



Brahim Ben Slama,  
Uwe Kemmesies (eds.)

# Handbook of **PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

An integrative cross-phenomenal approach  
for governmental agencies and civil society

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**PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

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## **Handbook of Preventing Violent Extremism**

An integrative cross-phenomenal approach for  
governmental agencies and civil society

Dedicated to the victims of extremist and terrorist  
violence in the interests of an open, tolerant and free  
society governed by the rule of law.

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## Holger Münch

President of the German Federal Criminal Police Office

On 18 and 19 November 2015 – five days after the coordinated attacks by the ‘Islamic State (IS)’ in Paris that left 130 dead and 700 injured – the Federal Criminal Police Office held its annual autumn conference in Mainz. The theme of the conference – ‘International Terrorism: How Can Crime Prevention and Law Enforcement Keep Up?’ – had already been set months before. The Paris attacks shockingly underlined the contemporary relevance of the conference and reminded us again just how important it is to maintain a focus not only on countering international terrorism but also on preventing terrorism in the first place and discussing suitable strategies to this end with representatives of the security authorities, the academic community and civil society.

Unfortunately, extremist crimes and violent acts of terrorism continue to be committed, despite the defeat of the IS in Syria and Iraq. In addition to international religiously motivated terrorism, we must also deal intensively these days with right-wing extremism and terrorism – a threat that never truly disappeared from our society. The acts of the ‘National Socialist Underground (NSU)’, the attacks in Hanau and Halle and the many other acts of right-wing violence since the reunification of Germany painfully demonstrate that the containment of violent extremism and terrorism remains one of the most urgent tasks for the security authorities.

But this is not the responsibility of the security authorities alone. Rather, it is a task that can only be managed successfully via an integrative, cross-phenomenal approach for governmental agencies and civil society. Police efforts to counter threats from international terrorism and to prosecute those who commit such crimes must be accompanied by interdisciplinary, interdepartmental prevention. The main aim is to prevent radicalisation processes where possible and provide those who already find themselves moving in relevant violent extremist or terrorist circles with options to get out and to de-radicalise.

From our law-enforcement point of view, we have established five central requirements that macro-social prevention must take into account in order to meet our high expectations and take maximum effect:

- the coordination of prevention and de-radicalisation measures
- targeted management of resources for practical prevention and research
- quality management and transparent evaluation
- an effective system of knowledge management
- the expansion of cooperation between the security authorities and civil society

As the central office of the German police, the Federal Criminal Police Office helps to meet these requirements by providing information relevant to the phenomena, raising awareness of potential risks and dangers, and carrying out criminological research into a wide spectrum of manifestations of criminality in general as well as political and/or religiously motivated criminality in particular, in which it cooperates closely with the academic community.

This Handbook aims at contributing to the enhancement of extremism prevention on the basis of a macro-social and cooperative approach. It reflects our certainty that the prevention of violent extremism must always be aligned with the very latest knowledge and designed to involve society as a whole. In it, numerous experts from academia, civil society and the security authorities illuminate various facets of violent extremism and terrorism as complex and challenging social phenomena and describe diverse approaches for prevention.

We are aware that this Handbook cannot reproduce all existing knowledge on the various manifestations of violent extremism and terrorism or practical prevention in all its forms. However, we are convinced that it can be a meaningful tool for those who shape and engage in the prevention of violent extremism in diverse roles and with various needs.



Holger Münch

*President of the Federal Criminal Police Office*

Wiesbaden, 2020

## Horst Seehofer

Federal Minister of the Interior (March 2018–December 2021)

No one is born an extremist. No one suddenly becomes an extremist from one day to the next. Rather, the adoption of Islamist, right-wing or left-wing extremist ideas is generally the result of a process. Radicalisation processes have various foundations and can take many forms. They usually result from a complex confluence of factors and progress in very different ways from case to case.

Of course, not every radicalisation process will necessarily end in violence – but extremist philosophies do, in themselves, represent a danger for our society. Polarisation and division are frequently employed as a means to achieve ideological goals. The disintegration of society is accepted or even welcomed. When extremists reject the foundations of our social order, this often enough includes the rejection of peaceful coexistence.

To effectively combat extremism, therefore, it is necessary to go beyond mere law enforcement. We recognise the importance of starting early in order to ensure that prevention is at the heart of counter violent extremism. Only a holistic approach in which responsibility is borne by society as a whole can guarantee the protection of our open society and a security policy that is effective in the long term.

With the 'Nationales Präventionsprogramm gegen islamistischen Extremismus' (National Prevention Programme against Islamist Extremism – NPP), the Federal Government has increased the funds available for this purpose. These will be invested, for example, to provide counselling services and programmes within the penal system, to support mosque communities, youthwork and social services, as well as to fund research projects and to evaluate our programmes and measures. By these means, working in collaboration with our partners at the federal, state and municipal level, we have expanded numerous existing programmes and launched new initiatives. We will continue this important work in the years to come, building on the solid epistemological foundations provided by close cooperation between public authorities and civil society.

This Handbook for the Prevention of Violent Extremism produced by the Federal Criminal Police Office's 'Terrorism/Extremism Research Unit (FTE)' supports this project. It provides an important overview and insights into the subject matter as a whole, the practices of the various actors and the coordination of prevention programmes. The Handbook illustrates the complexity of the 'challenge of violent extremism' and describes the measures being used to meet it. The practical knowledge it gathers and organises provides a solid foundation that we can use to adjust our responses to this challenge, establishing them as a macro-social, cross-phenomenal task. May this Handbook thus be given the attention and wide readership it deserves.



Horst Seehofer

*Federal Minister of the Interior, Building and Community*

Berlin, 2020

## Franziska Giffey

Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (March 2018–May 2021)

When we talk about security in Germany, we always have to look at both sides of the equation: security and prevention. I'm delighted to see that this maxim is prevailing. After all, extremism doesn't arrive overnight and doesn't disappear when we merely condemn it. No, it needs people who stand up for peaceful, diverse and democratic co-existence.

A large part of what holds society together are the efforts we make willingly on the part of our friends, our relatives and our colleagues. We don't label this 'prevention'.

But it has a preventive effect. The football coach, for example, who tells the kids in the team that they are all equally important for scoring goals, no matter what language they speak at home – they are contributing to democracy.

Putting your own interests aside, understanding other points of view and resolving conflicts – such skills have to be practised. That is why the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth places great value on promoting democracy. It is no coincidence that the largest federal programme in this area goes by the name 'Demokratie leben!' (Live Democracy!).

But it is also necessary to have limits: anyone breaking our laws and endangering our peaceful co-existence must be held to account. Yet by reaching out, we can prevent this from happening too often. Because, for all the many forms of radicalisation, in most cases, it is a matter of susceptible people experiencing moments of confusion and despair. Moments in which they feel abandoned by family and friends. And that is when they need someone to support them – at home, at school, at work, among their friends or at the local youth centre.

This Handbook provides engaged and interested persons in all fields of life – civil society, local authorities, state or federal government – with a comprehensive grounding in the phenomenon of extremism and radicalisation processes.

I am delighted that this Handbook has succeeded in bringing together preventive, educational work and the approach of the security authorities. I warmly thank all those who have contributed to this Handbook.

May this book be of help to all who work in this important and challenging field.



Franziska Giffey

*Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth*

Berlin, 2020

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## Introduction by the editors

Uwe Kemmesies, Brahim Ben Slama

The Handbook of Preventing Violent Extremism aims to comprehensively bring together the existing basic knowledge of a highly complex and politicised social field of action. At the same time, it seeks to raise awareness of the need to continually reflect critically on apparent certainties in theory and practice and to motivate people to do this. Extremism, radicalisation and terrorism are very fluid, changeable social phenomena. They appear at different times in different places and in different social groups, often in very different ways – this has seldom been as clearly demonstrated as in recent years, if we consider events from the Islamist attack at Berlin's Breitscheidplatz in December 2016 to the far-right shootings in Hanau in February 2020. Although the fundamental socio-psychological roadmaps that lead to the various ideological forms of extremism would appear not to vary greatly across space and time, the personal background and socio-cultural baseline conditions of each case of radicalisation are highly specific. This, too, has rarely been so obvious as in the terrorist events of recent times, both domestic and international. This must be taken into consideration in the conception and implementation of preventive measures. In short: a one-size-fits-all strategy could not do justice to the phenomenon itself nor to the work of prevention in this complex area. We need to be constantly asking whether approaches to prevention are (still) appropriate and effective.

