

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE STUDIES

VANCOUVER

ACCELERATIONISM THEORY

BRIEFING NOTE

April 12, 2021

Disclaimer:

This Briefing Note contains summaries of open sources and does not represent the views of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies.

Title: Accelerationsim Theory

Date: 12/04/2021

Disclaimer: This briefing note contains summaries of open sources and does not represent the views of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

This briefing note examines accelerationism theory and its connection to several white nationalist groups that may be considered Violent Transnational Social Movements (VTSM), and the potential threats that accelerationism poses to national security and political stability. Since the mid-2010s, some members of the far-right and white nationalist movements have reportedly embraced and promoted accelerationism as a key component of their ideology using online forums (Anti-Defamation League, 2019; Beauchamp, 2019). This briefing note also examines the reported connections between accelerationism and acts of soft and kinetic violence committed against minorities, immigrant communities, Jewish communities, and governments (Beauchamp, 2019; Dearden, 2020; Waugh, 2019).

THE SECURITY PROBLEM

Several white nationalist groups that embrace accelerationism emerged in the late 2010s including Atomwaffen Division and The Base. Believers in accelerationism have recently been linked to several instances of soft and kinetic violence, which allegedly aim to de-stabilise existing social structures (Beauchamp, 2019; Dearden, 2020; Waugh, 2019). The continued online promotion of accelerationism poses a serious potential threat to minorities, immigrant communities, Jewish communities, and governments (Beauchamp, 2019). Accelerationists are often radicalised through easily accessible internet sources and encrypted chat rooms. Believers allegedly often promote the use of 'lone wolf' attacks by individuals who are self-radicalized and self-actualized around right-wing extremist ideologies, possibly making it increasingly difficult for law enforcement to detect and predict future attacks (Gertenstein-Ross et al., 2019; Kelshall, 2021). The continued promotion of accelerationism as an ideology and the alleged connection between accelerationism and acts of soft and kinetic violence is a potential threat to public safety.

BACKGROUND AND KEY FACTS

Accelerationism is the belief that Western governments are potentially irreparably corrupt and threaten the future of the white race (Beauchamp, 2019; Gertstein-Ross et al., 2019). They propose that the only solution is to bring about societal collapse and an ensuing race war which will result in the establishment of a white ethnostate (Beauchamp, 2019; Gertstein-Ross et al., 2019). Accelerationist beliefs are drawn from James Mason's *Siege* newsletter, which was published from 1980 to 1986 (Hatewatch Staff, 2018). Mason's newsletter, which drew upon the beliefs of Adolf Hitler, Charles Manson, and William Luther Pierce, advocated for a white revolution while prescribing the establishment of leaderless organisations distributed in small cells to carry out acts of violence (Gertenstein-Ross et al., 2019; Hatewatch Staff, 2018). Additionally, accelerationists often reference attackers who committed mass murder such as Timothy McVeigh (Oklahoma City bombing) and Anders Breivik (2011 Norway attacks) as saints, as well as calling fellow white supremacists who have been imprisoned "prisoners of war". (Anti-Defamation League, 2020; The American Futurist, n.d.b).

Accelerationist groups have appeared in multiple Western countries, and accelerationism has allegedly been associated with several instances of soft and kinetic violence (Anti-Defamation League, 2019; Beauchamp, 2019).

Accelerationist groups:

- Atomwaffen Division (AWD) - Dissolved
- The Base
- Order of Nine Angles (O9A)
- Feuerkrieg Division (FKD)
- The Boogaloo Boys
- National Socialist Order (NSO)

Accelerationist violence:

- In October 2017, members of the Texas chapter of the accelerationist AWD participated in a White Lives Matter protest, which may be considered an act of soft violence, outside the office of the Anti-Defamation League (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.).
- On January 9, 2018, the body of Blaze Berstein, a 19-year old gay Jewish man, was found in Orange County, California after he was murdered by Samuel Woodward, reportedly a prominent member of AWD in California (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.).
- On October 27, 2018, Robert Bowers attacked the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh with an assault rifle, killing 11 people and wounding several others after being in online contact with accelerationists (Parker, 2020).

