

Radicalisation and Resilience Case Study

Germany

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This case study is part of a series of in-depth reports on religiously motivated violent radicalisation - and resilience to it - in 12 countries. The series examines periods in which religious radicalisation and violence has escalated and analyses relevant policy and political discourses surrounding them. While seeking to identify factors that drove radicalisation and violence in each country, the case studies also critically assess programmes of prevention and resilience-building, identifying good practices. This series was produced by GREASE, an EU-funded research project investigating religious diversity, secularism and religiously inspired radicalisation.

Countries covered in this series:

Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Tunisia and the United Kingdom.

<http://grease.eui.eu>



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The EU-Funded GREASE project looks to Asia for insights on governing religious diversity and preventing radicalisation.

Involving researchers from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, GREASE is investigating how religious diversity is governed in over 20 countries. Our work focuses on comparing norms, laws and practices that may (or may not) prove useful in preventing religious radicalisation. Our research also sheds light on how different societies cope with the challenge of integrating religious minorities and migrants. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how religious diversity can be governed successfully, with an emphasis on countering radicalisation trends.

While exploring religious governance models in other parts of the world, GREASE also attempts to unravel the European paradox of religious radicalisation despite growing secularisation. We consider the claim that migrant integration in Europe has failed because second generation youth have become marginalised and radicalised, with some turning to jihadist terrorism networks. The researchers aim to deliver innovative academic thinking on secularisation and radicalisation while offering insights for governance of religious diversity.

The project is being coordinated by Professor Anna Triandafyllidou from The European University Institute (EUI) in Italy. Other consortium members include Professor Tariq Modood from The University of Bristol (UK); Dr. H. A. Hellyer from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) (UK); Dr. Mila Mancheva from The Centre for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria); Dr. Egdunas Raciunas from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania); Mr. Terry Martin from the research communications agency SPIA (Germany); Professor Mehdi Lahlou from Mohammed V University of Rabat (Morocco); Professor Haldun Gulalp of The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (Turkey); Professor Pradana Boy of Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia); Professor Zawawi Ibrahim of The Strategic Information and Research Development Centre (Malaysia); Professor Gurpreet Mahajan of Jawaharlal Nehru University (India); and Professor Michele Grossman of Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia). GREASE is scheduled for completion in 2022.

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GREASE - Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together European and Asian Perspectives

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Introduction

Over the past decade Germany has not been spared by the rise in religiously-inspired violent attacks that have taken place in Europe. Yet, these violent incidents have not yielded death tolls of the same magnitudes as those experienced by other European countries such as France, Spain, or the UK.¹ Overall, Germany experienced fewer than 20 casualties as a result of Islamist terrorist attacks between 2001 and 2016, and in 2017 reported just one attack classed as ‘jihadist’, although 52 persons suspected of involvement in terrorist offences were arrested that same year and the number of concluded court proceedings for terrorism offences was higher than in 2015 and 2016 (Europol, 2018).

In parallel, however, one increasingly worrisome phenomenon has been that of far-right extremism targeting religious minorities. The shooting at a shisha-bar in Hanau in February 2020 was only the latest of a series of attacks against minorities—and one that has long been downplayed and understudied, despite being identified by academics and practitioners as the most important form of radicalisation in Germany (interviews 1, 6, 7, 9, 10).

Therefore, this report focuses on right-wing attacks aimed at religious communities. Not only has this been acknowledged as the main domestic threat in 2020 by both the domestic intelligence service (the main agency gathering intelligence on extremism²) and Minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer (dpa 2020a, 2020b), but Germany represents, in international comparison, ‘the country in Western Europe with the highest level of RTV [Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence]’ (Ravndal et al. 2020, p. 17).

As argued by the head of a civil society organisation (interview 10): ‘We have always advocated that the vehemence and meticulousness towards religious forms of extremism, especially after 9/11, must necessarily be extended to right-wing radicalism. We have warned that right-wing radicalism can flourish in the shadow of the fight against Islamism. Unfortunately, our warnings were not taken seriously and today we are experiencing exactly this consequence [...] Today we are starting to see the beginning of an acknowledgement, and after Hanau it is clear at least that we have racism in the middle of our society, which is fuelled and cultivated by right-wing extremists’.

By focussing on the case studies of the murder of Walter Lübcke³ on 2 June 2019, the attack on the Halle synagogue on 9 October 2019, and the February 2020 shootings in Hanau, what emerges is a complex picture in which unresolved aspects of Germany’s past are intertwined with the fears and ‘othering’ of newer generations towards newcomers.

Methodology

This report is based on 10 semi-structured interviews with 12 individuals, conducted between January and May 2020, during fieldwork in Berlin and via telephone interviews

¹ Germany’s deadliest was on 19 December 2016, when Anis Amri, a Tunisian failed asylum seeker with links to ISIS, drove a truck into the Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 and wounding 56.

² ‘Domestic intelligence service’ is the English title used internationally by the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. A more literal translation would be ‘Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution’.

³ Lübcke, a politician and member of the Christian Democratic Union, was murdered in 2019 by a neo-Nazi extremist.

over distance. Interviewees were selected to reflect a range of stakeholders with different perspectives and experiences on issues of radicalisation, prevention, and deradicalisation. In Germany, the prevention landscape is composed of many actors, from law enforcement to publicly-funded initiatives and civil-society-led programmes. Key stakeholders therefore include researchers/analysts (interviews 2, 3, and 4), law enforcement (interview 9), state administration (interviews 7, 8), and civil society organisations (interviews 1, 3, 5, 6, 10), including two led by religious/ethnic minorities (interviews 5, 10). Of the official stakeholders, there is also representation of both the federal and federal state levels. In the German case, the perspective of civil society organisations is particularly prominent since there is a long tradition and great variety of civil society organisation involvement in countering the far right.

The semi-structured questions posed to interviewees followed a similar structure to the report, with sections on the conceptualisations of radicalisation, on the crisis events and their drivers, on state and societal reactions, and on prevention and deradicalisation programmes. The focus on the specific crisis events was used to shed a light both on the specific escalation of right-wing radicalisation, which is the subject of this report, and on the wider themes of radicalisation and prevention. Interview results have been complemented with desk research.

Conceptualisations of radicalisation and extremism

The notion of ‘radicalisation’ has enjoyed mixed success in Germany; the most widely employed term traditionally used to describe both right- and left-wing radicalism has been ‘extremism’. The concept of ‘extremism’ sought to capture different political movements and ideologies under one umbrella term, and was employed until recently in official policies to describe a tendency toward a totalitarian ideology, in opposition to a (fictional) ‘democratic centre’ represented by the Constitution (Jesse and Mannewitz 2018).

With ‘extremism’ framed in opposition to the democratic-constitutional state, it is not surprising that this notion has been used mostly by the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz –domestic intelligence service) (Wippermann 2010), an intelligence agency that gathers information on political threats to the Constitution and reports to the Ministry of the Interior.⁴

Since its founding in 1950, the domestic intelligence service has used the term ‘radical’ and only started using ‘extremism’ in 1973 (Ibid.). The rationale for the shift was that using ‘radical’ posed the problem that political ideologies came under the radar of the domestic intelligence service simply because they sought to tackle social issues at their ‘roots’, whereas ‘extremism’ had an alleged clearer definition of being ‘on the fringes’ of politics and in opposition to the Constitution. In this context, ‘Islamism’ entered the debate as a ‘new’ threat to the German Constitution in the early 2000s and has been framed as another expression of extremism in national debates, while the notion of radicalisation gained currency at the international level in the aftermath of 9/11.

However, the domestic intelligence service’s usage of ‘extremism’ has received its own set of critiques: on the one hand, it has been argued that opposition to the Constitution *per se*, in absence of political violence, can end up framing as ‘extreme’ groups or individuals who simply oppose a narrowly-defined political centre but who should not be placed under security surveillance. The fact that it is the domestic intelligence service itself that defines which views are ‘extreme’ has serious practical implications: the label

⁴ The domestic intelligence service is an institutional anomaly in Western democracies that has its origins in the Cold War (Leggewie and Meier 2012).

'extreme', like the label 'radical', still allows for a vast discretionality on behalf of the domestic intelligence service. For example, the left-wing party Die Linke was kept under observation by the domestic intelligence service since its formation in 2007 until 2014, being deemed 'extreme'; yet the right-wing populist party AfD was only recently (in 2018 in the state of Thuringia and in 2019 federally) included on the list of groups deemed to hold 'extreme views'.

This should not however be interpreted as a sign that far-right violence is a novel phenomenon (interview 1):

'Right wing extremism is the core of all forms of extremism in Germany. It is historically the core, it's the sort of extremism that I would call domestic. Ironically the term of 'home grown' radicalisation, usually used for Muslim individuals radicalised in Germany, is very fitting for right-wing radicalisation, for the neo-Nazi substance that we have and have always had, also in 60s, 70s, 80s, from the Munich Oktoberfest bombing and the whole cover-up around that. We have a profound tradition of right-wing extremism after the war and outright terrorism also, which at the time was in line with the Red Army Faction, just not reported on. So, it is the very core'.

The notion of 'religiously-inspired radicalisation' applied to the far right

It is in part because of the shortcomings of the 'extremism' framework in Germany that scholars and practitioners have, in recent years, embraced the concept of radicalisation, even though differences exist between state institutions and civil society, as well as between state institutions in different federal states.

Perhaps the most significant difference is that the intelligence and law enforcement agencies tend to approach radicalisation through the prism of extremism, with the key operational criteria being a 'law and order' position interested in the occurrence of violence and crime (law enforcement) or the 'protection of the Constitution' (domestic intelligence service); academia and civil society actors, on the other hand, tend to adopt a 'pedagogical preventive position'. An analyst from a civil society organization (interview 3) commented:

'In my experience, there's a lot of horseshoe theory,⁵ equating right and left-wing extremism and exculpating the centre; which is something that academia and civil society don't share, that they don't buy into. For instance, the centre-study shows very well that racism is very spread in the centre. And that the difference between right-wing extremism and left-wing is very stark'.

