

METHODS FOR MAPPING FAR RIGHT VIOLENCE

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Introduction

Far right ideology is often associated with violence in the sense that (extreme versions of) it motivates and justifies acts of violence (see e.g. Wilkinson, 1995; Taylor et al., 2013; Weinberg and Assoudeh, 2018). Indeed, several recent incidences reminds us that far right violence is far from a historically distant phenomenon in contemporary (Western) Europe. Only in 2016 were there at least seven deadly events whose target selection seems to have been determined by far right beliefs.¹ One high-profile event was the street murder of British Member of Parliament Jo Cox, committed by Thomas Mair, a 52-year-old man with links to Britain First who bought material from the American national socialist group National Alliance (The Guardian, 2016). Before repeatedly stabbing and shooting Cox – a politician well known for her pro-immigration viewpoints – Mair shouted: “this is for Britain. Britain will always come first”. Another deadly event, which got significantly less press coverage, occurred in the small Italian town of Fermo. A man associated with the Italian far right used a traffic pole to beat a Nigerian migrant – Emmanuel Chidi Namdi – who tried to defend his wife from racial abuse. Chidi Namdi died a few days later from the injuries caused by the attack. The Nigerian couple were reportedly escaping the terror of Boko Haram (BBC News, 2016).

These events suggest that far right violence still exists in contemporary liberal democracies. However, we know surprisingly little about its prevalence, patterns and perpetrators. Is far right violence increasing or decreasing? Should we interpret seven deadly attacks in 2016 as a high or low number? Are some countries experiencing more violence than others? Are perpetrators like Thomas Mair typical of the far right? Who are the main victims of far right violence – politicians as in the case of Cox, or immigrants as in the case of Chidi Namdi? Existing events datasets and chronologies are to a greater or lesser degree unable to answer such important questions due to a number of methodological shortcomings.

The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, and most importantly, we review existing datasets on far right violence showing that they largely fail to include all relevant incidents and exclude all irrelevant incidents. More specifically, the datasets seem to suffer from one or several methodological pitfalls related to (1) availability, (2) representativity, (3) measurement validity, (4) replicability, and (5) comparability. Second, we propose and

evaluate three strategies to remedy some of the methodological shortcomings and improve the quality of existing data, including crowdsourcing, international standardized police reporting, and victimization surveys. The combination of these three strategies will enable scholars to provide empirically grounded and theoretically sophisticated answers to pressing questions about the nature of far right violence.

Before delving into these shortcomings and strategies, however, we will first explain precisely what we mean by far right violence and how it relates to different but similar concepts such as terrorism and hate crime.

Concepts and definitions

While ‘far right’ remains a scholarly contested concept, there is a growing consensus in the literature (see e.g. Carter 2018). In line with this consensus, we define ‘far right’ as the combination of anti-egalitarianism (Bobbio, 1996), nativism (Mudde, 2007) and authoritarianism (Stenner, 2005). These ideological constructs – and beliefs that are strongly associated with them, such as racism and conspiratorial thinking (see Mudde 1996; Fennema 1997) – produce a set of political and social groups that are considered to be enemies. Most notably, but not exclusively, this includes immigrants, minorities, and left-wing politicians. The justification for a rather *broad* definition of ‘far right’ – in which we include not only acts motivated by coherent far right ideology, but also those committed due to for example racist beliefs – is simply the major challenge of distinguishing the two in practice. In most cases, it would be very difficult to determine whether the perpetrator subscribe to a coherent ideology.

Violence is probably less contested than ‘far right’, yet scholars do disagree whether violence is only physical acts or if one should also speak of symbolic forms for violence. In this chapter, we refer to violence exclusively as the intentional use of *physical* force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm. This does not mean that we consider threats, hate speech, or symbolic attacks against material targets as irrelevant or trivial. However, the justification for a rather *narrow* definition of violence is that the threshold for committing physical attacks against other human beings is considerably higher than for making threats or hateful remarks. By implication, such physical attacks require different explanations, and they should therefore be treated as an analytically distinct phenomenon.

