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LIMITE

CT 6  
COTER 23  
ENV 108  
JAI 155  
COSI 9  
RELEX 131  
JEUN 19  
ENFOPOL 32  
DIGIT 31  
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#### NOTE

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From:	EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator
To:	Delegations
Subject:	The role of climate change and environmental concerns in violent extremist and terrorist radicalisation in the EU

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This paper examines the role climate change and environmental concerns play in the ideologies and narratives of violent extremists and terrorists in the EU. Climate change is one of many contentious topics, along with the war in Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza, and the Covid-19 pandemic, which are exploited by extremists for their own ideological goals. The potential for terrorism and violent extremism linked to the environment and climate change **is at this moment limited but might become more significant in the coming years**. Climate change threatens societal stability, creating new outlets for violent extremism and terrorism. It already features in the ideologies and discourses of different strands of violent extremism.

This paper examines the role of climate change and the environment in the ideologies and discourses of **(I) violent right-wing extremism (VRWE)**, **(II) violent left-wing and anarchist extremism (VLWAE)**, and a separate but small strand here identified as **(III) violent misanthropic environmental extremism (VMEE)**.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Violent misanthropic environmental extremism is currently not identified as a wider trend in Europe. However, activities by groups outside Europe call for more attention.

It is important to acknowledge that beyond narratives and discourses, climate change can act as a **threat multiplier** in relation to terrorism and violent extremism in different ways. Some of the adverse effects of climate change, such as the scarcity of natural resources and degradation of trust in societies, may increase receptiveness to violent extremist ideologies and therefore act as push factors for violent extremist and terrorist organisations. Some terrorist and violent extremist actors, especially violent right-wing extremists, also use climate concerns to promote climate denialism and conspiracy theories questioning efforts to tackle climate change.

While it is important to keep this angle in mind, this paper focuses on how climate change and environmental concerns feature in the ideologies of terrorists/violent extremists. In doing so, this paper does not discuss peaceful environmental protest and non-violent civil disobedience. There are limited signs of violent radicalisation in the wider environmental activist scene<sup>2</sup> and ‘violent environmental extremism’ motivated by solely environmental causes is at this moment a very limited threat.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. The role of the environment and climate change in violent right-wing extremism

Climate change and the environment increasingly feature in violent right-wing extremist (VRWE) ideology. In VRWE discourse, concern for climate change is used either in tandem with racist beliefs or as a justification for them. A prevalent narrative used by VRWE actors is that **the solution to climate change is halting immigration and eliminating non-western and non-white ‘over populators’ who are damaging the environment**. This line of thinking is rooted in **eco-fascism**, which is a reactionary ideology combining ecological and fascist arguments to justify violence against people who are considered destructive to the ecosystem. Often, immigration from global South countries is framed as an existential threat to the environment and the survival of the white race, while governments in the global North and liberal capitalism are blamed for causing uncontrolled migration.

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<sup>2</sup> AIVD, Jaarverslag 2022: <https://www.aivd.nl/onderwerpen/jaarverslagen/jaarverslag-2022/nationale-dreigingen>; Europol, EU Terrorism Situation & Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2020. Some Member States fear the further radicalisation of parts of the environmental activist scene in the EU towards violent extremist and terrorist activity, possibly carried out by clandestine groups. (TE-SAT 2023)

<sup>3</sup> Europol, EU Terrorism Situation & Trend Report (TE-SAT), 2020.

The eco-fascist connection between white nationalism and the environment is not new in VRWE ideology. The need to preserve the ‘purity’ of the land and its people from outside contamination is captured for example in **the Nazis’ “blood and soil” mantra**, which suggests that a racially determined nation (blood) is tied to its living environment (soil).