A key debate around the conceptualisation of radicalisation involves the opposition between a conservative, law-and-order-focussed concept that identifies with the

⁵ The extremism concept outlined above is criticised as 'horseshoe theory' because its view of political ideologies resembles that of a horseshoe: the 'good' political centre is in the middle whereas the 'bad' extremes are distant from the centre and have more in common with each other (in the allegory of the horseshoe almost touching each other) than with the political centre.

political-cultural centre of society and a more left-wing concept emphasising the continuities between attitudes and discourses of the political centre and radicalised and extremist movements and actions, thereby problematising the political centre.

As the result of the recent escalation of right-wing terrorism, however, there has been an increased recognition of the need for collaboration between state institutions and civil society actors, leading to an approximation of conceptualisations over recent years (interviews 2, 3, 7, 8, 9).⁶

Even though there is no consensus on a definition of radicalisation that can be applied uniformly at the national level, recent academic scholarship employs the notion of *radicalisation* to describe processes that can lead from affinity to certain ideas to terrorist acts (Neumann 2013a, 2013b; Malthaner 2017; Zick 2017; Quent 2019). The notion of radicalisation is sometimes discussed in relation to the concept of extremism, with some authors defining radicalisation as a ‘process through which individuals or groups become extremists’ (Neumann, 2013b; Knipping-Sorokin et al. 2016; Abou-Taam et al. 2019). Within these traditions, scholars differentiate between ‘cognitive radicalisation’ or radicalisation of beliefs vis a vis behavioural radicalisation (Neumann 2013b; Malthaner 2017). The key aspect of behavioural radicalisation is that of violence, with recent research suggesting a differentiation of radicalisation *without* violence, *into* violence, and *within* violence (Abay Gaspar et al. 2018), but doesn’t normatively problematise all aspects of radicalisation without violence *per se*. However, in civil society, the notion of radicalisation – associated with particular emphasis on individual radicalisation events – is not without critics.

‘I don’t call it radicalisation actually, I call it “violent extremism” because the radicalisation concept is problematic. One thing that could be helpful for European discourse is the German concept of “hatred,” the precise term is “group-focused enmity” [*Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit*], hostility and aggression towards groups [...] If I were to explain what that is, it is about aggressive prejudices towards foreigners, anti-diversity, anti-Semitism or anti-LGBT opinions and attitudes; elements of social Darwinism, hostility towards those perceived as weak [...] In general I think it is a psycho-affective state, the ideology of which is almost secondary. But all extremist ideologies resemble each other and coincide in basic traits: devaluation of a group of others, strong black & white thinking, and this is the core of it’.
(interview 1)

In official documents, state institutions tend to use the notion of ‘politically motivated crime’ to refer to radicalisation, and always differentiate between right-wing, left-wing, and Islamist motivated crimes (which is the terminology used by the police) and ideologies (the term used by the domestic intelligence service). While lately there has been a shift toward the concept of ‘hate crime’, the counterterrorism apparatus is still largely organised around the concept of the perpetrator acting ‘for a cause’ rather than ‘against someone’ (such as a minority, a religious community, etc.), which would require

⁶ This recognition goes both ways and is reflected not only in greater cooperation between different organisations, but also in hiring practices in law enforcement, which is increasingly seeking academic expertise (interview 9).

adopting the perspective of the victim as the defining criteria for the categorisation of the act.

Some members of minority groups challenge the usefulness of this approach, claiming that it is important to acknowledge the religious identity of the victims of Islamophobic attacks (interview 10):

‘The right-wingers have a very clear ideological goal of Islam as an enemy to be fought [...] I’m emphasising this not because I’m somehow “greedy” for a role as a victim. But the main object of the racist attacks taking place are Muslims; the main target is Islam. That’s a fact. *Pegida* could only grow as much as it did by claiming to “prevent the Islamisation of the occident”. The AfD has in its main programme that Islam is not a religion but an ideology and has therefore to be fought [...] And right-wingers and far-right terrorists have in recent years launched many attacks on Muslims and their buildings’.⁷

However, perhaps because the focus on the motivation of the perpetrator rather than the victim groups, many interviewees did not use the term ‘religiously attributed or inspired radicalisation’ in reference to right-wing extremist attacks on religious minorities, and opinions were mixed: some thought that the religious identity of the victims was a central motivation for becoming a target; while for others, religion itself was only used instrumentally by the attackers (interview 1): ‘The core, the motivation of it, is a certain view of others – foreigners, of difference – and a great deal of anxiety and aggression’.

All interviewees agreed that, regardless of the role of Islam in far-right violent radicalisation, the conflation of ethnic and religious categories runs rife. Such conflation can be found in the bestseller *Deutschland schafft sich ab* [“Germany is abolishing itself] by Thilo Sarrazin, a politician formerly a member of the SPD, which puts forward a racist genetic argument that claims a general intellectual inferiority of Muslims (Zuber 2015). Thus there is a conflation between religious identity and a supposed genetic/racial category; a conflation that sees all migrants from the Middle East as Muslims. Many interviewees also mentioned a strategic dimension of this conflation (interview 4):

‘Religion has been instrumentalised by the far right as a fundamental pillar of cultural identity. This is very artificially constructed, with the European Christian supposedly identity constructed against the Muslim invaders, towards the others, the extremist ones, etc. [...] This is very instrumental, with the idea to reach conservative people, with the aim to portray religion as an expression of fundamentally different and incompatible cultures, so that Europe is seen as a Christian – Judean cultural space – although the Judean is often left out – in which Muslims supposedly cannot be integrated. There is a dichotomy constructed, and this

⁷ Pegida, short for ‘Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident’ is an Islamophobic political movement founded in Dresden in 2014. AfD, short for ‘Alternative for Germany’ is a far-right political party that as of 2020 holds 12.5 per cent of the seats in Parliament.

works through the association between Muslims and migration, between invasion and Islam’.

Regardless how central ‘religion’ is to the ideology and motivation of different perpetrators, it certainly plays a central role in socio-political discourses and ideologies of both identity and security, and is mobilised to identify targets for attacks, making religious minorities their primary victims. This means that in the sense of a hate-crime categorisation of attacks, minority religious identity is an important element of being targeted by right-wing terrorism.

Country Background

Germany has seen an increase in its Muslim population and the visible presence and significance of Islam both politically and socially in recent decades, just as in other countries in Western Europe. In 1970, almost 95 per cent of the population were members of one of the two dominant Christian churches, 1.3 per cent Muslim, and just 3.9 per cent non-religious, according to official statistics. In 2020, Christians still comprise the majority of the population, albeit one that has decreased to 66 per cent, while Muslims account for 6.9 per cent of the population, Buddhists and Jews 0.3 per cent each, and those who identify as non-religious have risen to 26.3 per cent. This change is the result of gradual secularisation, migration, but also the unification with the former ideologically atheist East Germany in 1990 (Sealy 2019).

Religious diversity and Muslims in particular are increasingly viewed as a threat by a large share of the population; 55 per cent of non-Muslims in west Germany and 66 per cent in east Germany said that they saw Islam as a threat and that Muslims had failed to integrate (see also, Cesari, 2013). As a matter of fact, it seems that Germans’ relations with non-Christian religions is notably worse than other Western Europeans, with political parties displaying overt distrust, if not hostility, toward Muslims (Großbölting, 2017: 240).

A new wave of far-right mobilisation against Islam swept through the country since October 2014. Pegida – Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident – had its origins in Dresden, Saxony. The movement held weekly, increasingly large ‘Monday demonstrations’ that grew from just a few to 25,000 participants in January 2015, after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris. The movement rapidly spread into other cities in Germany, with offshoots such as Legida in Leipzig and Kagida in Kassel. Politically, it was the AfD (Alternative for Germany), founded in 2013, that capitalised on the spread of Islamophobic attitudes. Electorally, the party has been very successful, particularly in eastern Germany, where it exceeded 20 per cent in all states (except Berlin). In federal elections the party achieved 12.6 per cent in 2017. Since 2020, one of the party’s three internal factions, The Wing, has been classified as being right-wing extremist according to the domestic intelligence service and is under its observation, in part because of its open support of the narrative of the ‘great replacement’ (Litschko 2020a).

An important element in strengthening – and radicalising – the AfD was likely the increase in the number of refugees received by Germany in 2015 (notably, however, after Pegida’s rise and growth), and the accompanying discourses. Asylum applications rose from 77,659 in 2012 to 745,545 in 2016 (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2020). Since 2014, there has been an increase from a very high level of 44 per cent to an even higher level of 54 per cent in 2018/19 of the population agreeing with derogatory statements about asylum seekers (Zick et al. 2019). These developments suggest a radicalisation of substantive segments of German society and in particular a

strengthening of 'New Right'⁸ attitudes that is also observable in numerous surveys; nonetheless, surveys also attest to a strengthening of democratic milieus and attitudes (Herschinger et al. 2018, p. 142-5; Zick et al. 2019).

Terrorism in Germany

Compared to other western European countries, there have been relatively few violent extremist incidents involving radical Islamist attackers. Although notably some of the attackers of 9/11 had studied at German universities, not many attacks have taken place on German soil. In the mid-2010s attacks by 'lone operators' with links to ISIS became more prominent (Burke and Feltes n.d.; Dienstbühl 2019). On the other hand, violence and terrorism from a right-wing extremist background are on the rise. While this is a transnational phenomenon in Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand (Ahmed et al. 2020, p. 142), it is particularly pronounced in Germany (O'Connor 2020, Ravndal et al. 2020).