All violent perpetrators are evidently not terrorists. One authoritative definition of terrorism argues that terrorists deliberately use or threaten violence to trigger far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target (Hoffman, 2006: 40). However, in the case of far right terrorists, such deliberate use of violence can be hard to document because far right perpetrators rarely issue demands or claim responsibility for the attacks they carry out. Most attacks are never claimed or explained, but they generally involve demonstrating hostility towards and installing fear in some target group represented by the victim. Thus, although specific demands may be lacking, these attacks do contain a clear political message about the target group being unwanted. As such, the target selection may be seen as a political message in and of itself, and the larger target group may be seen as the primary audience to be influenced by the attack. One could therefore consider an attack as far right terrorism if it was premeditated, and if the victim was targeted primarily because he or she belongs to a group predefined as an enemy or as unwanted by the far right. By contrast, far right violence does not require premeditation, and includes spontaneous attacks against perceived enemies or people regarded as unwanted by the far right

The types of actors involved in far right violence may thus range from strongly organized elite-sponsored groups, such as *l'Organisation de l'Armée Secrete* in France or *Ordine Nero* in Italy, via more loosely organized subcultural groups such as *Combat 18* in the UK or *Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund* in Germany, to unorganized groups and individuals involved in less premeditated forms of violence that to some extent overlaps with violent hate crime (Ravndal, 2015).

However, far right violence differs from hate crime in at least three important respects. First, not all hate crimes are motivated by far right beliefs. For example, Muslim fundamentalists seem to be responsible for a significant amount of anti-Semitic violence in contemporary Western Europe (Enstad, 2017). Second, hate crimes are not restricted to physical violence, but include also [bullying](#), [harassment](#), [verbal abuse](#) or [insults](#). Third, violent attacks against left-wing politicians, government officials or law enforcement agents are normally not considered acts of hate crime since the victim is targeted due to political or professional rather than social or ethnic/racial belonging. In sum, this means that while most far right violence can be subsumed under the broader concept of hate crime, some acts of far right

violence – that is, those that are directed towards *political* opponents and state representatives – would not, which means that the two concepts are only partially overlapping.

Five barriers to mapping far right violence²

If the subject of inquiry is far right violence, there are several existing databases and chronologies where relevant information might be available. This includes, most notably, a number of cross-national terrorism databases developed by scholars (e.g. Global Terrorism Database and Terrorism in Western Europe: Events Data (TWEED)) or supranational agencies (Europol's annual EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT)). It also includes several within-country chronologies on far right violent incidents (Koehler, 2014), national hate crime statistics and reports from anti-racist organizations (e.g. EXPO in Sweden and Southern Poverty Law Center in the US). As discussed in the following section, however, existing data collected by scholars, agencies and organizations commonly suffer from one or several methodological pitfalls.

Availability

A first problem concerns *availability*, i.e. the simple yet surprising fact that it is difficult to come across systematic data on far right violence. Besides a general lack of documentation, existing terrorism datasets seem to suffer from one of two shortcomings: either they do not include far right violence as a separate category, or they are outdated.

For example, larger and well-known terrorism databases, such as the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and the RAND Worldwide Database of Terrorism Incidents (RDWTI), do not code for the political profile of the perpetrators. This lack of perpetrator coding makes it hard to distinguish far right attacks from others. And even if a handful of relevant events can be found using relevant search queries, these databases also suffer from problems of representativity (haphazard registration) and replicability (missing source references).

Among the top 20 terrorism databases reviewed by Routledge's *Handbook of Terrorism Research*, only four databases allow isolating right-wing attacks in Western Europe from other attacks. Two of these – the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS) and the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (TKB) – recently became unavailable, leaving us with Terrorism in

Western Europe: Events Data (TWEED), and Europol's annual EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT).

While TE-SAT suffers from major underreporting (see below), the 648 far right terrorist attacks registered by TWEED are certainly useful for identifying major trends and key actors in post-WWII Western Europe. However, TWEED only covers the period 1950-2004, and is less helpful for capturing recent developments. Similarly, the Domestic Terrorism Victims Dataset (DTV – not included in the Routledge handbook), includes two relevant perpetrator categories ("Extreme-right" and "Neo-nazi"), but is limited to the period from 1965 to 2005 (De la Calle & Sanchez-Cuenca, 2011).