That is enough to begin with about the 'theoretical' context of extremism prevention. With respect to concrete prevention practices, since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, we have seen a struggle emerge around the question of preventive approaches, which has increased appreciably in recent times. Practical approaches to prevention have been sought in response to the emergence of an apparently new phenomenon: religiously motivated, Islamist extremism/terrorism. This new challenge for the 'West' not only presses for answers from the security authorities on how to handle these manifestations of extremist terrorism, but also throws light on the major need for complementary prevention work.

Apparently, the stance of Western societies to Islam remains ambiguous, and relations of mutually affirmative tolerance and plurality are not yet the norm. The shortfalls in the area of integration became increasingly obvious with the rapid increase in migration to Europe in 2015. They are also expressed in the growth of various forms of right-wing populism and extremism. These in turn also occasionally trigger equally violent extreme reactions. And so Germany finds itself in a historically unique situation characterised by escalating and violence-prone mutual animosity between ideologically and religiously motivated extremists. Consequently, the expansion of preventive efforts we can observe at the federal, state and, above all, municipal levels is an understandable and welcome response to a highly complex radicalisation landscape that is increasingly receptive to extremism and prone to terrorism.

The COVID-19 crisis has only intensified this state of affairs. When we began to write this Handbook, right through the scrupulous editing process and up to the start of

proofreading, COVID-19 was still not an issue in Europe. But during the translation of this book into English, the pandemic swept across the continent, as it swept across the world, taking many millions of lives. The last two years have had a far-reaching impact on all aspects of society. We cannot predict either the long-term course of the pandemic or the future of social relations, but a few changes can already be observed. On the one hand, we are witnessing various forms of assistance in the spirit of solidarity in virtually all areas of society. These appear to – and hopefully do – have the potential to moderate the kinds of centrifugal forces that increase polarisation and erode social solidarity, and which, until recently, led to the kinds of horrifying terrorist acts we saw in Halle and Hanau. On the other hand, these same changes in public life have also created new trends in criminality, for instance by creating new opportunities for criminal activity in relation to the various phases of the pandemic. We are also seeing an acute burgeoning of conspiracy theories in connection with the COVID-19 virus – something that is often accompanied by radicalisation towards extremist worldviews. These conspiracy theories, which are currently spreading virulently online, are fuelled and exploited by various politically and religiously motivated extremist groups and subcultures. Thus, an increase in politically motivated crimes has been recorded over the last two years, which can be attributed to the pandemic. The MOTRA project, a collaborative undertaking launched in 2020 by a leading-edge research cluster funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, is attempting to estimate the extent to which radical protests are in danger of turning into extremism or terrorism.\* Although, as we have outlined, the situation is unpredictable, and despite – or rather because of – the current high degree of uncertainty with regard to the future, recent increases in preventive efforts at the federal, state and, above all, municipal levels are a sensible and welcome response to a complex set of radicalisation and extremism-related phenomena whose causes lie deeper than the COVID-19 crisis that is currently occupying all our attention.

What is lacking, however, is an overall view of prevention practices – an overview of all we know and all that has proven to be a practical and effective means of prevention with regard to the various manifestations of extremism. There is also a lack of vigorous, open and critical (including self-critical) exchange of views about our experiences in practice. Under the pressure to act, there can sometimes be a tendency to reinvent the wheel – to rediscover basic features and forms of extremism instead of discussing and building upon established and proven approaches. This occurs, in particular, because it is difficult to maintain an overview of the broad array of existing knowledge and the diversity of the various prevention programmes. The Handbook of Preventing Violent Extremism aims to assist here. Its intention is to provide an overview of the various forms of radicalisation and extremism as well as the individual fields of preventive action. The Handbook is primarily written for practitioners in the various fields of activity throughout society who are faced with the challenges of radicalisation and extremism, whether these be the parents of teenagers who are becoming radicalised, therapists working with exit programmes, mayors of municipalities where extremist groups are active, students seeking qualifications to work in this challenging field of practice, or social scientists who want to explore this exciting area of research. The overall structure of the Handbook and certain design features are the result of this wide-ranging aspiration.

\* MOTRA (2020): *Monitoringsystem und Transferplattform Radikalisierung (Monitoring System and Transfer Platform Radicalization)*. MOTRA joint project: [https://www.bka.de/DE/UnsereAufgaben/Forschung/ForschungsprojekteUndErgebnisse/TerrorismusExtremismus/Forschungsprojekte/MOTRA/motra\\_node.html](https://www.bka.de/DE/UnsereAufgaben/Forschung/ForschungsprojekteUndErgebnisse/TerrorismusExtremismus/Forschungsprojekte/MOTRA/motra_node.html) (30 April 2020).

## The structure of the Handbook

The Handbook is divided into seven self-contained chapters, which build on each other but also allow the reader to jump in at any point, depending on their interests. Specific content may also be found using the keyword index. The seven chapters are distributed between the Handbook's two main parts, each of which has a specific focus. A third, supplementary section consists of a selection of additional articles on relevant topics. Part 1, consisting of Chapters 1 to 4, deals with the theoretical foundations of violent extremism prevention under the key topics of 'theoretical references', 'phenomenology', 'radicalisation processes' and 'evaluation'. Part 2 comprises Chapters 5 to 7 and places the focus on violent extremism prevention practice in Germany. This section deals with the approaches practised here, existing prevention programmes and the current prevention landscape. Chapters 1 to 7, which cover what we could call the main body of violent extremism prevention, are supplemented by a third section comprising excursions into complementary questions and areas of society which, although not explicitly considered part of the field of violent extremism prevention itself, nevertheless influence the occurrence of radicalisation and the diverse manifestations of politically and/or religiously motivated extremisms. The topics touched upon there include conflict transformation, the media, criminal law, mobile counselling, civic education, football culture, Islamic associations, victim counselling and ethics.

Since the Handbook of Preventing Violent Extremism deals with a wide variety of working fields, phenomena and relevant academic disciplines, each of which has its own unique vocabulary, efforts have been made to use language that is comprehensible to 'laypersons' while also reflecting the current level of knowledge in each case in a way that is appropriate, concise and sufficiently nuanced. Where unavoidable and of significance for the topic in question, terms and concepts have been defined and introduced in more detail in the chapters, sometimes in text boxes set apart from the main text. Each chapter includes an introduction that highlights the key questions it covers.

### Part 1: The foundations of violent extremism prevention

**Chapter 1** (Kemmesies) provides a detailed introduction to the overall topic of the Handbook. First of all, key terms that delineate the subject matter of the Handbook are explained. In a narrow sense, this concerns the prevention of violent extremism and of politically motivated criminal acts. More broadly, the focus is on preventing conflict over political differences regarding solutions to social challenges (an ordinary occurrence in democratic societies) from culminating in anti-democratic acts and in politically or – in the broadest sense – ideologically motivated violence.

The concepts around which the practices described in the Handbook have developed are highly controversial, not only in academia but particularly in political, civic and cultural practice. What do extremism, radicalisation and terrorism mean? This Handbook does not aim to duplicate the conflict over the 'correct' definition of these terms, but to channel it pragmatically. The definitions introduced here are the result of an intensive process of discussion among the authors. Not everyone involved in the project concurs 100 per cent with all the nuances and sub-aspects of these definitions. However, they are supported by all the authors in their fundamental aspects. They can be understood as working definitions and/or a common foundation for the Handbook. They bring fundamental positions on substantive issues into focus while also allowing space for

additional viewpoints and priorities. Indeed, with regard to certain highly specific fields of action – be it in the area of civil society, the security authorities, politics or the media – it is necessary to expand on the definitions, for instance, by taking account of normative constraints pursuant to the penal code as a means of establishing when a politically or religiously motivated crime is classified as 'terrorism'.