There is a long history of right-wing terrorism in both the Federal Republic of Germany as well as in the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany, henceforth GDR). The terrorist attack that caused the highest death toll, with 13 fatalities and many more injured, took place in 1980 at the Munich Oktoberfest. The perpetrator, Gundolf Köhler, was a known neo-Nazi and member of the Wikingjugend and Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann, two far-right paramilitary groups. However, Köhler was declared a lone actor with private motivations in a rushed investigation.⁹ Less than three months after the incident, a leading member of the Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann murdered the Jewish publisher and rabbi Shlomo Levin and his partner Frida Poeschke in their home (Heymann and Wensierski 2011).

In the east, a growing far-right subculture emerged in the 1980s. But a particularly serious episode of radicalisation occurred after reunification in the 1990s, when a combination of very high unemployment, a political authority vacuum, and a state of societal anomy (interviews 1 and 7) in the former GDR created opportunities for the emergence and establishment of far-right structures. Racist violence escalated in 1991-1992, including arson attacks and bombings, claiming at least five lives. In Rostock-Lichtenhagen, a city on the German Baltic coast, during a siege on an asylum seeker shelter that lasted several days, a residential building that hosted migrants was set on fire.¹⁰ The mood in this phase was described as that of a pogrom atmosphere (Quent 2019, pp. 176-8). Out of this environment, three neo-Nazis – Uwe Böhnhardt, Uwe Mundlos, and Beate Zschäpe – who had grown up in Jena in the nascent far-right subculture further radicalised throughout the 1990s. It was not revealed until 2011 that the trio (and possibly their supporters) had committed a series of attacks from 1999 to 2011 claimed by the hitherto-unknown National Socialist Underground (NSU). The

⁸ This refers to old far-right ideological elements couched in a modernised language, such as 'the governing parties deceive the people' (22 per cent agreement), and 'Germany is being infiltrated by Islam' (25 per cent agreement) (Zick et al. 2019).

⁹ In 2014, prosecutors reopened the case and reviewed the evidence – part of which had been destroyed by the police to clear space. The case was closed in July 2020, concluding that the motivation for the attack was right-wing extremism, but without conclusive evidence for the involvement of others in the attack (Baur 2020).

¹⁰ In Rostock-Lichtenhagen, an asylum shelter and neighbouring residential building hosting over 100 workers from Vietnam was besieged for days (22-26 August 1992) by a mob of 3,000, with organised neo-Nazis among them. On the third day of altercations, the police, unable to clear the crowd, withdrew to ensure the safety of police officers. The residential building was then attacked and set on fire by the mob, with the residents still inside, amid shouts of 'we will get you all'. The fire fighters, called by a neighbour, were unable to access the building because of the crowd. The inhabitants meanwhile managed to escape through the roof onto an adjacent building.

series of attacks included nine targeted killings of people with a migratory background – often shopkeepers and restaurant owners of Turkish, Kurdish, and in one case Greek backgrounds, the murder of a police woman, another 43 attempted killings, and three bomb attacks (Quent 2019). Law enforcement, led by the special investigating mission tellingly called ‘Soko Bosphorus’, had however primarily investigated in the milieu of the victims, assuming the killings had been carried out by non-Germans. The media called the murder series *Dönermorde*, or Kebab murders, and speculated about migrant milieus, parallel worlds, and ‘walls of silence’ that allegedly made investigation impossible (Virchow et al. 2015). After the uncovering of the NSU, a long trial against the surviving key member, Zschäpe, continued until 2018, followed by an extensive public debate over right-wing terrorism as well as the failures and flaws of the security apparatus. This included allegations of cover-ups and destruction of evidence by the domestic intelligence service, which was criticised for its failure to investigate these allegations and to humanise the victims (Nebenklage NSU-Prozess 2020).

Country case studies

Against this background of right-wing radicalisation in Germany, this case study focuses on what can be argued to be a further escalation of radicalisation and terrorism in very recent years; 2019 alone has seen two incidents that can both be viewed as watershed moments in the German context, and in 2020 – during fieldwork – another, even deadlier attack shattered Germany.

The first incident is the murder of the CDU politician and mayor of the west German Hessian town of Kassel, Walter Lübcke, from close range by the neo-Nazi suspect Stefan Ernst and his suspected accomplice Markus Hartmann, both with ties to the UK-originated far-right terror organisation Combat 18. The German networks Pegida and the AfD – known to the courts, police, and the domestic intelligence service for various serious incidents in the past, but eventually dropped from surveillance – were both supported by Combat 18, which is also suspected of having provided support to the NSU. The apparent and widely-cited motive for the murder was that Lübcke had publicly defended Angela Merkel’s policy of opening the country to Syrian refugees in 2015. At an event at which the Kagida – Pegida’s Kassel off-shoot – provoked and hassled Lübcke, who reacted by saying ‘those who don’t share these values can leave the country at any time, if they don’t agree’. This statement – filmed by Ernst and posted on YouTube by Hartmann – incited significant anger in the far right. The far-right author Akif Pirinçci recalled the statement in his book *Umvolkung*,¹¹ which he read at a Pegida march of almost 20,000 in October 2015 as evidence that German politicians were propagating a ‘great replacement’ and silencing any opposition (Jentsch and Sanders 2020). This incident was of historic significance: ‘the open execution of a politician that had said positive things about Syrian refugees – this is a novelty in post-war Germany, an attack on the life of a politician with deadly result, from a neo-Nazi’. (interview 2; cf. also Ariza 2020).

The second instance was a deadly attack on a synagogue in Halle, Sachsen-Anhalt, on Yom Kippur, on 9 October 2019. While the failure of the perpetrator, Stefan Balliet, to break into the synagogue protected the more than 50 worshippers inside from harm, he killed a 40-year old woman, a passer-by, out of frustration, and later entered a Kebab

¹¹ The term *Umvolkung* means something close to the ‘great replacement’, but with an emphasis on the word *Volk* [people] – which in far-right discourse is a racially and symbolically charged term for an ethnic community.

shop – his words in the video stream: ‘*Döner, nehm wa*’ (Kebab shop, we’ll take that)¹² – killing another victim. Balliet filmed and live-streamed his attack. He had also published two English-language manifestos online, in which, among other things, he uses memes from incel culture,¹³ refers to his manifesto as a ‘spiritual guide for discontented White Men’, and unequivocally urges: ‘Kill all Jews’. He debates whether to attack a Mosque, an anti-fascist centre, or a synagogue, and concludes that even if he killed ‘100 *golems*’ it would not make a difference since ‘they’ are shipping greater numbers to Europe, and that therefore the only solution is ‘to cut the head of the ZOG [Zionist occupation government]’ (Önnerfors 2019). In the live-stream video of his attack, he further declares – again in English – that feminism is at fault for the mass migration because of sinking birth rates, and that behind all problems is ‘the Jew’ (Schwarz and Gensing, 2019). One interviewee commented (interview 3): ‘Stephan B. didn’t have a very elaborate ideology, but rather fragments of memes’. Key to this was a variation on the great replacement narrative, which, according to different segments of the online alt-right, is

‘just migration because people want to be better off, [...], is it an invasion [...] or on the most extreme fringes, the Jews started wars in the middle east to trigger migration flows, which they use so that in Europe /US races mix, and mixed races are more easily controlled’ (interview 3).

The significance of this attack cannot be overstated. Despite Balliet’s failure to achieve his declared main goal – to ‘kill as many non-Whites as possible, Jews preferred’¹⁴ – he did take the lives of two individuals. Except for the Munich shooting in 2016 (see below), this was the first significant right-wing terror attack clearly inspired by an international wave of right-wing attacks, namely the Christchurch massacre in 2019. The style (and language) of the manifestos and the live-stream followed the pattern of attacks in Poway, Pittsburgh, El Paso, and Christchurch, placing the attack in the context of a ‘global community’ (interview 3).

In the wake of the attack, many commentators, particularly Jewish, expressed anger at the failures of the security institutions to prevent it and at the lack of compassion and adequate reaction from politicians and civil society (Kapitelmann 2019, Salzborn 2019; Schneider 2019).

The attack, in Hanau, Hessen, was the deadliest of the three, claiming 10 lives plus that of the attacker, Tobias Rathjen. He opened fire at people on the streets around and inside a kiosk and two Shisha bars, killing nine people out of racist motives (Ferhat, Gökhan, Hamza, Said Nessar, Mercedes, Sedat, Kaloyan, Fatih, Vili), before fleeing to his home, where he killed his mother and then himself. Rathjen left a manifesto (in German), and a video (in English) addressed to American citizens. The manifesto contains an idiosyncratic paranoid conspiracy theory of a secret service that is reading his mind and

¹² This is arguably a similar motivation to some of the NSU murders: targeting visible institutions of migrant life in the cityscape.

¹³ ‘Incel’ stands for involuntary celibate and is a self-descriptor used by a loose online group of largely cis-heterosexual, misogynist men who blame women and feminism for their lack of sexual relationships. Part of a bigger online ‘man-o-sphere’ of antifeminist men, the incels are particularly linked to terrorism; at least three deadly terror attacks in the US and Canada have targeted women and stated ‘revenge’ against women as the main reason for the attack (Jasser et al. 2020).

¹⁴ He specified that if he killed just one Jew, it would be worth it: ‘After all, if every White Man kills just one, we win [...] Kill some more. Repeat until all Jews are dead or you prove the existence of *waihus* in Valhalla [i.e. get killed yourself], whatever comes first’ (cited in Önnerfors 2019). Thus, in his manifesto, the rationale for this depends on others following in his footsteps.

controlling world affairs. But arguably the most staggering element of the manifesto is his proclamation that the populations of more than 25 countries – mostly North African and Middle Eastern countries, including Israel, and Asian and South Asian countries, ‘must be completely annihilated’. As not all people with a German passport are ‘purebred’, half of the German population should also be annihilated.