National hate crime statistics based on police reporting suffer from similar problems. Notably, many countries, e.g. the UK and Finland, do not distinguish racist hate crimes (some of which are committed between minority groups) from crimes committed by far right activists. Swedish hate crime statistics used to include far right violence, but this category has been left out since 2013.³ In the Danish security service's (PET) reports on extremist hate crime, left- and right-wing crimes were lumped together in the same category. However, political violence has been left out entirely in the new hate crimes reports produced by the Danish police (rather than PET).⁴ Finally, some West European countries such as Greece, Italy, and Spain, do not produce regular reports on hate crime or political violence at all.

Representativity

Our second theme is *representativity*, i.e. the extent to which existing datasets that do include far right violence correctly mirror the actual universe of far right violence. Europol's often-cited Terrorism Situation and Trend (TE-SAT) reports – based on annual accounts of terrorist events from EU member states – clearly fail to include many relevant events. Between 2006 (when Europol started reporting terrorist events systematically) and 2015, we find only nine far right events (four attacks, five plots) of which only two happened in Western Europe. By comparison, the Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence (RTV) dataset – recently developed to remedy some of the problems discussed in this chapter – registered 265 events during the same period in Western Europe, including 67 deadly events resulting in 126 deaths. Among these 265 events, 189 were premediated attacks, and in 46 of these premediated attacks, the perpetrator(s) used explosives or firearms.⁵ The great disparity

between TE-SAT and RTV is likely caused by the fact that TE-SAT mainly reports events that have been tried legally as a terrorist act, while RTV cover all violent events (of a certain severity) whose target selection was determined by far right beliefs.

Another problem with TE-SAT is that they only cover events from the previous year and do not backlog. As a result, major events discovered more than one year after they occurred, such as the NSU-murders, are not covered. Despite these shortcomings, however, TE-SAT reports extensively on other forms of terrorism. For example, Europol registered 2,111 “ethno-nationalist and separatist” terrorist events between 2006 and 2015. The discrepancy between far right and ethno-separatist events may reflect a true yet probably smaller difference in attack frequencies. However, it likely also reflects EU member states’ interest in reporting certain types of terrorism and not others. Many far right attacks go under these governments’ radars, either because they are registered as hate crimes rather than as terrorism, or because they are never registered at all.

A similar but smaller problem pertains to the TWEED and DTV datasets. TWEED relies entirely on a single news source: Keesing’s Record of World Events (Engene, 2007). While a single source ensures (some kind of) data consistency, it also means that many events remain unreported. Considering that only the most spectacular events get media coverage, many events never made it to the news headlines Keesing’s daily news digest relies upon. Moreover, the extent to which journalists are willing and capable of reporting about far right violence likely vary across countries and periods. By contrast, the DTV dataset uses more than one single source. However, by excluding non-lethal events and terrorist plots, DTV misses many relevant but non-deadly events.

National hate crime statistics also suffer from problems of underreporting. In fact, we may speak of a double underreporting: first, there are victims of hate crimes who decide not to report the incidents to the police and, second, there are police officers who fail to recognize violent acts as motivated by far right beliefs. The first problem is mentioned by Lambert (2013, p. 37) in his study of anti-Muslim violence in the UK. The second problem might be due to either unawareness or, as in known cases from Greece, politically motivated unwillingness. For example, there are extensive reports about police abuse of migrants in Greece, and many therefore fear reporting violent attacks to the police (Sunderland et al.,

2012). In both cases, official police statistics end up misrepresenting the actual levels of far right motivated hate crime in society.

