SMR, SvP and NU, however, have active accounts and also relatively high numbers of viewings of the videos published on their channels.
Table 4.4. The right-wing extremist organisations’ activity on YouTube (9 Mar 2013).

The discussion of the video analysis begins by grouping the videos into videos that illustrate external activities and those that illustrate internal activities. “External activities” refers to, for example, demonstrations and public square meetings, whereas “internal activities” refers to meetings of activists (that do not take place in public settings), hiking in the woods and physical training. The videos are grouped into genres based on the characteristics displayed in the visual and written content. Material designating external activities identifies the genres of “the manifestation video”, “the confrontation video” and “the action film”. The videos designating internal activities include the two genres of “the wilderness film” and “the exercise video”. Besides the videos that represent clearly external versus internal activities, there are the genres of “the interview”, “the humour element” and “the news aspect”. The genres are ranked according to frequency, and also determine the structure of the analysis. It sometimes happens that one and the same video contains elements of several genres, but such videos are usually among the easiest to classify. A few videos lie outside the genre categories: these include one video containing a piece of music with no added illustrations (a national-socialist reggae song) on NU’s channel, *Etnopluralist*; which is currently the most popular of NU’s videos, with 54,713 viewings (3 Jan 2013). There are also a number of videos showing speeches from internal meetings and videos containing text read aloud (for example, SMR’s communiqués). These also lie outside the primary categories. Since the analysis is structured according to analytic thematisations based on common patterns and characteristics of content, some nuances and details

---

83 The arithmetical average is rounded off to the nearest whole number.

84 The national-socialist reggae song “Think” has received critical comments from other actors in the right-wing extremist milieu. The national-socialist activist Magnus Söderman (formerly SMR; currently Party of the Swedes/Norden Group) writes in a tweet “Nationalist reggae, a paradox for a white nationalist movement. Over my dead body!” https://twitter.com/Nordengruppen) (retrieved on 3 Jan 2013).
are lost. The purpose of the analysis, however, is not to provide detailed descriptions of all – slightly over 200 – videos, but rather to distil a few common distinguishing characteristics that warrant further examination, given the overall purpose of the study. If we consider YouTube’s viewing statistics for the genres, manifestation videos are the most viewed, followed by action films and confrontation videos. The least viewed videos were in the interview genre as well as various recitals of speeches and text. The humour videos are not particularly numerous, but garner in comparison fairly high visit numbers.

*The manifestation film*

By far the most common content of the uploaded videos is sequences from the organisations’ various manifestations. Such films can be divided into two thematic sub-genres that reflect the visual and text content: *demonstrations* and *public meetings*.

One way to make a movement’s political activity visual is by videotaping the movement’s demonstrations. All five organisations have films from demonstrations (the two NNS clips are from demonstrations in Stockholm on 26 May and 30 November 2013). The demonstration films vary in character and quality. A common element in the videos is superimposed, dramatic music (common in the videos from the Swedish Resistance Movement) or some form of nationalist rock or pop (common in the National Youth videos). One technique that typifies the production of several demonstration videos is the combination of cut-and-spliced sequences, a soundtrack with suggestive music (comparable to instrumental film music) and a soundtrack with speeches from one of the movement’s activists. The combination of these three elements creates a feeling that there are more participants that is actually the case, a feeling of intensity and excitement about the actual chain of events, and a political, ideological framing of it all. In certain video sequences these three elements also appear in combination with a fourth consisting of superimposed text with some form of political message or description of the visual sequence of events.

The political dimension of the videotaped demonstrations is not particularly prominent. The videos show demonstration marches against “multiculturalism and multicultural violence”, “against political violence” (a demonstration aimed at the anti-racist left), and for “the spirit of Charles XII”, “women’s right to be safe”, a few videos from May Day demonstrations and from “the people’s march” on Sweden’s national day. Some of the videos contain videotaped speeches by representatives of participating organisations, but explicit political content is generally toned down in favour of a more narrative framing including photo montage, added music soundtrack, text signs and speaker voice.
It may be relevant, for several reasons, to take an in-depth look at the political and ideological dimension of the demonstration about women’s right to be safe. Firstly, the demonstration utilises a case of rape that attracted much media attention to discuss “mass immigration”. In the process, the theme of “women’s right to be safe” became merely a question of immigration and immigrants. Secondly, it is connected to a general legal policy issue that relates to rape legislation and sanctions. That is, a legal policy issue potentially associated with great pathos. Turning “women’s right to be safe” into a question of immigration is a standard ideological element for political forces that try to turn “women’s bodies into a projection screen in the struggle to European values” (Mulini & Neergaard 2010:71). This ideological element has deep colonial roots. In the Swedish Resistance Movement’s political discourse, the theme of women’s right to be safe is linked to the idea of an ongoing attack against the white women, rather than to any idea of “Europeanness”. The white women’s body and sexuality is a central element of a national-socialist discourse that views the woman’s body as a question for the white nation. In the race-ideological myth of motherhood, the process of biological reproduction becomes a duty toward the own white race (cf. Lööw 2000:350).

The videos from SvpMedia focus on demonstrations at which the participants represent themselves as victims of the established society and of the anti-racist left. Clearly emphasised here is that the movement’s political issues and the position declarations reflect a strong current of public opinion, but that this current of opinion is muzzled. A few videos also contain sequences of what look like attacks by counter-demonstrators and various scuffles with attendant police. The videos from MatståndMedia contain a video from a silent demonstration for “women’s right to be safe” carried out in Bollnäs on 25 August 2012, that toward the end is framed with a music loop. The demonstration film from FNU describes the demonstration as a collaborative arrangement with the Party of the Swedes, and the film takes place on 1 May 2012 in Eskilstuna. The video contains sequences from the demonstration with the spoken refrain “proud Swedish nationalist”, short excerpts from a speech on “people’s community instead of class struggle” and an added music loop.

Several of the demonstration videos amount to thematisations of some of the radicalisation mechanisms that according to social psychologists Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko (2008) can develop into political terrorism. The theme of women’s right to be safe is an example of collective victimisation (McCauley and Moskalenko speak primarily of personal victimisation), in which white women are made into the victims of collective violence perpetrated by “immigrants”. Also the mechanism of group radicalisation can be connected to films in which the right-wing extremist movements present themselves as victims of an unjust stigmatisation brought on by actors in the public realm (cf. McCauley & Moskalenko 2008).
Another narrative ploy that occurs in several videos is inserted sequences showing counter-demonstrators. Right-wing extremist actors utilise these sequences to display their own movement’s aggressive reaction to the counter-demonstrators, as evidence of the movement’s bold and confrontational nature, and to make what they define as political enemies visible. SMR’s videos in particular contain a strong element of masculine aggressiveness and focus on confrontation. This may be largely due to the fact that several of SMR’s videos of their own activities involve the presence of security guards and/or police. In the most viewed video on the SMR channel MotståndsMedia, the organisation can be observed during a demonstration against the South African government party ANC and in support of the then recently murdered right-wing Boer leader Eugène Terre’Blanche. The video shows activists burning and spitting on the South African flag while voices chants “ANC, murderers”.

The demonstration film’s perhaps most important function is to illustrate the organisation’s ability to mobilise itself and to project an image of the movement as one of camaraderie and courage. It fills an external and an internal social and political purpose. The demonstration film seeks to strengthen the inner social community while at the same time aiming to demonstrate the movement’s strength, unity and political fighting spirit, vis-à-vis potential sympathisers. In that respect, the demonstration video may serve as a visually powerful tool for the consolidation of both ideological conviction and social mobilisation ability.

The movements also videotape and edit different types of meeting activities. At MotståndsMedia the visitor finds an impressive quantity of activity reports under the collective title “Images of the Struggle”. Here, the visitor encounters the Swedish Resistance Movement in public contexts – at town square meetings, distributing flyers, at manifestations, and so on. The videos serve as visual confirmation of SMR’s activities and political mobilisation. There are rarely more than about 20 activists present. In some of the videos, the mood becomes threatening and aggressive, and in one video that shows a town square meeting in Bollnäs, the movement’s representatives appear with black shields spray-painted with hangman’s nooses. The video shows some of the movement’s representatives distributing flyers to passers-by. In a conversation with a man in the town square, one of the organisation’s activists declares that “I personally think we ought to haul out the municipal politicians who are responsible for this and hang them from a tree”. The Bollnäs video is also embedded in a short news article on the news page Nationell.nu, under the heading “Emil Hagberg:

---


86 The responsibility that the SMR activist mentions probably refers to Swedish immigration policies. The Bollnäs protest was triggered by the gang-rape of an 18-year-old woman in Bollnäs, where the perpetrators
Hang the politicians from a tree”. The article has 35 comments, of which all but two are positive toward the statement by the SMR activist. The two that are more hesitant question the tactical value of speaking in such violent terms. Explicit threats of violence (or calls to commit murder) expressed in public contexts and then published as propaganda material are unusual. The right-ring extremist movements are aware of the legal complications that could result if such material were published. SMR, however, seems to fetishise that aspect of the political propaganda production, as they also publish video tapings of court cases at which the movement’s activists are convicted of incitement to racial hatred. Several of SMR’s meeting videos contain some form of confrontation or clash with security guards or police.

The confrontation film

One type of video that is common on SMR’s channel MotståndsMedia contains some form of confrontation. It may involve verbal confrontation with political opponents, media representatives, security guards, representatives of government authorities or private individuals, as well as physical confrontation with non-like-minded persons.

A series of videos contains recorded telephone calls in which various people are called and asked several questions by one of SMR’s leading figures. In the total of seven videos, the representative calls a police officer, a school teacher, a Swedish Radio executive, a couple of employers, an owner of a refugee housing facility, a police officer at the Criminal Investigation Service (KUT), and an employee of the Swedish Security Service. The videos containing recorded phone calls contain pictures of the person who receives the call and of the activist. The videos fill two clear functions: they show SMR as a victim of injustices that befall individual members and the movement, and they show that SMR is unafraid and focused on confrontation. Given the context of violence of which SMR is a part, the phone call videos embody a latent threat. They manifest a form of latent violence, in which SMR shows that are informed about individuals who they consider act against the movement.

Another type of confrontational element involves videotaped sequences in which SMR activists get into verbal and physical confrontations with the police and with security guards. These videos usually end with some person or persons being arrested or detained by the security guard. SMR uses the confrontations with the police as compensation for having been subjected to political persecution.

---

and oppression of opinion by the municipal apparatus. The videos often contain explanatory text in which the movement describes itself as a victim of political oppression. The videos contain elements of collective victimisation, as well as tendencies toward what McCauley & Moskalenko (2008) define as radicalisation under threat. The physical confrontation with police and security guards reinforces the elements based on internal discipline and collective action with physical elements. Here, videotaped physical confrontations become part of the messages romanticising the movement’s strength in relation to the – for now – invincible enemy.

Some videos contain sequences from confrontations with political opponents – for example, counter-demonstrations at some of the movement’s actions. The quantity and the intensity of the violence, however, are restricted; the videos contain images of light scrimmages and commotions, rather than actual physical violence. The character of the videos suggests it is more important to demonstrate the movement’s defence capability – both its defensive readiness and its physical capacity – than to display directly violent actions. There is also a legal aspect to this: nothing in the videos can be used as evidence against any of the movement’s activists. Nor are there any videos showing attacks against opponents on the movements’ own YouTube channels. There are older clips, however, produced by SMR, in which activists are seen knocking down counter-demonstrators. Such films have, however, been uploaded by individual users on anonymous YouTube accounts. These clips probably belong to SMR’s earlier channel or platform for video distribution.

The confrontation elements are relevant in that the national-socialist organisations appear as if they are under political attack by established public institutions. That it is the state and not the immigrants or immigration that constitutes the most important political counterparty is a prominent trait of modern race ideology discourse (Mudde 2004:196). Immigration and immigrants are seen as more a symptom of a sick political system and as the product of a state apparatus hostile to the people, than as the actual root of the problem. This tactical displacement must be understood against the background of political development within the right-wing extremist milieu. Instead of trying to create a political issue by attacking refugee centres or assaulting individual immigrants, the movement instead confronts representatives of the state apparatus. By assuming an underdog position, the movements try to inspire sympathy in the viewer, while simultaneously presenting themselves as politically relevant. The films display the movements’ political activities in forms protected by the constitution and thus also try to appear as legitimate actors. The political victim position has been constructed using simple dramatic devices. With the help of well balanced visual clips, dramatic

88 See, for example, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHUoZ3alCAk (retrieved on 26 Dec 2012).
music and explanatory text, a right-wing extremist movement such as the Swedish Resistance Movement looks as if it is being subjected to political oppression and persecution by a corrupt state apparatus. The clips clearly show the mechanisms associated with a collective victimisation (cf. McCauley & Moskalenko 2008).

The action film
Videotaping actions is another way to project the image of mobilisation capacity and publically focused activities. The action film is interesting as it documents and preserves small, and sometimes visually short-lived, actions, for the sake of the audience that presumably exists. This give the action a different impact, at least potentially, in time and place. National Youth has attracted attention through a number of unconventional street actions, which have been filmed and then distributed on the movement’s YouTube channel. The actions have been aimed at the public employment office, at Goldman Sachs, wars, temp agencies and sex crimes. In one film clip, we see spliced-together sequences showing activists and flyer confetti, set to a soundtrack of Euro pop-type techno music.

NU’s activist films focus on the spectacular and partially playful, rather than on aggressive behaviour and homosocial masculinity, One interesting aspect is the political dimension of NU’s actions. The actions tend to circle around socio-economic issues such as unemployment, wars and economic injustice – issues usually associated with the political left. NU’s actions derive obvious inspiration from the European new social right, which often cloaks its racism or xenophobia in social terms. This political strategy has been adopted, with some success, by actors in Italian neo-fascism and in the nationalist revolutionary stream in Germany.

SMR’s actions in public space are a far cry from the playful and the spectacular. SMR’s action films depict conventional political practices, such as town square meetings, that sometimes develop into physical confrontation with security personnel and police. Some clips show video tapings of physical fights with anti-racist counter-demonstrators. In a couple of clips the actions end with police intervention, all filmed by the organisation’s activists. In SMR’s action clips, the role of the victim is combined with that of the martyr. The ideological framing casts the state apparatus in the role of the aggressor as the movement tries to invoke the constitutionally protected freedom of assembly. This way, SMR can show that they are not bending, but that at the same time they are trying to operate within the bounds of the applicable legislation. In the action clips, the violence reveals itself as an underlying element that is never far way – SMR’s street fights are transformed in the clips into legitimate self-defence and the pictures seek to confirm the movement’s militant ideology while simultaneously presenting representatives of the power of the state and counter-demonstrators as the aggressors. The victim role connects with both the victimisation and the ideological martyrdom that constitute mechanisms of radicalisation toward the use of political violence (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008). What is striking about the action clips of the Swedish Resistance Movement is
their aggressiveness, sometimes explicitly physical, but also latent and discursive. The aggressiveness is ideologically connected to SMR’s ideological and political perspective on society, and also to a homosocial masculinity. The SMR clips do not show any female activists: all of the activists seen in the images are (primarily young) men. The violence (and the social desensitisation that the violence breeds), combined with the lauding of the masculine, are often described as central components in the creation of the fascistic political identity (see, for example, Eco 2004; Hobsbawm 1999).

The wilderness film
An entirely different type of activist film shows various actions in different natural milieux, often with a wilderness theme. These films contain sequences from nature hikes and other exercises in a forest milieu. The films contain clips that emphasis physical challenges, such as ice swimming and marching while carrying heavy packs over difficult terrain. In the video clip “Vandring i Dalarna” (“Hiking i Dalarna”) from MotståndsMedia, four young men carry a sawn tree trunk around in a snow-covered wood. The clip is described as follows: “On the weekend, activists from the Resistance Movement’s 5th threw themselves once again into the deep Dalarna forest to pursue a wilderness adventure. The adventure they embarked upon this time was more challenging than ever before.” In the film, a person serving as the leader explains that they are going to hike through the woods in the winter night. This is followed by several clips from the night-time hike with maps and compasses, all set to dramatic music. In one caption the picture clips are explained as follows: “Activity, Borlänge 18 Feb 2012. 1 hour of sleep in 48 hours, 45 km march. No food. Hardly any water. Constant challenges”.

Sometimes the videotaped hikes have cultural and historical aspects, as in the video “Ancient history hike outside Stockholm”, published on FNU’s channel FörbundetMedia. Combining an interest in Swedish history with physical activity may seem harmless – however, the activity must be understood in a larger political context in which nature activities serve as an component of an ideal of wholesomeness based on race ideology. The wilderness theme and the pseudo-military exercises are linked to the focus of the contemporary racial ideology milieu on health and clean living – that is, the promotion of a tradition, pre-modern masculinity (see, for example, Kimmel 2007). An orientation that distinguishes current right-wing extremism from the periods in the 1980s and 1990s, when the

---

89 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAOMY09q6wQ (retrieved on 3 Dec 2012).
90 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAOMY09q6wQ (retrieved on 3 Dec 2012).
milieu, or at least media images of the milieu, was characterised largely by elements from skinhead culture, white power music and destructiveness (cf. Lööw 2000). Physical culture and the ideal of wholesomeness are particularly clear for FNU and in some films on the Swedish Resistance Movement’s channel. Perhaps these videos are also intended to normalise the movement’s style of social life, and in such a way create counter-images to the intense stigmatisation that otherwise surrounds the movements. In the videotaped wilderness excursions, the public image of the right-wing extremist milieu is of one characterised by threats, violence and (political) criminality meets an ideological counterparty. Here the audience meets a movement occupied with field exercises in a military spirit, or activities reminiscent of the Scouts.

Another type of film in a natural setting is SMR’s videos from its annual farm activities. The video “Svenska Motståndsrörelsen: Bondens dag” (“Swedish Resistance Movement: the Farmer’s Day”) is described with the following text: “On the weekend of 12–13 September, activists from the Swedish Resistance Movements, most of them city-dwellers, travelled to the southern Swedish countryside to help a farmer with his chores”.

The video does not take place in the wilderness, but tries to show the movement’s contact with history and nature, which SMR associates to the idea of race via the phrase “blood and soil”. The video consists of sequences illustrating activities being carried out in an agricultural milieu. SMR has several videos on the farm theme – for example, the video entitled “Svenska Motståndsrörelsen: Bondens dag 2010” (Swedish Resistance Movement: the Farmer’s Day 2010”). It is conceivable that this type of video attempts to thematicise an agricultural/pastoral romanticism filtered through a national-socialist anti-modernism. In the video “Svenska Motståndsrörelsen: Bondens dag 2010”, activists are seen marching across a field with the movement’s banner to a place where one of the then-leading figures holds a speech. Wearing a dark suit, he reads his speech from a notebook he has brought along. The opening phrase is “Children, parents. It is the

91 While the ideal of wholesomeness was certainly an ideological element in the 1980s and 1990s, the media image represented another reality in the racial-ideological milieu.

92 The scout movement was also referenced by SMR in an article about the Scouts movement’s founder Robert Baden-Powell’s contacts with Nazi-Germany. The article states that “[…] 1939, Baden-Powell spent an entire day reading Mein Kampf and concluded it was ‘a wonderful book with good ideas about education, health, propaganda, organisation, etc.’” http://www.nordfront.se/scoutrörelsen-baden-powell-och-moten-med-tyskland.smr (retrieved on 3 Mar 2013).

93 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3_QcVQbRSg (retrieved on 7 Feb 2013).

94 Blut und boden (“blood and soil”) was the nineteenth-century German concept for the racially homogenous nation (i.e., a national citizenship based on German “blood”), and the phrase was popularised by the NSDAP in the 1930s.
blood of the race that gives you your life”. The videos of the countryside normalise the movement’s practitioners by exhibiting them in a comradely situation in a natural setting. Accordingly, SMR also produces a type of propaganda film that has more in common thematically and visually with traditional documentaries than with modern race ideology activism.

The training film

Another type of video shows internal activities that in different ways involve some form of physical training, often of a martial-arts character. These training films have thematic similarities with the wilderness film: they stress physical education and camaraderie, while demonstrating that the movement is ready for physical confrontations. In the videos, the observer is introduced to physical fighting with political overtones. In the video “Svenska Motståndsrörelsen: Vikingakamp i Dalarna” (Swedish Resistance Movement: Viking Fight in Dalarna) we watch SMR activists practise wrestling and archery. In other videos, activists jump hurdles, for example, in “Spontan fysträning i Stockholm” (“Spontaneous physical training in Stockholm”) (FNU/Förbundetmedia) and in SMR’s video “6/11 – Motståndsrörelsen i Friluftsaktivitet i Västsverige” (6/11: Resistance Movement in Outdoor Activity in Western Sweden)(MotståndsMedia).

In the launch film for the National Youth Federation activists are seen practising martial arts, and in a film on the Party of the Swedes’ channel, FNU activists practise the sport of Airsoft with “young people from SvP in Malmö”. The film is called “Airsoft med SvP och FNU” (“Airsoft with SvP and FNU”) and is described with the following caption: “On 10 September 2011, young people from SvP Malmö and activists from FNU conducted a group friendship activity in Skåne. Airsoft and socialising in the fair autumn weather were on the agenda. The teams were mixed boys and girls, SvP members ad FNU members, and the sense of friendship was complete”. The film represents a number of people wearing safety masks and shooting at each other in a forest setting. The pictures from the forest battle are accompanied by the musical number “Det finns bara krig” (“There is only war”) by the Dutch industrial metal band, Raubtier.

The training video functions as a meditation on physical education reflected in right-wing extremist movements’ ideological self-representation. Here the video thematicises the friendly spirit, physical culture and latent use of violence that characterise the movement’s self-image and political identity.

---

95 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eso1VPACdg (retrieved on 7 Feb 2013).
process. The violence is present only in terms of play and self-defence training, but must be understood in relation to the actual violence that follows certain organisations in the right-wing extremist milieu. Physical education and self-defence training are aspects of the potentially imminent armed race conflict.

Among the films that describe internal activities there are also clips from meetings and events. The Swedish Resistance Movement publishes videos from its “Activist Days”, where cut and spliced sequences of speeches, social activities and other activities are accompanied by suggestive mood music. National Youth publishes a video from the launch of the organisation and a video from Midsummer celebrations and the Party of the Swedes publishes videos from a Christmas dinner. None of the latter videos have had especially many viewings.

Both the wilderness film and the training film thematicise the building of collective identities. Camaraderie, loyalty and physical education are clear markers of identity-seeking individuals, and in the surrounding society, sports movements and other association-based collective contexts often fill these needs (apart from more obvious motives, such as that it is fun to play soccer, climb mountains, etc.) In the right-wing extremist milieu, a clear link is created between these identity markers and the right-wing extremist political ideology. Affiliation is stressed by representing physical and social activities as a group-building cement for making a goal-directed ad collegial movement.

The interview

As part of Nordic Youth’s campaign “be active”, the organisation published videotaped interviews with activists. In the videos, young men explain why they joined the organisation and what it was that persuaded them to make the decision. One of these active persons describes how one of the contributing factors was the use of the Internet, and particularly a forum (he does not name which one it is, though it is likely to be nordisk.nu that he is referring to) when is encountered political opinions and users who contributed to his becoming politically active.

The Swedish Resistance Movement publishes a type of video that is reminiscent of NU’s though it does not involve interviews but rather videotaped communiqués – that is, a speech read by one of the movement’s representatives. In “communiqués” a leading figure, who has now defected, speaks about the social and political conditions of the activity within the movement. Activism should be rooted in total loyalty to the movement and in personal sacrifice. SMR also has a clip in which a female representative is interviewed by a Norwegian newspaper about her views on topics such as women’s role and the family.
The humour film

One element typical for the genre, which appears in some clips, is humour. The humour clip is mainly about ridiculing anti-racist counter-demonstrators to achieve a comic effect. It can be a matter of repeating short visual sequences and adding on humoristic music to make the political opponent seem foolish. Or as, for example, in SMR’s clip “Motståndsrörelsen - Aktivism i Jönköping” (“The Resistance Movement – Activism in Jönköping”), in which SMR activists are shown distributing flyers on the streets of Jönköping. Suddenly activists from RKU (Revolutionär Kommunistisk Ungdom, or, “Revolutionary Communist Youth”) appear walking (with banners) toward the camera. The speed of the clip is increased and the episode is accompanied by the Povel Ramel song “Bråttom Bråttom Bråttom” (“Hurry, hurry, hurry”).96 There is similar episodes in several clips. In “19/6 - Motståndsrörelsen - Aktion i Stockholm” (“19/6 - Resistance Movement - Action in Stockholm”) SMR activists have set up a banner over a road tunnel in a place that is difficult to access (the Fredhäll tunnel in Stockholm). When the police arrive, the speed is increased and the musical vignette from the British TV series Benny Hill is inserted. A sequence that resembles a small slapstick chase ends with the activists climbing down. The video clip also shows SMR activists in conversation with several uniformed police. In the clip, one of the police officers is heard threatening the activist who is holding the camera. The officer is heard saying “I’m going to tell you something....this is the way it is. If you dare film me and my face...[short pause]...it’s gonna end badly”. The officer then repeats the same threat several times, stating he knows who the person is who’s filming him because they’ve already got the SMR activists to show their ID. In the clip, the officer who uttered the threats is then seen in a picture in which his face is clearly visible.97 In this way SMR presents itself as political activists with some degree of a sense of humour, but also as victims of harassment and threats from the police. The clip blends elements of the action film, the confrontation video and the element of humour; it is also the fourth most viewed video on the SMR YouTube channel.

There are other instances of humour in the right-wing extremist video clips, for example on the Nordic Youth channel. In the clip “Nätverket mot Rasism - Demonstration mot Nordisk Ungdom” (“The Anti-Racism Network - Demonstration against Nordic Youth”),98 anti-racist activists are heckled and called by name, to the accompaniment of music for a comic effect. In another video, an activist from NU is seen dancing in a deliberately silly manner, and the clip ends with the text “Okay, so we can’t

97 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03ZYsp9d87E&bpctr=1357242919 (retrieved on 3 Jan 2013).
dance.” But we understand politics”. Nordic Youth has even published a type of blooper clip, entitled “Best of Nordisk Ungdom”, in which they have spliced together clips showing activists falling down and throwing snowballs and confetti; in one scene a small child is heard crying as the Italian fascist Gianluca Iannone from Casa Pound speaks at some small internal meeting with NU. The clip also shows activists throwing snowballs at the windows of an asylum residence for refugee children who arrive alone. Sometimes, the humour also masks a latent threat, as in a clip where NU activists try to distribute toys to the same asylum house residents. This is a house that according to information in the film has been attacked by Nazis (i.e., by NU activists). The attack is said to have included egg throwing. In the clip the president of NU is seen with a contemptuous smile as he tries to give the toys to one of the employees at the asylum house, and in the clip several NU activists are seen guffawing at one of the refugees shown smoking outside the building. This type of film clip is clearly aimed at a younger target group. The clip tries to appeal to potential sympathisers using a simple message (refugee children are not actually children) and simple rhetorical devices. Humour has here become a weapon in the battle to attract new adherents, and also to ridicule political opponents, refugee children, and other subjects and political processes that the group defines itself against.

The news film

On the Party of the Swedes YouTube channel there are a few clips of an amateur journalistic character. The clips bear the name of the SvP online newspaper Realisten and are about events with immigration-related themes. One clip shows an interview with the owner of a guest house that the Swedish Migration Agency would like to use as an asylum residence. In another, some school children are interviewed regarding the unease they have felt now that their municipality (Åmål) has accepted refugee children who arrive alone. The clip shows interviews with young people (both anonymous and identifiable) who report that they feel “threatened”, “disgusted”, and are “afraid” of the refugees. The crux of the news clip is that “some little girls” in Åmål have been “harassed by unaccompanied-arrival refugee children”. In the clip, the activist also tries to interview staff at the

---


100 A blooper shows spliced together film sequences in which something has gone wrong during the videorecording, for example, when someone forgets their lines, or falls over – that is, things that are edited out of the final version.


asylum residence.\textsuperscript{104} One clip concerns a trial “against the immigrants who assaulted Carl-Eric Cedvander in Kortedala Square”. The clip starts with a speaker voice describing the event, after which audio recordings from the trial are combined with the speaker voice. The names of the accused are given on the page on which the clip is published.\textsuperscript{105} The news component is not that prominent in the YouTube material, but it is still relevant as it is a type of video version of the Internet news discussed above. Selecting events on the basis of their own (xenophobic or racist) news assessment and publishing the items as alternative journalism is a well tested tactic of online newspapers such as Nationell.nu and Realisten. The future will tell whether this is a form of publication that will increase in scope.

4.7.4 User interaction and the significance of the YouTube comments

It is difficult to determine what significance the comments under the individual video clips have, both in relation to the YouTube users in general and in relation to those who publish the films. Overall, we perceive three potential socio-political and political/cognitive functions of the comments as a whole.

Firstly, the comments can play the role of providing political confirmation. Many of the entries are positive and encouraging and in this way the comments confirm the videos’ messages and the movements behind them. They produce a form of opinion-based community among users with similar attitudes. Instead of sitting alone and consuming racist content on the Internet, the comments become a form of socialising, allowing the user to feel a sense of connectedness around socially stigmatising expressions and opinions. In the communication with others, the pejorative language is reinforced and the anonymous opinion-based community can contribute to a normalisation of an extremist use of language (cf. McCauley & Moskalenko 2008).

Secondly, the comments invite verbal confrontation, in which invective against those holding opposing views, and explicit racism, are common. In this way, the comments fields come close to the extreme jargon that is common in the comments on the news pages, such as nationell.nu. The explicit racism is concealed, or plays a more dampened role in the actual film clips, but it is freely exhibited in the user comments. Protected by anonymity, visitors here can enter into racist communication with other users without social or legal consequences. There is also a large quantity of comments calling for violence under the video clips – entries with statements like “Shoot the scum

\textsuperscript{104} http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nht1Q6o9oI (retrieved on 4 Jan 2013).

\textsuperscript{105} http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueGemJ4IYy (retrieved on 4 Jan 2013).
in the back of the neck”,106 or “fuckin’ wogs, JUST GET OUT!!! Do the world a favour: Go to a mosque and blow yourself up, goddamn sickening wog, do you understand the whipping you'd get if you tried anything on me, fuckin’ cunt!!”.107 There would really be no point to listing more such examples here; we can simply say that YouTube’s comments field can be quickly filled up with venomous, explicitly racist entries. There is no moderation here to speak of. It is possible to consider the anonymous comments a form of cultural violence (Galtung 1990), that is, linguistic utterances that devalue, dehumanise, threaten or try to create terror in specific subjects (immigrants, leftist activists, politicians, etc.) The linguistic cultural violence gradually normalises structural violence and potentially also physical violence aimed at certain groups in society (cf. Galtung 1990).

Yet another aspect of the verbal confrontation touches upon what is usually referred to as a “flame war” (Askanius 2010:351), of “flaming” (Byam 2010:57), a designation used to describe how Web 2.0 users of diverse (political) opinions use (for example) the comments functions to insult and discredit each other in social media. Flaming is a prominent element of the comments fields in a large number of the right-wing extremist YouTube clips. This also suggests that those with opposite opinions see and comment on the right-wing extremist clips, which in turn shows that we cannot say who we see on the clips, nor why we see them.

Thirdly, the comments function implies, potentially at least, that the movements can come into contact with and communicate with sympathisers. It is likely, however, that the contact interface on YouTube plays a highly limited role in actual recruitment in the right-wing extremist milieu. The most important function, instead, is the movements’ visibility and their socio-political normalisation, which will be discussed in more detail below. On the other hand, we can view the comments function as a key springboard for the development of racist ideas. Since extreme opinions circulate freely, the comments also displace the boundaries of what it is possible to say. Over time, they can develop a normalisation function, and become in this way socially accepted. This normalisation process also implies that extreme language has a desensitising effect on the users and a general discursive normalisation of extreme utterance and opinions have historically shown themselves to be eminently dangerous (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008).

4.7.5 The importance of visibility – video activism and the cognitive praxis of You Tube-clips\textsuperscript{108}

The right-wing extremist groups are well established actors on YouTube, and the organisations’ film clips are mainly well made and politically and strategically well planned. The video clips contains multidimensional expressions, in which visual, audio and textual elements are combined in a strategic manner to achieve a political effect. Almost all of the video material published on the right-wing extremist organisations’ channels is within the boundaries of what if legally acceptable (i.e., there is very little content that could conceivably be classified as incitement to racial hatred, direct calls to engage in acts of violence or acts of terror, etc.). The right-wing extremist milieu’s utilisation of YouTube as a platform for the publication, distribution and circulation of visual material can be considered a strategic adoption of what is usually referred to as video activism (see, for example, Askanius 2010; Aguayo 2011). As shown above, video activism is a prioritised component in the extensive propaganda production of specific groupings within the right-wing extremist milieu. Despite the fact that the video clips do not have enormous audiences (the number of viewings of the total material on the movements’ channels amounts to around one and a half million, and relative to other political clips, this is not that much), there are other aspects of the video activism that are worth investigating further. The clips and their political messages fill other important functions\textsuperscript{109} for the right-wing extremist milieu. The following will focus on three of these.

- The video clips confirm the existence of the right-wing extremist milieu and the groups in that their activities are made visible in the mediated public arena.
- The YouTube videos contribute to a normalisation of the movements’ socio-political character.
- YouTube functions as a political arena unto itself, one to which actions, interviews and other political practices are adapted. Political communication on YouTube shelters a particular form of media logic – a logic with certain concrete characteristics and effects.

The by far the most important function of the right-wing extremist activity on YouTube is related to the feature of visibility. Publishing and distributing film clips gives the right-wing extremist movements and the organisations a place in the mediated public arena. Moreover, it also means the

\textsuperscript{108} “Cognitive praxis” refers to the common ideas and identities formed in the actors in a movement. In scientific research on social movements there are those who contend that a social movement is primarily a cognitive area (characterised by collective learning processes and cognitive praxis), rather than an organisation or group (see, for example, Eyerman & Jamison 1991).

\textsuperscript{109} This refers not only to intentional functions, but also to functions that derive from the specific characteristics of YouTube communication.
audience for the political messages is potentially endless, even if the audience in practice is relatively restricted.110 Publishing material on YouTube also means film clips can be circulated in other Web milieux, in that they can be embedded in or linked to blogs, Web sites, or other information flows on the Web 2.0. In this way, the right-wing extremist organisations potentially reach outside their traditional audience categories. Right-wing extremist material is on many Web platforms in what is usually called the “corporate Internet” (Fuchs 2010) – that is, the part of the Internet that is owned and controlled by commercial actors. It may seem paradoxical that political forces that operate outside established political institutions can benefit from a commercial communication platform such as YouTube.111 Right-wing extremist movements’ political messages include heavy criticism of established media and media companies; however, since YouTube tolerates right-wing extremist material, it is highly useful as a publication and distribution platform.112

For a movement to be publicly visible on the Web means confirmation of its existence. The organisations can display their actions and other selected parts of their activities and this also allows actual members to appear in public. For a conventional political movement, this would not be remarkable, but given the underground or partially underground nature of the right-wing extremist milieu’s activities in, particularly, the 1980s and 1990s, this signals an attitude change among the movements. During the 1980s and 1990s, the right-wing extremist activists were often masked or at least anonymous (cf. Lööw 2000). Participating in a mediated public context means the movements can display a multitude of activities. This means their political activities can be associated with various dimensions of social life.

The other central function of the movements’ film production and distribution encompasses a normalisation of the right-wing milieu. In the clips, we encounter ordinary young men (though almost no women) hiking in the woods, working out, playing games, holding town square meetings, and so on. Granted, some of SMR’s clips showing confrontation, homosocial aggressiveness and

110 Web users tend to form a fairly fragmented audience (see, for example, Wasko & Erickson 2009).
111 YouTube is funded by advertising and since 2006 is owned by Google (Wasko & Erickson 2009).
112 YouTube has fairly extensive publication rules. Videos with pornographic content of videos that contain violence are not permitted under the conditions with which all users must agree to comply. Nor does it permit clips that amount to agitation against others, for reasons of “racial or ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender, age and sexual orientation/LGBTQ identity” (http://www.youtube.com/t/community_guidelines) (retrieved on 2 Jan 2013) It is apparent, however, that the moderation or the interest in upholding the rules and regulations does not work particularly well. Possibly it is sometimes difficult to determine where the boundary should be drawn as regards violent content or incitement to racial hatred, but the main problem is probably maintaining regulations that entail that material with violent or racist content remains in place. It is not particularly difficult to find material that contravenes YouTube’s conditions of use (cf. Andén-Papadopoulos 2009).
latent violence stick out from the rest, but even the SMR material includes socially uncontroversial content. Publishing a significant quantity of clips showing young men having fun in the wilderness and otherwise just interacting together in non-political contexts is a central component of what can be described as a social cleansing process. Thematising camaraderie and a healthy lifestyle above, for example, hate and hedonistic partying is ideologically calculated, and to the observer who is unaware of the context, these clips may appear innocent or even positive. If we instead consider and analyse the wilderness theme in the light of existing knowledge about the right-wing extremist milieu’s political and practical contemporary history, a different picture emerges. Wilderness sites can then be considered as an extension of the paramilitary culture nourished in the right-wing milieu throughout the post-war period. The major difference is the more neutral ideological framing of the exercises that is done in the propaganda material. In the clips showing physical challenges, there is never any indication that the exercises are associated with a commitment to a potentially violent political struggle.

If the first two functions, visibility and normalisation, are also associated with the cognitive dimension of the movements in the right-wing extremist milieu. Not only do they fill an external-communication role, but they also have an internal significance. The visibility and normalisation can be seen as elements of the ongoing socio-political identity process of the movements. They strengthen certain identity markers, such as physical health, masculine homosociality and outdoor life, and they distance themselves at the same time from other possible identity markers. These other markers appear in the films as a projection screen against which the viewers’ own political ethics and self-image is reflected. This marking and distancing is often expressed in a forceful manner, often in aggressive terms, in which the writers speak of political opponents and immigrants as “degenerate scum”, or as “riffraff”. Here, then, the comments fill an important confirming role for the writers’ own social and political identity.

Finally, it is therefore fruitful to consider the right-wing extremist video activism as its own form of combat with specific (media) characteristics. Publishing films that represent the movements’ activities and political patterns of action entails that certain elements of these practices are combined and mediated for propaganda purposes. The video format itself and the particular manner of distribution mean that certain activities (or particular parts of activities) are adapted for publication on YouTube. This becomes clearest in the Nordic Youth video material. NU’ s spectacular actions, in which dressed up activists stage performance-like protests, is well suited to the practice of video activism. By filming spectacular actions and then publishing them as short clips, the time and space limitations of the actions are transgressed. In this way, the mediated actions extend the time and space limitations of the actual action, enabling it to continue to circulate after being carried out. In this
regard, the physical political space is extended at the same time as time is compressed (in that the action can be witnessed at any time, all the time).

So publication on YouTube implies that the political content and aesthetic aspects of the videos interact so as to create ideological effects. The fact that the videos are generally well-produced, featuring deliberate editing, superimposed music, and simple and catchy messages and symbols, contributes to what sociologist Les Back (2002) defines as the aesthetic dimension of racist politics. The video clips embrace a pop culture aesthetic, for which the observer’s emotional register is the primary target. Linking together sequences of images that thematise camaraderie, resistance, the ability to act, and masculinity, and then adding portentous, atmospheric or other suggestive music results in aesthetically coded ideological propaganda. The right-wing extremist milieu’s communications work shows that affective arguments occupy a prominent position, which also corresponds to the organisations’ pronounced political idealism and to other propaganda distributed by the actors in the milieu.

### 4.7.6 Facebook as recruitment platform

The presence of the right-wing extremist milieu on Facebook is not extensive; however, at the same time, several actors are steadily growing on the platform. All organisations, with the exception of the Swedish Resistance Movement, have accounts with some activity, but their activity can nevertheless be considered fairly limited. Two organisations stand out as being more active – the Party of the Swedes, whose page has 2,905 Likes, and Nordic Youth, which has 2,427 Likes (see Table 4.5). During the preparation of this report both organisations increased their Facebook presence and activity level significantly (8 Apr 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Number of Likes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Svenskarnas parti (SvP)</td>
<td>2,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordisk Ungdom (NU)</td>
<td>2,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against Swedophobia – for the protection of the Nordic countries (SvP)</td>
<td>702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Förbundet Nationell Ungdom (FNU)</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordiska nationalsocialister (NNS)</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.5* Facebook popularity of the right-wing extremist organisations (8 Apr 2013).
To illustrate how the organisations’ increased presence also affects their popularity, we can look at the Facebook account of Nordic Youth. Between 21 September and 30 December 2012, the number of Likes rose from 1,293 to 2,097 on NU’s account of the same name. On 26 December, this increase in popularity was stressed in an entry on the page:

Yet another youth federation in our rear-view mirror! Today, we surpassed Green Youth, and Nordic Youth is now larger on Facebook than four of the eight Riksdag parties’ youth federations. The federations now surpassed in popularity by Nordic Youth are Green Youth, LUF, CUF and KDU. 113

Nordic Youth conducts member recruitment with the express goal of recruiting 1,000 members, in order to become eligible for financial support from the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs (Ungdomsstyrelsen). At year-end 2012, the number of members is claimed to be slightly over 700 (30 Dec 2012). NU’s Facebook page is interesting, as some of the organisation’s international collaborations are shown there. The page contains comments and photographs from trips to major right-wing extremist arrangements in Poland (the march on Poland’s national independence day, 11 November) and from two right-wing extremist festivals in Hungary with the names “Festival Boreal” and “Magyar Sziget”. The Hungarian photos include pictures of performances by right-wing extremist singer Saga.114 The majority of the photographs from the festival (23 of 39) depict some form of tournament game involving fighting with Medieval combat weapons such as the axe, crossbow, longbow, and sword. Other photographs show activists participating in meetings. NU describes its visit to the festival in the following manner:

The festivals are expected to attract nationalists, not only from Europe, but also from Japan. It will be filled of interesting speeches, discussions, concerts and different types of demonstrations. We will do our best to provide regular updates containing visual and written reports on what goes on there.115

The NU Facebook page contains links to the official festival pages and on those pages it is clear that Nordic Youth is not only there as a visitor but also participates actively with known and lesser-known neo-fascists and right-wing extremists. For example, NU representative Fredrik Becklin participates in a panel discussion called “European Round Table Discussion Part 1”.116 Also

114 The appearance by a national socialist artist like Saga at an “identitarian” festival shows (as previously discussed) that the distance between the different streams of the right-wing extremist milieu is not particularly great (see also Lundquist 2010:154).
participating in the meeting are Robert Fiore (from the Italian Forza Nuova), and representatives of right-wing extremist organisations in seven other countries (Croatia, Spain, Poland, Norway, France, Belgium and Hungary).117

Nordic Youth’s Facebook page serves as an interactive visual platform for the movement’s activities and as a tool for linking to the organisation’s Web site. The political content of the page is primarily connected with NU’s various actions and to writings on the organisation’s own Web site. There are also comments on contemporary political events, such as “Tintin-gate”,118 but also political comments to traditional holidays such as Christmas and Sweden’s Midsummer celebration. On the page, the organisation’s political profile is described as follows:

Nordic Youth is a nationalist youth organisation that promotes the rights of Scandinavian young people. In our Nordic countries, young people are not discriminated against in the labour market. Drugs, violence and criminality are not a part of the everyday life of our young people. In our Nordic countries, Scandinavians co-operate with each other, regardless of whether they are rich or poor. In our Nordic countries, everyone works together for our people, not for our own personal gain. We try to have the basic attitude that nothing is impossible. We try to see problems as something positive that can be resolved. In Nordic Youth, we are not afraid of taking controversial approaches and trying out new things. We want to serve as a generator of ideas, in which we show that changes are not impossible, not even difficult, to achieve. Improvising, adapting, conquering – that is how we describe our work.119

While NU’s programme declaration indicates, in several ways, the organisation’s position far out on right wing, the political content on the Facebook page is relatively conventional. There are no attacks on society’s constitutional foundation, nor any explicit racism or material that could be considered as falling within the bounds of tolerance of cultural violence or discursive racism (cf. Galtung 1991; Gust 2002; Jiwani, & Richardson 2011). When racist entries appear, they are more subtle. For

117 One of the organisations present is the Spanish Democracia Nacional, which according to its Web site seems to have relations with the Party of the Swedes (http://democracianacional.org/dn/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=4008) (retrieved on 3 Jan 2013). DN belongs to a part of the Spanish extreme right that has tried to shift toward the right-wing populist field (Rodríguez Jiménez 2012:118), the French Renouveau Francais (conservative nationalist catholics), and the more extreme Hungarian HVIM (Bermáth, Mikósi & Mudde 2005:86).

118 Tintin-gate is the name of the media controversy that arose when a supervisor in Stockholm’s Kulturhuset building elected to remove the comic strip volume Tintin in the Congo, claiming that its content was racist. The event attracted a great deal of attention, and the decision to remove the book was subsequently retracted by Kulturhuset management.

example, there is a satellite picture in which large parts of Sweden are white (from snow). The caption says “This is what we fight for!” So the interpretation is that NU fights for Sweden, and that the white snow is a symbol of the ethnically homogenous Sweden.\textsuperscript{120}

An interesting aspect of NU’s programme declaration is the clear management discourse\textsuperscript{121} that characterises the text. The description “Basic attitude” contains several explicit elements of pronounced (neo-liberal) management vocabulary. Phrases such as “(w)e try to see problems as something positive that can be resolved” and “Nordic Youth are not afraid to use controversial methods and try new things. We want to serve as a generator of ideas, in which we show that changes are not impossible, not even difficult, to achieve. Improvising, adapting, conquering”,\textsuperscript{122} are typical examples of how a neo-liberal management discourse influences the rhetoric of a right-wing extremist organisation (cf. Fairclough 2006). In the intersection of right-wing extremist political discourse and neo-liberal management discourse we find a discursive shift toward the radical populist right. Exactly how this programme declaration is reflected in NU’s political sociology is open to discussion.\textsuperscript{123}

The Party of the Swedes also has an active Facebook page. The page appears to have three aims. Firstly, SvP publishes activity reports; secondly, it focuses on and links to articles in the party’s online newspaper \textit{Realisten}; and thirdly, it links to the party’s Web site. The activity-related material on the Facebook page contains various reports from the celebration of “heroes” in the right-wing extremist movement. This includes photographs of the celebration of Charles XII, Gustavus Vasa,\textsuperscript{124} Gösta Hallberg-Cuula,\textsuperscript{125} the Swedish Waffen-SS captain Hans-Gösta Pehrsson and photographs from the celebration in honour of Swedish volunteer soldiers who fought in Finland. In its praise for selected

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{120} https://www.facebook.com/nordicyouth (retrieved on 9 Apr 2013).
\textsuperscript{121} Management discourses are notable in that their use of language is adapted to market relations in which actors such as companies, customers and consumers, are constituted. The use of language in NU’s programme declaration corresponds partly to the forms and stylistic elements of corporate communications.
\textsuperscript{122} http://www.facebook.com/nordicyouth/info (retrieved on 30 Dec 2012).
\textsuperscript{123} Nordic Youth’s Facebook account expresses a certain degree of support for the more traditional faction of the Sweden Democrats, and there are several entries in which NU representative express sympathy for SD’s youth federation, SDU (http://www.facebook.com/nordicyouth, retrieved on 13 Mar 2013).
\textsuperscript{124} Together with Gustavus II Adolphus, Charles XII and Gustavus Vasa are key historical figures for Swedish neo-fascism (Lööw 2000:407).
\textsuperscript{125} Throughout the post-war period, Hallberg-Cuula has been a central figure among the right-wing extremist milieu’s martyrs. Hallberg-Cuula was a party functionary in the Lindholm movement, and died as a volunteer on the Finnish side of the Finnish Continuation War (Lööw 2000:439ff).
“heroes”, the Party of the Swedes also places itself in a long political tradition in Swedish post-war fascism. Here, the Party of the Swedes appears not as a reformed nationalist party but rather as part of a historical continuum starting with the post-war period in Swedish fascism (represented primarily by Engdahl’s New Swedish Movement and by Göran and Vera Oredssons’ Nordic Reich Party), in which Swedish kings and national socialist martyrs (such as Hallberg-Cuula and Pehrsson) had a prominent symbolic significance (cf. Lööw 2000). The open accolades for the Swedish Waffen-SS volunteers also show that the party’s reformation (from expressly national socialist to nationalistic) is primarily cosmetic and tactical, which confirms the assessment of the Swedish Security Service.

The activity reports concern the party’s political campaigns, demonstrations and actions. The majority of the reports concern immigration or immigration-related issues, and SvP’s framing of them reflects the typical right-wing extremist discourse. There is a description of the party’s campaign *Mot svenskfientlighet – till värn för Norden* (“Against anti-Swedish hostility – for the defence of the Nordic countries”), a campaign that also has an associated Facebook page (with 702 Likes). The concept of “anti-Swedish” is a common expression in right-wing extremist circles and became nationally known in conjunction with the much talked-about film scandal in which SD Riksdag member Erik Almqvist was forced to resign. On its Facebook page, SvP also highlights politicians who have left the Sweden Democrats to join the party, and the names of other well-known individuals in right-wing extremist circles who have also joined. Publishing these names gives the impression of a growing party.

In addition to the SvP page “Against anti-Swedish hostility...” referred to above, an additional campaign page can be tied to the right-wing extremist milieu. The page has the name *Nätverket Stoppa pedofilerna* (“Stop the Paedophiles Network”) and was started by a well-known profile in right-wing extremist circles (the creator is currently a member of the Party of the Swedes). The page contains no indication, however, that the “Network” might have any link to the right-wing extremist milieu. Instead, it presents itself as a non-profit organisation. The Network’s Facebook page contains the following text:

---


127 http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mot-svenskfientlighet-till-v%C3%A4rnf%C3%B6rNorden/145238075574304 (retrieved on 8 Apr 2013).

128 Erik Almqvist was filmed by his Riksdag colleague Kent Ekeroth uttering racist and sexist invective during a fight with a known Swedish comedian. At that time, Almqvist used the term “anti-Swedish”.

121
“The Stop the Paedophiles network is run on a non-profit basis with the aim of influencing public debate and by extension achieving a number of legislative changes[…] The network’s vision is a society in which it is the victims who are our highest priority, rather than the perpetrators. The network envisions a society in which children can be safe from sexual abuse, a society in which the state takes its responsibility and does its utmost to inform the public. The network uses several social media to disseminate its message, as well as direct actions such as distributing flyers. The network constantly seeks people who would like to work for the network, so do not hesitate to contact us if you have something you can contribute with. Examples of tasks are: Distributing flyers, spreading information on the Web site, requesting judgements from courts, Internet research.\(^{129}\)

The page is popular, and has garnered a total of 14,462 Likes (1 Apr 2013). The page functions as a public-shaming Web site, in which the names and (sometimes) the photos of convicted and suspected paedophiles are published. Whether the page functions as a recruitment site within the right-wing extremist milieu is difficult to say. The page contains links to the Party of the Swedes online newspaper Realisten (there are also links to more conventional news media). Much, however, suggests that the “Stop the Paedophiles Network” is purely a Web phenomenon – that is, it mobilises no activity outside the Internet. On the other hand, the Facebook page functions as a more innocent linkage into the right-wing extremist Web milieu, particularly as it gives the impression that it is the movements in the right-wing extremist milieu that take the problem of paedophilia and sexual abuse of children seriously. Paedophilia is a useful theme around which to build political affect, as it is a decidedly abhorred phenomenon in society.

4.8 Comments and conclusions

The Swedish right-wing extremist Internet milieu is extensive and well-visited – that is the first and the most general conclusion that can be drawn from the investigation presented. This conclusion also corresponds to the results of earlier Swedish research on right-wing extremism (see Lööw 2000, for a report on the racial-ideology milieu’s propaganda up to the millennial shift), to the results of contemporary research contributions (Lundquist 2010; Wåg 2010), and to the results of the continuous examination of the right-wing extremist field that investigative actors have contributed (see, for example, Expo 2012a). There seems to be a continuity in the right-wing extremist milieu regarding the prioritisation of alternative media production and media distribution. It is also clear that

\(^{129}\) https://www.facebook.com/Natverket (retrieved on 1 Apr 2013).
the players have developed communication strategies. Seen in an international perspective, the
Swedish right-wing extremist Web milieu would seem to be at the forefront in terms of its level of
activity, professionalism, scope and penetration on the Internet and in social media (cf. Caiani, della
Porta, & Wagemann 2012; Whine 2012). That being said, at the same time we should be careful not
to be too quick to draw conclusions as to the significance of the right-wing extremist actors’ presence
on the Web and in social media. Let us first consider a few general and brief conclusions that can be
drawn on the basis of the analysis of the right-wing extremist Internet landscape.

The Web milieu is extensive and multifaceted. The right-wing extremist actors employ many
different publication forms and platforms, as well as multifaceted content. They have taken great
advantage of development in information and communication technology. That is apparent in the
production, circulation and distribution of their political propaganda material. The milieu is extensive,
in terms of the numbers of sites and platforms that derive from the most prominent actors, as well as
the scope and depth of the individual sites. There is ongoing intensive production of political and
ideological material in the right-wing extremist Web milieu.