In present-day VRWE discourse, eco-fascist ideas are often paired with conspiracy theories like Renaud Camus’ **“great replacement theory”**. According to the great replacement theory, there is an elite capitalist plan to replace the white population in the global North with immigrants from the global South.<sup>4</sup> Such conspiracy theories and the eco-fascist belief that environmental demise is caused by overpopulation originating from the global South provide violent right-wing extremists with a narrative to make sense of climate change and to justify violence against minorities and immigrants.<sup>5</sup>

**Europol’s Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT)** has cited eco-fascism as subdivision of violent right-wing ideology.<sup>6</sup> It is noted in the most recent TE-SAT that the influence of eco-fascism in VRWE is growing.<sup>7</sup> As the impact of climate change is becoming more pronounced and migration provoked by climate-related causes rises as a result, the influence of eco-fascist ideas in VRWE is might increase and they may be used as an additional rationale for attacks.<sup>8</sup> This is especially the case as VRWE interpretations of climate change are prevalent among the younger generation.<sup>9</sup>

The growing use of environmental concerns as a justification for violence and hatred in VRWE discourse is observable in the **online environment**. Established VRWE groups like The Base and Proud Boys have combined white supremacy with eco-fascist narratives in their online communications.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Balsa Lubarda and Bernhard Forchtner, “The Far Right and the Environment: past-present-future,” 2022, in: Populism and Far Right: Trends in Europe.

<sup>5</sup> B. Hughes et al.: “Eco-fascism: an examination of the Far-Right/Ecology Nexus in the Online Space”, 2022, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 34(5).

<sup>6</sup> Europol, *EU Terrorism Situation & Trend Report (TE-SAT)*, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> TE-SAT, 2023: “2022 bore witness to the tightening of the nexus between eco-fascism, anti-capitalism and anti-immigration sentiments both in the online and offline right-wing extremist landscape.”

<sup>8</sup> Graham Macklin, “The Extreme Right, Climate Change and Terrorism”, 2022, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 34(5), pp. 979-996.

<sup>9</sup> Graham Macklin, “The Extreme Right, Climate Change and Terrorism”, 2022, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 34(5), pp. 979-996.

<sup>10</sup> Katia Patin, “The rise of eco-fascism,” 2021, Codastory: <https://www.codastory.com/waronscience/the-rise-of-eco-fascism/>. Mack Lamoureux, “Neo-Nazi’s are Using Eco-Fascism to Recruit Young People,” 2020, Vice: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/wxqme/neo-nazis-eco-fascism-climate-change-recruit-young-people>

The influence of eco-fascism is also observable in wider VRWE circles on the messaging platform **Telegram**. On VRWE Telegram channels, eco-fascist arguments have been combined with ‘accelerationist’ ideas. The term ‘accelerationism’ refers to the desire to accelerate the destruction of Western culture through terrorist violence and subsequently revive it in a white supremacist form.<sup>11</sup> A combination of eco-fascist beliefs and accelerationism suggests that the ecological crisis can be stopped through a destruction of Western culture and a return to a nature free from industrial and non-white ‘pollution’.<sup>12</sup>

Other more fringe ideological influences on VRWE adaptations of eco-fascism include **deep ecology**, which suggests that society must be radically restructured to recognise that nature is as important as human life.<sup>13</sup> The belief that nature should be protected at all costs, even at the expense of human life if needed, is used as a reasoning to justify violence against immigrants and non-white populations who are blamed for polluting the environment.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Tess Owen, 2019, “How Telegram Became White Nationalists’ Go-To Messaging Platform”, Vice. [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/59nk3a/how-telegram-became-white-nationalists-go-to-messaging-platform](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/59nk3a/how-telegram-became-white-nationalists-go-to-messaging-platform) ; April Glaser, 2019, “Telegram Was Built for Democracy Activists. White Nationalists Love It”, Slate Magazine: <https://slate.com/technology/2019/08/telegram-white-nationalists-el-paso-shooting-facebook.html>

<sup>12</sup> Macklin, “The Extreme Right, Climate Change and Terrorism”, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Loadenthal, "Feral fascists and deep green guerrillas: infrastructural attack and accelerationist terror," Critical Studies on Terrorism 15 (1), 2022.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to Telegram, similar ideas are actively spread on sites like whitebiocentrism.com or on Twitter and Instagram. Hashtags like #savetreesnotrefugees have been popular on Twitter.