But unlike the Halle attack, and despite the video message in English, there are few traces of the specific milieus of the alt-right or direct references to previous attacks. Nor are there any direct links to known far-right ideological currents in Germany. Expert Alexandra Kurth described the manifesto as clearly that of a right-wing extremist, but an ‘unread’ one, with his own ‘genius’ at the centre of his worldview (Kurth, in Leimbach 2020). Initially, however, the police did not classify the attack as having a right-wing extremist motivation, focussing instead on the idiosyncratic conspiracy theories as the motive (Litschko 2020b). In a highly politicised aftermath of the attack, numerous actors – in particular ethnic and religious minorities and civil society organisations – expressed their anger and frustration at the perceived inaction from the authorities about right-wing extremist terrorism (Kohrs 2020; Litschko 2020b; #SayTheirNames 2020). The attack in Hanau took place on 19 February 2020, during the fieldwork being carried out for this report and after most interviews had already been conducted. It will therefore feature less centrally in this report but should be noted as at least equally important as the other two incidents.

The three attacks described above were arguably the most notable acts of right-wing terrorism and violence in Germany in the past two years. However, there are several incidents that would be worthy of reporting and build towards them: on 22 July 2016, the fifth anniversary of the right-wing terror attacks in Oslo and Utøya, at a shopping district in Munich, 18-year-old David Sonboly shot dead nine people of colour, injured five, and killed himself. The Bavarian law enforcement agencies concluded that the motive for the shooting rampage was revenge for ‘mobbing’ (bullying). Independent consultants disagreed (e.g. Quent 2017), and after new evidence emerged, among which a direct link to a shooting in the US, new investigations concluded in October 2019 that it had indeed been ‘politically motivated’ right-wing terrorism (Ahmed et al. 2020, p. 147; Fuchs and Stroh 2020). Like Halle, the deed fits the pattern of a lone-acting terrorist who radicalised online and stood in close contact with similarly-minded individuals transnationally (Ahmed et al. 2020, p. 147; Ayyadi 2018)¹⁵.

Another noteworthy fact is that a series of attacks being planned by right-wing terrorist groups have been averted. In 2018, members of the Revolution Chemnitz group were arrested for attempted attacks on politicians, journalists, and economic elites. In February 2020, 12 members of the unnamed ‘Group S.’ had planned attacks on migrants, politicians, and mosques in 10 different federal states using semi-automatic weapons (Connolly 2020; Ahmed et al. 2020). The most alarming incident was perhaps the arrest of 30 members of the Nazi/prepper group Nordkreuz, which included police and military personnel, that was planning a large-scale attack on people they deemed responsible for the 2015 decision to accept refugees from Syria. Investigators found the names and addresses of 25,000 local politicians among a weapons cache and 2,000 body bags that had all been taken from police and official military storage units (Hille 2020; Ravndal et al. 2020).

¹⁵ Surprisingly, almost none of the interviewees made reference to this incident without prompting. This might be because a) it is three years old, or b) that the official framing of these incidents by police do play a role in how they figure in the collective memory, even for practitioners and experts in the field.

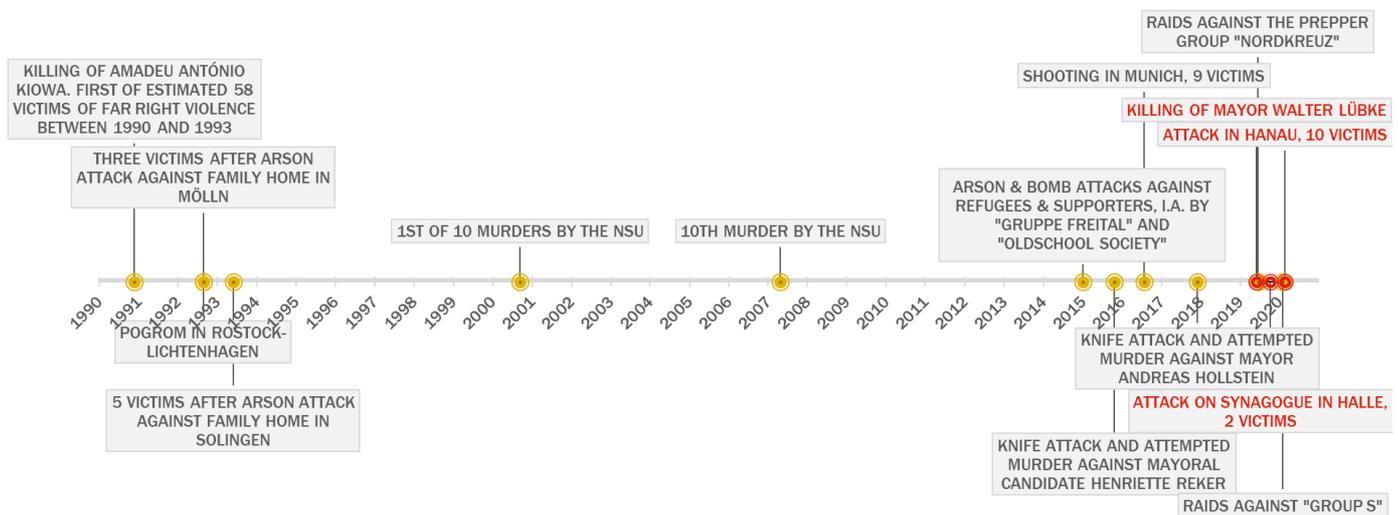


Figure 1- Right wing violence and terrorism in Germany (authors' illustration). Source: Hille 2020

Drivers of religiously-inspired radicalisation and assessment

Drivers of far-right radicalisation regarding the recent escalation are numerous and cut across several different levels of explanation, which will be used below to group the main factors.

Macro

An often-mobilised explanation for radicalisation is the ongoing change in the economic structure and rising levels of inequality, partly resulting from globalisation processes (interview 4). This is particularly heightened because of the economic crisis (interview 5):

'In times of economic insecurity, we always see that extreme ideas get stronger [...] So, people start to feel that they are going to lose out, that they experience an existential threat. And so, people look for things that offer support [...] And right wing and religious extremism, partly also left-wing extremism, offer that support, and easy answers. And they offer identities. And identities lead to groups, and people feel more secure as members of a group'.

The statement emphasises that this is an issue of perception rather than social class or economic insecurity as such. Indeed, the average AfD voter has an income in line with the national average, or even slightly above average, yet feels disproportionately disadvantaged (Herschinger et al. 2018, p. 150).

Another macro-societal change is that of gender relations (interview 3):

'One root cause is the fragmentation of society, and neoliberalism that lead to the fact that there's [a] breakdown of classical role models, [a] crisis of

masculinity. Men cannot be the sole breadwinner anymore, they do not find a job with which they can support their family alone, it is not so easy anymore to find a partner [...] So, crisis of masculinity is a big factor, if you look at the perpetrators, often socially isolated, and informed by ideas of male supremacy, of a right or claim to privilege. And to cope with their damaged ego, this is lived through omnipotence fantasies. So that's the original cause, I would say'.

The manifestos of both Stefan Balliet and Tobias Rathjen included strong misogynistic elements. Balliet's manifesto contained references and ideological proximity to the strongly misogynistic incel movement. He describes feminism as the cause of the downfall of the West, which is the legitimization for the 'great replacement' (Kemekenidou 2019), echoing a similar argument by Breivik (Kaiser 2020). Tobias Rathjen also stated in his manifesto, under the heading 'the topic of women', that he hasn't had romantic relationships with women for many many years; the text displays a feeling of entitlement to women and their bodies, not unsimilar to that of the incel community, even though he does not explicitly refer to their ideology, language, and meme culture (Jasser et al. n.d.). Still, 'aggrieved entitlement' (Kimmel 2017) of white men can be listed as a key development and as a bridge to mainstream discourses and culture that nurture male entitlement (Jasser et al. n.d.), and an entry gate for online radicalisation into the alt-right (interview 3). An additional macro element is the widespread racism, Islamophobia, and anti-Semitism, and the related concept of

“group-related human enmity” (GMK) are certainly key to right-wing terrorism. While the question of whether Muslims, Jews, or “foreigner” are the central target group depends on the particular strand of right-wing extremism. After Hanau, no one denies that racism isn't in the centre of society. Because racism is in the centre of society. Especially anti-Muslim racism [...] Muslims and Islam are the main target group of racist attacks [...] Pegida could only gain the support it did by claiming to want to prevent the “Islamisation of the occident” [...] And the right-wing radicals and terrorists have in recent years primarily targeted Muslims and their institutions'. (interview 10)

This is amplified by ongoing failures to create a society that respects and values ethnic and religious diversity (interview 5):

'This is a decisive question, how has a society learned to deal with plurality and diversity. German politics lagged behind and failed to deal with this, [...] [the previous prime minister] at the beginning of the 90s still payed money to Turkish migrants so that they return to Turkey. Rather than accepting them as part of this society. And that does something to the majority [...] And on the other hand, Germany has waited for a long time to start

approaching an equal recognition of the different religions’.

The refugee crisis of 2015-2016 and ‘the constant admonitions in the media that “we are close to a collapse of the functioning of society and state”’ (interview 10) critically amplified these issues, fostering feelings of insecurity and of ‘othering’ of migrant minorities:

‘Since 2015-6, since the “migration crisis,” the profile of the groups and individuals involved has changed drastically. There has been an explosion of attacks on refugee shelters. This has been strongly provoked by a heated [...] atmosphere that the time has come to act [...] these are people that were previously not known, they have no prehistory of violence [...] Groups like Revolution Chemnitz, Freital, the Oldschool society [...] they have formed in the context of the migration crisis and are now acting because they are convinced to act in the name of the people’ (interview 2).