The Web milieu is fast, well-developed and current. Several of the platforms and Web sites
analysed are characterised by rapid updating and high reflexivity to events, processes and
circumstances in the surrounding (media) society. This implies, for example, that they are quick to
pick up news that can be exploited in political propaganda, and to jump onto topics in current public
debate, and that they continuously analyse development in the surrounding society. The right-wing
extremist production is very well-developed, which leaves an imprint on both the graphic
characteristics of the material and in its content. This is particularly evident in the visually designed
propaganda.

News production as a traffic-generating factor. The quantitative impact of the right-wing
extremist Web milieu – that is, the proportion of data traffic (visits) to the various Web sites, is
probably due to the regular news production that several actors prioritise. All of the three most
visited Web sites have daily news publication that consists largely of re-mediated and re-
contextualised Internet news. This news is angled to reflect right-wing extremist news evaluation and
injected with racist language. The texts are often aimed at individuals, and there is continuous public
shaming of (public) figures. The public-shaming journalism is also relatively unique for the right-wing
extremist news production – that is, public shaming is something that traditional commercial media
usually avoid. News production also enables direct contact with right-wing extremist actors: both
representatives of the various movements and general visitors are highly active commentators on the
news pages.
Right-wing extremist video activism as visual front line. Several right-wing extremist actors have extensive channels on the commercial video-sharing service that is YouTube. The YouTube channels constitute dynamic platforms for the publication, circulation and distribution of visual propaganda. The five movements on which the analysis focused have published over 220 film clips that have been viewed slightly fewer than 1,500,000 times. The film material is consistently well done and is designed primarily to mobilised the public by stimulating affect – the video material is thus a form of mediated emotional politics (it contains rational political rhetoric to a lesser degree).

Facebook as recruitment platform? Right-wing actors’ impact on the social network platform Facebook is fairly limited. At the same time, their presence there is steadily growing. Some of the organisations are established and active; however, openness and the possibility of identifying adherents has probably stood in the way of a major impact. There are, however, signs that some actors are increasingly utilising Facebook, with success, partly for recruitment purposes and partly to showcase their political activity and to link into the movements’ other Web milieus.

Significance of the Web milieu for the movements’ cognitive aspects A key characteristic of right-wing extremist Internet communication is its internal function. The general confirmation of the movements’ political practices (and the political content) that is expressed by activists and sympathisers, and the interaction (between users) that arises around activity reports, news provision, in forum discussion, etc., are significant components of political identity-creation. Shared racist opinion is produced and reinforced in the comments fields and in social media (cf. Statzel 2008; Welks 2010), and in the interactive communication, the violent tendencies of the right-wing extremist milieu are given concrete illustration.

4.8.1 Characteristics of right-wing extremist communication and its recruitment potential

Against the background of the qualitative analysis, it is also possible to draw some more specific conclusions on the basis of the content and the formal characteristics of the material. Here, we discuss the character traits of the right-wing extremist material in relation to various societal, political and cultural contexts. The purpose is to understand the recruitment potential of the material, and how it relates to the study’s general points of departure – how the right-wing extremist Web milieu can be viewed on the basis of its relationship to the democratic form of governance and to political violence. The present section deals with aspects of socio-political normalisation (the visual decontamination of the right-wing extremist milieu), masculinity, homosexuality, identity and community, as well as the significance of political violence for the milieu. Given the background of this discussion, the identified radicalisation mechanisms will also be critically examined.
The right-wing extremist Internet milieu is held together by a number of common and related messages. Certain of these messages are self-evident and obvious (for example, the explicit racism); others are perhaps more unexpected (such as animal rights, for example). If we try to construct a cohesive picture of the milieu, some consistently recurring themes appear, all of which are framed in a racist and nationalist discourse. In simple terms, these themes can be grouped in four general subject areas: (1) immigrants and immigration, (2) the established political system and its actors, (3) mainstream journalism and the “politically correct” social climate, and (4) social problems.

The right-wing Web material provides extremely simplified solutions to different types of societal problems, which in turn are attributed to multiculturalism, immigrants, politicians, journalists and the established news producers, etc. By describing society through a racist filter, a number of factors that also point to the recruitment potential of the material become clear. The right-wing extremist actors offer supposed solutions to real social and economic problems – that is, they relate to current events, processes and decisions that reflect current societal development, such as violent crime, unemployment and deteriorating social conditions. This is a classic populist strategy (cf. Eatwell 2004; Rydgren 2010; 2005). The right-wing extremist messages contain a recurrent claim that the movements merely reflect vox populi, that is, that they express a (silenced and oppressed) popular will. Through emotionally charged propaganda, a framework is constructed of emotional elements that appeal to the public’s (the potential sympathisers/activists) personal experience of social conditions.

---

130 These four overall themes do not cover everything published and communicated with the right-wing extremist Web milieu, but they correspond to the overwhelming majority of the analysed material.

131 One interesting detail is that there is very little criticism of the prevailing economic system, at least in comparison with the dominant individual, cultural and political explanatory frameworks that inform the messages. When there is criticism expressed in economic terms, it is primarily a matter of anti-Semitic statements about Jewish bankers, or of a faceless global Jewish capital. In the right-wing extremist discourse it would seem the only demand is that the economic power should lie with “the Swedes”. In the analyses of Nordfront and of SvP’s Web pages, there is very little about the group’s views regarding the economic system. From SvP, we learn that they “strive to nationalise the Swedish economy so as to guarantee Sweden’s sovereignty” and that “a more independent economy must be supported and, simultaneously, Swedish private enterprise must be actively encouraged, so as to strengthen Sweden and to reduce, as far as possible, international influence on the Swedish economy”. SMR displays a text about the organisation’s leading figure, who states that there may be reasons to limit the concentration of capital. “An important element in establishing true government by the people is to limit the possibilities for very rich families to establish themselves at other people’s expense. Some wealth with of course be permitted – we are not communists – but some form of legislation will apply when private companies, individuals or families amass too much capital”. So, when the topic of economic governance is finally broached, the movements appear to advocate a sort of nationalistic capitalism (SvP) or a national-socialistic capitalism (SMR). [http://www.svenskarnasparti.se/2012/09/25/svp-stodjer-kritik-mot-imf-och-varldsbanken/ and http://www.svenskarnasparti.se/vidareutveckling-av-de-politiska-punktarna/ & http://www.nordfront.se/framtidens-styrelser, all retrieved on 12 Mar 2013].
The Web milieu analysed reveals the visual transformation of the right-wing extremist field, from violence-worshiping masked activists and drunken hordes of skinheads, to a normalisation of the activist. In several ways, the right-wing extremist Internet milieu constitutes the movements’ outward face to the public. This also implies that major efforts have been devoted to erasing the earlier (established) image of the racial-ideology milieu as socially, politically and visually extreme. This transformation is not new; rather, it has been under way for a considerable period (cf. Wåg 2010; Lundquist 2010), but it has become clearly visible in the material that the movements choose to communicate to the public. Normalising the milieu also amounts to a concrete way of adapting to the forms of communication available through the Internet and social media. With the contact interfaces becoming more numerous, easily accessible and interactive, it is important that the encounter with potential sympathisers is not characterised by distancing, but rather by possibilities for identification through common points of reference. For this reason the right-wing extremist Web milieu typically shows obvious visual cleansing – that is, all signs and attributes that could be associated with a more vulgar romanticising of national-socialist contexts are gone or are at least not particularly prominent (an exception here being Nordfront, however). At the same time, there is a major discrepancy between the material produced by right-wing extremist actors and the statements and the communication in the comments fields and discussion forums.

The visual decontamination indicates not only that the movements are aware of the importance of the look of their communications, but also that they are trying to distance themselves from the sub-cultural attributes and identity markers that characterised the right-wing extremist milieu in the 1990s and 1990s. This is also explicitly expressed by the prominent actors in the right-wing extremist milieu. The development must also be understood in relation to the general “popularisation” that has characterised the right-wing extremist field for a significant period. Throughout Europe, parties that previous operated under extremely marginalised conditions are now members of decision-making bodies, and sometimes even hold clear positions of power.

132 By visually extreme, we mean images of masked neo-Nazis posing with automatic weapons, or images of half-naked skinheads in full-out duel at White Power concerts (see, for example, Lööw 2000, for examples of this type of visual presentation).


134 Certainly, the parties sometimes have new names and can build on new constellations of actors, but they often have a legacy from, or have grown out of, a European post-war fascism. In Sweden, the Sweden Democrats are an example of such a party (cf. Demker 2012).
4.8.2 Masculine community

Michael Kimmel’s (2007) sociological research of defected Swedish neo-Nazis shows that in several ways the activism in the right-wing extremist milieu constitutes a masculine rite of passage. In this rite of passage the masculine community is also more significant for the proponents’ involvement than are the ideology and the political messages. Group identities, in which strong masculine ideals are formed, are the main reason for the pro-violence behaviour of Kimmel’s informants. Even though the right-wing extremist milieu has changed since Kimmel completed his study, it would seem to be of central importance to analyse the right-wing extremist Web milieu from a perspective that focuses on the presence of masculinity, particularly on account of the character of the analysed Web material. The right-wing extremist Web milieu contains a significant quantity of material that visually and textually represents manly community and a manly pro-violence attitude. Masculine ideals are also expressed in ideological texts in which gender-based biologism meets an extreme form of political idealism. But the masculine elements that should have the greatest significance for the users’ identification and identity formation are found in the examples of violent meting out of justice that occur in both propaganda films and texts. Stories about individual and social vulnerability (such as in material involving “immigrants” violence against Swedes) produce a form of victimisation (see further, below). Against this victim position, the masculine violence appears as a principled, rational reaction. The right-wing extremist Web milieu offers a (latently violent) male community, in which injustices and vulnerability can not only be avoided but also actively stopped.

In the analysed material, then, tolerance for and promotion of violence are linked to how the different forms of struggle have adapted to specific situations. Violence or the threat of violence often appears in videotaped confrontations with the police or with political opponents, and illustrates heightened violent behaviour in groups. In that respect there are similarities with other forms of masculine violence, such as violence among football hooligans, or other forms of street violence in groups. The political dimension of the violence in these situations is largely a matter of explanatory framework for the events (both internally and in propaganda material), but is also an end in itself. A large part of the videotaped confrontations appear to the observer to be unnecessary, or at least such that they could have been avoided. It is apparent that certain actors in the right-wing extremist milieu view the violence, both the latent violence and the explicit violence, as a central part of the organisations’ action repertoire. The use of violence can then be justified through a rhetoric that stresses self-defence (against anti-racists, “reds”, etc.), or as a defence of one’s own people. The point is that the use of violence, regardless of how it is explained or framed in the right-wing extremist propaganda, can be viewed as a product of homosocial practices that in turn form and are formed by
group identities (cf. Kimmel 2007). The masculine promotion of violence can also be understood on the basis of the figures of thought of fascist ideology. In fascist ideology, violence and the masculine chauvinism are central components of a “mythical worship of hardness” (Moore 1966/2004:266).

4.8.3 Radicalisation tendencies

It is difficult to say with any certainty whether the reception of right-wing extremist Internet material and the communication in right-wing extremist Web milieus can contribute to the radicalisation of individual users. In the report, we have seen some tendencies as to how interaction on the Internet triggers and accelerates violent use of language. In comments fields and discussion threads on social forums, pro-violence communication among users appears in the (open) right-wing extremist Web milieu. In several observed cases, we have been able to see how behaviours are affected in a spiral of cultural (linguistic) violence. Under cover of anonymity, users incite each other and their use of language becomes successfully more brutal. At times, the interactive communication spills over into hateful calls to engage in extreme violence, for example, detailed descriptions of how to kill people whom one believes deserve to be killed. At the same time, it is difficult to draw unambiguous conclusions as to how a brutalised use of language, that dehumanises immigrants and political opponents, should be understood. A reasonable conclusion would be that such tendencies, when combined with other factors, help create a general tolerance of the use of violence in the right-wing extremist milieu and, in more extreme cases, provide the support and lay the groundwork for the actual violence that occurs within the race ideology milieu.

If we consider the mechanisms of radicalisation that are in various ways are involved and (at times) explicitly thematised in the right-wing extremist Web material, we obtain a picture of individual, social and social psychological elements that the right-wing extremist Web material utilises in its propaganda aspect. A recurring reference to the mechanisms of radicalisation is the various forms of personal and collective victimisation (cf. McCauley & Moskalenko 2008). Right-wing extremist propaganda projects victimisation (towards the observer) by highlighting and presenting individual events and individuals as victims (rape victims, assault victims, etc.), or by presenting its own movement as a victim of unjust suppression of opinion and state-sanctioned persecution. In relation to the personal and collective victimisation, potential identification markers are created – markers that may correspond to the users’ own experience. An individual experience of, for example, violence carried out by someone (or some group) that is identified on the basis of the right-wing extremist categories Swedes and non-Swedes, is exploited on an emotional level by right-wing extremist senders. In this way, actual experiences of injustice or vulnerability (violent or not) are transformed into a radicalisation of individuals in, or potential recruitment to, the right-wing extremist milieu.
The material also contains several examples that relate to the mechanism of radicalisation that is *group radicalisation*. Based on a collective victimisation, the right-wing extremist movements (particularly SMR) present themselves as victims of unjust persecution, that in turn creates social stigmatisation. In the material that contains confrontations with representatives of public institutions, there are several tendencies toward what McCauley & Moskalenko (2008) define as *radicalisation under threat*. Verbal and physical confrontations with police and security personnel appear in the intersection between messages that romanticise the struggle and strength of the sender’s own movement and stress the unjust oppression exerted by public institutions. This type of material can function as radicalising representations on already active individuals and on politically committed sympathisers. Given that much of the right-wing extremist Web material is utilised by activists and sympathisers who already share attitudes, views and political perspectives (as the user interactivity at least suggests), the content reinforces already established ideas about the users’ own movement and in relation to public institutions. So the social and political marginalisation that people in the racial-ideology movement experience can be reduced through the expression of forms of representation and frameworks of action based on personal and shared experiences communicated in the right-wing extremist Web milieu (cf. Statzel 2008). For example, individual experiences of problems in their encounters with the police, with government agencies, school personnel, etc., are confirmed by other activists (users) with similar experiences. This creates shared basic premises for political expression and political action.

In the analysed material, we also find references to ideologically informed *martyrdom*. Martyrdom appears (at least implicitly) in the descriptions of activists who have received prison sentences or have been indicted and have been the subject of court proceedings. Persons who have “been put through such experiences” become symbols for the collective support of the group, and they serve as a projection screen for comments expressing group cohesion and loyalty to the organisation and to the struggle. In social psychological terrorism research, martyrdom is considered to be a prominent mechanism of radicalisation to the use of violence (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008). Usually, however, this refers only to martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the struggle. Activists who have received prison sentences express a milder version of the same phenomenon: they become symbols of sacrifice and loyalty to the struggle. It is no doubt advisable to view the martyrdom with a certain distance; better to consider activists whose prison sentences and indictments are represented in the Web material as “witnesses” to society’s injustice, against which the movement seeks to mobilise force. Accordingly, elements of radicalisation appear in the fact that activists and sympathisers share and express the view that the group’s members are subjected to persecution, which in turn helps foster an opinion-based community strengthened by the idea that the group operates under *external pressure* (cf. McCauley & Moskalenko 2008; Caiani & Parenti 2009).
The various aspects of the represented mechanisms of radicalisation should be viewed primarily as recruitment mechanisms, and secondarily as expressions of radicalisation. The two aspects are interlinked, however, as radicalisation is a process that does not necessarily begin in the concrete use of violence or even in the promotion of violence, but rather in socio-political radicalisation and, more specifically for the right-wing extremist milieu, in cultural tolerance of violence (particularly expressions in racism and the dehumanisation of others). At the same time, earlier research shows (see, for example, Kimmel 2007) that violence and male homosociality (masculine community) are central incentives to individuals’ approaches to the racial-ideology milieu.
Abbreviations

ANC: African National Congress

BBS: Bulletin Board System

DN: Democracia National

FNU: Förbundet Nationell Ungdom

HVIM: Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom

NDU: Nationaldemokratisk Ungdom

NNS: Nordiska Nationalsocialister

NPD: Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands

NSDAP: Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei

NSF: Nationalsocialistisk front

NU: Nordisk Ungdom

RKU Revolutionär Kommunistisk Ungdom

SDU: Sverigedemokratisk Ungdom

SMR: Svenska Motståndsrörelsen

SvP: Svenskarnas Parti
5. Pro-violence and anti-democratic left autonomist messages on the Internet

Linus Andersson

5.1 Introduction, purpose, and starting points
The Swedish Media Council has been tasked with describing the occurrence of anti-democratic messages on the Internet and social media aimed at youth, encouraging violence for a political or ideological cause, and how the Internet is used by organisations, movements, and networks for the purpose of influencing and spreading an anti-democratic message. This sub-report analyses the occurrence of such messages within the autonomist left milieu in Sweden. “Autonomist”, which means independent or self-governing, is usually used as a denomination for groupings on the extreme left that are not tied to any organisation. It should be emphasized, however, that in this report it is not a question of charting the extra-parliamentary left milieu as a whole. This is a broad, multifaceted movement that for the most part distances itself from violence as a political method. The focus for this study lies solely on such messages that advocate, glorify, or encourage violence for a political cause.

During the post-war period, extra-parliamentary left movements and alternative politics in Sweden were long associated with non-violence, in contrast to their counterparts in other parts of Europe (Peterson 2001). It therefore came as somewhat of a surprise when militant anti-fascism and animal rights activism became widespread in the 1990s. The networks in Sweden associated with the pro-violence autonomist movement have a history stretching back to the anarchist milieux of the 1980s, but it was primarily in connection with the disturbances around the 2001 EU summit in Gothenburg, where three activists were shot by the police and many of the (often young) demonstrators were sentenced to harsh punishments for their participation, that the autonomist groups were noticed in the media (for a summary, see Wijk 2003).

In its political meaning, the concept of autonomist has its origins in the labour conflicts in Italy in the 1960s, where industrial workers initiated actions outside the unions to conduct a more direct struggle against employers and capital (Katsiaficas 2006, Chap. 2). The concept refers to political activity that takes place outside the framework of organised forms of left politics (labour unions, political parties). A delimitation is usually made against the two forms of left politics that dominated during the 1900s – social democracy and Leninism – and against more traditional organisations and parties on the
extreme left (the so called “alphabet left”) – that is, groups that were regarded as a threat in the 1960s and 1970s and which were the subjects of comprehensive surveillance from counter-intelligence services (SOU 2002:91). The Security Service use the denomination “the autonomist milieu” as an umbrella term for individuals and groups within the extra-parliamentary left who, unlike the majority of the extra-parliamentary left, do not distance themselves from violence as a political means.

Existing subsidiary studies aim at analysing how this attitude towards political violence finds expression on the Internet and social media, with respect to communication directed outwards in the form of propaganda and recruitment material. Since the task has been formulated with particular focus on messages aimed at youth, the study has primarily taken recruitment potential in the material into consideration – that is, material that through its appeal and design intends to introduce young people into the milieu and attract sympathisers. This means that the material dealt with is only that which has been published in open forums and which is available to the general public.

In contrast to groups that are opponents of democratic values and practice on principle (both these values find expression in existing systems and as fundamental governance), the form of the radical left which the autonomist groups can be said to be part of is critical of a liberal/constitutional praxis in democracy, but is not anti-democratic on principle. They do not distance themselves from democratic values in general terms of fundamental civil rights (cf. March & Mudde 2005:24). The concept of “anti-democratic” as it occurs in this task is thereby problematic in this context, but in the framework of this subsidiary study it has be interpreted as comprising activities that attempt, with violence, to prevent others from exercising their freedoms of speech and assembly. This also includes activities, for example when it comes to militant anti-fascism, that are often justified through that they intend to defend democracy from anti-democratic forces. The concept must be understood as a question of the means with which the political activity is pursued rather than an expression of an ideological standpoint.

In accordance with the definitions of violence that are found in the introduction to this report, material that encourages, defends, excuses or in some other way manifests political acts of violence in a Swedish political context are meant here. Both messages that are expressions of cultural violence (e.g. in the form of the use of deprecatory language) and descriptions or messages that refer to direct violence belong here. Extra-parliamentary methods that advocate non-violence (e.g. actions that comprise civil disobedience) are not covered by this definition.

Further, the study sets up a communications perspective and is limited to only observing pro-violence, anti-democratic messages that occur in the autonomist milieu on the Internet. This means
that the investigation will only touch tangentially on specific organisations or networks; its ambition is not to chart which people are included in them, the ideologies they represent, or the activities they pursue. The question is formulated as follows:

- How is the Internet and social media used in the milieu?
- How are the pro-violence messages formulated?
- What does the message look like, as regards to aesthetics and appeal?
- Which mechanisms for radicalisation do the messages refer to?

5.2 Outline and methodological delimitations

This study is primarily interested in the autonomist milieu in Sweden. The material and milieu as such, however, are difficult to demarcate so as only to apply to Swedish conditions for two reasons. Firstly, socialist ideology is characterised by a tradition of internationalism. It is argued that conflict lines in modern society do not run between nations, races, religions or cultures, but between capital and labour. Secondly, the Internet is a transnational network whose forms of communication are only limited geographically (or, rather, linguistically) by way of exception. All in all, it can consequently be assumed that the autonomist milieu with which Swedish youth come in contact on the Internet is not limited to the Web sites that are written in Swedish and deal with Swedish groups or actions, but that have a view towards activity in the rest of Europe. For example, there are also reports from demonstrations and other events around Europe on Swedish web sites, as is material that aims at mobilizing for demonstrations and manifestations abroad.

An assumption like this means that the potential material for this study could be quite large and difficult to understand. This study has therefore been limited to apply to material produced by Swedish groupings or which depict events in Sweden. There has also been an attempt at a delimitation in time. Much of the material published on the internet remains there long after its original topicality, which is quite clear when it comes to videos published on YouTube. A delimitation was therefore set to cover only activity from the past ten years.

It is difficult to comment on the nature of the milieu owing to the lack of formal organising among the groupings within it. This elusive structure is reflected in the milieu on the Internet, which can have consequences for the validity of the study – that is, the measure of the extent to which one studies what one intends to study. The strategy, in that respect, has been to be careful in describing material as representative for a uniform milieu. The choice of a qualitative approach in processing the material was a consequence of this, where a description and a deeper understanding of what types of messages that exist have been given priority over ambitions to quantify. Nor is it possible to exclude
the existence of additional web sites that can be traced to the milieu but which are not covered by the study. The aim, however, has been to focus on representatives that can provide considerable theoretical insight on the nature of the milieu on the Internet and, in cases where several examples could be brought up, they can be subordinated to the categories indicated. As regards reliability, which refers to the authenticity of the results, the principle has been to aim for the greatest transparency possible in delimiting and categorising the material. The material included in the investigation must be easily accessible and open, not limited to closed networks or web sites that require membership.

The subsidiary study consists of five parts. The first part provides a clear, general description of the milieu and reports on prior research into autonomist milieux. Three empirical sections follow. The first of these consists of a clear explanation of the milieu on the Internet: what web sites there are, what type of material they contain and an estimate of their popularity. This is followed by an empirical section that studies the web presence of three specifically named networks/action names whose activities are linked to the autonomist milieu. The third empirical section builds on an analysis of material published on YouTube, and focuses on aesthetics and appeals in the video material produced in connection with the autonomist milieu, as well as what types of messages are found in this material. The concluding section summarizes and discusses conclusions in relation to the task and purpose of the study.

5.3 Who are the autonomists?

The definition of autonomist used in this study does not refer primarily to a specific political ideology, but is to be regarded as an approach to political activity. This approach advises a concentration on extra-parliamentary activity and direct action. The anthology *I stundens hetta* (In the Heat of the Moment, Wåg 2011) is one of the few books in Swedish on the autonomist milieu; it provides insight into the theoretical perspectives of the milieu as it gathers together texts from different parts of the movement – both in Sweden and abroad – published over a twenty-year period between 1991 and 2011. The title is suggestive, as is the book’s foreword, which tries to place the autonomist movement in a historically social conflict perspective. The emphasis on ongoing struggle is essential to understanding how an internal discussion develops in a direction that legitimizes violence as a political method. The book’s contribution deals with finding the tools to conduct resistance against a societal development where, as seen from a left perspective, everything is interrelated: unemployment and the financial crisis, housing shortages and racism, EU border policy and persecution of minorities. The situation is acute; an extreme situation sometimes requires extreme measures. It’s worth noting that the majority of these texts are authored by a collective, and
not by individual authorities, which can be said to be significant for this milieu: there is no official strong leader or interpreter of “the true doctrine”. Moreover, the foreword describes how political activism in the 1990s was formed around single-issue movements and campaigns, associated with what was called the “New Left” or new social movements: “feminism, environmental struggles, anti-racism, queer/LGBT and animal rights. The autonomists were, in practice, the militant wing of these social movements” (Wåg 2011:11). In this context, militant is not necessarily synonymous with being inclined to violence – internationally, the concept exists to describe strong conviction with emphasis on activism, and an ambition to discuss methods of struggle also deals largely with problematising and evaluating the role of violence. There are, however, those who state that it is exactly the relation to violence that distinguishes the autonomist left: “What differentiates the autonomists from the rest of the left, however, was that they did not distance themselves from violence as a political method in Sweden” (Pinto 2009:9).

The autonomist milieu is frequently described as a loosely coherent “scene” that is not built on formal organising. In a report (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009:44 ff.), the Swedish National Intelligence Service and the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) described the autonomist milieu in the terms of three types of organisational forms: networks, campaigns, and action names. Networks have no central leadership and are composed of more or less self-governing groups; campaigns are temporary projects that mobilise groups or individuals around a certain issue or event; and action names can be used by groups or individuals without any official platform – anyone who shares the basic ideology can make use of the action name. The report mentioned above also points out a number of networks, campaigns and action names as active within the autonomist milieu in Sweden: Antifascistisk aktion (AFA), Revolutionära fronten (RF), Osynliga partiet, Reclaim the Streets (RTS), Global intifada, Djurens befrielsefront (DBF). These entities also recur in journalistic reviews of the left autonomist milieu (Lodenius 2006; Sandelin 2007). Since the purpose of this study is to investigate the occurrence on the Internet and social media of pro-violence messages, these entities are of interest only to the extent that they have an active presence on the Internet where such messages find expression. Since campaigns, above all, are a temporary and transient phenomenon, a list like the one above would quickly be out of date; it could be more justifiable to speak about central perspectives rather than the entities within the milieu.

5.3.1 What do autonomists want?

The following attempt at drawing a framework narrative for the autonomist milieu should not be understood as a thorough summary of the autonomist view of the world. It is impossible to claim that all autonomists are covered by the same framework narrative, but it is intended to be read as a generalised construction of some of the more widespread idea forms within the violent sections of
the milieu. Even if ideological questions are not on the whole of interest for this study, it can be of assistance to sketch a few outlines in the political context where pro-violence messages become meaningful, and to describe the interpretation of democracy that occurs in this milieu. The autonomist milieu is comprised of a libertarian socialist or anarchist perspective. This means, among other things, that it is primarily the capitalist system that is described as the fundamental cause of social problems and conflicts. This analysis is shared with the socialist tradition, but the autonomist perspective distinguishes itself by taking a critical attitude towards the state and not distancing itself from illegal or violent methods. It can be said that the independence that is meant by the term “autonomist” involves being able to act on one’s own without having to consider a party line or agreements made in other traditional decision-making structures.

Since constitutional democracy in its bourgeois or liberal form is not considered to constitute any real possibility for challenging the capitalist system but is rather aligned with it, the state is regarded from this perspective as a part of this destructive structure. Here, the analysis of structural violence as an important component in explaining why they do not distance themselves from violence as a political method, in contrast to large parts of the extra-parliamentary left. Structural violence finds its expression in the form of discrimination of minorities or exploitation of the working class. Cultural violence, as it is expressed in the form of racism and sexism, is also objected to. From this, it follows that common cause is to be made with subordinate groups: the working class, youth, “immigrant and working-class youth”, LGBTQ persons, “immigrants”, undocumented refugees, prison inmates, and in certain cases animals as well. Based on this perspective, fascism is interpreted as a populist tendency that is the product of bourgeois society – a tendency that exploits the feelings of marginalisation and subordination, and provides seemingly simple solutions to the problems caused by class society. The adversary met on the streets in the form of the organised extreme right is seen as a product of capitalism, not a political movement.

The analysis of structural violence also has significance for how the police are perceived and portrayed within the milieu. The police are the final outpost of the repressive state, where structural violence becomes direct violence. They obstruct attempts to challenge or question the prevailing order at the same time as they defend and protect the elements that want to limit basic democratic freedoms and rights (fascists and neo-Nazis). Uniformed police are also described as permeated with racist and sexist attitudes.

In contrast to the milieux of race ideology and jihad, there is no historical golden age for autonomists to refer to. Even if ideas of a classless society occur within the framework narrative, and socialism stands out as an ultimate political goal, there is nothing that is described as a utopian state. Rather,
the classless socialist society is described as the only possible solution to the social problems that capitalism causes. The theoretical superstructure for the milieu can be found in anarchist and Marxist theory. There is, however, no distinct “holy” texts to relate to; instead they refer to analyses and documentation from a fairly large anti-capitalist canon. This pluralism can also be found in organisation and leadership style. The networks mentioned in the subsidiary study consist of local groups that are self-organising. There is no explicit leading character or person who formally represents the network in official contexts. This contributes further to the difficulty in outlining a unified framework narrative. Autonomism does not only mean the relationship to power, but also the relationship to orthodoxy. There are no dictates to any great extent as to how others should act, other than that autonomists wish to be left to conduct their activities in peace.

The strategy for answering the destructive societal structure that they argue capitalism creates falls first and foremost into two approaches: the counter-culture with an emphasis on lifestyle, which tries to create and maintain a life in alternative institutions that function and operate outside or alongside of established society (e.g. temporary autonomous zones such as social centres and squats135), and the extra-parliamentary social movement that seeks broader alliances in order to influence and change society. Based on the tense relationship between the lifestyle counter-culture and the social movement, the attitude towards parliamentarism can also be understood in two ways: the counter-culture perspective represents a type of antiparliamentary attitude where action is directed towards creating, maintaining, and defending free zones where the parliamentary order is not regarded as having any legitimacy. The social movement perspective represents a view that does not necessarily repudiate the parliamentary process but emphasises its inertia and shortcomings, which justifies direct action which in certain cases – but not always – breaks the law.

In both strategies there is an emphasis on acts and direct action. This could involve actively working to establish and defend free zones (occupied houses) or directly confronting social problems (militant anti-fascism). For those who do not differentiate between peaceful and violent methods, the use of violence is not a moral issue, but a tactical one. This can take shape in many different ways, and there is a continuous internal discussion on the advantages and limitations of various methods of struggle (cf. Wåg 2011). What can be said to distinguish the autonomist milieu, in contrast to large sections of the rest of the left, is that these discussions do not always make a clear distinction between legal and illegal methods. In the milieu, the concept of “diversity of tactics” exists to bridge the gap between the groups that are pro-violence and those that advocate non-violence. In cases where someone

---

135 The concept of “squat” is used internationally to designate occupied houses.
advocates violent means, it is often justified through highlighting the class conflict in a historical perspective; people thereby enrol themselves in a tradition of struggle where societal development is understood as a struggle between progressive and reactionary forces.

There are tendencies within the autonomist milieu indicating that the last ten years have focused less on sensational riots in order to develop other forms of action. Many bear witness to how the Gothenburg riots and the war on terror meant a setback for the mobilisation of an extra-parliamentary left that took place in the 1990s. In the Swedish media, spectacular pictures of Black Bloc activists and barricades on Kingsgate Avenue remained long in the public eye, and the AFA became a symbol of left extremist violence in the media (cf. Vestergrén 2010). At the same time, questions were raised about how the criticism and mobilisation that found expression in connection with the summit protests could be translated into everyday life and become a permanent anti-capitalist struggle instead of individual outbreaks of demonstrations.

“Lifestyle politics” – an umbrella term for the identity politics and the perspective of consumer power that was prominent in the 1990s – is sometimes spoken of in this context. Lifestyle politics is used as a derogatory term for superficial political involvement that is perceived as entirely too preoccupied with style markers (clothes, music) and individual life choices (diet, attitudes towards drugs). But the limitations of lifestyle politics are also described as a particularity in front of the universal, which obscures the class issue with an entirely too academic approach. Lifestyle politics can also be understood in light of the “triple oppression” theory. Triple oppression is translated into Swedish as “förtryckssamverkan”, and is an analysis of power which proposes that oppression in modern society has three faces: capitalism/class oppression, sexism, and racism. The development within the autonomist milieu since the 1990s can be partially understood as a reaction to lifestyle politics in order to more clearly emphasize the fundamental conflict between labour and capital. The fundamental imbalance of power in this conflict won’t let itself be changed by individual life choices or patterns of consumption. This has been visible in the changes towards daily life that has occupied a large part of the autonomist movement over the last decade (see e.g. Kämpa tillsammans! 2009), a direction that for natural reasons has not attracted attention in the reviews that focus on criminality and violence (see e.g. Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009).

---

136 The “Black Bloc” is a tactic that comprises violent confrontation and destruction of corporate property. The name comes from the fact that activists are masked and wear black (see e.g. Albertini 2002 and Dupuis Déry 2010).
5.4 Previous research

One difficulty in studying autonomist milieux is that they are not organised according to traditional political patterns. The type of seemingly spontaneous mobilisation and loosely coherent networks that comprise the milieu cannot be simply summarised or described in a list of parties, organisations or similar. In this connection, the following overview of the research aims at emphasising studies that are devoted to describing the structure of the autonomist milieux in order to more clearly discuss what types of material this study came to investigate, as well as the function or status of this material within the milieu.

In addition, there may be problems of definition associated with the concept of autonomism since, in certain cases, it is treated as a historical category linked to specific milieux and movements limited in time and space (e.g. the autonomist movement in Italy in the 1970s, squat groups in West Germany and Denmark in the 1980s and 1990s). A Danish report on political extremism (Larsen 2012) writes, for example, that the autonomist movement that set the tone in the extra-parliamentary political movements in Denmark around the turn of the millennium no longer exists (Larsen 2012:26). It can be asserted, however, that there are groups in Sweden that took inspiration from the autonomist movements in Italy, Germany and Denmark, and which can be described (and describe themselves) as autonomist in their capacity as independent, action-oriented extra-parliamentary left groups.

The autonomist milieux in Sweden have not been a object of scientific research to any great extent. One exception is the Field research on Organizations and Groups (FOG) at Linköping University which, as part of the “riot project” in collaboration with various government agencies, has published several reports and essays from a socio-psychological perspective. The main part of this research aims at producing theoretical models for how the risk for violent battles and riots in connection with political events and sporting events can be prevented and minimised. Parts of the research, however, have focused on the autonomist milieu for the purpose of compiling empirical data not only on autonomist groups’ view of themselves but also on the representation of autonomist groups in the mass media (e.g. Vestergren 2010; Granström, Näsland & Rosander 2009).137

In international research, it has been proposed that autonomists should be understood as a milieu on the boundary between subculture and social movement (Schwartzmeier 1999). This dualism, in turn, reflects a long-standing tension within the anarchist movement between lifestyle anarchism and social

---

137 Journalistic reviews of the autonomist left in Sweden, e.g. Lodenius (2006) and Sandelin (2007) can also be added to this.
activism, where lifestyle anarchism focuses on creating milieux or subcultures to make an alternative lifestyle outside established society possible, while social anarchism is more outwardly focused and willing to build alliances with other movements in order to effect social change (Gautney 2009).

Regarded as a subculture, the autonomist milieu is described as a scene for those creating an identity to compare with other youth cultures marked by style, but which occurs in a political context (Schwartzmeier 1999; March & Mudde 2005). From the perspective of social movements, researchers have places the autonomists in a larger context of extra-parliamentary left movements with roots in the New Left of the 1960s (Katsiaficas 2006).

In cases where a subculture perspective is applied to the autonomist milieu, it is in order to emphasize the lifestyle dimension of the milieu. Based on this perspective, a counter-culture is spoken of that, instead of wanting to replace the dominant culture, tries to develop an alternative culture outside of it (March & Mudde 2005, Gautney 2009). The autonomist movement is described as “first-person politics” (Leach & Haunss 2009:262) based on creating space or sanctuaries where it is possible to lead a counter-cultural lifestyle based on self-organisation in opposition to the predominant system. The concepts of “subculture” and “counter-culture” are sometimes used in parallel, but in research they refer to different traditions, where counter-culture is associated with the American student movement in the 1960s (Roszak 1968) and subculture is associated with the post-war British working class (Hebdige 1979). Leach & Haunss (2009) differentiate between subcultures that sometimes may be politically oriented and sometimes purely lifestyle-oriented, and counter-cultures that, by definition, are described as involved in political endeavours (p. 261).

In view of the emphasis of our task on recruitment potential in the messages found on the Internet, it seems justified to devote particular attention to the lifestyle or subculture dimension, which takes processes that create meaning – with a focus on components such as style and identity – into consideration. The focus of the study on messages and appeals make it interesting to analyse the implicit reader or viewer the material addresses – that is, which aspects of activities and actions are emphasized and how these are made meaningful. The Security Service speak, for example, of brooders and thrill-seekers as two ideal constructions to describe particular individuals’ way into an extreme milieu (Brottsförebyggande rádet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009). These are linked to questions concerning aspects of identity creation (an existential need for meaning and context, or the attraction in seeking out excitement or “kicks”).

5.4.1 Violence and masculinity

Research into political violence and pro-violence milieux sometimes applies a perspective of masculinity to explain how individuals are motivated to join a violent community (cf. Kimmel 2007). Ann-Dorte Christensen (2010) has studied masculinity among Danish men who are involved in
militant anti-fascist activities and contrasted it with similar studies of extreme right-wing movements (e.g. Kimmel 2005). Her results show that the crisis of masculinity – which can be seen as a diving factor in developing a violent (white) hypermasculinity in extreme right-wing milieux – is not found among the men who tend to move to the pro-violence autonomist left. Quite the opposite, she argues; these men sympathise to a great extent with feminist critiques and the rights of ethnic minorities. It is thus not possible to explain their violence with the help of the young men’s structural position or individual conditions growing up. Instead, Christensen proposes that the construction of a violent hypermasculinity is rooted in the political learning process, and development that took place in the organisations and movements in which these men took part (Christensen 2010:165). She writes:

This includes encounters with other violent men: on the one hand the police who according to the young activists responded to non-violent actions with violence, and humiliated the young men when they were 15- or 16-year-old children; on the other hand the neo-Nazis as the adversary whose violent hyper-masculinity is despised yet is met with the same type of violence. At the same time it seems as if the movement’s internal political culture and the social conventions in the milieu leave no room for weakness – the norm becomes ‘machismo’, which implies dominance and oppression of the men who cannot live up to the norms as well as of the women who are part of the AFA men’s social or political network. (Christensen 2010:166)

The quote points out specific experiences based in violent confrontation as important components in understanding how an individual youth is radicalised into seeing violence as a legitimate means in a political struggle. It doesn’t really agree with the brooder–thrill-seeker model, but rather emphasises how radicalisation within the milieu is a reaction to threats and violence, and both political opponents (right-wing extremists) and the police are mentioned in this context. Christensen’s study can thereby contribute with a perspective on how to interpret how the message found in the material is formulated in order to draw on or validate similar experiences.

5.4.2 The scene

What seems disorganised and unstructured to an outsider can, on the other hand, be perceived as rationally organised and structured to the initiated. This is the case with what is usually described as a “scene”. One example of an attempt from the academic side to describe how not readily transparent, loosely organised autonomist milieux are structured is found in Katsiaficas (2006) who, based on Kriesi (1984), sketched out a model of how the autonomist movement can be described (see Figure 5.1). The model is built on concentric circles where the centre is formed by a core of activists and where active political involvement decreases in the outer circles (which in turn encompass larger groups of sympathisers). In the inner core there are “crystallisation points” which can be comprised of occupied houses, collectives, and action committees in which there can be formal or informal hierarchies (although the autonomist milieu is primarily regarded as non-hierarchical). Along with
individuals who are not connected, this forms a core of activists who in turn lean on a scene of alternative institutions such as social centres, cafés and so on. People who involve themselves in things like movement mobilisation and who sporadically participate in meetings are counted as sympathisers. “Passive sympathisers” can refer to people who acquaint themselves with a more general debate of ideas, who read alternative media, academics, and so on. The fluid character of the autonomist movements means that individuals can move between levels or take part on several levels simultaneously (Katsiaficas 2006:191 f.). The model is built on experiences from Germany and Italy, countries where the scene is significantly larger than in Sweden, but it can be of assistance in so far as it provides a conceptual picture of the seemingly loose structure. In this report, the scene is a phenomenon that is characteristic of the autonomist milieu: in race ideological milieux there is a more formalised organisation structure with clear hierarchies and formal leadership, while jihadist milieux seem to be even more loosely structured and not readily transparent.

Figure 5.1 Structure in autonomist movements (from Katsiaficas 2006:192).

Leach & Haunss (2009) have further developed the concept of “scene” in relation to autonomist milieux in Germany in an attempt to find a definition with analytical weight. Their observations were made on material from autonomist scenes that existed for over 30 years, whose forms and activities were consolidated and became a part of the urban geography. An equivalent to the autonomist milieux of Berlin and Hamburg barely exists in Sweden. In Leach & Haunss (2009), the scene is
described as a geographic, primarily urban, phenomenon. Communications within the milieu take place primarily through personal contacts at parties, concerts and meetings, or through posters, stickers, and flyers in the urban space. The Internet is certainly described as a further source of information about what is happening in the scene, but seems to be subordinate to social reality.

5.4.3 **Research into the internet, new media, and autonomist movements**

Since the turn of the century, a growing literature on the alternative media of the extra-parliamentary left has emerged (Downing 2001; Rodriguez 2001; Atton 2002; Atton 2004; Waltz 2004; Langlois & Dubois 2005; Coyer et al. 2007; Bailey et al. 2008). The common element among many of these is that they make an explicit connection between new social movements and initiatives for independent, small-scale, oppositional media channels. It may be about printing one’s own newspaper or broadcasting pirate radio, or about creating alternative news sources on the Internet. Alternative media of this kind is described as important for getting out stories about events that are not given a place within the mainstream media, and also for strengthening a group feeling of solidarity. It is often emphasised just how digital information technology has made creating such alternative media channels more easily available.

In parallel with this, there has also been a development in the media field towards increased participation through media use. Social network media provides media services where the content is created and shared among the users themselves (examples of this are YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook). Developing one’s own media channels has, in other words, become an integrated part of many people’s daily use of the media. There are, however, critical voices that point to how these companies (chiefly Google and Facebook) are profiting off free labour power (Scholtz 2013) and surveillance/data gathering (Andrejevic 2002). For a movement that is critical of exploitation of labour power and the expansion of capitalism, there can consequently be an ideological problem in making use of the types of tools that are built on exploiting free labour power.

Julie Uldam (2010) has studied how extra-parliamentary left movements used social media in their grass-roots work. She notes such things as how different extra-parliamentary groups relate to the Internet and social media: to what extent should these services should be used to communicate and disseminate the messages, when at the same time they generate profits for multinational companies and facilitate surveillance? A study of the use by Scandinavian activists of social network media (Askanius & Gustafsson 2010) shows, however, that far from every group problematises this relationship to a similar extent as other parts of Europe have done.
In light of this interpretation, it can be asked how large a part of the pro-violence tendencies within the left autonomist milieu actually finds expression in the open, publicly available Web sites on the internet? In interviews with activists (Peterson 2001, Lodenius 2006), as in discussions conducted on web sites like socialism.nu and Flashback\(^\text{138}\), a picture appears of the autonomist left repeatedly being uninterested in disseminating propaganda and recruiting new followers through the Internet. Strategic propaganda activities are often associated with right-wing extremism, and neo-Nazis’ use of the internet to appear larger and more serious than they actually are has been criticised.

One of the activists interviewed in Peterson (2001:153) describes it as if Antifascist Action (AFA) and other militant groups are completely uninterested in reaching outsiders with their Web sites, while their opponents design their Web sites to attract curious young people and recruit followers via the web. Even if the interview was conducted in the 1990s, there is reason to dwell upon this, as similar reasoning is found in more contemporary sources. One post on the socialism.nu discussion forum dated 5 May 2011, for example, a user asks if AFA still exists, referring to the fact that for a long period they have not had a Web site. One answer reads:

Oh, yes. They’re still here. Their activities haven’t disappeared with the Web site. This idea originates with how the Nazis organise themselves. There, they have tons of Web sites but little or no activity IRL. It’s a good thing for the AFA not to spend time building digital “castles in the air”. Those who need to know about AFA’s existence will certainly see it =) \(^\text{139}\)

For this subsidiary study, then, it will be interesting to discuss whether a counterpart to the scene exists on the Internet. Leach & Haunss (2009) describe how the scene plays a central role for mobilisation, creating and maintaining collective identities, practices and forms of organisation (p. 20). Much of the material available to the general public on the net is found in the outer circles of Katsiaficas’ (2006) model above; it deals with subjects and conducts discussions that concern both the radical and the reformist sections of an extra-parliamentary debate on political subjects. It will also be interesting to comment on how digital communications technology will be of use in terms of making material available and interactivity. The motive for studying precisely Internet communications is built on the premise that the Internet offers other forms of communication than

\(^{138}\) The extensive Flashback discussion forum has a forum section for “Anarchism, Activism and Socialism” with 187,918 posts in 4,433 discussions (130410).

other forms of media (printed newspapers, flyers, posters, and so on) and that this, to some extent, also has other effects in reception than the more traditional forms of propaganda, insofar as the Internet increases access to material and participation in a Net-based community of opinion.

5.5 An autonomist scene on the Internet?

In the journalistic reviews of the autonomist milieu already mentioned (Lodenius 2006; Sandelin 2007) the Internet is afforded a great amount of space. As they were not accompanied by any systematic account of which Web sites were included in these reviews, it is easy to get the idea that there is a comprehensive, active autonomist milieu on the Internet. It is consequently justified to investigate, in the first stage, the extent to which an autonomist scene is found on the Internet – that is, a milieu where news is reported and public discussions are held (with an emphasis on those which, according to the introductory definitions, can be regarded as pro-violence). What Web sites are there, and how popular are they? How do pro-violence and anti-democratic messages occur? These are also important questions in relation to the concept of “enclavisation” – that is, the extent to which an extreme community of opinion is maintained, validated, and strengthened through it being possible for the individual Internet user to be on a number of Web sites and web forums that all point in the same direction.

In reality, it is difficult to say how large this autonomist milieu, or scene, is on the Internet. On the one hand, there is a problem of delimitation regarding which entities should be counted as part of the scene (what importance, for example, should be attached to individual bloggers?); on the other, which parts qualify for the emphasis of the task on antidemocratic and pro-violence messages. The starting point for the following summary has been to include those Web sites mentioned in the section in Våldsam politisk extremism (“Violent Political Extremism”) on the autonomist milieu, and which are still accessible online (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009). Furthermore, individual blogs have been excluded since these are often linked to specific individuals, and the interests of the study are not in charting the opinions of individual people but to depict the infrastructure for a pro-violence community of opinion.

Two Web sites that are usually held out as essential to the autonomist milieu in Sweden are Motkraft (motkraft.net) and Yelah (yelah.net). If milieux similar to the autonomist one are often described as unstable and transient, the Web sites mentioned instead distinguish themselves through their permanence: Both have been on the Internet since the 1990s: Motkraft since 1997 and Yelah since 1994. Motkraft is described in Våldsam politisk extremism as “the portal blog of the autonomist movement” (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009:38) and calls itself a media platform for independent left groups. Yelah is an independent socialist libertarian media group/anarchist
webzine. Yelah functions primarily as a news page, with an editorial staff and a legally responsible publisher, while Motkraft functions as an information page that, apart from news (often translations of articles from other sources or reports from various groups) and a calendar, also serves the function of resource base for radical activism (e.g. there is an archive of reports, interviews, manifestos and theoretical texts, and so on). Since none of these Web sites are linked to any specific organisation, it is not possible to identify any dominant agenda. Reformist and radical positions coexist, and it could be said to be more a diversity of critical left perspectives than a unified ideology. The subjects dealt with are rooted in socialist and anarchist perspectives: anti-racism, housing policy, public transportation, labour law, feminism, and so on.

In its original sense, the concept of “scene” is anchored in a given geographic location (often an urban district or particular block in a city milieu). In cities where there is an established presence of autonomist milieux, the scene is the place where a political movement and subcultural lifestyle coexist; it serves as an introduction and base for recruitment to political projects. In its urban form, the scene consists of occupied houses, social centres, clubs and bars. Information and communication occur primarily via direct communication face to face, via posters, and flyers. The personal contacts are crucial for keeping informed about the activities that are happening in the scene (Leach & Haunss 2009). Much of the above seems to also apply to the internet milieu being studied in this section. The autonomist milieu does not comprise a large, coherent alternative public on the Internet, and several web sites mentioned in the reports and reviews no longer exist (one such example is Aktipedia, describes as the “Web dictionary for autonomists” [Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009:36]).

There are very few web sites (apart from individual blogs) that publish and analyse news and current events. The form of ideological news reporting corresponding to those found in the race ideological milieu does not exist in the autonomist scene. In 2001, a Swedish subsection of the international news site for activists, the Independent Media Center (Indymedia) was started, but the web site is no longer active (the last post is from 2010). Some type of news dissemination takes place through web sites such as Motkraft and Yelah, but this is not especially comprehensive. The absence of strategic, active work on ideological news reporting may possibly be explained by the fact that the fundamental social analysis found in the autonomist milieu is shared with large parts of the left, the worker movement and the union movement; even if the worker press has been decimated over the last few decades there are plenty of organs close to the mainstream media where questions and perspectives relevant to the milieu are discussed. In other words, the need to create alternative media seems fairly small in the milieu being studied here.
Interactivity in the scene on the Internet is remarkably low. Motkraft’s news page has a comment function connected to every article, but it is rarely used, and when some article is commented, it is usually a question of no more than a few individual posts. These comment fields thus do not comprise an arena for active discussions in a similar way as is found on Web sites within the race ideological milieu. Regarding forums for a public debate, the discussion forum socialism.nu is the largest and most active, with 5,508 registered members (526 active). The forum contains 245,697 posts in discussion threads on 7,900 subjects. This is not a forum exclusively for the autonomist milieu, but gathers together both organised and autonomist sections of the left. Nor is it a forum where anti-democratic or pro-violence messages play a central role (even if there are long discussion threads that deal with the legitimacy of violence in a political struggle). The majority of discussion threads deal with political theory and questions concerning various left organisations.

Apart from the types of web sites mentioned, there are also web shops that sell clothes, films, and literature with a focus on the autonomist milieu (radikaldistro.com, bokefet.se, 15fot.net, wapiti.se). In their selection of goods there is a great deal of material that can be categorised as “romanticising violence” or “romanticising revolution”, for example in the form of T-shirts and cloth badges depicting stylised Molotov cocktails or the emblem of the Red Army Fraction. It is difficult to comment on exactly what role or significance these goods have for the autonomist milieu. To some extent they can be referred to the category of lifestyle politics, and fill a function as a type of style and identity marker rather than encouragement or defence of political violence. There is also a certain degree of self-reflection and humour in the setting of these products. People are obviously aware of the mass media image of the rock-throwing left demonstrators, and it is a profitable stereotype to play on. With a certain irony, for example, the web shop Radikaldistro lets their T-shirt models pose in ski masks and sunglasses in front of a graffiti-covered wall.

To get a clear picture of how popular the web addresses mentioned are, visitor statistics were retrieved from Free Website Report. The numbers do not reflect the exact number of visits but are built on an estimation of daily visits to the Web site based on information from a number of open Internet sources. It is, consequently, in several respects an unreliable source, since the compilation is not transparent, but in combination with the Alexa ranking tool it is possible to obtain an approximate estimate of the number of visits, as well as what place the address has in a national ranking (where first place is the address that has the most visits daily).

---

140 These figures were retrieved on 08 Apr 2013.
Website | Daily page views | Ranking in Sweden
---|---|---
revfront.org | 3,400 | 5,181
socialism.nu | 3,192 | 2,102
motkraft.net | 1,356 | 7,507
antifa.se | 220 | No data
yelah.net | 156 | No data
djurensbefrielsefront.com | 119 | No data

Table 5.1 Visitor statistics for web sites within the autonomist milieu (28 Mar 2013).

Of these web sites it is only revfront.org, antifa.se and djurensbefrielsefront.com that can be said to represent milieux which consistently take a position for violent activism. To the extent this estimate is reliable, it seems that none of these web sites are particularly heavily visited. The scene, to the extent it exists on the internet, is consequently fairly small. The web sites that stick out with their relatively high visitor numbers are also those where activity and updates occur almost daily. But the most popular Web site have had relatively few visits and are far down in the national ranking compared with the visitor statistics for right-wing extremist web sites (see Chapter 4 in this report).

