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**Misogynist Incel Violence as a Post-Organizational Threat:
Addressing a New Challenge for the Current Counter-Terrorism
Strategies**

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Abstract: The number of terrorist attacks related to the male supremacist ideology, mainly affiliated with the so-called misogynist “incels”, has increased in the last decade. Despite male supremacy having been officially tracked as a motivation for acts of terrorism only since 2018, little to nothing has been done so far to effectively address this rising terrorist threat. This is due to the nature of misogynist violence itself, a hybrid phenomenon characterized by lone actors who operate outside a formal and structured organization, but ascribe to an extremist subculture that introduces many legal and conceptual ambiguities. This policy paper aims to show that in order to tackle this emerging threat, it is necessary to go beyond the traditional counter-terrorism strategies and formulate new suitable and innovative policies. After a brief introduction to the incel ideology, and its related threat assessment, the analysis will focus on the challenges posed by the existing counter-terrorism frameworks concerning incels’ post-organizational extremism and its online dimension.

Since 9/11, the broader discourse around the rise of terrorism has been predominantly occurring in the Western world. In light of the trauma and the sense of powerlessness that the attack at the World Trade Center left in people's hearts, at the beginning of the 21st Century the most urgent need was to prevent the Islamic extremist violence from propagating and causing more casualties. As this paper aims to explain, this brought to one conceptualization of terrorism which is currently unsuitable to effectively address new types of violent extremism, like the one related to the misogynist and male supremacist ideology. To understand why researchers and practitioners have reasons to believe that this is a new form of terrorism, it is necessary to dig into the phenomenon's historical background.

The origin of the misogynist ideology traces back to the 1970s. As the women's rights movement was trying to slowly erode the status quo of patriarchal societies, a new opposing movement of "men's rights" was rising: in order to counterbalance the feminist struggle, they denied the existence of patriarchy and affirmed the condition of men, and not women, as the true victims of sexism and discrimination. As these communities (like Pick Up Artists and Men's Rights Activists) were steadily expanding, the spread of internet access and online discussion forums in the 1990s and 2000s further helped them to reach their purpose. Indeed, the development of new online communities, commonly known as the "Manosphere", created a safe haven for users to bring ideas and beliefs across forums.¹ And this is how the incel ideology finally saw the light.

The Rise of Incel Ideology

The Incel movement (which is the contraction of "involuntary celibate") took its name from a website created in 1997 by a young female student at Canada's Carleton University.² The forum aimed to support people who wanted but lacked romantic relationships, and initially admitted both men and women. While this forum was not conceived with a misogynist intention, the audiences for Pickup Artist and incel communities overlapped with respect to men dissatisfied with their sexual

¹ Megan Kelly, Alex DiBranco, and Julia R. DeCook, "Misogynist Incels and Male Supremacism," *New America*, February 18, 2021, <https://www.newamerica.org/political-reform/reports/misogynist-incels-and-male-supremacism/>.

² Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, "Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (April 19, 2020): pp. 565-587, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610x.2020.1751459>, 566.

experience promoting a dehumanizing language towards women. In the early 2000s, two of the most popular men-exclusive forums, *4chan* and *Reddit*, started to encourage extremist declamations in order to gain more visibility, with a prominent use of “trolling”, “shitposting” and more sarcastic language to disguise their true aggressiveness. Nowadays, researchers believe that older communities, such as Men’s Rights Activists and Pick Up Artists, are becoming less popular and active, while newer communities, like Incels and Men Going Their Own Way, are flourishing: this can be worrying since the latter are more toxic and embrace more nihilistic and extreme misogynist ideologies.

Indeed, incels ground their ideology on the assumptions that physical characteristics are those that primarily determine one’s place in the hierarchy of the society, and that women are the main culprit for this hierarchy. Consequently, they claim that women are responsible for incels’ lack of sexual and social status and, in the most extreme cases, women become the main targets of their frustration and violence.