The second part of Chapter 1 then presents the theoretical framework that underpins the Handbook. This will not involve any attempts to use theory to explain radicalisation, extremism and terrorism 'as a whole'. Nor are we concerned with developing a theoretical model of 'limited reach' that could be used to derive explanations for specific features or problems in this area of activity as a basis for directly implementing practical measures. The 'contextual structure of radicalisation model' ('Kontextstruktur Radikalisierung' or KoRa) presented here is a theoretical framework of 'medium reach'. It seeks, in the first instance, to make the multidimensionality and multi-causal conditionality of radicalisation 'theoretically' tangible and thus describable: which influencing factors and which individual and institutional stakeholders do we have to take into consideration when we find ourselves confronted with these phenomena in our everyday work within society and seek to address them preventively? So much is clear: radicalisation, extremism and even terrorism are social phenomena that inevitably affect all members of society, directly or (most commonly) indirectly. Because we are all affected in some way, even if it is merely as consumers of news media or taxpaying citizens who are impacted to a greater or lesser extent by the enormous expenditure on counter-terrorism that comes at the cost of other areas of society. The theoretical framework illuminates the practical necessity of investing our preventive efforts in this field in a whole-society approach. This brings us to a central message and key priority of the Handbook: stimulating a stronger willingness across the whole of society to accept responsibility that is not borne of an occasional, vague fear of terrorism or electoral considerations, but rather of a fact-based discourse that calculates the risks of extremism and terrorism (more) realistically.

**Chapter 2** turns to the various radical and, in particular, extremist phenomena that are relevant in Germany today. It provides an overview of the various manifestations of politically and/or religiously motivated extremism by drawing attention in particular to the commonalities and differences between the various radical milieus and extremist groups. It becomes clear that there is no single entity we can identify as either right-wing or left-wing extremism. Rather, these are phenomena that are very fluid in time and space. The various extremisms take different – sometimes very different – forms in different regions and cities, both qualitatively and quantitatively. And every extremist has followed a highly individual path, even though, in terms of the basic psycho-social roadmaps towards 'extremist' radicalisation, we can identify strong similarities between the individual routes that lead to the various radical milieus – regardless of political or religious orientation.

The four contributions to Chapter 2 deal with the phenomena of right-wing extremism (Backes and Nattke), left-wing extremism (Pfahl-Traughber, Baron, Deycke and Micus), extremism and terrorism rooted in Islamism (Hummel and Rieck) as well as the most important manifestations of transnational extremism (Bayrak and Sandikci). Besides describing current developments and contemporary manifestations of these forms of extremism, these sections also look at mobilisation and recruitment strategies. Relevant conflict issues of importance for each area are also examined.

The goal of this chapter is to provide practitioners with initial orientation in identifying and evaluating extremist manifestations so that they can develop appropriate options for preventive action.

**Chapter 3** focuses on the factors that condition and influence radicalisation processes. These are considered on three different levels in line with research that distinguishes among sets of influencing factors effective in different ways on different levels of social collectivity. First, in Chapter 3.1, Roland Eckert addresses radicalisation at the level of the social collective: what radicalises a society or societal sub-groups in which individuals are not connected by direct social ties or even indirect acquaintance?

In Chapter 3.2, Andreas Zick then narrows the focus further by placing groups in the centre of the observations. He considers both small groups – typically with direct social relationships between their members – and organisations, which are characterised by their own group identity (clear delineation from outgroups) and roles, norms and values, and which create relationships between their members by means of networks and communication structures.

In Chapter 3.3, Brahim Ben Slama focuses on the factors driving radicalisation processes at the individual level. The emphasis is on personal characteristics that appear to be relevant in cases of radicalisation, motives, individual paths to radicalisation and push and pull factors that have an effect on the individual, both for becoming involved in extremism/terrorism and for exiting. This sub-chapter also discusses the significance and limitations of common definitions of terms, which are revealed when applied to processes of individual radicalisation.

In Chapter 3.4, Diana Rieger et al. consider the significance of the internet for radicalisation processes. Their focus is on the significance of technological change and digitisation for radicalisation at the three levels discussed in Chapters 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3: society, groups and the individual. This analysis reveals that technological developments in the last decade have fundamentally transformed existing structures that regulate both the consumption and the diffusion of media. For one thing, in the age of mobile internet, information is available everywhere, all the time and is easily accessible to all; for another, control and management agencies (gatekeepers) that previously monitored compliance with ethical, legal and qualitative standards are increasingly collapsing. Consumers can slip into the role of media producers and media distributors at any time and with little effort. What would appear at first glance to be limitless freedom can manifest as a new form of external control when regarded more closely, since the sheer endless flood of available information is sorted and filtered in the background. Search algorithms do the thinking for the internet user, limit access to alternative content and inevitably lead to what are known as filter bubbles. Terrorist groups and extremist actors exploit these new opportunities to disseminate their propaganda and acquire sympathisers, supporters and new members. However, the internet can also be used by the agents of prevention to convey positive messages and play a part in stemming hate, disinformation and extremism.

The four contributions that make up Chapter 3 demonstrate that individual and collective radicalisation processes exhibit diverse dynamics and combinations of influencing factors that are effective in a variety of ways. This has significant implications for the design of prevention activities: what may have proven to be an effective approach

within prevention work with small groups could well be unsuitable for large societal groups. And what could well successfully inhibit development in the direction of violent extremism at the beginning of an individual radicalisation process might, in some circumstances, even threaten to be counter-productive when employed in the advanced stages of the radicalisation process. In short: there appear to be no universal preventive strategies that promise success across different target groups and radicalisation phases. Prevention must take the individual idiosyncrasies of (radical) milieus, groups and persons into consideration and, in doing so, observe the current social context, because both radicalisation and extremist phenomena are always in part an expression of historically unique social conflicts.

In **Chapter 4**, Junk et al. examine a distinct, practice-relevant gap in research and an obvious deficit in the profile of extremism prevention practices. The issue in question is the evaluation of violent extremism prevention. Although work in this area has visibly increased in the last few years, this is still not enough. The systematic, transparent and comprehensive evaluation of prevention projects throughout their lifecycle – from planning through to the conclusion of the project – has been rudimentary and rare. There may be many reasons for this, from the lack of resources, at the one extreme, to a failure to recognise the necessity of evaluation at the other. In this respect, Chapter 4 is concerned not only with presenting the possibilities of evaluation and highlighting specific approaches, but in particular with calling for more evaluation in this sensitive field of work. After all, it is not merely a matter of differentiating successful and less successful preventive approaches and focusing on good, functioning practices based on economically motivated considerations of efficiency. Above all, it is vital to rule out preventive approaches that are not only ineffective but may even also be counter-productive. This is of particular significance here because, in the case of violent extremism, there is a risk of substantial third-party damage. In this respect, the practical field of extremism prevention is subject to a particular moral and ethical obligation. It is important to meet this obligation by means of critical, transparent reflection on all practical activities (for more detail, see here also Kemmesies and Kowalski in this volume, Excursus 10 – Part 3). It is also necessary to carefully examine what works under which conditions in each case. Due to the circumstances indicated here, it is particularly important to promote the imperative to carry out evaluation in relation to the prevention of violent extremism. This Handbook seeks to contribute to this, including by encouraging the documentation of failings.

## Part 2: Violent extremism prevention in practice

Following the overview of the theory behind the prevention of violent extremism in Chapters 1 to 4, the practical section of the Handbook (Chapters 5 to 7) discusses violent extremism prevention in Germany from the viewpoint of the practitioners who, in various roles, actively shape the prevention landscape.

The **introduction** by Brahim Ben Slama highlights the need for prevention from the perspective of the security authorities. For the last two decades, this has been heavily focused on the phenomenon of extremism and terrorism motivated by Islamism. Beginning with the presentation of a specifically German prevention concept, which found its way into the international specialist literature a few years ago as the ‘German approach’, the introduction outlines the efforts of governmental actors in the development of prevention programmes up to the prevention work practised today. Here, some central

conclusions are also drawn from the first half of the Handbook and considered with regard to their significance for the fulfilment of a prevention requirement that focuses on a target group of primary relevance for the security authorities – namely, above all, the prevention of criminal and, in particular, violent acts.