Measurement validity

A third problem concerns *measurement validity*, i.e. whether existing datasets actually measure far right violence or something else. A recurrent problem, especially within events chronologies compiled by anti-racist activists, is that they include events that may have been committed by far right activists, but whose targeting was not political but personal. For example, the Swedish anti-racist organization Expo has created a fact sheet listing “persons killed by people with a background from the white power movement”, suggesting a causal connection between the perpetrator’s ideological background and their violent behaviour. However, several of the events included in the list are clearly personal and not political, such as when a 32-year-old man killed his girlfriend and stepdaughter, or when one 19-year-old killed his own nationalist friend at a party (Expo, 2008). By applying overly lax inclusion criteria, these actors may therefore end up exaggerating or distorting the far right threat.

The problem of including irrelevant events is also the case with supposedly more politically neutral statistics. For example, a re-examination of the events listed in the DTV dataset shows that some events should not have been included, either because the target selection was not based on far right beliefs, or because their circumstances remain extremely vague (Ravndal, 2016, p. 4).

Replicability

Our fourth theme is *replicability*, i.e. whether existing datasets include source information enabling other scholars to re-examine the information used to code each event. Without such information, it is impossible to validate the interpretation and classification of the events included in a dataset. For example, in the case of TWEED, the dataset is available online as an SPSS file, but the information used to code each event is unavailable.

Some datasets do include source overviews, but do not explicitly link particular sources to particular events. For example, in his extensive chronology of terrorist events in America, Hewitt presents the main sources used in the study, but does not include source references in the actual events chronology (Hewitt, 2005). A more general problem is that reliable

sources on far right violence are rare. For example, the coding book of the DTV dataset explicitly states that “it was much more difficult to find reliable information about the perpetrators of [extreme right and neo-Nazi] killings” and that “the information we have obtained about these killings is, in general, of worse quality than the one on nationalist and leftwing [sic] terrorism.”

It is even more difficult to replicate chronologies developed by anti-racist organizations. Notwithstanding the detailed information provided by some of these chronologies, most events cannot be corroborated by external sources. For example, the Spanish anti-racist organization *Movimiento contra la intolerancia* has published an impressive amount of material on racist and far right violence.⁶ However, most of this material is not backed by external sources and therefore difficult to validate. Similarly, the Southern Poverty Law Center in the United States has developed an extensive online dataset on hate crimes in the USA.⁷ However, the sources used to register each event are not made available.

Yet the perhaps most common problem concerning replicability is that existing datasets on far right violence are not made publicly available at all. This is the case with the CTC dataset on far right violence in the United States (Perliger, 2012), the United States Extremist Crime Database (Freilich et al., 2014), and the GIRDS database on right-wing terrorism in Germany (Koehler, 2014). Although there might be several good reasons as to why they are unavailable (e.g. privacy concerns or academic advantage), it leads to a problem of replicability. Ideally, more databases should be publically available as is the case with SOVA Center’s database on xenophobic events in Russia. This database includes source links for all registered events, and one can easily distinguish violent from non-violent episodes.⁸

Comparability

A fifth and final problem is that of *comparability*, i.e. the difficulty of comparing data between countries. Although some countries provide extensive data on far right violence, they are of limited value in comparative research because they cannot be compared with similar data from other countries. Each country uses different definitions, different registration methods, and different inclusion criteria. Some countries also tend to change their methods and criteria from time to time, making time-series analysis difficult. For example, the Finnish, Danish and Swedish hate crime reporting systems have undergone

substantial changes over the past 10 years, making both temporal and cross-country comparisons difficult.

Besides national hate crimes statistics, some scholars have developed datasets on far right violence (e.g. Arnold & Markowitz, 2017; Freilich et al., 2014; Hewitt, 2005; Karpantschov & Mikkelsen, 2016; Koehler, 2014; Kundnani, 2012; Perliger, 2012). However, most of these datasets cover only one country and are difficult to compare due to divergent data collection and registration methods. The only existing dataset that covers all West European countries is the RTV dataset. However, even this dataset, which is aimed at facilitating cross-country comparisons, is likely biased towards countries and periods that are better covered by available sources (Ravndal, 2016, p. 6). We might therefore benefit from considering some new and innovative strategies for mapping far right violence.