Misogynist Incel Violence: from Online Radicalization to Violent Attacks

The very first documented mass killing which was explicitly perpetrated by an anti-feminist lone actor is the so-called “École Polytechnique massacre”, which took place in Montreal in 1989. On this occasion, a 25-year-old Canadian man, Marc Lépine, entered the mechanical engineering class at the École Polytechnique and killed 14 women, injuring 10 more. The purpose was to “fight feminism” since, according to Lépine, feminists “want to keep the advantages of women ... while seizing for themselves those of men”.³ This sense of male victimhood at the hands of women is the pillar of most episodes of misogynist violence which have become increasingly common after 2014, the year of the Isla Vista attack in Santa Barbara, California. The episode particularly stands among the others since for the first time the perpetrator, 22-year-old Elliot Rodger, clearly claimed to be part of the online incel community and publicly expressed his motivation was due to incelism. After posting numerous misogynistic videos on YouTube, outlining his profound sense of alienation

³ See note 1.

because of this serial rejection, Roger set out on his “War on Women”, as written in his autobiography.⁴ After he was denied entry to the sorority house he planned to attack, he targeted random passersby on the streets of Isla Vista, California. He actively explained through his manifesto, videos, and forum posts how he—and other incels—faced sexual injustice for which mass violence was a justified response: this made him a hero in the community, and substantially shaped the consequent trajectory of incel ideology and mass violence. The references to Rodger by incel mass killers that have followed over the past five years indicates that they are following in his footsteps, as he had hoped. Indeed, the deadliest incel terrorist attack inspired by Rodger’s case occurred in April 2018 in Toronto, Canada. A 25-year-old male named Alek Minassian drove a rented van through one of the city’s busiest streets, striking pedestrians and ultimately killing 10 persons, eight of whom were women.⁵ Generally speaking, violence committed by lone males calling themselves incels or presenting affiliations with the incel ideology has claimed more than 50 victims, averaging almost eight fatalities per incident.

The list of high-profile Incel-related attacks, available on The Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith (ADL)’s website, is the most complete source concerning examples of misogynist extremism. Considering its lengths, it is worth mentioning a few other cases, among which are the Umpqua Community College shooting which took place in 2015 in Roseburg, Oregon, and the Aztec High School shooting of 2017. The perpetrators of the two attacks, respectively Chris Harper-Mercer and William Atchison, both explicitly stated their fascination with incel ideology and admiration for Elliot Rodger, but their attacks were less clearly, and perhaps not directly, motivated by incel ideology.

Finally, the most recent case occurred in the United Kingdom, specifically in Plymouth, in 2021. The Plymouth shooting was England's deadliest shooting attack since 2010, killing five people and injuring two others. Davison, the perpetrator, used to post multiple videos on YouTube

⁴ Alex DiBranco, “Male Supremacist Terrorism as a Rising Threat,” ICCT, February 10, 2020, <https://icct.nl/publication/male-supremacist-terrorism-as-a-rising-threat/>.

⁵ Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence”, 570.

and content online echoing the incel ideology and lamenting his lack of romantic success and deriding women as “simple-minded” and shallow.⁶

As it is noticeable in many of the instances presented on ADL’s website, the role of the internet in the radicalization of violent incels is fundamental. Not only it is fungible in order to spread hate and terror online, deploying sarcastic and extreme language, but also to connect and deepen the knowledge about other incels’ experiences. Aside from the immense devotion many self-identified incels have expressed toward Elliot Rodger, it is also likely that some lone actors are able to connect with each other and coordinate their attacks. Alek Minassian, the perpetrator of the Toronto van incident, claimed in a police interview conducted after his arrest that he had been in direct communication with both Elliot Rodger and Christopher Harper-Mercer. Together, they had, in Minassian’s telling, been “plotting certain timed strikes on society in order to confuse and shake the foundations, just to put all the normies in a state of panic”.⁷ Therefore, these attacks are to be taken seriously since, even if perpetrated by single and autonomous lone actors, they could be seen as part of a wider organized plot which is likely to intensify the threat.

A New Terrorist Threat? Addressing Its Conceptual Ambiguities

Some may question whether it is legitimate to define these acts of violence as “acts of terrorism”. In this regard, most terrorism researchers widely recognize that incel-related violence is indisputably terroristic, since its core ethos revolves around the repression of a specific group along with broader societal and psychological intimidation.⁸ However, the post-organizational outlook inherent in many violent lone actors is currently posing many challenges to policymakers and scholars. Not only this is due to its evasive online dimension, but also to the profiles of the perpetrators, who may ascribe to a broader subculture without identifying with one specific group. Therefore, the overlapping of many ideologies and the adherence to different views, which are not directly connected to an unique classification, eludes the current counter-terrorism strategies

⁶ “Incels (Involuntary Celibates),” ADL, May 3, 2022.