In three sub-chapters, **Chapter 5** introduces the main working fields of prevention practice, asking: what are the target groups and particular challenges of universal (5.1), selective (5.2) and indicated (5.3) prevention? The authors of these three contributions follow an approach that differentiates prevention services according to the target group addressed in each case. This chapter is thus based on a broad understanding of ‘extremism prevention’ that goes far beyond the target groups that are regarded as being of crucial interest for the security authorities and even touches upon areas of general youth work and civic education. In Chapter 5.1, Frederick Groeger-Roth et al. examine the broad field of ‘universal extremism prevention’, which is distinguished from the most general level of helpful measures by its specific goals – namely the prevention of (extremism-related) radicalisation. Universal prevention approaches attempt to identify risk and protective factors for radicalisation and aim at promoting specific social competencies. In Chapter 5.2, Michaela Glaser et al. look at the target groups, areas of activity and approaches belonging to ‘selective extremism prevention’. The focus here is on individuals and groups who, because of their beliefs or behaviour, are not merely assessed as predisposed to radical (extremism-receptive) worldviews, but already display corresponding tendencies in their attitudes and behaviour. Approaches in this area aim at reflecting critically on ideological outlooks and worldviews and using appropriate methods of awareness-raising and intervention to halt a further tendency towards anti-democratic, extremism-receptive positions and interpretations. Following this, Marc Allroggen et al. describe in Chapter 5.3 the field of ‘indicated extremism prevention’, which concentrates on intervention in situations where radicalisation has already taken root. It includes measures for both de-radicalisation and disengagement.

Notwithstanding the difficulty discussed in the three articles of Chapter 5 of clearly defining points of contact and transition between the three fields of prevention, it becomes clear that the focus in each of the three working fields should be placed on different factors that can influence individuals, groups and ideologies. While universal prevention focuses on the analysis of risks and protective factors as a means of preventing interest in radical or extremist identification offerings, selective extremism prevention concentrates on the deconstruction of ideological reference points in order to halt developments towards a correspondingly motivated extremism or acts of violence at as early a stage as possible. And in indicated prevention, which goes hand-in-hand with de-radicalisation and exit processes, the focus is generally placed on personal factors, in processes that deal with individual psycho-social conflicts and/or needs and seek to make a life away from violence-oriented extremist groups attractive as a liveable alternative for the persons affected – and possibly also, without aiming at such, leading to their giving up entirely the radical position they had adopted in the effort, for instance, to achieve a ‘fairer’ society. The central concern of Chapter 5 is underlining the essential design features and elements of prevention services in the three broad fields of action.

Hans-Gerd Jaschke et al. build on this in **Chapter 6**, where they discuss the challenge of correlating the various measures in the various fields of action in the design of a coordinated, holistic prevention approach. Special consideration is given here to

cooperation and the need for interaction based on trust and mutual respect between the relevant governmental and civil society actors. In this chapter, too, we differentiate between three levels of consideration. First, Iris Bothe et al. examine questions concerning the particular challenges posed by the organisation of prevention at the municipal level (6.1). This addresses practice directly – after all, prevention ultimately takes place where people live, in towns and villages, each with their specific challenges and opportunities. What can be done in a local community that is (suddenly) confronted with radicalised or violent extremist groups? Who can be mobilised? Where can support – possibly from the federal or state government – be found? The final two contributions to Chapter 6 look at the shaping and support of prevention efforts at the regional and state levels (6.2) and the national (federal) level (6.3). In the article by Gregor Dietz and Antje Gansewig, two examples from Hesse and Schleswig-Holstein are used to illustrate the opportunities that exist within the framework of state programmes for violent extremism prevention. For its part, the contribution by Christian Lüders et al. describes the framework and goals of the programmes of the Federal Ministries of the Interior, Building and Community and of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

Concluding the practical section of the Handbook, Saskia Lützing et al. attempt in **Chapter 7** to trace the overall landscape of extremism prevention in Germany. The snapshot they take aims to map out the current state of practice on the basis of open-source research. Their guiding question is: which specific services are available with regards to which forms of extremism in the areas of universal, selective and indicated prevention? In addition, the ‘geographical’ distribution of prevention projects and measures is juxtaposed against the numbers of politically motivated crimes recorded for each region in order to be able to undertake an initial detailed assessment of the relationship between prevention needs and available services. In this context, there is a direct point of contact between the Handbook of Preventing Violent Extremism and the online world: the Handbook will be made available on its own website ([www.handbuch-extremismuspraevention.de](http://www.handbuch-extremismuspraevention.de)). The website will include a continually updated map of Germany showing the prevention services offered in each city and region. Chapter 7 also gives an idea of the potential that the georeferenced mapping of the prevention landscape contains for improving the targeting and effective deployment of resources: taking other indicators for the emergence of radical, extremist phenomena or associated socio-economic or socio-demographic ‘risk factors’ or ‘vulnerabilities’ into account, where should prevention services be expanded (or reduced)?

Finally, Chapter 7 looks at international factors that appear likely to have an impact on practices in Germany. How can prevention measures be coordinated internationally to face a challenge that is ultimately of global significance, at least in terms of encouraging a mutual exchange that enables reciprocal learning? This chapter also introduces existing European structures and networks, which, for all the deficits that still exist, at least provide a foundation and some starting points. There is still much potential for development at the international level in particular. There are differences among countries not only in terms of levels of impact in the various fields of extremist phenomena, which vary widely, but also with regard to the weight placed on preventive approaches in relation to, for example, law enforcement measures.

### Part 3: Complementary social fields of action

In the **supplementary section** of the Handbook, a range of experts from academia and practice examine various complementary social fields of action that are indirectly linked to violent extremism prevention. The introduction by Uwe Kemmesies outlines in general terms the relationship between services that are immediately understood as extremism prevention activities and ordinary social programmes which, for various reasons, are not considered part of violent extremism prevention, and which it is therefore particularly important to highlight here; these programmes contribute indirectly as part of a whole-society approach to the prevention of extremism, as society's ordinary structures have a conflict-regulating effect and thus mitigate the risks that can lead to violent radicalisation. In Excursus 1, Andreas Schädel and Hans-Joachim Giessmann look at opportunities for conflict transformation via the reduction of radicalisation potential. In Excursus 2, Bastian Berbner considers a dilemma: how can journalists report on terrorism without being exploited for terrorist purposes themselves? Excursus 3, written by Federal Public Prosecutor General Peter Frank and Senior Public Prosecutor Stefan Freuding, focuses on the preventive role of criminal law. In Excursus 4, Reiner Becker outlines the work of mobile counselling in the context of right-wing extremism. Excursus 5 by Daniel Duben deals with the topic of prevention work in relation to football culture. Thomas Krüger describes the role of civic education in Germany in Excursus 6. Mouhanad Khorchide looks at the role of Islamic associations in Excursus 7. Excursuses 8 and 9 deal with the victims' points of view in articles by Bianca Biwer and Egbert Schmidt, and Simone Rafael. Finally, the ethical dimension of violent extremism prevention is discussed in the article by Uwe Kemmesies and Michael Kowalski (Excursus 10).

### Outlook and thanks

The editors are aware that the ambitious goals we have set ourselves for this first edition have yet to be met in full. This is a complex field. The better we understand the manifestations of the varied and constantly evolving phenomena of extremism that we aim to prevent and the effects of the various practical preventive approaches, the better we will be able to meet our goal of gathering together relevant existing knowledge. We invite you, the reader, to provide feedback, comments, etc. to help shape and improve the Handbook – both the online version, which will be continually updated, and future editions of the print version. The editors see the 'Handbook of Preventing Violent Extremism' project as a dynamic work, whose content is to be adapted continually to ongoing developments and an evolving environment. We aim to continually update it to take account of the latest research underlying each area of the prevention landscape and – to the extent that the pace of change in this field allows – to document developments in the various fields of practice.