Strategies against methodological pitfalls

Many of the shortcomings described above are difficult to deal with because they stem from inherent political or practical deficits. Admittedly, no matter how you approach far right violence, it remains a clandestine phenomenon, which is hard to measure systematically. Methodological improvement therefore requires creative solutions. In this section, we propose three strategies that we believe could help overcome some of the most salient problems: (1) crowdsourcing, (2) international standardization of police reporting (3) and victimization surveys.

Crowdsourcing

To overcome the most pressing problem discussed above – *availability* – a new online-based method known as crowdsourcing could be part of the solution. Crowdsourcing is essentially about using the Internet to outsource a problem-solving task to an undefined public (Estellés-Arolas & González-Ladrón-de-Guevara, 2012). The perhaps most successful example of crowdsourcing to date is the online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia*. To map far right violence, crowdsourcing is mainly useful for identifying events that otherwise would not have been reported and registered. One key advantage is that information can be shared anonymously, which lowers the threshold for people at risk to report a violent attack. In such cases, the reporting person must document the event by providing reliable sources,

such as newspaper articles or police reports describing the event, and demonstrating that the target selection was indeed determined by far right beliefs.

All crowdsourcing systems are confronted with four key challenges: (1) recruiting a crowd, (2) facilitating proper contributions, (3) synthesizing contributions in a way that solves the problem, and (4) evaluating users and contributions (Doan et al., 2011). To crowdsource far right violence, the first challenge may be more about public promotion than about recruiting a crowd. Important contributors will be those affected by an attack, either as a victim, as a victim's friend or relative, or as a witness. Anyone affected by far right violence should be aware of the opportunity and importance of reporting attacks to the crowdsourcing site. This can only be done through branding, promotion, and publicly demonstrating that the system is working. One example of such successful promotion is the UK-based TellMAMA project, which monitors anti-Muslim bigotry of all sorts, ranging from discrimination and public harassment to vandalism and violent attacks (e.g. TellMAMA 2013; 2014). Within a few years, TellMAMA has become an authoritative voice in the UK on all concerns related to anti-Muslim bigotry.

The second challenge concerns how to facilitate proper contributions. As a first step, it would be necessary to establish a user-friendly and easily accessible system for online reporting. In addition, it is important to clearly define and communicate the types of events to be reported versus those belonging to other categories such as verbal abuse or violent attacks with personal rather than political motives. At the same time, one does not want to discourage people from reporting poorly documented events. One solution to this dilemma is to rank reported events according to the quality of available information. One example can be found at the crowdsourcing site "The City at a Times of Crisis" which documents racist violence in and around Athens, Greece, and where each event is labelled either as verified or unverified.⁹

The third challenge concerns how to combine contributions in a way that actually solves the problem. To map far right violence, combining contributions is simply about adding together events that have passed the registration criteria. The challenge may therefore lie more in *presenting* the combined contributions in a meaningful way. For example, "The City at a Times of Crisis" has produced an interactive online map visualizing the geographical

distribution of all reported events,¹⁰ while TellMAMA produces a number of relevant products, including online infographics and annual reports (e.g. TellMAMA 2013; 2014).¹¹

The fourth challenge concerns how to evaluate contributions and users as reliable sources. An important feature will in this case be anonymous reports, which makes source evaluation more difficult. There is no quick fix to this challenge, and the only way to verify anonymous reports is to attach other reliable sources such as news articles, police reports, or non-anonymized testimonies.

In sum, crowdsourcing would score high on availability by generating otherwise unavailable information, provided that people are aware of the opportunity to report violent events. It would also do well on validity because the system managers are able to filter out irrelevant events, as well as on replicability, because all events and corresponding open sources could be made available online. Potential weaknesses thus lie in representativity and comparability. To develop a representative overview, a majority of events would have to be reported, which would require major promotional efforts and high public awareness. Furthermore, reporting frequencies and practices would likely vary over time and between places. A dataset based on crowdsourcing can therefore easily become biased towards certain regions or periods, and would therefore not be appropriate for comparative analysis.

International standardized police reporting

As described above, existing hate crimes statistics based on police reporting suffer from a number of shortcomings, such as being incomparable across countries or not distinguishing far right attacks from others. Ideally, all countries should register and report on hate crime and political violence in the same way. However, we realize that this is likely never going to happen due to different legal systems, norms, and traditions.