**Perpetrators of recent violent right-wing terrorist attacks have used eco-fascist ideas, alongside other motives, to justify their acts.** The perpetrator of the 2019 terrorist attack in **Christchurch**, New Zealand, referred to himself as an eco-fascist ethno-nationalist and vowed to “kill the overpopulation and by doing so save the environment” in his manifesto.<sup>15</sup> The perpetrator of the 2019 attack on a Walmart supermarket in **El Paso**, Texas, where 23 people of Latino origin were killed, justified his attack based on environmental damage caused by consumerism and what he called “a Hispanic invasion of Texas”.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the perpetrator of the 2022 terrorist attack in **Buffalo**, New York, who shot and killed ten African American persons in a local supermarket, also used eco-fascist ideas as a rationale for the killings, among other motives, referring to the “continued destruction of the natural environment itself through mass immigration”.<sup>17</sup> All three attackers **referred to themselves as eco-fascist** and quoted the great replacement theory in their manifestos.<sup>18</sup> While eco-fascist ideas were only a part of the motivation of these attacks, they nevertheless showcase the increasing use of eco-fascist ideas as justifications for right-wing extremist violence.

**At least two attacks motivated by a mix of eco-fascist ideas with wider VRWE ideology have taken place in Europe.** The neo-Nazi perpetrator of a shooting in a mosque in Baerum, Norway in 2019 was inspired by the aforementioned attacks in the U.S. and referred to the Christchurch shooter as a ‘saint’.<sup>19</sup> Even though the perpetrator was prevented from harming anyone in the mosque, he killed his stepsister before setting out for the attack.

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<sup>15</sup> The white-supremacist perpetrator attacked a mosque during Friday prayer, killing 51 individuals. Luke Darby, “What Is Eco-Fascism, the Ideology Behind Attacks in El Paso and Christchurch?”, GQ, 2019: <https://www.gq.com/story/what-is-eco-fascism>

<sup>16</sup> Luke Darby, “What Is Eco-Fascism, the Ideology Behind Attacks in El Paso and Christchurch?”, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Maxime Jaselow, and Vanessa Montalbano, “Suspect in Buffalo Rampage cited ‘eco-fascism’ to justify actions,” The Washington Post, 2022: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/05/17/suspect-buffalo-rampage-cited-ecofascism-justify-actions/>; Gaby del Vale, “3 Years After the El Paso Shooting, “Environmental” Nativism Is Spreading,” The Nation, 2022: <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/el-paso-shooting-xenophobia/>

<sup>18</sup> The Christchurch shooter Brenton Tarrant stated in his manifesto: “Kill the invaders, kill the overpopulation and by doing so save the environment.”- Arsalan Ifthikhar, “Christchurch Anniversary: the Islamophobic ‘Great Replacement’ Theory,” Bridge: A Georgetown University Initiative, 2020: <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/christchurch-anniversary-the-islamophobic-great-replacement-theory/>.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Venner sier siktet 21-åring gjennomgikk en forandring den siste tiden’, NRK, 2019. [https://www.nrk.no/norge/venner-om-siktet-21-arig\\_-han-gjennomgikk-en-forandring-den-siste-tiden-1.14656678](https://www.nrk.no/norge/venner-om-siktet-21-arig_-han-gjennomgikk-en-forandring-den-siste-tiden-1.14656678). For an analysis of social media imagery used by the perpetrator, see: <https://twitter.com/kevinshakir/status/1160878111715729409>.

The second incident is connected to the short-lived and no longer active militant group called the “Green Brigade”, which acted as the eco-fascist wing of VRWE group The Base. The group was responsible for an arson attack on a Swedish mink farm in 2019 in an attempt to commit sabotage in the name of the environment and the perpetrators were also allegedly plotting several subsequent violent attacks motivated by eco-fascist ideas mixed with other elements of VRWE ideology.<sup>20</sup>

Similar to the attacks in the US and New-Zealand, any attacks in Europe will likely be conducted by individuals or very small groups that have been radicalised online.<sup>21</sup> The Christchurch, El Paso, and Buffalo shooters **are widely idolized in online VRWE circles**, which increases the chances of people engaging with their violent extremist perspective on the environment and adopting eco-fascist beliefs.<sup>22</sup> While groups are often fleeting and short lived, the desire for violence motivated by eco-fascist ideas in VRWE is a concern.<sup>23</sup> While eco-fascist ideas are not central in VRWE ideology, climate concerns increasingly function as a vehicle to promote other parts of the ideology, such as racism and anti-immigration. Therefore, the increasing incorporation of climate change into the rationales behind right-wing extremist violence is a phenomenon that needs to be watched.