- On March 15, 2019, Brenton Tarrant shot and killed 51 people at two mosques in New Zealand. The manifesto he wrote before his attack made direct references to accelerationist ideas (Waugh, 2019).
- On August 3, 2019, Patrick Crusius opened fire with an assault rifle at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, killing 23 people and wounding 23 others. His alleged targets were hispanic immigrants to the United States, and his manifesto mentioned Brenton Tarrant by name ten times (Wegener, 2020).
- In January 2020, an unnamed 17-year old in the United Kingdom was sentenced to 6 years and 8 months in prison for plotting to firebomb several synagogues. His manifesto made direct references to accelerationist ideas and the race war (Dearden, 2020).
- In January 2020, Patrik Mathews, a combat engineer in the Canadian Army Reserve; Brain Lemy, 33, a former cavalry scout in the US Army; and teenager William Bilbrough, alleged to be members of The Base, were arrested on federal gun charges and for planning to incite violence at a gun-rights rally in Virginia (Harte, 2020).
- On February 10, 2020, Conor Climo, allegedly linked to the FKD, plead guilty to weapons charges in Nevada and was also accused of making threats of violence towards Jews and members of the LGBTQ community (U.S. Attorney's Office District of Nevada, 2020)
- On June 16, 2020, Steven Carillo, an alleged member of the Boogaloo Boys, was charged with murdering one police officer and wounding two others outside a U.S. courthouse in Oakland (Office of Public Affairs, 2020).
- In June 2020, US Army Private Ethan Phelan Melzer, 22, was charged with plotting in an encrypted chat room to ambush and murder members of his own unit where he was stationed in Europe with alleged members of O9A (Williams et al., 2020).
- On August 19, 2020, Private Jarrett William Smith, 24, was convicted in Kansas for distributing information about how to construct a bomb and napalm on social media, and was allegedly associated with FKD (Associated Press, 2020)
- On September 18, 2020, Guilherme Von Neutegem, a reported follower of O9A, was charged with murder of a Muslim man in Toronto (CBC, 2020; Lamoureux, 2020)
- On October 23, 2020, Ivan Harris Hunter, an alleged member of the Boogaloo Boys, was arrested for allegedly inciting a riot in Minneapolis during a Black Lives Matter protest over the death of George Floyd (Campbell, 2020).
- On January 6, 2021, members of the Boogaloo Boys reportedly participated in the violent Capitol Hill insurrection in the United States (Somos, 2021).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS/ CHARACTERISTICS OF A VIOLENT TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT (VTSM)

It has been reported that numerous members of accelerationist groups are former and current members of the military and have received military weapons training (Anti-Defamation League, 2019; Beauchamp, 2019; Harte, 2020). Accelerationist groups such as The Base have reportedly held military-style training camps to allegedly provide other right wing extremists with weapons and tactics training - potentially increasing the capability for violence of these individuals (Lamoureux & Makuch, 2019; Wilson, 2020).

Accelerationism encourages the implementation of leaderless structures, whose adherents are typically self-radicalized on the internet through various right-wing ideologies, which has possibly lead to attacks in multiple Western countries by small cells of believers and individuals (Gartenstein-Ross et al., 2020; Beauchamp, 2019; Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.; Anti-Defamation League, 2020). These tactics and strategies are reportedly partially drawn from Islamic terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and Isis - in fact, “The Base” shares the same meaning in English as al-Qaeda (Jones et al., 2020). The movement’s main ideological inspiration, James Mason, also calls for this strategy of small cells of extremists to implement accelerationism throughout *Siege* (Hatewatch Staff, 2018). Additionally, the wide range of beliefs incorporated into the accelerationist movement including anti-Jewish, anti-immigration, anti-Muslim, and anti-government sentiments demonstrate the segmentary nature of the movement (Parker, 2020; Wegener, 2020; Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.). The alleged polycentric, reticulate, segmentary, and transnational structure of accelerationist groups means that they may be considered to be a VTSM (Kelshall, 2019).