<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/incels-involuntary-celibates>.

⁷ Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence”, 577.

⁸ Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence”, 568.

established in the aftermath of the War on Terror because they require a deeper study in the way these attacks are planned and put into action. For instance, the fact that many incel-related attacks are often perpetrated by mentally-fragile lone actors and manifest social problems often leads to a misclassification of the violence as “lone wolfism” rather than terrorism, risking to dismiss this manifestation of violence as something minor. As the author J.M. Berger stated, “even if mental-health issues contributed to the attack, that doesn’t mean it wasn’t terrorism”.⁹

Defining terrorism is not easy, but this is not something new. For decades scholars and law experts have struggled to formulate a unique and shared definition of terrorism, because defining someone as a terrorist is substantially a political choice. The legal definition of terrorism is fluid and can rapidly change, by aiming at different targets, using different tactics, and adopting new forms of organization, such as the one we are analyzing. Martin Scheinin, Professor of the Department of Law of the EUI who was appointed as the first United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights and counter-terrorism from 2005 to 2011, largely criticized the passive approach of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which did not make efforts in trying to give a clear definition of what terrorism is, but required States to take decisive action against it.¹⁰ The only exception to the inactivity of the UNSC has been the UNSC Res. 1566/2004, adopted under Chapter VII, in which is embedded “one of the best existing definitions of terrorism in international law”: “...*criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitutes offenses within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism*”. This definition validates the theory that intimidation, the use of violence and the intent to cause a state of terror are key aspects of terrorism, which is coherent to

⁹ J.M. Berger, “The Difference between a Killer and a Terrorist,” *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, April 26, 2018), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/04/the-difference-between-killer-and-terrorist/558998/>.

¹⁰ Martin Scheinin, “A Proposal for a Kantian Definition of Terrorism: Leading the World Requires Cosmopolitan Ethos”, EUI Department of Law, Research Paper No. 2020/15 (2020), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3720913>, 1.

what we noticed in the instances of misogynist incel violence. However, even if it is considered a good definition, the UNSC Res. 1566/2004 has failed in delivering a comprehensive tool adaptable to new and emerging types of violence. For instance, the formulation of the definition itself excludes the existence of forms of cyber-terrorism and acts of psychological terror not involving physical injury, potentially as traumatizing to a population as an actual attack.

Since both the psychological terror and the online dimension are particularly important elements of the threat posed by the manosphere in terms of radicalization, these gaps leave important questions and unsolved issues in tackling forms of post-organizational extremism. This leads us to the conclusion that, while clearly defining terrorism threats is doubtlessly important from a security perspective, getting trapped in a binary debate about whether or not a violent act constitutes terrorism risks missing the wider challenge presented by increasingly nebulous extremist threats, as the one of misogynist incels.¹¹

Evaluation of the Current Counter-Terrorist Strategies related to Misogynist Incel Violence

In 2018 the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) began to include male supremacy among the ideologies they track. However, the current policies regarding counter-terrorism strategies have been poorly administered to address these acts of violence. Being able to evaluate examples of violence perpetrated by lone actors could be difficult, especially due to their conceptual and terminological complexity. For this reason, the Institute for Research on Male Supremacism of the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) recommends the term ‘misogynist incel’ to distinguish the male supremacist ideology, characterized by more violent and dehumanizing language, from the personal identification with the term incel. Indeed, one can identify as an incel and struggle to find sexual relationships, without necessarily following male supremacist ideology.¹²

¹¹ Milo Comerford and Jakob Guhl, “Is the ‘Incel’ Ideology a Terror Threat? That's the Wrong Question to Ask.”, *New Statesman*, August 18, 2021, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2021/08/incel-ideology-terror-threat-s-wrong-question-ask>.

¹² See note 4.