## 2. **The role of the environment and climate change in violent left-wing and anarchist extremism**

The most worrying risks linked to environmental concerns in the violent extremist left are the infiltration of violent left-wing and anarchist extremist (VLWAE) actors in climate activist movements and a wider adoption of climate change and the environment in the rationales of VLWAE actors. VLWAE actors are increasingly **co-opting climate concerns and incorporate climate change in their justifications for violence**. Environmentalism fits well together with some of the concerns of VLWAE actors, including, e.g., urbanisation, capitalism, and consumerism.

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<sup>20</sup> Mack Lamoureux, Ben Makuch and Zachary Kamel Alleged Eco-Terrorists Discussed Abortion Clinic Bombing, Assassinating Judge: Court Documents, Vice, 2020: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/g5bjqm/alleged-eco-terrorists-discussed-abortion-clinic-bombing-assassinating-judge-court-documents>

<sup>21</sup> Forchtner, “Eco-fascism ‘proper’: the curious case of Greenline Front,” Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, 2019: <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2020/06/25/eco-fascism-proper-the-curious-case-of-greenline-front/>.

<sup>22</sup> TE-SAT, 2023

<sup>23</sup> Lisa Kaati and Katie Cohen, “Eco-fascist propaganda on Telegram,” FOI, 2020.

A recent report by the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) affirms that **VLWAE actors appropriate environmental causes for their own agenda.**<sup>24</sup> There is a risk of VLWAE increasing their presence in and co-opting climate and environmentalist movements for their own cause. The VLWAE scene uses seasoned/veteran actors with experience in conducting violent attacks, who may seek to transfer their strategies to younger generations, for example those taking actively part in environmental groups.<sup>25</sup> Some groups have used sabotage and violence against property as a strategy, but these activities as such do not meet the threshold of terrorism. However, violent extremism and violent acts outside of the scope of terrorism equally pose a threat to public safety and therefore need to be monitored.

Due to a lack of data and analysis, it is difficult to assess the gravity of the current threat of VLWAE infiltrating environmentalist movements in the EU.<sup>26</sup> There are some examples of the phenomenon. The organisation **Interventionistische Linke** (*Interventionist Left*, IL) has increased its influence on the broad environmental coalition **Ende Gelände**, which is made up of several anti-climate change and environmentalist groups. The German Security Service (BfV) considers the IL as 'left extremist' due to its belief that the democratic capitalist system needs to be overthrown, by violence if necessary.<sup>27</sup> The group has adopted sabotage in its modus operandi,<sup>28</sup> and a spokesperson recently openly raised the question whether peaceful protest is a useful tool for achieving change.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Francesco Farinelli and Lorenzo Marinone "Contemporary Violent Left-wing and Anarchist Extremism (VLWAE) in the EU: Analysing Threats and Potential for P/CVE." RAN Report, 2021 [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ran\\_vlwae\\_in\\_the\\_eu\\_analysing\\_threats\\_potential\\_for\\_p-cve\\_112021\\_en.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ran_vlwae_in_the_eu_analysing_threats_potential_for_p-cve_112021_en.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Some Member States have reported instances of veteran VLWA-extremists/terrorists having trained individuals for example in Extinction Rebellion. However, Extinction Rebellion's strategy is so far based on non-violent direct action/civil disobedience and as a wider movement it has not resorted to or condoned violent tactics. It remains to be seen if interactions between environmental movements and seasoned VLWAE-actors increase.

<sup>26</sup> Francesco Farinelli and Lorenzo Marinone "Contemporary Violent Left-wing and Anarchist Extremism (VLWAE) in the EU: Analysing Threats and Potential for P/CVE." RAN Report, 2021: [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ran\\_vlwae\\_in\\_the\\_eu\\_analysing\\_threats\\_potential\\_for\\_p-cve\\_112021\\_en.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ran_vlwae_in_the_eu_analysing_threats_potential_for_p-cve_112021_en.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Verfassungschutzbericht 2020-2022; Ende Gelände Action Consensus 2022: <https://www.ende-gelaende.org/en/action-consensus-2022/>

