

# Far-right violence in Portugal draws strength from skinhead roots—study

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Far-right agitators in Portugal now have different reasons to their 1970s predecessors for becoming radicalised and committing acts of political violence—a new study shows.

Influenced by the international 'skinhead' movement from the mid-1980s, current extremists drawn largely from the working classes have turned to violence to 'protect' white Portugal and Europe against the 'threat' posed by multi-racial and multicultural society.

Radicalised by the 13-year Colonial War, which started in 1961, and the revolutionary leadership's behaviour after the 1974 April Revolution, their predecessors were active in politically violent organisations aimed at stopping the advance of Communism in Portugal and safeguarding the Portuguese multi-racial and pluri-continental empire.

Researchers at the University of Birmingham and Lisbon University Institute (ISCTE) have published their findings in Perspectives on Terrorism. Their findings coincide with publication of a [comprehensive Western European right-wing extremism database](#).

They note that far-right political violence in Portugal could be found in two different periods: transition from authoritarianism to democracy (between 25 April 1974 and the mid-1980s) and from the second half of the 1980s to the present.

Dr. Raquel Da Silva, from the University of Birmingham, commented:

"Throughout the four decades of Portuguese democracy, extreme right-wing political violence has profoundly changed—both in how it is carried out and who is involved.

"In the transition to democracy, armed clandestine networks grew out of nationalist groups or paramilitary organisations within the deposed authoritarian regime. More recently, we've witnessed a fusion of the old extreme right's ultra-nationalism with the neo-Nazi racism of the skinhead subculture."

The researchers discovered that the Movimento de Acção Nacional / National Action Movement (MAN) was key in uniting nationalist militants and skinheads. The authorities dismantled MAN, but it was replaced by the Portugal Hammerskins (PHS).

Dr. Riccardo Marchi, from Lisbon University Institute, commented: "There is a notable difference between these two periods of extremism. The transition generation mobilised attacks on the headquarters of leftist parties or took up arms against selected targets.

"However, the more recent generation sparked no armed campaign against specific targets, with the most serious episodes being murders in 1989 and 1995 that resulted from spontaneous waves of urban violence."

Militants operating during the transition period enjoyed a perceived victory against the extreme left forces—allowing them to avoid any kind of judicial consequences in Portugal's post-revolutionary society.

However, the violent groups of the late 1980s and their early 21st century counterparts remain isolated—disconnected from mainstream politics and alienating moderate militants who disagree with using [violence](#).

Researchers also note that, although some transition militants were recruited from the working classes, many had a higher academic background and came from the middle-upper classes or nobility.

In contrast, the following decades saw the violent far-right in Portugal draw its support from the working class—in line with the international skinhead movement.

**More information:** [www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/viewitem/1118511/1118511-6-03-marchi.pdf](http://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/viewitem/1118511/1118511-6-03-marchi.pdf)

Provided by University of Birmingham

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