5.6 Examples of pro-violence communication on the Internet

Based on the description of the framework narrative of the autonomist milieu given in the previous section, there are a couple of methodological challenges as regards investigating the material based on the formulation “anti-democratic messages that encourage violence for a political or ideological cause”. Above all, there is no large or unified scene where such messages are openly expressed. This is not to say that such attitudes do not exist in the milieu, but based on a perspective that takes propaganda and communicative recruitment strategies as a starting point, it is difficult to find convincing evidence that the pro-violence autonomist milieu in Sweden prioritises the Internet as a base for recruitment, or chooses to disseminate propaganda over the Net.

Since the study is not limited to only observing depictions of and encouragement to direct violence, but also to what is described as cultural violence (e.g. use of derogatory and dehumanising language), it can be worth noting that it seems as if the fundamental ideological analysis in the milieu does not

---

141 Alexa cannot show any regional data on how the address is ranked in Sweden.
support a use of language that is equally powerful and comprehensive as is the case with racism. The antagonism is directed towards a structure, not against “ethnic groups of lower standing” or “infidels”, who in a racist or jihadist milieu are ascribed dehumanizing epithets and mythologically attached negative characteristics. On the other hand, there is use of aggressive and dehumanizing language on the issue of certain adversaries (“Nazi pigs”) and the police (“All cops are bastards”).

As regards discussions on direct violence, there is plenty of general metareflections on the subject. Motkraft’s archives collect articles from various Swedish and international sources which deal with the role of violence in a political movement in different ways. Discussions of this type are preferably conducted on a level of principles, where rational argument dominates and outbursts of a more affective character, for example where a discursive violence escalates in detailed descriptions of how violent actions can be carried out, do not exist. These can be read as political and philosophical theoretical interpretations on the limitations of liberal democracy, but can also be interpreted as a defence of violent means in order to present a political position. One example of how direct and structural violence are discussed and problematised in such texts is the article “Det liberala våldet” (Liberal violence) with the “Vår makt STHLM” (Our Power STHLM) as poster:

Thus, private property, or the ownership of the means of production – even if we take an extreme (but highly realistic) example where someone lives in enormous abundance next to someone who is starving to death – is not to be seen as a violent relationship. It is, in liberal discourse, less violent to let that person starve to death in accordance with prevailing property relations than to question them by taking from the abundance and sharing it with the starving. Theft is thus more violent than death by starvation. A strike is more violent than invalidity from a workplace injury. Class struggle is more violent than imperialist war, and so on. 142

If the above is an example of how structural violence is defined, then the text concludes with a summary where own (direct) violence is related to structural violence:

But for our movement there is really no distinction between means and ends; the means we have at our disposal is our goal – proletarian power – in its historical form. This means, of course, that our violence – our establishment of compulsory relations – must be visible in order later to be phased out in a future society. That is, however, not our problem right now. The invisible party is equally as critical of violence as all other parties – but whereas we are an invisible party with visible violence, they are visible parties with invisible violence. Until this has changed, we must remain as a part of the public that distances itself from all violence, and consequently feel the responsibility to act in order for it to be recognized and then disappear. Facts are no excuse, it is our indifference when faced with them that makes us guilty. 143

142 http://motkraft.net/temasidor/kamper-och-kampanjer/tema36/tema_var_makt_sthlm_det_liberala_valdet/ (download date 26 Feb 2013).
As seen in this example, the discussion on the place of violence in the political struggle assumes a certain familiarity with theoretical discourse. It is not possible to comment on the recruitment potential in texts like this, but the form of presentation is such that the reader who is implicitly addressed through this and similar texts is expected to follow the dialectical presentation of the argument and be familiar with its premises on structural violence and bourgeois democracy. It also assumes a certain familiarity with academic vocabulary (“liberal discourse”) and Marxist terminology (“means of production”, “historic form”).

That violence, and relationships to political violence, are subjects of concern is noted through their also being recurrently discussed in presentations by the groups of themselves in the milieu. On the other hand, it is not possible to comment on the significance of violent methods for the movement based on these brief descriptions; they can just as well be read as a way of responding to the criticism that is often aimed at them. The AFA Network’s recently re-activated web site provides a brief presentation of the view of the network on how to work with militant anti-fascism. In a passage placed next to a photograph depicting three people kicking a police van, there is a description of the view of violence as a method:

Despite the fact the majority of our work occurs with “peaceable” methods, we are often criticized when we consider resorting to violence to be justified. We do not, however, have any ambition of scoring political points, trying to win votes or perhaps be written about in the media. Our goal is to knock the legs out from under organised fascism. (antifa.se, 08 Mar 2013)

It is interesting to note that any media interest in the network’s use of violence is commented on. Media representations and a perceived exaggerated interest from the journalists’ side in violence within the autonomist milieu has been noted in previous studies (Vestergren 2010). Similar formulations on the relationship to violence as a political method can be found in Revolutionära Fronten (RF) which, in a description of the network’s activities, wrote the following:

We will never stand behind a completely peaceful line. Too many times have we seen such movements strangled by an inability to act, and their demands pushed back. Instead, we assert that we can choose to act exactly as we wish to. What necessity requires, and what is tactically reasonable and feasible. ¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ ”Om revolutionära fronten”, http://revfront.org/?page_id=10 (download date 28 May 2012).
A little further down in the same document, various positions are summarised in a list. One of these deals explicitly with the question of violence and violent methods:

4) Revolutionära Fronten recognises all methods of struggle and sees peaceful resistance and revolutionary violence as equal parts in the revolutionary class struggle. We see the use of revolutionary violence as a purely tactical and political issue, not as a moral one. 145

As mentioned by way of introduction, the major part of alternative politics and extra-parliamentary left politics in Sweden has been characterised by principles of non-violence. It is therefore possible that the quotes cited above (and their posters) wish to carefully define and explain their view of the role of violence. The opinion that peaceful resistance and revolutionary violence are equal in merit is such a divergent attitude that they feel compelled to develop a reasoning and justification for it. It is also possible to read the formulations above as a response to an imputed characteristic, the expectation of violence and broad criticism of violent methods that are found in the political public. When someone admits that violent methods are included in his or her repertoire, it is a way of marking autonomy in relation to the broad consensus that condemns violent actions. In the milieu as a whole, there are plenty of arguments both for and against violence, and it is not really possible to speak of any widespread consensus regarding the role of violence in the political struggle.

This can also be ascribed to a reasoning on how niche communities of opinion serve as a type of ideological greenhouse that is brought out as an essential component in explaining how the Internet contributes to radicalising and reinforcing pro-violence and anti-democratic attitudes. As indicated in the overview above, there are very few web sites that openly advocate violent methods. Nor is there any comprehensive alternative public of ideologically re-contextualised news dissemination where an extremist world view is validated and eventually reinforced through daily reporting of events reinterpreted to fit into an extremist community of opinion.

This type of message and the formulations that have been expressed are chiefly interesting in light of how the Internet is used to communicate these messages. One motive for studying Internet communications among those milieux that recognise violent methods as legitimate political means is based on an idea that messages conveyed over the Internet are more easily available than those conveyed via printed manifestos, pamphlets or flyers (which assumes a distribution of physical artefacts), and that Internet communication recognises a technology for interactivity between, for example, posters and readers, or between readers. As indicated in the overview above and the

145 Ibid.
examples brought out, it does not seem, however, as if Internet communication in this milieu makes use of the opportunities for accessibility and interactivity provided through the technology.

As regards accessibility, web site are few and not especially popular (based on the estimate of visitor statistics). It is certainly fairly easy to come in contact with material that defends violence as a political method, but as the examples above indicate, it is not always so that these texts are easily accessible in the sense of being easy to understand. It could even be asserted that this material is poorly adapted to the media-specific conditions that Internet technology involves, since long theoretical texts often are easier to read in book form than on a screen. On the other hand, there is also material that seems better suited for the media – videos, for example – which are given space later in this analysis. When it comes to interactivity and the opportunity for interaction between poster and reader, the above analysis shows how comment functions are implemented sparingly and in cases where the opportunity to comment exists – articles on Motkraft, for example – it is seldom used.

5.7 Web presence in active networks and action names in Sweden

In the section that described a framework narrative for the violent parts of the milieu, it was emphasised how the autonomist approach involves “first-person politics”, which underscores its independence and asserts the right to decide for oneself the means with which one’s own struggle is to be conducted. Nor in the autonomist approach is there any clear element of dictating how others should act – in other words, people seem to defend being left alone rather than depicting themselves as models for other political activists. This can be observed in how networks and action names appear and are present on the Web.

Based on the networks and action names described by the Swedish Security Service (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009), the following section aims at providing an overview of the web presence among these entities. The choice is justified by these groupings or action names being given space in the report mentioned, but also because of mass media interest in them. In newspaper articles on the theme of left extremist violence published over the last few years (e.g. Göteborgs-Posten’s review in December 2009) there are solely two entities mentioned: Antifascist Action (AFA) and Revolutionära Fronten (RF). It could be said that when left extremism is discussed in public, it is these groups that are consistently referred to. The Security Service categorise these groups as networks; based on the presence that exists on the Web, it is impossible to estimate how many people are active in these networks or who sympathise with their attitude towards violence as a political method.
Animal rights issues have frequently been linked with the autonomist milieu and generally treated as a left issue (Peterson 2001; Lodenius 2006; Sandelin 2007; Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009). Both the left and the animal rights movement, however, are split regarding their ideological habitat, and animal rights issues have received increased support within right-wing extremist movements (cf. Olsen 1999). One example of this is how there were people with connections to neo-Nazi contexts among those sentenced in highly-publicised criminal cases with links to animal rights activism (Göteborgs Fria Tidning, 15 Sep 2011). Among the autonomists, examples like this have been brought out as confirmation that no one really knows where anyone has “animal rights”, while within the animal rights movement a moral dilemma has arisen whether allying with Nazis in the fight for animals’ rights is justified. Despite this, Djurens befrielsefront (Animals’ Liberation Front, DBF) has been included in the review below in view of the fact that they were mentioned in Våldsam politisk extremism (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009).

What can be brought up as noteworthy with these networks is that in the context, they are fairly long-lived. In contrast to descriptions of the autonomist milieu as in a state of constant change, these entities at least appear as quite constant: Djurens befrielsefront has existed since the early 1980s, AFA since the early 1990s, and RF since the early 2000s. It is of interest for the study to find out what internet communication among these entities looks like: What kinds of websites are there, and what type of presence do they have in social media? What can be said regarding strategies for recruitment and opportunity for contact?

5.7.1 Antifascist Action

The Antifascist Action (AFA) network was formed in 1993, and during the 1990s and the early 2000s was the most visible grouping that pursued militant antifascist activities in Sweden. Its organising is described as a network of local groups in different cities with annual national meetings (based on the little information found on the net, however, it is difficult in the current situation to say whether any such meetings have taken place over the past several years). Even if they express a goal of a classless society based on a basic socialist outlook, the AFA has most been associated with direct confrontation of neo-Nazi organisations, including a comprehensive charting of people active within the white power milieu.

For a time, there was speculation on web forums like socialism.nu and Flashback whether AFA existed in general any longer. To a large extent, these speculations were built on the fact that the website of the national network (antifa.se) had been deactivated sometime in 2010, and that there had
long been no official presence of the network on the Web. In the beginning of March 2013, however, a new web site for the national AFA network was started with the same address, but it has no content other than a short declaration of programme and contact information for the local AFA groups.

In October 2012, a Facebook page was started in the AFA’s name (15 likes) but it is unclear who lies behind it. The description on the site reads: “All of us who think the AFA is good and who work to get rid of sexism, fascism, racism, Nazism, capitalism and homophobia!”, which means it’s more about a tribute site than an official channel. On YouTube there is a small number of films produced by local AFA groups, but there is no official account that collects these videos; rather, they are uploaded by individual user accounts.

5.7.2 Revolutionära Fronten

Revolutionära fronten (The Revolutionary Front) is described as an organisation or network with roots in the AFA and which was formed after the 2001 EU summit in Gothenburg. There are many similarities between RF and AFA as regards basic socialist outlook and views on methods of struggle. On the other hand RF, in contrast to AFA, has an active presence on the Web. They have their own Web site, revfront.org, which also contains their online newspaper “Röd agitation” (Red Agitation) and a page on Facebook was opened in October 2012 (around 440 likes). Furthermore, they have a Twitter account (@revfront), but it is locked and visible only to accepted followers (which means that neither the messages nor the number of followers is visible for those who have not been approved by the account holder). They also have two YouTube channels (RevfrontMedia and RevfrontMedia2) with a total of 19 videos published and 51 subscribers.

Revfront.org is a combined organisational and news site where there are both depictions of direct violence (e.g. pictures from confrontations with adversaries) and cultural violence in the form of derogatory and dehumanising language (in descriptions of adversaries). Primarily, it is the class struggle that is emphasised as the main goal of their activities, but much of the external activity reported on the web site is linked to militant anti-fascism. Revfront.org also contains a series of articles under the heading “Armed struggle” which focuses on different types of guerrilla organisations that have conducted armed struggle (e.g. the Red Brigades and Tupamaros). This interest in historical examples of armed struggle could perhaps be understood as an expression of how their own activities are justified and given meaning in the light of a long tradition of violent political struggle.
Viewed from a recruitment aspect, the web site contains information on how to apply for membership in Revolutionära Fronten. This information is presented, however, together with a number of strictly formulated requirements that do not immediately invite an application for membership:

Revolutionära Fronten places high demands on our members; as a consequence, many unwelcome personalities disappear along the way. We are politically active socialists who place political involvement first and foremost. We accept, of course, that there come times in everyone’s lives when other things must take priority, but we appreciate lifelong, undying involvement. We demand full loyalty to the organisation’s decisions: “Openness in discussion, unity in action” is the watchword. We are looking for a spirit of self-sacrifice, taking initiatives, and conviction; members who are prepared to carry the organisation and the struggle forward.

We require the following from associate and full members:

1) Act respectfully and always represent with a good example. Both in activities and in our everyday lives we are viewed in our capacity as members of the organisation.

2) Attend activities held by the organisation as often as possible.

3) Involve yourself wholeheartedly in the organisation; other involvement may only comprise union and single-issue organisations.

4) The internal activities of the organisation are completely secret.

5) As a member, you will pay a reasonable membership fee once a month based on your income.

6) We also have several internal rules that you will learn about when you join up. 146

Over the autumn and winter of 2012, the Revolutionära Fronten web site became more active as a news site, with almost daily updates. During the spring of 2012 there were only a few updates interwoven with longer periods of inactivity: Between January and June 2012 16 news items were published, while between July and December 82 news items were published. The contents during this period also had a more general focus with detailed comments on current political events. This tendency towards increased visibility is confirmed by a post dated 1 November 2012, which reads:

146 http://revfront.org/www/?page_id=1095 (retrieved 121031).
Revolutionära Fronten is an organisation that constantly strives for improvement and to take steps forward in our political work. We understand the importance of being seen in public space, both on the streets and on the Internet. We have therefore chosen to start a Facebook page. A page that, we hope, our readers will appreciate. The page will serve as a tool for spreading our news and to reach out to more people with our political message.

After ten years as an organisation we are also proud to present the Revolutionära fronten logo! It will represent the organisation and mark our propaganda.147

The logo mentioned depicts a stylised gear surrounding the letters RF. In early December 2012, revfront.org was the subject of a DDoS attack that left the web site inaccessible for almost a month. During the time the web site was inactive, they denied the rumour that it was a neo-Nazi organisation that lay behind the attack on their Facebook page.

5.3.7 Djurens Befrielsefront

Djurens befrielsefront (Animals’ Liberation Front) is an action name for militant animal rights activism. They have a Web site, but it has not been updated since 2010 and news or action reports from actions against the pet trade linked to DBF are rather published on the American web site Bite Back than on their own web site. Like AFA, the action name seems to be operative (they participated, for example, in the 2012 Anarchist Book Fair) but don’t make use of the web site to spread propaganda or to recruit activists. Under the heading “Contact” there is an e-mail address, but they also write:

Please do NOT contact us if you want to join Djurens befrielsefront, or if you otherwise want to carry out actions for animals. We cannot help with such contacts; furthermore it is a security risk to send such information via e-mail. [...] For information on how DBF is organised, you can read our booklet När skymningen faller (When Twilight Falls). [...] Please do NOT contact us about ordering När skymningen faller, either. The DBF SG [support group] handles distribution.148

The DBF SG has its own header on the web site where the visitor is referred to an e-mail address and the address of a post-office box in Stockholm. The web site also contains information that in various (indirect) ways encourages rescue actions and sabotage. For example, they have published sections of “When Twilight Falls” with advice on police interrogation techniques and law, as well as how to handle the media in connection with actions. There is also a comprehensive archive of action reports reaching back to 1975. The latest reports are from 2010, and it is obvious that the Web site is no longer active. If, on the other hand, you follow the link to the American Web site Bite Back Magazine (directaction.info), it is possible to find brief action reports from Sweden signed Djurens befrielsefront.

DBF is not represented in social media, either. There is no Facebook account linked to the Swedish DBF, nor has it been possible to find any official channel on YouTube. There are isolated action films depicting rescues of animals in Sweden, but these are uploaded by international animal rights groups and militant environmental activist groups based abroad. On the Web site there is also a detailed section on computer and Internet security, which can be seen as a possible explanation as to why they are careful about appearing on the Internet to too great an extent; the risk of communications being monitored is simply too great.

The table below provides an overview of what type of presence these networks and action names have on the Internet. None of these networks either publish, or currently operate any Web shops in their own name (in a similar way to that found in the race ideological milieu).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Online newspaper</th>
<th>Facebook in their own name</th>
<th>YouTube channel in their own name</th>
<th>Twitter in their own name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Red Agitation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Revfront Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBF</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 Web presence with three entities active within the autonomist milieu.

5.8 Social movement or subculture?
As previously pointed out, international research has described autonomist milieux as a boundary between social movement and subculture that contains tension between social anarchism and lifestyle anarchism. Both social movements and subcultures are phenomena that are often described as loosely composed and which are built on informal structures; it may seem paradoxical that the groups viewed as central in the milieu have such strict requirements for membership. At the same time, the strict formulations can be read as a form of identity marker, in that they aim at separating authentic political involvement from those seeking a political subculture that emphasises lifestyle. Referring back to Katsiaficas’ (2006) model of autonomist movements, the groups mentioned can be placed at the crystallisation points in a core of activists who, in turn, have support in a broader scene of active and passive sympathisers.

The groups reported on above, which are usually brought out as the active entities within the pro-violence part of the autonomist milieu, are very closed milieux. The presence on the Internet in the form of organisation pages are not designed to directly recruit new followers to the movement. There are certainly opportunities for contact on all the organisation pages, but with the reservations that exist it could rather appear as if they were aiming to discourage the curious from contacting them. Since the milieux are so closed and do not openly give the impression of being interested in recruiting members, there is no need of producing propaganda material that emphasises the positive and edifying aspects of being a part of the group. Where groups in the race ideological milieu, and jihadists as well, often accentuate values such as comradeship and community in their internal
activities (masculine homosociality and outdoor life), there is no insight for an outsider into what social intercourse among activists in RF or DBF, for example, looks like. Recruitment to the milieu does not seem to occur to any great extent through showing the positive and inspiring sides in being associated with any of these groups or participating in their actions. Either this absence of insight into their own activities can be understood as if it was not needed – potential followers are attracted or motivated by other incentives that seeking community, or it is simply more important for various reasons to keep internal activities secret that it is to show themselves (other than through their actions).

In summary, this overview shows sparse use of the Internet’s various opportunities for communication among the entities of this milieu. With the exception of RF, it does not indicate any elaborated media strategies, but rather points towards the description of autonomist scenes that Leach & Haunss (2009) gave, underscoring the importance of personal contacts and direct communication between people rather than building up comprehensive activity on the internet.

Availability and the amount of information that their web presence offers differs between the various groups. RF is the only entity that makes use of the Internet and social media to a greater extent to inform people of their activities and spread propaganda. Opportunities for contact are found in all three cases, but the degree of interactivity on their own Web sites is low; to come in contact with the respective groups, visitors are referred to other channels (chiefly encrypted e-mail addresses149).

5.9 The autonomist milieu on YouTube

With the development of web-based services that allow for increased participation in producing and disseminating audiovisual material, a visual change has occurred within the culture of political protest (Askanius 2010:340). The ability of short video films to effectively combine hard-hitting messages with spectacular scenes, as well as their availability, make it reasonable to assume that videos on YouTube can attract sympathisers to the autonomist milieu. These videos, with their orientation towards and interpretation of direct action and political acts, also satisfy the movement’s desire to enclose politics in praxis; the different types of activist films offer an effective form of what in the anarchist tradition is called “propaganda of action” – that is, a sensational action can make a greater breakthrough than mottoes and slogans.

149 These addresses are often linked to accounts at Hushmail, a web-based e-mail service that offers a high degree of encryption.
Special attention has therefore been devoted to material published on the video sharing service YouTube. The collected empirical material can be divided into three different types: material published with direct connections to networks or organisations; material linked from other web sites such as Facebook pages and Motkraft; and searches for individual campaign and action names (e.g. Salem, Stoppa matchen, ESF Malmö, Reclaim the Streets). A methodological problem in connection with collecting the material was that several of the clips, even when it is clear from the film that it was produced, for example, by AFA Göteborg, were uploaded by individual users and not by an official account (the films listed under AFA in the table below, for example, were uploaded by six different accounts). The films are not gathered under the same channel but are found through using a variation of search words.\textsuperscript{150} The exception is the films of RF, where there is an official YouTube account (Revfront Media). Another observation is that several of these films have, in the context, fairly few viewings, but that individual videos with many viewings raise the average.

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Account/user & AFA & RF & Other (Salem, ESF) \\
\hline
Number of published films & 8 & 19 & 12 \\
\hline
Total number of viewings & 165,127 & 27,117 & 256,149 \\
\hline
Number of subscribers & --- & 51 & --- \\
\hline
Average viewings per film & 20,641 & 1,427 & 21,346 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Viewing statistics for YouTube videos from the autonomist milieu. These figures were retrieved on 13 Mar 2013.}
\end{table}

As previously stated, the existence of pro-violence messages with their origins in an organisation or the like with connections to the autonomist milieu is limited; it is actually only RF that portrays itself as a coherent organisation giving expression to a militant attitude advocating violence. In light of this, the following analysis has been structured based on a thematic outline for the purpose of identifying and describing different categories of message rather than starting from how individual groups or organisations choose to portray themselves through video films. The categories are, in turn, designed with reference to the mechanisms for political radicalisation described by McCauley and Moskalenko (2008). The analysis of the messages focuses on aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions: how is the message designed as regards to appeal and implicit viewers, and what type of arguments to they bring up?

\textsuperscript{150} The YouTube search tool is not transparent; the user has no insight into the algorithms that govern the search results (which in general favours commercial material over amateur and user-generated content). For a methodological discussion of YouTube as a database, see Askanius 2012c.
Several of the videos included in the material analysed depict events that took place several years ago. It could, for example, have originally been uploaded to mobilise prior to counter-demonstrations against the Salem march, and fulfils another function today than it was originally intended for. This can be illustrated by how Motkraft, in an article\(^{151}\) that describes how the antifascist struggle won as the Salem march did not occur in 2012, links to several of these mobilisation videos. Instead, they become a place to remember an event rather than to mobilise prior to one. But even if few elements in the material depict more current events, it is still possible to talk about the messages they convey. Additionally, video clips uploaded in 2008 could have comments from 2012 (in those cases where the comment function is active), which indicates that they are still used or considered relevant.

It should also be added that even if YouTube offers great opportunities to make material available to a larger public with small means, it is also a tool that people have very little control over, especially with regard to the context in which one’s films appear. This manifests itself both through the comment function, which is pre-set to be automatically attached to the published video, and through the list of suggestions for similar videos presented in the right-hand margin. The comment function can be shut off, and this has been done for several of the videos included in the material. As regards YouTube’s recommended videos, it is remarkably often that, in connection with videos linked to the autonomist milieu, the viewer is given suggestions for videos produced and published by right-wing extremist groups. Making use of YouTube as a channel for propaganda thus involves a risk of providing undesirable space for one’s adversaries, or that one’s films are places in an undesirable context.

### 5.9.1 Genres and messages in the video material

The video films included in the material touch exclusively on what in this report is categorized as external activities: demonstration films, action films, and confrontation films. On the other hand, no videos depicting internal activities (such as group activities, internal meetings, training films or the like) have been found. **Demonstration films** are primarily documentation of demonstrations (mostly with a focus on protest marches and banners, filmed speeches don’t occur), but where elements of confrontation with the police also occur. **Action films** often appear in the form of filmed action reports where actions and confrontations are documented with a video camera and presented together with a description of the purpose of the action and, often, a brief evaluation of its success. **Confrontation films** often consist of brief sequences depicting how political adversaries were attacked by activists, or skirmishes between police and demonstrators. An additional category prominent in the autonomist

---

milieu can be added to these genres: Mobilisation films. Askanius and Uldam (2011) have observed these mobilisation videos and their function in left activist milieux: films produces for the purpose of mobilising prior to a certain event, a demonstration or manifestation. These mobilisation videos are described as featuring dramatic sequences for the purpose of arousing an emotional response, where street violence takes on a nearly idealised and artistic form (Askanius & Uldam 2011:74). Their purpose is to raise morale and also to strengthen the feeling of belonging to a group.

Through studying YouTube videos with connections to the autonomist milieu, it is possible to identify a number of different types of message that in various ways refer to or justify a radical attitude in relation to violence as a political method. The division is analytical; a number of video films could be sorted into more than one category. The messages included in the analysis are (inspired by McCauley & Moskalenko 2008): messages referring to personal and collective victimisation (e.g. negative experiences of police violence); messages referring to political dissatisfaction; messages that normalise a radicalisation process; messages referring to group radicalisation and messages referring to a search for identity. In the last case, it may be justified to refer to the Security Service categorisation of paths into extreme and pro-violence milieux: the brooder’s path and thrill-seeker’s path (cf. Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009).

Messages that romanticise martyrdom or promise some sort of reward for the individual have a subordinate role in the material and is only partially commented on. On the other hand it may be of interest to discuss the absence of such messages in the material and put it in relation to material being investigated in other parts of the report – something that will be discussed later in the analysis.

**5.9.2 Popularity of the videos**

The most popular video found in the material is the demonstration video “Antifa Sweden” which, according to the description was produced by AFA Nyköping.\(^{152}\) It consists of a barely two-minute montage depicting demonstrations, riot scenes where activists attempt to break shop windows, and confrontations between demonstrators and the police. It has been viewed 98,128 times, which is a number that diverges from the rest of the video material by being remarkably high. It is also one of the few videos where the comment function is activated (1,082 comments as of 14 Mar 2013; many of these are in English, which indicates its audience is not limited to the Swedish milieu).

\(^{152}\) The clip was uploaded 5 September 2006 and has 98,128 viewings. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gb3fNqbnk0w (retrieved 14 Mar 2013).
Another popular video is the confrontation film “Fria nationalister konfronteras i Stockholm” 153 (Fria nationalister confronted in Stockholm), which depicts two activists from RF attacking and chasing off what are described as eight followers of Fria Nationalister at Sergels torg in Stockholm. The clip is almost two minutes long and does not contain an actual fight, but rather aggressive and threatening body language. The RF activists push their adversaries into the T-Centralen station, where they disappear down into the subway. Apart from being on the RF’s official channel, this video has also been uploaded to two other YouTube accounts. If the number of viewings for all three versions are added, the total figure is 39,822 viewings. Even if the video is not spectacular in the sense that it deals with a violent confrontation (even if it is a question of latent violence) the symbolism is clear: Here our adversaries are chased off the street with effective, tactical means – a triumph for street militancy as a method. Street militancy is a name for direct confrontations within militant anti-fascism where “a small, close-knit group with fighting experience” conducts “street fights with Nazis” (AFA3 Malmö 2005/2011:367). The obvious numerically disadvantageous position – two against eight – also contributes to the rhetoric of the video: With a conscious operation, it is possible to achieve success in the struggle on the streets and chase Nazis off. The strategy of striking a blow from a disadvantageous position manifests (masculine) values such as bravery and decisiveness (from one’s own side) at the same time as it underscores the adversary’s cowardice and pitableness.

The number of published videos is fairly equally distributed across the four genres, but seen from the number of viewings, confrontation and demonstration films are the most popular. On average, these videos have been shown six times as often as the action and mobilisation films. The mobilisation films are the least popular, both in number and in amount of viewings. Even if it is individual videos with many viewings (“Antifa Sweden” represents one-fifth of the number of viewings) that most influence the distribution, it is possible that the popularity of confrontation and demonstration films also has to do with their content, which often is spectacular and displays decisiveness and ability. Their function can also be said to be double: They both function as documents of events and gives those who were there something to fix their memories on, and those who weren’t there have the opportunity to get an idea of what took place. And they have a propagandistic function in that they show the group’s own capacity, to say nothing of the potential entertainment value in spectacular depictions of riots and street brawls, a form of evaluation that does not necessarily require identification with the ideological framework.

5.9.3 Repression and vulnerability

In one study of pro-violence radicalisation and hypermasculinity among Danish AFA activists, Christensen (2010) describes the personal experience of being subjected to violence from right-wing extremists or the police as a key to understanding pro-violence attitudes within the autonomist milieu. Confrontations with the police and documentation of police brutality have long been a theme for video activism and a motive for filming demonstrations (Harding 2001). Several of the video clips uploaded in connection with the Salem march describe how the police, in their mission to protect the right of right-wing extremists to demonstrate are equated with their adversaries, but there are also depictions of how the police act violently or in a threatening matter towards the demonstrators.

The confrontation film “Reclaim the Tracks (Salem 2010)”\(^{154}\) is an example that depicts how the police evict a group of counter-demonstrators from the commuter rail station in Älvsjö. It was filmed with a mobile phone camera by one of the demonstrators and lasts for approximately 6 minutes. During that time, the viewer follows how the police move the group from the platform, up the stairs to the ticket hall, and out through the turnstiles. Many protest against the heavy-handed treatments, and the police are made out to be fairly unreasonable. The description of the clip on YouTube reads as follows:

In a protest against the annual Salem march by Swedish neo-Nazis, the antifascists tried to stop the train that would bring the Nazis to Salem. But, as usual, the police will always try to stop peaceful demonstrations.\(^{155}\)

Even if the clip itself does not contain an explicit agenda — the video consists of raw, unedited, film without commentary — it can be seen in a context of victimisation where the actions of the police are interpreted as pro-fascist and where people who apparently are not guilty of any crime are subjected to heavy-handed, unfair treatment by the police. The rhetoric, or the implicit message in the video, can be summarised as “This is what happens when the police stop peaceful demonstrations” and gives a picture of an unreasonable absolute power who arbitrarily and summarily practice violence. Not only is the righteous antifascist struggle thwarted by the police; as an activist you also risk falling victim to police brutality. The clip contains no visible elements of violent actions from the activists’ side. It could be said that the video constitutes an example of an argument that validates the picture of the police as unfavourably disposed both on an individual level (individual peaceful activists are

\(^{154}\) The clip was uploaded 17 December 2010 and has 1,646 viewings.

\(^{155}\) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tOVFo8UrY (retrieved 21 Feb 2013).
subjected to unreasonable violence) and on the structural level (the police are protecting the real enemies of democracy).

On the other hand, the material contains no message referring to personal victimisation in the form of having been subjected to violence from political adversaries. On one level, violence is brought out as the major problem with fascist movements, but at the same time it seems as if the militant antifascist movement does not admit that they have been subjected to violence on a personal level. Film sequences depicting how activists are beaten by police are quite common, but it has not been possible to find any films that in a similar way depict how activists are victims of violence from neo-Nazis. On the other hand, it is possible to see the representation of the threat their adversaries comprise in more abstract terms of collective victimisation, or – as it is expressed in the mobilisation video “Väl mött i Salem 2007”: “Anti-fascism is always self-defence”. The video contains a slide-show depicting historical pictures from Nazi Germany alternating with contemporary pictures of neo-Nazi, as well as from demonstrations and confrontations. Using a number of tableaux, the militant antifascist struggle is justified by distilling it into a simple solution. In one of the introductory tableaux, this conclusion is summarised with the white text ANTIFASCISM IS ALWAYS SELF-DEFENCE against a black background. This tableau is followed by a still image depicting a city milieu illuminated by a red light, possibly a Bengal light. Above this picture is the following text, written in white on black subtitles:

Self-defence for immigrants.

Self-defence for gays and lesbians.

Self-defence for struggling workers, the unemployed, and students.

Self-defence for everyone who thinks we have something to win by changing the prevailing order.

Two types of victimisation can thus be understood from this example: On the one hand, personal victimisation linked to how peaceful demonstrators were subjected to harassment from the police. Here it is primarily particular individuals who appear as innocent targets for violent repression and who validate the idea that the police consistently go harder on left activists while they protect the right-wing extremist groups. On the other hand there is also collective victimisation, which observes a real threat from right-wing extremists and a kind of structural violence aimed at minorities and the

156 The clip was uploaded 4 December 2007 and has 2,217 viewings.

157 Ibid.
socially disfavoured, structurally inferior groups. In the latter case it does not happen that particular individuals fall victim to violence (e.g. activists being abused by right-wing extremists) but are dealt with on an abstract level. In connection with this, it can also be noted how the message quoted above illustrates how solidarising is not only limited to their own group, which is the case with the race ideological milieu where “we” is limited to “Swedes”, or the jihadist milieu which differentiates between believers and infidels. In this case, the struggle is also waged for those who do not explicitly support a socialist ideology but who fall victim to the negative effects of capitalism.

5.9.4 Political decisiveness

Sometimes there are videos that depict actions or put forward arguments that can clearly be placed in the framework of political work, or that refer to political dissatisfaction. In the case of the autonomist left, there is no clear distinction between the political and everyday experience. Films with messages that refer to political dissatisfaction are anchored in a broader criticism of society. This criticism is partially formulated in terms of structural violence: Immigration policy contributes to people being deported to countries where they risk being subjected to violence or death; sexism and the exploitation of women’s bodies in public spaces results in repression of women’s opportunities and rights; the exploitation of labour power and the weak position of employees on the labour market create social inequality.

An example of a video that clearly refers to political dissatisfaction is the action film “Aktion mot bemanningsföretaget Lärarjouren”. The video is in black and white and equipped with a filter that makes the image blurred and grainy; it is difficult to tell what is going on. The text in the graphics indicate that the clip depicts an action against the offices of the Lärarjouren temp agency. As an introduction, we see a person writing “Slavedriver” using spray paint. Afterwards, it’s not possible to clearly make anything out, but the sound track contains the sounds of glass being broken.

Above a grainy, black-and-white photo depicting a person scrawling “Slavedriver” on a wall, the following text appears in white:

    Temp agencies...

    a dirty industry

158 The clip was uploaded 7 April 2012 and has 1,176 viewings.
that exploits workers

Ban

temp slavery!

On March 26, 2012, we visited

the temp agency

LÄRARJOUREN

[the world “FIFFLAR” (“cheater”) appears in red text over “LÄRAR-” (teacher) in the above so that it forms “FIFFLARJOUREN”]

This was

A warning

To “Lärarjouren”

We see you!

REVOLUTIONÄRA FRONTEN

The video clip is supplemented with a press release published in connection with the video on YouTube:

Offices of the Lärarjouren temp agency attacked by Revolutionära fronten

Press release:

On the night of March 26, 2012, Revolutionära fronten attacked Lärarjouren’s office at Stockholm University. Their windows were smashed and messages spray-painted on the walls.

Lärarjouren is a temp agency dedicated to exploiting young people. They profit from young people’s vulnerable situation on the labour market, and can thus pay low wages and have terrible working conditions.

Lärarjouren is a part of the temp worker industry, an industry that chiefly employs groups of workers that are most poorly positioned on the labour market. We find this situation unacceptable, and for this reason we are conducting a campaign against temp agencies.
We are for a safe, fair labour market where temp agencies are forbidden. This action was a part of this work.

We have previously taken action against similar cheaters, and we will continue to do so in the future.

Reinstate the ban on temp agencies!159

In this case there is a political message that cannot be described as extreme or anti-democratic. On the other hand, the action as such is a violation of the law and breach of democratic rules of conduct. The action turns political dissatisfaction grounded in a structural analysis into direct action. What is of interest here is that the use of violent direct actions as a method for combating the temp worker industry and pushing through the demand for reinstating a ban on temp agencies is not justified. Violence as a method of struggle is usually otherwise accompanied by a type of political and philosophical explication where the advantages are weighed against the disadvantages. When various groups in the early 1990s, for example, encouraged sabotage of the “Yes to EU” campaign offices around Sweden, this was justified by wanting to even out the economic inequalities between the “Yes” and “No” campaigns (where the “Yes” supporters had clearly more resources than their adversaries). The attack on Lärarjouren’s offices, however, were not accompanied by any such rationalisation. The action is described as part of larger campaign work, but a more detailed discussion of how this exact type of action advances the overall struggle is not brought up in connection with the film. Lärarjouren as a target is also interesting, as its activities do not have an immediate or clear link to the working class. On the other hand, there is a clear reference that it is young people the action addresses itself to. Temp agencies are said to profit from the vulnerable situation of young people on the labour market.

Politically motivated dissatisfaction is also used as an argument in a mobilisation video published prior to the Reclaim the Streets street party in Malmö in connection with the 2008 European Social Forum (ESF). The clip consists of a montage of film sequences with superimposed graphics in the form of various exhortations. The message brought out can be summarised as populist: it contrasts a distant political elite (illustrated with pictures of politicians like Eskil Erlandsson and Mona Sahlin) with the daily experience of being short on money (“Tired of being broke?”) and difficult working conditions (“Tired of being pushed around at your job?”). An invitation to take part in the RTS street party on 19 September 2008 in Malmö follows to “show who power belongs to: us!”, and it

159 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZU5i6ysfxg (retrieved 21 Feb 2013).
concludes with a montage of demonstration videos from different parts of the world, blending violent confrontations with more carnival-like elements.

As an introduction, a picture of agriculture minister Eskil Erlandsson at the rostrum in Parliament is shown, with the text:

    THIS IS ONE OF THE IDIOTS WHO WANT TO RUN YOUR LIFE

    WWW.ESF2008ACTION.NET [yellow] GATUFEST 19/9! [pink] [these texts on the lower edge remain throughout the film]

This is followed by a picture of Mona Sahlin and a clip depicting a panel of politicians sitting on a podium.

    TIRED OF POLITICIANS WHO ARE TEN THOUSAND KILOMETRES AWAY FROM YOUR LIFE BEING THE ONES WHO DECIDE FOR YOU?

    […]

    ON SEPTEMBER 19, 2008

    WE WANT TO SHOW THEM WHO POWER SHOULD BELONG TO:

    US!!160

After a rhetorical “we” has been constructed, a visual interpretation follows of how this “we” takes shape in the form of protest marches, scenes of riots, and carnival processions. The dramaturgy of the clip has major similarities with another mobilisation video published in connection with the 2009 climate summit in Copenhagen (COP 15) – “War on Capitalism”161 – which was analysed by Askanius & Uldam (2011). It was introduced in the same way, by establishing a problem in the form of a self-contained political establishment that ignores injustices and the needs and interests of normal people. “War on Capitalism” thereby builds up a background of political inability and a lack of interest in getting at the roots of the climate problems, which are identified as a result of capitalism.

160 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPOb8n41Gz0 (retrieved 21 Feb 2013) The clip was uploaded to YouTube on 26 August 2008 and has 4,888 viewings.

161 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWEzLoUgXw0 (retrieved 21 Feb 2013). The clip was uploaded to YouTube on 22 November 2009 and has 9,682 viewings.
Above a photo of inner-city Copenhagen is the text:

COP 15 WILL TRY

TO GET CAPITALISM BACK ON TRACK

This is followed by a photo depicting an activist’s face wearing a black mask and a folded-up, black hood. Only the eyes are visible, and their gaze is fixed directly into the camera. Above the photo is the text:

WE DON’T

What follows thereafter is a montage of pictures from riots and demonstrations to the sounds of pop band Franz Ferdinand’s song “This Fire”, with the suggestive (in this context) refrain “This fire is out of control/I’m going to burn this city, burn this city”. In contrast to many of the other films included in the material, “War on Capitalism” is more stylistically elaborate. The montage and graphics appear as soberly, carefully composed, while the “Street Party” video brings out its populist message with graphics in garish colours. Comparing the “War on Capitalism” video with the “Street Party” video further, the latter has an almost libertarian, or individualist, political message (“they” want to control “your” life) that does not develop its political analysis or identify a concrete societal problem in the same way the former does. The street party announced thus appears only indirectly anchored in a structural criticism of society, and seems more to be an opportunity to manifest general dissatisfaction.

Who is the implicit viewer in these mobilisation videos? Both are built on the establishment of a “we” that the viewer is given the opportunity to identify with, and both are framed by a political criticism where the manifestation announced is presented as a political demonstration of power. The political establishment is distant and lacks democratic legitimacy, since the decisions they make are far away from the reality of their citizens (“ten thousand kilometres from your life”), or are allied with the capitalist system (“will try to get capitalism back on track”). In reality, the action or space for action that the mobilisation video announces requires no deeper political analysis than dissatisfaction, which can be assumed to appeal to a broader audience than just a core of activists.

5.9.5 Images of adversaries

The research on political radicalisation speaks of a normalisation process where a radical attitude such as a stance on violence as a legitimate political method is gradually normalised. One well-documented example is in the form of cultural violence such as the use of dehumanising language where political adversaries are labelled with diverse derogatory nicknames and construed as
undesirable elements. For the autonomist milieu, as for the left in general, the adversary is an often abstract system rather than an ethnic group. Their militancy is ultimately directed against a structure, not against people. This hostile structure is at times given human shape in the form of fascism or Nazism, or as representatives of government authority, primarily the police. The normalisation process is linked to what was described by way of introduction as cultural violence, and to messages that refer to direct violence.

In the “Salem 08” mobilisation video\(^{162}\) there is a sequence where the police are described as the protectors of the neo-Nazis, and pictures of uniformed and plain-clothes police are fitted with cross-hairs, as if they were filmed through a sniper’s scope. The sequence is begin with a photo where plain-clothes police in a line and a police van are filmed through cross-hairs. At the lower edge of the screen some texts slides across:

\[
\text{Cops…u gotta love em…fuck it}
\]

In the next sequence, six men (plain-clothes) are filmed through the same cross-hairs. On the lower edge is the text:

\[
\text{ACAB ALL COPS ARE BASTERDS}
\]

Even if the added effect seems meant to be perceived as ironic, it reflects an attitude that could be an example of how the police, through an example of cultural violence, are normalised as a legitimate target. The acronym ACAB – which stands for “All Cops are Bastards” – has its origins in the British skinhead culture and is found in several subcultures. Elements hostile to the police are found in hip-hop (“Fuck the Police” and “Fuck Aina”), and in punk (e.g. band names such as Snutslakt ['Cop Slaughter'] or MDC – Millions of Dead Cops). In football fan culture, there is also a similar antipathy towards the police. In light of this spread of meanings and contexts where the police are seen as an enemy, it is possible that there is not only a political motive behind negative representations of the police; it can to some extent also be understood from a symbolic and cultural perspective where the expression signals a general dissatisfaction with the police rather than an ideological positioning.

Even here, one can speak of the tension between a counter-culture that categorically fosters antipathy towards a police power that defends its own activities, and a social movement that, similar to the activists Christensen (2010) interviewed, based on its own experiences of police violence in

\(^{162}\) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAL1fGspY (retrieved 21 Feb 2013). The clip was uploaded to YouTube on 12 January 2009 and has 5,903 viewings.
connection with peaceful demonstrations, developed a hostile attitude to the police. The police are also in the way of, and restrains what is perceived as a legitimate resistance to the enemies of democracy.

Another example of video clips that refer to a normalisation process are the action films that document home visits to representatives of neo-Nazi organisations. Often, these videos depict how masked activists vandalize the victim’s house, followed by a threatening greeting or warning and a summary of the action. The “Kristallnacht 2009” video, uploaded by Revfront Media, films a masked offender spraying graffiti on the outer door and stairwell in a block of rental apartments where an alleged neo-Nazi resides. A person clad in a black hoodie with the hood up spray-paints “The Nazi [Name] lives here.” on a wall; the same person gets into the stairwell and writes “Nazi apartment ->” on the wall. The whole thing concludes with the person chopping the victim’s outer door three times with an axe and writing “Next time we’re coming in”.

“Nazi” is perhaps not an example of the use of directly dehumanising language, but it is an abusive word that can be socially stigmatising, which is why within the right-wing extremist milieu it is common to describe oneself rather as a “national socialist” or “Sweden-friendly” (cf. Ekman’s contribution to this report). One part of the method of militant anti-fascism amounts to revealing and naming one’s adversaries as Nazis and fascists, which not only plays on the social stigmatisation that being exposed as a Nazi entails, but also makes them a more legitimate target for actions. When a person calls him- or herself a nationalist, it can be perceived as an expression of a personal stance – an attitude. Saying someone is a Nazi instead makes the person a representative of a system, and an attack on that person becomes an attack on that system.

One example of where actions directed at particular individuals is rooted in a narrative of fascism as the result of a societal structure can be found in a video clip produced by AFA Göteborg where members of Fria Nationalister Göteborg are exposed as Nazis in their neighbourhoods. Posters and stickers are put up in the area with the name and picture of those so pointed out, and various slogans were spray-painted on houses and cars.

The video begins with a sequence filmed through the windshield of a car driving along a road in the dark. The following text appears in a white graphic:

163 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ivTydMXdpQ (retrieved 21 Feb 2013). The clip was uploaded 4 May 2010 and has 2,107 viewings.

164 The name given has been removed in this report.
FNG [Fria Nationalister Göteborg] is a product of a class society that creates hate and frustration. The only way to stop them and other right-wing groups over the long term is to create a classless socialist society where folk do not feel the need to resort to simple solutions to explain their vulnerability. But for those who have chosen sides, it is already too late.

In this quote, the structural explanations for fascism and Nazism are underscored, and the actual cause for their existence is placed in the prevailing political system. It concludes, however, by pointing out that despite fascism having structural causes and that actual resistance must be carried out on the structural level, there is still reason to conduct the fight against particular individuals – those who have chosen sides do not appear as victims of a structure but as operating actors entities whose deeds make them legitimate targets.

In these films, both the police and neo-Nazis are turned into representatives of the structure or the system they are battling. The normalisation process can be understood as a process where these elements are reduced to parts of a destructive system – and at the same time are a place where the abstract system or structure can be attacked. There is a long-term solution to the threat of fascism, but it can be combated already, here and now.

5.9.6 “Us” and “them”

A recurring theme in the pro-violence section of the autonomist movement is romanticising the power in the collective. Most video clips in the material depict collective actions and there is rarely any idealising of the “lone hero” (the warrior, the martyr and the like). Instead solidarisation with marginalised groups is advocated – a solidarising that can assume the character of a fetish where categories such as working class, or immigrant and working-class youth, become a kind of projection surface to which radical qualities can be ascribed and which are assumed to give expression to a genuine class dissatisfaction. They are also groups that are subjected to structural violence in the form of social marginalisation and discrimination.

The term “group radicalisation” is sometimes used to describe how a smaller group, through a perceived or actual threat, becomes more and more willing to resort to violence. Central to the rhetoric for the messages that refer to this type of radicalisation is the construction of an “us” and a “them” where forces are measured and assessed.

165 The exact title of this film has been lost, and it has not been possible to find the video on YouTube. It has, however, been saved. It has either been taken down from YouTube, or this is an example of how difficult it can be to find material using the search function.
One example of how “us” and “them” are established in connection with solidarising with vulnerable groups is found in the demonstration and confrontation video “Demonstration mot nazister i Göteborg 2011”. The majority of the film consists of material from a demonstration depicting people who are alternately walking and running. The elements of violence that exist in the clip are above all confrontations with the police, in the form of rocks being thrown at police vehicles. The tableaux with text indicate that a large part of the people seen in the pictures are not only activists but “other workers, and immigrant and working-class youth”.

After a sequence depicting a black-and-white photo of a protest march, there is a tableau of white text on a black background:

When the Nazis arrived at their endpoint after considerable delay and began speaking, activists from RF, other workers and immigrant and working-class youth made their way up Ramberget so they could rush down towards the Nazis. Even this time, the police were in the way and defended the fascists with dog patrols and night sticks.

After a while down at the police barricades, two or three hundred immigrant and working-class youth started moving away towards Hjalmar Brantingsplatsen, as it was seen that the Nazis were going there after their demonstration; RF activists followed, of course, and after a couple of rushes on the back streets of Kville, the whole group went over the pedestrian bridge at Lundbyleden. Once in position, there was a rush for the mosque area in order to be able to intercept the Nazis.

These tableaux alternate with sequences where people are running and individual demonstrators throw rocks at a parked police van. The video concludes with the following tableau:

Despite the fact that the Nazis were able to have their demonstration, it can be seen as a victory for the anti-fascist movement which could mobilise the working class from the suburbs and together try to find Nazis for confrontation.

We of Revolutionära fronten do not think much of those who believe that fascism is best fought with music, speeches, prayers, or clowning around. We must learn from history and strike hard and mercilessly to remove the elements that want to split our class. As a certain Adolf Hitler said:

“Only one thing could have stopped our movement – if our adversaries had understood its principles and from the first day smashed with the utmost brutality the nucleus of the movement.”

The concluding tableau describes how the violence, threats, and hate that fascism is said to advocate is best battled with the same type of mercilessness. They refer to a Hitler quote, the content of which is that the Nazi movement only could have been crushed if it had been met early on with “the utmost
brutality”. This reflects what Christensen (2010) described from Danish AFA activists where the violence of right-wing extremists is portrayed as abhorrent while at the same time a similar type of pro-violence rhetoric is adopted. This is underscored by ascribing to Hitler – perhaps the greatest symbol of the ideological enemy – a correct analysis of the necessity of political violence.

In the “Väl mött i Salem 2007!” mobilisation video already referred to, there is rhetoric that refers to the group’s own power in relation to one (or rather two) adversaries, here identified as “Nazis and police”. Above a colour photo with Stockholm’s Old Town in the background, where activists are seen arranged in ranks and holding shields with the AFA emblem on them, there is text that reads:

We don’t stand in the way of the police and Nazis because we are tough. We are tough, but that is absolutely not the point.

The argument in this example actually says two things: That there is a mobilisation and preparation for violent confrontation, both in the text that explains that they stand in the way of elements with a documented history of violence, and in the picture of the armed antifascists, but also that there is a higher purpose – “the point” – that rationalises the use of violence to apply to self-defence (they bear shields, not weapons). This self-defence (which is discussed under the section “Repression and vulnerability” above) can also be understood from a perspective of group radicalisation. When “we” are under further threat, it is justified to gather our forces for protection against that threat.

5.9.7 Martyrdom and rewards

Being a martyr for left politics is not something that is actively encouraged in the material being studied. On the other hand it is pointed out how people have fallen victim to right-wing extremist violence (e.g. the syndicalist Björn Söderström, who was murdered by a neo-Nazi in 1999). What is worth noting is that these cases are not, however, brought up to advocate martyrdom as an ideal worthy of striving for; they are rather used as warning examples that the fascist threat should be taken seriously (and used, by extension, as proof that bourgeois democracy is compliant when faced with this threat).

In the international milieu, however, memorial videos and tributes to young activists killed by the police are fairly common (Askanius 2012a, 2012b). But even in these typical martyr films, the theme is the innocent victim of violent repression, rather than the lone hero’s honourable death for the

167 The emblem, which is found internationally, consists of a stylized picture of a black flag and a red flag within a circle.
cause. Martyrdom is therefore linked more with narratives of vulnerability and repression (collective and personal victimisation) than with a self-sacrificing ideal.

It’s not really possible to talk about any rewards for the individual as a recruitment strategy in the autonomist milieu. There are no explicit references to what the individual could earn from joining a pro-violence autonomist movement. The strong emphasis on collectivism and the absence of formal leaders also means that individual status does not appear in the propaganda material either. The emphasis on acts and direct action also gives very little space to description of a future goal. When a “future classless and socialist society” is described, it’s not primarily to draw the picture of a utopian state of things. There are no vivid descriptions in the style of promises of what would come “after the revolution”.

5.9.8 Self-reflectivity and humour

No films with direct humorous elements similar to those produce in the race ideological milieu have been found in the material. This is not to say that the material lacks humour. Often, this refers to media images of “left-wing extremist perpetrators” and has a clear self-reflective element. One example from the riots in Copenhagen in connection with the eviction from Ungdomshuset is the banner activists hung up on the front of the building with the text:

COPENHAGEN MUNICIPALITY OFFERS

FOR SALE

INCLUDES:

500 STONE-THROWING AUTONOMOUS VIOLENT PSYCHOPATHS

FROM

HELL! (Karpantschof & Lindblom 200):112.168

168 “500 Stone-Throwing Autonomist Violent Psychopaths From Hell” is also the title of a documentary film on Ungdomshuset produced in 2006.
A video that combines a humorous appeal with a type of identity maintenance is the “Antifa Heroes” mobilisation video, which is built on an advertising film from Coca-Cola where a montage of film sequences (which look like family videos and Super 8 films from children’s parties, and so on) with children in superhero costumes playing to the sounds of David Bowie’s “Heroes”. The clip alternates with tableaux containing the following text: “We have all been heroes/Do you remember what it was like?/Feeling powerful/Without fear/Being one of the good guys/Where did that costume end up?/Because it’s time to put it on”. After the last of these tableaux is shown, the original continuation of the advertising film is replaced with a montage of film sequences from protest marches and confrontations between antifascist activists and police. They appear to have been taken from various parts of Europe (the languages on the banners vary) but the last scene, which depicts gross abuse, is from an event in Gothenburg (it appears in the AFA/RF video “6/6 2008”) and was part of the evidence in a trial regarding abuse in connection with confrontations between a neo-Nazi group and members in antifascist groupings (GP 14 Dec 2009, p. 6). The sequence mentioned depicts five persons (four of whom are masked) with weapons standing around a man lying on the ground with his legs drawn up and his hands on his head. It is not apparent from the clip, but the person being subjects to violence belongs to the right-wing extremist organisation Göteborgs Fria Nationalister. The clip is followed by a tableau of white text on a red background:

The world needs us

The tableau is followed by the AFA emblem (without text).