Accelerationist groups have proven to be resilient to the efforts of governments and law enforcement to arrest and prosecute their members which poses a concern to law enforcement in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and other Western nations. For example, months after five prominent members of the AWD were arrested by the FBI in 2020, a new group called the National Socialist Order was formed by former members of the AWD espousing the same ideology (Purdue, 2020). These different groups are often closely associated with one another through the use of the same encrypted platforms for communication, which can make it difficult for law enforcement to access their communications (The American Futurist, n.d.a; Gais & Squire, 2021). Additionally, accelerationism poses a special problem to law enforcement because their alleged goal of facilitating a race war through the use of violence potentially makes any target that they feel will help them move towards this goal liable to attack (Anti-Defamation League, 2019; Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.). This may include government officials, the Jewish community, minority groups, and immigrant groups (Anti-Defamation League, 2019; Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.),

WHAT IS NOT KNOWN

The precise number of believers in accelerationism is unknown as well as the extent to which accelerationist beliefs have influenced many right-wing groups that are not explicitly accelerationist.

NEXT STEPS

- Further research should be conducted to examine the impact that accelerationism has had on other extremist groups that are not explicitly accelerationist.
- Further research should be conducted to examine possible connections between so called “lone wolf” attacks and accelerationism.
- Further research and surveillance should be conducted to identify those who may be radicalised to accelerationism through the internet.

CASIS Vancouver specializes in examining Violent Transnational Social Movements and the different ideologies that overlap an array of ideological segments. VTSM theory suggests that violent extremists are socially radicalized self-actualized individuals who arguably are radicalized through a societal normalization of extremist language and sentiments (Kelshall, 2021. Whereby self actualised actors want to impose legitimacy, dominance, authority, and supremacy over other identity groups using soft and kinetic violence as their main tools (Kelshall, 2021).

REFERENCES

The American Futurist. (n.d.a). *Follow the American futurist on Gab*. https://www.americanfuturist.xyz/2021/03/28/follow-the-american-futurist-on-gab-2/

The American Futurist. (n.d.b). *P.O.W. support*. https://www.americanfuturist.xyz/p-o-w-support/

Anti-Defamation League. (2019, April 16). White supremacists embrace "Accelerationism". https://www.adl.org/blog/white-supremacists-embrace-accelerationism

Anti-Defamation League. (2020, April 19). *Twenty-five years later, Oklahoma city bombing inspires a new generation of extremists.* https://www.adl.org/blog/twenty-five-years-later-oklahoma-city-bombing-inspires-a-new-generation-of-extremists

Associated Press. (2020, August 20). *Ex-soldier in Kansas with neo-Nazi links sentenced to 2½ years in bomb plot*. Los Angeles Times. https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-08-20/satanist-ex-soldier-sentenced-to-2-1-2-years-in-bomb-plot

Beauchamp, Z. (2019, November 18). *Accelerationism: The obscure idea inspiring white supremacist killers around the world.* Vox. https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/11/11/20882005/accelerationism-white-supremacy-christchurch

CBC. (2020, September 18). *Man charged in stabbing death of Etobicoke mosque caretaker*. CBC. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/man-charged-death-mosque-caretaker-1.5730329

Campbel, J. (2020, October 24). *Suspected Boogaloo Bois member arrested and charged with rioting*. CNN. https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/23/us/boogaloo-bois-arrest/index.html

Dearden, L. (2020, January 7). *Teenage neo-Nazi who planned terror attacks on synagogues as part of 'race war' jailed*. The Independent. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/synagogue-attack-durham-neo-nazi-teenager-jailed-terror-antisemitism-a9273696.html

Gais, H., & Squire, M. (2021, February 16). *How an encrypted messaging platform is changing extremist movements*. Southern Poverty Law Center. https://www.splcenter.org/news/2021/02/16/how-encrypted-messaging-platform-changing-extremist-movements

Gartenstein-Ross, D., Hodgson, S., & Clarke, C. (2020, April 20). *The growing threat posed by accelerationism and accelerationist groups worldwide*. Foreign Policy Research Institute. https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/04/the-growing-threat-posed-by-accelerationism-and-accelerationist-groups-worldwide/