The concept and the format of the Handbook emerged from two central concerns: firstly, to encourage a more sober and objective discourse – removing the 'fear factor' by using risk analysis and risk assessment based on evidence and supported by research and practical experience rather than guided by emotions. Secondly, the authors hope that the expertise compiled here will be used as a management tool or as an instrument to make violent extremism prevention more efficient and, above all, more effective.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks. We, the editors, are grateful to the many experts from academia and practice who have engaged with us, two researchers from the security authorities, in a wide variety of collaborations and discussions over what is now more than a decade and a half. That this is not something to be taken for granted is reflected in the tangible scepticism and wait-and-see attitude vis-à-vis the academics at the Federal Criminal Police Office's Terrorism/Extremism Research Unit that is evident time and again even today. But we are grateful for this too, because this sceptical attitude continually pushes us to convince our audience, guided by the facts and arguing on the basis of our research findings in each case. And when this fails, we feel prompted to reconsider our positions or adjust them in light of new research findings, or to iron out any uncertainties by establishing new research projects to overcome knowledge gaps. We have had the honour and the recurring pleasure – despite the difficulties and irritations that crop up from time to time in the cooperation process – of collaborating with almost all the authors involved in the Handbook in a wide variety of project and work contexts. This collaboration with diverse experts from academia and practice is, we could say, the creative source and the foundation of knowledge and experience that underlies this volume. In view of this, we would like to express our warmest thanks not only to those involved in this Handbook, but also to everyone who briefly or lastingly accompanied us over the last few years and always offered a constructive sounding board on the diverse topics explored here. There is an important reason why we have decided to forego mentioning by name all those colleagues who quite rightly feel that they are being addressed here: we simply did not have enough space. The number of people who deserve mention quickly reached three figures, and we considered it impractical and inappropriate to single specific people out. In particular, we would like to also extend our thanks here to our former and current colleagues at the Terrorism/Extremism Research Unit.

Ultimately, the Handbook reflects the current state of a vital exchange between the academic and practitioner communities; it is also the result of lively cooperation on many projects between researchers from universities and the security authorities. The authors and editors have acted here as the scribes and facilitators of this process – though the editors alone take full responsibility for any failings. And finally, a personal note of disclosure from the editors: the idea and the format of the Handbook is not least the result of a fifteen-year professional dispute between two representatives of different cultural traditions – shaped by Islam and Christianity, respectively – and different academic disciplines: sociology and psychology. Apart from a constant, intensive exchange with the co-authors, this was possibly the key to unifying the (at times contrary) positions of the editors in a creative and productive way. For this too, we express our thanks to those who worked on this book because, without the tolerance granted to the sometimes clashing discourses and idiosyncrasies of the editors, it would have never come into being.



# PART 1

## The foundations of **violent extremism prevention**

- Concepts and theoretical references
- Forms of politically motivated crime
- Processes of radicalisation
- Evaluation

# CHAPTER 1

## Concepts, theoretical references and practical implications

Uwe Kemmesies

### Dr Uwe Kemmesies

Social scientist and director of the Terrorism/Extremism Research Unit at the Federal Criminal Police Office's Institute of Law Enforcement Studies and Training since 2005. Since 2019, Uwe Kemmesies has been Coordinator of the consortium of institutions cooperating on the MOTRA (Monitoring System and Transfer Platform Radicalisation) project, part of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research's leading-edge research cluster for the early detection, prevention and countering of Islamist extremism.



Although this Handbook is primarily concerned with practical applications in various social fields of action, in Chapter 1 we would first like to introduce some key concepts for the field of extremism prevention and mark out a theoretical framework within which the practice of extremism prevention occurs – regardless of whether the various practitioners are aware of this. In contrast to a widely held understanding, we will explicitly not be placing theory and practice in opposition to one another: the theoretical framework established here seeks to produce an overview and outline of the multifaceted framework conditions of our practical undertakings in this complex field. The aim is to increase awareness of the specific practical realities and possibilities for action at specific times – in terms of both individual radicalisation and radicalisation in society as a whole.

When the framework conditions and the phenomena we are seeking to prevent change, new practical requirements arise and our theoretical model has to be adapted or extended. In this sense, theory here is nothing more than a systematically structured pooling of our practical experience and thus a means of providing newcomers in relevant fields of practice with initial practical guidance: what should I look out for? What is more or less significant under which circumstances and at which point in time, and should therefore be given more or less priority in practical terms? A number of key practical conclusions are presented throughout and at the conclusion of the chapter.

## Key concepts – categories and definitions

We shall begin by examining some central concepts. These include the component parts of the expression ‘**extremism prevention**’ as well as the terms ‘**radicalisation**’ and ‘**terrorism**’, which are closely associated with the concept of extremism. If we follow the discourse in the media and in (security) policy discussions, the phenomena covered by these concepts would appear to be closely intertwined. However, if we take our lead from empirical research, we would seem to be well advised to differentiate between concepts and phenomena when it comes to the design of prevention practices. The equation of radicalisation with extremism and/or terrorism that one occasionally encounters poses a grave risk of the development of unsuitable means of addressing these issues.

We will look first at the concept of **prevention**, which, in contrast to the other terms, generally has positive initial associations. Prevention is an umbrella term that, in the broadest sense, describes measures implemented to stop an undesirable condition from coming about in a person (for example, an illness) or in society (here: extremism).

Depending on the practical context, numerous subcategories can be distinguished, which will be explored in more detail in the chapters and sections to come. The following broad internal differentiations are sufficient to enable us to set out the theoretical framework and define the field of action of extremism prevention: in terms of the time of intervention of preventive measures, we differentiate between **primary**, **secondary** and **tertiary prevention**. Where the intention is to implement specific measures before an undesirable condition occurs, we speak of primary prevention.

The field of secondary prevention concerns the prevention of further deterioration when the undesirable condition has already occurred, and tertiary prevention aims at preventing repeated deterioration or relapse where stabilisation or improvement of the condition has already occurred. When distinguishing preventive measures with respect to the target group, we speak of **universal**, **selective** and **indicated prevention**. Universal prevention measures are aimed at an entire population, whereas selective prevention focuses on certain population groups or groups of people that are considered, in the light of available knowledge, to be at greater risk of developing an undesirable condition. Indicated prevention is aimed at people who have already developed the undesirable condition (for more details, see Chapter 5.3). In this Handbook, extremism prevention is broadly distinguished along the lines of universal, selective and indicated prevention (see Chapter 5 for details). Furthermore – and of some relevance for the theoretical framework – preventive measures are distinguished in terms of whether they address individual behaviour (behavioural prevention) or the social living conditions (situational prevention) that can facilitate the development of undesirable conditions.

In considering the terms ‘radicalisation’, ‘extremism’ and ‘terrorism’, we should begin with general observations. The constant re-emergence of public debates over these terms – in the media and the world of politics/security policy – make it clear how politically charged they are. They are not technical terms that describe objective and tangible factors or phenomena in the manner of the natural sciences. There are no generally accepted, standard definitions in academia or politics worldwide. According to a study by Alex Schmid,<sup>1</sup> there are over 200 (sic!) definitions, deviating to a lesser or greater degree, in academic or institutional use by the various national and international institutions that deal in some way or other with the phenomenon. As well as ‘objective’ features of terrorism (e.g. the use of violence, evidence of applied strategies and tactics), these definitions also reveal many instances of ‘subjective’ classification on the basis of factors specific to different societies. We therefore need to ask how terrorism is perceived from the perspective of each institution or academic discipline. There is no unanimity regarding either which population groups are associated with each form of extremism or terrorism, nor what constitutes or characterises the terrorism and extremism in each case. This impedes an ‘enlightened’ discussion of these phenomena.

The lack of a universally shared (global) definition also hampers agreed and coordinated (international) action between the various stakeholders: which groups should activities and specific – repressive or preventive – measures target? What are the goals and priorities of civil society efforts to combat and prevent terrorism and extremism in Germany? And which form of extremism or terrorism is involved in each case: nationalism, separatism, social-revolutionary or religiously motivated extremism or terrorism?<sup>2</sup> In Germany, the acronyms NSU (National Socialist Underground), IS (Islamic State) or, going back a little further in time, RAF (Red Army Faction) are associated with these different varieties of terrorism. These manifestations of right-wing, left-wing and religiously motivated terrorism recruit from entirely different social groups, pursue (or used to pursue) very different goals and occur (or used to occur)

<sup>1</sup> Schmid 2011.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed examination of the distinctions between various forms of terrorism, see for example Hoffman 2018.

against a background of extremely different ideologies and historical social conditions. The result is a field of research and action that is clearly anything but uniform; the phenomena that it covers, which are commonly categorised under the label 'terrorism/extremism', are highly diverse along several dimensions (for distinctions among the various forms of extremism, see Chapter 2).