In its original form, the advertisement film refers to feelings of sentimentality and nostalgia. The Antifa Heroes version can be described as culture jamming – a form of media activism where pop culture and commercial texts are recoded with new, subversive messages, often in a playful or ironic manner (Lasn 1999; Lievrouw 2011). Making use of advertising campaigns in particular with a vigorously formulated message or a slogan that is re-contextualised in order to lead into association paths that criticise commercialism and capitalism. The nostalgic appeal “We have all been heroes” and so on, in its new meaning, suggests that the implicit observer is someone who has had a past as a

169 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYq4OR6WYsM (retrieved 21 Feb 2013.) The clip was uploaded to YouTube on 27 July 2012 and has 224 viewings. In the information to the film there are addresses for stoppaedl.org – a campaign mobilised prior to the EDL demonstration in Stockholm on August 4, 2012. The address now leads to motkraf.net.

170 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxPUrRMgRU&list=UUg1KNmDifl-kKJkws5EqMwuA&index=5 (retrieved 21 Feb 2013). The clip was uploaded 4 May 2010 and has 2,296 viewings.
militant antifascist – perhaps one of those who participated in the battle for the streets in the 1990s, but who has now left militancy behind. It is to this implicit viewer that the message is directed: It's time to resume the fight.

Even if it is expressed with an element of irony in this context, “The world needs us” is a message that seems to coincide with the self-understanding of militant anti-fascism. The humoristic appeal also contrasts sharply with the extraordinarily brutal abuse that concludes the video montage. The AFA network arose so as to present a strategic resistance to the mobilisation of neo-Nazi groups that was taking place across the country in the 1990s. The perception was that the rest of society did not recognize or was unable to meet this threat effectively, which is why militant anti-fascism was needed.

Another way of using humour is to dub videos with music that in different ways (preferably ironically) contrasts with the events being depicted. Examples of this can be found in the action video “Jag ska måla hela världen” (I’ll Paint the Whole World)171 which, according to the description, was produced by AFA Uppsala and depicts how the home of an outed Nazi has its windows painted over with house paint and two activists deface the front of the house to the sounds of the childrens’ song “Jag ska måla hela världen lilla mamma” with Anita Hegerland. This type of humorous element may possibly be understood not only as an expression of reflectivity and self-perspective, but also as a way of normalising provocative actions. By surrounding the activity with a humoristic or ironic appeal, it appears to a greater extent as a prank rather than as an aggressive act.

5.10 Categories of message in the video material

In the pro-violence messages linked to the autonomist milieu that can be found on the Internet there are both cultural violence and messages that refer to direct violence, even if there are few elements of direct encouragement to the individual to commit specific violent acts. More often, the depictions of violence assume the form of cultural violence, where violent confrontations are normalised or made legitimate in light of a structuralist analysis of power where political violence is split into two categories: Structural violence “from above” directed, for example, towards minorities, which can be described in terms of repression; and which is met by direct violence “from below” directed at power, which is characterized as resistance (cf. Peterson 2001:46). The elements tolerant of violence interpret it as a form of resistance, or self-defence, legitimised through structural inequality.

171 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTOvbE8va8M (retrieved 21 Feb 2010). The clip was uploaded 1 June 2009 and has 25,791 viewings.
The majority of the material that refers to direct violence is linked to a militant antifascist struggle. There, violence is not only an expression of resistance against oppression and structural repression justified from a moral viewpoint, but also an effective means to induce fascists and neo-Nazis to give up their activities. The use of violence is legitimized through their adversaries threatening democracy as an idea; it can be spoken of in terms of a “pragmatic” use of violence.

5.10.1 Pragmatic violence
In a context where violence is regarded as an effective method of struggle, a rhetorical framework that might be called pragmatic pro-violence develops – that is, a way of describing actions with elements of violence as primarily tactical efforts where the emotional aspects are played down. From this perspective, violence is not a goal in itself but has the characteristic of a necessary evil.

It is also described as that violence is not a moralistic, but a tactical question. The choice to make use of violence as a method of struggle is nothing that grew out of a theoretical discussion but is something that is known to be effective from reliable experience. When the question of violence is reduced to being a tactical question, it appears that violence is only there because it is does some good, and other methods could just as well be used if they were equally effective. The type of pressure methods covered by pragmatic violence are also justified by the fact that those who become targets for it (especially persons involved in the organised race ideological milieu) in turn form a threat against democracy as an idea. What seem to be anti-democratic methods actually aim at defending democracy.

It is primarily action videos and confrontation videos that have elements of tactical, rational violence. In the action videos are scenes from “home visits” where the adversary’s home and property are vandalised; in confrontation videos a smaller group of activists go on the attack against one or two representatives of the adversaries. The attacks are portrayed as well-thought-out and specifically directed.

5.10.2 Affective violence
In parallel with tactical, pragmatic violence there are also portrayals that to a greater degree are designed to trigger an emotional response. In one web shop, there is the film Code Red, which is offered with the following description:
This movie contains one hour of leftwing riot. Watch riots from Gothenburg - Sweden, Genoa - Italy and much more. Follow the black block fighting the police and burning the property of the rich. Straight riot and pure hardcore to the sound of rock n roll music.\footnote{http://www.bokcafet.se/?p=productsMore&iProduct=15 (retrieved 21 Feb 2013).}

This can be described more as an affective riot romance than a critical analysis and evaluation of the success of actions with elements of violence. It is naturally difficult to ascribe meanings to depictions of violence as if they glorify violence or advocate violence as a method; since there are no reception studies on this material, all claims to say something about how the messages are in fact perceived by a viewer are purely speculative. On the other hand, it is possible to interpret the framework the film receives through the quote as a type of glorification of political violence where the focus is directed at the action itself rather than at its ideological meaning.

Some of the mobilisation videos that have been discussed have elements of this form of romanticising violent riots. Sequences from various events are often clipped together in a montage that is set to hard music – hardcore punk, for example. In Security Service terminology, the term thrill-seeker, is used to explain the path of certain individuals into a pro-violence political milieu. Parts of the mobilisation videos, and the description of the film *Code Red* above could be interpreted as a form of expression constructed to appeal to this type of motivation.

### 5.10.3 The importance of not being seen

Large parts of the video material show masked activists acting in a group. Both the actions that appear coordinated and those that are more chaotic offer an opportunity for viewers to identify themselves with the faceless, anonymous activists. The balaclava is a well-established symbol for subversive politics, and how these symbols are played on can be seen both in “War on Capitalism”, where the message “We Don’t” is illustrated by an masked activist gazing sharply into the camera, and in RadikalDISTRO’s masked models. During the 1990s masks, secrecy, and anonymity were subjects of debate in the extra-parliamentary movement. Criticism concerned the fact that masks got in the way of reaching out with the message, while defenders pointed to the security risk in conducting antifascist struggle if one’s identity became known.

In Peterson’s (2001) study of militant political activism in the 1990s, the polemic between an open, peaceful struggle based on principles of non-violence and a closed, secretive, violent struggle on the other was discussed. She cites movement researcher Stellan Vinthagen (1996) who, in an article in *Syndikalisten* that attracted great attention, likened AFA to a terrorist organisation based just on their secretive approach. Peterson develops a discussion on the significance of secrecy for forming a
collective identity in AFA and DBF, citing activists who describe how the groups in the autonomist milieu aren’t interested at all in reaching out to outsiders with propaganda: The purpose of web communications is not to recruit new activists, in contrast to the fascists who consciously address themselves to curious youth (Peterson 2001:153). In light of such statements, it is hardly surprising that the pro-violence autonomist milieu on the Internet is quite small. Effort is put into mobilisation rather than recruitment, and to the extent they turn outward and direct their message to others outside the milieu it is often to manifest decisiveness towards their adversaries.

Nor should the significance of the function of anonymity or facelessness for a kind of identity creation be underestimated. In a sense, the masked demonstrators and the blurred-out faces in the video clip say to the already initiated: “We” know who “we” are, but for others “we” are a faceless mass; there is also the opportunity to act without being seen: “we see you” is a recurring phrase. The faceless mass offers the possibility of a kind of collective identification, but also a way to take an attitude to a mass media stereotype of rock-throwing left extremism it can be profitable to speak ironically about; it also offers the opportunity to negotiate identity and resistance from outside. Research into youth culture and identity has brought out how such negotiation practices grow in structurally subordinate groups – for example, how young men play on the expectations and prejudices of the world around them on the stereotype of “immigrant boy” (cf. Jonsson 2007).

Anonymity also entails a lack of explicit representatives among the groups associated with the autonomist milieu, and it is very difficult as an outsider to form an image of who the members are, how many they are, and so forth. The strength in anonymity lies in being able to appear bigger, stronger, and more widespread in society than you actually are.

5.10.4 Police as enemy

How is an enemy constructed when it is the structure that is responsible for evil? As was indicated by the review above, it is often the police who are portrayed as the closest adversary to activists in the autonomist movement. Several levels of causes for the antagonism can be found here: On an ideological level, the police serve the prevailing order and are thereby set up to defend the interests of the ruling class; on a concrete level, the police are ordered out to protect right-wing extremist demonstrations, which is interpreted to mean they seem to be the lackeys of fascism; and on a personal level where individual experiences of harassment from individual officers becomes part of a narrative about the police’s negative attitudes to left sympathisers, youth, and minorities.

The police also appear as an entity that hinders people’s own actions (e.g. Reclaim the Streets). If the various roles of the police are put together – they protect the public demonstrations of right-wing
extremist groups, they come down hard on counter-demonstrators who have gathered in connection with the right-wing extremists’ demonstrations, and they come down hard on our own gatherings and demonstrations – a unified image of an antipathic police force emerges.

5.10.5 Identity and masculinity

The web material included in this study displays no explicit references to an idealised masculinity but there are elements, above all in confrontation and action films, of a masculine coded rhetoric where their own forces are held out and contrasted with their adversaries, who in turn are portrayed as cowardly and indecisive. The emphasis on devotion and loyalty to the group, as well as identification with a collective (e.g. the working class) can also be read as masculine coded qualities. As also mentioned in the analysis of the web material, there are elements that refer to the experience of personal victimisation (police violence).

On the other hand, there is no material that expressly portrays the internal activities within the group or that refers to any homosocial masculine community. What type of relations can be found within the milieu remains a secret that is only shared by those already initiated. It is also interesting to note this absence of message referring to community from a recruitment perspective, since the material gives few clues for the answer to the question of what the pro-violence autonomist milieu offers to prospective sympathisers. Nor is there anything that refers to status or rewards for the individual, either in the form of direct validation or in descriptions of any coming utopian socialist society.

5.11 Conclusions and summarising discussion

The purpose of this subsidiary study has been to describe the occurrence of anti-democratic and pro-violence messages in the autonomist milieu on the Internet. The questions that governed the investigation were formulated as follows: How is the Internet and social media used in the milieu? How are the pro-violence messages formulated? Which mechanisms for radicalisation do the messages refer to? Due to the informal structure of the object of investigation – loose networks and action names rather than formal organisations – the majority of the study ended up analysing in detail the categories of anti-democratic and pro-violence messages that are found on the video Web site, YouTube.

5.11.1 Conclusions

The first stage discussed the existence of an autonomist “scene” on the Internet. This review of a few web sites shows that an estimate of the visitor statistics for web sites identified as central for the milieu is relatively low as regards daily visits. In addition, the networks and action names associated
with the pro-violence section of the autonomist milieu in Sweden display no unified strategy as regards presence and working on the Internet: AFA is barely represented and the DBF web site displays no activity, while RF has an active organisation page and is active on social media.

A reasonable conclusion of these observations is that the Internet does not constitute a prioritised arena for disseminating propaganda or recruiting to pro-violence autonomist groupings. Based on earlier research into autonomist milieux, the causes of why it looks like this can be sough in at least three possible explanations:

The autonomist groups are not interested in disseminating propaganda in order to recruit followers. Peterson’s (2001) study, which was based on interviews with militant activists in the 1990s, showed that propaganda was something associated with the extreme right-wing milieu and that acting without being seen was prioritised.

The autonomist groups avoid the Internet and social media since they do not want to generate profits for multinational businesses that they argue profit from free labour power. In addition, there is limited control over the material published on the Net. YouTube films, for example, open them up to undesirable comments in the comment field, just as the films risk ending up in contexts they were not intended for.

The autonomist groups avoid the internet and social media so as not to facilitate monitoring and mapping of their activities. Askanius (2010:34) cites an English activist who, speaking about making use of Facebook, argues that “it’s like holding all your political meetings at McDonald’s while making sure that the police are there filming the whole time”.

In the video material, there are four genres of activist films with different senders within the autonomist milieu: demonstration videos, action videos, confrontation videos and mobilisation videos. Many of these have links to militant anti-fascism, above all those published in connection with counter-demonstrations against the Nazi marches in Salem in the 200s, or actions and confrontations with individually organised right-wing extremists. Certain actions with elements of violence (vandalism) with a political motive were found.

As the task included describing how radicalisation processes can come about, the video material was analysed based on how messages referred to different mechanisms for radicalisation, based on a categorisation inspired by McCauley and Moskalenko (2008). In summary, the following can be said about these messages:
In connection with demonstration and mobilisation videos, sequences recur where the actions of the police appear as brutal and arbitrary and where individual (peaceful) protesters fall victim to heavy-handed treatment. There are also elements of a kind of collective victimisation where structural violence in society is portrayed as a threat against minorities and socially disadvantaged groups. In action reports and mobilisation videos, a dissociated political elite and ruthless exploitation of labour power is portrayed, which justifies direct action and acts.

Mobilisation videos, action reports and demonstration films contained elements of construing adversaries as legitimate targets. Since the milieu is built on an analysis where, ultimately, the structure and parts of the societal system are the enemy, the system needs to be allowed to take concrete shape in order to justify direct action or targets for action. The clearest example is attacks against individual neo-Nazis who, in their capacity as individuals, can stand as representative of the undesirable, but police can also be a representative for repression by the establishment and a protector of the forces of the extreme right wing.

The collective is the chief entity in the material. Lone heroes or strong leaders are not found, and in those cases where action reports document actions carried out by particular individuals, they are masked or anonymised so that they appear as faceless parts of a larger mass. The emphasis on the collective also contains solidarising with other groups such as “workers” and “immigrant and working-class youth”. Since the milieu is collective, there is no glorification of martyrdom. Those who fell victim to right-wing extremist violence or state repression are kept in memory, but as innocent victims of violence and hate. Anonymity and secrecy around actions and activities also means that, at least outwardly, no personal gain for the individual is referred to. Nor is any insight into internal activities provided.

Within the milieu, there is an ambition to distance themselves from identity politics and lifestyle politics, which are perceived as a sign of superficial involvement. At the same time, the autonomist milieu offers several elements of style and identity creation that are recognisable from subcultures that emphasise style. In the visual material, there is uniformity of style that finds expression in clothes and symbols. There is also a self-reflectivity in relation to style and identity that finds expression in certain ironic elements such as the slogan “No class - just style” or the use of masked models. The well-used stereotype in the mass media of a rock-throwing masked activist becomes a type of empty signifier than can be played with in a symbolic game of identity and resistance.

Since the milieu, broadly, consists of informal, loosely coherent, non-hierarchichal networks, it is also difficult to form an image of any coherent world view. Even if there may well be informal leadership figures in the network, there are no clear interpreters of ideological messages to side with. Many
times, the message has an anonymous or collective sender. In addition, we see that an overall vision of a desirable society is played down; instead, focus often lies on short-sightedly formulated goals where action is placed in a larger context, but without any developed discussion conducted around how they play into a struggle to bring about radical social change. What, then, does the pro-violence autonomist milieu offer, based on the messages analysed in this material?

Firstly, an emphasis on decisiveness can be understood: Through direct actions and confrontations, political dissatisfaction can be channelled through a concrete operation.

Secondly, it offers a political analysis, even if it is no complete world view. The political analysis that exists in the material emphasises personal experience and places it into a structural context.

Thirdly, it can speak of the possibility of identifying oneself with a progressive struggle, a collective power that offers resistance to repression by the powers that be and battles the forces that threaten democracy as an idea.

Based on this investigation, two conflicting tendencies can be distinguished in terms of visibility and propaganda: One tendency means that the Internet is abandoned as a platform for propaganda, recruitment and documentation of activism; the other an attempt at expanding their presence on the Internet and social media. Through giving up activities on the Internet in principle, AFA represents a movement towards reduced visibility. This reduced visibility has sometimes been interpreted as if AFA operations have ceased completely, even if there has been a web sit confirming the network’s existence since March 2013. Militant animal rights activism in Sweden also seems to have taken this course (even if their action reports are published in international contexts). At the same time, RF provides an example of development moving in the opposite direction. They say they understand the importance of being seen in public space, both on the streets and on the Internet. They therefore updated their web site during 2012, launched a logo and opened a Facebook page for the express purpose of reaching out to more people with their political message. Through this approach, RF thus chooses a path that leads to increased visibility. But they are unusual in this context; the overarching picture of how the Internet is used among groups associated with the autonomist milieu is that it occurs with a limited scope. Both as regards the number of web sites associated with the autonomist milieu in Sweden that provide pro-violence messages, and the extent to which their popularity can be estimated in the form of site visits, the milieu obtainable from the Internet appears as a marginal phenomenon.
5.11.2 Internet as a tool for recruitment and radicalisation

As mentioned by way of introduction, the interest in studying pro-violence messages and propaganda on the Internet includes an idea that the Internet as communication technology differs conclusively from more traditional propaganda channels such as posters, flyers, or pamphlets. A significant part of this difference consists of the Internet making this type of material more and more easily available, since messages can be disseminated without any physical artefact having to be transported. In addition, the Internet offers opportunities for interaction between sender and recipient, and between recipients.

*Accessibility*

For the most part, there is no doubt that access to material is increasing through its dissemination over the Internet. It would barely have been possible to come in contact with the type of content included in this study if it had not been on the Net; one would already have to have been involved in the milieu. But the term accessibility can mean two things: on the one hand, how easy or difficult it is to get hold of something, but also how easy or hard it is to understand a text or message. In the first sense, the Internet has made the material studied easily accessible. In the second sense, however, there is a great variation, which is worth commenting on in connection with a discussion on recruitment and radicalisation.

The examples taken up in the study of how violent methods for a political purpose are defended and given legitimacy covers both brief formulations of the type “We decide ourselves when it is justified to resort to violence” and attempts at more principled reasoning around the role of violence in a liberal democracy and political struggle. In the latter case, it does not concern an easily understandable message, but builds on an argument that assumes prior knowledge. It is difficult to say that the Internet as a medium favours this type of statement, which perhaps might simply be better suitable in printed form. On the other hand, the YouTube videos analysed can be said to be easily accessible in a double sense: they are somewhat easy to come in contact with and, for the most part, convey a message that does not require any prior knowledge to be comprehensible. These types of messages could possibly be related to the categories of brooder and thrill-seeker so that the longer, theory-laden texts that legitimise violent practice find their audience among more intellectually-oriented visitors, while some of the YouTube videos described have an appeal that seems more adapted to viewers who are motivated by excitement and adrenalin rushes.
Interactivity

The other dimension that makes internet communications interesting is the possibility of interaction between users. Coming in contact with and communicating with like-minded people, or being invited into a community where the individual gradually adopts an ever more radical stance, is usually held out as a central component in the description of radicalisation through the Internet. It is therefore justified to also comment on the material investigated based on the degree of interactivity and opportunities for communication.

The overview of web presence in three networks associated with the autonomist milieu showed that all of them offered opportunities for contact in the form of e-mail addresses and, in one case, a postal address as well. Their own Web sites were fairly static as concerns interactivity, where no opportunities to comment on articles directly was given; visitors were referred to other channels for contact and communication. It is only RF that is actively met with in social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), but the Facebook page is quite new (October 2012) and the number of films published on the YouTube channel is low (19 videos). As far as the YouTube channel and Twitter account are concerned, the original degree of interactivity has actively been limited by the sender – the Twitter account is only visible to those who have been approved as followers, and the commentary function for the YouTube videos has been deactivated.

In the case of Motkraft, which was described as the portal blog for the autonomist movement (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009), there is the opportunity to comment on news articles directly on the web site, but as was clear from the study, this function is seldom used by visitors. It is possible that the absence of commentary is the result of strict moderation and that the moderator of the web site actively removes comments, but regardless of the cause, the results is that the degree of interactivity even here appears fairly low.

The material of pro-violence messages within the autonomist milieu on the Internet is, perhaps to a lesser extent, to be understood as an instrument for recruiting potential members to militant organisations. The variation in senders sometimes makes it unclear who one should turn to in order to participate; many times the messages – in mobilisation videos, for example – seems to be directed at those who are already active. It is also difficult to confirm that mobilising for an anti-racist demonstration directly encourages violence; more often, violence is portrayed as a reaction to provocations. At the same time, through the re-use of sequences containing violent confrontations with police and political adversaries, an implicit expectation of violent conflict can be construed – there is a predictable dramaturgy in how the event is portrayed. A distinction between mobilisation and recruitment can be brought out where mobilisation films are produced for the purpose of encouraging participation in a specific event, not for recruiting followers to a movement.
Radicalisation

As far as radicalisation or self-radicalisation is concerned, it is not unthinkable that the material treated in this study could contribute to strengthening an uncompromising stance where violence appears as a legitimate method for exerting an influence. This is particularly prominent in how the police are portrayed. At the same time, the pro-violence autonomist milieu on the Internet is small and diversified; the messages that occur seldom have a clear source or sender and, in many cases, there is a very low degree of interaction around the messages.

The commission for the Swedish Media Council mentions the possibility of self-radicalisation as one of the motives for studying the existence of anti-democratic and pro-violence messages on the Internet. Self-radicalisation means that an individual, on his or her own, undergoes a radicalisation process without direct dealings with an extremist group. It has been pointed out how this phenomenon is extremely unusual (see the introduction to the report) and the question is if there is, in the material investigated, messages designed in such a way that the intended reader or viewer is encouraged to commit violent acts on their own for a political cause. The web milieux investigated are certainly fairly closed off with a low degree of interactivity. This could indicate the possibility of a user studying the contents of pro-violence material and gathering arguments that legitimise violent acts without ever coming into contact with any persons within the movement. At the same time, it is evident how relatively small this web milieu is, and that it is hardly possible to speak of an ideologically unified milieu that can create, on a mass scale, an extremist community of opinion where, for example, news is re-contextualised for the purpose of validating a conspiratorial, anti-democratic, pro-violence conception of the world.
Abbreviations

AFA: Antifascist Action

ALF: Animal Liberation Front

Antifa: The name of the German Antifascist Action

DBF: Djurens befrielsefront

ESF: European Social Forum

RF: Revolutionära fronten

RTC: Reclaim the City

RTS: Reclaim the Streets
6. Pro-violence and anti-democratic Islamist messages on the Internet

Simon Stjernholm

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this subsidiary study is to lay a research foundation, through presentation and discussion of various types of Web material, for the work to reduce the probability that new adherents are attracted to pro-violence Islamist extremism via the Internet. The study does not concern Islam or religion on the Internet in a broader perspective; the assignment relates to “anti-democratic messages”, and messages that “encourage violence for a political or ideological cause”. A discussion of these and other concepts used follows below, as a complement to the introductory chapter of the report. The tendencies and expressions concerned in this survey constitute only a few aspects of the many-faceted and enormously large Muslim presence on the Internet. They should not be seen as representative of Islam or Muslims.

One challenge of working with Internet material, in particular jihad-oriented material, is its evanescence (see the discussion in Halldén 2007). Some of the Swedish Web addresses that were previously stated as leading to extremist material had, when the work on this report was carried out, either ceased to exist or had been transformed into something different. Already when the report is published, new updates and publications will have been made since the report was written, and some of the material used or entire Web sites may have vanished from the public sphere. Descriptions of the Web immediately become historical writings. The forecast value of the study is therefore limited. Despite this, the ambition has been to describe messages, reasonings and expressions which, fairly independently of the duration of individual Web sites, are recurrent and central, and therefore of lasting relevance over time.

173 For a multitude of examples, see, for example, Bunt 2009 and the periodical Cyber Orient (www.cyberorient.com).

174 One example is Noor.se, which was stated to be an extremist discussion forum (Sandelin 2012:77, 118; the forum is also mentioned in several contributions to the leader writer Per Gudmundson’s blog). As we write (27 March 2013), this Web address leads automatically on to Ahlalbait.se, a Web site claimed to belong to the Pakistan Islamic Cultural Association in Märsta, a suburb of Stockholm.
6.2 Jihad and jihadism

A more detailed discussion of concepts will follow later, but already at this stage the terms *jihad* and *jihadism* and associated concepts need to be introduced. Among Muslims throughout the world, there are individuals, groups and networks that support or alternatively are engaged in violent struggles defined as “jihad”. The term comes from the Arabic root j-h-d, but the basic meaning is “to fight”, “to exert oneself”. Since the time of Mohammed, religiously sanctioned violent struggle has been present in Islamic tradition. In the Qur’an and the hadiths, or tales of what the Prophet Muhammad is supposed to have said and done, violent struggle for God’s cause is mentioned, and the classic literature concerning jihad is comprehensive (Cook 2005). During the time of the crusades (mainly the 12th and 13th centuries) and the time of the invasion by the Mongols of central Muslim areas (13th century), the subject was dealt with, for natural reasons, by many Muslim lawyers and theologians. Rules for how, when, by whom and against which enemies jihad was to be fought developed – but views varied between different religious scholars. One person whose writings have a great influence among certain present-day Muslims – an influence that can be noticed in this study – is Ibn Taymiyya (died 1328). He lived during the period of the Mongols’ ravaging of the east, and one of the many themes his writings deal with is jihad.

As a Muslim, to accept jihad as a proper and legitimate aspect of Islamic tradition is not synonymous with being a “jihadist”. Claiming that jihad – in the sense of violent struggle for God’s cause – does not have a place in Islamic tradition must rather been seen as apologetic historical revisionism. In the same way, events such as crusades, witch burnings and inquisition processes demonstrate that Christian tradition also encompasses a lot of religiously sanctioned violence. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible to accept and relate to jihad as a part of Islamic tradition without holding the views that characterise present-day jihadism. Many Muslims also emphasise that, for them, jihad designates primarily an inner fight against egotism and sinful lust, for example. But this does not delete the pro-violence meaning that the concept has had throughout history, and continues to have for certain movements within present-day Islam (Cook 2005).

“Jihadism” here refers to the view that violent struggle for God’s cause is an individual religious duty for present-day Muslims, alongside other religious duties. The concept of “jihadist” is used to designate individuals and groups that promote active participation in or support for violence for

---

175 This can be compared with other definitions of the term “jihadism”: Thomas Hegghammer uses the broader “militant Sunni Islamism” (Hegghammer 2010:2); Jarret Brachman writes that jihadism “is a clumsy and controversial term” but defines it as a way to refer to “Sunni Muslims who use violence in order to pursue their universalistic goals” (Brachman 2009:4); the editors of the anthology *Contextualizing Jihadi Thought* use the terms to describe “forms of Islamist militancy defined above all by a commitment to violence ostensibly in the name of Islam” (Deol & Kazmi 2012:1).
God's cause as an urgent, individual religious duty for present-day Muslims. Some of these consider that jihad should be fought against the enemies of Islam on a global scale, while many focus on mobilising for specific existing conflict zones.

This study uses Thomas Hegghammer’s (2010) differentiation between “classic” and “global” jihadism. Both are modern phenomena that arose in the 1980s and 1990s respectively. Hegghammer mentions Abdullah Azzam (died 1989) and Osama bin Laden (died 2011) respectively as the instigators. Classic jihadism is thus not a historically continuous phenomenon, but is closer to mediaeval ideas about jihad when compared to global jihadism. Azzam’s focus in classic jihadism was that Muslims all over the world are obliged to defend Muslim territory from the incursions of non-Muslims, and to defend Muslims against oppression. Azzam’s innovative idea was that not only Muslims from the area in question should take part in the fight; according to him, the global ummah, that is to say all Muslims, were involved. This view has been called “pan-Islamism”. In the 1980s, the focus for this struggle was Afghanistan, but since then this view has also included Bosnia, Chechnya, Iraq and – since 2001 – Afghanistan again. As a result, jihad fighters from different parts of the world, primarily the Arab world, travelled to these conflict zones for the purpose of fighting for God’s cause.

The focus of global jihadism is instead to fight the enemies of Islam, those who are perceived to fight a war on Islam, wherever they are – preferably their own home ground. Jihadist attacks in the USA, United Kingdom, Spain and Sweden are based on this pan-Islamist vision, which is of a more extreme form than Azzam’s. Not just the territories and lives of Muslims shall be defended; instead, the global jihadists advocate imprecise attacks wherever the enemies of Islam can be found. With this, not just the jihadists’ mobilisation has become global, but also the war as such. Moreover, the jihadists’ image of the enemy includes not just active combatants, but also civilians (Hegghammer 2010).

6.2.1 The jihadist framework narrative

The attraction to militant jihad among some present-day Muslims is dependent on a number of factors. One important factor is what could be called the jihadist framework narrative, which has proved to be fairly consistent across time and place. It recurs with some variation in geographically separate contexts, and is advocated by Muslims with varying linguistic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. It also has clear conspiracy theory features. One example of how the jihadist framework narrative can be expressed, found during the work on this report, is an e-book with the title *An Incomplete History: The Muslims of Spain Post-1492/837 in a Global Context and its Relevance to Muslims Today* (al-Muhajir 2011). When al-Andalus, the part of the Iberian peninsula that was ruled by various Muslim rulers from the early 8th century to the late 15th century, is mentioned in present-day
debates, it is often to point out the relatively harmonious cohabitation between Muslims, Jews and Christians before 1492. In that year, the Spanish reconquered the peninsula, with the consequence that those Jews and Muslims who had not already departed were either banished or were forcibly converted to Christianity by the Spanish inquisition. The e-book’s author is, however, interested in the period after 1492 “in a global context” and its importance for present-day Muslims. It lies outside the theme of this report to assess the e-book’s depiction of history in a broad sense, but its conclusions and concluding comments are of interest. The basic thesis is that, since they lost al-Andalus, Muslims have been persecuted and dishonoured the world over. The author also considers that the rulers in Muslim societies are traitors and that their religious scholars have failed in their duty to call to jihad (al-Muhajir 2011:247). This is important to note: all rulers in Muslim-dominated countries are regarded as illegitimate leaders, renegades from the true religion, as they have allied themselves with non-Muslims and introduced laws written by humans instead of the laws of God. The theologians and lawyers of the religious establishment are also regarded as corrupt and self-interested, and as being at the beck and call of the politicians. The jihadists thus define themselves as tellers of the truth, who see through the illegitimate power. They consider themselves as spokespersons and activists on behalf of the true Muslims, who fight for the reintroduction of Islam throughout the world, something that according to their views can only occur with the help of militant jihad.

The e-book presents many examples to support these claims. To illuminate the conclusions drawn, and thus illustrate the jihadist framework narrative, some core formulations are quoted and commented on below. The author describes jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s as a wake-up call to Muslims in general:

It was only after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, that the Muslim Ummah began to wake up out of its slumber and began to realize the extent of the problem and, on the other hand, its solution, which was Islam and jihad. Muslims from all over the world came to finally begin to discharge their duties as Muslims of jihad fee sabil Allah [for God's cause], as it was, and is, fard ayn [an individual duty]. The flames of jihad spread across the lands, from Afghanistan to Kashmir, Pakistan, Mindanao, Indonesia, Thailand, Somalia, Bosnia, Iraq, Turkistan and of course, the Maghrib. I did not forget Palestine, and who could, when over fifty years we have been derelict of our duty to liberate this sacred Islamic land. (al-Muhajir 2011:257f)

In this section, the author establishes that the Muslims’ problem is that they have abandoned their duty to fight for God's cause (jihad fi sabil Allah), and that the solution to their problem is to once again act according to the insight that jihad is an individual duty (fard ayn). Many are agreed that jihad

176 Also the current Islamist president of Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood’s Muhammad Morsi, has been the subject of such accusations (Bunzel 2013).
is a religious duty for Muslims. But under what circumstances the duty applies, and for whom, is a point at issue. Many consider that jihad is a collective duty (*fard kifaya*) that can only be ordered by a legitimate leader. Jihad is then carried out by a few representatives of Muslims in the form of soldiers. A distinguishing feature of jihadists is that they instead insist that jihad is an individual duty (*fard 'ayn*) that is incumbent upon every individual Muslim. Arguments for this view have, for example, been proposed in influential modern jihadist texts by Muhammed al-Faraj (died 1981) and Abdullah Azzam. As, according to the jihadists, no legitimate Muslim leader exists, each individual Muslim must shoulder the duty to carry out jihad themselves. This can be compared to the “lone wolf” phenomenon, that an individual takes violent action without being linked to an organisation or movement (see, for example, Gable & Jackson 2011; Pantucci 2011). The concept of *fard 'ayn* is not synonymous with acting alone, but refers more broadly to an individual duty to act, even in the absence of a legitimate leader who can order representatives of the Muslim collective to go to war. But the concept opens up opportunities for so-called lone wolves in the global jihadist struggle. In al-Qa’ida’s electronic magazine *Inspire*, express calls for individual actions against the global enemy have occurred. *Inspire* has also celebrated individuals who have acted apparently without any link to an organisation, among them Taimour Abdulwahhab, who carried out a suicide attack in Stockholm in December 2010 (Pantucci 2011).

Acting according to the insight that jihad is an individual duty is described in the e-book as awakening from a trance. Furthermore, many conflict areas are being related to each other and to this awakening in a way that ignores cultural, historical and political differences. The linking of different political occurrences is given an almost mythical dimension, as the e-book talks of the “flames of jihad” that are spreading. The militant activism of Muslims in a number of countries all over the world is described as an expression of a single wave of religious insight. The special symbol status of the Palestinian areas as supposed proof of the Muslims’ precarious global position is also established.

After “the awakening” during the 1980s, Muslims had come “closer to their religion”, but had still not reached the proper faith, according to the author. The fact that several Muslim political groups in the 1990s approached participation in democratic processes is due to this misunderstanding about the faith, according to al-Muhajir. The author sees the creation of political parties as a treachery against Islam; there is no room for compromises on this issue. According to the e-book, there is no middle way that combines Islam and democratic processes (al-Muhajir 2011:258).

Furthermore, it is claimed that the regimes in the Muslim states have shown their true “unbeliever” face: to consider returning veterans from the Afghan jihad of the 1980s as potential problems is regarded by the author as choosing the side of “America” instead of God’s side. An example quoted is Pakistan’s political course alteration from supporting the mujahedin during the 1980s to thereafter
starting to control jihadist fighters. “Two dogs” pointed out as responsible for this are Benazir Bhutto, then Pakistan’s prime minister, and the head of the police, Rehman Malik. The description of Bhutto is interesting to note: she is called a “Rafidhi Shia” (a term discussed in more detail below), who “got what she deserved” (al-Muhajir 2011:260). This refers to the event when Bhutto, regarded by many as a possible force for democratic development in Pakistan, was killed in a suicide attack in December 2007, soon after her return to the country after several years in exile due to accusations of corruption. After these observations, the author ends the e-book on a positive note:

However, there were also good things that occurred in this era. The mujahedeen [the jihadist fighters] that had fought during the Afghan jihad had now gone back to their home countries and began to incite the youth to wage jihad against their tyrannical regimes at home and, if need be, to go abroad and aid their brothers in the deen elsewhere. (al-Muhajir 2011:260)

The return of jihad fighters from Afghanistan to their respective home countries is seen as a positive development by the author, as they, with their experience and knowledge, are able to fight against “tyrannical regimes at home” and to turn out to aid their Muslim brothers in other parts of the world. Again, conflict situations in widely separated parts of the world are seen as parts of one single struggle: the struggle between Islam and non-Islam. The attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001 are also commented on, and called “blessed”. The author exhorts the reader to fight against his weakness, to have faith in God and to fulfil his duty to fight militant jihad:

With that said, I have made my decision to act out my duty and to not fall prey to the mistakes of the people of Andalus, but: What about You? (al-Muhajir 2011:262f)

With this exhortative rhetorical question, the text ends. The author asks the reader the direct question: what do you choose? Are you on the side of the brave Muslim warriors – or on the side of the unrighteous oppressors? The answer is not determined by your prayers, good intentions or care of your fellow human beings, for example, but by your willingness or unwillingness to fight militant jihad. It is not surprising that the e-book is posted on the well-known transnational jihadist forum Ansar al-Mujahedeen. But, during the work on this study, the e-book was found on a Swedish Web site during a Web search of the name of the jihadist ideologist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (born 1958).}

177 In her autobiography, Bhutto reportedly states that her mother was a Shia Muslim of Iranian extraction, while the rest of her family were Sunni Muslims. See http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,IRBC,,PAK,,3df4be8f8,0.html (27 March 2013).


179 In a long footnote, the author refers to al-Suri’s document “Muslims in Central Asia and the Coming Battle of Islam” to describe conflicts between the Muslim local population and incoming Arab jihadist fighters in
The Web site does not have any jihadist character otherwise. The document was hidden behind a non-committal link title that gave Muslims in Spain as its subject. No introduction, comment or explanation was given on the Web site in conjunction with the document. As the finding stood out from the contents of the Web site otherwise, the author of this subsidiary analysis contacted those responsible to ask about their views on the text. When its jihadist message was pointed out, the text was removed, with the explanation that they do not have time to investigate all material in detail, but sometimes make only a rough assessment before publication. The fact that an explicitly jihadist text ended up on a popular Swedish Muslim Web site in this way must be considered worrying. It is, however, doubtful whether the text had any large readership due to its size – just over 260 pages plus almost 200 pages of appendices – and a relatively unapproachable style.

The jihadist framework narrative can be summarised as follows: Violent struggle for God's cause is an individual religious duty for present-day Muslims. This duty has been neglected by present-day religious scholars, who instead defend the tyrannical, un-Islamic regimes in Muslim countries. The sins of these regimes include the introduction of laws created by humans at the expense of the laws of God, which is idolatry. As from the Afghan jihad of the 1980s, Muslims the world over have begun to realise the state of things, and have acted both against the “closer enemy” (the regimes mentioned) and the “further enemy” (Islam’s global enemies). Conflict zones that include Muslims all over the world are linked together in this fundamental, all-encompassing conflict between Islam and non-Islam. The mobilisation of jihad fighters constitutes a global wave of religious insight. There are differing opinions about where and how the fight should be carried on, but the fight as such affects all Muslims. Therefore, each individual Muslim must make his/her mind up for or against; no intermediate positions are possible. Your decision determines your status as either a true believer or a hypocrite. The hypocrites will be punished severely in the life hereafter, while the believers will be rewarded. Martyrs in the struggle for God’s cause are rewarded extra richly in Paradise, and should be celebrated as heroes.

6.2.2 Central concepts of jihadism

An additional couple of concepts, in addition to those mentioned above, are central to present-day jihadism. The main purpose of these is to differentiate between Islam and non-Islam, which is central

Afghanistan of the 1980s; he also refers to similar conflicts in Kosovo and Bosnia in later years (al-Muhajir 2011:165f). Reference is also made to a passage from the same document, where al-Suri considers that the renegades respectively follow and breach international law when it suits their interests (al-Muhajir 2011:257). In a final reference to al-Suri, a list of eight ways in which the Chinese authorities are oppressing Muslims is quoted (al-Muhajir 2011:257).
for maintaining the categories on which the framework narrative is based. The terms below are not used exclusively by jihadists, but in the jihadists’ approach to the world, they have been given some distinctive connotations.180

*Shirk, mushrikun.* To place something at the side of God, to wrongly elevate something or someone to divine status is called *shirk.* It is sometimes translated as “polytheism”, as it is considered to breach the central idea in Islamic theology of the unity of God (*tawhid*) or monotheism. Those who are deemed to practice *shirk* are called *mushrikun.* According to jihadist theory, laws enacted by human beings and autocratic rulers have wrongly been elevated to divine status; the rulers have become idols (*tawaghit*). This is used by present-day jihad theorists to legitimise violent rebellion against them. According to this view, the fact that the rulers in Muslim countries have introduced laws that do not derive from God makes them legitimate targets for jihadist violence.

*Jahiliyya.* In traditional Islamic history writing, *jahiliyya* has denoted the time of “ignorance” that has been considered as characterising pre-Islamic Arabic society. According to conventional thinking, Muhammed’s appearance and the creation of the Islamic communion entailed the end of *jahiliyya*, as Islam took over as the social order. During the 20th century, Muslim radicals criticised present-day Muslim society using the concept of *jahiliyya*. In particular, Sayyd Qutb (died 1966) is known to have used the concept about present-day Muslim society. Designating something as belonging to *jahiliyya* means to deny it any relationship to Islam; it is in actual fact ignorance without knowledge of Islam.

*Kufr, takfir, kaﬁr, kufar.* These four concepts are closely related. *Kufr* means “false belief”, “unbelief” or “heresy”: something that is considered as divergent from Islam so much that, as opposed to differences of opinion within the religious tradition, it is placed outside Islam. Declaring a person guilty of *kufr* is called *takfir* (in Swedish the expression ”att göra *takfir* på” (“doing *takfir* on”) someone is used, for example). This person is then considered a *kaﬁr*, a “false believer”, “unbeliever” or “heretic”. *Kufar* is the plural form of *kaﬁr*. Traditionally, *takfir* was a controversial and relatively unusual occurrence. When it has occurred, it has been the prerogative of the sphere of persons learned in religion. *Takfir* means that people place themselves in judgement over other persons, instead of leaving the judgement to God. Those who engage in *takfir* consider themselves to have so secure an insight into the meaning of God’s words and will that no doubt exists. For many Muslims, *takfir* and a preoccupation with drawing limits for *kufr* is probably obsolete – just as many Christians

---

180 For a Swedish-language introduction to various forms of Islamism, including jihadism, see Hjärpe 2010.
do not put any great effort into differentiating confessions socially and theologically, even if there is a fundamental awareness of the differences that exist. For some religious groups, however, these distinctions are very important.

*Al-wala wa’l-bara*. The phrase can be translated as “loyalty and disavowal” and is central to jihadist theory. The idea is that believers must distance themselves from all forms of non-Islam and actively show loyalty to the *ummah*. In jihadist theory, a radical interpretation of the concept is promoted, namely that alliances with non-Muslims constitute sinful treachery against Islam. The concept is central for supporting the dualist, black-and-white world view that characterises jihadist theory.

### 6.3 Salafism and its variations

An important observation is that many Web sites that promote a very conservative or puritan interpretation of Islam – which many may feel to be extreme – expressly condemn the use of physical violence, with reference to this being in breach of the correct understanding of Islam. A Web site may, for example, include statements that strictly forbid actions that are generally accepted in the majority of society (such as taking holiday photographs), at the same time as it includes strong condemnation of suicide attacks and other violent actions. A conservative, dogmatic attitude on some issues does not equal a jihadist attitude. These Web sites often have links to the religious ideological movement of *Salafism*. The word is linked to the Arabic word for “ancestor” (*salaf*) and designates those present-day Muslims who claim to follow the examples of the first generations of Muslims. These ancestors are considered to stand for a pure and uncorrupted Islam, as opposed to the Muslims of latter days, who are instead accused of having distorted and corrupted the religion. The Prophet Muhammed and his companions are, of course, examples for Muslims in general, but those who claim to follow “the pious ancestors” (*al-salaf al-salih*) make more specific claims to follow in their footsteps, with references to traditional biographical material about these early Muslims. As a rule, Salafi-oriented Muslims focus strongly on testimonies about the actions of the early Muslims. Moreover, the statements of some historical religiously learned authorities are given a special position; some of the historical religious scholars to whom reference is made are Ibn Taymiyya (died 1328), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (died 1350), Ibn Kathir (died 1373) and Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (died 1792). However, Salafism is a far from unified movement.
There are a number of examples of conservative, Salafi-oriented Web sites that, with reference to their religious authorities, condemn the global jihadist struggle as fought in recent years. Several of these authorities regard suicide attacks, jihad travel to conflict zones in Muslim countries and even participation in political demonstrations as religiously illegitimate. This can be understood with references to distinctions between different groups of Salafis made by researchers. One categorisation that has had a certain impact is the differentiation between puritan (sometimes the term "quietistic" is used instead), political and jihadist Salafis (Wiktowicz 2006). Among the religious authorities frequently referred to on Swedish Web sites with a Salafi approach are Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (1914–1999), ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Ibn Baz (1910–1999), Muhammad Salih Ibn Uthaymin (1925–2001) and Salih ibn Fawzan al-Fawzan (born 1935). All were or are active in Saudi Arabia and can be placed in the category puritan Salafis, which means that their focus is on studying the writings, promoting the message and personal pure living according to the Salafi ideals. They do not promote violent methods and regard politics more as a diversion from the true path. Although puritan Salafis to a large extent share their creed (aqida) with political and jihadist Salafis, they do not share their view of the type of actions that characterise true believers. Political Salafis, on the other hand, try to exercise influence over the political sphere. Examples are the so-called Sahwa movement in Saudi Arabia and the Egyptian Salafi party al-Nur, which was formed after the fall of Hosni Mubarak. The jihadist Salafis are characterised by promoting the use of violence.

Many jihadists can be related to the movement that is called salafi-jihadism in theological-oriented terms. It is not a unified phenomenon with a fixed content. Considerable differences and conflicts exist in relation to how salafi-jihadists define correct jihadist theory and practice (Paz 2009; Lia 2009). Different thinkers have developed ideas of how and when militant jihad should be fought in the present day. Salafi-jihadist ideologists criticise puritan Salafis for not seeing the importance of jihad for present-day Muslims. They also criticise those political Salafis and Islamists in a broader sense who try to use the established political systems to gain influence and power in their respective societies. Social systems created by humans and human rulers are seen by the jihadists as idols (tawaghit) and to put one’s faith in them is considered equal to idolatry, placing something at the side of God (shirk). According to jihadist ideologists, those who do this place themselves outside Islam;
the person in question becomes an unbeliever (*kafir*, plur. *kuffar*) (Wagemakers 2012). This applies in particular to rulers and their allies in Muslim countries, who are considered to have left Islam (puritanical Salafi scholars in Saudi Arabia take the opposite view and declare any revolt against the ruler to be a sin). For some jihadist ideologists, also civilians with no particular link to the regimes can be classed as legitimate targets for jihad. The challenge of legitimising this is to explain them as being “warriors” in some sense. An extreme case is Osama bin Laden’s view that the people who were present inside the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 supported the USA financially; they were therefore co-responsible for the crimes he considered the regime and the military had committed against Muslims. Bin Laden also considered that, as the USA is a democracy, civilian citizens are responsible for the policies their elected representatives implement (Wagemakers 2012:87). Not all go as far as that: in his book about the influential jihadist thinker Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (born 1959), Joas Wagemakers calls him a “quietist jihadist”, a designation that indicates the difficulty of drawing any unambiguous borderlines.

It should also be noted that in some contexts, no clear differentiation is made between puritan and jihadist messages. On the English-language Web site Kalamullah.com (to which several Swedish Web sites have links), there are puritans, such as Ibn Uthaymin and al-Fawzan, jihadists, such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Anwar al-Awlaki (died 2011) and Abdullah Azzam, and also revolutionary political thinkers, such as Sayyid Qutb represented. The Web site makes no clear categorisation like the one presented here; it is up to the visitor to form an opinion about the material presented.

Not all who are involved in militant jihad are Salafi-oriented. Although salafi-jihadism is associated with much-noticed networks and organisations, such as al-Qa'ida and al-Shabaab, groups with other views have also defined their militant struggle as jihad. Particularly noticeable are groups that fight for the control of territory, often against what the movement considers to be an occupying or illegitimate ruler (here, parallels with anti-colonial jihad during the 19th century can be drawn). Well-known present-day examples are Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Palestinian areas, the Taliban in Afghanistan and separatists in Chechnya. Even if the borderline towards Salafi-jihadism is not always razor-sharp in today’s globalised world, the motivation for the struggle of these groups is often another one than the salafi-jihadist. The authorities and the interpretation frameworks differ, as does the local support. The borderlines between different violent groups can also become unclear, as jihad

---

184 Jihad against colonial powers was fought by different Muslim groupings in India, the Caucasus, North and East Africa, among other places (Cook 2005, Chapter 4).
travellers seek out conflict zones. The jihad travellers’ relationship with the local population – even with those who participate in violent fighting – often becomes strained, as they have different grounds for their respective struggles.\textsuperscript{185}

An alternative categorisation of the theologically-oriented terms used above has been formulated by Thomas Hegghammer (2009), who instead proposes analytical categories based on the political preferences and the political behaviour expressed by a certain Islamist group. The categories he proposes are said to represent the five most important (short-term) causes of Islamic activism. All encompass both violent and non-violent expressions. The categories are: state-oriented,\textsuperscript{186} nation-oriented,\textsuperscript{187} \textit{umma}-oriented,\textsuperscript{188} moral-oriented\textsuperscript{189} and sectarian Islamism.\textsuperscript{190} Actors may move between the categories, and often promote several of these priorities, but according to Hegghammer, they always have one of them primarily in their sights. Each priority can be related to a certain type of propaganda. State-oriented Islamists focus on criticism of the rulers of Muslim countries, while nation-oriented Islamists focus on territorial occupation. \textit{Umma}-oriented “pan-Islamists” emphasise global threats against Muslim lives and territories: a multitude of examples of Muslim suffering and non-Muslim assaults on Muslim territories characterise this propaganda. Moral-oriented Islamists focus on moral-religious corruption and divergences among Muslims, while sectarian Islamists are characterised by victimisation of their own identity group and demonization of the enemy group (Hegghammer 2009:258–261). These categories help to understand the messages that are highlighted in this study.

\textsuperscript{185} This is discussed in relation to Iraq, for example, in Hallberg Tønnessen 2010.

\textsuperscript{186} A reform-oriented manifestation of state-oriented Islamism is the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, while a revolutionary, violent version is the Algerian GIA.

\textsuperscript{187} Hegghammer does not give any example of a non-violent manifestation of nation-oriented Islamism. Among the violent manifestations are, for example, Hamas and the Chechen separatists.

\textsuperscript{188} A non-violent manifestation of \textit{umma}-oriented Islamism is the Muslim World League, while violent manifestations include both “classic” and “global” jihadism as presented above.

\textsuperscript{189} Non-violent manifestations of moral-oriented Islamism are piety-oriented groups, such as Tablighi Jama’a and puritan Salafis, while citizen militias can represent violent manifestations.

\textsuperscript{190} Once again, Hegghammer gives no example of a non-violent manifestation of sectarian Islamism, while violent sectarianism can be exemplified by Iraqi Sunni or Shia militias, and Pakistani movements attacking Shiias.
6.4 Definitions of violence

How religious preaching, ideals and tendencies should be understood is not self-evident, in particular as the creation of distinctions between “we” and “them”, “believers” and “heretics”, the “saved” and the “lost” has always been a central aspect of human religiosity. With reference to the discussion about cultural violence in the introduction to the report, the author here includes not just material that promotes direct or structural violence. The study differentiates between messages that are: 1) pro-violence (jihadist); 2) expressions of cultural violence. In some of the studied material, there are encouragements to or support for direct violence for the purpose of defending Islam or Muslims. A determinant factor in the categorisation is the authorities being quoted. Even if some of the well-known jihadist authorities do not exclusively mention the importance of jihad, references to these authorities and the dissemination of their messages are seen as accepting and supporting of a jihadist message.

Anti-democratic messages, which are characterised by condemning, distancing and derogatory attitudes towards certain human collectives, are instead sorted into the category cultural violence. Also condemnations of human collectives as “unbelievers” (kuffar) are deemed to be expressions of cultural violence, as they entail a hierarchic organisation of humans based on a rough collective generalisation. This does not refer to more ordinary divisions into Muslims and non-Muslims, nor statements about the supposed sinful lives of individuals, but messages where the distancing and condemnation through takfir is given great importance. Defining all Shias as unbelievers is one example. The approach itself does not have to be accompanied by a direct encouragement to violence, but can be used to legitimise violence.

Cultural violence thus does not aim at a specific event, action or behaviour. Nor is it regarded as anything extraordinary; instead, it is about attitudes and expressions that can be normalised to a great degree within a certain culture, and thus become everyday. Normalised cultural violence exists in different ways in many parts of society, and shall not in any way be seen as characteristic of Islamist messages. This study focuses on messages that set strict borderlines between Islam and non-Islam, belief and unbelief, as the relationship of these borderlines to the explicitly pro-violence messages is relevant.