‘Significantly, groups within the federal army and police forces also radicalised, for example the “uniter ¹⁶ network”’ (interview 3).

On the other hand, for already established extremist forces, ‘this was a signal that now the eschatological, final battle has begun, we cannot succeed by peaceful means only [...] militance is also increasingly seen as viable’. (interview 6)

Meso

On a meso-level, we might point to more specific trajectories of ideologies, discourses and organisations in recent years that have marked the formation and escalation of right-wing terrorism. One key turning point, according to one interviewee, was in 2010 (interview 2):

‘I would start in 2010, with Thilo Sarrazin’s book “Germany is doing away with itself,” which was a key text in making social Darwinism and racist thoughts socially acceptable [...] – this was *the* bestseller of the last 50, 60 years – and [...] penned by an SPD politician, seemingly from the centre left. The ideas of the book are not new, they go back to the thirties, the idea of the death of the people [Volkstod]. And this central paranoia of the right-wing [...] had been made socially acceptable by Sarrazin

¹⁶ A network of 200 active and former soldiers preparing for a Day X of political breakdown, storing weapons, and producing death lists, as part of the Nordkreuz division of the ‘Hannibal’ network of preppers.

[...] This connection of the extension of what is say-able, and the much broader reach of right-wing ideas through social media, is the main cause of recent escalation of radicalisation’.

In terms of extremist milieus, there are two main trajectories of far-right terrorism: one ‘homegrown’ and one international. This difference can be illustrated by ‘two different types of perpetrators – ideal-types represented in the two Stefans; Luebke and Halle’ (interview 3). The first is exemplified by the attack in Kassel:

‘This is the ‘90s generation Nazis. Back then, in the ‘90s, the key experience that Nazis made in this period is that the violent mob can achieve results. The result, with a very high level of violence, for example, to achieve a Hoyerswerda “free of foreigners” [...]. And now, with the migration crisis and the shift in public discourse [...] that acts as an accelerator, the idea that one is on the right path, and that now is a good time to escalate’. (interview 2)

The other, transnational lineage is exemplified by the attacker of Halle. This lineage comes from a ‘global community’ (interview 3) that emerged, not very long ago, in the US context, but is spreading throughout western and eastern Europe, and is in a process of increasing radicalisation. This new ‘alt-right’ emerged from imageboards, in particular 4chan,¹⁷ and from very early on was radicalised through various forces on the right – from the ‘alt-light’ around Steve Bannon and Breitbart to the more radical ‘alt-right’ and organised neo-Nazis (Nagle 2017):

‘Just to get the roadmap clear again. So, it started with this idea of the red pill,¹⁸ here is a truth, the world is controlled [...] there is an elite that controls truth. And this was long the trend until blackpilling emerged,¹⁹ which was the foundation for the retreat from political solutions and into violence [...] Then the book *Siege* provided the instruction for the method of how to use violence and insurrection and organisation, then all these groups were founded like Atomwaffendivision, Feuerkrieg, Sonnenkrieg, Blutkriegdivision, the Base, Vorherrschaftdivision [...] So, I would call it a global community that is in exchange [...] The question is how to make plans for the next attack, how can we spread those plans [...] How can we achieve that the next perpetrators [...] can kill more people’. (interview 3)

¹⁷ 4chan is an anonymous English-language imageboard website launched in 2003.

¹⁸ The meme of the red pill references a scene in the film *Matrix*.

¹⁹ In the words of interview 2: ‘This variation on the red pill theme comes from the incel subculture. The idea is a resignation; the truth is realised but it is too late to act on a political level [...] the only way now is to enforce a spiral of destabilisation, the only way to save the white race, through acts of terrorism and mass shootings that bring about the breakdown of democracy’. The New Zealand attacker Brenton Tarrant directly referenced this idea.

Siege was written by American neo-Nazi James Mason as a manifesto in the form of a newsletter that he published between 1980 and 1986, and as a book in 1993. Since 2015 there has been a renewed interest in the book by the alt-right in the US and in particular through the Atomwaffen Division, who meet with Mason (Southern Poverty Law Center n.d.):

‘And the logic of these groups is that you only count for something when you act [...] And in particular Christchurch, that is an attack that is conceptualised as a real-world meme. The idea is that copycat attacker can copy the format and add individual content and ideas, and this happened six, seven times. The aim is to establish terrorism as a cultural artefact, through meme-like charging. Through music, images, videos, obscure references, the online meme aesthetic is adapted to the real world. And this is what worries me the most at the moment.’ (interview 2)

Micro

At the micro level, radicalisation is primarily based on individual factors of psycho-emotional development – which of course are linked to larger social relations as well:

‘Every aspect of psychological mental health in a wider sense makes you vulnerable to recruiting factors. Whether you end up buying into conspiracy theories, or get sucked into a right-wing extremist militia, for some young people it is almost irrelevant, or does not make a difference. We need to develop strategies to take care of everybody, every young person, on a very broad level’. (interview 1).

The point about individual radicalisation processes indirectly ties to the question of the ‘lone actor’. This is a concept that is often used for the kinds of attacks such as Kassel, Hanau, and Halle: they are ‘classic cases of individual perpetrators, lone actors that radicalised themselves’ (interview 9). The concept of the lone actor has been used, historically, particularly in the context of far-right terrorism, as described above, unlike jihadist terrorism, in which links with terror organisations such as ISIS are often more emphasised.²⁰ However, the concept is very heatedly debated, as it seems to decontextualize the specific terrorist act and perpetrator from the ideological and organisational context.

In reference to the 2016 Munich attacks and to the one in Halle, an interviewee reflected (interview 2):

²⁰ This is partly because of a difference in tactics; confession to the crime is a key propaganda tactic for many jihadist terror groups, whereas for-right wing extremism, including the Octoberfest attack and the NSU, the tactic is sometimes to not reveal responsibility in order to either continue to reap terror (NSU) or to frame left-wing extremism (Octoberfest) in order to destabilise civil society and eventually provoke a civil war.

‘Those were perpetrators that were acting alone – even though their ideas and their rationale to act came from digital network cultures, from international communities, organised right-wing extremists [...] but the planning and execution of those deeds is fundamentally done alone. But that does not mean that it should be understood as “lone actor terrorism,” *they don’t do it for themselves, they act for the community*’. (interview 2)

Indeed, the view that the lone wolf ‘self-radicalizes’ is unsubstantiated; instead their radicalization can be traced to ‘various social networks’ (Hamm and Spaaji 2017, p. 59), which can be on- or off-line, although post-9/11 there has been a clear shift from radicalisation in organised extremist groups to affinity with anonymous online sympathisers (Ibid., p. 74). This form of provoking terrorism is called ‘stochastic terrorism’: ‘the use of mass media to provoke random acts of ideologically motivated violence that are statistically predictable but individually unpredictable’ (Hamm-Spaaji 2017, p. 84). This works particularly through the ‘emotional intensity’ of the messaging, or ‘dangerous speech’ (Benesch 2014): narratives that make violent acts appear consequential. Such messaging is understood by the audience as a call to violence even if not explicitly mentioned by the speaker, in particular, by identifying groups as foreign to exclude them from the in-group, and claims that they pose an existential threat to the in-group (cf. also Ahmed et al. 2020). This is precisely the radicalising function of the narrative of the ‘great replacement’. Those inspired to violence often have a criminal background or a mental illness (Hamm-Spaaji 2017, p. 84), thus the juxtaposition of psychological and political motivations, of ‘lone actors’ and ‘organised groups’ misrepresents this process.

It can be argued that the radicalisation factors on the macro level – a perception of increased economic vulnerability, a crisis of masculinity, and a flawed political-discursive approach to Germany’s immigration society – increasingly combine to channel vulnerable individuals, already susceptible on a micro level towards radicalisation, into an increased receptivity towards the messaging of the far right. At this point, then, the meso factors come into play. And the worrying point here is that both trajectories – the organisational and ideological developments on the national and transnational networks of the far right – show tendencies of further radicalisation (even though it might not always involve violence).

Nationally, radicalisation without violence is evidenced by the discursive shift initiated with Thilo Sarrazin’s book, the rise of the AfD and the Pegida movement, and the greatly expanded reach of right-wing content through social media. Radicalisation into and within violence is achieved primarily against the backdrop of the migration movements and the increased presence of radicalised New Right ideology. Evidence for a radicalisation within violence is provided not only by the attacks covered in this paper, but also by the increased number of terrorist groups and plots uncovered by the police. Transnationally, the largely internet-based alt-right also demonstrates an ever-increasing reach of the ‘red pill’ ideologies and conspiracy theories, as well as a radicalisation into violence through the increasing salience of the idea of the ‘black pill’, according to which the only solution is a spiral of violence. And from there follows, almost logically, also a radicalisation within violence; the ‘meme-like charging’ (interview 2) of terror that seeks to inspire copycat perpetrators and attempts to make attacks more deadly. The threat emerging from these developments cannot therefore be overstated.

The state and societal-led approaches

The German understanding of ‘countering radicalisation’ or ‘counterterrorism’ includes observation, repression, and intervention. Legislation has addressed terrorism specifically from 1976 onwards, mostly as a reaction to activities of left-wing groups, specifically through the addition of an article (§129a) to the German criminal code (StGB) criminalising the formation or support of terrorist organisations. Counterterrorism legislation was significantly increased in the aftermath of 9/11; just eight days later, Germany passed reforms restricting the rights of religious and ideological associations. In 2002, a comprehensive counterterrorism law was passed (Terrorismusbekämpfungsgesetz), broadening the powers of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, especially in their surveillance reach.