Not only it is wrong to consider all the self-identified incels as inherently violent, but it is also important to remember that misogyny as the motivation of extremist violence is not a prerogative of incels only. Indeed, the wider misogynist landscape can also be dangerous to act as a “gateway drug” to other types of hate, especially far-right extremism. It is arguable whether to actually categorize misogynist extremism as a fringe of its own or not. For example, a 2019 report from the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right described the incel masses “are part of a growing trend of radical-right movements that are anguished by the success of neoliberalism”. ADL has also noted the links between “men’s rights activism” and the neofascist militant Proud Boys, further reinforcing the convergence of politicized misogyny with far-right activism.¹³ Other authors, however, believe that male supremacism does not fit the scheme of right-wing supremacism, and is to be conceived as a form of extremism of its own. While the debate is still open, we can all agree that the existence of a link between misogyny and white supremacy is undeniable: as in the case of Anders Breivik, who killed 77 people in Norway in 2011, the anti-feminist conspiracism has been typically combined with other far-right ideologies when manifested in many terrorist attacks.¹⁴ This denial of the interrelation between these two extreme ideologies can be harmful if embedded in a broader policy discourse. Indeed, the national responses formulated in the countries in which the attacks occurred have been diverse and, in some cases, incongruent. In Canada, after another Incel-related attack took place in Toronto in 2020, the perpetrator was finally charged with terrorism, explicitly classifying the Incel attack as “terrorist activity”.¹⁵ This constitutes a standpoint for Canada since, according to the Global Terrorism Index 2022, most deaths have occurred as a result of attacks by groups and individuals with links to the incel internet subculture.¹⁶ The same path has been followed by the Department of Public Safety of Texas, which in the 2020 Texas Domestic Terrorism Threat Assessment has included Incels among the emergent domestic terrorism

¹³ Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence”, 572.

¹⁴ See note 4.

¹⁵ See note 6.

¹⁶ Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), “Global Terrorism Index 2022: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism”, Sydney, March 2022, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTI-2022-web-04112022.pdf>.

threats.”¹⁷ At the federal level, the 2021 US National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism classified Inceldom as “a single-issue” ideology that poses a threat to public security, including it among the forms of violent extremism that can lead to terrorist attacks.¹⁸ Given the soaring rise of misogynist violence in Europe, the 2022 European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TESAT) issued by Europol, classified violent Incel-affiliated extremists “as related to terrorist offenses”. The report stated that “whereas the majority of incels are non-violent and do not approve violence, some members consider themselves to be staunch misogynists and are likely to endorse violence”.¹⁹ Moreover, Incel-affiliated violence was defined as a manifestation of terrorism also by the Report of the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation on the Operation of the Terrorism Acts 2000 and 2006 presented to the UK Parliament in March 2021, which included Incel attacks under the “novel cause terrorism” category. However, in the UK, incel violence falls into an ambiguous category of “Mixed, Unclear and Unstable” (MUU) threats, a vague term aiming to include ideological drivers of terrorist violence beyond far-right and Islamist extremism.²⁰ As it is noticeable, the lack of a comprehensive definition of terrorism shared globally causes asymmetries and incongruences among the State’s single classification: unlike the Europol, for example, the UK and the USA do not recognize the link between misogynist violence and the right-wing spectrum.

Although the recognition of the threat at a national level is undoubtedly an important stance to consider, the transnational nature of misogynist forms of extremism may suggest the need for a common ground to hinder its propagation. The recognition of new forms of terrorism is lacking both by the UNSC and its subordinate bodies, like the UN Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT).

For instance, the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism has been largely unsuitable in

¹⁷ Marta Barcellona, “Incel violence as a new terrorism threat: A brief investigation between Alt-Right and Manosphere dimensions”, *Sortuz*, *Oñati Journal of Emergent Socio-legal Studies*, Volume 11, Issue 2 (2022) pp. 170–186, ISSN 1988-0847, 177.

¹⁸ National Security Council, “National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism”, Washington, DC: Executive Office of the President/National Security Council, June 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/National-Strategy-for-Countering-Domestic-Terrorism.pdf>.

¹⁹ Europol, “European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report”, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union (2022), DOI: 10.2813/467703, 50.