It is beyond the scope of this article to delve deeper into the problems of defining 'extremism' and 'terrorism'. With regard to the problem of definition, I refer here to the relevant specialist literature.<sup>3</sup> Since discussions of the various manifestations of religious/Salafist and left-wing political extremism and their relation to right-wing extremism are particularly contentious,<sup>4</sup> it should be pointed out that the official definitions of extremism used by the security authorities differ from many of those used in academia.<sup>5</sup>

And if we consider what Wikipedia says about the terms 'radicalisation' and 'radicalism', we find it defined most generally as 'the intent to transform or replace the fundamental principles of a society or political system'. The term 'radicalisation' denotes a process towards the formation of radical political attitudes. Such processes carry a risk of resulting in a criminal career, the culmination of which may involve the performance of serious acts of violence in the form of terrorist attacks. This is not the inevitable end of every radicalisation process, however, although public discourse on cases of radicalisation in society would appear from time to time to suggest so.

Why is it important to point this out here? It is important because the political radicalisation of individuals or social movements can also be positive and only rarely ends in criminality and violence. Some examples of this are the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1960s and the Indian independence movement of the 1940s and their central leading figures Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi – two deeply radicalised persons who did not allow their radical convictions to lead to violence but, quite the reverse, propagated and practised a position that was opposed to violence, a consistent politics of non-violence. The strategic benefits of this are obvious: why would a social (protest) movement take the risk of bringing the goals it pursues into disrepute through the use of violence, thus robbing itself of the opportunity to recruit support for its cause in wider sections of the population and other social milieus?

There is clearly no direct and immediate causal link between radicalisation and violence. Radicalism is generally not destructive, but is rather an engine for individual and collective societal development. We can observe radical phases in the development of both individuals and societies. With respect to individual development, these occur primarily during puberty and adolescence. In this phase of self-discovery, young people often develop controversial, provocative opinions that question the norms of adult behaviour and social conventions. Where these questions are of universal significance – for example, in relation to world peace, economic development or energy

supplies – there is generally a potential for large-scale radical protest movements to develop. This sort of protest movement forms roughly every ten to 20 years. Looking back over recent decades, examples of these include the hippie and student protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the environmental and anti-nuclear movement and the (new) peace movement of the 1970s and 1980s, the anti-globalisation and Occupy movements in the 1990s and 2000s and, currently, the international climate change protest movements Fridays for Future (FFF) and Extinction Rebellion (XR).

Considered very generally and in neutral terms, these protests appear positive: the younger generation is essentially confronting their parents and/or society's decision-makers with the question of whether they are still capable of answering contemporary challenges. Ideally, the discussions that such protests provoke generate an innovative social climate that can regulate most forms of conflict, and in which violent radicalisation is negligible compared to the scale of the protest movements. This may not always be a completely smooth process, but ultimately these 'radical' processes of political realignment provide impetus for innovation in one field of policy or another. By means of the collective critical engagement with social developments or sources of conflict initiated by the protests of younger generations, society undergoes a kind of 'future-proofing'.

If a situation threatens to occur or has already occurred in which radicalism ceases to move within a socially desirable 'corridor of innovation' and shifts towards extremism, culminating in criminal, violent behaviour that can no longer be accepted by society because violence is being done against certain social groups, repressive and preventive measures must be taken to promote (once again) the constructive potential of radical disputation while repressing the potential for violence that undoubtedly exists.

In view of the complexity of the various definitions of these concepts and social phenomena, we have deliberately chosen to use broad definitions that guarantee extensive compatibility with the definitions used in a range of practical fields dealing with the phenomena (ranging from academic research practices and civil society prevention practices to prosecution practices by the security authorities). This means that the definitions on which the Handbook is based may not necessarily encompass everything taken into consideration in the definitions of each specific practical field. The definitions should be considered working definitions that are intended to provide a basic orientation towards the phenomena in question. They can also serve as starting points for more precise definitions, allowing the introduction of additional factors or definitional criteria with regard to specific requirements in various fields of activity related to the phenomena in question.

It must also be emphasised that, contrary to the popular saying 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter', these definitions are not arbitrary and are entirely compatible with different value systems. The definitions are built on a shared foundation, which is rooted in the inalienable human rights and precept of tolerance of a free and democratic basic order and bound by the ideal of a pluralistic community.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For an overview, cf. for example Berger 2018, 23 et seq.; Bak et al. 2019, 9 et seq.; Hoffman 2018, 1 et seq.; Backes 2006, 17 et seq.; Waldmann 1998, 9 et seq.

<sup>4</sup> For example Neu 2012, 7 et seq.; Jennerjahn 2010.

<sup>5</sup> For example Neugebauer 2010, 5 et seq.

<sup>6</sup> On the legal foundations of this, cf. the paper given by legal scholar Ilse Staff (1993) at a colloquium held at Frankfurt's Goethe University on the topic of 'Fremde, Andere und das Toleranzgebot des Grundgesetzes' ('Outsiders, Others and the Precept of Tolerance in the Basic Law') in December 1992, shortly after the right-wing extremist, xenophobic murderous arson attacks in Mölln.

*Radicalisation* should be understood here as a process that leads to the development of a political and/or religious attitude that deviates fundamentally from the attitudes currently shared by the majority of society and the militant adoption of this attitude in public. As part of the process of radicalisation, a critical and hostile stance develops towards dominant attitudes and practices relating to the political, economic and/or cultural everyday life of a society. Generally, radicalisation takes the form of protest-driven revolt against specific economic (e.g. anti-globalisation), infrastructural (e.g. protests against construction projects), cultural (e.g. Mohammed caricatures), social (e.g. welfare reform), ecological (e.g. use of pesticides, climate change) developments or circumstances and/or ethical (e.g. the abortion debate) aspects of society. This revolt is generally limited in terms of time and (social) space and focused on specific issues.

Initially, radicalisation is a neutral process. Radical protest can be the starting point for both negative and positive social developments. Whether or not an attitude is 'radical' depends crucially on the historical and social context in each case. What might today still be classed as 'radical' may no longer be so tomorrow. This is clearly illustrated by the historical example of the suffragettes: the women's rights activists from the early 20th century, whose advocacy of voting rights for women was deeply militant and, it was deemed at the time, 'radical', ultimately made a substantial contribution to securing inalienable human rights in our free and democratic basic order.

In determining whether 'radical' protest movements have a negative or positive influence on the development of society, we refer back to the values upon which our definitions are based, as detailed above. At the point when 'radical' protest begins to impinge upon inalienable human rights or the precept of tolerance of our free and democratic societies, the radicalisation process must be considered no longer tolerable and measures taken to avert such developments. The aim of this Handbook is to provide practical orientation in such matters.

In defining extremism, the question of the prevailing values of a given form of society, as outlined above, has a vital role to play. *Extremism* should be understood here as an ideologically – politically and/or religiously – based fundamental opposition in the sense of a fundamental rejection of the free and democratic basic order prevailing in Germany, which is committed to the constitutionally enshrined inalienable human rights and the precept of tolerance.<sup>7</sup>

We understand *terrorism* as a strategy for realising certain political and/or religious goals that involves the organised, strategic and continued use of physical violence: terrorist means are employed with the intention of exerting a powerful psychological impact on the social environment in order to bring about the desired changes.

<sup>7</sup> In terms of the practical activities of the police to combat and prevent criminality, this definition is expanded to include a significantly wider variety of actions, as, for these purposes, every activity that contravenes one of the following basic constitutional principles is classified as extremist:

- the right of the people to exercise state authority in elections and ballots and through particular organs of legislative, executive and judicial power and to elect parliament in general, direct, free, equal and secret elections,
- the subjection of legislation to the constitutional order and the subjection of the executive and judicial power to law and justice,
- the right to form and exercise a parliamentary opposition,
- the possibility of dissolving the government and its responsibility to parliament,
- the independence of the courts,
- the human rights substantiated in the Basic Law,
- the exclusion of all violence and tyranny.