<sup>28</sup> Verfassungschutzbericht 2020-2022; Ende Gelände Action Consensus 2022: <https://www.ende-gelaende.org/en/action-consensus-2022/>

<sup>29</sup> Christian Parth, "Der Marsch der Frustrierten" Die ZEIT, 2023: [https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2023-01/luetzerath-proteste-greta-thunberg-grossdemonstration?utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F](https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2023-01/luetzerath-proteste-greta-thunberg-grossdemonstration?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F)

Another example is the French **Soulèvements de la Terre** (*Uprising of the Earth*), which is comprised of organic farmers, environmentalists, communists, and anarchists.<sup>30</sup> The group was ‘dissolved’ by the French government in June 2023 due to alleged use of violence against property and people during a protest in Sainte Soline against a planned irrigation project.<sup>31</sup> The group has used intrusion and sabotage (for example recently against a cement factory in France) as tactics to intimidate political opponents and companies perceived to be complicit in environmental degradation.<sup>32</sup> However, the ban over Soulèvements de la Terre was lifted by the French Conseil d’Etat in November 2023, based on a judgment that no provocation of violence against persons could be attributed to the group.<sup>33</sup>

It is important to note that IL, Ende Gelände, and Soulèvements de la Terre **have not carried out attacks with human casualties** and the actions of these groups, as they stand, cannot be classified as terrorism.

In the U.S., where the definition of terrorism includes damage to property, sabotage actions by environmentalist groups have sometimes been classified as ‘**eco-terrorism**’ since the 1970’s. In the EU, the label terrorism has generally not been ascribed to acts of sabotage or environmental groups using it as a tactic.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Damien Gayle, “Fire and concrete: will France’s model of radical climate protest catch on?” The Guardian, 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/may/04/will-france-model-of-radical-climate-protest-catch-on>

<sup>31</sup> Multiple policemen and protesters were injured and cars were set on fire.

<sup>32</sup> France24, “Une manifestation contre un site Lafarge près de Nantes dispersée par la police”, 2023: <https://www.france24.com/fr/info-en-continu/20231211-une-manifestation-contre-un-site-lafarge-pr%C3%A8s-de-nantes-dispers%C3%A9e-par-la-police>

<sup>33</sup> Conseil d’Etat, “Soulèvements de la Terre, GALE, Alvarium, CRI : le Conseil d’État précise les critères justifiant la dissolution d’une association ou d’un groupement”, 2023: <https://www.conseil-etat.fr/actualites/soulevements-de-la-terre-gale-alvarium-cri-le-conseil-d-etat-precise-les-criteres-justifiant-la-dissolution-d-une-association-ou-d-un-groupement>

<sup>34</sup> The CT Directive is relevant in this context. However, some EU Member States prosecuted sabotage as terrorism. For example, Italy has classified acts of sabotage carried out by the militant left-wing organisation Red Brigades in the 1970s as terrorism.



One strategy used by environmentalist groups has been labelled as ‘eco-tage’, i.e., sabotage carried out by environmental activists against perceived ecological exploiters, without inflicting physical harm on individuals. The tactic was first adopted by the internationally operating environmentalist movements **Earth First! (EF!)** (U.S.) and **Earth Liberation Front (ELF)**<sup>35</sup> (UK) but have since been used by organisations operating globally, including in the EU.<sup>36</sup> Animal Liberation Front (ALF), a decentralised international movement calling for direct action against animal abuse, has also used sabotage and attacks against property as a tactic, but has explicitly denounced physical violence against people and animals.

Groups such as Plane Stupid, Just Stop Oil, and Last Generation (also known as Ultima Generazione in Italy and Letzte Generation in Germany) have employed non-violent direct action and sometimes vandalism<sup>37</sup> but are not currently regarded as a violent extremist threat to the EU.<sup>38</sup> Data from the Global Terrorism Database shows that sabotage related to environmental causes has decreased over the past decade.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Originally founded as Environmental Life Force (ELF) in California in 1977. The group was the first radical environmental group to use explosive devices in its efforts to commit sabotage. Stacy Jonah Vynne, "Earth Liberation Front (ELF)/Animal Liberation Front (ALF)", in Schiffman and Howard (ed.). *Green Issues and Debates: An A-to-Z Guide*, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> A classic example is ‘tree-spiking’, where a metal object is inserted in a tree to prevent it from being cut down by damaging the saw.