6.5 The Swedish context of the study

The fact that Swedish Muslims have figured in jihadist contexts is one of the reasons why this study was initiated. For the greater part, Swedish Muslims’ jihadism has been “classic”, in the sense that it has been located in countries with a majority Muslim population and ongoing violent conflict, among
them Somalia, Afghanistan and – since 2012 – Syria. Among the jihadist groups that take part in
Syria’s civil war are individuals who have travelled there from various parts of the world – including
Sweden (Lund 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; Ekman & Vergara 2012). The suicide attack in Stockholm in
December 2010, the threats against the artist Lars Vilks and the guilty verdicts in June 2012 for plans
for terror attacks against the editorial offices of Jyllands-Posten in Copenhagen also show that
individuals have carried out, or tried to carry out, “global” jihadism in Scandinavian countries.

Promotion of religiously motivated direct violence aimed at defending Islam and Muslims appears to
be a limited phenomenon in Swedish Web milieux. In the work on this study, a small number of Web
sites, blogs and actors on social media quoting, referencing or formulating pro-violence Islamist
messages in various media formats have been encountered. However, no claim is made here to
describe all existing material of a pro-violence character on the Swedish-language web. The material
is evanescent and appears to be dependent on individual initiatives. It can also be difficult to draw
sharp delineations in relation to the actors’ ideological home base.

The pro-violence messages that have been encountered are primarily concerned with conflicts in
countries with a majority Muslim population.¹⁹¹ To use Hegghammer’s definition, the messages
countered therefore represent “classic”, not “global”, jihadism. The messages also express ummah-
oriented pan-Islamism, which means that they refer to the global siblinghood – with the consequent
duty to defend and help each other – that is considered to link all Muslims the world over. No
Swedish-language messages specifically promoting direct violence in Sweden or nearby countries
were found. This does not necessarily mean that some support for violent actions in Sweden does
not exist. However, no express support for this was found during the work on the study. There are,
however, references to representatives of al-Qa’ida’s global jihadism.

There is no previous Swedish academic study with a similar focus, but Philip Halldén’s analyses
of Arabic-language jihadist Web material have been very valuable for this study (Halldén 2006; 2007;
2010).¹⁹² Pro-violence Islamist extremism and associated activities in Sweden have also been the
subject of journalistic attention (Hedin 2007; Sandelin 2012; editorial writer Per Gudmundson’s
blog). In the study, the focus has been on Swedish-language Web material and material encountered

¹⁹¹ In a recently published article, Thomas Hegghammer also shows that ”foreign fighters” are in a clear
majority compared to ”domestic fighters” in Europe and North America, and that one crucial reason is that it
is regarded as more legitimate (Hegghammer 2013). However, Petter Nesser considers that European jihadists
in recent years have moved ideologically towards also regarding jihadism in Europe as legitimate and prioritised
(Nesser 2011).

¹⁹² The author also wishes to thank Philip Halldén for valuable comments during the course of the work. The
advanced research seminars in History of Religion at both Lund University and the University of Gothenburg
have also contributed valuable viewpoints.
on Swedish-language Web sites. The social nature of the Web and the nature of the material in question does, however, mean that transnational flows of information, people and ideas must be taken into account. Given the large amount of material that can be related globally to the theme of the report, no claim is made here to provide a comprehensive picture. Nor are any assumptions made of the degree of support for the messages among Swedish Muslims, even if estimates of the popularity of the Web sites in question indicate that they are numerically very marginal. Instead, the goal is to highlight examples of anti-democratic and pro-violence messages in Swedish Muslim Web milieux, to provide a basic explanation for their ideological content and context and to discuss the potential attraction of the messages.

6.6 Categories of Web material

Muslim Web communication has developed in a similar way as other Web communication, with a gradual movement from sender-controlled, text-heavy Web sites via moderated discussion forums to ever more individually controlled and very much interactive social media, where audio-visual media formats take up a great deal of space. The text sections are still large, however. The development does not necessarily mean that the older forms of communication are disappearing; instead, they are being supplemented with more and varying forms of expression that may possibly appeal to a different, broader audience.

Sender-controlled material constitutes the main part of this study, as the focus of the assignment is on messages. Websites and blogs that provide material in the form of lectures, religious statements, e-books, sound and film files are the focus. Some Web sites offer opportunities to make comments, but no large-scale comment activity is visible. Interaction on Facebook also occurs, but is given less room in the study, as there is a risk of the focus being on single individuals instead of on the messages.

As the focus of the assignment is on messages, no particular attention has been paid to communication on discussion forums either. Jihadist discussion forums have been the subject of international research. They are also being monitored by security services. Currently, there does not...

---

193 Previous discussions about Swedish Muslim Web milieux, without a particular focus on the type of messages dealt with here can be found in Schmidt 1999; Larsson 2006.

194 The Web also offers informative sources of knowledge about jihadist Web forums. The group blog Jihadica.com, several internationally recognised researchers (including Thomas Hegghammer, Will McCants and Joas Wagemakers) have published reports based on their research. On the Web site Jihadology.net, Aaron
appear to exist any open Swedish-language jihadist forum. In the material studied, links and references to transnational jihadist forums have been found, though. On such more-or-less closed forums, material produced by the media factions of jihadist groupings is published. Some of this material is then re-published by individual actors or “entrepreneurs” on open Web sites and in social media (Zelin 2013). In this study, such re-publication on the Swedish-language Web is taken into account.

Below follows a summary listing of the Web sites that are included in this survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Daily page views</th>
<th>Categorisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darulhadith.com</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Puritan Salafi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim.se</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>Puritan Salafi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatwa.se</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Puritan Salafi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanningenomshiism.wordpress.com</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Puritan Salafi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanningen.bloggspace.se</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Jihadist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam-tawhid.se</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Jihadist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1. Statistics of daily page views of the Web sites mentioned. The information is taken from freewebsitereport.org on 11 April 2013.

6.7 Reading tendencies of Web material

In order to assess the tendency a certain Web site represents, some factors are particularly important. The rhetoric on Web sites includes certain expressions, references or metaphors that indicate a certain ideology; this says something both about the sender and the type of characteristics and character the intended receiver is encouraged to develop. An important indicator of ideological tendencies are the religious authorities being referenced. One method of finding material of a potential jihadist character is consequently to search for the names of known jihadist ideologists. Since the 1980s, a kind of canon of jihadist classics has developed; texts that recur as inspiration and a reference point for newer jihadist groups. Searches for the names of jihadist ideologists generate a

---

Y. Zelin regularly publishes updated reports about activities on and translations of material from several jihadist forums.

195 See Black 1999 for rhetoric theory discussion of the intended audience.

196 For a similar perspective where a Swedish-language Muslim publication is related to global flows and ideological influences, see Otterbeck 2000.
large number of hits; a delimitation to Swedish-language Web sites makes the material considerably more manageable. The names of jihadist ideologists do, of course, occur on many Web sites without any links to jihadism, for example in news reporting.

Another factor in the assessment of Web material is to be aware of how news reporting is framed ideologically. Reporting on and documentation of violence inflicted on people, including Muslims, in different parts of the world is important in an open and well-informed society. In jihadist messages – as in all other propaganda – news reporting may be re-contextualised in an ideological framework where exhortations to violent self-defence become a legitimate and righteous consequence. Among the jihadists’ ideas about attack and defence, there is a solidarity with the *ummah*, the global Muslim community to which all (orthodox) Muslims are supposed to be party. Therefore, news reporting about Muslims suffering in various parts of the world may be re-contextualised in order to support jihadist argumentation. In the same way, news about security services and police who crack down on suspected terrorists may be interpreted as a putative war on Islam. News about and documentation of the exposure of Muslims are linked to the victimisation that is central in messages that seek to encourage the defence of Islam and Muslims.

Furthermore, ideological tendencies may be read into the rhetoric about certain human collectives, in particular any condemnation or distancing. Central to these attitudes may be conflicts in relation to history writing, the interpretation of religious writings, the practice of rituals or compliance with religious authorities. Among the groups whose type of religiosity is regularly condemned in the material studied are Shia Muslims and some Sufi Muslims. There is also talk of hypocrites (*munafiqun*); those who claim to be Muslims, but whose actions reveal other loyalties and priorities than to serve God. Idolaters (*mushrikun*), unbelievers (*kuffar*) and Jews are also the subject of numerous and strong condemnations. The attitude to these groups varies in the material from avoidance and distancing to legitimisation of violent struggle against them. The central factor is the construction of differentiating distinctions between human collectives, which are then encouraged for use as guidance in interpersonal relations.

6.8 *Film, aesthetic dimensions and forms of appeal*

Audiovisual material and its aesthetic dimensions are important aspects of Web communication. Audiovisual material is a relevant subject of study, as it is more easily accessible and can be consumed more quickly than the often complicated and inaccessible writings that form the basis for these messages. Not just the theological messages (in a wider sense) that characterise these media should be
studied, but also the aesthetic dimensions, visual communications and attitudes to popular culture (see, for example, Hallén 2010). Jihadists can be said to be carrying out a cultural struggle as well as a physical one.

Below are the YouTube channels with Swedish links that figure in this study. Channels with clearly jihadist material are marked with an asterisk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>Total number of viewings</th>
<th>Number of films uploaded</th>
<th>Average viewing frequency</th>
<th>Subscribers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MuslimerSverige2</td>
<td>July 2011</td>
<td>39,551</td>
<td>1,265</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Darulhadith.com)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DawaSweden</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>296,720</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>2,580</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* AlGhurabaaMedia</td>
<td>November 2011</td>
<td>149,994</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IslamiskaVideos</td>
<td>August 2012</td>
<td>56,587</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* DaruTawhid</td>
<td>November 2010</td>
<td>8,492</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Islam-tawhid.se)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 Statistics showing the number of views on YouTube channels. The information was gathered on 27 March 2013.

Well-known examples of visual jihadist media are al-Qa’ida’s communiqués in video format and the digital English-language magazine *Inspire*, which is published by “al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula”. These have often both commented on present-day political events and lauded fallen jihadist martyrs. Notice has also been paid to them in regular news reporting. The examples of jihadist media selected for a more detailed presentation below are a video produced by “al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb” (AQIM), a video produced by the Syrian rebel group Jabhat al-Nusra and a Swedish-language exhortation to jihad in Syria. These will be considered in detail later on.

A report from the Norwegian defence research institute (FFI) has presented and categorised jihad films registered in its database (Finsnes 2010). The report describes briefly the content, origin and symbolism of 800 films, and categorises them into ten overlapping genres. The most common genre is the “operational film”, which can be said to correspond to the “action film” and the “confrontation film” in this report. Many focus on a certain action, for example a bomb placed by the roadside for the purpose of attacking American vehicles in Iraq, or a suicide attack. Many films contains features of different genres, among them violent action, propaganda, ideology, the celebration of martyrs, mobilisation of sympathisers and frightening the enemy. On the other hand,
only a small number of the films are instruction films that could be used by self-radicalised so-called lone wolves (see also Stenersen 2008). What the films primarily encourage potential sympathisers to do is to seek out the training camps for jihad, from which training sequences are shown.

A central component of jihad films is religious songs (\textit{anashid}, sing. \textit{nashid}; here used in the Anglicised plural form \textit{nashids}), which as a phenomenon is not specific for jihadist milieux. The jihadist preacher Anwar al-Awlaki has underlined the importance of nashids in the pamphlet ”44 Ways to Support Jihad”:

\begin{quote}
“A good Naschid [sic] can spread so widely it can reach to an audience that you could not reach through a lecture or a book. Naschids [sic] are especially inspiring to the youth, who are the foundation of Jihad in every age and time. Nasheeds [sic] are an important element in creating a “Jihad culture.” Nasheeds [sic] are abundant in Arabic but scarce in English. Hence it is important for talented poets and talented singers to take up this responsibility.”\textsuperscript{197} (Quoted in Said 2012:863)
\end{quote}

The textual content of jihadist nashids can, for example, be about brave warriors’ willingness to do battle, exhortations to take part in the struggle or celebrations of fallen martyrs. In addition to this, they also offer a cultural resistance aesthetic through their archaic use of language, their distancing from pop-like melodies, their refusal to use musical instruments and the use of classic Arabic verse metres.\textsuperscript{198} The Web also offers many opportunities for visual accompaniment to the sound. In other words, nashids can be quite refined – but they tend to keep within strict genre conventions. Nashids are also often linked to specific conflict situations. For this reason, there are special collections of nashids from Iraq and Palestine, for example.\textsuperscript{199} In the jihadist films discussed later on, nashids play a central role as accompaniment to images and the propagation of a militant message.

In the dissemination of certain messages, one could even talk of a kind of anti-aesthetic: in order to keep the entire focus on the content of the message, all ornamentation is deselected. As an example could be mentioned the videos published by the YouTube account linked to the Web site Darulhadith.com.\textsuperscript{200} The name can be translated as “the home of the Hadith”. Its aims are puritan

\textsuperscript{197} The differences in spelling (“naschid”, ”nasheed”) are as in the original.

\textsuperscript{198} Behnam Said describes how the jihad songs in 1980s Afghanistan differed between Arab and Afghan fighters. In the Afghan songs, musical instruments were often used, and the music was classically Pashtun. The Arabic nashids were, however, performed \textit{a capella}. Over time, the Arabic influences came to dominate, however, which led to the present-day Taliban jihad songs being more reminiscent of the Arabic nashids (Said 2012:868).

\textsuperscript{199} See, for example, http://www.kalamullah.com/misc.html. For a discussion of music with links to Hamas, see Berg 2012.

\textsuperscript{200} According to FreeWeb sitereport.org, Darulhadith.com has 67 daily visits (24 March 2013).
Salafis. The Web site includes a large number of statements about what is permitted and not permitted according to its authorities, who are principally religiously learned Saudis. A conspicuous attention to detail in ritual religious practice is also noticeable. The approach is described as “Islam according to Salaf”. The Web site has two YouTube channels, the inactive “MuslimerSverige” and the active “MuslimerSverige2”. Darulhadith.com uses YouTube with the comment function inactivated. Used in this way, any potential interaction between sender and consumers of messages is throttled. The sender is clearly unwilling to discuss, but sees its role strictly as a transmitter of information. The films published here follow a consistent minimalist pattern. The films have a black background, on which white Swedish text is shown with a question, the name of the learned person asked, and a translation of the answer given. The text is simultaneous with an audio file that includes the question and the answer in Arabic – it is thus an actual social interaction with question and answer that is reproduced. The sound is often of poor quality, generated by an echoing, rattling loudspeaker system. The poor sound becomes part of the aesthetics. The video producers’ consistent refusal to use images of the authority answering the question, or in fact anything to illustrate the message expressed, signals a deep seriousness that characterises all of Darulhadith.com’s activities. The answer may concern almost any subject, such as married life, ritual cleanliness or attitudes to political demonstrations. As all the films observed retain the same format, the same degree of seriousness is given to all these messages. Even a refusal to aestheticise can lead to a recognisable aesthetic, with relevance for how the message is perceived.

Another type of video that is relevant to mention in this connection is the Reminder. Sometimes it has the form of a doomsday warning, often with quotations from the Qur’an combined with visually strong images, often similar to expensive catastrophe films. Sometimes they concern religious preachers, who in a more quiet way remind the viewer of the importance of fulfilling a certain religious duty. A YouTube channel with associated Facebook account that has published many

201 http://www.youtube.com/muslimerSverige2 (27 March 2013). The channel was created in July 2011 and has published 1,265 video clips, has 174 subscribers and a total of 39,551 page views. Its most popular clip is “MuslimerSveriges ställning till hedningarnas nidfilm om Allahs sändebud” (“The attitude of Muslims to the pagan’s scurrilous film about the messenger of Allah”), which has had 1,227 page views (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKr4g8_aVXw). In the film, Salih al-Fawzan al-Fawzan exhorts calm and patience. The second and third most popular clips have 842 and 326 page views respectively, and thereafter the number of views sinks rapidly down towards 100. The average page view frequency is a modest 31. There is also a Twitter account (https://twitter.com/DarulHadith) where updates to Darulhadith.com are advertised. The Web site IbnBaz.se is related to Darulhadith.com.

202 Reminders of this type can be related to the classic preaching genre wa’z, “a strict, admonishing sermon, often about subjects such as death, resurrection and the final judgement” (Haldén 2001:47).
Reminders, in particular of the more visually powerful variant, is "IslamiskaVideos". Many of these videos are cuttings from Arabic-language or English-language sermons set to pictures and provided with Swedish subtitles. The preacher is often in an intensely emotional condition close to tears, while he, for example, repents his sins and all the times in life when his duties towards God have been neglected due to idleness or cravings for amusement. One of the first videos published on IslamiskaVideos was the seven-minute-long “Syrien | Vart är ert hjärta | Känslig” (“Syria | Where is your heart | Sensitive”) [grammatical errors corrected]. As the title suggests, it includes many sensitive images of persons who have suffered violence. One preacher speaks in a very highly-strung and emotional tone about the specially selected place that “Sham” has for God, and the duty to help the Muslims there in their suffering. In another video “MUHAMMAD THE COMMANDER (Svensk Text)” (“MUHAMMAD THE COMMANDER (Swedish Text)”), an English-speaking voice lists hip-hop artists (2-Pac, Dr Dre, 50 Cent, etc.) that present-day Muslims are claimed to have taken as role models, when they in actual fact have the world’s best role model in their Prophet Muhammad. As proof of Muhammad’s status as a unique role model, the voice mentions various military battles in which Muhammad took part where the Muslims were numerically at a disadvantage against kuffar, yet still victorious. The aesthetics of the clip are interesting: first, the named artists are shown, thereafter the military battles mentioned are visualised, with expensive battle scenes from film productions. The viewer is invited to identify with the effect-seeking and glorifying battle scenes combined with talk of the Prophet Muhammad as a role model. This type of clip uses features from popular culture, at the same time as the messages focus on the life hereafter, doomsday and on turning one’s back on worldly things. The duty and doomsday-laden messages in Islamic Reminder videos also relate to a “scene” with Swedish Internet preachers.

203 http://www.youtube.com/user/IslamiskaVideos (130327); at the time of observation, the channel, which was created in August 2012, had 288 subscribers, 92 uploads and 56,587 page views. This gives an average viewing frequency of 615. The associated Facebook account is http://www.facebook.com/islamiska.videos
204 http://youtu.be/AbcpTrax8tY (27 March 2013); at the time of observation, the video had been viewed 457 times.
205 Sham is an Arabic designation of the Levant, the area around the eastern part of the Mediterranean that includes Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan.
206 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fY_Fh3lPr70 (27 March 2013); at the time of observation the video had been viewed 973 times.
6.9 The da’wa of Swedish Internet preachers

As a result of easily used media technology having become generally available in large parts of the world, more-or-less self-appointed preachers and interpreters of religion have become able to reach out, with small means, to a potentially large audience. This is noticeable also in Sweden, where a number of Web sites and networks disseminate video lectures in Swedish. In some cases, these are messages that have been recorded without an audience. In other cases, they are recordings of social events before an audience, often arranged by Muslim associations, where lectures play a central role. Some preachers appear to have become very popular through their lectures, particularly among young persons. Several are also active in social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Some have acquired religious education abroad, for example in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. It is possible to see a number of lecturers and media organs as part of a “scene” of Islamic activities with links to a transnational Islamic genre. The religious tendency of the genre is doomsday-aware, puritan and Salafi-oriented, but also encompasses differences and complexity. The activities within this scene are not by definition anti-democratic or pro-violence. However, there are expressions of cultural violence and the borderlines towards pro-violence messages are not always razor-sharp. This does not mean that the Internet preachers themselves are openly pro-violence in their rhetoric. On the other hand, to some extent they share the jihadists’ diagnosis of a situation where there is a war on Islam.

This scene of preachers appears to be a phenomenon that has a potential to reach a young audience, both via the Internet and in physical social contexts. The lecturers are mostly young men who speak excellent Swedish, and who refer easily to present-day culture and social phenomena in their rhetoric. At the same time, they make many references in Arabic to verses of the Qur’an, hadiths, and Islamic theology and historiography. In the lectures, the religious text sources represent the truth, the authoritative guiding principle that tells Muslims of all eras how they should live. It is common for these lecturers to designate their activities as da’wa, a “call to Islam” (a person carrying out da’wa is called da’i). The messages are usually aimed at Muslims, in order to exhort them to let Islam be the most important thing in their lives. The da’wa carried out within the scene is multifaceted and complex; it is therefore introduced separately from the division into expressions of cultural violence and pro-violence messages below. The messages being put forward can also be interpreted in various ways, depending on the prior understanding of the listener. It is a dynamic scene with a number of actors. The author does not claim that all these actors act in a unified and coordinated way, only that they display similarities in relation to themes, da’wa activity and theological preferences, and that there are links between them on the Web.
Some of the associations and individuals that can be related to this scene have previously been highlighted in journalism about radical tendencies among Swedish Muslims. Among them are Troende Unga Framtida Förebilder (“Faithful Young Future Examples”) (TUFF)\textsuperscript{207} and the lecturer Anas Khalifa.\textsuperscript{208} The scene also includes Al-Taqwa Ungdomsförening (“Al-Taqwa Youth Association”), the YouTube channel “DawaSweden”,\textsuperscript{209} the Web site Muslim.se\textsuperscript{210} and a number of individual lecturers who figure in these contexts. Only a very summary introduction to the messages is provided here. A separate study would be required to deal with the scene in an exhaustive and satisfactory way.

\subsection*{6.9.1 Worldly success versus real success}
A recurrent theme is to compare worldly success with success in the life hereafter. Time after time, God’s promised rewards for the believers and God’s punishment of the hypocrites and the unbelievers are emphasised. Making Allah satisfied is said to be the only success that means anything. There are stories from the traditional Islamic sources of those who have died fighting for the cause of God, for example Muhammad’s followers who died on the battlefield, and who at the moment of death say “I am victorious”, as they will be rewarded with a high place in Paradise as martyrs. The listeners are encouraged to question the constant pursuit of material success and high status in this life, and instead value the only thing that matters: that their own actions are approved by God. The tone is similar to the Reminders in video format discussed above. Sometimes the speaker becomes emotional during the lectures; at times almost close to tears.

\subsection*{6.9.2 Propaganda and (cultural) war on Islam}
Another theme is the vulnerability of Islam and Muslims. In lectures and social media, preachers claim there is a war on Islam. To prove this, reference is made to films and television series that depict Muslims as uneducated, ugly and backwards, whilst the viewer is encouraged to “cheer for haram” (what Islam forbids), such as immoral and pleasure-seeking behaviour or homosexuality. Repeatedly, the lecturers underline that social intercourse and the consumption of culture have an

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotetext{207}{TUFF has recently ceased to exist, according to itself due to the defamation of the organisation in the media, where it has been “linked to international terrorism, extremism and radicalism, homophobia, hostility towards women and intolerance on vague grounds”. Some of those who were active in TUFF have instead started a new organisation, Sveriges Förenade Muslimer (“Sweden’s United Muslims”). A press release is available here: http://tuff-forening.se/ (27 March 2013).}

\footnotetext{208}{See for example Magnusson, Lönnaeus and Orrenius 2006; Hedin 2007; Sandelin 2012.}

\footnotetext{209}{http://www.youtube.com/user/DawaSweden (27 March 2013). The channel has 399 subscribers, 115 published films and 296,720 viewings, which gives an average viewing frequency of 2,580.}

\footnotetext{210}{According to FreeWeb sitereport.org, Muslim.se has 337 daily page views (24 March 2013).}
\end{footnotesize}
impact on us; they determine the people we become, what we value and scorn, love and hate. The listeners are therefore exhorted to be careful in their choice of friends and entertainment. These factors are claimed to have a direct impact on whether we are on the way to heaven or to hell. No room is given for intermediate positions, it is impossible to “play on both halves of the pitch”. A true Muslim must place obedience to God first, and should therefore make efforts to live according to God’s commandments every day and to fulfil the religious duties. The status of prayer as a prominent religious duty is emphasised time after time as one of the most important things a Muslim can do.

**Solidarity with Muslim “siblings”**

In conjunction with the war in Syria that has been in progress while the study was carried out, expressions of solidarity with those suffering have also been made on this scene. Collections of money and necessaries and events in support of suffering Muslims in Syria at which popular lecturers participate have been arranged. Acknowledging and actively supporting Muslim “siblings” in need is prominent within the Swedish *da’w* scene. Images and videos that bear witness to the suffering of Muslims are used to awaken feelings and encourage acts of solidarity.

**Calling to action**

The doomsday and duty awareness that is emphasised time after time in the *da’w* of the lecturers means that certain actions are placed in focus. As mentioned, the listeners are often reminded of the meaning of prayer and of the importance of avoiding bad company and harmful consumption. There are also exhortations to struggle for Islam. The actions mentioned in this context may be everyday social activities: to treat neighbours and school friends well, to look after one’s children. The solidarity with Muslims the world over is also highlighted. In conjunction with this, central characters from Sunni historiography may also be cited as role models. Among them are characters known as military leaders in addition to their status as “pious ancestors”. The messages put forward are heavily moralising and appeal to the listener’s compassion, guilt, duty awareness and the unavoidable death and doomsday. The stories and characters referred to are taken from classical Islamic sources.

**6.9.3 Interpretation of the messages: the listener’s prior knowledge**

The messages encountered within the Web activities of the scene in question during the work on this study cannot quite simply be treated as pro-violence. The *da’w* preachers do not generally express any specific political goals and intentions; politics is considered as part of the worldly sphere, while the focus of the preachers is on the personal piety of the believers. However, the category of cultural violence is relevant in the context, as a clear and hostile dualism between believers and others, between Islam and non-Islam, is conjured up. A forceful imagery and visual effects are used to deter sinful living. In this way, cognitive definitions are created, which in turn are thought to guide the
listener to act correctly in everyday life: here understood as a puritanical, duty and doomsday-aware piety. Young persons are exhorted to adopt a dualist way of thinking (right and wrong, we and them, believers and hypocrites) that is similar to the one used in jihadist contexts. But the actions the believers are explicitly exhorted to carry out based on these dualist categories differ radically from jihadist pro-violence messages.

The Swedish Internet preachers do not carry out their da’wa in a vacuum; both sources of inspiration in the global Muslim public and likeminded people in the nearby milieu can be identified. One source of inspiration that has been referred to is the Egyptian satellite channel al-Nas (“The People”; this is also the name of the 114th and last sura of the Qur’an). The preachers on this channel can be said to represent a puritan Salafism that distances itself from worldly strivings for the benefit of a doomsday-aware piety that focuses on following the life examples of the earliest Muslims.

It is largely dependent on the individual listener how stories about, for example, persons dying on the battlefield who gain success in the life hereafter are received. The message in itself does not encourage violent struggle. If, however, an individual has become convinced elsewhere that jihad is an individual religious duty comparable to prayer, then exhortations to work hard to fulfil one’s religious duties to God may be interpreted as supporting violent struggle, for example to defend Muslim “siblings” in current conflicts. This interpretation is, however, dependent on the listener’s prior knowledge.

6.9.4 Summarising discussion

The popularity of the lecturers is probably largely due to their ability to combine traditional Islamic sources with references to present-day culture and lifestyle – and the ability to do so in an engaging, personal and entertaining way. What do these preachers want to achieve? Charles Hirschkind has analysed clips from Egyptian Friday sermons on YouTube and found that the response to such clips as expressed in the comment fields is relevant:

> [W]hat links and relates these clips to each other is a feature ascribed to them by their viewers, the quality of being mu’aththir. Mu’aththir, from the root ‘athara, embraces among its multiple meanings such ideas as effective, affecting, moving, emotional, impassionate, stirring, exciting, a kind of impact on the senses that […] leaves a track, trace, touch, taste, or imprint (specifically, on the heart or soul).” (Hirschkind 2012:6)

211 For introductions to Al-Nas and other Islamic satellite channels, see Sætren 2010:65–69, 82–87; Skovgaard-Petersen 2011.
Within the Swedish Muslim Internet preacher milieu, similar expressions are noticeable: “moving”, “impactful” and “strong” are examples of adjectives used to comment on Internet sermons, or when a link or story is shared with followers in social media. The intention is to incite pious feelings and reactions among the audience and in this way encourage them to live more religiously. The Swedish Internet preachers should be seen as part of the broader, transnational genre of Islamic da’wa online. Promoters of this type of da’wa are effective users of new media in the dissemination of their messages – so too in Sweden.

It should, however, be noted that when consuming YouTube clips, for example, within this genre of Salafi Internet preaching, then moving on to material with a jihadist character is perhaps not too great a step to take. A brief example: The YouTube channel DawaSweden has published a clip called “Hemma hos Ibn Jibreen” (“At home with Ibn Jibreen”), a Saudi religious scholar. This film clip is one minute long, and can be perceived as meaningless; a collection of white-dressed men in a room who are eating food and greeting each other. When the clip is shown, the right-hand margin is filled with links to related clips on YouTube. Both the viewer’s history and the algorithm that directs the search function on YouTube affect the choice. In this way, YouTube as a media platform participates in creating links between various messages based on the viewer’s search history and the searches of other users. During the author’s observation of “Hemma hos Ibn Jibreen”, the right-hand margin included “Shaykh ibn Jibreen Praising Osama Bin laden [sic]”, a clip published by the user account Milkshaykh01. In a clip subtitled in English, Ibn Jibreen explains that bin Laden was a mujahid, a man who fights for God; and he also frees Ibn Baz from the accusation of having called bin Laden a person who corrupts the religion. It has also been reported that Ibn Jibreen in 1991 stated that Muslims may righteously kill Shia Muslims because of their supposed polytheism (Steinberg 2009:115). In other words, DawaSweden, through the agency of YouTube – with an apparently pointless clip – gives attention to a Saudi shaykh who in other, related clips is reported to have judged bin Laden’s violent actions to be acceptable according to Islam and to have declared the killing of Shia Muslims as permitted. This is done without DawaSweden expressing these views. The example illustrates the difficulty of drawing sharp borderlines between ideological points of view. At the same time, it is very difficult to draw any conclusions about causality in relation to examples like these. It is far from certain that a person who sees the first clip also looks at the second clip; nor is it certain that the viewer becomes convinced by the message in the clip and adopts the opinion.

expressed. These observations conclude the summary of the complex scene of duty and doomsday-aware Salafi-oriented Internet preachers. There are, however, references to the Web site Muslim.se mentioned in the next section, which highlights expressions of cultural violence towards certain human collectives.

**6.10 Examples of expressions of cultural violence**

This section discusses examples of messages that express cultural violence. The examples are taken from Salafi-oriented Web sites on which lessons, statements from religious scholars and exhortations have been published. The Web sites often include a multitude of material on many different subjects in addition to the ones mentioned here; only a few are specialised on a single issue. The presentation below does thus not provide a comprehensive view of the messages that occur on the Web sites referred to, but is a consequence of the assignment’s focus on anti-democratic messages.

**6.10.1 Anti-Shiism**

In Swedish-language Web milieux, there is anti-Shiite material with religious condemnations of (actual and alleged) Shia Muslim articles of faith, historical characters of importance for Shia Islam and present-day Shia Muslims in general. The main point is often to prove that Shias in reality are not Muslims at all, and to ridicule Shia articles of faith and religious practitioners. The material is generally not of a pro-violence character – but parts can be said to be an expression of cultural violence. Anti-Shiism of the kind described is a global phenomenon, and not specifically Swedish. Much of the material that exists in Swedish Web milieux is translated and reproduced from international sources. The specifically Swedish aspect is the framework the material is given, and any personal comments by bloggers, Web editors and lecturers. Examples from text-based Web sites and MP3 lessons that summarise and develop anti-Shiite texts for a Swedish audience are presented below.

Anti-Shiite opinions among Sunni Muslims is not a new phenomenon (Steinberg 2009). However, the political development in several countries during the last decade has made such views topical in relation to openly militant groups, in particular in Iraq and Pakistan, where Shias have been killed in violent attacks. One of the most (in)famous anti-Shiite jihadists in Iraq in the years after the invasion in 2003 was Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi (died 2006), whose propaganda aimed to legitimise the killing of Shias – which has also occurred in a number of attacks against specifically Shia targets (such as shrines and processions). Al-Zarqawi based his anti-Shiite rhetoric on classical Muslim sources, in

---

213 See Otterbeck 2000 for a study of similar phenomena.
particular Ibn Taymiyya (died 1328) and Ibn Kathir (died 1373). In their writings, al-Zarqawi and his adherents found support for a nuance-free condemnation of present-day Shia Muslims based on historical writings about the early history of Islam and the time around the Mongols’ invasion of Baghdad and Syria during the 13th century (Halldén 2011). A fundamental idea is that Shia Muslims in general can be held responsible for or be assumed to represent specific historical events and characters. The generalisation is thus very rough, as it does not take into account time, place or individual variations. Shias are condemned as a collective based on historical conflicts and religious practices that are regarded as heretical; they are not considered to be Muslims but as opponents of Islam.

Anti-Shiism on Swedish Web sites is not identical to al-Zarqawi’s propaganda or synonymous with the violence he represents. However, there are some central unifying elements. A common feature is the pejorative designation of Shia Muslims as *rafida*, ”deviant”, a term used already by Ahmad ibn Hanbal (died 855) and which was taken up by later theologists, such as Ibn Taymiyya and Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (Steinberg 2009:113). Concerning the term *rafida*, Philip Halldén writes:

> In Arabic, it refers to Shia Muslims’ (supposed or actual) refusal to recognise the three first caliphs as the legitimate successors of the Prophet Muhammad. It also refers to the Shias’ rebuttal that Aisha, the Prophet Muhammad’s wife, should have been acquitted of the accusation of fornication that was once made against her in Medina. [...] Therefore the designation al-rafida, “those who refuse, deny, deviate”, in relation to the majority consensus (Halldén 2011:48).

In addition to Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathir, Swedish anti-Shiite Web milieus refer to prominent present-day Salafi authorities, among them Salih bin Fawzan al-Fawzan. Supposed statements and writings of individual Shia religious scholars are also generalised as describing the views of all Shia Muslims – in other words, all who confess to Shia Islam are being held responsible for what a few religiously learned are reported to have stated.

Since 2010, the anonymous blog Sanningeomshiism.wordpress.com has published a large number of contributions that in different ways fit the pattern described above. The blog describes itself as “A blog that unmasks Shia and their lies”. A multitude of categories for blog contributions include “Lies

---

214 One example is Baghdad’s Shia vezir Ibn al-Alqami, who, according to Ibn Kathir, betrayed ”the people of Islam”, negotiated with the Mongols and contributed to the ”blood of the Muslims [gushing] like rainwater along the streets of Baghdad” (Halldén 2011:55).

215 FreeWeb sitereport.org does not generate any result concerning the number of page views of the blog, as they are too few.
Rafida is mentioned on several occasions as “stupid”, among them in quotes from Ibn Taymiyya. Shia Muslims’ celebration of the feast of *ashura* is also called stupid. Several articles of faith associated with Shia Islam are ridiculed. Texts by individuals are also taken out of context and used as grounds for making fun of Shias. One example is a post where the blogger quotes two texts that claim that the faeces and urine of Shia imams smell sweeter than musk, and that those who eat and drink these infallibles’ “urine, shit and blood, Allah prohibits him from fire and lets him come into Paradise”.216 After the quotes, the blogger writes:

> “As we are in the month of Ramadan, all you Shia are welcome to me for iftar [the meal that breaks the fast during Ramadan]. Please prepare your forks, spoons and glasses. I have something for you that will send you straight to paradise according to your Ayatollahs above. All you now need to do is to find the last infallible Imam!”

The blogger thus implies that he intends to invite Shia Muslims to eat faeces as a meal to break the fast. Some contributions also include very detailed video and photograph material that is claimed to show how Sunni Muslims are attacked and killed by Shias precisely because they are Sunni Muslims. The bloody and disfigured human bodies are claimed to be the victims of religiously motivated violence carried out by Shias. In conjunction with one of these contributions, the blogger writes:

> “Perhaps you are wondering why I am making these posts? Well, it’s like this, Shia have always painted a picture where they are always the "victims" of terrible Sunni and "Wahhabi" crimes. However, this is far from the truth, Shia are responsible for lots of bloody crimes carried out against Sunnis and they are not as peaceful as it [sic] really wants to believe.”217

The anonymous blogger makes a coarse and hostile generalisation based on the categories Sunni and Shia, and synonyms for these designations. Differences in time and place are ignored, as theological writings from the 14th century are used to explain the present day.


Ideologically, Sanningenomshiism.wordpress.com is very similar to the Web sites to which it repeatedly links. Several quotes have, for example, been taken from Ibn Taymiyya and the present-day Saudi shaykh Salih bin Fawzan al-Fawzan from the above-mentioned Darulhadith.com. But on Darulhadith.com, anti-Shiite expressions are not limited to the aggregated material from foreign religious scholars. They are also used in orally given lessons in Swedish published in MP3 format. Many lessons have the format of commentary on books by selected religious authorities. In a series of twelve lessons that explain the book *al-radd ‘ala al-rafidha* ("The Response to the Deviants") by Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, rafida are repeatedly declared to be unbelievers (*kuffar*). Among other things, they are called “donkeys” because of articles of faith described that diverge from the teacher’s understanding of Islam. The lessons are recorded in a social context, where some interaction between teacher and pupils does occur. Sometimes the teacher asks questions to those assembled, who sound like young men. The answers are often short, and the teacher expands on them himself. There is no room for problematising; only one answer is correct. (One exchange might, for example, be: “What is the judgement for assigning the Prophet any failing?” - “Kufr.”) No possibility of discussion or actual exchange of ideas is offered: the teacher conveys, the listeners receive. Among the points brought up by the teacher from al-Wahhab’s book is that rafida lie about hadiths, deny the righteousness of Abu Bakr’s, Umar’s and Uthman’s caliphate (the three who according to Sunni historiography writing righteously succeeded the Prophet as leaders of the Muslims) and claim that the Qur’an is misrepresented. The teacher claims that the purpose of the doctrine of the rafida is to “exterminate Islam entirely”.

The series of lessons is based on a book written in the 18th century. It could be questioned whether al-Wahhab’s religious condemnation has any relevance for the present-day situation. The teacher clearly thinks so, as the book is dealt with during twelve lessons. The opinions of the book are also transferred to present-day events and persons through explicit references. In part three of the series, it is claimed that Iranian aid to victims of war in Bosnia was “not because they loved the Bosnians

---

218 The audio files were downloaded in December 2012 from http://www.darulhadith.com/mp3_rad RAFIITHA.html.

219 In a study of young Muslims in Malmö and Copenhagen, Jonas Otterbeck has noted that the discussion culture that young persons learn in school, where critical questions are encouraged, clashes with the way in which traditions are passed on to young Muslims in the mosque (Otterbeck 2010:124–127).
but to disseminate its *aqida* [creed]”. The teacher also criticises the Muslim Brotherhood and various religious authorities who claim that “we are all brothers, there is no difference between us [Sunni and Shia Muslims]”. The teacher instead claims that:

“Shia, since childhood, are given sweets – they do this in Saudi Arabia – and then they take the sweets away from the child, so that the child starts to cry. Then they say ‘Abu Bakr and Umar took the sweets from you’. Then they give the sweets back to the boy and say: ‘Ali came back and gave them to you’.”

To further underline the supposed hate of Shias against Muslims, the teacher asks what would happen if you were walking in the street in Iraq and were stopped by Shia militia, who see from your ID documents that your name is Umar, Abu Bakr or Uthman (the names of the three above-mentioned caliphs). One listener answers: “Shoot you”. The teacher confirms: “Shoot you!”.

Therefore, he says, it is important to know, item by item, “why we differ from rafida”. After these examples, the teacher asks: “Is there anyone now, after this, who doubts that a rafidi is a kafir?” Nobody expresses a divergent opinion.

### 6.10.2 Anti-Sufism

The anti-Sufism that is present in Swedish Web milieux is similar to anti-Shi’ism to some extent. This is also a global phenomenon that often aims to prove, with the support of Islamic sources and scholars, that certain religious expressions are incorrect and do not belong in true Islam. The specific arguments and practices that are brought up in relation to Sufism differ from those that relate to Shiism, however. Sufis are accused of having introduced “innovations” (*bida‘*) in their religiosity, that is to say have wrongly added teachings and practices that were not included in original, true Islam. Among these innovations are the celebration of Muhammad’s birth (*mawlid al-nabi*) and supposed worship of Sufi spiritual masters and their graves, which is equalled to idolatry (*shirk*). Salafi scholars consider that those who are guilty of and propagate un-Islamic innovations place themselves outside the religion; they are therefore *kuffar*. However, a difference is made between different degrees of idolatry. Only those forms that are considered to be clearly in breach of Islamic monotheism (*tawhid*) make the practitioner *kafir*.

Like the violent anti-Shiism mentioned above, anti-Sufi activities with the purpose of cleansing the religion have also sometimes been expressed violently. For example, in recent years, grave monuments of Sufi holy men, as well as persons who visit these for religious purposes, have been

---

attacked in Libya, Mali and Pakistan. Criticising or condemning religious “innovations” is not synonymous with carrying out or supporting such attacks. There is a spectrum of attitudes to the criticised groups that is based on similar theological reasoning, where violent attacks constitute one extreme of this spectrum, while distancing, condemnation and discrimination constitute less extreme expressions. The expression of cultural violence in the form of human collectives being condemned as unbelievers and idolaters can therefore be placed into the triangle of interacting expressions of violence described by Johan Galtung (Galtung 1990). In Saudi Arabia, the opportunities for both Sufi groups and Shias to freely practice their religiosity are severely limited. To refer, in Sweden, to Saudi scholars who categorically condemn these groups can therefore be seen as support of such a severely limited freedom of religious beliefs. Some examples of statements about Sufism that are found in the studied material follow.

As the answer to the question “What is Sufism?”, Fatwa.se states, with reference to Saudi scholars, that it refers to “a misled group” and that it is “not permitted to be in their company or become friends with them apart from calling them to Allâh”.221 On Muslim.se, an article states that shirk is worse than “disgusting crimes”, such as murder, rape, child assault and genocide.222 Even if these acts are “loathsome”, shirk is worse as it is not aimed against another person but directly at God. The article does state, however, that those who commit shirk can be forgiven by God if they repent of their sins. Thereafter, the article describes different types of shirk. It says that “unfortunately certain Muslims have become victims of” shirk. Among these are those that “call on saints and deceased holy men”:

> “Thousands, if not millions, of ignorant Muslims make pilgrimages to the graves of saints and holy men. [...] They carry out prayers (literally?) by the graves, they make offerings in the name of the dead saint and they do **tawaf** (circulate) around the grave. Many of them even pray for the saints to bless them with children and to forgive them their sins!”223

This condemnation of rituals associated with Sufi respect for deceased spiritual masters is not accompanied by an encouragement to violence. However, similar reasonings are also used by groups that desecrate grave shrines. In another article on Muslim.se, Ibn Baz explains that those that consider that the idolaters “are not unbelievers or who doubt their unbelief or who think that their

---

221 [http://fatwa.se/metodik-innovationer/vad-ar-sufism/](http://fatwa.se/metodik-innovationer/vad-ar-sufism/) (27 March 2013). A search on Fatwa.se on FreeWeb sitereport.org does not produce any results as the estimated number of daily page views are too few.


way is correct, that person is an unbeliever – kafir”. In a further article on Muslim.se, taken from the popular multilingual Salafi Web site Islamqa.com, the proper attitude of Muslims to kuffar, which includes unbelievers of all kinds, not just those Sufis who are guilty of shirk, is explained. Among other things, a Muslim should not do any of the following: accept their kufr and doubt that it actually is kufr; become friends with them and like them; become a member of their societies, join their parties or serve in their armies; trust them and use them as advisers and consultants instead of the believers; put them into administrative positions where they manage Muslims; imitate them in dress, appearance, speech or habits. The overall impression from these texts is that a large number of Muslims the world over, whose religiosity is judged to be incorrect – to say nothing about all other groups that fit into the designation kuffar – shall be singled out, marginalised and discriminated against.

A similar attitude to the “people of innovation” (ahl al-bid’a) is noticeable on Darulhadith.com. For example, Ibn Uthaymin’s claim that those that disseminate innovations shall not be let into the mosques is quoted. In another quote, al-Fawzan claims that those who call for innovations are “human devils”; the same scholar is also quoted as saying that the rituals the “grave worshippers” within Sufism engage in constitute “major idolatry that takes its practitioners outside Islam”. A statement by Ibn Uthaymin that has the heading “Freedom of religion is unbelief” can possibly summarise the Web site’s message concerning divergent opinions on religious issues. “He who considers that [...] people can choose the religion they want is not a Muslim.”

---


225 According to FreeWeb sitereport.org, Islamqa.com has just over 14,000 daily page views (24 March 2013).


6.10.3 Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitic expressions also occur in Swedish Muslim Web milieux, a fact that has already been given some attention (Tossavainen 2003). Anti-Semitism is not one of the most pronounced tendencies in the material studied, but is worth noting. The anti-Semitic expressions are partly similar to the anti-Shiite, in the way they generalise and categorise, with no regard for history, complex human collectives based on selected religious texts. Below follow examples of messages with anti-Semitic tendencies.

““The Jews” are occupying Palestine

Repeatedly, “the Jews” are mentioned instead of the state of Israel. This is probably related to the world being explained in religious terms instead of political ones. Conflicts are imagined as being between religions instead of between political entities. On Muslim.se, Ibn Baz is quoted on a “solution to the Palestine issue”, where he considers that the issue must be seen as an Islamic issue and that Muslims should fight “an Islamic jihad against Jews, until the land is given back to its people and the Jewish occupant goes back to the countries they [sic] came from, and the original Jewish inhabitants stay in their cities under Islamic rule”. Here it is clear that Israel’s relationship to the Palestinian areas is referred to – but the conflict is formulated in religious terms. The generalised exhortation to jihad against Jews in the representation of the statement signals a considerably more global conflict than the latter part of the quote does, in the words about occupied areas. The choice of words also signals support for violent struggle, although Ibn Baz is usually associated with puritan Salafism that generally discourages the use of violence. The use of the term “Jews” instead of Israel may also be related to an unwillingness to give legitimacy to the state of Israel by using its name. The effect of not naming Israel by name is then a coarsely generalised and racist talking about “Jews”.

““The Jews” conspire against Islam

There is talk about conspiracies, both in historical time and in the present day, to “destroy Islam” and prevent Muslim societies from developing – conspiracies of which the Jews are claimed to be guilty or accessories. A possibly unexpected link between anti-Shiism and anti-Semitism that occurs in

231 Mikael Tossavainen’s report Det förnekade hatet: Antisemitism bland araber och muslimer i Sverige (“The Hate Denied: Anti-Semitism among Arabs and Muslims in Sweden”) (2003) caused a certain impact in the Swedish political debate, but was also criticised for its generalisation based on very limited empirical material. Of the three Swedish Muslim Web sites to which Tossavainen refers, two do no longer exist (Muslimer.com and Islamiskaforum.com). The third Web site referred to is Darulhadith.com.

the material is that the origin of Shiism is blamed on a Jew. The accusation fills the function of proving the non-Islamic origin of Shiism. If a Jew was behind Shiism, it is thought, this would, by definition, prove its anti-Islamic tendencies. The present-day Saudi scholar al-Fawzan is quoted on Darulhadith.com as answering a question as follows:

**Question:** “Is it true that the first innovator of Râfidhah's teaching was the Jew ‘Abdullâh bin Saba’?”

**Answer:** “Yes, there is no doubt about that. Shî´ah is generally divided up into two types; Shî´ah from the fire worshippers and Shî´ah from the Jews. All are united against Islam, both the Jews and the fire worshippers. They introduced Shî´ah’s teachings to Islam in order to destroy Islam.”

The same claim also occurs in the anti-Shiite series of lessons on Darulhadith.com that was discussed earlier. The question and answer are reproduced on the blog Sanningenomshiism.wordpress.com. The answer shows an example of a world view where “the Jews” are “united against Islam” together with other enemies of the true religion. In the lesson series on Darulhadith.com, the Iranian revolution is not called Islamic – which is commonly accepted – but as “the Jewish revolution in Iran”. This expresses a conspiratorial world view, where “the Jews” are behind various apparently non-Jewish events, including those that are supposedly Islamic. Jews are thus accused as a generalised collective of having worked throughout history to destroy Islam, for example by introducing false beliefs among Muslims.

*“The Jews” have a harmful influence*

In statements that emphasise this item, Jews are included among other *kuffar* and *mushrikun*. Imitating them, having them as friends or helping them in various ways is sinful. There is a danger of being

---


234 According to *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, there is conflicting information about this figure. He is mentioned in negative terms in both Sunni and Shia sources, because he assigned an unduly high status to Ali and denied his death. In Sunni sources, he is stated as being a Yemeni Jew. According to the encyclopaedia article, this information is said to be very uncertain (Hodgson 2013), while other researchers consider the idea to be totally out of date (Halm 2004:159).

235 The “fire worshippers” refer to Zoroastrians, i.e. the dominant pre-Islamic Persian religion.

shaped by and becoming like one’s company. If you are in the company of unbelievers and idolaters, you become one of them. As the Jews, like the Shias, are also said to want to destroy or exterminate Islam, the risk of negative impact from them is high.

There are quotes from Al-Fawzan on Darulhadith.com in which he states that “he who says that the Jews and the Christians are our brothers has blasphemed”. In a longer answer to a question of what is entailed in loving and hating for the sake of Allah, al-Fawzan (again) says that love of the faith and the faithful and hate against “the unbelief and idolatry and the unfaithful and idolaters” is a basis for the religion. To “hate” them does not mean that one cannot have anything to do with them in business and agreements; as proof, it is pointed out that Muhammad made deals with Jews. Several quotes from the Qur’an are used in support of the view that “the unfaithful do not love us after all. They hate us extremely much. [...] As far as the Jews and the idolaters are concerned, there is nobody who hates the Muslims like they do.” There is thus clear distancing from Jews, at the same time as it is said that business relationships based on agreements are permitted.

6.10.4 Summarising comments

The expressions for cultural violence discussed above fit into the pattern of a world view where conflicts between religions dominate – at the expense of all other explanatory models. Religious motives and relationships between clearly separated religious groupings (hardly corresponding to reality) are portrayed as the driving force of history. Islam is claimed to be under attack, both historically and in the present day. Coarsely generalised collectives (“Jews”, rafida, kuffar in general) are said to act in a coordinated and goal-oriented way, with the aim of damaging Islam. The accusations are not aimed so much against the supposed Jewish feature of this as against non-Islam in general. The Jews are part of the greater, global and trans-historic front line of non-Islam against Islam. But the various enemies’ attacks against Islam are expressed in different ways.

Certain central texts from Islamic tradition are ascribed incontestable trustworthiness: primarily the Qu’ran and hadiths, but also theological explanations and historical chronicles by selected scholars. They are considered to prove historical events, which in turn are generalised by present-day scholars.

---


to cover broad collectives, such as “the Jews” or “the Shiites”. These readings of the texts by present-day scholars are then reproduced in a Swedish-language context. Sometimes, they get further comments in Swedish-language lessons.

A core factor for understanding the formulation and potential impact of the messages is the incontestable trustworthiness ascribed to the religious sources, both texts and persons. The texts, and the scholars who are seen as their faithful interpreters, are ascribed a status that cannot be challenged by rational argumentation, critical historical research, references to human legislation or present-day political values. Any objections based on these factors serve rather to reinforce the selected sources’ validity as evidence. This complete faith in the validity as evidence of certain Islamic texts and selected scholars is a challenge to work with in the development of critical media and information literacy among the potential audience for the messages described.

6.11 Examples of pro-violence messages

This section differs from the previous ones, as it focuses on directly pro-violence messages. References to and lectures by jihadist ideologists, propaganda films produced by jihadist groupings and the support of jihadist violence will be discussed. The international research into these messages and their related actors shows that the material is considerable seen from a global perspective. However, this study is limited to deal only with pro-violence messages encountered on Swedish-language Web sites.

6.11.1 References to jihadist ideologists

A number of Swedish Web sites make reference to, quote from and play audio files of one particular jihadist preacher, the Yemeni-American Anwar al-Awlaki (1971–2011). His considerable popularity as a preacher was partially due to him speaking excellent English. Al-Awlaki lived for a major part of his life in the USA, but he was also active in the United Kingdom and Yemen. He had an engaging and easily accessible way of expressing himself. His audience came to consist to a large part of younger Muslims in traditionally non-Muslim countries; an audience that in many cases were more fluent in English than in Arabic. Al-Awlaki is thought to have influenced a number of jihadist terror attacks, both implemented and prevented. He was not an original jihadist thinker; instead, his contribution consisted primarily of selecting parts of the messages of others, synthesising them and disseminating the result in popularised form in English. He was killed in September 2011, in the company of others belonging to “al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula”, through an attack carried out by an American
In a policy report analysing al-Awlaki’s ideological development, it was established that his analysis of the contemporary world remained fairly consistent throughout his career. What changed over time was the prognosis, his view of what should be done. The report considered that the exhortations to violence emerged over time, while the basic diagnosis of a global war on Islam in progress was present in his preaching work for a long time (Meleagrou-Hitchens 2011).