Security approaches (observation and repression)

The main actor in charge of surveillance is the Verfassungsschutz, an intelligence agency tasked with the observation of extremism, which has both a federal agency and state agencies.²¹ The main actor in charge of repression is law enforcement, headed by the federal crime agency, Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) and the 16 federal state crime agencies, Landeskriminalämter (LKA). Both are under the Ministry of the Interior (BMI). Competencies of observation and repression have been strengthened in the 1970s in response to RAF left-wing terrorism, as well as in reaction to 9/11 in the early 2000s (Erhard 2002; Lepsius 2004).

The separation of competencies between law enforcement and intelligence services – a constitutional feature born as a reaction to the Nazi-structure – as well as between the federal and state agencies, makes for a complex landscape. Efforts to better coordinate counter-terrorist measures have led to a joint terrorism interception centre (GTAZ) created in 2004 against jihadist terrorism (BVf 2018), and a joint extremism and terror interception centre (GETZ) set up in 2012 to check right-wing, left-wing, and ‘foreigner’ extremism (BVf 2019), mostly in reaction to the discovery of the flaws in countering the NSU:

‘I think 9/11 has been a key point for everyone, for all states in Western Europe and US [...] Coordination was strengthened, to bring together expertise from federal and state level, bring together police, intelligence, research, to understand the phenomenon and the challenges’ (interview 4).

However, the problem of the German state’s strong reaction to 9/11 meant that countering jihadist radicalisation was prioritised at the expense of countering right-wing terrorism, as argued by one interviewee (interview 5):

‘What I do observe is that there is definitively a different assessment and valuation of right-wing and religiously-inspired radicalisation on behalf of the state [...] [W]e had a long time the perception from political institutions that

²¹ Other agencies with a role in terrorism prevention include the federal police (Bundespolizei), the federal intelligence service (BND), the Military Counter-Intelligence Agency (Militärischer Abschirmdienst), and the federal office for migration and refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge).

it is Islamism that is the threat [...] We noticed this in particular in reports of the domestic intelligence service, which always very strongly stated that the biggest threat currently is Islamism terrorism. But one also noticed this in the funding structures, where there was a lot of money in Islamism prevention’.

Two main issues emerged as important for understanding the recent shift in focus towards the threat of right-wing radicalisation: some cite the discovery of the NSU, while others see this as a reaction to the attacks of the last few years (interviews 4, 5).

In some regions, the state police agencies introduced important changes. In Berlin, for example, a new specialised unit for countering right-wing extremism was created and a ‘comprehensive strategy against politically motivated criminality – right-wing’ was passed as reaction to the NSU, including closer cooperation with stakeholders, improved approach to victims of hate crimes, including specifically trained caseworkers, stronger requirements of diversity, and intercultural competence for staff, and ‘online investigators that do nothing else than scan the internet’ (interview 9, cf. also Plarre, 2015). But in civil society, these changes are perceived as too little, too late: ‘very frequently right-wing radicalism is underestimated, in security policy, politically, and by the media’ (interview 10).

Prevention

There are also many different actors in prevention. The main actors at the state level are the BMI with its federal agency for political education (BPB) and the ‘Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe’ programme, and the BMFSFJ (Ministry for families, pensioners, women, and youth) and its subsidiary equivalents on the federal state level. The latter coordinates the ‘Demokratie leben’ – *Lived Democracy* federal programme, the most important initiative created in 2015 through the merging of earlier programmes. Demokratie leben is the main source of funding for civil society projects and programmes of prevention, with a budget of close to 50 million euros in 2015 and 2016 and some 120 million euros for the years from 2017 onwards (Überblick Förderperiode 2015-2019 | Demokratie leben! 2020, Bericht der Bundesregierung über Arbeit und Wirksamkeit der Bundesprogramme zur Extremismusprävention n.d.).

Since 2016, the prevention work of the state follows the strategy of the federal government for the prevention of extremism and promotion of democracy. The core aims are to prevent radicalisation and violence, to strengthen societal cohesion and ‘lived democracy’ and its core values. The strategy counters ‘different forms of extremism’ explicitly hate-targeting minority groups (GMF) (BMFSFJ 2016).

However, despite the overall division of labour in countering extremism and terrorism, and the range of actors involved, according to practitioners there are efforts to increase collaboration (interview 7):

‘In general, we try to combine prevention, intervention and repression, we look at this holistically. Where are the transitions, who has what role in the advice network. There is a good fluctuation between civil society actors, police, administration. Of course, there are some differences, how broad do we understand prevention, or deradicalisation etc., and all actors have different interests and motivations. One has to remain in constant exchange’.

Prevention work itself in Germany can be classified roughly into primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. Primary prevention or political education usually targets society as a whole. Secondary prevention (or intervention) targets individuals or groups at risk of radicalisation, and tertiary prevention or deradicalisation targets already radicalised individuals who want to exit these structures.

Parallel to increased cooperation between prevention and security measures, recently there have been efforts to integrate the different levels of prevention more holistically (interview 7), even though these collaborations are stronger in relation to jihadism (interview 8):

‘regarding Islamist extremism, we had a significant development of structures in recent years. It was very focussed on security aspects, in part because of the great engagement of the interior ministry, but also of the VS [domestic intelligence service], in the working group “radicalisation”. And in the area of right-wing extremism prevention this never existed. There is now a catch-up development in the security aspects; while the professionalisation of the collaboration of NGOs and security structures is much higher in the area of Islamism’.

While the state institutions are newer to this area, civil society programmes had for a long time worked on right-wing extremism and voiced criticism towards the security imbalance (interview 5):

‘Well I believe that most civil society organisation pointed out early on that right-wing extremism was a serious problem and [...] they warned of a dramatic increase in the potential for violence [...] But this has for a long time been ignored. And a lot of resources have been poured into the area of Islamism’.

Another crosscutting issue for prevention work is the temporary nature of much funding for civil society projects. This was mentioned frequently (interview 4): ‘You can’t have a prevention program for two years’. The cause for this short-term funding is an inappropriate ad hoc legal basis for the key government prevention funding programme, Demokratie Leben, which is based on the stipulations of the child and youth plan, with the side effect that programs are funded as model projects (interview 8).

Specific reactions in the wake of recent escalation and challenges

The escalation of far-right terrorism in the last year has also led to the reinforcement and strengthening of counterterrorism approaches. In the wake of the attack in Halle, the government passed a package of measures (BMI 2019) that includes the creation of a new central agency within BKA for hate crimes on the internet, more stringent hate crime and violence penalisation, more resources for domestic intelligence on right-wing extremism, and an extension of existing prevention projects.

In February 2020, the government also drafted a bill to 'counter right-wing extremism and hate crime' that widens criteria for legal prosecution for hate crimes and provides for an initiative to force online platforms to share data with the BKA concerning posts that contain death threats or terror propaganda, among other things (Deutscher Bundestag 2020).²²

Political and media reactions; public debate

The attacks triggered significant attention from both security and prevention standpoints:

'The German state is reacting. Law enforcement and police officers and analysts is being improved in terms of numbers. [This] shows that the state is taking the issue seriously now, shows that is understood' (interview 4).

Yet grievances persisted. The debate remained, according to some, 'very narrow' and limited to certain victim groups (interview 5), with minority voices still marginalised (interview 10):

'One listens too little to the directly affected, to include them in the processes [...] And especially in the context of Islam and Muslims there is still this [...] debate mired with a general suspicion. A debate that works constantly with an extremism caveat against Muslims'.

Nor was the gap in funding closed, with right-wing terrorism behind Islamist radicalisation.

'I do see that things are starting to change, at least since Halle [...] But the dimensions in which we should fight right-wing extremism are still not appropriate; 100 million euro were spent for the fight against Islamist radicalisation after the attack on the Breitscheidplatz, and we are far from that in our work against right-wing extremism' (interview 8).

Additionally, there has been criticism of both the domestic intelligence service's outdated approach to terrorism and group dynamics and its president from 2012-2018, who frequently downplayed right-wing extremism (interview 2).

However, presenting the latest Verfassungsschutz report in July 2020, Interior Minister Seehofer for the first time named right-wing extremism as the biggest security threat in

²² Twelve alternative suggestions been proposed by three authors – a researcher, the head of a federal state domestic intelligence service, and a civil society actor – demanding a 'federal masterplan against right wing extremism' in collaboration with civil society and research. These include a constitutional declaration of Germany as an immigration society and making antiracism a constitutional federal task; more anti-discrimination bodies in administrations; a democracy promotion law; greater provision for education and pedagogy; more protection of victims of terrorism; and new democratic participation mechanisms for the majority and minority population (Dilmaghani et al. 2020).

Germany.²³ This may be due in part to the leadership changes precipitated by political scandals (Litschko 2019).

Media reactions and the tone and symbolism of public debate have once more demonstrated a lack of empathy and double standards in the treatment of perpetrator and victims in relation to jihadist and right-wing terrorists. As interviewee 2 put it,

‘The media themselves reacted very poorly. This was demonstrated when the video of the Halle Terrorist was spread by media [...] In Germany, there was an overreaction in security policy, but no understanding or empathy [...] In New Zealand, there was a very good behaviour of the prime minister, who took a lot of time, and reacted very empathetically with the communities of the victims, and also gave a very clear sign to the attacker: I won’t say your name, I have only contempt for you’.

This is again exacerbated by a double standard between jihadist and right-wing terrorists (interview 3):

‘If the perpetrator is Muslim, then often the focus is on the victims, and the perpetrator remains an evil actor, remaining in the dark. But if there’s a right-wing background, then the focus is often on the perpetrator, the motivation, potential psychological problems, the biography, etc’.²⁴

Overall, the NSU and, particularly, the recent attacks have clearly shifted attention in the overall counterterrorism effort towards the threat of right-wing extremism, rectifying some shortcomings of the past. Increased cooperation and interlinking of all structures of counter-radicalisation efforts are promising. However, events and reactions also show that Germany’s mediatic and political discourses still involve implicit bias. This emerges clearly in the continued underrepresentation of migrant and minority voices in mainstream media and politics (interview 5): ‘I think it would be an important sign to actively involve migrant or Muslim organisations in the debate, to show that they are part of our society, not external to it. So their role would be to be [...] part of the solution’.