<sup>37</sup> Last Generation climate activists threw soup at a van Gogh painting in Rome and mashed potatoes at a Monet painting in Potsdam, Germany. Both paintings were protected and were not damaged because of the acts. Tactics such as these are used by the group as a form of direct action without committing violence or sabotage. The group has sometimes used paint to vandalise vehicles, such as private jets. It has also performed hunger strikes and road blockades. Source: Ingo Salmen, "Blockade statt Hungerstreik: Klimaaktivisten versperren Zufahrten zu Berliner Autobahnen – 24 Festnahmen", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2022: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/klimaaktivisten-versperren-zufahrten-zu-berliner-autobahnen--24-festnahmen-8017651.html> ; Deutsche Welle, "German Last Generation group not a threat to democracy", 2022: <https://www.dw.com/en/german-last-generation-group-not-a-threat-to-democracy/a-63789202>

<sup>38</sup> The Bavarian state criminal police office (LKA) investigated seven Letzte Generation activists in Germany for donation campaigns to fund protests and future legal battles. Two members were suspected of planning to sabotage the Trieste-Ingolstadt oil pipeline in April 2022, but were not convicted. Source: Kate Connolly, "German police stage nationwide raids against climate activists", *The Guardian*, 2023: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/24/german-police-stage-nationwide-raids-against-climate-activists>

<sup>39</sup> João Raphael da Silva. "The eco-terrorist wave," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 12 (3), 2020; CEP, "Earth Liberation Front," *Countering Extremism Project*, <https://www.counterextremism.com/supremacy/earth-liberation-front>.

### 3. Violent misanthropic environmental extremism

There is a small-scale phenomenon identified here as violent misanthropic environmental extremism (VMEE), which is currently more prominent outside the EU. VMEE shares some ideological influences with VRWE and VLWE but can be distinguished from both strands as its own ideology. VMEE draws on an extremist form of deep ecology, which in their interpretation refers to nature superseding *all human life*.<sup>40</sup> **Humans are considered as detrimental to nature**, and therefore the manifold death of human beings is seen as necessary, even beneficial.<sup>41</sup> Groups adopting VMEE views are mainly active in other parts of the world, but the phenomenon is nevertheless important to be watched. In the context of VMEE, violence is almost solely based on concerns related to the environment and climate change and might therefore increase with the worsening climate crisis.

A significant influence for VMEE is the Finnish philosopher **Pentti Linkola**, whose thought has been described as radical and authoritarian deep ecology. Linkola believed that nature should be protected at the expense of human populations and expressed sympathy towards the 2004 Madrid terrorist attack as a welcome ‘disruption’ to a consumption-centric society responsible for destroying the environment.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> **Against** the eco-fascist VRWE interpretation, which suggests that the protection of nature necessitates violence against non-western populations.

<sup>41</sup> Pentti Linkola, *Can life Prevail: A Revolutionary Approach to the Environmental Crisis*, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Petra Himberg, “Pentti Linkola ja puoli vuosisataa radikaalia sanomaa luonnon puolesta”, Yle, 2018: <https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2018/12/05/pentti-linkola-ja-puoli-vuosisataa-radikaalia-sanomaa-luonnon-puolesta>

Another ideological influence for VMEE is **Una Bomber Ted Kaczynski**, who perpetrated multiple terrorist attacks in the U.S. during the 1990s by sending bomb letters to academics studying computer science and to IT-stores, among other targets. His attacks were motivated by his **hatred of modern society and technological development**, which he held responsible for destroying nature.<sup>43</sup> He rejected ideological alignment to either left or right.<sup>44</sup> Kaczynski's manifesto "Industrial Society and its Future" is still widely popular and available.<sup>45</sup> Despite his own rejection of both left and right, Kaczynski also has influence among eco-fascist VRWE circles.