Some of the Web sites that include material from al-Awlaki are blogs, of which several are anonymous. These are generally poorly maintained and give a very amateurish impression from a technical viewpoint. The material in question often consists of audio files, as al-Awlaki is primarily known as a speaker. In some cases there are also texts, either taken from al-Awlaki’s now closed Web site or transcriptions of oral presentations. A lot of material by al-Awlaki is also available via YouTube.

An anonymous Swedish blog has embedded YouTube elegies for al-Awlaki after his death. The account that uploaded the videos is now closed, however, and they can no longer be viewed. Yet the links remain, which may indicate that the blog has been abandoned. The latest contribution was posted in January 2012. The blog has a separate category for al-Awlaki. Apart from the elegies, it also includes posts consisting of long quotes from al-Awlaki. In one post with the title “O Muslims. AVOID VOTING FOR THIS DISGUSTING DEMOCRACY” [grammar corrected], al-Awlaki is quoted as claiming that Muslims should not have anything to do with democracy, as it is an “un-Islamic system”. He also asks why certain Muslims, despite this, adopt democracy as their “political religion”; something that according to him is a treachery against Islam. A speech by al-Awlaki is also reproduced about the importance of “loyalty and disavowal” (al-wala’ wa-l-bara’) where he accuses Muslim scholars in the West of hypocrisy, as “hundreds of verses and hadith on Jihad are swept away” in conjunction with trying to save public Islamic activities from suspicions of extremism. Muslims who cooperate on anti-terrorism with Western authorities are accused by al-Awlaki of selling out their religion by allying themselves with non-Muslims.

---

240 More information about al-Awlaki is available, for example on http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11658920 (27 March 2013).


Variations on the same theme recur. Al-Awlaki is quoted as speaking about how some Muslims are more concerned about appearing good in the eyes of the unbelievers (for example by avoiding jihad) than being good Muslims; once again this is linked to *al-wala wa'l-barat*. He also considers that “there are some Muslims who are so much Muslim for the sake of the kuffar that they do not even like Muslims who call the kuffar ‘kuffar’!” Al-Awlaki is also quoted on the proper method for re-establishing the Muslim caliphate; after a critical discussion of various strategies, he decides that it must be jihad. The blog also includes “44 ways of supporting Jihad”, a pamphlet that exhorts Muslims in non-Muslim countries to support jihad in alternative ways, if they cannot participate in person themselves. The methods mentioned are, among others, financial support, provision of medical help, dissemination of jihadist writings and bringing up children to love jihad and mujahedin. In the category “Lite om islam för dig” (“A little about Islam for you”) on the same blog, longer quotations of the above-mentioned Abdullah Azzam, known for his support of and propagating for Arabic Muslims to take part in jihad against the Soviet Union in the 1980s are also reproduced.

Other similar Swedish blogs have, besides references to and material from Anwar al-Awlaki, also material that, for example, lauds Osama bin Laden and nashids and messages from the Somali al-Shabaab. Many of the contributions consist only of embedded YouTube videos, for example nashids with jihad themes. Some blogs also include more personally formulated comments, reflections and poems with links to the above-mentioned themes.

One YouTube channel with relevance in this context is ”alghurabaamedia”. Among the various films on the channel, there are those with a pro-violence message. Several short clips with Anwar al-Awlaki are shown, among them the film ”ya shabaab nasheed” (611 views) that includes a nashid lauding the young persons (al-shabaab) who work for God’s cause (*fi sabil Allah*). Some way into the film, al-Awlaki starts to talk about the importance of young persons for change. There are also

---

246 http://www.youtube.com/user/alghurabaamedia/ (27 March 2013). The channel was created in November 2011, has 107 subscribers and has published 202 films. In total, the channel has had 149,994 viewings, which gives an average of 743 viewings per film. The most popular film has had more than 20,000 viewings, while many other films have only had a couple of hundred viewings. The Arabic *al-ghuraba* means “the strangers” and has been used in jihadist circles as a designation of the faithful in a world where true religion has become strange.
several films in which al-Awlaki emphasises the importance of being united as ummah, as well as films about martyrdom and poems by jihad fighters about their love of jihad. The channel also has a clip produced by al-Qa’ida’s media organ Al-Sahab with the title “Invitation to Islam” (246 viewings). In the clip, Adam Gadahn, an American convert who has been central when al-Qa’ida has presented messages to Americans, invites all kuffar to repent of their sins and become Muslims. The channel alghurabaamedia also contains Swedish-language films that bear witness to an almost morbid attitude to life. A film with the title “wallahi [vid Gud] vi alla kommer att dö” (“wallahi [by God] we all will die”) (144 viewings) begins with a picture of a skull. Thereafter, the following white lines of text against a black background roll, without sound:

“Wallahi jag kommer dö / Wallahi jag kommer dö / Wallahi jag kommer dö / WAllahi Du kommer med dö / Wallahi vi alla kommer att dö / Wallahi detta liv är inget vi ska leka med, / Wallahi ingen utav oss vet när döden kommer / Wallahi vi alla kommer få träffa dödsängeln / jag har en fråga, / År du redo? / Handen i hjärtat är du redo? / Du vet klockan tickar, tiden går, Döden kan komma när som helst, / Tänk efter, / Jag törper i alla fall göra detta nu, Be lite nu, Sen läsa Quran, / Kör du med på detta” (“Wallahi I will die / Wallahi I will die / Wallahi I will die / Wallahi You will also die / Wallahi we all will die / Wallahi this life is not for playing with / Wallahi none of us know when death will come / Wallahi we will all meet the angel of death / I have a question / Are you ready? / Hand on heart are you ready? / You know the clock is ticking, time is passing, Death can come at any time, / Consider, / I will do this now in any case, Pray a little now, Then read the Quran, / Will you hang in there” [grammar corrected]249

Thereafter, the film concludes with the same skull. On this YouTube channel, there are thus clips with jihadist ideologists and messages about youthful energy, the longing for jihad, the elevation of martyrdom, distancing from unbelievers and exhortations to constant awareness of death.

6.11.2 ”Victory”: a lecture by Anwar al-Awlaki

On a Swedish-language blog, which does not otherwise have a jihadist character, there is a collection of links to lectures by Anwar al-Awlaki on the English-language Web site Kalamullah.com. One of the lectures, entitled Victory, is about victory for the Muslim ummah being close.250 The lecture includes several elements that characterise al-Awlaki’s deeds: assumption of a global conflict between Islam and non-Islam; distancing from unbelievers and exhortations to constant awareness of death.

248 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gL7cF-kg-zM&feature=youtube_gdata_player (27 March 2013).

249 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0_M7aWXFLM&feature=youtube_gdata_player (27 March 2013).

250 The following sections are based on two audio files (54 and 28 minutes long respectively) which were downloaded in June 2012 from http://www.kalamullah.com/Anwar%20Al-Awlaki/asbab1.mp3 and http://www.kalamullah.com/Anwar%20Al-Awlaki/asbab2.mp3. This lecture is not mentioned in the analyses of al-Awlaki’s activities encountered during the work on this study. Like a lot of other material with al-Awlaki, the lecture is also available on YouTube.
early Muslim community with that of the present day; references to present-day political events that are interpreted into the jihadist framework narrative; and the view of jihad as a religious duty. The lecture bears indubitable witness to his jihadist ideology and is therefore discussed here in detail.

It takes as self-evident that a global struggle between Islam and non-Islam is in progress. Al-Awlaki claims that the unbelievers are trying to exterminate the light of God, Islam. God has also promised the Muslims that their religion will dominate the surface of the Earth. An important point for al-Awlaki is that God throughout history has created circumstances that have brought victory for Muslims, even when it has appeared improbable. He exemplifies with events from the time of Muhammad, the time of the Prophet’s followers and the time of the crusades, and emphasises God’s ability to steer events to the benefit of the believers. Events are retold with reference to two classical Muslim chronicles, Ibn Kathir (died 1373) and Ibn al-Athir (died 1233).251 The accounts of history given by these two writers are treated as completely trustworthy in the retelling.

The view of personal reward

The present day is compared by al-Awlaki with the time of Muhammad’s companions: in those days there was not yet any Islamic political authority, and the Muslims were involved in a struggle with two super-powers – the Persians and the Byzantines. Al-Awlaki considers that this is similar to the present-day situation: Muslims are being fought by super-powers and no Islamic political authority exists. The present day is said to be a time of jahiliyya, pre-Islamic “ignorance”, even if this expression is not used explicitly. All Muslim societies today are dismissed, as they are not considered to be legitimate representatives of Islam and Muslim interests.

For al-Awlaki, the comparison between the time of the Prophet’s companions and the present day makes an important point, namely that the reward (al-ajr) for the believers today is at the same level as for the historical companions, as the trials they are encountering are of equal value. Therefore, present-day believers should not complain about living in a difficult time, and look back nostalgically towards the companions. Instead, they should be grateful to live in a time when they are being tested, and the reward for standing at the side of God is consequently high. For the individual, this time of trials can be understood as an opportunity, an offer to receive the highest level of divine reward a

251 Ibn al-Athir is famous particularly for this contemporary description of the crusades.
human can achieve by taking sides for God’s cause. Here, a distinctively religious level appears in the argumentation; God as a supernatural actor with importance for people is the very foundation of the reasoning.

**The view of religious scholars**

One point al-Awlaki makes in his lecture concerns religious scholars (‘ulama). Based on Ibn Kathir, he says that many of the scholars during the time of the crusades were prepared to fight, to embark on jihad against the attacking Europeans. But when they heard about the enormous size of the Christian army, they turned back – they were fearful when danger approached. As they were ‘ulama, al-Awlaki continues, they could find excuses for their actions: they could twist and turn the words of the Qu’ran and hadiths to their advantage. The lesson al-Awlaki teaches is that complying with what established, well-known ‘ulama say is no guarantee for acting righteously. But, he adds, all ‘ulama are not bad. There are those that give the right advice to the believers. “They might be in jail, they might be killed, they might be underground, they might not be famous because no TV station would broadcast their khutba [Friday prayers]. But they are ‘ulama.” The believers are exhorted not to listen to the well-known scholars given high status by governments and TV channels, but to learn to recognise the truth where it can be found. Here there is explicit criticism of officially imposed interpretations and the messages transmitted by the mainstream media, which can be compared to the criticism of established media by right-wing and left-wing extremists.

The role models that are highlighted are thus scholars with knowledge about religion who do not compromise with the powerful. No specific names are mentioned, but it is apparent that al-Awlaki is keen to include himself in this category – even if he perhaps would not call himself a scholar. His death in an American attack can also be said to have confirmed this status. Considering the fact that al-Awlaki never took part in violent struggle himself, the killing of him may possibly have given him a martyr status that would otherwise have been difficult to achieve.

**The view of historical and political events**

Al-Awlaki further refers to the apocalyptic ending of Ibn Kathir’s historical work from the 14th century, *al-bidaya wa’l-nihaya* (“The Beginning and the End”). The text describes events in certain parts of the world which, based on hadith texts, are supposed to signal that the end is near. He speaks of the chaos (*fitna*) that will characterise the last days, and of the battles that are claimed to have been predicted in the hadiths. Al-Awlaki says that he used to read this text as a young man, and then thought that the end would be wonderful, but that it must yet be far away. Thereafter he offers a story about how conditions have changed in the geographic areas involved in Ibn Kathir’s apocalyptic text: Iraq, Khurasan (eastern Persia; al-Awlaki interprets this as Afghanistan), al-Sham (the Levant) and Yemen. Then, just over twenty years ago, Iraq was secular and governed by the
Ba’ath party under Saddam Hussein. Afghanistan was communist. “The Palestinians I knew”, says al-Awlaki, “cursed Allah”. Syria was also governed by Ba’ath. Beirut was a party city and South Yemen was the only communist state in the Arab world. Consequently, young al-Awlaki thought that the end must be very, very far away in the future.

But then he describes changes in these places. The jihad of the Palestinians gave martyrdom operations (suicide attacks) the central role they have today. Al-Awlaki speaks appreciatively about how Palestinians celebrates when a shahid, “martyr”, gives his or her life to Allah. They are an inspiration to Muslims in the rest of the world. The communist Afghanistan became a country for jihad. Al-Awlaki considers that all jihad that is being fought in the present day can be traced back to Afghanistan’s jihad against the Soviet Union in the 1980s. And who could have guessed that Iraq would become a centre for jihad? Even the Americans were surprised, al-Awlaki says. But thanks to Allah’s preparation in the form of sanctions against the people, the war against Iran in the 1980s and the USA’s invasion in 2003, the secular Iraq became the very front line for jihad. Even the socialist one-party state of South Yemen has experienced an Islamic re-awakening. Al-Awlaki asks: do not these developments show that the final victory is close? Do they not show that Allah has prepared these areas for the next phase – the epic battle that will take place between the Muslim ummah and its enemies, followed by a global caliphate?

One observation is that al-Awlaki combines talk about political events that belong to general news reporting and history writing (the conflicts in Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq, etc.) with specifically religious references. In order to fully understand al-Awlaki’s lecture, prior knowledge is needed: knowledge about Islamic terms and stories about the end of days. The ideal listener is not anyone, but a person who is well versed in and accepts the legitimacy of super-natural events as described in Islamic sources. God is assumed to be an actor who directs history according to His will. Even United Nation sanctions and the war against Iraq are said to be God’s work. The listener is expected to accept this premise; otherwise the reasoning of the lecture falls flat on its face. God has determined a series of events, and nothing can occur that diverges from God’s will.

Complex political events in separate parts of the world are also related to each other, just as in the text referred to in the introduction to the study in order to exemplify the jihadist framework narrative. Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Yemen and other places are portrayed by al-Awlaki as affected by one single wave of religious insight, resulting in violent struggle. The fact that these places each have their own history, their own context, their own local conflicts and circumstances that play a role is not taken into account at all in al-Awlaki’s account of historical and political events.
The view on the individual’s duty to act

Al-Awlaki continues to talk about how the listener should relate to the message he has just given:

“Now, if we are getting close to those times, you really, really, really don’t want to be sitting on the sidelines and lose out on all of the ajr in the Golden Era. [...] And here you are, living in those times, sitting on the sidelines.”

The listener is faced with a choice: Either you join the global Islamic wave of religious insight, manifested in violent struggle, and thereby get a share of the reward (ajr) that has been promised – at the same high level as the first Muslims. Or you sit passively on the sidelines and miss out on this golden opportunity. The listener is also accused of sitting on the sidelines. Here, al-Awlaki addresses the listener directly: what will you choose to do? About the opportunity to fight jihad, he also says:

“If you sit behind, if you’re reluctant – you’re gonna miss out. The chance only comes once.”

It is thus necessary for each individual to choose sides. There is no place in the middle. Either you are for us, or you are against us. Al-Awlaki considers that the Muslim ummah will be divided up into believers (mu’min) and hypocrites (munafiq).

The message of the lecture is consequently that people do not really have any room for action over and above placing themselves either on the side of the winners (the believers) or the side of the losers (the unbelievers, the hypocrites) in the unavoidable historical development that God is directing. The examples from Islamic historiography aims to prove this view: if God wants, he will create the prerequisites for Islam’s victory (which has been promised), even if all observable signs of the times signal that it is impossible. The listener is therefore not exhorted to change history through his/her actions, but rather to follow the unavoidable development of history and stand on the winning side. The opportunity only comes once; the judgement on those who hesitate is hard and unavoidable. This depiction of the individual’s room for action highlights jihad as a religiously charged symbolic act – a witness to your decision to take up God’s cause – rather than as politically necessary for the struggle as such.

A hadith is quoted: “If you leave ibad fi sabil Allah, Allah will humiliate you and the humiliation will not leave you until you return to your religion.” Al-Awlaki considers that this hadith speaks both of the problem and its solution. But, he says, some Muslims turn the argument around and claim, wrongly, that the problem is in actual fact the solution:
“Some Muslims say that the way forward for the umma is to distance itself from terrorism, and to spend their time becoming good in business, good in technology and agriculture and the rest, and that is how we can compete with the rest of the world. Rasul Allah [God’s emissary] (saws) says that this is false, that this is wrong and Allah will dishonour us if we do that. Rasul Allah says there is no way out for you except if you go back to your din [religion]. Now, the commentators on the hadith say that ‘going back to your din’ here means going back to jihad fi sabil Allah specifically. […] So jihad becomes equal to the religion.”

With this straight-forward message, that jihad is on an equal footing with the religion and is the solution for the world’s Muslims, al-Awlaki ends the lecture. According to his interpretation of the hadith referred to, Muhammad states clearly and explicitly that the only solution for Muslims to end the humiliation is to take up arms. In relation to the comment above about the driving force of history and jihad as a symbolic act rather than a political force of change, al-Awlaki can be understood to mean that jihad in itself will not ease the burdens of Muslims. On the other hand, their taking sides for religion, for God’s cause – manifested through jihad – will guarantee their salvation in the life hereafter. In this way, they avoid the humiliation.

On the Swedish blog that linked to this lecture, there are also links to several lecture series by al-Awlaki that focus on Muhammad’s life and prominent figures from the early history of Islam. According to Meleagrou-Hitchens (2011), these series of lectures contain the same fundamental diagnosis of the state of the world as al-Awlaki’s later lectures, with the struggle between Islam and non-Islam at the centre, while the explicit exhortations to violent jihad emerged in later years. None of the linked lectures are commented on, in terms of content, time or place. Visitors to the blog therefore get the impression that the person behind it sympathises with the overall message from the lectures. The blog’s Swedish-language original material is not of a jihadist character, but can rather be called duty and doomsday-aware puritan Salafism (however, a video with quotes from an Australian preacher has also been posted during the execution of the study; at the start of the video, the preacher is said to have become a martyr in Syria). However, because lectures with al-Awlaki are published on the Web site, a relationship arises between its unique material and al-Awlaki’s message. This does not mean that every visitor to the Web site self-evidently moves from one ideological point to another. It is up to the visitor to relate to the material offered.

---

252 The abbreviation ”saws” in brackets is used to mark the ritualised blessing of Muhammad that usually accompanies his mention. In the lecture, al-Awlaki says salatu Allahu 'alayhi wa sallim, ”God’s peace and blessings on him”.

235
One Swedish Web site with a consistent pro-violence message is Islam-tawhid.se. It has an estimated 90 daily page views. Tawhid means “unity” and in Islamic theology, it indicates God’s unity and indivisibility. It can be said to be the opposite of “idolatry” (shirk). The main headings of the Web site are: Home; News; Links; MP3; Video; Articles; Sheikh Anwar al-Awlqi. There are only three links under the heading Links. One leads to the jihadist forum Ansar al-Mujahedeen, which is described as a “Very good Web forum for the latest news from the Islamic world”. There is also a link to a Web site for learning the Qur’an and, behind the sub-heading News, one that calls itself “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan”, with the sub-heading “Voice of Jihad”. Islam-tawhid.se also has a YouTube channel that is relatively inactive. Anwar al-Awlaki is the only preacher who is given his own heading on the Web site. The section with his name includes three “doroos” (“lessons”) by him in the form of audio files with the titles “State of the Ummah”, “The Battle of the Hearts and Minds” and “Your Just Reward”.

Islam-tawhid.se also includes unique material in Swedish. A collection of lessons are published in MP3 format. The male teacher who is speaking is not named, but the same voice can be recognised in the various recordings. A few lessons are recorded in a social setting; vague sounds of listeners can be discerned. Others appear to be recorded without an audience. Examples of the titles of the lessons are “Who do you ally yourself with?”, “Hang on to Tawhid”, “How will your life end?!”, “The longed-for khilafa” and “Do you really care about them?! [grammar corrected in last item]. In the lesson “Tafsir Sorat al-Kafiroon” (interpretation of Chapter 109 of the Qur’an), the teacher first explains the importance of this sura. In Mohammed Knut Bernström’s Swedish translation, it reads in its entirety:

“Säg: ‘Ni som förnekar sanningen! Jag dyrkar inte vad ni dyrkar. Inte heller dyrkar ni vad jag dyrkar. Och jag kommer aldrig att dyrka vad ni dyrkar, och ni kommer heller aldrig att dyrka vad jag dyrkar. Ni har er tro – och jag har min tro!’” (“Say: ‘You who deny the truth! I do not worship what you worship. Nor do you worship what I worship. And I will never worship what you worship, and neither will you ever worship what I worship. You have your faith – and I have my faith!’”

In his discourse, the teacher uses two historical Qur’an commentators: Ibn Kathir and al-Qurtubi (died 1273). The sura is said to have been revealed in Mecca during a time of difficulties and

---

253 The source is FreeWeb sitereport.org (24 March 2013). The Web site was downloaded and saved in its entirety in January 2013.

254 http://www.youtube.com/user/DaruTawhid/ (27 March 2013). The account was created in November 2010 and has fourteen subscribers, eight films have been published (mostly clips with fighting from the Libyan civil war in 2011) and 8,492 viewings. This gives an average viewing frequency of 1,062 (8 March 2013).
persecution of the Muslims. After the revelation of the sura, the difficulties increased, as Muhammad and the believers distanced themselves from their opponents’ “idolatry”. Towards the end of the lesson, the teacher notes that, when in conversation with Muslims you point out that, for example, Christians and Jews are expressing *kufr* and worshipping other than Allah, then sometimes “ignorant Muslims” claim that this sura means: “Let them be, they are permitted to worship what they worship – they have their religion and you have your religion. Why are you quarrelling about that?”.

According to the teacher, this understanding is “of course wrong, they have not understood the true meaning”. Instead, the sura is “a clear and concise explanation that your religion is invalid, your religion is not acceptable to Allah (swt), your worship is wrong, your worship is not right”. Those who understand the sura as an acceptance of differences that exist between Muslims and other religions therefore have a completely incorrect understanding, he considers. Thereafter, he adds that there is:

“No doubt whatsoever that this is a distancing from kufr and shirk that must exist at all times and that should also be followed by battle, when it is time for battle, when we seek battle, when we should spread this religion, spread this da'wa with word and sword. So da'wa is not just spread by words – da'wa is spread with word and sword. So as the Prophet Muhammad (saws) did, so as sahaba [the followers] did, so as Allah (swt) first and foremost ordered in the Qur’.”

Here, there is open support of militant struggle against the “idolaters” and the “unbelievers” in order to “call to Islam”. The calling shall be carried out with both “word and sword”. This battle shall be fought “when it is time for battle” – the timing is not stated in more detail in this lesson, however.

Among the updates on Islam-tawhid.se, there are references to news that has been published in regular media and re-contextualised here. News reports from TT (Swedish news agency), Dagens Nyheter, Jyllands-Posten, svt.se and other sources are included. Several relate to society’s response to terror threats and actions. “Säpo vill öka spaningen på internet” (“Swedish Security Service wishes to increase searches on Internet”) is the heading of one article, in which the head of the Security Service discusses how best to monitor extremist tendencies on the Internet in the wake of the deeds of Taimour Abdulwahhab and Anders Behring Breivik. “Säpo allt mer inflytande på terrorism” (“Swedish Security Policy concentrate increasingly on terrorism”) is the heading of another article taken from TT, which states that the appropriations for the Security Service have more than doubled over a ten-year period. In the beginning of August 2012, the latter article was published on the front page of Islam-tawhid.se, with the heading: “Allah säger i Qoranen: ‘och de strider mot er tills ni överger er

---

255 Just as with ”saws”, the abbreviation ”swt” within brackets is used to mark that the speaker praises God in a ritualised way when mentioning Him, using the phrase *subhana wa ta’ala*, which roughly translates as “exalted and all-powerful”.

237
religion om de kunde” (“Allah says in the Qoran: ‘and they fight against you until you abandon your religion if they could’”) (Qur’an 2:217).256 The Security Service’s anti-terror intelligence operation is in this context seen as being aimed directly against Muslims. In January 2013, the same quote from the Qur’an was used on the front page to link to articles about the Danish former jihadist who, according to news reports, cooperated with the Danish security service and the CIA to set the trap that led to the attack that killed Anwar al-Awlaki in September 2011.

To frame a post that claims that the USA is on the verge of being torn apart (“34 av 50 stater begär ett utträde ur de förenta staterna”) (“34 of 50 states are demanding exit from United States”), the phrase “they are so cruel to each other, you think they are united, but their hearts are so different” (Qur’an 59:14) is used.257 A further example of the use of quotes from the Qur’an relates to support to people in Syria, where the Qur’an quote “the faithful are brothers” (Qur’an 49:10) is used. In addition to this, hadiths are quoted that speak of the believers being like a body, where the whole organism is affected if one part is sick, and that “No-one of you has faith (Imaan) before he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he wishes for himself”. In association to the quotes, there is an exhortation to give humanitarian aid to Muslims in Syria through collection of money, medicine and necessaries. No specific details are provided about how the collection should be implemented in practical terms; neither account numbers or other contact details for any aid organisation is shown. Instead, informal Muslim contacts appear to be favoured. In conjunction with the text, there are five pictures of a young girl. In four of the pictures, her eyes are closed, her arm is bloody and she looks to be in great distress. In the fifth picture, she is wrapped up in a towel, looks clean and secure, and looks straight into the camera. The viewer can understand from the unifying images and text that the girl was in need in war-torn Syria, but has been helped by her Muslim “siblings”.

Exhortations to help Muslims in Syria illustrate how humanitarian and military support have in principle been treated as equal within what Hegghammer calls classic jihadism. These activities are seen by ummah-oriented pan-Islamists as two sides of the same coin. Exhortations to give material humanitarian aid can therefore be published next to propaganda from fighting groups and exhortations to join the armed struggle. In these exhortations to solidarity, both activities play a big role. This despite the fact that many in society as a whole want a clear distinction between

256 In Bernström’s translation, the same phrase reads: “Och de kommer att fortsätta att kämpa mot er för att förmå er att avsvära er tro – om de kan.” (“And they will continue to fight against you to persuade you to forswear your faith – if they can.”).

257 The same phrase in Bernström’s translation: “Inbördes är de hätska fiender. Det är lätt att tro att de håller samman, men i sitt intre är de splittrade [utom i sitt hat mot de troende].” (“Between themselves, they are fierce enemies. It is easy to believe that they are united, but internally they are disunited [except in their hatred of the believers]”).
humanitarian aid on the one hand, and violent struggle on the other. Similar messages are expressed in the lesson “Bryr du dig verkligen om de?” (“Do you really care about them?” [grammar corrected]), where the speaker deals with the duty of Muslims to aid Muslims in need in Syria. He speaks of welfare states’ systems for taking care of the weak, and that the Muslim ummah must take a similar organised responsibility. The help he talks about is primarily humanitarian aid in the form of money, clothes, food and other necessaries. But there is also express support for those who take part in the militant struggle. He also refers to a statement by Muhammad in a hadith that those who neither 1) take physical part in battle themselves, nor 2) financially and practically support those who go into battle, nor 3) take care of the surviving relatives of the fighters (women and children) will suffer “a catastrophe” before Doomsday. If, on the other hand, you support those fighting for God’s cause financially and practically, you get the same reward (ajr) as them. The lesson ends with an emotional exhortation to give fifty kronor [EUR 5.50/GBP 5.00] per month to support in particular those children in Syria who have suffered from the ongoing violence. Humanitarian aid to exposed Muslim “siblings” is in this way linked to support for jihad fighters in conflict zones.

Syria takes up much space on the Web site, but other conflict zones in which militant jihadists figure (such as Mali and Algeria) are also included. In January 2013, several posts relating to Syria were at the top of the front page. First is a view with the heading “Blev beskjutna av stridsflyg vid ett bageri i staden Halfaya 2012 12 23” (“Was shot at by fighter jets by a bakery in the city of Halfaya 23 December 2012”), (the file itself was named “Massaker på civila vid bageri” (“Massacre of civilians at bakery”)). A shaky, hand-held camera first moves by car along dusty streets towards what appears to be a bomb crater in a city milieu. Several persons in the vicinity of the camera are calling “Allahu akbar”. At the place of the explosion, bloody and mutilated human bodies are shown. The image material in itself is not unlike that which is broadcast on regular TV channels. The difference is that here it has been placed in an ideological context that supports jihadism through the other messages on the Web site.

Solidarity with the Muslim victims of the violence of Syrian regime’s forces is a central theme. In a text with the headline “Syrien, Alsham och det kommande hoppet” (“Syria, Alsham and the hope of the future”), whose author is stated as being “Khalid Al’adam”, hateful propaganda is also aimed against the Alawite people – the minority in Syria to which the president and many of those in the

258 Attacks specifically against bakeries have been reported as being a recurring feature in Syria. Flour and electricity – which are needed to bake bread – have become goods in short supply, which has led to long queues of desperate and hungry people at the few bakeries that have had access to both.
government circle and the army belong. Alawites are designated “the unfaithful sect” and the fighting in Syria is described as a battle “between Islam and kufr”. Taking part in the fighting is described as a duty, as religious scholars are said to be agreed that there is “no excuse before Allah (SWT) on doomsday for Muslims who can help them, but who refrain”. It is also claimed that the Muslim ummah “must be militarised” and that its “former time of greatness will not return until there really is an Ummah of sword and pen, and this will not happen except with Jihad and blood letting on the altar of Islam”. The fighting in Syria, which is described as “birth pangs”, is also said to be “the beginning of the end of years of humiliation, servility and the deprivation of the Muslim’s honour, manliness and instinct, by removing his weapons”. The fact that weapons are associated so closely to manliness and honour is significant, considering the visual presentation of weapons in jihadist films that is discussed below.

6.11.4 A film by “al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

A 56 minute long film from 2009 with the title Join the Caravan was published on Islam-tawhid.se in the autumn of 2012. The film encourages young men to take part in jihad arranged by “al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb”; the message focuses more specifically on Algeria. Several technical finesses are used in the editing of the film: the person or persons who produced the film are clearly technically knowledgeable. The film is in Arabic, but has been provided with English subtitles and is therefore accessible for a global audience. The title (in Arabic Ilhaq bi’l-qafila) is taken from a well-known jihadist text from the 1980s by the above-mentioned Abdullah Azzam, in which he exhorts Muslims the world over to take part in jihad. This text is also quoted explicitly in the film. There are also several video clips with Azzam where he is lecturing on the necessity of jihad. The fact that Azzam’s text is applied to the struggle in North Africa shows that the originators of the film consider that the exhortation from the 1980s still has topicality in another part of the world. The message is considered to have general validity in different places, different eras and in different political contexts, which was earlier established as being the case with the jihadist framework narrative.

Other authorities that appear in the film, besides Azzam, are Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Yahya al-Libi. The messages given by these are variants of the jihadist framework narrative.

259 The film was downloaded in October 2012.

260 Al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is a jihadist group with roots in Algeria, which allied itself to al-Qa’ida in 2007. The group came into focus internationally in conjunction with the hostage drama at an Algerian oil installation in January 2013. For an introduction to AQIM, see Lebovich 2013.

261 Central parts of the text in English translation are included in the anthology Islam in Transition (al-Azzam 2007) for example.
In the introduction, however, Algerian leaders in particular are criticised for being corrupt, un-Islamic and in collusion with enemy powers. Simultaneously with pictures of political leaders in Muslim countries being shown, a speaker says that these rulers have abolished sharia and introduced the laws of worldly unbelievers by force. They are also said to be in alliance with “our enemies among the Jews and the Christians”.

The main content of the film is a long series of sequences from a training camp in the forest. Shooting exercises of several types are shown, as are close-combat exercises. Young men are seen jumping, running, climbing and crawling past various obstacles, often with automatic weapons in their hands. A brotherhood is portrayed, where young men wander, live camp life and fight together – side by side. No example of actual jihad battle is shown in the film; instead, the training phase itself is focused on in a romanticising way. Nashids have a central importance in the film as accompaniment to the training scenes. In several cases, the words are reproduced in English in the subtitles. The proposed audience for this subtitled version of the film is therefore not assumed to understand Arabic. At the same time, the messages in the songs are clearly more than padding. They are a central part of the content of the film. The nashids emphasise virtues, such as determination to fight, willingness to make sacrifices, determination and strength.

Most of the men taking part on the training camp have not masked their faces in front of the camera. The film also shows how the group gathers into a circle for joint study: one camp leader reads verses from the Qur’an and gives an oral commentary to them. The young men, wearing trousers that end above the ankle (which many Salafis do to imitate Muhammad), sit in a circle on the ground, listening apparently with concentration and follow the text in their own books. Bird song can be heard in the background. To conclude the training camp, prizes are awarded to the participants who have excelled. One by one they are called up, receive a package and are shaken by the hand, and then return to their place in the circle. Here there is a clear aspect of personal reward of a more immediate character than promises about the elevated status of martyrs in paradise. Being selected as particularly able at the training camp may exercise an attraction on young men, in particular an audience whose reference world includes war depictions on film. The appreciation of physical ability and the competitive element the awarding of prizes adds may be an effective combination.

The genres of film that have been discussed in other parts of this report can be applied here – in particular, *training film*, *mobilisation film* and *wilderness film*. The camp shows internal activities with a strong focus on goal-oriented military training. There are also elements of unity in the group: everyday camp life with cooking, bread baking and smiling young men are cut in. The focus is, however, on the training elements and their physical and mental challenge. The film appears to ask a question of the viewer: could you cope with this? The internal activities have a clear purpose: they are
preparing fighters for a violent struggle against corrupt, un-Islamic regimes in Muslim societies. Well-known and charismatic ideologists are cut in, on small-size frames alongside with the training sequences. The first part of the film has an almost documentary, polemic style, where the rulers are criticised through historical image material and interviews with “experts”. There are, however, no contact information for those viewers who may become convinced by the film and want to join. Nor does Islam-tawhid.se, where the film was found, provide any details about where recruits to the jihadist struggle can turn to. However, an email address is provided on the Web site.

6.11.5 A film by Jabhat al-Nusra

One of the most noted jihadist groups in the war in progress in Syria since the popular uprising in 2011 has been Jabhat al-Nusra (“the Support Front”). The organisation was presented publicly in January 2012; the leader is the Syrian Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani (Zelin 2012b). In December 2012, the organisation was designated as an international terror organisation by the USA. A 54-minute-long film about Jabhat al-Nusra, produced by its media department al-Manara al-Bayda (“The White Minaret”), was published in 2012 on Islam-tawhid.se. (Subsequently, another film by Jabhat al-Nusra has been published on the Web site.) The film is less technically advanced than the AQIM film discussed above, but the production is not unsophisticated. The film was published on Islam-tawhid.se with the Swedish heading “Ge stöd och seger till ahl sunna i Syrien” (“Give support and victory to ahl sunna in Syria”). Among the fighters within Jabhat al-Nusra there are both Syrians and jihadist foreign fighters. The publication of their propaganda material on a Swedish Web site can be assumed to be aimed at increasing the support for the group, financially, morally and physically.

The film shows the group’s various activities, including bombings and one attack against a military barracks. Individuals with blurred faces, who are each one designated a “hero” (batal) are presented, interviewed and also speak directly to the viewer. These are persons who will be carrying out suicide attacks; they talk about their longing for martyrdom. The filmed explosions are repeated several times and the consequences – burnt-out, destroyed buildings – are shown from several angles. In conjunction with a filmed night-time attack against a military barracks, the killed soldiers’ faces and mutilated bodies are shown in close-up. The effect is impactful. The viewer is given no doubt that this group is involved in bloody, violent combat with a deadly outcome. Nashids that glorify jihad fighters and condemn their enemies are played simultaneously in the background.

262 For a review of jihadism in Syria during the war, see Lund 2012a.

263 The video, which is just over 50 minutes long, was downloaded in August 2012. Transcriptions of the video in PDF format in Arabic and English, and the video itself, have also been made available on Jihadology.net (Zelin 2012a).
Interestingly enough, the film also shows how Jabhat al-Nusra hand out necessities to the local population, and how they protect people against gunfire at street corners. Some sequences show cars on a road. Above certain cars, the word “Muslim” is shown in black letters; above others the word “ahdaf”, “target”. This is a clear example of dehumanisation. With sequences like these, Jabhat al-Nusra’s media department appears to want to present the group’s soldiers as “the good guys” by claiming that they are not risking – or even actively protecting – the lives of Muslims. FFI’s report about jihadist films states that similar scenes, where “Muslims” are being protected by the jihadists, occur also in its material (Finsnes 2010:22). Of interest in the context is the designation of those who do deserve protection and those who do not: “targets” equals non-Muslims. Here, the ideological framework based on which Jabhat al-Nusra acts is noticeable, where the world is divided up into categories that leave no room for intermediate positions.

The last part of the film concerns training camps and group activities. In addition to training sequences with automatic weapons in a stony desert landscape, there are also groups posing for the camera, among them one surrounding a car. The visual effect of a group of masked, armed men who pose around a car with a black-and-white flag showing the Islamic declaration of faith in the middle of the desert is impressive. A message is read out: the group announces that it has created a battalion in eastern Aleppo that is loyal to the leader of Jabhat al-Nusra.

In the concluding sequence of the film, two lines of armed men stand turned against each other. Between the two lines an unmasked man walks back and forth (his face is blurred when turned towards the camera). The men in the lines rhythmically recite a phrase that they intend to carry out jihad. “The helpers of the religion” (ansar al-din) are also exhorted to support the four “rightly-led” caliphs in Sunni Muslim historical writing: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali. This marks the Sunni character of Jabhat al-Nusra, which is important as many in the Syrian regime are Alawites, which are seen by many Sunnis as unbelievers, as noted earlier. Anti-Shiism has been a factor among Syrian Islamists for a long time (Steinberg 2009). Seen against the background of the strongly sectarian fighting in Iraq since 2003 and the al-Assad regime’s war on the opposition movements in Syria, anti-Shiism could possibly contribute to the recruitment for jihadist struggle in Syria.

The film contains messages relating to external activities that can be labelled as action film, confrontation film and mobilisation film. The focus is on the group’s violent activism and confrontation with enemies. The film also includes ideological argumentation of a similar type to the above-mentioned AQIM film, but without the corresponding references to globally known jihadist ideologists. There is talk about the lethargic condition of present-day young Muslims, as well as of the hateful enemies. Messages are also disseminated that focus on the struggle in the local context (war in Syria), the longing of suicide bombers for martyrdom and loyalty to Jabhat al-Nusra as a group. The message of
the film is thus not primarily one of principles, but is locally grounded: the propaganda can be said to be state-oriented, according to Hegghammer’s typology. Participation in the ongoing civil war in Syria is in self-evident focus. Jabhat al-Nusra is presented as the true champions of Muslims in Syria against the unbelieving enemy, the regime and its helpers. Their violent strategy and effectiveness is presented as their strength. These external activities and confrontations are crucial for the group’s self-presentation.

At the same time, what could be called internal activities are also represented. Military training within the group and posing for the camera are given some space, as well as some kind of ritual at the end. The concluding sequence fills no military function, but rather fulfils an identity-strengthening purpose with its religiously charged rhythmic call and response. These more internal messages can be thought to appeal to the viewer as well as the explosions and the fighting.

Even if the group that produced the film is state-oriented, its placing and framing on Islam-tawhid.se entails an ummah-oriented recontextualisation. In correlation to the AQIM film and the other material presented above, the film can be understood partly as support for the struggle of Jabhat al-Nusra, partly as an exhortation to the visitor to the Web site to join this struggle in order to defend the Muslim ummah. In other words, the function of a film can be altered, depending on the context in which it is placed. Through the publication of the film on Islam-tawhid.se, it is included in an ummah-oriented and pan-Islamist “classic” jihadist context.

6.11.6 Svenska Mujahedeen Fi Ash-Sham

During the autumn of 2012, there were reports of Scandinavians who had made their way to Syria in order to fight with jihadist groups against the regime. Swedes were also represented. A group of Swedish jihadists calling itself Svenska Mujahedeen Fi Ash-Sham published a film with the title “Och Uppmana De Troende Att Strida” (“And Exhort The Believers To Fight”) via various Web platforms (Facebook, Vimeo). It is probably the first published Swedish-language jihadist film, with Swedish originators, directly aimed at a Swedish audience. This eight minute long video contains only hints of theological reasonings of the style described above. Instead, it is a straight and clear exhortation to all Muslims, in particular “brothers”, to take part in militant jihad in Syria that can be described as a mobilisation film. The film fits well into the jihadist framework narrative and the other messages described above. It can hardly be said to contribute anything new over and above the

---

264 The video was downloaded in December 2012. It has been removed from Vimeo. The Swedish jihadists’ own upload of the film appears to be have been removed also from other platforms, but other users have re-published it on YouTube (from which it has again been removed) and Liveleak.com (8,456 viewings on 12 April 2013).
delivery in the Swedish language. Since then, material has been published indicating that Swedish jihadists in Syria have also taken part in combat (see, for example, Gudmundson 2012; Lund 2012c). The film begins with a quote from the Qur’an and a still photograph of a man, shown from behind, with a gun hanging over his back, in what looks to be early dawn. Thereafter, a masked man armed with a gun is shown standing in front of a stone wall. He says:

I hope Insha’Allah that a certain person will see this video, and that is Bashar al-Kalb [Bashar the dog]. And I hope […] that you there in Sweden [points to the camera] can do du’a [intercession] and that I can shoot a bullet like this [points to the weapon] […] straight into his face.

Thereafter he aims the weapon. The person holding the camera says *bismillah* (“in the name of God”). The man with the weapon also says *bismillah* and then fires.

In the next scene, there are seven masked persons, probably men, posing in front of a background of grass and trees. Three persons are sitting in the foreground, four stand behind. The group is heavily armed. A black flag is held up showing the Islamic declaration of faith in white text against a black background. The man sitting in the middle front gives an oral message in Swedish. Below follow selected portions with comments.

“My beloved brothers and precious sisters. Listen to this message. A message that cuts to the heart and makes it heavy. My brothers! Eyes and ears bear witness. Men are being humiliated. Women are being raped! And children are slaughtered. This makes my heart heavy.”

The message concerns Syria, but these introductory sentences could have been used about many other conflict zones. The listener is encouraged to enter into the weight of the tragedy that affects men, women and children.

“But however – what cuts to the heart! – is when the Muslims fail these children and women. When the Muslims turn their backs! Their own brothers and sisters. This cuts to the heart. We are Mujahedeen Fi Ash-Sham. And we bear witness that jihad is obligatory for each and every one who believes in Allah, his Prophet and Doomsday.”

Here, the message becomes more specific. What really hurts the speaker is not the suffering of humans, but that Muslims “turn their backs” when their “own brothers and sisters” – that is to say other Muslims – are affected by such sufferings. Here there is a strongly moralising tone that implies a certain ethic: when Muslims suffer violence, other Muslims are obliged to act on their behalf. The type of actions propagated for is left without any doubt. The speaker emphasises that jihad is obligatory for all Muslims; not just some selected ones or those who happen to be nearby. There can hardly be any doubt that the type of jihad referred to is militant, considering the framing of the speaker:
“The verses are many, ya akhi [my brother], and the hadiths are long. Allah and his Prophet call you. But you follow your own inclination and you follow Shaytan. Why, ya akhi, ask yourself. Why do you follow those who say that it is fard kifaya [a collective duty] instead of following what Allah and his Prophet have said? Sura al-Tawba – itself! It is enough by itself. It speaks for itself.”

Here, particular religious texts are indicated: The Qur’an and hadiths. The chapter of the Qur’an (al-Tawba) mentioned is often referred to by salafi-jihadists in order to legitimise their case, as it contains many verses that speak about militant struggle between the faithful and the “idolaters” (Hallén 2012). The viewer is also accused of wanting to follow his own inclination and Satan instead of the right path. An important point is also the conflict mentioned earlier concerning the status of jihad as a religious duty, individual or collective. Like other jihadists, the speaker here emphasises the individual dimension: presenting jihad as fard kifaya is even said to go against what “Allah and his Prophet have said”. Those who advocate this are given no credibility. Among these are, for example, those who follow Salafi scholars who condemn jihad travel on the grounds that only a legitimate leader can order Muslims to jihad.

Thereafter, reference is made to the individual’s dependency on God:

My brothers! Remember that jihad does not need you. You need jihad. You and I, we need Allah, Allah does not need us. We warn those who stay at home. We fear for you. [...] We are afraid that you will die with nifaq [hypocrisy] in your hearts. You will die with nifaq in your hearts!”

Dying with nifaq in your heart means that you belong to munafiqun, “the hypocrites”. The difference between being a true believer and being a hypocrite is determined, according to the speaker, by whether you comply with the exhortation to fight jihad. Those who do not are hypocrites, who are assumed to receive the everlasting punishment of God. The special status jihad fighters have is then dealt with:

“Even a mujahid’s sleep when he sleeps it is better than [...] your night prayer in Sweden. And if you fast all day – you sleep here, and it is better! The path to jihad is a shortcut to firdaws [paradise].”

The idea that a jihad fighter’s actions are valued highly by God is given as a reason for becoming one of them. Just by having gone on jihad, even sleep is better or more valuable than prayer, which may “raise your level” before God. This refers to the reward (ajr) that people are assumed to receive for their actions; something that also Anwar al-Awlaki brought up in the “Victory” lecture discussed above. Praying and fasting gives many rewards; but for a mujahid, even sleep is said to be worth more in the reward system. Therefore, joining jihad is a shortcut to paradise. But a further argument is added:
“The path we are telling about today, it is the best path ever shown. Allah forgives your sins. Come to jihad – Allah forgives your sins. Do you not want Allah to forgive your sins? And raise your levels? Then put your trust in Allah. Fear Allah, do tawba [penance, repentance], place your trust in Allah, pack your bag and come to Syria. Because we are waiting for you, beloved brother.”

If the previous arguments were not enough to convince the audience, the speaker adds a final trump card, namely God’s forgiveness of sins for those who carry out jihad. Many pious persons are surely aware of their sinfulness. Here, they are offered a chance of forgiveness, provided they repent (“do tawba”) and pack their bags. The argumentation makes references that could possibly act in a mobilising way on a receptive audience; an audience that understands the concepts and references invoked and for which the talk of paradise, sinfulness and the suffering Muslim brothers and sisters have a strong emotional charge.

A nashid is playing in the background at the same time as the message is presented. Several times during the presentation of the message, the man brandishes his index finger or a closed fist. The man also touches the gun that lies in front of him on the ground. Several times during the message, he looks down into his lap, which gives the impression that he has a crib note there.

The language used in the message is not everyday language. Ceremonious expressions, such as something giving a “heavy heart” or “cutting to the heart” are suitable for the cultural context of the message. Oral presentations on Arabic salafi-jihadist Web sites are characterised “as a rule of an elevated and formal level of language, and also by rhetorical finesses and adornments of a classic or classicising style, which gives an archaic impression” (Halldén 2010:338). The Swedish jihadists’ oral presentation does perhaps not reach up to the level described – but it shows an ambition to rise above everyday ways of expression in order to give violence and sabre-rattling a sacred framework.

After the message has been presented, a picture is shown with the heading “We are coming”, a quote from Abdullah Azzam and a picture of a masked, armed fighter figure. The seriousness that has characterised the words of the message is interrupted, however, in the concluding scenes of the film, when the young men, apparently without a target or a reason, fire rounds of ammunition. Perhaps this works as a further broadening of the audience for the message. Those who have not become convinced to travel on jihad to Syria by the oral presentation (not even to have their sins forgiven) may be convinced by this: the unrestrained use of automatic weapons. Nothing more substantial is said, and the film ends with these apparently randomly fired shots.
A possible impact of the film – or a common source – can be discerned on Facebook. Several Swedish-language users had a “cover image” on their profiles showing the same picture with the text “We are coming” as was used in the film shortly after the publication of the film.265 This can be seen as support for the Swedish group of jihad fighters who produced the film.

**6.11.7 Facebook**

The social media platform Facebook is a many-faceted, transnational arena, where users can come into contact with a multitude of messages and create virtual links to and discussions with various individuals and organisations. Jihadist messages are also part of the throng of information that Facebook contains. As a field of study, Facebook is enormously large. Only a few brief examples and comments follow here.

A Swedish-language user account that disseminates jihadist propaganda from several international forums is “Ummah Nyheter” (“Ummah News”).266 Press releases, pictures and films from jihadist groups, such as Jabhat al-Nusra, AQIM and the Somali al-Shabaab can be found among the linked material. Both longer films and shorter documentations of individual actions, such as “martyrdom operations” are included. Conflict situations in widely separated parts of the world are treated as parts of one single front line between Islam and non-Islam. The links posted rarely lead straight into jihadist forums; instead, they lead to YouTube and the document portal Scribd, for example. The account also links to the latest edition of al-Qa’ida’s magazine *Inspire*, where some of the items are exhortations to assassinate Lars Vilks, Salman Rushdie, the editor of Jyllands-Posten and others who are considered to have insulted the Prophet Muhammad. Ummah Nyheter is active, with almost daily updates. News relating to Sweden is also part of the flow, for example a notice that Sweden has decided to send 15 instructors to the EU’s military exercise effort in Mali. The user account calls jihadists in Mali and other parts of the world “our brothers”, sometimes even “our beloved brothers”. One film has also been uploaded to the account from “our latest visit to Syria”, where a Swedish-speaking man shows urban buildings bombed to pieces, an abandoned hospital and a visit to a refugee camp to distribute money and necessaries. The account has also posted films where jihadists are smashing and vandalising Sufi grave monuments, and has posted appreciative comments about attacks where hundreds of Shia are said to have died.

---

265 The observation was made on 27 November 2012.

266 [http://www.facebook.com/pages/Ummah-Nyheter/](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Ummah-Nyheter/) (the account was observed most recently on 9 April 2013; at that time, the account had 199 Likes).
Another user account with a jihadist character is “Millatu Ibrahim Sweden”.267 Here too, the designation “our brothers” is used for jihadist groupings. Among these are the Swedes fighting in Syria, but also those who carried out the attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001. Among the present-day ideologists quoted and referred to are Anwar al-Awlaki, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Abdullah Azzam, Abu Mu‘ab al-Zarqawi and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Besides external material referred to, the user account has also posted Swedish-language comments and exhortations to jihad, underlines that jihad is an individual duty (fard ‘ayn) and points out as guilty those Muslims who live comfortable lives of excess without caring about the suffering ummah. There are also pro-violence anti-Shiite and anti-Sufi expressions.

There are also Swedish-speaking individuals who advertise views on Facebook that signal a jihadist attitude. For example, there are references to and lauding of jihadist ideologists, denigration of the Muslim Brotherhood as “light” and condemnation of Salafis who adopt certain pious outer attributes (such as beards and trousers that end above the ankle), but who have an incorrect view of jihad. One contribution posted by a user in January 2011 is interesting in this context, mainly due to the comments it generated. The contribution quotes Saudi Arabia’s former Grand Mufti Al-Albani (died 1999) who is said to have stated that he wished he was younger so that he could fight in Afghanistan “with weapons and Da’wah”. No timing is given for the statement, but it appears reasonable to think it was the 1980s, when Saudi Arabia, like many states (including the USA) supported the mujahedin in their struggle against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The contribution received eight Likes and 71 comments.268 Immediately underneath, the user who posted the contribution commented that the statement was “noble” and that if al-Albani wanted to go to Afghanistan and “make jihad”, why shouldn’t one do so today? “You who say one shall not? [grammatical error corrected] May Allah give you more knowledge!” The comments on the contribution are both appreciative and questioning. To those who question whether Muslims should “make jihad” in present-day Afghanistan, the user replies that they will have to answer for their statements on doomsday.

Comments supporting present-day jihad in Afghanistan have also been posted in response. One user writes a long contribution claiming, among other things, that “THEY ARE KILLING US one at a time, and the world is looking on, and brothers what will you do about that???” There are sisters who

267 http://www.facebook.com/MillatuIbrahimSweden (the account was observed most recently on 10 April 2013; at that time, the account had 195 Likes). Millat Ibrahim can be translated as “Abraham’s religion” and is the title of an important work by the jihadist ideologist Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (Wagemakers 2012).
268 The observation was made on 27 November 2012.
are braver [spelling error corrected] than the brothers, who go out fisabillah,269 without knowing what will happen." Another user writes, a propos the comments that one have to have great knowledge to determine when jihad should be fought, that:

“There was someone who asked about [...] fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence] here and there... I ask that person, did Sahaba [Muhammad’s companions] know all those rules at badr?270 or at uhud271 or all other battles? Do you have to be Alim [religiously learned] and Dr of Sharia [Islamic law] before you can defend your honour, and your country and your religion?”

Yet another user comments that the Prophet Muhammad himself is supposed to have said that if a Muslim hears anyone from their ummah cry for help and does not respond, then:

“[…] you no longer belong to us !!! what does that mean ? stop discussing, jihad is obligatory !! and we who do not help the brothers will have it hard on doomsday.” [abbreviations and spelling errors corrected]

Criticism against so-called “sect Salafis” whose scholars say that jihad should not be fought in the present day also occurs. The phenomenon is written into an apocalyptic vision, where the events are predicted in hadiths:

“Islam will only see victory when you see who are with the mujahideen and who are against. The test has been on our leaders and we see who they have chosen then it was our ulama [religious scholars] and we see who they have chosen and now it is on us and we see who chooses what.” [spelling errors corrected]

This quote also includes criticism against Muslim regimes and religious scholars similar to those noted earlier. Another user comments further:

“To say that it is haram [religiously prohibited] to protect your country and your family then you are a bit far from the Quran and Sunnah as the Quran and the Sunnah encourage us to fight against those that fight against us.” [grammatical errors corrected]

269 "Fisabillah" is a contraction of fi sabil Allah, "for God’s cause".