Harte, J. (2020, January 16). *Alleged neo-Nazis caught with assault rifle charged ahead of Virginia gun rally*. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-guns-rally/alleged-neo-nazis-caught-with-assault-rifle-charged-ahead-of-virginia-gun-rally-idUSKBN1ZF2B3

Hatewatch Staff. (2018, February 22). *Atomwaffen and the SIEGE parallax: How one neo-Nazi's life's work is fueling a younger generation*. Southern Poverty Law Center. https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/02/22/atomwaffen-and-siege-parallax-how-one-neo-nazi%E2%80%99s-life%E2%80%99s-work-fueling-younger-generation

Jones, S.; Doxsee, C., & Harrington, N. (2020, June 17). *The escalating terrorism problem in the United States*. Center for Strategic & International Studies. https://www.csis.org/analysis/escalating-terrorism-problem-united-states

Kelshall, C. M. (2019). Violent transnational social movements and their impact on contemporary social conflict. *The Journal of Intelligence, Conflict, and Warfare, 1(3), 1-17*. https://doi.org/10.21810/jicw.v1i3.840.

Kelshall, C. (2021). Soft violence, social radicalisation, and violent transnational social movements (VTSMs*). The Journal of Intelligence, Conflict, and Warfare, 3(3), 146–153*. https://doi.org/10.21810/jicw.v3i3.2800

Lamoureux, M., & Makuch, B. (2019, August 16*). Militant neo-Nazi group actively recruiting ahead of alleged training camp*. Vice. https://www.vice.com/en/article/bjwx55/militant-neo-nazi-group-actively-recruiting-ahead-of-alleged-training-camp

Lamoureux, M. (2020, September 19). *'Random' murder of Muslim man linked to 'neo-*

Nazi death cult': report. VICE. https://www.vice.com/en/article/k7qvny/random-murder-of-muslim-man-linked-to-neo-nazi-death-cult-report

Miller, C. (2020, June 23). *'There is no political solution': accelerationism in the White Power movement*. Southern Poverty Law Center. https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/06/23/there-no-political-solution-accelerationism-white-power-movement

Office of Public Affairs. (2020, June 16). *Two defendants charged with murder and aiding and abetting in slaying of federal protective service officer at Oakland courthouse building*. US Department of Justice. https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/two-defendants-charged-murder-and-aiding-and-abetting-slaying-federal-protective-service

Parker, J., (2020, February 4). *Accelerationism in America: Threat perceptions*. Global Network on Extremism & Technology. https://gnet-research.org/2020/02/04/accelerationism-in-america-threat-perceptions/

Purdue, S. (2020, October 29). *The new face of terror in the US. Open Democracy*. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/new-face-terror-us/

Somos, C. (2021, January 8). *These are some of the extremist groups responsible for the violence on Capitol Hill*. CTV News. https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/these-are-some-of-the-extremist-groups-responsible-for-the-violence-on-capitol-hill-1.5259142

Southern Poverty Law Center. (n.d.). *Atomwaffen Division*. https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/atomwaffen-division

U.S. Attorney's Office District of Nevada. (2020, February 10). *Las Vegas man pleads guilty to possession of bomb-making components*. U.S. Department of Justice. https://www.justice.gov/usao-nv/pr/las-vegas-man-pleads-guilty-possession-bomb-making-components

Waugh, R. (2019, March 18). What is 'Accelerationism', the belief followed by New Zealand terror attacker? *Metro*. https://metro.co.uk/2019/03/18/accelerationism-belief-followed-new-zealand-terror-attacker-8930673/

Wegener, F. (2020, March 16). *The globalisation of right-wing copycat attacks*. Global

Network on Extremism & Technology. https://gnet-research.org/2020/03/16/the-globalisation-of-right-wing-copycat-attacks/

Williams, P., Dienst, J., & Kube, C. (2020, June 22). *Army soldier charged with giving classified info to neo-Nazi group*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/military/army-soldier-charged-giving-classified-info-neo-nazi-group-n1231766

Wilson, J. (2020, January 24). Revealed: The true identity of the leader of an American neo-Nazi terror group. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/23/revealed-the-true-identity-of-the-leader-of-americas-neo-nazi-terror-group