There are examples of attacks inspired by this line of thinking. The perpetrator of a **2007 school shooting in Jokela, Finland**, Pekka-Eric Auvinen, was inspired by Linkola and Kaczynski. During his attack, Auvinen wore a t-shirt stating that "human life is overrated" and his manifesto announced a "Total War Against Humanity", combining eco-fascist elements with the belief that humanity is responsible for the destruction of the natural world and should be eliminated.<sup>46</sup> James Jay Lee, the attacker behind the **2010 hostage crisis at the Discovery Channel Headquarters** in Maryland, U.S., declared in his manifesto that that all natural wildlife must be protected by decreasing the human population.<sup>47</sup> Lee entered the Discovery Channel headquarters armed, in an attempt to demand that the channel broadcasts solutions to the "problems humans are causing" instead of encouraging "to breed more environmentally harmful humans".<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> ICCT, "Ted Kaczynski, anti-Technology Radicalism and Eco-Fascism," ICCT, 15 June 2022:

<https://www.icct.nl/publication/ted-kaczynski-anti-technology-radicalism-and-eco-fascism> Kaczynski himself disproves of the racist elements of eco-fascism in a letter written in 2020, debunking the eco-fascist appropriation of his thought.

<sup>44</sup> Theodore John Kaczynski, "Industrial society and its future," in The Washington Post, September 19, 1995.

<sup>45</sup> For example: <https://www.amazon.com/Unabomber-Manifesto-Industrial-Society-Future/dp/1595948155>.

<sup>46</sup> Pekka Eric Auvinen, "Natural Selector's Manifesto", 2007: [https://archive.org/details/pekka-eric-auvinen-online\\_202205/page/n3/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/pekka-eric-auvinen-online_202205/page/n3/mode/2up)

<sup>47</sup> James Jay Lee, "Demands and Sayings of James Jay Lee", 2010: <https://www.tedmontgomery.com/remarks/10.7-12/JamesJayLee/manifesto.html>

<sup>48</sup> James Jay Lee, "Demands and Sayings of James Jay Lee", 2010.

In addition to these single-actor cases, there are groups actively promoting ideologies that can be identified as VMEE. An example is the **Individualistas Tendiendo a lo Salvaje (Individualists Tending to the Wild, ITS)** movement. The group started its operations in Mexico in the 2010's and call themselves "wild terrorists". Its core beliefs are described to be a mix of 'eco-extremism', anarcho-primitivism, and eco-fascism, without fitting neatly to any end of the violent extremist spectrum.<sup>49</sup> It has reportedly expanded into Latin American countries and has been linked to two attacks in Europe where no one was injured. ITS claimed responsibility for an attempted bombing in a park in Edinburgh and an explosion at Agios Dionysios Orthodox Church in Athens, both in 2018. Five Greek nationals were arrested in connection to the two incidents.<sup>50</sup> A man connected to ITS was convicted in Italy in 2022 for plotting attacks against metro stations and a courthouse in Turin.<sup>51</sup>

Inspired by Kaczynski, ITS has blamed **scientific and technological development for the destruction of nature** and promotes misanthropic and nihilist views.<sup>52</sup> The group has been responsible for bombings, intimidations, and assassinations of the people it holds responsible for endangering nature, such as researchers and policymakers, but it also resorts to indiscriminate misanthropic violence.<sup>53</sup> It currently claims high amounts of damage to property and the death of around 37 people through its attacks outside of the EU.<sup>54</sup> The apparent (limited) ITS expansion into the EU and adjacent countries is a concern.<sup>55</sup> Europol's AP Dolphin has supported Member States' investigations into ITS for some years.

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<sup>49</sup> Despite ambiguity around its ideological position, ITS declared a union with a dozen eco-anarchist groupings in 2014. "Grupo "Reacción Salvaje", anuncia ataques terroristas en México" [Group "Wild Reaction" announces terrorist attacks in Mexico] (in Spanish). Al Momento, 2014. Archived from the original on 27 March 2019: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190327094631/https://almomento.mx/reaccion-salvaje-anuncia-ataques-terroristas-en-mexico/>

<sup>50</sup> Severin Carrell, "'Eco-terrorist' who planted bomb in Edinburgh park jailed", *The Guardian*, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/feb/16/eco-terrorist-who-planted-bomb-in-edinburgh-park-jailed>