Prevention and deradicalisation: principles, policies, and best practices

Primary Prevention / resilience building / democracy promotion

Many stakeholders (interviews 1, 4, 5, 7) believe that greater emphasis should be placed on primary rather than secondary prevention. However, secondary prevention is ‘easy to justify politically [...] because the target is concrete’ (interview 5), while primary prevention’s link to its target is more indirect.

²³ Until May 2019, the domestic intelligence service had still regarded Islamism as the highest potential for danger (Fürstenau 2019; interview 5).

²⁴ The attack in Chemnitz refers to a prevented bomb attack by an IS-sympathiser (dpa 2016). The incident involved the communal CDU politician Hans-Josef Bähner, who after an argument with the 20-year old victim and his friends, and after having hurled racist pejoratives, shot him in the shoulder (Nach Schuss in Porz 2020).

(interview 1): 'I think what states should really try is the inter-agency approach [...] at a community level – social services, schools, mental health, probation – sharing a common awareness of what an at risk young person is and sharing a skills set of what you do in first response, and how you value that more systematically'.

An emphasis on transphenomenal work also emerged as a useful alternative to working solely on right-wing extremism or jihadist/Islamist extremism (interview 7):

'Prevention is often mostly about offering a space for the discussion of values. So discussions about what values unite us, what kind of competencies do we need to orient ourselves in a diverse society – that sounds banal, but it isn't. Through these primary preventive projects, we often soon encounter processes of exclusion, discrimination, xenophobia. So since a few years we often follow the approach to start with this primary prevention, encounter these kinds of obstacles and start to work on them. And if you look at the projects [...] you can see a shift in recent years. Often, projects begin very focussed, one-dimensional, with right-wing extremism, but then move to broader dialogue projects, asking how people can participate, how can they articulate their interests, how can they understand social processes. That has become much stronger in recent years, in all projects'.

An underlying reason for transphenomenal work is that reasons for radicalisation are non-specific:

'Of course there are differences, but we need to get beyond measuring up one form of extremism against another. Because the reasons for radicalisation are mostly similar: non-fulfilment of social needs. Political education needs to be made approachable and relevant for the experiences. So not just being abstract about democracy but being able to break it down to the practical level for the individual' (interview 5).

There are however also problems with cross-phenomenal work related to the funding structures that are often specific. As one interviewer (interview 1) stated, the 'five-fold increase in funding for prevention in the last five years has mostly targeted Islamist radicalisation, and not all projects and staff with specific expertise can be easily transferred to other radicalisation phenomena'.

A key issue for primary prevention is to increase its reach. This is why interviewees stress the role of education, and in particular the education and training of staff in social institutions (interview 4). This enables an 'inter-agency' approach that aims to take care of everyone (interview 1):

‘What should be the priorities of state prevention [...] aside of what I’ve already said, schools and youth work. I think what states should really try is the inter-agency approach, not very well understood in its implications, but it means at a community level – social services, schools, mental health, probation – sharing a common awareness of what an at risk young person is and sharing a skills set of what you do in first response, and how you value that more systematically. Building capacity for interagency work at local level, well embedded, across the board, in particular, mental health and health issues, delinquency issues, social media and schooling issues. To be very wide and open in their perspective about what risk means. Not just caring about extremism prevention but also caring about mental health protection, drug prevention, all sorts of preventions that come together. Because in the end you see that with every case of full-fledged terrorism you have lots of issues [...] This is what I mean by building a resilient democratic space in civil society to take a more thorough, responsible attitude in each and every interaction’. (Interview 1)

One example of an organisation working on primary prevention is UFUQ²⁵ in Berlin which offers political education and material for schools since 2007, promoting dialogue around issues arising in a pluralistic immigration society and in particular around Islam and anti-Muslim racism (interview 5). The idea is not to ‘fight’ or directly prevent racist or religious fundamentalist ideologies but to obviate extremism indirectly by focussing on the needs of young people and fostering their participation and empowerment, as well as an understanding of diversity before extremist offerings seek to capitalise on those needs or provide one-dimensional answers.

Intervention / deradicalisation / disengagement

The most frequently-cited organization in deradicalisation was the Violence Prevention Network (VPN), which works with radicalised individuals, teaching young people how to take responsibility through their actions. VPN offers services from counselling to dissociation and disengagement assistance to deradicalisation work in prisons, on both right-wing and religiously-motivated radicalisation. The key tool is establishing a trusting relationship with the at-risk or radicalised individual.²⁶ Another frequently-referenced organisation in the field of secondary and tertiary prevention is Cultures Interactive, which focusses on high-risk youth groups, utilising youth culture and group dynamics to focus on the development of cultural and emotional intelligence (interview 8).

‘Methodologically, good programmes have a good capacity for dialogue, for exchange, which means I tell you something and try to learn from your experience as opposed to, I tell you something and try to win a point [...]

²⁵ See <https://www.ufuq.de/en/homepage/>

²⁶ See <https://violence-prevention-network.de/?lang=en>; <http://cultures-interactive.de/en/>

these methods all way round I normally call them, group and group dynamic approaches, because you do a lot more in terms of emotional and social skills doing things in a group; “open process”, no-agenda approaches’ (interview 1).²⁷

On a more local or regional level, Drudel 11 in Jena²⁸ and Jump in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern²⁹ also work with at-risk youth groups or radicalised members. Another characteristic of German secondary prevention programmes is to work with counselling centres and particularly, recently, with a systemic consulting approach:

‘Also in Germany, compared to other European countries, we have a lot of counselling centres for deradicalized individuals and support for relatives of radicalised persons, and these centres use the approach of systemic consulting. This has proved its worth in Germany and isn’t very common elsewhere. There isn’t also so much scientific evaluation yet but there are a few research projects now. This systemic approach thinks of radicalisation as a symptom that can be “cured” in the system of the personal surrounding of a person, like the family or at school. This makes it possible to take away the question of “guilt,” which makes it more approachable, but that it approaches relations between people and sees if there is something odd. And it’s resource-oriented, to ask what resources the individuals have and how can we find the resources to change things. And sometimes we go as far to say that we don’t even have to work with the index client – the radicalised person – themselves, but with their relatives and related individuals. Then this works like a cog system, we turn one cog and everything else falls slowly into place. So some of the needs that couldn’t be satisfied in the family before can then be satisfied in the family, instead of seeking for replacement in radical groups. And so the affected person can be helped to deradicalise and drop out of the groups he or she is in. And this is very different, many centres work this way (...) for example Hamburg, in NRW, in Bremen with IFAK, in Rheinland-Pfalz’.³⁰

²⁷ See the RAN declaration of good practice, mentioned in interview 1 (Weilnböck/Örell/RAN 2015) http://cultures-interactive.de/tl_files/publikationen/Fachartikel/2015_Draft%20RAN%20Derad%20Declaration%20of%20Good%20Practice_Summary%20in%20progress.pdf

²⁸ See <https://www.drudel11.de/de/>

²⁹ See <https://www.beratungsnetzwerk-mv.de/mitglieder/jump/>

³⁰ <https://ifak-bochum.de/>; <https://www.bundesverband-mobile-beratung.de/>. Specifically on systemic counselling see <https://legato-hamburg.de/wie-beraten-wir/>

Finally, in a community-based approach, the Zentrum Demokratische Kultur (ZDK) runs a project that targets an entire community if it is challenged by specific radicalisation processes. The programme is called Community Coaching and is

‘operating on a systemic, holistic level in the communities based on accurate analysis of the actual situation. We have tested this in several communities in Eastern Germany [...] Often it is directed to the key group of youth work, but it affects the whole community. Everybody - the church choir, the nursery, the youth club, the village club - has an impact on the social fabric of the community, also political parties. And all of them have to be confronted with this issue. There must be a collective process of self-understanding. We develop plans for a year or so, in which there are reflections on the issues in the village that are central to life in the community, to identity, and this is decisive. So that there is the creation of a kind of bond within the community that works against the right-wing. And this can, in specific constellations, also include some right-wing radicals. And this works best for small villages, but for communities with up to 40,000 residents as well. The staff is mostly composed of education researchers, social, cultural and political scientists, ex policemen, psychologists who got trained for these kind of projects’ (interview 6).³¹

Online radicalisation

Another key issue in the interviews was the approach to online radicalisation and the challenges this brings to prevention work, from primary prevention to deradicalisation. Some approaches blend offline-online approaches, including coaching in media literacy and resilience against extremist propaganda in schools as a primary prevention strategy. This includes, for example, CONTRA (countering propaganda by narration towards anti-radical awareness),³² a programme that produces content for schools that increases awareness and media literacy against extremist propaganda online. The project developed three learning arrangements that are ready to be used by teachers with no additional skill requirements.³³

Many interviewees stressed that producing a counter-narrative or debunking myths is not enough for deradicalisation (interview 2):

‘We cannot contain this with counter-narratives or a few YouTube videos. These people have bought into their ideologies very intensely, you cannot just turn that around like that [...] I’ve recently interviewed someone from the US, who got into the alt-right, via YouTube. Once

³¹ See <https://zentrum-demokratische-kultur.de/news/community-coaching>

³² The project is organised by a consortium of organisations in Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands, coordinated by the Federal Criminal Police Office’s Terrorism/ Extremism Research Unit and funded by the Internal Security Fund of the EU https://www.project-contras.org/Contra/EN/Home/home_node.html

³³ However, if individual pupils have already begun a process of radicalisation, teachers are advised to seek additional support.

they're in the bubble, you can't do much, one, two wrong keywords, and the communication is over. But this person got out of the alt right in the same way they got into it, through mentoring, people on YouTube they start to trust, and who refute some of the claims of the alt-right. But for that, you don't need a channel of the BPB [Federal Agency of Political Education]. You need people that have 10,000, 100,000 followers. It's all about reach. This is what the right understood, they have a reach that goes beyond anything they've ever had, through click-baits, through headlines that cause fear, etc. And civil society doesn't have that reach. Curating of social media is the key. And many other countries are much further than Germany'. (Interview 2)

Concrete projects combining relational work and online communication include 'digital streetwork' (interview 3):

'Debate/de:hate had a project of digital streetwork, transposing the concept of street work onto the digital level. For example, the platform GuteFrage.net, where young people ask questions, often in the context of doing their homework. And often there are debates about 9/11, or about criminal acts. And then we worked together with the platform to answer these questions [...] The principle is to go to digital hotspots, meeting points, you need online streetworkers that are authentic – there's no use when the forty-year-old social worker talks with gamers – it needs to be people from the community, ideally from the same social sphere [...] You can only achieve change through deep personal connection',³⁴

Repression and interlinked approaches

In repression, one of the key challenges is how to deal with online radicalisation, and the legal, policy, and logistic limitations involved. But there is growing awareness and cooperation, with some regional police offices better-equipped to address these issues.