270 The battle of Badr in 624 was a crucial event for the early Islamic congregation. According to the traditional sources, despite a great numerical inferiority, the Muslims won a convincing victory against their enemies with the help of God.

271 The battle of Uhud in 625 was also crucial in early Islamic history. Again, the Muslims were numerically inferior. The battle was a setback compared to Badr – the sources state, among other things, that Muhammad himself was injured.
In conjunction with the news that Osama bin Laden had been killed by American forces in Pakistan in May 2011, comments on the event were published on Facebook. Appreciative comments about bin Laden were met by both agreement and severe criticism. Comments that bin Laden had brought shame on Muslims were made, and claims that jihad mainly means to struggle in everyday life, “that we guard against sins and make our prayers”. Someone asked what bin Laden had done that was so good and useful for Islam – and received the answer that he had fought for Allah and for “our siblings in Afghanistan among other places”, and is “our brother in Islam and shall be treated as such”. The counter-question was also asked about what the commentator had done himself that was good and useful for Islam. Another user writes “no my siblings I am not a radical Muslim or a terrorist”, despite appreciation of bin Laden who had “killed several civilians”. The user asks the question “Have not kuffar killed civilians?” and writes accusingly that “You seem to be kind to them and you speak rubbish about bin Laden who is your brother in Islam”. News such as that of bin Laden’s death gives rise to discussion, where differing views emerge. The proponents of the most aggressive views appear to try to silence critics through accusations of a lack of loyalty with other Muslims. The individuals are exhorted to first and foremost identify themselves as Muslims and nothing else. The messages invite a feeling of victimisation, where Muslims fall victim to the enemies of Islam. This is in turn expected to be expressed in actions and decisions that show solidarity with the ummah.

A few calls to battle that incite action against “the Jews” and kuffar also appear on Facebook. In November 2012, in conjunction with an Israeli bombing campaign against the Gaza strip, several users published such calls to battle.272 One example:

“Oh Jews, you have to look out. The Islamic nation is the ONLY one that will not be destroyed, you do not know what you have let yourselves in for. The mujahedins doesn’t wait for permission from anyone, they come from all sides. You will not cope with these Muslim lions, you meet people who WANT to die, you are battling against persons who do not fear anyone except our Lord, you are fighting against MEN who have paradise in sight. Just get out of the way, I say.” (21 Likes)

In the same spirit, by another user:

“The Muslims have awoken! The lines among the mujahedeen increase, young persons are seeking the meeting with our Lord. Calls to battle are heard all over the world, from east to west. The dogs of the Jews and the non-believers begin to shake, the fear has conquered their hearts. Muhammed’s ummah is back!” (10 Likes)

272 The observation was made on 28 November 2012.
The examples correspond to the jihadist framework narrative presented above. Joining jihad in various parts of the world is described as a unified wave of religious insight and the “Islamic nation”, the *ummah*, is felt to be a clearly defined group identity that is in conflict with the collectives of “Jews” and “non-believers”.

There are also statements on Facebook that “it is obligatory for all Muslims to do *takfir* on” various persons. This in itself is an interesting development. *Takfir* has traditionally been rare throughout history, and when it has occurred, it has been the prerogative of religious scholars. Even Salafi scholars of the present day, such as al-Fawzan, exhort students to leave *takfir* to the learned.273 The claim that all Muslims must “do *takfir* on” someone means that significantly increased power authorities are ascribed to practicing Muslims in general. Each Muslim is exhorted to make his/her own decisions about right and wrong; no intermediaries are accepted between God and human. This modern view of the position of the individual constitutes a breach against the traditional division of authorities between religious scholars and ordinary people. Muslims who lack formal theological schooling have, or consider themselves to have, greater insight into religious affairs now than previously. This has the result that anyone at all can make statements about what is obligatory for all Muslims to do; including declaring other Muslims to be unbelievers. This opportunity can be used to disseminate hostile, excluding messages as well as loving and inclusive ones. In today’s media climate, these messages, irrespective of content, can easily be disseminated to a potentially large audience. Who listens and how the messages are interpreted is another matter.

6.12 Concluding comments

International research about the Internet as an arena for jihadism has focused on various problem areas, among them ideology, media strategies and the potential of the Web as an arena for terrorist actions (see, for example, Stenersen 2008; Torres Soriano 2010; Awan 2012; Zelin 2013). Different researchers and security analysts give the Internet varying roles in the recruitment processes to jihadism. Marc Sageman (2008) considers that most “passive” Web sites with radical or pro-violence content are not in themselves a cause of radicalisation of individuals; on the other hand, they may serve to reinforce the views of those already convinced. He considers that the discussion forums are of greater importance for recruitment to pro-violence extremism, as people change their views through discussions with others, not through consumption of images or texts from conflict zones (Sageman 2008:114–116). On the other hand, Aaron Y. Zelin (2013) points our that, whilst forums

constitute distribution channels for jihadist networks and function as important interactive meeting places for convinced jihadists, individual “entrepreneurs” who blog, re-publish, translate and highlight jihadist messages, for example on social media, are those who “sell” the messages to a potential new audience (Zelin 2013:6).

The causality that is often assumed to exist between ideology and behaviour needs to be questioned (Gunning 2012). It is not a given that consumption of pro-violence messages is followed by adoption of the ideology disseminated. Nor is it a given that adoption of a pro-violence ideology is followed by participation in acts of violence. It is in any case relevant to note the prospective audience that is imagined for the messages in question, and what needs of that audience the messages can be thought to fulfil. The discussions below connect to the mechanisms for radicalisation that are discussed in the introduction to the report.

**Personal and collective victimisation**

Both personal negative experiences and difficulties that befall the group with which the individual identifies are considered as able to contribute to an individual’s radicalisation. Being (or perceiving oneself to be) a victim of negative discrimination or violence can constitute a ground for wanting revenge or achieving justice. The crucial factor here is the identification with a certain group whose experiences (actual or alleged) of violence or injustice become a part of the own experience. A person who identifies with the exposed group feel their (“our”) suffering close to the skin – despite the fact that it may be taking place on the other side of the globe. The frequent mention in the messages studies about “our brothers and sisters”, “siblings in Islam” and similar expressions can conjure up feelings of victimisation. There is a multitude of testimonies and reports of violence and threats to which Muslims in different parts of the world have been exposed. Solidarity with and a wish to help these persons can be expressed in many ways without features of anti-democratic or pro-violence messages.

In the material studied, there is talk about war on Islam and about conscious campaigns throughout history and in the present day to exterminate or destroy Islam. These campaigns are claimed to have been mounted by coarsely generalised groups of enemies: rajida, kuffar, Jews. The main conflict is said to be between Islam and non-Islam. The vulnerability of Muslim persons in different parts of the world is claimed to be due to this fundamental, all-permeating conflict. Religion and religiosity are used as explanation models at the expense of a multitude of other relevant social and political aspects. Views of historical development dominated by religion and a very strong faith in certain selected texts underpin this attitude. The persons who are exhorted to show solidarity with – “us” – are religious kinsmen and women. In particularly extreme cases, such as in the lectures of Anwar al-Awlaki, solidarity with non-Muslims is even described as apostasy from Islam. The messages invite
the feeling of victimisation, of a feeling of participation in being a victim of anti-Islamic hostility, which in turn is expected to lead to actions of solidarity. What these actions consist of varies in the different messages: from material and financial humanitarian emergency aid to taking up arms in a certain conflict zone. One does not necessarily have to lead to or be linked to the other (even if such links exist). But the grounds for the different types of action, namely personal and collective victimisation, can be compared. How this victimisation occurs can therefore be problematised and criticised.

Normalisation of enemy images and group radicalisation
One figure of thought that may lead to anti-democratic expressions is that the enemy shares a bad, hateful essence that can be generalised to include a faceless collective, where neither historical change nor individual characteristics are given any room (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008:428). In the material studied, such ideas are noticeable, for example in the depiction of shiites. In the lessons referred to and in the blog material, texts written in the 14th and 18th century are assumed to speak the truth about shiites in general throughout the ages. The generalised collective is not just designated as unbelievers; statements that they are actively occupied with exterminating Islam also occur. In other words, they represent a threat against the alleged truth that is the primary identification factor in the messages in question. The material studied talks of a response to this threat: the distancing. But there is also a hint of latent violence in the expressions used to speak about the supposed enemies of Islam. Moreover, similar reasoning has been used to legitimise direct violent action against shiites in some circumstances.

Within groups that identify with a certain cause or ideology, there can exist a social pressure for a community of opinion. The more extreme individuals are often considered more devoted, and can therefore have an influence on the development of the group’s opinions. A kind of competition to prove to be the most devoted can also exist. In the observations from Facebook made in this study, a possible such tendency can be observed. For examples, condemnations of Salafis who do not express pro-violence opinions may get appreciative comments. The distancing on the part of the jihadists is then based exactly on the puritan Salafis lack of support for violent struggle. Those who criticise terrorist actions carried out by bin Laden, for example, risk having their loyalty with the Muslim “siblings” severely questioned, and of being accused of taking the side of the unbelievers. An emphasis on the bravery of those who take up the struggle against the powerful enemies is a recurrent theme.

Martyrdom and rewards
Opinions about martyrdom are prominent. The talk of martyrs and their rewards are deeply rooted in Islamic sources, which can be traced back to the first Muslims’ experiences of persecution and
struggle. This means that martyrdom can be talked about in positive terms also in non-jihadist messages – it is not in itself a sign of jihadist ideology. Fighters who have been killed in the struggle for God’s cause are seen as martyrs, who will enjoy the rewards of paradise.

Suicide attacks are called by jihadists, in embellishing terms, “martyrdom operations”. In the film by Jabhat al-Nusra, the young men who will be carrying out martyrdom operations talk about their longing for the action. In Anwar al-Awlaki’s lecture “Victory”, he speaks of present-day Muslims’ level of reward being comparable to that of the first Muslims. Also in messages that are not directly pro-violence, such as certain Internet preachers da’wa, there is talk about the elevated status of martyrs before God. In the AQIM film, there could also been seen more concrete rewards for those camp participants who had excelled: they were called up in front of the rest of the group in a concluding scene and given gifts. Otherwise, the rewards mentioned in the material studied are largely of a metaphysical character. Moreover, martyrs and their surviving relatives can enjoy a high status within the groups that sympathise with their struggle.

Talk about rewards in the life hereafter may seem strange to population groups that are used to secular attitudes to life. But the fact that promised metaphysical rewards for acts carried out in the life on Earth can have an impact on the actions and motivations of individuals with a strong religious faith must be taken into account. The forgiveness of sins and receipt of God’s reward (ajr) may sound far-fetched to a non-believer, but it may have a motivating importance for a religious person who is aware of his/her failings.

Brooders and thrill-seekers

The two types, brooders and thrill-seekers, have been spoken about as possible recruits to pro-violence milieux (Säkerhetspolisen 2010:43f). Of the messages discussed in this study, the films focusing on physical activity and the use of guns appear more aimed at the thrill-seeker type rather than the brooder type. The direct, visually effective appeal in the films by Jabhat al-Nusra, AQIM and Svenska Mujahedeen Fi Ash-Sham all include such sequences. Training sequences accompanied by war-mongering nashids, clips with speeches by pro-violence ideologists and sequences where buildings are blown up and enemies attacked may exert a temptation on individuals who are attracted by macho-oriented, action-packed propaganda. The brooders, on the other hand, may possibly be more attracted by the reasoning, reference-heavy texts and lectures that argue for the necessity of jihad. The expressions of cultural violence discussed in the study do not appear to be suited to attracting thrill-seekers more than as a legitimisation of direct violence. The brooders, on the other hand, may become engaged in the contexts where expressions of cultural violence occur. There are a multitude of questions that demand an answer. Puritanical Salafism, which is the movement whose features of cultural violence this study has focused on, offers a large field of study of both the Arabic
language and also a large number of texts, historical narratives and theological reasonings. Studies of this kind can probably be very absorbing and play a major role in the development of a brooding individual’s understanding of life, while for thrill-seekers they can be assumed not to have the same attraction as action-oriented and weapon-heavy films. The conflicts expressed in the comments on Facebook, where pro-violence individuals express themselves in derogatory terms about the “sect Salafis” who do not understand the importance of jihad, illustrate the dividing line between brooders and thrill-seekers to some extent.

6.12.1 The format and address of the messages

The framing of material, as well as its aesthetics and appeal, is crucial for its potential impact. The consumption of messages on the Internet may take place in a network of ideologically framed information disseminated by linked channels that build up an internally coherent worldview (Awan 2012:110). The messages with different senders who share a basic ideological outlook can then confirm each other, and remain almost uncontested in a digital community of opinions.

The development of communication formats on the Internet indicates an increased focus on emotionally affecting video and image sequences accompanied by religious songs and emotive agitation. The jihadist propaganda appeals to a large extent to the emotions of the audience, and not just to their reason. The senders want to achieve an emotional response. In film material from jihadist groupings, this aspect is often more in focus than the theological argumentation, which, despite all, forms the foundation for the pro-violence attitude. Audio-visual material can be more globally accessible for an Internet-skilled young audience without knowledge of Arabic or other languages used in local conflict zones – to some extent, the images communicate across language barriers (Awan 2012:114). At the same time, the more complicated ideological and theological texts remain and continue to have relevance for the jihadist propaganda. The texts constitute an ideological fund, to which the films relate. The Internet has meant that these texts can be distributed to a potentially global audience by simple means. The different types of messages complement each other.

Long texts with theological reasonings and historiographical writings probably do not attract a large audience, even if they continue to be available. Instead, messages delivered orally are probably a more effective communication tool. Repeatedly listening to the voice of an individual may mean that some type of trust emerges. The repetitive features that exist in the orally delivered presentations also play a role. They inculcate certain recurrent messages and starting points. Repetitive features may, for example, be ritualised blessings of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, or mentioning by title the scholars whose texts are being commented on. They may also consist of arranging the presentation in itemised form, in order to communicate the central points effectively.
Orally delivered messages can be divided up into two media types: audio files and audiovisual files (lectures and lessons recorded on camera). Both types can be consumed using portable electronic apparatus in various contexts, independent of time and place. They can be disseminated easily, without expense or spatial room. They do not demand the careful concentration of the listener/viewer in the same way as a longer text does. In order for these lecture media to be effective, the lecturer has to achieve a resonance with the audience in terms of personal and aesthetic expression, as well as content. If the lecturer wants to influence the listener, he (it is exclusively men in the material studied) has to connect to the prior knowledge and interpretation framework that the listener can be expected to possess. Only then can he hope to influence the audience in the intended ideological direction.

The edited film material discussed in the study is of a different character than the lecture media. Although the films include segments with speeches and sermons, the major focus is on image storytelling in combination with authentic background material, cut-in sound effects and nashids. Here, there is more striving for effect and importuning for attention. The films display clear similarities, but differ in how sophisticated they are, both in terms of content and of design. Of the ones described above, *Join the Caravan* by ”al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb”’ is the most technically advanced, while ”Och Uppmana De Troende Att Strida” by Svenska Mujahedeen Fi Ash-Sham is the most simple in design. The former film is also considerably longer. The borderline between internal and external activities is not entirely clear in the films. Training camps and exhortations to join are internal, but their purpose is expressly external: to fight with violence and weapons against the enemy. Jabhat al-Nusra’s film is the only one of the three films to focus on combat situations of different types, while the other two films focus on training sequences, agitation and mobilisation. In these films, the external activity – the fighting itself – is more of a promise than a reality. In Jabhat al-Nusra’s film, the armed struggle is, on the other hand, very real.

There are interesting differences between Jabhat al-Nusra’s film and the Swedish jihad film. Both concern the conflict in Syria and appear to have salafi-jihadist links – but their respective exhortations to or defence of violence are done on slightly different grounds. With reference to Hegghammer’s categories of Islamic priorities, Jabhat al-Nusra’s film can be said to be state-oriented (it described the group’s struggle against the Syrian regime), while Svenska Mujahedeen Fi Ash-Sham’s film is *ummah*-oriented (it focuses on solidarity with Syria’s vulnerable Muslims). However, both are expressions of what Hegghammer calls “classic” jihadism, namely global mobilisation for jihad in regions where Muslims are oppressed, or alternatively defence of Muslim territory against invaders.
The content of the messages and their interpretation

Some lecturers leave considerable room for interpretation to the listener. This is particularly clear in the “scene” of Swedish Internet preachers’ da’wa discussed. Exhortations to carry out religious duties carefully, to always be aware of the imminent doomsday and to actively show solidarity with Muslim “siblings” can be understood in various ways. In these expressions, a listener may perceive an exhortation to carry out his daily prayers carefully, to keep the fast and to treat fellow humans well, and to give humanitarian support to vulnerable persons in conflict situations. Another listener, who has previously become convinced that jihad is an individual religious duty for all Muslims, can in the same message interpret an exhortation to take part in violent struggle in solidarity with the ummah. It is consequently difficult to say anything about causality between the content of the message and its interpretation by the audience. The prior knowledge, interpretation framework, experiences, personality and social context of the individual media consumer is of crucial importance. Major further research about the reception of messages is necessary in order to enable any statement on the interaction between these factors.

Authority

Issues of religious authority are relevant. How is it possible that elderly, religious scholars in Saudi Arabia can appear as authorities also to young Swedish Muslims? Several factors play a role here. One of them is the authority accorded to religious texts and to documented acquired knowledge about them. According to the view of classical Islamic texts that is fostered within Salafism, the interpretation of the texts shall not change with the development of human societies. Modern phenomena and expressions shall be understood on the basis of the Qur’an and the narratives about the words and actions of Muhammad and the pious forefathers, not the other way around. The scholars referred to are schooled in an educational system where these ideals dominate; they occupy high positions in Saudi society and are officially acknowledged as experts on Islam. On Swedish salafi-oriented Web sites, their reading of the texts is given the highest authority. This authority would be hard to challenge by actors with an alternative view of what constitutes relevant knowledge. According to such a view, the best way for a Swedish Muslim to acquire relevant knowledge is not to study at a Swedish university and take part in rationalist strivings for knowledge, but to study in the schools that use the Salafi view of the importance of the religious texts as their starting point. Not surprisingly, several Swedish Internet preachers also state that they have studied in such contexts.

Identification

A recurring aspect of the messages discussed is the opportunities for identification that they offer. Here, differences can be established between the various expressions for cultural violence and the directly pro-violence messages. The puritanical Salafi messages that condemn idolatry and unbelief
and encourage dissociation from groups associated with these characteristics offer identification with “the true believers”. A person who is convinced by the argumentation in such messages and tries to act accordingly can thus imagine him/herself to be included in the group saved from the wrath of God thanks to pure living, obedience and scrupulous compliance with religious decrees. The focus here is on individual salvation, but identification with other true believers who follow the same path is also offered. The identification can be understood as based on careful avoidance of sins rather than the active deeds that are encouraged.

The jihadist messages offer another type of identification. Of course orthodox faith and personal salvation from the wrath of God are prominent here too, but an action-oriented identification with a religious avant-garde, a fighting advance troop said to defend Islam against attack is also offered. The jihad fighters claim to take their religiosity one step further than all others, as they are unselfishly sacrificing themselves in the fight for God’s cause. The identification with this group romanticised in jihadist propaganda, and the associated criticism of all who do not respond to the duty to carry out jihad, can exert an attraction. The wish to identify oneself with those who are acting forcefully could be thought to over-shadow the wish to identify oneself with those who avoid sin.

6.12.2 Masculinity

In the studied material, there are few explicit references to masculinity. In conjunction with Islam-tawhid.se, a text was referenced where the weapons taken from Muslims were equalled to the lost honour and manliness of Muslims. From Facebook, a comment has also been quoted that jihad fighters are “MEN who have paradise in sight”. This explicit linking of masculine ideals to the exercise of violence is not as explicit in the rest of the material. At the same time, masculine ideals is a theme that is implicit in many of the messages referred to. The absence of women in the jihadist messages referenced is almost total, with the exception of supporting roles in Anwar al-Awlaki’s pamphlet “44 Ways to Support Jihad”. To “join the caravan” can be understood to be a way of shouldering one’s responsibility as a man; to stand up for and defend the lives and honour of Muslim women and children against attack. From Facebook, a female user’s comment was quoted that certain sisters had greater courage than men, as they went out to fight for God’s cause; an implicit criticism of those men who do not shoulder their responsibility and join up.

A study of neo-Nazi defectors in Sweden underlined that the Nazi commitment of these young men was a masculine rite of passage rather than an ideologically convinced struggle. For these defectors, the incorporation and participation in the Nazi community had been a way of standing up to bullies, of becoming popular among girls and of becoming part of a very cohesive group. The commitment therefore also declined when these needs were no longer felt so strongly (Kimmel 2007). The adoption of pro-violence behaviour was thus linked to a certain type of masculinity, rather than to
any deep-seated ideological conviction. The attraction of this violent masculinity is in Kimmel’s article also linked to experiences of personal victimisation in the form of bullying and social vulnerability. It is possible that a masculinity ideal – in combination with other factors – may play a role for the potential attraction of young Muslims to the messages highlighted by the study. This does not mean that the ideological dimension of the messages is irrelevant. Instead, a masculinity ideal may complement the explanation of their possible attraction.

In the jihadist messages studied, ideals such as bravery, seriousness, responsibility, religious devoutness, strength and forcefulness are transmitted, which can be understood to be traditionally masculine-coded characteristics. In the jihadist messages, they are associated with defending the Islamic ummah. Nashids are performed by male voices. The jihadist films only include men. The sabre-rattling scenes and training sequences are full of traditionally masculine-coded themes: weapons, cars, bombs, wilderness life, robust comradeship and action-oriented argumentation. The jihad fighters are portrayed as forceful men who sacrifice themselves and work hard for the greater good, while those that sit at home in the Swedish jihad video are claimed to follow their own inclination and Satan. Taking part in the struggle is portrayed as an ability to master one’s inclination; to exercise self-control. This self-control, the ability to set one’s own feelings and wishes aside for the sake of the greater good, can also be understood as a traditionally masculine ideal. Even if it may seem contradictory, this ideal interacts with the sabre-rattling manliness that may appeal to the thrill-seekers. Enacting young men are thus here offered opportunities to lay claim to sacrificing, responsible and self-controlled roles – something that may be difficult to achieve in other circumstances.

6.12.3 Solidarity and identification

When studying pro-violence Islamic extremism on the Internet, it is possible to try to explain the specific ethic that is promoted in the material, rather than to dismiss the material as inhuman or incomprehensible as a starting point. According to Faisal Devji, it is possible to speak of a “jihadist ethic” based on the specific view of the world, reference world and the narratives that inform the material that emerges from the milieu (Devji 2008; 2009). Peter Mandaville has emphasised the importance of understanding jihadism, not just as being caused by material discrepancies or radical ideology, but also as a part of a broader form of resistance against global power relationships (Mandaville 2012). In order to understand (and counteract) pro-violence messages, aspects such as solidarity, humiliation rhetoric and ideas about ethical action must be included. Hegghammer’s category ummah-oriented Islamists is relevant in this context. Primary identification and solidarity with the ummah can take both humanitarian and pro-violence expressions. By some actors, these expressions are seen as closely linked. It seems to be important that young Muslims are offered
opportunities for identification that go beyond an exclusive solidarity with the “Muslim siblings” or the ummah to include more, and alternative identity groups. A central issue is therefore in which way increased media and information literacy among young persons also can contribute to broadening young persons’ opportunities for identification.
Glossary

ahl al-sunna the people of the Sunna; designation of Sunni Muslims
ajr reward from God
‘alim religious scholar (plur. ‘ulama)
al-wala wa'l-barah loyalty and disavowal
aqida creed
Badr location of and designation of an important battle between Muslims and non-Muslims in 624
bida’ innovations (sing. bid’a)
da’wa call to Islam, mission
dhikr reminder, remembrance; designation of a type of repetitive prayer ritual within Sufism
din religion
du‘a prayer in addition to the five daily prescribed prayer occasions, such as intercession
fiqh Islamic jurisprudence
firdaws paradise
fi sabil Allah for God’s cause or “in the path of God”
fitna chaos, discord
hadith narrative about what the Prophet Muhammad is supposed to have said or done
haram forbidden according to Islamic law
jahiliyya ignorance; designation of the pre-Islamic condition in Mecca that has been re-interpreted to describe present-day un-Islamic regimes
jihad struggle, striving
jihadism here: ideological movement that considers that violent struggle for God's cause is an individual religious duty for present-day Muslims
kafir unbeliever; see kufr
khutba Friday sermon
kuffar unbelievers (sing. kafir); see kufr
kufr unbelief, heresy; pejorative designation of non-Islam that marks a clear delineation between truth and untruth; can be used to legitimise distancing or violent struggle on the part of Muslims
mawlid al-nabi celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad
munafiq hypocrite (plur. munafiqun); designation of those who verbally confess to Islam but whose actions reveal other loyalties
mu’min believer
mushrikun/mushrikin idolaters; see shirk
rafida deviants; pejorative designation of Shia
rasul Allah messenger of God; designation of the Prophet Muhammad
sahaba companions of the Prophet Muhammad
salaf al-salih pious ancestors; designation of the first generations of Muslims that indicates their way of life should be copied
**Salafism** designation of a much varied theological movement where the focus is on copying *salaf al-salih*.

*(saws)* *sallu Allahu 'alayhi wa sallim,* "God’s peace and blessings upon him"; ritualised phrase that often accompanies mention of the Prophet Muhammad.

**shahid** martyr.

**Shiism** collective designation for the second largest main form of Islamic tradition; can in turn be divided up into various forms; characterised by strong focus on ‘Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, and his descendants, and distancing from the first three of what Sunni tradition calls the “rightly-led caliphs”, i.e. the leaders of the Muslim community after the death of Muhammad.

**shirk** idolatry, polytheism; considered one of the worst sins in Islamic theology.

**Sufism** designation of a much varied Islamic tradition of piety and spirituality, often with a strong focus on reverence for the Prophet Muhammad and living and deceased spiritual masters.

**Sunni** collective designation on the largest main form of Islamic tradition; can in turn be divided up into many different forms; characterised by a focus on following the Prophet Muhammad’s and his companions’ *sunna*, i.e. regularising tradition.

*(swt)* *subhana wa ta'ala*; ritualised phrase that often accompanies mention of God to mark his elevation and majesty.

**tafsir** Qur’an interpretation.

**takfir** to declare someone an unbeliever; see *kufr*.

**tawhid** God’s unity, monotheism; one of the most central features of Islamic theology.

**Uhud** location of and designation of an important battle between Muslims and non-Muslims in 625.

**‘ulama** religious scholars (sing. *‘alim*).

**Wahhabism** pejorative designation of the theological-political movement based on Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s (died 1792) reform ideas; closely related to Salafism.
7. Summarising conclusions

One of the express ambitions of this report has been to conduct a continual dialogue between the different areas of study during the course of the work. The goal was to modify the questions and focus areas as much as possible so as to make the subsidiary studies as comparable as possible and so as to more easily distinguish the fundamental differences between the milieux.

The subsidiary studies deal with three complex milieux that differ among themselves. Summarising and comparing these involves certain simplifications and generalisations. To get a complete picture of the three web milieux, we wish to emphasize the importance of the reader also assimilating the three subsidiary studies in their entirety.

7.1 The size and design of the web milieux

The most tangible difference between the three Web milieux is their difference in size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Swedish Web sites</th>
<th>Number of page views/day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right-wing extremist</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>144,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-wing extremist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jihadist (Puritan Salafi)</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
<td>90 (404)²⁷⁴</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1 Number of Swedish Web sites in the mapping with visitor statistics. Social media not included.

The reliability of these figures cannot be assessed, and they should therefore only be regarded as a rough comparison of the scales of the milieux. There are no Swedish Web sites for pro-violence jihadist organisations. There are individual blogs and users in social media, as well as at least one Swedish Web site that spreads jihadist messages, but none of them seem to be linked to any organisation. The majority of jihadist propaganda spread to a potential Swedish audience is found on international Arab-language Web sites or on commercial Web platforms such as YouTube. The Swedish Web sites provide further links to parts of this transnational jihadist Web milieu. The four puritanical Salafi web sites in this survey distance themselves from the use of physical violence. On the other hand, expressions of cultural violence are found, in the sense of the use of derogatory and dehumanising language about groups of people. The Salafi messages in this survey should primarily

²⁷⁴ Visitor statistics are lacking for one Salafi Web site, one Salafi blog and one jihadist blog.
be understood as an ideological background against which the jihadist messages can be interpreted. In several respects, jihadist ideas lie close to puritanical Salafi ideas, but differ most clearly in the promotion of physical violence.

The internet milieu of the pro-violence Swedish left is limited to two organisations, revfront.org and antifa.se. The former is updated fairly continually, while the latter currently consists only of a manifesto and e-mail addresses for the AFA’s local sections.

Both these milieux are very modestly represented on the Internet compared with the extreme right. In this survey, there are five different right-wing extremist organisations represented; including news sites, it covers seven Web sites with a total of 144,868 daily page views. Both autonomist Web sites had a total of 3,620 hits and the only jihadist Web site for which statistics have been found has 90 hits daily. Even as regards representation on YouTube, the differences are extensive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of films</th>
<th>Number of viewings per film</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right-wing extremist</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>25,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-wing extremist – linked to movements (freestanding)*</td>
<td>27 (12)</td>
<td>817 (21,346)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jihadist (Salafi)</td>
<td>210 (1,472)277</td>
<td>902 (266)278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2 The number of films on YouTube channels linked to movements, and the viewing statistics for these.

The extreme right has the greatest number of pro-violence films and by far the most viewings per film. It is worth noting that the extreme left films that are uploaded by free-standing individuals not expressly linked to movements are significantly more popular than those uploaded to the movements’ own channels. This can be explained by the fact that these films primarily portray violent confrontations in connection with events that attracted media attention.

275 The animal rights organisation Djurens befrielsefront (Animal Liberation Front) seems to still be conducting activity. Their web site, however, has not been updated since 2008 and is therefore only dealt with briefly in this survey.

276 There are several other Swedish extreme right Web sites than these seven. They have, however, considerably fewer hits and/or are rarely or never updated.

277 The free-standing films portray actions and confrontations that are ascribed to movements but are not posted on the channels for these movements.

278 1,265 Salafi films consist of oral questions and answers, illustrated only by white text on a black background.
There are also differences when it comes to the design of the various Web sites: The right-wing extremist Web sites have both a more advanced Web design and more advanced functions than those of the autonomous, and in particular those of the jihadists. Both the right-wing and left-wing extremists have logos for their organisations, and uniform graphic identities and layout. Although the Web sites of the autonomous have a less professional appearance than those of the right-wing extremists, they are working at packaging their messages in an attractive format. In comparison, the Swedish jihadist Web sites appear amateurish. However, the lack of functionality and advanced design found in this milieu may just as well be an expression of a deliberately anti-aesthetic image. The materials produced by the media organs of international jihadist movements, and republished on Swedish-language Web sites, give a professional impression, however.

Re-contextualisation of news is something that the extreme right attaches great importance to. It is common with both the autonomists and the jihadists that current events are depicted, interpreted through their respective ideologies. This takes place continuously, on a daily basis, on the extreme right Web sites. Taking news from the mainstream media and rewriting it in terms of a right-wing extremist ideological framework has become a propaganda strategy. The extreme right occupies itself with an alternative news dissemination, where events are passed through a racist/nationalist/national-socialist filter before it is presented to the audience.

There are also big differences in the opportunities for interaction in the different Web milieux. Whilst the opportunities for visitors to the Web sites to comment or otherwise give feedback are limited in the autonomous or jihadist milieux, user interactivity receives high priority in the right-wing extremist Internet milieu. There are open comment fields on most right-wing extremist Web sites, and they are also used very diligently. The right-wing extremists have clearly chosen to open up to great interactivity as a stage in their recruitment operation, while both the other milieux trust more in traditional one-way communication or recruitment paths outside the Internet.

7.2 The common features of the milieux

The three extremist milieux differ in many ways but also display some similarities. The messages conveyed on the internet are similar in at least four thematic areas: they include sharp dichotomies, a clear self-defence rhetoric, the world is explained through conspiratorial framework narratives and there is an idealisation of direct action coupled with contempt for discussion and consensus solutions.
7.2.1 Sharp dichotomies

A central feature of all three extremist milieux is a sharp division between those who constitute “we/us” and “them”. In the case of the right-wing extremists, it concerns a race ideology-influenced dichotomy between on the one hand Swedes – or what is call “the Nordic race” – and on the other hand non-Nordic immigrants in general and Jews in particular. Belonging to the right race, however, is not sufficient for being counted as “us” – they argue that there are enemies even within their own race, “traitors of the people” or, alternatively, “race traitors” who ally with Jews and/or immigrants. It is only within their own extremist milieu where race, attitude, and involvement are sufficient.

The jihadists’ dichotomy differentiates between orthodox Muslims and unbelievers, or kuffar. A jihadist identifies exclusively with the ummah, the perceived global community of orthodox Muslims. Some extreme theologians even argue that it is sinful to socialise with or help the kuffar. The unbelievers include not just individuals belonging to faiths other than Islam; for example, Shi’a and Sufi Muslims are repudiated and, in the most extreme interpretations, all Muslims who do not support jihad in the meaning of armed fight.

The autonomous left wing bases its fundamental dichotomy on a simple power analysis: “We” constitutes the oppressed, who fight against the oppressors. In present-day society, this refers particularly to workers against capitalists (not infrequently referred to as the “upper class”). Other subordinate groups such as immigrants, undocumented aliens, LGBTQ persons, women and immigrant and working-class youth are also included in the own collective. The oppressors include the police, who maintain the supposedly unfair financial system, as well as Nazis and fascists, whose existence is considered to be a logical conclusion of the capitalist economy.

It is evident that a politically or religiously extreme milieu must create and maintain a clear dichotomy between the good and the bad, between us and them, in order to market their messages. If different opinions – and in the case of the extreme right, what they call races – are permitted and discussed without being condemned, the extreme standpoints could not be upheld; above all, it would be impossible to justify the use of violence against one’s opponents.

7.2.2 Rhetoric of self-defence

Linked to the clear distinction between friends and enemies is the idea that the group is under attack from an all-powerful enemy, who wants the crush the group. The violence carried out by the various extremist groups is almost exclusively described by themselves as self-defence – very rarely as aggression. Among right-wing extremists, violence is justified as a response to aggression from the autonomous left wing, or to protect the Swedish people and the Nordic race against Jewish conspiracies or racial mixing with disastrous consequences.
The autonomous consider that the capitalists and the upper class attack workers and other oppressed groups, and that it is therefore necessary to defend oneself and these exposed minorities. In more concrete terms, it refers to self-defence against what is described as the assault of the police and the fascists.

Finally, among jihadist extremists, there is an idea about a war against Islam. Who is waging this war and why is not always quite clear, but countries such as the USA, the United Kingdom and Israel, infidel regimes in Muslim countries, other Muslim groupings (such as Shiites) and Jews are mentioned in the arguments about the war on Islam. There are also trains of thought that secular political power – regardless of whether it is democratic or not – is to become alienated from God, which is why all politics based on human ideas instead of God’s laws become an attack on faithful Muslims.

7.2.3 Conspiratorial framework narratives

In all three milieux, there are also conspiratorial framework narratives that are used as cover-all explanations for the unfairness and problems that are considered to characterise the current era. Both among right-wing extremists and among jihadists, there is an idea that the development of the world is secretly governed by a Jewish conspiracy, with world domination as its goal. The framework narrative of the autonomous left wing reduces all processes to interpretations based on a strict economic and political analysis, where the capitalist structure and the actions of capitalists functions as an explanatory model for almost any process whatsoever. Clear examples are, for example, how the police are primarily the protector of capitalism, and how the existence of the Nazis is a logical consequence of capitalism. Alternative explanations for the role of the police in society or the roots of Nazism are seen as red herrings.

7.2.4 Fixation on action and contempt for discussion

In parts of all the milieux, there are tendencies towards contempt for discussion and theorising. Just talking about something does not lead to any change; instead, action is what changes the world.

Among both right-wing and left-wing extremists, there is the same distancing from theoretical and intellectual discussion, although in places rather advanced theoretical discussions are held. Thought, however, is subordinated to physical action. The following example is taken from the Revolutionära fronten Web site, but the argument is in principle the same as the extreme right:
The RF does not have the goal of again becoming a middle class-dominated organisation that speaks over the heads of people, using language and asking questions that feel alien and muddled. We will not be speaking in study circles locked behind academic doors in the universities; our goal is to be out on the streets where we work and live. ("Om revfront.org" http://revfront.org/?page_id=10)

Direct action is romanticised, while discussion and striving for consensus is seen as objectionable.

Also among the jihadists, a warrior is valued more highly than someone learned in the holy texts. Among intellectual jihadists, however, the ideal is “the warrior shaykh”, i.e., a person who both fights and is learned in the holy texts.

### 7.3 The unique messages of the milieux

One of the ambitions of this survey has been to compare the three extremist milieux as far as possible. It is possible to draw parallels between ideological elements or strategies in their use of the Internet in several respects, even if the differences are often greater than the similarities. The special characteristics in each individual milieu that lack any equivalent in the other two are described below.

The right-wing extremists’ conceptions about the central importance of the race, their own people and the nation do not exist in the other milieux. According to the extreme right, the people constitute a community that must at all costs be protected and preserved from any outside influence. The greatest threat is neither ideological nor religious, but consists of other (non-desirable) ethnic groups.

The autonomous left differs from both the other milieux in two respects. Firstly, they neither distance themselves from democracy as a political idea nor from democratic citizen rights for all. On the contrary, they think that the capitalist market economy must be fought because it leads to an undemocratic society. Secondly, they do not express solidarity with any particular ethnic group. While the right-wing extremists are only interested in their own race, and the jihadists feel exclusive solidarity with orthodox Muslims, the autonomous left takes the part of several fragmented social groups, such as workers, immigrants, women, LGBTQ persons, immigrant and working-class youth, and prison inmates. The common factor for these groups is that they hold a subordinate position in

279 Some describe the difference between “Swedes” and “immigrants” as a question of race; others use the concept of “people” (which can be based on race, ethnicity, and culture). The similarities between the different focuses is reflected in the idea that all “people” are naturally linked to a geographic territory and that they should be kept separate from each other.
society and, they argue, are used by capitalists and the upper class. The jihadist extremists demonstrate three characteristics that lack comparisons in both the other milieux.

Firstly, there are religious texts which are perceived as the absolute truth and the ideological-religious answer to all questions. The jihadist reading of the Qur’an and the tradition of Islam is considered to be the unadulterated truth, and other interpretations constitute blasphemous distortions. Secondly, there is a perspective on the hereafter that is lacking in both the other milieux. A jihadist is forgiven all his sins and receives the blessing of God in Paradise after death. Thirdly, jihadism is a global and transnational milieu. The Swedish right-wing and left-wing extremists are primarily active in Sweden, and concerned with changing Swedish circumstances. The jihadist messages relate to Swedish conditions to only a small extent, and instead relate primarily to conflict zones, such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. The final goal is the creation of a Muslim world state.

7.3.1 Views on sex and gender

The autonomists conduct an explicit struggle against sexism and for equality, whereas the extreme right and the jihadists have an entirely different view on women. Both the latter milieux are especially homosocial, and women are uncommon figures within them. Women are seen as essentially different from men, and – to the extent mentioned – as a rule as good mothers and caregivers, or as victims of the enemy’s aggression. They are found extremely rarely in the jihadist milieux, and when they are spoken about at all, as a rule it is as victims of violence and oppression from the enemies of Islam. On the Web sites of the Swedish extreme right, stories of how Swedish women are raped by “immigrants” are a constantly recurring element. As mentioned above, a radical striving for equality is expressed in the autonomist milieu. Despite this, the masculine features are dominant in the milieu, and the aggressive masculinity that finds expression in violent struggle does not differ greatly from the masculinity of the extreme right.

7.3.2 Golden ages

Both right-wing extremists and jihadists look back to a golden age, a past ideal state of affairs that has since decayed. The extreme right draws inspiration from various historical epochs when powerful historical figures are idealised. This concerns Swedish kings such as Gustavus Vasa, Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII and the eras of their rule, but also insurrectionists like Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson. Some of them point to the Third Reich as a golden age. In places, there is also a conviction that national socialism is “the biological world-view”. They argue that it is an ideology based on definite biological factors and to deny this is to alienate oneself from human nature. It is described as “[...] equally as absurd and illogical to be against national socialism as it would be to oppose the law of gravity or the fact that the world is round!” (Riis-Knudsen 2010).
Among the jihadists, the age of Muhammad and the first generation of Muslims are seen as a lost ideal existence. Even when there are concrete political goals for the struggle (liberating Syria, for example) the stories of this ideal existence serve as an ideological guide for today’s jihadists. Historical development, however, is seen as lying in God’s hands, which is why jihadists don’t always look first to the strategic Realpolitik effects of their actions. The central thing is not simply what results are achieved through the use of violence. Jihad is also a symbolic action showing that one has chosen a side.

The extreme left lacks these ideas of a lost golden age. Their view of history has its foundation in the (class) struggle between capitalists and workers. This struggle is as old as the capitalist economy and was preceded by conflicts between oppressors and the oppressed as part of other economic and political systems (e.g. feudal or slave societies).

7.3.3 The view of democracy
Neither of the milieux consider that parliamentary democracy in its current form is acceptable. Their justifications for this view differ significantly, however. Left-wing extremists criticise the system based on it not being democratic enough. The capitalist system is the root of all evil in society, and a political system that tolerates it is undemocratic, they think. Revolutionära fronten

[...] strives for worker’s power in the workplaces and for restoring a sense of class and responsibility for that class, with the goal of creating a society governed by direct democracy at the local level that collaborates with other societies build on the same principles of direct democracy. [...] What we envision is an international society with its base at the local level, where power is with the residents instead of the powers that be. (“Om revfront.org” http://revfront.org/?page_id=10)

Parliamentarism is dismissed and, by means of direct democracy, their ideal society would be considerably more equal than the system we have today:

But something has to happen somewhere, and history has also shown that the time for parties and bigwigs has ended. We won’t fall into that same trap again and let ourselves be betrayed. (“Om revfront.org” http://revfront.org/?page_id=10)

Right-wing extremists are more splintered, but it is clear that all actors want to restrict citizen rights for certain groups (such as immigrants, Jews, and homosexuals). While Svenskarnas parti, for example, is – on paper, at least – a traditional party organisation that does not expressly distance itself from parliamentary democracy, others such as Svenska motståndsrörelsen have a racially pure nation under a strong leader as their goal:
We consider party politics to be a degenerate form of political activism; it is in many ways only a powerless illusion and in no way represents a sufficient answer to the problems we face and must deal with. ("Klas Lund svarar" http://www.nordfront.se/klas-lund-svarar.smr)

All right-wing extremist organisations in this mapping, however, consider that democratic principles and rights should be disregarded as soon as they are applied to anyone other than themselves and “real Swedes”. Elected persons are described as “traitors of the people”, or in terms of serving the interests of the Jewish world conspiracy. Even the Sweden Democrats are described as traitors, as their analysis of immigration is not based in anti-Semitic thought. In reality, the race-ideological extreme right argues, Muslims are only a pawn in the game of world dominion orchestrated by the Jewish conspiracy.

Jihadists distance themselves entirely from the democratic process. Democracy is a human invention, and any attempt to rule a society in any way other than according to the words of God is condemned. According to the jihadists, a good Muslim therefore distances him/herself entirely from any political commitment. Participating in the political process is to practice *shirk*, raising laws and the powers that be to divine status. Those in power are described as *tawaghit*, idols who have introduced laws that do not originate with God. This makes them legitimate targets for jihadist violence.

7.3.4 Anonymity

Both the autonomists and the jihadists protect the anonymity of their activists to a greater extent than the extreme right does. On the Web sites of the autonomous, no individuals within their own milieux are named. All persons shown in images are masked or have been made unidentifiable. In the jihadist films being disseminated across the Internet, it is relatively unusual to see any recognisable faces, apart from those of the leading ideologists. The right-wing extremists differ in this respect: leading persons are shown with their names, and sometimes also with a picture by-line. In films that document social activities, the participants are usually fully recognisable. Nor are the right-wing extremists masked in confrontation and action videos, as the autonomous and jihadists are. However, anonymity is more the rule than the exception in the right-wing extremists’ forums and comment fields. The possibility of being anonymous is likely a precondition for being able to express one’s politically extreme opinions without risk of social sanctions. It is not surprising that jihadists are concerned about their anonymity, since they bear the stamp of international terrorists and are subject to military interventions from a number of states. An ideological explanation for the less discreet image of the extreme right can be speculatively distinguished. The fixation on a strong leader is one of the mainstays of the national socialist ideology, something that is not linked to anonymity. Revolutionärä fronten and AFA are clear about emphasising they are leaderless collectives where no individual stands out – the goal is to act without being seen.
7.3.5 The view of the media

In their views of mainstream media, the three extremist milieux are in principle united: they serve the interests of the enemy. The extreme right regards the media as Jewish propagandists hostile to Swedes, that serve the interests of Jews and Marxists exclusively. The left-wing autonomous thinks that the majority of the media output is bourgeois propaganda in service to capital. Not everything is objectionable, however; for example, revfront.org recommends documentaries from Swedish public service radio. The jihadists also describe mainstream media as full of lies and controlled by the enemies of Islam. The critical attitude does not stop either of the three milieux from using material gathered from mainstream media, which is then provided with their own contextualisation in order to confirm their own images of the world.

7.3.6 Relationships with other extremist milieux

The extreme right-wing and left-wing milieux have a symbiotic relationship in many respects as each other’s arch-enemy. A large part of their propaganda concerns the reprehensibility of the opposite side. The autonomists in particular concentrate on the struggle against right-wing extremism (Antifascist Action has even named itself after this endeavour). Even if the opponents’ side is not seen as the main reason behind the problems that need to be fixed (which for the extreme right is immigration and the world Jewish conspiracy, and for the extreme left global capitalism), they are the ones most often confronted. Monitoring of each other’s Web sites appears to be continuous, and planned actions and manifestations from one side are therefore met with counter-actions from the other side. There are observations that indicate that when right-wing extremist groupings establish themselves locally, left-wing autonomous opponents soon grow strong, and vice versa (Brottsförebyggande rådet & Säkerhetspolisen 2009:15).

The jihadists lack actual relationships to the other extreme groupings in Sweden. There are several reasons for this. Neither the left-wing autonomous or the right-wing extremists regard the jihadists as enemies. Nor do the jihadists act in the same physical space – the street – as do both the other milieux. Finally, Swedish right-wing and left-wing extremists fight mainly about conditions in Sweden and a particular Swedish political orientation. Although there is international cooperation in both movements, the actions are noticeably often directed locally or nationally. The jihadists, on the other hand, constitute a transnational milieu where actions seldom take place on Swedish territory, as their fight is mainly carried out abroad.
7.3.7 Views on the police

The autonomists see the police as hostile both on the individual level (individual activists are subjected to police brutality) and on a structural level (the police protect both the real enemies of democracy – the fascists – and a fundamentally undemocratic system). In a similar manner, the extreme right treats the police as protectors of traitors of the people and the state they want to oppose. The view of the police as an enemy, however, seems to be a stronger theme among the autonomists than among right-wing extremists.

Among the jihadists, the police are not an explicit enemy, perhaps chiefly owing to the fact that they are seldom confronted with the Swedish police. On the other hand, they see the counter-intelligence services trying to survey them, and the military units active in Muslim countries, as directly participating in the war on Islam.

7.3.8 Views on leadership

The milieux differ drastically regarding how they are governed and what are perceived as authorities. Within the extreme left, collectivism is the fundamental principle, and no official leaders or representatives exist. The networks consist of local self-organised groups that make all decisions in a democratic fashion.

Where the extreme right is concerned, the approach is the opposite. Extreme right organisations always have a formal leader who has a prominent role. While SMR, for example, is a strongly hierarchical organisation under an absolute leader, Svenskarnas parti has a formally traditional party organisation. In these milieux, however, the leadership is usually very strong.

Among the puritanical Salafis (that is, the branch of Islam that gives expression to cultural violence but does not encourage violent acts) the leaders who appear on the Internet are always people with great authority where interpreting religious texts are concerned. Markedly often, these Saudis are of very great age. The leadership figures of the jihadists, on the other hand, are often charismatic and battle-hardened persons who give themselves the right to interpret the religious texts despite their not having any major religious schooling. They are not religious authorities in the first place, but their experience in armed struggle is much more important.
7.3.9 “Us” and “them”

Swedish right-wing extremists are strongly racist in the original meaning of the word. Jews are generally the most hated group, but non-Nordic immigrants in general are also very much disliked, which often expresses itself in de-humanising and seriously offensive use of language. Among the “ethnopluralists”, it is claimed that no people or ethnic groups are inferior to others, but that they must be kept apart to avoid purported negative consequences.

In the Islamist Web milieux, there is strong condemnation of Muslim groups that are considered as not living in an orthodox way. There are also anti-Semitic expressions which are not, however, as prominent as with the extreme right in the material that has formed the basis for this report.

The left-wing autonomous do not express any contempt for any minority groups (except the extreme right-wing). On the contrary, they emphasise that they are fighting against sexism, homophobia and racism/fascism in all their forms. In reports from demonstrations and actions, Revolutionära fronten often emphasize that “immigrant and working-class youth” – a group they seem to want to be associated with – took part.

7.4 Mechanisms of recruitment and radicalisation

After having summed up some of the leading ideas as they are expressed in the messages of the three extremist milieux on the Internet, we now turn our attention to how these ideas are presented. Perhaps the strongest common theme in all three of the milieux is that the opinions expressed can be described as reactions to structures where they perceive themselves as disadvantaged and subject to injustices.

Of great importance for how a message is interpreted is how the recipient is addressed. We will here refer to the mechanisms for radicalisation presented in Chapter 3.

7.4.1 Personal and collective victimisation

All three milieux include references to victimisation, where the fellow-feeling of the recipient is appealed to, either with exposed movement itself, or with their unfortunate brothers and sisters (Swedes, workers, Muslims).

In right-wing extremist discussion forums, there are often discussion subjects concerning how “innocent Swedes” have been robbed and/or assaulted by “immigrant gangs”. The point of these recurrent stories is to create an image of systematic violation, where all Swedes may be subjected to assaults from elements hostile to Swedes. If the recipients themselves have met with something like
that, they learn that they are in good company; if not, that it is only a matter of time before it happens. In this context, the race ideological movement is portrayed as the only functioning protection against such violations. The alleged rape of Swedish women by immigrants is also a popular genre on right-wing extremist Web sites. The victim is construed as one of “us”, while the perpetrator is an outside, alien threat that does not belong here. Rape is a crime that, in media reporting, often contains what Norwegian criminologist Nils Christie calls “ideal victims” (Christie 1986). An ideal victim is the opposite of the perpetrator, and is ideal in the sense that it becomes an effective story in the media and moreover confirms the ideas we have of criminal deviants on the one hand and “normal people” on the other. The victim is weak, and the perpetrator is strong; the victim is respectable, the perpetrator suspect; the victim is innocent, and the perpetrator alone bears the guilt. Preferably, the victim and the perpetrator should be at as great a social distance as possible for it to be an effective news story. According to the logic of the extreme right, the reporting on the rape should emphasise the ethnicity of the perpetrator and victim in order to distance themselves from each other further. The consequence becomes that they seem to be arguing that it is less serious to be raped by a “Swedish” man that by an “immigrant”. Another type of victimisation that is relatively common with the right-wing extremists is to portray the own movement as a victim of unfair suppression of opinion and Government-sanctioned persecution.

For several years, autonomists have documented confrontations with the police on video, and then presented these as police brutality. The autonomists often come into conflict with the police when the police are protecting the nationalists’ right to demonstrate from attacks by the former. In several of the video films studied in this report, police action is portrayed as on an equal footing as that of the right-wing extremists. They describe their own movement as subjected to abuse from state authorities. On the other hand, no examples of how they were subjected to violence from the extreme right in street conversations has been found. On the Internet there is mudslinging between both camps where each accuses the other of being cowardly weaklings. In a wider sense, references to a type of collective victimisation can be discerned with the extreme left, which they argue is the consequence of the economic structure: exploitation of workers, racism, fascism, homophobia and sexism are structural violence that affects the individual, but which is linked to larger groups in society (working class, immigrant, LGBTQ persons and women).

Among the jihadists, the victimisation is related to Islam. There are lots of stories about how “our brothers and sisters” are exposed to discrimination, violence and injustice in different parts of the world. A good Muslim shall feel solidarity with the ummah, the perceived global community of Muslims, and therefore also with those who are subjected to these violations. Showing solidarity with vulnerable persons does not have to equate to encouraging the use of violence, but both the jihadist and the puritan Salafi propaganda talk about the “war on Islam” and the opponents’ will to
“exterminate Islam”. Conflicts where Muslims are involved are reduced to being exclusively about religion, and all other explanatory models (such as ethnic conflicts, territorial claims or financial interests) are subordinated the religious explanations. All Muslims are presented as collectively victimised by a world of *kuffar* (unbelievers).