Also included are criminal acts which, through the use of violence or preparatory actions to this end, endanger the foreign interests of the Federal Republic of Germany or are directed against understanding among nations.

These working definitions make it clear that the terms 'radicalisation', 'extremism' and 'terrorism' denote diverse social phenomena which do not have a direct relationship with each other as part of a single process: radicalisation does not automatically and inevitably lead to extremism and subsequently to terrorism. And 'radicalised' persons can also employ terrorist strategies and forms of action without being extremists.<sup>8</sup> This should serve to caution us that we need precise analysis of each manifestation of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism in order to conceive and initiate the appropriate preventive measures.

## Central practical and theoretical findings of radicalisation research

To better understand the specific conditions in which preventive practices are carried out in this field, it is important to be aware of key research findings about the social phenomena of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. Although these phenomena should be distinguished from each other and have no kind of causal relationship with one another, the following commonalities need to be observed.

### ■ Multi-causal conditionality

The causes of radicalisation in general as well as of extremism and terrorism in particular are diverse. There is no mono-causal explanation or mono-causal motivation for either individual (see Chapter 3.3 for more details) or group-based radicalisation processes (Chapter 3.2) or for collective processes relating to large societal groups (Chapter 3.1). Behind every instance of radicalisation there are complex clusters of causes rooted in individual factors (psycho-social, biography) and effective at different levels (micro, macro) of the social system.

Attempting to comprehend radicalisation in terms of just one dimension of influence inevitably results in a deficient understanding that has negative consequences for practical activities. For instance, public discourse continually stresses the underlying ideology as a key explanatory factor. However: no ideology has yet been discerned with the potential, regardless of time and place, to radicalise people simply on the basis of its own 'seductive power'. The specific historical and social conditions are obviously relevant whenever a social group or subculture becomes radicalised with reference to a given ideology. Otherwise, we would have to ask why, for example, the basic ideological principles of Al-Qaeda that were already set out in the middle of the 20th century by Sayyid Qutb did not culminate in radicalisation accompanied by terrorist activities until the beginning of the 21st century. Equally, we can ask why right-wing extremist ideology takes very different forms and is present to very different extents in Germany across time and space. Moreover, we also need to ask why different people in the same historical and social circumstances are more, less or not at all receptive to a given ideology. And just as radicalisation as a whole cannot be deciphered solely in terms of the factor of 'ideology', nor can the radicalisation of one individual be explained solely by means of their personal characteristics. We have yet to discover a personality that is genetically predisposed to extremism, which is reflected indirectly in the observation

<sup>8</sup> One example of this would be radical anti-abortionists in the United States, who have occasionally pursued the terrorist strategy of employing extreme violence, up to and including targeted murders, in order to spread fear and horror – particularly among medical personnel – in an attempt to end the provision of abortions (in this context, see, for example, Etter and Collison 2021).

that varying numbers of people become radicalised in different social environments and at specific times. And similarly, no social environment has so far been identified in which radicalisation develops automatically, so to speak, or which would appear to be completely immune to radical influences and developments – radical milieus, from which violent actions can also emerge, develop time and again in both markedly dictatorial and democratic social systems.

In short, radicalisation and its possible forms of expression, extremism and terrorism, have many causes. To make sense of it all, three variables that exhibit a complex interrelationship must be considered in parallel. Firstly, the *ideology* on which the respective radicalisation process is based. Secondly, the personality traits and personal living circumstances of the *person* in question. And thirdly, the micro- and macro-social socio-cultural *environment* in which the given radicalisation event takes place. We can thus consider the variables ideology, person and environment to represent a causal triad for the phenomena under examination. It follows that a broader theoretical framework is required as a basis for the fundamental design of prevention practices, as is described in the following section.

### ■ Individual and social development dynamics over time

Radicalism, extremism and terrorism are not static phenomena. Within the course of individual development, we can observe phases of more or less intensive radicalisation – the latter mostly in the case of teenagers and young adults. And in terms of the dynamics of societies over time, again and again we see phases in the historical development process of societies in which social groups of various sizes become radicalised. This is dependent on the social context and the conflicts that exist in a given society (for details, see Chapter 3.1).

### ■ Socio-spatial differences

However, it is not just over time that radicalisation varies and the different forms of extremism manifest themselves in different ways. Strong geographical and socio-spatial differences can also be identified: considerable contrasts in the manifestation of radicalisation can be detected, both within and among societies. We can take as an example the radicalisation associated with the anti-immigrant Pegida movement and its offshoots in Europe. Germany's neighbours did not experience nearly as much radicalisation as Germany itself, and we can observe major regional differences even within Germany.<sup>9</sup>

## Theoretical framework – the structural social context of 'radicalisation'

To capture and model the multifaceted reality of radicalisation and the various manifestations of extremism and terrorism requires a theoretical model with a very broad scope – a model that is also open to the new phenomena that constantly confront preventive practice. Any such model has to combine sociological (focusing on social relations) and psychological (focusing on individual personality and circumstances) perspectives. This is the only way we can come to understand and take effective action

to prevent both collective radicalisation processes affecting major social subgroups and the individual radicalisation processes that are embedded in these. A model is required that reveals the specific dynamics of each case of radicalisation and, in line with the current state of research, understands 'radicalisation' as a social phenomenon with multiple causes. Theoretical models that are less broad, which generally focus on specific segments of social reality, are not capable of grasping the complexity of radicalisation in a way that can be the basis for practical action.

The theoretical foundation we introduced above – the triad of causes of extremism: person – ideology – environment – means our model fulfils these requirements.<sup>10</sup> These three cornerstones interact in a continual dynamic process that determines what forms of extremism arise in each case. This process of interaction is therefore essential if we are to have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon as a basis for appropriate preventive practice.

The 'contextual structure of radicalisation' model, which builds on the causal triad model of extremism and is explained in more detail below, is a 'pre-theoretical' model and not a theory in the classic sense because it does not contain any 'if-then statements'. A model of that kind would in any case not do justice to the subject matter, since there is no constellation of conditions that inevitably leads to extremism. At best, there are circumstances that make it more or less probable that extremism will develop, though such circumstances cannot be grasped in terms of any theoretically well-founded causal relationships, at least according to the current state of research.

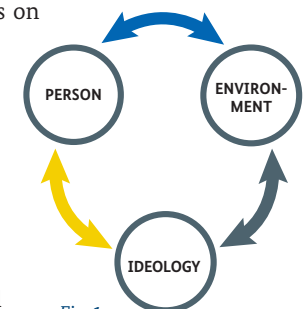


Fig. 1:  
Triad of causes of extremism

The contextual structure of extremism model extends the causal triad model by, above all, breaking down the factor 'environment' to capture the variety of potential influences in a person's micro- and macro-social environments that might be relevant to extremism.

This has been done with reference to Bronfenbrenner's (e.g. 1979) theory of the 'ecology of human development'. According to this theoretical approach, human development in general, and human development towards extremism in particular, are subject to the conditions of various systems and/or system levels that form a person's social environment. A person's social environment or any social and cultural *environment* within which extremism develops can be considered a complex structure with various levels.

These range from relevant **microsystems** (such as family, friends and extremist groups) to the social **macrosystem** consisting of laws and values. Between the levels of the microsystem and the macrosystem, we find the **mesosystem** and **exosystem levels**. The mesosystem consists of the specific combination of microsystems to which a given individual belongs. This can be more or less complex. For a small child, it is generally very simple and is essentially limited to family. With increasing age, it diversifies and generally becomes considerably more complex and heterogeneous. The exosystem primarily encompasses the larger institutional contexts of a society

<sup>9</sup> On the dynamics of the protest movements discussed here, cf. Roth/Rucht 2008, 660 et seq., for example.

<sup>10</sup> Below, we will speak only of 'extremism' – the theoretical model is equally applicable to the phenomena of radicalisation and terrorism, however.

(such as the education system, the world of work, the administrative apparatus) that influence patterns of behaviour at the individual and micro-social levels. In terms of the various manifestations of extremism, the state security apparatus (primarily police, intelligence services) is particularly significant here, of course. But other institutional structures can also potentially and, by means of indirect influence, be highly relevant for the development of extremism: the media and political parties, the justice system, the immigration authorities, the labour and training market, mosque communities, Islamic associations, business and financial institutions, and, not least, civil society actors who make statements on and/or engage specifically with relevant phenomena, for example within the framework of prevention activities.