<sup>51</sup> Simona Lorenzetti, "Torino, l'eco-terrorista con il reddito di cittadinanza che voleva far saltare la metro: condannato a 3 anni e 4 mesi di carcere", *Corriere Torino*, 2022. [https://torino.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/23\\_maggio\\_11/torino-l-eco-terrorista-con-il-reddito-di-cittadinanza-che-voleva-far-saltare-la-metro-condannato-a-3-anni-e-4-mesi-si-carcere-d198e7b3-22cd-4f83-a58e-c7580117cxlk.shtml](https://torino.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/23_maggio_11/torino-l-eco-terrorista-con-il-reddito-di-cittadinanza-che-voleva-far-saltare-la-metro-condannato-a-3-anni-e-4-mesi-si-carcere-d198e7b3-22cd-4f83-a58e-c7580117cxlk.shtml)

<sup>52</sup> "Maldición Eco-extremista" [Eco-extremist curse] (in Spanish). Archived from the original on 26 March 2019: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190326160517/http://maldicionecoextremista.altervista.org/>

<sup>53</sup> The ITS claims to promote "A radical ecological vision where hope and humanism are overcome by the barrel of a gun."

<sup>54</sup> Paola Andrea Spadaro, "Climate Change and Environmental Terrorism", 2020, *Journal of Strategic Security*, 13(4).

<sup>55</sup> Farinelli and Lorenzo Marinone "Contemporary Violent Left-wing and Anarchist Extremism (VLWAE) in the E,": [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ran\\_vlwae\\_in\\_the\\_eu\\_analysing\\_threats\\_potential\\_for\\_p-cve\\_112021\\_en.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ran_vlwae_in_the_eu_analysing_threats_potential_for_p-cve_112021_en.pdf).

Another group that can be linked to VMEE is the **Deep Green resistance**, which promotes accelerationist discourses of rebirth through destruction of industrial society. Despite adopting similar accelerationist beliefs as VRWE actors, the group claims no specific ideological or political leaning.<sup>56</sup> The movement is currently relatively inactive, but its ideology continues to be present in the online space, for example on Telegram. VMEE is a cause for concern as a vague and unpredictable ideology, which might be fuelled as the climate crisis escalates.

#### 4. Way forward

**The use of climate change and the environment to justify terrorist violence is an emerging threat in the EU's terrorist and violent extremist landscape.** The adoption of climate change and the environment in violent extremist rhetoric can increase the risk of radicalisation, especially among younger populations. Despite ideological differences, there are overlaps in how climate-related topics are exploited in extremist narratives across the violent extremist/terrorist spectrum. It is imperative to develop a holistic response and not approach the issue in silos. As temperatures rise in Europe, the role of the environment and climate change in the ideologies and narratives of violent extremists and terrorist might become more significant.

Furthermore, the conflation of peaceful climate activism with radicalisation and terrorism may increase polarisation by wrongly labelling activists as radicals and trivialising terrorism. Alarmist reactions to climate activism may also increase frustration with the political system among young people, increasing receptivity to violent extremist messaging and influencing.

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<sup>56</sup> Enzo Traverso. *The new faces of fascism: Populism and the far right*, 2019.

Possible measures to address the phenomenon observed in this paper include:

1. **Improving our understanding of the role of climate change and the environment in the ideologies and motivations of violent extremist actors.** More data is needed to address the phenomenon and scale of the threat. Continued attention to this phenomenon by INTCEN and Europol, including through in-depth analyses, should be encouraged.
2. **Develop a better understanding of how extremist groups leverage climate-related issues and which factors trigger individuals to commit violent extremist and terrorist acts,** e.g., with the support of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), the future EU Knowledge Hub on Radicalisation, and research projects on prevention. A strategy could be developed for how violent radicalisation motivated by climate change and environmental concerns can be better taken into account in EU's prevention efforts.
3. Working towards a **common understanding of the role of climate and environment-related topics in violent extremism across EU Member States,** identify commonalities, differences as well as enablers and barriers of violent or extremist action. Exchanges in the Council's Terrorism Working Party (TWP) could provide a starting point for further exchange and a common understanding.
4. **EU Internet Referral Unit could be consulted in view to address and flag violent extremist online content related to climate change and the environment.** It would also be beneficial to take up the issue in the EU Internet Forum with major online companies.
5. **Exchanging information with like-minded third countries** would be beneficial for scoping the phenomenon outside the EU and for sharing best practices.