A second best alternative would therefore be if all countries could contribute to a shared and standardized report on political violence. While some may consider this an unsurmountable task, international standardized reporting is already taking place across a wide range of domains, in particular among EU countries. For example, Eurostat offers annual statistics from all EU countries within areas such as health, migration, education, culture, sport, and crime, but not political violence.¹²

Moreover, some existing initiatives are already covering political violence, most notably Europol's terrorism trend reports (TE-SAT). However, as explained above, different countries use different criteria for categorizing terrorist events, and therefore end up reporting differently violence and terrorism.

Another relevant initiative is a project at the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights developing a shared methodology for recording and collecting data on hate crime.¹³ However, considering the rather wide application of the hate crime concept, which includes both violent and non-violent events, and generally does not distinguish far right crimes from others, we suspect that this initiative will not generate comparable events data on far right violence specifically. Thus, in terms of documenting far right violence systematically, there is a gap between Europol's terrorism report covering "too little" on the one hand, and existing hate crime reporting covering "too much" on the other.

Our proposition is to develop a shared reporting system on political violence using a set of imposed inclusion criteria that all countries must employ regardless of their particular jurisdictions. To uphold comparability between countries, this report would have to focus on the most severe types of events – events that are highly likely to have been registered by the police, such as murders, armed attacks, bombings or major terrorist plots. This dataset should include all kinds of extremism, including left-wing, right-wing, religious, separatist and possibly environmentalist and animal rights.

International standardized police reporting would primarily cater to the problem of comparability. If all countries follow the guidelines and submit their annual reports, this dataset could become an important source for comparing the extent of (severe) far right violence over time and between countries. However, it would still not include events not reported to the police, and therefore compromise on representativity. Furthermore, considering that all events are based on classified police reports, scholars will not be able to replicate the data to assess their validity.

Victimization surveys

While standardized police reporting is weak on representativity, crowdsourcing is weak on comparability. Victimization surveys represent a third method that is strong on both these

areas (representativity and comparability). The basic idea is to survey a representative sample of a given target group and ask them about their experiences with a particular threat, in this case far right violence. However, since far right violence seems to be a rather marginal phenomenon in most Western countries, it makes little sense to survey the entire population – so-called national victimization surveys. Only a few respondents from a representative sample, if anyone at all, are likely to have experienced a violent attack motivated by far right ideology. Thus, instead of surveying the general population, we suggest – in line with the well-known FRA-surveys¹⁴ (carried out by The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) – that one should survey particularly vulnerable groups. Previous research has demonstrated that far right activists in Europe are likely to target immigrants, religious minorities such as Muslims, Jews and Roma, sexual minorities, political opponents, government officials, police officers, homeless and disabled people (Ravndal, 2016). In other words, extreme right activists do not carry out violent attacks randomly. They target groups or people they perceive as enemies or as unwanted.

How can we survey hard-to-reach population groups? In most cases, there is (fortunately) no register from which to draw a representative sample of respondents. Only cases of government officials, police officers and left-wing politicians represent clearly defined populations. There are at least two ways to deal with the problem: Either the sample is so large that even small minorities amount to the several hundred respondents needed to carry out meaningful statistical analysis. For example, Herek's (2009) study of sexual minority adults in the US relies on responses from a national probability sample consisting of 662 gay, lesbian and bisexual adults drawn from an existing panel of more than 40,000 US households. The other option is to use convenience sampling. The previously mentioned FRA agency has developed their own method to reach marginal and often socially stigmatized groups such as Roma and Jews.¹⁵ In their 2012 study aimed at collecting data about the 'experiences of antisemitism' and 'feelings of safety' among self-identifying Jews in Europe, relied on a standardized online questionnaire which was made available to Jewish communities on the FRA website, via Jewish organizations (both international and national) and Jewish media outlets. To be sure, the sample suffer from problems of self-recruitment (i.e. it depended on individuals' willingness to participate) and inaccessibility (i.e. it

depended on some level of computer skills), yet this approach seem to produce (more) representative samples than other methods (FRA 2013: 73).