### 7.4.2 Political dissatisfaction

The jihadists’ dissatisfaction is justified in religious terms, in that society is not governed by religious principles but by secular ideas. Implementing these religious principles for how society is to be organised has political consequences, but in the jihadists’ messages, political ambitions and analysis are expressed with religious language and religious references.

Political dissatisfaction is the principal motives for the actions of the extreme left. Structural explanations are emphasised here – that the unacceptable condition of things is not the result of the actions of individuals or ethnic or religious groups. The capitalist system of production is the root of all evil, and the extreme right groupings they battle are a product of this system. Their dissatisfaction is based primarily in the economic exploitation of subordinate groups, and their violent activism is justified by solidarity with these vulnerable groups: workers, immigrants, LGBTQ persons and women.

The political dissatisfaction of the extreme right has the opposite basis. Immigrants are the primary problem, but the roots of this problem are the politicians who betray the people and the Jewish conspiracy. Even if the expression “capitalism” is seldom used, dissatisfaction is expressed with the prevailing economic system, which can be described in terms of criticism of capitalism. The criticism is then directed at what they describe as global Jewish capital. Swedish capitalism, on the other hand, is seen as unproblematic. In the world of ideas in the race ideological movement, all political problems could in principle be solved if Sweden only became an ethnically homogeneous nation.

### 7.4.3 Normalisation

A very prominent phenomenon in the extremist Web material is how an aggressive, dismissive and dehumanising use of language that in other social contexts would be unacceptable is normalised in the various milieux. This is done primarily in comment fields and forum discussions – at the editorial level, the use of language is as a rule somewhat more moderate, probably to avoid prosecution. In the fairly closed communities of interest that the extremist milieux constitute, the extreme views or the extreme use of language are never challenged. Instead, they are constantly confirmed, as the milieux consist only of like-minded persons. In these milieux, the most extreme people are perceived as the most devoted, which is why a kind of competition can arise as to who can express themselves the most brutally, and thereby be the most faithful (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008). This effect has

---

277
variously been described as an echo chamber (as you call, so you hear back) and an ideological greenhouse (views are cultivated and reinforced). Both concepts indicate the same phenomenon – a unanimous community without addition of outside perspectives results in cultivated and radicalised opinions, which in a less homogeneous discussion milieu would have been balanced by contrary opinions. In a broader sense we can speak of enclavisation, where the ever larger supply of niche media and specialised discussion forums result in a number of digital enclaves where the participants only meet like-minded people and never have their opinions questioned (Bjurwald 2013).

As the left-wing autonomous see their primary enemy in a social structure and not in different ethnic groups, the dehumanisation in their forum is not as palpable as in the other milieux. It does exist here too, however, particularly when it comes to the description of right-wing extremists. In its capacity as the prime defender of the current social order, however, the police receives the harshest treatment. Videos where police are fitted with swastikas exist, and the old skinhead acronym ACAB (All Cops Are Bastards) is occasionally used.

The pitch on the Web sites of the extreme right is considerably more raw; here hate is directed at ethnic groups (“Nasty fucking nigger bastards”), politicians (“Diiiiiiiiie Billström, diiiiiiiiiiiiiiiic”), journalists (“I hope Åsa Linderborg gets the punishment she deserves for her crimes against the people when we’ve taken power”) and feminists (“I spit on that kind of rabble”). When other commentators distance themselves from such statements, they do not argue that they are wrong in fact but justify their distance for tactical reasons. They argue that it does not benefit their cause to express it in such terms.

Also in the puritan Salafi and jihadist milieux, there is considerable dehumanisation that normalises a hateful attitude to persons with different opinions. Shiites are described eating excrement for religious reasons, people who embrace other religious movements are “unbelieving dogs”, and in a film portraying the activities of Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria, some of the cars that appear are fitted with the sign “Muslim”. Other cars are fitted with the sign “Target”.

The use of derogatory and dehumanising language is a method of normalising the hateful view of enemies and opponents. When an image of opponent’s groups has been established as being of less worth or even non-human, the willingness to use physical violence against them increases.

280 Tobias Billström, Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy.

281 Åsa Linderborg, chief cultural editor at the independent social-democratic newspaper Aftonbladet.

282 All quotes are taken from the comment field on http://www.nordfront.se
7.4.4 Group radicalisation

Group radicalisation refers to the internal unity that arises in a small group under strong external pressure. Fighting military units or active terrorist cells are classic examples. It is not possible to assert that mechanisms that are found among military combatants are directly comparable with those that arise in discussion forums on the Internet. But the rhetoric in extremist milieux refer to the same phenomenon. This rhetoric is much the same in all three milieux. They are a small, heroic group fighting against a superior, unjust enemy (the Jewish world conspiracy and immigrants, global capitalism and fascism, and *kuffar* waging a war on Islam). The courage and spirit of self-sacrifice is especially emphasised with the extreme right and the jihadists, while the autonomists emphasise the effectiveness and solidarity of the collective. Mobilisation is important as the movements are small, but in order to become a full member it is emphasised that major sacrifice is required. In SMR, SvP, NU, NNS and RF, membership can be applied for over the Net. Both SMR and RF practice trial membership, where competency for becoming a full member must be proven. In addition, SMR has elite members, the Oath-bound. The requirements for becoming one, however, are secret. Among the jihadists, recruitment information is limited, probably for security reasons, to email addresses where more information may possibly be offered.

7.4.5 Martyrdom

Martyrdom in its fundamental form – dying for one’s cause – is not seen as something desirable either among the extreme right or the extreme left. In a broader sense, however, two types of references to martyrdom can be found within these milieux. Firstly, the memory of fallen comrades is kept alive as a reminder of who the enemy is and that the struggle must continue. Syndicalist Björn Söderström, who was murdered by a neo-Nazi in 1999, is one such example mentioned in leftist contexts. The murder of Daniel Wretström in Salem in 2000 got the extreme right milieu to organise demonstrations in his memory for ten years. In the latter case, a martyr was used as a symbol for gathering together a rather splintered milieu in a joint demonstration. Secondly, there is a tendency among the extreme right to glorify activists who have been indicted and/or sentenced to prison. They are seen as political prisoners and become symbols of loyalty and sacrifice at the same time as they serve as living proof of the injustices their own group has been subjected to by a corrupt civil society.

Among the jihadists, martyrdom is central. Those killed in battle or through an attack on the enemy will be rewarded in paradise, and suicide attacks are not infrequently called “martyrdom operations”. Martyrdom also has a high status among Muslims outside jihadist circles and is rooted in traditional religious texts.
7.4.6 Rewards

Among the extreme right and the extreme left, messages that refer to those taking part in the struggle being rewarded in some way are absent. Fighting for the right and the good, and winning, are reward enough. Among jihadists, however, there are depictions of rewards both in life and after death. One of the films from a jihadist training camp that was studied shows how participants who distinguished themselves are called out before the rest of the group and receive gifts. This is, however, of lesser significance than the metaphysical rewards that a fighting warrior might receive. A faithful jihadist is given both forgiveness for sins and ajr (God’s reward) as thanks for his efforts. The greatest gift is dying a martyr’s death, for which a special place in paradise is promised. Depictions of the honour of becoming a martyr and the rewards that follow after death have a great presence in jihadist propaganda.

7.4.7 Reaching identity-seekers

One of the reasons for approaching an extremist group may be that the individual feels a lack of a social context. Persons who feel little connection with their immediate surroundings and/or society at large may find a group affiliation in the closely knit extremist milieux (Munton et al. 2011). Extremist groups distancing themselves from the civil society an individual like this feels alienated from further strengthens the value of such group identification, as does the fact that the surrounding world also distances itself from extremists (Hoigård 2012). Those individuals who can be characterised as identity-seekers might therefore be attracted by a message that shows that a given extremist milieu has a strong internal unity.

Such messages are lacking among the autonomist left-wing. In their action-centred message, there are no everyday activities shown alongside the struggle, and therefore no inter-group sociality either. All activities are shown as directed towards the class struggle and the fight against fascism and capitalism. One possible explanation for this may be that within this milieu the struggle is not seen primarily as a means for the interests of one’s own group, but that it acts for other groups and individuals that are exploited and discriminated against. One’s own group, the argument goes, distinguishes itself by being the people who confront the problems the most effectively.

Within the extreme right, on the other hand, a very large proportion of the material aims to show social activities within the group. Apart from purely political collective activities such as handing out flyers, social activities are also shown: people practising martial arts, survival training in the wilderness, or helping out at a farm. The race ideological “us” (which only includes their own ethnic group) is considerably narrower than the “us” of the autonomists, who solidarise with the majority of the
citizens in society (excluding fascists, capitalists and the police). Considering the quantity of right-wing extremist propaganda aimed at showing a strong comradeship and good sociality within the group, it can be assumed that this is perceived as an important recruitment strategy.

The jihadists take something of a middle position in terms of the description of the social cohesiveness of their own group. The films show men camping out, exercising and cooking food together. The focus is not, however, on displaying good fellowship and social relations, as with the right-wing extremists; instead, the central theme is training to be good soldiers. The masculine homosociality is the same as with the extreme right, but among the jihadists, identification with the fighting avant garde – those who stand up in the battle against the enemy – is emphasised.

7.4.8 Reaching brooders

Philosophically inclined individuals seeking historical and ideological explanations for the nature of things are offered these in all three milieux. The autonomous left wing starts from a historical materialist economic analysis that describes history in terms of the relationship between oppressors and the oppressed, and that also offers a solution to these unequal relationships through the overturn of capitalism. The framework narrative of the autonomists is less complicated than the theories that explain the world views of right-wing extremists and jihadists. If the narrative of the extreme left is materialist, the theories of the extreme right have both biological (racist) and idealistic features. National socialism and nationalism are described as natural and healthy ideologies, where all social and political problems can be solved through the implementation of racial and ethnic separation. The strongest narrative is found among the jihadists, where the religious texts represent the absolute truth, which can be interpreted to provide answers to all questions. The jihadist framework narrative asserts its legitimacy with the aid of holy and unquestionable documents, something that lacks any equivalent in both the other milieux. It is worth noting that the more existential and philosophical features of both the pro-violence parts of the autonomous left and the jihadists are simplifications of arguments that exist within the non-pro-violence sectors of closely related milieux. As previously pointed out, there is also contempt among all the milieux for theorising and discussion, which are seen as subordinate to physical action. To the extent that brooders are attracted by pro-violence extremist messages, it is probably rather in the search for simple and indisputable answers than a desire to discuss philosophical questions.

283 Svenska Motståndsrörelsen and Nordiska Nationalsocialister expressly call themselves national socialists. Other organisations call themselves nationalists (Svenskarnas parti and Nationell ungdom) or ethnopluralists (Nordisk ungdom).
7.4.9 Reaching thrill-seekers

The thrill-seekers could be said to be the opposite of the brooders. Here, it is not the search for truth, but physical activity, excitement and the opportunity to act out aggressive impulses through violent behaviour that are attractive. The type of affective message that can be thought to have these thrill-seekers as their target group is disseminated primarily in the form of video clips. All milieux contain video material that presents street fights (among the right-wing and left-wing extremists) or armed struggle (among the jihadists) as an adrenalin kick.

One of the autonomists’ web shops sells the film *Code Red*, which is presented as follows:

“This movie contains one hour of leftwing riot. Watch riots from Gothenburg - Sweden, Genoa - Italy and much more. Follow the black block fighting the police and burning the property of the rich. Straight riot and pure hardcore to the sound of rock n roll music.”

It is about affective riot romanticism, where any aim and success in the actions are completely subordinated to the physical act. This is interesting in light of the fact that the pro-violence branch of the autonomists describe the use of violence only as one tactic among many, a means for achieving an end. In this film, violence seems rather to be an end in itself.

The jihadists’ depiction of fighting is at a different level from both the extreme left and right. While they limit themselves to street fights and riots, the jihadists show fighting with automatic weapons, bombings and shootings, with detailed close-ups of dead bodies. The jihadist films are often significantly longer than those of the other two milieux and therefore contain more varied material. The pure battle sequences, however, can be re-used in shortened, more action-packed film versions. The religious framework has the character of sermons that can be experienced as considerably more long-winded than the shorter slogans of the right-wing extremists and the autonomists.

---


285 Shorter versions of this type have not been studies in this survey.
8. Measures against pro-violence messages on the Internet

In summary, the mapping shows that there is a multitude of strategies, mechanisms and processes that may lead to radicalisation and the embrace of pro-violence messages. Trying to counteract each of these by itself is not meaningful, and the proposed measures are therefore at an overarching structural level, aimed at reinforcing individuals' ability to critically evaluate and interpret media messages.

In the directives for this study, the task of the Swedish Media Council is defined as:

propose suitable measures to help young persons in particular become well-informed media users and other preventive measures to combat pro-violence behaviour connected to anti-democratic values that are disseminated over the Internet. (Ju2011/6776/D)

The Council will not provide suggestions as to how pro-violence extremism can be combated or prevented, only as to how resistance to such messages can be strengthened. Nor will we recommend methods for how these messages can be stopped, or access to them made more difficult; we will only suggest preventive measures against pro-violence behaviour developing as a consequence of contact with anti-democratic messages on the Internet. Just because the commission to submit proposals for measures is limited does not mean that these proposals submitted will have limited effects. There is much that indicates the proposals to strengthen children and young people against extremist propaganda through increased efforts towards media and information literacy can also have positive consequences for their opportunities to participate in the democratic dialogue. Even though the proposals are primarily directed towards countering young people being recruited to violent extremist milieux, we have chosen a holistic perspective for the measures. In our assessment, it is not possible to carry out surgical procedures directed solely at preventing extremism; on the other hand, it is possible to carry out efforts that, for example, increase the cognitive skills of young people and their critical and analytical thinking, thereby giving them the opportunities to understand the world around them and be participants in the democratic process. Participation is thus strengthened, and the experience of being an outsider – which is a seedbed for all extremism – is decreased.

8.1 Limiting violent extremism

Tore Bjørgo describes nine different methods of preventing criminality in general and crimes of terror in particular: creating norms against criminality, deterrence through punishment, aversion,
incapacitation of repeat offenders, protecting vulnerable targets, reducing harmful effects, reducing the profitability of criminality, limiting recruitment through social measures, and rehabilitating those who were involved in criminality (Bjørgo 2011:24).

As part of the commission for this report – anti-democratic and pro-violence messages on the Internet – only two of these points are, strictly speaking, applicable: creating norms against criminality and limiting recruitment through social efforts. In this context, creating norms against criminality could also refer to a kind of schooling in democracy where the individual’s normative resistance to the use of violence for anti-democratic goals is reinforced:

The major advantages of the normative prevention mechanism is that it is uncontroversial compared to the other methods, non-repressive, and does not violate the principles of democracy or legal security. To a great extent, it deals with general socialisation and integration into society. (Bjørgo 2011:27)

Such measures have, however, proven to be difficult to carry out for State entities and have even proven to be counter-productive, which is further discussed below.

Counteracting recruitment can, in this context, can be understood as young people with the capacity for criticism of sources and analytical as well as critical thinking, will be less receptive to pro-violence and anti-democratic propaganda. A person who can critically review messages like this can also see through flawed arguments and logical gaps.

8.1.1 Neighbouring commissions

The reason for this commission primarily proposing measures regarding strengthened media and information literacy can be found in other parts of the Government’s action plan for protecting democracy against pro-violence extremism (Skr 2011:12:44). Two of the inquiries included in the action plan, Utredningen om ett effektivare arbete mot främlingsfientlighet (Inquiry into more efficient work against xenophobia) and Utredningen för ett förebyggande arbete mot våldsbejakande extremism (Inquiry into preventive work against pro-violence extremism) partially overlap with this commission. To avoid overlap or conflicting proposals for measures, the work on this report has been coordinated against these two commissions.

The first of the commissions, Utredningen om ett effektivare arbete mot främlingsfientlighet, submitted a report in 2012 under the title “Främlingsfienden inom oss” (“The Xenophobe Within”) (SOU 2012:74) This differs from the present commission in three important respects. Firstly, Främlingsfienden inom oss deals only with xenophobia, while the present survey studies pro-violence extremist messages. Secondly, the xenophobia surveyed is not always extreme or pro-violence. It often takes the form of “everyday racism”. While the part of the population that has a strong
xenophobic attitude lies between five and ten percent in various studies, the ideological extremists are far fewer (SOU 2012:74, page 147). Many instead give expression to a lesser form of xenophobia – approximately half of Swedes say they are negatively disposed towards Islam (Weibull 2012). Thirdly, this survey is centred around the existence of pro-violence and anti-democratic messages on the Internet, while the previous commission has a broader design that stands more openly towards the media in general and the Internet in particular. Several of the proposals submitted by the Inquiry for more effective work against xenophobia have increasing the level of knowledge about xenophobia as a goal, for example the proposal to inform people about Islamophobia and the history of xenophobia in Sweden, as well as government initiatives for teachers on human rights (SOU 2012:74, pp. 331-334, 340-344). As concerns pro-violence extremism, however, it turns out that similar information projects can be counter-productive (see e.g. Kundnani 2009, Roots of violent radicalisation 2012, RAN 2012). Prevent, a major centrally-controlled project to check violent jihadism, was carried out in Great Britain during the 2000s. It is regarded as a failure, as it essentially seems to have given birth to suspicion around the purpose of the operations. Many people perceived the project as a tool for spying and intelligence activities. Many evaluators argue that greater decentralisation with more locally connected operations in addition to a less explicit focus on one single extremist milieu as problematic is a solution to these credibility problems (Kundnani 2009, Roots of violent radicalisation:31–32, Thomas 2010).

State authorities pointing out certain extreme opinions as incorrect will not get extremists to re-evaluate them. Rather, they are reinforced in their perceptions; the conspiracy theories around the State’s secret agenda that flourishes in the milieux are validated, and the extreme groups can unite in resistance against a common enemy.

If measures aimed at increasing knowledge are to be able to prevent extremism, they must aim at increasing skills in seeing through propaganda by means of a media critical approach, not through asserting that certain perceptions are true or false:

In milieux where paranoia and conspiracy theories flourish, state involvement can be the “kiss of death” for independent local initiatives. (Stevens & Neumann 2009:43)

To counteract extremism, young people should be given the strength to become politically involved and contribute to the democratic development of society, which is difficult if they perceive that their opinions and perceptions must be approved from above (Kundnani 2009). The same reasoning can be applied to the two proposals the inquiry submitted in connection with xenophobia in the media: that the National Board for Youth Affairs be commissioned with providing economic support to projects or activities aimed at counteracting xenophobia, and funding a quick-response function.
Both proposals can be effective against xenophobic ideas, but among extremists it will most likely be perceived as state propaganda.

The second neighbouring commission in the Government’s action plan, Inquiry into preventive work against pro-violence extremism, was first published on 13 December 2013. This text was composed during ongoing contact with the inquiry mentioned. It also differs from this survey in the scope of the commission. While this report only deals with messages on the Internet, the Inquiry deals with the existence of pro-violence extremism itself. While the commission Swedish Media Council only has the goal of proposing measures for strengthening young people against anti-democratic propaganda, the Inquiry has the broader ambition of stopping pro-violence anti-democratic extremism in general. This means that they can submit more comprehensive proposals than the Council can.

The Inquiry has divided up preventive measures as follows:

---

286 The idea of a quick-response function is that when something – in this case xenophobic messages – that can be questioned appears in the media, then the media, organisations and opinion-makers should be supplied with the correct facts and background information.
Figure 8.1 Preventive measures against extremism.287

The measures proposed in this report belong to the group of general approaches, aimed at as many people as possible. Reinforcing young persons as conscious media users is a broad effort with no particular target groups or subject fields. An effort towards increased MIL will not prevent everyone from being attracted by anti-democratic milieux. Other measures according to the model above are therefore needed to catch those whose recruitment and radicalisation cannot be prevented by increased MIL.

8.1.2 Evaluating measures

Measures must be evaluated in some way so as to be able to assess whether they are successful, meaningless, or counter-productive. Measures for combating pro-violence extremism are not always evaluated, and evidence-based evaluations are unusual. The problem is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to say with certainty that it is a given measure that resulted in any decrease in the number of people within an extreme milieu or if it is the effects of other factors: general ideological currents, changes in demographics, finance, unemployment, etc. A decrease like this could also be due to a leading figure within an extreme milieu leaving it. Evaluating preventive measures is especially problematic, since their purpose is to prevent an undesirable development from taking place. The measurement of whether a measure is successful is that something doesn’t happen – and it can never be stated with certainty that this something, the undesirable development, would have taken place without the preventive measure. The action proposals we present below are, on the whole, impossible to evaluate in such a way as to express with certainty that they contributed to decreasing recruitment to extreme, pro-violence movements. On the other hand, it should be possible to evaluate the extent to which they contribute to increasing the critical and analytical abilities of children and young people to understand messages conveyed on the Internet in general, and anti-democratic, pro-violence messages in particular.

8.2 Preventing media influence

When the impact of mediated messages is to be prevented, it can take place in three different ways: through limiting the occurrence of the messages, preventing access to the messages and strengthening the resistance of the message’s recipients. Even though this report will only submit proposals regarding the third method,

287 Social action groups is a project initiated by the National Police Board, now made permanent and operated in collaboration with the National Board of Health and Welfare. Both projects deal with preventing lifestyle criminality among young people.
there is reason to discuss briefly what all the types of measures may involve. With the exception of legislation and police intervention, all these measures can be carried out both by public entities and by representatives of civil society (Bailey 2007).

8.2.1 Limiting the occurrence of messages

The occurrence of messages can be limited both by state entities and by representatives of civil society.

That the state tries through various measures to see to it that a certain type of message generally does not exist is a repressive measure that involves a limitation of the freedom of expression. The most extreme form of limitation of this type is censorship – all messages must be reviewed beforehand and approved before they are allowed to reach the general public. This is a form of limiting the freedom of expression that belongs in totalitarian states and not in democracies. On the other hand, there are already other forms of limiting freedom of expression in Swedish law that can be applied to parts of the material in this survey.288

The law against incitement to racial hatred (Penal Code, Chap. 16 § 8) forbids threats or expressing disrespect for an ethnic group or other such group of people with reference to race, skin colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation, and ought to be applicable to parts of the material in this survey.

In order to prosecute someone, they need to know who is responsible for the potentially criminal statement. Many of the Web sites in this survey lack a legally responsible publisher, which means that they lack protection under freedom of the press. This also means that it is not always possible to find someone to take legal proceedings against. Even when a legally responsible publisher has had proceedings brought against them, the desired effect fails to appear. For example, the responsible publisher for nordfront.se has twice been sentenced for incitement to racial hatred, which has not obstructed the Web site’s continued existence.

288 Indictments, for example, can be brought against material published on the Internet for crimes against civil freedom (Penal Code, Chap. 18 §5), libel (Penal Code, Chap. 5 §3), defamation (Penal Code, Chap. 5, §§ 1 & 2), incitement to racial hatred (Penal Code, Chap. 16 § 8), unlawful threats (Penal Code, Chap. 4 § 5), threats against civil servants (Penal Code, Chap. 17 § 1), sedition (Penal Code, Chap. 16 § 5), obstructing the course of justice (Penal Code, Chap. 17 § 10). When these counts constitute a crime against freedom of expression, they can be found in the Swedish Freedom of the Press Act, Chap. 7 § 4.
Another problem with legal measures of this type is that many of the Web sites that could be subject to legal action are physically located in other countries, especially those with more liberal legislation regarding incitement to racial hatred.

The law on responsibility for electronic bulletin boards (SFS 1998:112, the “BBS Law”) stipulates that material that can be regarded as sedition, incitement to racial hatred, child pornography or unlawful depictions of violence must be taken down by the person responsible for the Web site. Anders R. Olsson asserts, however, in his report *Yttrandefriheten på nätet. En guide om gränserna för det tillåtna på nätet* (Freedom of speech on the Net. A guide to the limits of the permissible on the Internet, 2009) that the law is not clear as to the time-frames intended:

> [...] This much is clear; those who own or maintain the electronic bulletin board must make certain efforts to keep it clean of the enumerated crimes. He or she must regularly devote at least some time to reading and checking what other publish. Should anyone tip them off that something criminal has turned up on the Web site, the persons responsible are obligated to investigate the matter quickly. (Olsson 2009:69)

The Swedish Web sites in this study have also adapted their material so that it probably falls within the boundaries of the law. Tightening any one, or some, of the laws governing incitement to racial hatred, unlawful threats, defamation or sedition is a measure that goes entirely too far to be discussed as part of this report. Limitations of the freedom of expression risk having undesirable consequences. By restricting the constitutionally protected freedoms of expression and information in order to safeguard democracy, we ourselves risk damaging that we intended to protect.

Strategic legal action against particular individuals who operate Web sites should have a deterrent effect, but in extremist contexts it has not proven to be effective. (Stevens & Neumann 2009:25–27). In Great Britain, the efforts in the field of the Internet have primarily concerned attempts to shut down Web sites and/or prosecute the publishers behind them, which has not been successful in reducing the messages they wanted to stop (Roots of violent radicalisation:23–26). Perhaps the kind of threat and hate brought up in comment fields or in private e-mails to journalists and debaters could be suppressed as a consequence of the deterrent effect that prosecution could bring with it, but it is not likely that representatives of the extreme milieux would be affected by this.

An additional model for limiting the occurrence of anti-democratic and violent messages on the Internet are “hot-lines”. The International Network Against Cyberhate (INACH) was established in 2002 for the purpose of combating discrimination on the Internet. Their primarily methods are to make reports to the Web host or service providers who have given space to the discriminatory material. In many cases, there is a prohibition against such material in the user agreement, which is why it is taken down after the report. In the event there is legal scope, the material is also reported to
the police. INACH is found in 19 countries today; the Swedish node in the network is the Discrimination Office in Uppsala. This could be viewed as user-driven self-regulation – the users tighten the requirements on those who provide the services. Without detracting from INACH efforts in the area, it can be stated that their activities reach beyond extreme and pro-violence messages. Among the Facebook pages they have acted against there are groups that have spread tasteless jokes about cancer and dead infants. There is also reason to assume that this strategy only works against Web services in the broad middle groove who are concerned about their reputation. Extremist Web sites and forums or discussion forms where the basic idea itself is that everything is allowed to be said – Flashback, for example – as a rule do not take down posts after they are reported.

8.2.2 Preventing access to messages

Instead of trying to prevent undesirable messages from being found on the Internet, there can be attempts to obstruct access through filtering or blocking. Internet filtering can be described as “an entity, using technological methods, tries to block the flow of specific information that another entity makes available to everyone or communicates to some through the Internet.” (Olsson 2010:19).

There are several different types of filtering. IP-filtering means that the internet operators who provide Net access block certain IP addresses. In Sweden, Web sites with suspected child pornographic content are blocked this way through a voluntary agreement between Internet operators. The National Criminal Investigation Department has a “blacklist” of these kinds of Web sites; most of the major Swedish internet operators use the list. Content or dynamic filtering are technical solutions where software blocks Web sites or parts of Web sites after having analysed the contents (Stevens & Neumann 2009:16-18). This content analysis applies as a rule to the occurrence of certain key words, and sometimes even image analysis. There are, for example, filtration programmes that can recognize nude pictures. Most commercial filtration programmes for home use contain both IP filtering and content filtering.

Filtering can take place on several different levels. At a central level, the Internet operator blocks access to material for all users. On a local level, filtration programmes can be installed at schools, for example, or workplaces or libraries. On a private level, users (or, rather, the user’s parents) themselves install filters on the computers in the house. One of the biggest problems with filtering solutions is that, regardless of technology, they lead to overblocking. IP-filtering means that the entire Web site is blocked, even those parts that do not contain undesirable messages. The programmes that filter for content are entirely insensitive to context – the mere occurrence of certain

words or images means that material can be blocked. RFSU – the National Association for Sexual Information – has reported that their Web site has been blocked by several Internet filtration programmes; if a content filter against extremist propaganda were created, this report would probably get caught in it. With current legislation, it is in principle impossible for government agencies to decide to filter content.

The Swedish Freedom of the Press Act (TF) prohibits precensorship. Intervention against criminal expressions, according to TF and the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression (YGL) may thus only take place afterwards. Filtering out expressions on the orders of a government agency so that they cannot reach recipients would hardly be consistent with this prohibition against obstacles to dissemination being laid in advance. (Olsson 2011:85)

That child pornography can be filtered despite this is due to the fact that it is not protected by TF or YGL and that Internet operators voluntarily block Web sites according to the National Criminal Investigation Department blacklist. A similar process regarding political or religious messages would be unconstitutional. This does not prevent private entities – the Internet operators – from being able to block material on their own authority. It can, however, be asked on what grounds and with what consequences this kind of filtering could be implemented. The measures so far described for limiting the occurrence of and access to anti-democratic and pro-violence messages are not unproblematic if the state carries them out in a democracy.

8.2.3 Strengthening the resistance of users

Strengthening the resistance to anti-democratic and pro-violence messages means providing media users with cognitive abilities that reduce the attractive power of the messages. The aim is to reinforce media users’ abilities to evaluate critically, to analyse and understand both online and offline material, to teach children and young persons to question and compare different information sources, to partake of independent investigations and to be able to evaluate texts, audio and image material (Stevens & Neumann 2009:38). The international designation of these abilities is media literacy. In Sweden, it has variously been translated as media knowledge, media pedagogics, media literacy, etc. In a newly published curriculum from UNESCO (Carlsson 2013), the concept of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) was launched. It is within this field that all the proposals for measures are put forward.

The final report of the Swedish Commission for the Future, Svenska framtidsutmaningar ("Future Challenges for Sweden") argues that three factors are of significance for people to remain correctly informed through media use: they must have opportunities to study the supply of media, they must have the motivation to do so, and they especially must have the ability to understand and assimilate the contents. (Ds 2013:19 p. 180)
In today’s information society, it is vital that citizens are media and information literate; that they can find, analyse, critically evaluate and create information in various media and contexts. Of particular importance in this context is the ability to remain critical and questioning, and being able to analyse different types of media text in an increasingly larger and more diversified media landscape. The Commission for the Future expresses the paradox of an information society:

The expansion of the Internet and the media landscape have not only increased access to information and provided people with better opportunities to communicate with each other and reach out with their messages. It has also increased access to disinformation and Net hate. It has never been as simple to become informed. It has never been as simple to become misinformed. (Ds 2013:19 p. 184)

With increasingly comprehensive media use at increasingly younger ages, it is also of the greatest importance that children and young persons learn these abilities at an early stage. Today, the ability to read and write no longer means just being able to read and write. In the present-day media landscape, the boundaries between text and image and between producer and consumer have become unclear, and it could be said that what is required of citizens is a form of multi-literacy. Considering that media use is becoming increasingly more comprehensive at increasingly lower ages, this is also something that should be part of a school education as early as possible so as to ensure an instinctive source-critical attitude:

Digital competence, and a text competence that covers the ability to handle texts in different genres and practices, can be added to the more traditional skills of reading and writing. (Adelmann et al. 2013:62)

Mappings of current day violent extremism emphasises the Internet as a very important, or even the most important, tool for recruitment and radicalisation. The need for measures promoting critical use of the Internet and social media is also established (see, for example, Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation 2012, Roots of violent radicalisation, Metoder i arbejdet med radikalisering 2012, SOU 2012:74 p. 291).

The British extremist researcher Jamie Bartlett formulates it as follows:

Much of the information that appears credible and exact – and people tend to judge it based on the aesthetics of the Web sites – is complete humbug, but we don’t learn that in school since it has arisen so quickly. We don’t get to learn how to critically evaluate Internet-based content, and I believe this is one of the greatest problems we are facing just now. (Roots of violent radicalisation:25)
In *Främlingsfienden inom oss* it was stated that source-critical skills are central today:

> Information has become more easily accessible than ever, but it reaches us in a more unsorted form than previously. [...] It is therefore important to ask ourselves who stands behind the information that reaches us. What is the original source? Can we trust the author? Is the author well-known? Some kind of expert? What sources did the author use? Are the references known? Have others linked to the document in question? Who? (Hultén et al 2007:89–90). The questions are many. Schools have a tremendously important task as regards developing a source-critical approach. (SOU 2012:74; 291)

Many voices thus emphasize increased efforts in MIL in general and source-critical abilities in particular as a central measure for preventing violent extremism. Despite this, as far as we know, no large projects of this kind have been carried out, either in Sweden or internationally. Efforts in MIL education do not need to have a goal of suppressing extremism to be carried out. In a more comprehensive policy plan, the EU Commission maintains that:

> It is a prerequisite for democracy that its citizens participate actively in the life of society; media literacy could give them the skills they need to understand the daily flow of information that is spread through new information technology. [...] Media literacy is regarded today as one of the most important conditions for an active and full citizenship and to prevent and reduce the risk of exclusion from the life of society. (2009/625/EG)

UNESCO, in *Medie- och informationskunnighet i nätverkssamhället* (Media and Information Literacy in a Network Society), argues that together with a democratic constitution and free media, media and information literate citizens are one of the conditions for a functional democracy:

> If people are to be strengthened in their role as citizens, joint efforts must be made to develop MIL as a way of contributing to the critical and communicative abilities of the individual. It will then be possible to use media and communications both as an instrument and as a way of giving expression to processes that reflect developments and changes in society. It also contributes to changing daily life for the better and to reinforcing the opportunities for people to control their own lives. (Carlsson 2013:46)

In her introductory text to *Medie- och informationskunnighet i nätverkssamhället*, Professor Ulla Carlsson formulates that there are two goals for successful MIL education: “maximising the opportunities and minimising the risks in digital media culture.” (Carlsson 2013:8).

### 8.3 What is media and information literacy?

Traditionally, *media literacy*, which relates to the abilities to understand and use media, has been separated from *information literacy*, which focuses on how information can be sought, processed, and used. In the UNESCO framework, they have chosen to combine these competences into media and information literacy (Carlsson 2013). There are pedagogical gains in this merger, as both areas overlap each other to a great extent. The changes in the media and information landscape that follow

293
digitisation and the Internet also make it difficult to differentiate them; much of the information we encounter on the Internet can seem to be media content but is actually information from databases or archives. The question is, to what extent the media concept as such fulfils some function on the Internet: is the information found on a personal blog, or on Facebook, essentially different from information published on a daily newspaper’s Web site or broadcast by national public service tv?

There may be differences in organisation and the intents of the poster, but the question is the extent to which the user understands this. Without developed skills in MIL, he or she probably will not do so at all. Remaining critical towards the media and information is often considered synonymous with source criticism, but MIL embodies more than that. *Medie och informationskunnighet i nätverkssamhället* picks out the following abilities as central to MIL:

**Media literacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding the role and function of the media in a democratic society.</th>
<th>Knowing what conditions are required for the media to fulfil its functions.</th>
<th>Being able to critically evaluate media content based on the functions of the media.</th>
<th>The ability to use media in order to express oneself and participate in the democratic process.</th>
<th>Using the skills required to produce one’s own media content.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Information literacy**

|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

A strengthened effort in MIL should take place during school hours if as many people as possible are to benefit from it. The ideal situation would be if all teachers had excellent instruction in MIL, but as this is not the case, external instructors need to be hired to manage MIL education for students and training for teachers. There are competent local and regional MIL initiatives around the country that, under the right economic conditions, could make exhaustive contributions.

In the newly-revised curricula for primary and secondary schools (LGR 11) and high schools (GY 11), the formulations on the elements of media in education have been given a more prominent place.
than previously. There has been criticism, however, that the curricula in this context focus entirely too strongly on traditional communicative skills, while the competences central to Internet communications have been forgotten:

[... it can be stated that the curricula now in effect – Lgr 11 and Gy 11 – if anything emphasize listening, speaking, reading and writing even harder than before, but seeing and creating are still treated unfairly, to say the least. (Adelmann 2013:59)]

It takes time to apply new curricula in practical education, and the formulations in LGR 11 and GY 11 ought to be sufficient to ensure proper MIL education for everyone – provided that they are implemented. Currently, this is not the case. A study of IT competence and IT use in schools showed recently that 31% of the students in grades 7–9 receive no instruction in source criticism on the Internet whatsoever (Skolverket 2013:61). In high schools, 22% of the students are completely without such instruction. In addition, the proportion of students who were able to learn source criticism has fallen by 8% in both groups compared to a similar study from 2009. Teachers are also looking for training in the field: 41% of primary and secondary school teachers, and 34% of high school teachers, indicate that they have a great or very great need for in-service training in source criticism (Skolverket 2013:64). Source criticism comprises much more beyond indicating where something is published. Limberg (2013) differentiates between at least four principal source-critical efforts to investigate the credibility of a source (Limber 2013:71). It is worth noting that the study from Skolverket (the Swedish National Agency for Education) referred to above only surveys the technical and source-critical skills of students and teachers. The status of the other skills included in the UNESCO definition of MIL is not dealt with in the report.

A successful investment in MIK as a preventive measure against pro-violence and anti-democratic messages must not focus just on these issues. The students would probably perceive carrying out media education that focuses on extreme messages on the Internet as ideological schooling – the state pointing out which ideologies are right and which are wrong, thereby running the risk of becoming counter-productive. A wiser strategy is a broad design where different genres can be critically analysed: the daily press, advertising, different types of television programmes, social forums on the Internet, and so on. They can even work with political propaganda – both extremist and tied to parliamentary parties – but as one type of media material among many. The students themselves can identify flawed arguments and factual bases through getting to understand how messages are constructed, what ideological purposes lie behind them and what these ideologies contain – not through adult society telling them that the message is wrong. An individual who sees the world in
black and white will not start observing it differently just because someone claims there are shades of grey. Seeing nuances is an ability the individual him- or herself must develop, and a properly implemented MIL strategy can facilitate this learning process.

An investment in MIL can strengthen students against extreme messages through giving them opportunities to develop a source-critical approach: being able to identify conflicting and incoherent arguments, understanding how propaganda is constructed, and understanding how extremists reform current events to fit their own purposes. A large part of the messages from extremist milieux consist of strongly slanted or false “facts” and news. An investment in media and information literacy in children and young people should therefore be able to strengthen their ability to see through such messages and could, in a nutshell, strengthen their resistance to extreme, pro-violence messages.

An increased investment in MIL can also bring about other effects that can strengthen democracy. As has already been established by organisations like the EU Commission and UNESCO, increased MIL results in increased opportunities for citizens to participate in the democratic process, both through their ability to understand the role of the media and various media expressions, and through themselves being able to express their opinions in various media genres. Working early on for opportunities for children to understand this information society and to also express their opinions as citizens in this society will reduce the risks of exclusion, marginalisation and – ultimately – extremism.

Alongside the democratic benefits, there are additional advantages to strengthened MIL instruction. The full title of the recommendation from the EU Commission is Commission Recommendation of 20 August 2009 on media literacy in the digital environment for a more competitive audiovisual and content industry and an inclusive knowledge society (2009/625/EC), which points towards the fact that competitiveness is seen as at least as important as the knowledge society is for everyone. In the same spirit, the UNESCO framework for teacher training has been described as:

[...] in the first place, a document for democracy, peace and mutual understanding between citizens, but increased media and information literacy in teachers and students is also significant for the labour market of the future and global competition. (Forsman 2013:77)

Increased MIL instruction is not a universal solution for stopping extremism. But it is probably one relatively resource-effective method of counteracting the rise of violent extremism which, in addition, can have many positive side effects.
A holistic approach, however, is central to the problem: one-sided efforts that only focus on ideology, or social efforts, are doomed to failure (Tackling Extremism: De-Radicalisation And Disengagement:22). In the same way, helping people who have ended up in violent extremist milieux with individual measures has proven difficult. A combination of ideological work and improvement of the individual’s personal circumstances, family relations and social bonds seems to be the most effective (Bjørgo & Horgan 2009:4). The jihadist messages here occupy a place apart, as they are nourished to a great extent by international conflict situations that are not affected by social measures in Sweden. Nonetheless, all mediated reporting on these conflicts are subject to interpretation when they are received by a Swedish audience. The extremists’ reporting on the conflicts are, in addition, strongly slanted to support their world view. Increased investment in MIL can thus be of great significance even when the basic problem lies outside a Swedish context.

For MIL to work as an effective method, however, it must be seen as something important in itself – not just as a tool for combating extreme ideas.

8.4 Proposals for measures

As a link in the Government’s Handlingsplan för att värna demokratin mot våldsbejakande extremism, the Swedish Media Council was commissioned on May 29, 2013 to “develop digital educational material aimed at increasing the media and information literacy of young people, thereby strengthening them against anti-democratic messages on the Internet and in social media that encourage violence and threats for a political or ideological goal” and to “survey which entities are active in the field of media and information literacy and inventory the pedagogical material found in the field”. (Jv2013/3289/D) The Justice Department has been kept continually informed of the discoveries this survey has provided. This reporting forms the foundation for the new commission. The Media Council sees this as two important measures, but as the commission has already effectuated, it will not be discussed further here.

The Swedish Media Council proposes six measures – two short-term proposals that can be implemented straight away, two proposals that can guarantee broader and more in-depth MIL teaching for pupils in all schools in the country in the longer term, and two proposals aimed at reinforcing knowledge about recruitment to extremist milieux and MIL as a didactic tool.
The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is tasked to administer financial support to existing MIL activities at the local and regional levels in order to show good examples. A support decision is taken by a special expert team led by the Swedish Media Council in consultation with the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs. A total of SEK 15 million, to be distributed over 3 years, should be ear-marked for this purpose.

There are various local and regional MIL initiatives around the country. These are sometimes carried out within the framework of schools, but also by charitable associations or as regional resource centres with support from municipalities and county councils. The operations with which the Swedish Media Council has been in contact are unanimous about what the main problems with teaching Media and Information Literacy are today: the needs are great both among pupils and among the teachers, who need further training to equip them to use MIL at school, but the resources are too small. In the short term, financial support to existing operations could result in both increased teacher competence and also a more widespread operation directly aimed at children.

One of the most important efforts in counteracting extremism on the Internet is developing and spreading “counter-narratives” on the Net. This can be expressed in three ways: messages that dissect extremist ideology and show the logical and factual errors or the internal contradictions; messages that satirize or in some other way undermine their credibility; and messages that offer positive alternatives (Institute for Strategic Dialogue 2011:9). For the credibility reasons discussed earlier, it is of the utmost importance that such initiatives are not carried on as centrally-run state campaigns. The already existing local activities are thus considerably better suited for spreading such counter-narratives than a large state entity. A large granter that can provide smaller sums of money to a large number of local projects has better conditions for achieving positive changes than a smaller number of centralised, well-financed projects. On the one hand, it is of little consequence if some of the small projects fail; on the other hand, the larger, rich projects find it difficult to be thought of as credible in local society (Stevens & Neumann 2009:44–45).

If properly functioning local and regional MIL entities are given increased economic support, they can disseminate their good examples to wider circles, serve as a source of inspiration for aspiring operations and disseminate knowledge of methods for MIL work. In order to enable the projects to carry out long-term planning and build up a larger operation, the support should be available for at
least 3 years. The projects granted support should also be continuously evaluated in terms of didactic methods and pedagogical results in order to enable identification and further development of particularly effective methods.

On April 25, 2013, the Swedish Media Council received a special commission from the Government to survey the various entities that work with MIL on a national, regional, and local level; to inventory what educational material exists; and what needs to be developed (Ju2013/3289/D). The agency is therefore particularly suited to lead the group of experts that can decide which operations are best served by economic support.

Proposal:

A public authority suited for the purpose is tasked to work out a strategy for coordinating the different actors working with Media and Information Literacy at the national, regional and local levels.

Just within the sphere of the agency, there are many entities within the field. Apart from the Swedish Media Council, the following authorities have operations that touch upon MIL in different ways: The Swedish National Agency for Education, the Swedish Higher Education Authority, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the National Board for Youth Affairs, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden, the Data Inspection Board, the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority, the National Criminal Investigation Department, the Swedish Film Institute, and the country’s colleges and universities. Even outside the world of government agencies there are a number of national entities: The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company, Nordicom, Surfa Lugnt, and Mediekompass. At the regional and local levels, there are many more who work with MIL – private and municipal schools, specialist culture schools, libraries and associations. Coordination between these actors is, at best, weak, and as a rule non-existent. International research in the field also emphasises the importance of coordinated efforts within the field of MIL for achieving results:

Naturally, this will not yield immediate results; in the long run, however, there are few measures more important to undermining the attractive power of extremist messages, which is why a comprehensive strategy with coordinated efforts from everyone concerned is important. (Stevens & Neumann 2009:40)
Coordination of the various MIL actors could improve the results of the measures and reduce costs, as some of the activities currently overlap each other. As the Swedish Media Council has already been tasked to map and carry out an inventory of these operations, the Council is well suited to carry out the coordination task.

**Proposal:**

The Swedish National Agency for Education should be tasked with producing support material for the LGR 11 and GY 11 curricula, providing examples for how teachers can teach MIL at the elementary school and upper secondary school levels.

As stated earlier, almost one in every three lower secondary school pupils does not receive any teaching in source criticism, and four out of ten teachers feel a need for competency development in this area. The Agency is currently working to produce commentary material for the parts of the knowledge requirements for Year 6 in various subjects (Swedish, Biology, History, Religion) that concern pupils’ ability to assess the usefulness of sources. There are also plans to produce support material based on the commentary material to provide examples for teachers of how to teach in order to support the development of pupils’ ability to evaluate sources and information critically. The production of such material is of crucial significance for implementing the formulations of the curriculum on the role of the media in education. As of this writing, material of this kind is planned only for grade 6. The Swedish National Agency for Education’s report, *It-användning och It-kompetens i skolan* (IT Use and IT Skills in School) argues that both students and teachers have a great need regarding education in source criticism. Given this, the Agency should be tasked with producing corresponding material for all grades in elementary and secondary school, and for high school.

**Proposal:**

Media and Information Literacy should be an obligatory part of teacher training. An inquiry should be set up with the task of proposing new wordings in the Higher Education Ordinance aimed at making MIL obligatory in the training of elementary and upper secondary school teachers.
In order for pupils to receive broad-based MIL teaching, teachers who have learnt how to teach the subject are needed. The Higher Education Ordinance stipulates what must be included in the various courses at the country’s universities and higher education colleges. There is a sentence in the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance that can be interpreted as saying that MIL is something that should be found in teacher training. The students, after having gone through the instruction, should:

 [...] display the ability to safely and critically use digital tools in pedagogical activities and to observe the significance of the role of different media and digital milieux for this. (Högskoleförordningen 1993:100 Appendix 2)

This formulation concerns the role that digital tools, media, and digital milieux play in pedagogical activity on the whole. It is not the intent here that a trained teacher be able to educate about media and digital tools, but that he or she is to use them in education, regardless of the subject.

The Higher Education Ordinance thus indicates the minimum requirements for teacher training. The country’s teacher training programmes formulate their own syllabi, which vary from institution to institution. Looking through them with regard to the element of training in media and information literacy is impossible in this report. A search on the Studentum education portal shows that specialist teacher training is carried on at nineteen different institutions in the country. The elements of MIL in teacher training seem, however, to vary greatly from university to university. To ensure that the country’s newly qualified teachers have full competency in the subject, we propose that an inquiry be set up with the task of proposing new wordings in the Higher Education Ordinance aimed at making MIL obligatory in the training of elementary and upper secondary school teachers.

**Proposal:**

The Government allocates funds for research (for example, through the Swedish Research Council) into how pro-violence and anti-democratic messages on the Internet are received and interpreted by young persons. In order to further develop methods for preventing violent extremism, systematic reception research into how the audience for the messages receives them is needed.
This study only investigates the presence of messages and what these messages look like. The issue of how children, young persons and adults interpret the messages cannot be stated based on this survey. Proper international research into the area is also lacking. Deepening our understanding of recruitment to violent extremist milieux, and further improving the measures against this, requires more research. There are many questions that are still unanswered:

How common is it that people come into contact with extremist, pro-violence messages? Through which channels do they encounter these messages: Facebook? Twitter? YouTube? Discussion forums? The Web sites of the extreme milieux?

Do people seek out the messages themselves or are they led there through links on forums that are not absolutely extreme? How do the recipients interpret the messages? Do they assimilate entire ideologies, or are they attracted by specific parts of them? Which parts? Which parts do they find more difficult to come to terms with? Are there other, non-ideological, parts of the milieux that attract them? If they are not attracted by the messages – on what grounds does repudiation take place? Is it a normative repudiation, or do they see flaws in the arguments?

Investigating what significance the recipients attach to messages on the Internet compared with other mediated messages and non-mediated social contacts is important in this context.

These issues cannot be answered unless comprehensive reception studies are carried out, focusing on the recipients of the messages instead of the messages themselves. Such studies are more labour-intensive and costly than the type of qualitative analysis that has formed the basis for this report. In an ideal situation, a major quantitative questionnaire study could be combined with qualitative in-depth interviews.

**Proposal:**

The government should set up a resource centre for Media and Information Literacy, with a didactic aim.

Good teaching in MIL must be based on good research, irrespective of whether it concerns teaching at the elementary, upper secondary or higher education level. There are good examples both within pedagogic research and in media and communication science aimed at MIL, but no established
research centre in Sweden. In the long term, it is extremely important to set up a stable research environment that can be used as the basis for pedagogic development in the MIL area. It is also extremely important that such a research environment has the tasks and resources to disseminate the research findings to practitioners in the area. A possible model for the creation of such an environment is the national resource centres for Mathematics, Natural Science and Technology supported by the Swedish National Agency for Education. These centres are subject-specific for Technology, Biology and Biotechnology, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics, and are linked to the universities in the country. Their task is to support teachers and work for the development of education and pedagogy within each subject.

Even if MIL is not a subject by itself, and nor should it be, a national resource centre would be of great importance, both for disseminating research-based pedagogic models for teaching and to create an environment that stimulates further research in the area.

Increased investment in MIL will do as little as other individual measures to suppress the existence of pro-violence and anti-democratic extremism. Such an investment would, however, provide young persons with the cognitive abilities that make it possible to see through the angled propaganda messages and the distorted information that are central elements of the extremists’ recruitment strategies. An important success factor for this work is that it aims to reinforce the individual’s ability to engage in critical thinking and analysis. To instead describe certain views – however extreme and repugnant one may think they are – as wrong has shown itself to be directly counter-productive from an extremism prevention point of view.

Giving young persons the tools to form their own, well-informed opinion is not just a way of strengthening their resilience against pro-violence extremism. It is also a way of strengthening them in their roles as active members of the democratic process.


Gable, Gerry & Paul Jackson (2011) Lone wolves: myth or reality? Searchlight. UK.


Vinthagen, Stellan (1996) "Vad har vi att lära av militanta veganer och DBF?" *Syndikalisten* 1–2 1996.


Zelin, Aaron Y (2012a) “al-Manarah al-Bayḍā’ Foundation for Media Production Presents a New Video Message from Jabhat al-Nuṣrah: ‘Fulfillment of the Vow #1’”. *Jihadology.net*. http://jihadology.net/2012/05/22/al-manarah-al-bay%e1%b8%8da-foundation-for-media-production-presents-a-new-video-message-from-jabhat-al-nu%e1%b9%a3rah-fulfillment-of-the-vow-1/


Övriga källor

FreeWebsiteReport (www.freeWeb sitereport.org) (retrieved 20 Feb 2013)
Stormfront. White Nationalist Forum (http://www.stormfront.org/forum/) (retrieved 03 Sep 2012)

Materialförteckning, högerextrema

Svenska Motståndsrörelsen
http://www.nordfront.se/
http://www.youtube.com/user/MotstandsMedia
https://twitter.com/Nordfront

Nordiska Nationalsocialister
http://www.nordiskanationalsocialister.com/
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nordiska-nationalsocialister-NNS/321067244621708

Svenskarnas Parti
http://www.svenskarnasparti.se
http://www.realisten.se/
https://www.facebook.com/SvenskarnasParti
https://www.facebook.com/tidningenframat
http://www.youtube.com/user/Realistenfilm/
http://www.arminius.se/
https://twitter.com/Folkfronten

Förbundet Nationell Ungdom
https://facebook.com/nationellungdom
http://www.youtube.com/user/Forbundetmedia/
https://twitter.com/NationellUngdom

Nordisk Ungdom
http://nordiskungdom.se/
http://www.youtube.com/user/Etnopluralist
https://www.facebook.com/nordicyouth
https://twitter.com/NordiskUngdom
Icke-organisationsskutna platser
http://www.arktos.com/
http://midgaardshop.com/
http://www.nationell.nu/
http://www.nordisk.nu/
http://www.sniper-records.net

Materialförteckning, vänsterextrema

AFA
http://www.antifa.se
http://www.facebook.com/pages/AFA/271829282938776

Djurens befrielsefront
http://www.djurensbefrielsefront.com

Revolutionära fronten
http://www.revfront.org
http://www.youtube.com/user/revfrontmedia
http://www.youtube.com/user/revfrontmedia2

Oberoende platser
http://www.socialism.nu
http://www.motkraft.net
http://www.yelah.net

Övriga källor
http://www.bokcafeet.se
http://www.radikaldistro.com
http://www.wapiti.se
http://www.15fot.net
http://www.flashback.org
http://www.directaction.info

317
Materialförteckning, jihadister

http://www.darulhadith.com
http://muslim.se
http://fatwa.se
http://sanningenomshiism.wordpress.com
http://sanningen.bloggspace.se
http://islam-tawhid.se