²⁰ Barcellona, “Incel violence as a new terrorism threat”, 178.

formulating a serious and effective strategy against radicalization via internet and social media, underestimating the power of violent extremism online.²¹ During the sixth review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/72/284), for the first time Member States have expressed concern at the increasing use by terrorists of information and communications technologies, in particular the internet and other media, and the use of such technologies to commit, incite, recruit for, fund or plan terrorist acts.²² However, the UN structure has demonstrated to have architectural difficulties in addressing post-organizational terrorist violence. As the ideology associated with misogynist incel violence mainly manifests through lone actors rather than organized groups, it becomes nearly impossible for law enforcement agencies to identify potential attackers and stop the violence before it occurs: the perpetrators leave no traceable footprint online until they post their manifestos or digital attack advertisements and, even when they do, they are easily buried by an army of sarcastic “shitposters” who enjoy spreading extreme language but rarely have any intention of committing attacks in the real world. Amid mounting pressure from governments and civil society, some steps forward have been made in recent years in removing illegal terrorist content from more mainstream social media platforms. However, our current approaches are not fit to tackle this increasingly diffuse post-organizational threat.²³

Addressing The Threat: An Open Challenge for Policy Makers and Experts

Despite the challenge, some practitioners and scholars are trying to understand how to better implement new forms of counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization. For example, in a recent report published by the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), many authors recommend that tech companies should expand their terrorist taxonomy of the hash-sharing database to explicitly include violent misogynistic content as they already do with jihadist-related

²¹ UN General Assembly Resolution A/70/674, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, A/70/674 (15 December 2015), <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/plan-of-action-to-prevent-violent-extremism>, 19-20.

²² UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/284, The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review, A/RES/72/284 (2 July 2018), https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/a_res_72_284.pdf, 9.

²³ Milo Comerford, “Confronting the Challenge of ‘Post-Organisational’ Extremism”, Observer Research Foundation, August 19, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/confronting-the-challenge-of-post-organisational-extremism/>.

hashes. Violent misogynist content, including incels, only constitutes a tiny percentage of the hashes, but a more systematic approach to categorizing such online content will be extremely beneficial for establishing an industry standard on this matter.²⁴ In order to make it possible, it is necessary to finally adopt a gender approach within the counter-terrorism framework and to recognize that misogynist violence can be as threatening as every other hate crime-related attack.

Within this framework, setting a coordination of experts, policymakers, and tech companies would be beneficial to bring a higher understanding of incels culture, including their language, ideology and practices, and therefore to formulate detailed policy frameworks that move beyond a group-centered approach. The implementation of ad-hoc strategies designed by tech companies could constitute an asset and a real form of innovation for the rigid and rather old counter-terrorism frameworks we have encountered so far. Indeed, while tech and social media companies have been already developing their own internal guidelines and successfully removed extremist content online, specific policies around terrorism are partly hamstrung by the limitations of international lists of proscribed terrorist groups, such as the UN Designated Terror Groups list, which are focused mainly on ISIS and al-Qaeda related threats.²⁵

It is essential to set up a network made by tech companies, terrorism experts and policymakers to revamp this structure and make it more flexible and easily adaptable to the changing landscape posed by the online environment. As a matter of fact, the misogynist incels' radicalization is particularly dangerous because of its accessibility: it does not entail training or a religious or political doctrine to follow. Instead, it manipulates emotions and frustrations experienced daily by young men, coopting these feelings into a hateful ideology that attacks women, men, and, in some instances, minorities and individuals with mental illness. And, with its online presence, a catalog of incel chatrooms is only a few clicks away for anyone with an internet

²⁴ Eviane Leidig, "Why Terrorism Studies Miss the Mark When It Comes to Incels", International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, August 31, 2021, <https://icct.nl/publication/why-terrorism-studies-miss-the-mark-when-it-comes-to-incels/>.

²⁵ See note 23.

connection.²⁶ To prevent this, it is essential to provide more proactive and accessible mental health services to those men manifesting psychological and social difficulties.

Conclusions and Final Recommendations

The current issues related to the counter-terrorism gaps in addressing misogynist forms of terrorism and male supremacy are both legal and conceptual in nature. In the last years, the political responses to this form of terrorism have been less proactive than the governmental response to Islamic extremism and other forms of terrorism. To solve this problem, it is necessary to address the rising misogynist extremism and recognize its dangerous and long-lasting effects on societies.