'At the moment there isn't even the appropriate trained staff, that could fill these positions [...] The FBI is much better in this, they recruit people from the gamer community, people in their early 20s. I mean, I'm in my 30s and it was very hard for me to get a sense of what's going on on these platforms, I can imagine that a 40, 50 year old person sits in front of the computer and ceases

³⁴ Debate/de:hate (<https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/projekte/debate-dehate/>) is a project by the Amadeu-Antonio Foundation. Key to the concept of 'digital streetwork' is transferring the idea of classical streetwork – reaching out to clients in their life worlds – to the digital sphere, which means to understand practices in online communities and intervene – either in one-to-one interventions or in one-to-many debunking (https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/digital_streetwork_web-1.pdf).

to understand the world. There is so much need for literacy, to understand this, this is a whole different language [...] The problem is how to distinguish larping [live action role playing] from ideology, who are the people that are trying to infiltrate the platforms and to recruit for the right wing. This does happen strategically, on 4chan, reddit, to address people specifically. And there is a lot of need for young blood. Thus this is beyond new VS [domestic intelligence service]-people online, there needs to be a rehaul of age structures'. (Interview 2)

One federal state agency has a social media team running a counter-speech programme, working with internet investigators to speed up prosecution (interview 9):

'We try to identify perpetrators by name, which is difficult with lack of collaboration from Facebook often, or anonymisation via TOR. And what we do differently from other regional states is that when we have a name, no matter if it is the first hate crime post, we'll try to get a search warrant right after the first hate posting, and then search and prosecute accordingly'.

One key policy debate that is needed regards the online platforms used by extremists for recruitment.

'A further point is that platforms should be much more regulated, and that there should be a clear responsibility for the state [...] And the problem is that simply going through the posts manually, or even with AI, doesn't work for the whole scale of the material. I am not a fan of upload filters, but this is the problem on the platforms – if you can post everything by default, then how do you want to limit the spread of calls to violence or streams of attacks. There is this issue that the extremists invoke precisely the freedoms that make up much of the ethos of the internet. So we have the Popperian problem of tolerance, that you can't limit these problematic spreads without reducing the freedoms. To find a middle way is difficult' (interview 2).

The problem of double standards mentioned throughout this report also repeats itself on the issue of banning content. For example, Telegram, which is a key channel for far-right organising, prevented Islamist groups like ISIS from using the platform, but not right-wing groups. However, since July 2020, Telegram is also moving against violent right-wing groups online (Katz 2020).

As already mentioned, an increasingly dominant feature of prevention and intervention work is an integral approach utilising collaboration between all aspects of prevention and intervention (interview 7):

'We have come to a position [...] that the different aspects of primary prevention, deradicalization, intervention, repression all belong to the same process and are fluid. For example, we go to a school with a primary prevention approach, and then see that there are particular cases of potential radicalisation; but we then also try not to go in with the full repressive force'.³⁵

Many of these coordination platforms are based on the cooperation between public administrations and civil society organisations. But some administrations are bringing services completely in-house, which can have problematic consequences for civil society organisations in the context of their short-term funding (interview 5):

'So in Baden-Württemberg [...] they've ended the contract with VPN, and have brought it inhouse with the interior ministry. This has led to a lot of insecurity among civil society organisations. In particular because many NGOs have only short funding periods [...] And if you then compete with state structures that maybe pay better and do have open ended contracts, then there's a challenge'.

While the effects of primary prevention are sometimes hard to measure, understanding them as an infrastructure and a network on which to build deradicalisation processes is helpful (interview 7):

'Evaluation and measurability are difficult concepts. It is about a political decision, whether we want political education or not. And sometimes you need to build structures, networks, and that has a very low visibility at first. But when something happens, then these structures and networks spring into action and do work. So, it can't be just about visibility and measurability'.

Concluding comments

The recent escalation of right-wing radicalisation has laid bare a very significant problem load of the German state in relation to right-wing extremism. Significant factors on the societal level – a perceived greater economic vulnerability, a crisis of masculinity, and widespread racism and anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim attitudes – make susceptible individuals on the micro level increasingly receptive towards the messaging of the far-right, which has also vastly extended its reach through social media.

On the meso level, both national and transnational developments show trajectories of radicalisation without, into, and within violence. Domestically, a long development of 'home-grown' extremism, resulting particularly from key dynamics in the aftermath of German reunification, is currently re-radicalising in response to a growing salience of populist and New Right discourses in the public debate, and against the backdrop of the

³⁵ A local example of this kind is the regional centre of the Mecklenburgische Seenplatte in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern which offers three forms of approaches: democracy pedagogy, community advice – identifying possible problems and strengthening the social infrastructure to counter potential radicalisation processes – and crisis intervention when there is apparent radicalisation or organising by right-wing actors <https://www.cjd-rz.de/>

large migration flows in 2015-2016. These developments have led to radicalisation without violence in terms of discursive and political radicalisation, and to radicalisation into and within violence for extremists who see these conditions as an opportunity to escalate. Transnationally, an expanded reach through social media and imageboards, ideological developments leading to the idea of the 'black pill' of an escalating spiral of violence and chaos, and forms of 'stochastic terrorism' that seek to inspire more copycat terrorists and escalate the scale of the attacks, all constitute a significant problem.

The state has reacted to these developments strongly but is still in a transition phase. A key distinction is that through civil society engagement against right-wing extremism, Germany can build on a long tradition, whereas in the past the intelligence, security, and law enforcement agencies have laid bare very serious shortcomings. This was particularly evident during the NSU terror wave, where the flawed and prejudiced investigations left major wounds. Double standards persist in the treatment of terrorist incidents, with the state and media downplaying right-wing terrorism and focussing on the threat of religiously-inspired terrorism, including an 'extremism caveat' in cooperating with Muslims in Germany. Finally, individual members of law enforcement are themselves subjects of right-wing radicalisation, with some having used police data to compile death lists and an arsenal in preparation for a 'Day X', including the Hannibal/Nordkreuz network of the far right. There is now heightened focus and prosecution of such cases, but greater scrutiny is necessary.

There are, nonetheless, some reasons for cautious optimism. There is a noticeable shift in the political debate; even Interior Minister Seehofer and the domestic intelligence service now accept right-wing radicalisation as the biggest threat to security, shifting the focus of counterterrorism from Islamist terrorism to right-wing terrorism after almost two decades. Some law enforcement agencies in federal states have also made changes since 2011, publishing comprehensive strategies, increasing capacities against online radicalisation, and improving their approach and sensibilities to hate crime and hate crime victims, even though there is arguably room for improvement – particularly in relation to anti-Muslim hate crimes (interview 10). There is also an emerging public discourse and increasing understanding of the position of minorities, not least in efforts to make themselves heard.

Germany can look to a long history of civil society engagement, and some of the core institutional problems – including the absence of a democracy-promotion law that would enable projects to run for longer – seem attainable under a renewed political willingness to build on these strengths. There are also signs that the gap between civil society and state actors seems to be narrowing, both conceptually and in terms of practical cooperation. This means that despite a large problem load, the situation is better than in the 1990s in at least one respect.

Overall, however, there still seems to exist some tone-deafness on behalf of public figures and institutions in reaction to attacks. A more empathetic reaction would be more beneficial and, importantly, would unequivocally signal that an attack on Germany's minorities is an attack on all citizens, that the German state does not make implicit distinctions between 'autochthonic' Germans and those with a migration background. This would require including migrant and Muslim organisations more prominently in the public debate as agents and 'part of the solution' (interview 5) without double standards in suspicion of extremism.

It is perhaps now that the role of politics is to let those civil society and migrant organisations take a lead in its approach to countering right-wing radicalisation by tackling it from the root causes. The 'masterplan' (Dilmaghani et al. 2020) emerging from a collaborative effort from actors in research, civil society, and intelligence services, in reaction to the Hanau shooting, could be a good starting point.

Appendix: Interviews

Interview	Position descriptor
1	Practitioner / Civil society organisation
2	Researcher
3	Analyst / Civil society organisation
4	Researcher / Practitioner
5	Practitioner / Civil society organisation (Rel. min.)
6	Practitioner / Civil society organisation / criminal expert
7	State administration (federal state level) – 2 interview participants
8	State administration (federal level)
9	Law enforcement (federal state level) – 2 interview participants
10	Practitioner / Civil society organisation (Rel. min.)

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