To the extent that we can establish a representative sample, victimization surveys are particularly strong on representativity and comparability. They allow us to bypass some of the obvious limitations of having to rely upon media reporting or criminal complaints registered by the police. Instead, victims can report directly to the researchers. As such, these surveys may be the closest we can get to the “truth” about far right violence and thus the best point of departure for doing comparative analysis at the cross-national level.

However, there are some disadvantages to this method as well. Notably, the method allows the victim to determine the perpetrator’s motive, resulting in possible validity problems. This may lead to events being classified as far right even they were not, but also to not reporting events because the victim did not realize they had a far right motive.

Despite the possible disadvantages of the three strategies, we argue that crowdsourcing, standardized police reports and victimization surveys would be of great value when assessing the prevalence and patterns of far-right violence. The three strategies are particularly fruitful when used in combination given that they have distinct strengths and weaknesses, as illustrated by Table 1. Our preferred strategy is thus similar to the one carried out by Lambert (2013) in his more limited case study of anti-Muslim violence in the UK. This study relies on incident data from media reports, police statistics (mainly from the Metropolitan Police) and survey data provided by Mosques, Islamic centers and Muslim organizations.

Table 1. Methodological strengths and weaknesses of selected strategies

	Availability	Representativity	Validity	Replicability	Comparability
Crowdsourcing	+	-	+	+	-
Standardized police reporting	+	-	+	-	+
Victimization survey	+	+	-	+	+

Conclusion

To develop precise explanations of far right violence, we need to match our theories with reliable empirical evidence documenting variation in violence across time and place.

However, as this chapter shows, available evidence on far right violence suffers from problems of availability, representativity, validity, replicability and comparability. This is also the case for well-known databases available to scholars in the field, such as GDT, TE-SAT and national hate crime statistics. Consequently, it becomes very difficult, if not say impossible to assess whether far right violence is increasing or decreasing, let alone explain under which social, political and economic circumstances this kind of violence is most likely to pose a security threat and democratic challenge (Koopmans, 1996; Ravndal, 2017).

To overcome some of the existing methodological problems, we have proposed three strategies that we believe will significantly improve available data on far right violence.

Crowdsourcing is particularly strong on validity and replicability, but weaker on representativity and comparability. Standardized police reporting is strong on comparability, but it will most likely continue to suffer from underreporting and problems of replicability. Victimization surveys are therefore necessary to gain a more accurate but far from perfect assessment of the scale of the phenomenon. To be sure, this method has its own problems of biases, sampling challenges and validity issues, but in combination with the other strategies, it will provide scholars with a far better foundation for analysing the prevalence, patterns and characteristics of far right violence, both within and between countries.

¹ This number is derived from an updated version of the RTV dataset yet to be released publicly. For more details, see www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/rtv.

² This section draws heavily on a previous article by Ravndal (2016), originally published in *Perspectives on Terrorism*.

³ See <https://www.bra.se/bra-in-english/home/crime-and-statistics/hate-crime.html>

⁴ See https://www.politi.dk/NR/rdonlyres/C452577B-1EFE-4C73-8207-62B05E3E783E/0/%C3%85rsrapport_hadforbrydelser_2015.pdf

⁵ See www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/rtv.

⁶ See <http://www.movimientocontralaintolerancia.com/html/raxen/raxen.asp>.

⁷ See <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/hate-incidents>

⁸ See <http://www.sova-center.ru/database/>.

⁹ See <http://map.crisis-scape.net/>.

¹⁰ See <http://map.crisis-scape.net/>.

¹¹ See also <https://tellmamauk.org/resources/>.

¹² See <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>.

¹³ See <http://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2017/subgroup-methodologies-recording-and-collecting-data-hate-crime>

¹⁴ See <http://fra.europa.eu/en/research>

¹⁵ See <http://fra.europa.eu/en/survey/2012/fra-survey-jewish-peoples-experiences-and-perceptions-discrimination-and-hate-crime>

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