The lack of cooperation among states and the missing efforts observed in searching for common ground in the definition of the threat are incompatible with the battle against growing forms of terrorism, with a strong post-organizational and online dimension. Also, the decentralized nature of the “manosphere” implies the rise of autonomous acts of violence without the mandate of specific groups, but inspired by broad online extremist subcultures.²⁷ Therefore, it is essential that policymakers develop counter-terrorism strategies that move beyond a group-centered approach since, as scholars Bruce Hoffman and Colin Clarke pointed out, “a confluence of ideological affinities is more powerful in inspiring and provoking violence than the hierarchical terrorist organizational structures of the past”.²⁸

This is particularly true considering that the classification of the attacks by actor type, instead of focusing on the content of the ideology behind it, often leads to a broad misperception of the terrorist threat. In the past, the vague term “lone wolf” has been overused to define violent misogynist extremists, not only bringing to the public an inaccurate description, but also an underestimation of its danger.

²⁶ Bruce Hoffman and Colin Clarke, “The Next American Terrorist”, The Cipher Brief, July 2, 2020, <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/article/united-states/the-next-american-terrorist>.

²⁷ The Institute for Strategic Dialogue, the McCain Institute, “The Threat Landscape: Incel and Misogynist Violent Extremism”, US Prevention Practitioners Network. <https://www.mccaininstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/incele-and-misogynist-violent-extremism-read-ahead-materials-august-2.pdf>, 11.

²⁸ See note 26.

Moreover, it is fundamental to incorporate the gender dimension into different fields of international security, including terrorism studies. As long as misogynist terrorism is not considered as impacting as other forms of hate-crime-related extremism the problem will not be solved. Not only should gender-motivated violence be prioritized as a security threat, but it should be recognized as a motivation for violence that feeds into right-wing extremist ideas. Even though some researchers and practitioners do not believe in a strong interconnection of the two phenomena, there are reasons to believe that male supremacism deserves to be recognized as potentially feeding into right-wing extremist ideas, and therefore be included in far-right extremism counter-strategies with a broader and intersectional approach, rather than a "single-axis" one. First of all, because male supremacism, like white supremacism, is fundamentally a right-wing belief system which can foster threat and violence at the same level of the xenophobic and racist ideology which characterize different forms of far-right extremism. Including the misogynist ideology in counter-terrorism policies would be extremely helpful to effectively prevent attacks presenting, among others, a misogynist mindset from happening.

Second, the male supremacist and misogynistic ideology is extremely accessible and re-adaptable to different forms of extremism, since it's widely present in most far-right platforms and ideologies and can constitute an indirect influence even for someone who does not self-identify as an incel. On the other hand, the misogynist incel movement has been increasingly infiltrated by far-right extremists, who see so-called "men's rights activism" as a common ground. Rodger's manifesto, for example, was not only virulently misogynistic, but also racially charged.²⁹ Excluding male supremacist ideology can risk missing the point in the deep understanding of the trajectory that the far-right movements are currently taking.

Third, there is an urge to specifically dismantle these types of binarism and strict classification in favor of the emergence of policy frameworks that move beyond a group-centered approach. As long as we keep on getting trapped in a binary debate about whether or not a violent

²⁹ Bruce Hoffman, and Jacob Ware, "Incels: America's Newest Domestic Terrorism Threat," Lawfare, January 30, 2020, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/incels-americas-newest-domestic-terrorism-threat>.

act constitutes terrorism or how to strictly classify them, we risk disregarding the wider challenge presented by the fluidity and adaptability of misogynist incels. A more attentive focus should be devoted on the influence that the ideology can exercise on the perpetrator – also for its accessible online sphere – rather than the complete acceptance and coherence to the incel ideology by all the far-rights groups.

The radicalization potential within the incels' environment is extraordinarily high for its accessibility, since it takes emotions and frustrations and weaponizes them into hatred, anger, and violence. Learning how to better intercept incel radicalization while the individuals are still in the pain and loneliness stage, by improving access to mental health treatment, is an urgent imperative.

Finally, it is essential to invest resources and efforts to deeply understand the incel ideology and formulate effective responses, to ensure more security, especially for women. This threat is exacerbated by a lack or slow response from the tech companies and public safety stakeholders and requires a major struggle to fill the gap in our understanding of the online "manosphere" communities, their language, and their ability to elude possible law enforcement intervention - including the use of dark web and a sarcastic attitude to hinder the threat assessment.³⁰

³⁰ See note 27.

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