As this suggests, the individual interacts with their environment on various levels of social collectivity, social proximity and formal structure. The theoretical point of departure of this sociological and developmental-psychological model is an understanding of human development as a process of the 'progressive, mutual

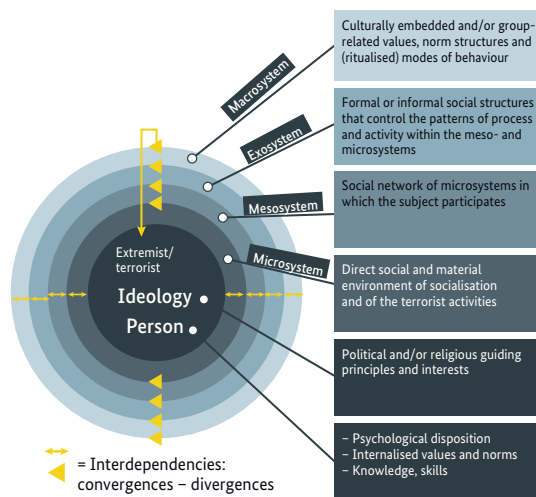


Fig. 2: The contextual structure of radicalisation

accommodation, throughout the life span, between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environments in which it lives, as this process is affected by relations obtaining within and between these immediate settings, as well as the larger social contexts, both formal and informal, in which the settings are embedded'.<sup>11</sup> The environment is 'conceived topologically as a nested arrangement of structures, each intersecting with the next'. As Figure 2 shows, Bronfenbrenner conceives of the individual's environment as a structure with several levels. There are multiple social layers, and the experiences made in the direct environment on the mesosystem level are conditioned by and interact with higher-level environments, in which the individual does not participate directly. The four system levels that Bronfenbrenner distinguishes will be outlined in greater detail following a brief presentation of his conceptions of 'ideology' and 'person'.

### Person

When studying extremism, the attitudes and values of the relevant individuals, as well as their broad personality traits, are of major significance. These are 'acquired' by the subject in the course of socialisation, which is significantly influenced by the structural conditions of their environment.

For instance, it requires a certain propensity towards violence for an individual to undertake a terrorist act. There also needs to be a degree of overlap between an individual's core values and those of the terrorist group in question – for example,

it would be hard to imagine Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof, the key figures in the Red Army Faction (RAF), as right-wing extremists, though there are occasional cases of people switching between opposing extremist positions.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the expertise and skills that people engaging in extremist or terrorist groups possess are important. After all, certain skills are ultimately the basis for the execution of certain acts.

In order to understand extremism, it is necessary to engage with the worldviews of extremist actors. According to the Thomas Theorem (named after American sociologists William and Dorothy Thomas), we can assume that there will be real consequences when a person defines a situation as real. This can be observed in anti-migrant protests and attacks or in terrorist acts directed against supposed 'infidels'. This has consequences for the design of prevention measures – the subjective view of the protagonists must be taken into account, i.e. aspects of how they construct reality and interpret the world that motivate them to carry out extremist actions or even acts of violence.

### (Extremist) ideology

This refers to the dominant belief system to which a person subscribes – for whatever individual motives – and on the basis of which that person engages in extremism. Such belief systems are generally linked to existing social groups and function as a kind of 'motivational' trigger. Each ideological system, with its historical body of ideas, thus serves as the basis for the legitimisation of extremist engagement. This gives us the specific definition of 'ideology' that is important for the theoretical framework we are presenting here: ideologies are leveraged to justify violent insurrection, and, on occasion, to legitimate criminal acts that target social relations, particularly the political, economic and social status quo, but also religious and cultural relations. This basis of legitimisation is generally used by extremist actors as an exculpatory factor in the sense of the techniques of neutralisation described by Sykes and Matza (1957), to the extent that the violent actions are construed as justified in view of the greater goals that are being pursued.

Although this component of the theoretical model may appear obvious and accessible – after all, extremist groups go to great lengths to somehow communicate their goals – understanding the ideological foundations of extremist movements is generally not easy. The supposedly uniform ideological structures frequently conceal highly diverse interpretations and political (as well as concrete economic) interests of the individual extremist subgroups and activists (for more detail, see Chapter 2).

### Microsystem

The microsystem is the immediate environment in which a person lives and in which everyday life occurs (for example, family, school, friendship group and, in individual cases, also extremist or terrorist groups). These environments through which a person moves are characterised by direct interpersonal contact in the form of 'face-to-face interactions'. Each microsystem is constituted by its physical elements (for example, the family's living space, the characteristics of the school classroom), predefined roles

<sup>12</sup> One prominent example is Horst Mahler, who was active in left-wing terrorism in the 1970s (including as a founding member of the RAF) and is today an avowed neo-Nazi.

<sup>11</sup> Bronfenbrenner 1977, 514.

(mother, father, pupil, employee, etc.) and participants, i.e. the people that occupy the microsystem, as well as the time, duration and the changes that occur within it. When considering extremist groups, we should also take into account, in particular, the roles and expectations assigned to the members of a given microsystem and the composition of the group: is it homogeneous or heterogeneous? What personality types are included? This all has enormous impact on how the group and its members will develop (more detail on this in Chapter 3.2).<sup>13</sup>

### Mesosystem

The mesosystem is the combination of the various microsystems in which a person is involved at a particular stage in life. It should be understood as a social network that traverses the different spheres of the person's life. The structure of a mesosystem is measured in terms of the number and degree of dissimilarity of the microsystems within it. The more differentiated the structure of a mesosystem is, the greater the cognitive and social requirements that are placed on the person in mediating between and/or 'withstanding' the various role patterns, social contexts, activities, etc. in the individual microsystems. In formulaic terms, a mesosystem is a system comprised of microsystems.

In terms of the various phenomena that concern us, the 'mediation requirements' that a person's mesosystem places on them become almost tangible: how does the person mediate and move between the microsystems of the more or less isolated, secret world of extremist/terrorist groups and any existing microsystem connections with normal society, such as in the family or working world? As integration into the extremist/terrorist circle progresses and the individual takes on central roles, it is not uncommon to observe them increasingly withdrawing from social relations and going underground in order to 'protect' their identity as a terrorist. Protection has multiple meanings here: firstly, it means avoiding detection by the police and secondly, minimising any cognitive dissonance that could arise out of conflicting messages from the heterogeneous microsystems to which the person belongs. For example, the person has to mediate between contradictory messages from the extremist group and the parental home, as can be illustrated, for instance, using the biographies of left-wing extremists in the 1960s and 70s in Germany. Extremist groups and their sympathiser milieus often function as what we could call 'agencies for socialisation', encouraging a gradual drifting away from values and norms (see below: Macrosystem) of (mainstream) society towards alternative, radical – political and/or religious – ideologies and value systems.<sup>14,15</sup> In such situations, there is no longer much chance that those who withdraw further and further into extremist/terrorist environments will listen to alternative viewpoints – it becomes increasingly unlikely that they will exit the radicalisation process.

<sup>13</sup> Koenen's study on key figures within the RAF (2003) provides a very vivid illustration of how involvement in apparently divergent microsystems impacts the biographical developments of terrorists. The important role played by groups in the development of a terrorist career was already highlighted by Wilfried Rasch in a study that was published in the 1970s: 'The group itself is also important for the continuation of a terrorist career, not only in a technical sense, but also with respect to the psychological development of its members. The group provides back-up when other support is eradicated' (1979, 164). In this respect, extremist groups and the sympathiser groups around them appear to be a sort of cocoon in which extremist careers develop.

<sup>14</sup> Silke 2003, 37 et seq.

<sup>15</sup> This is explored in depth in the article 'Becoming a Terrorist' by Andrew Silke 2003.

It is important to note that the heterogeneity of the mesosystem can vary considerably for actors engaged in differing forms of extremism. This means that the differences in values between extremist groups and the families of origin of the members are not necessarily profound. For example, around separatist movements or in the case of religiously motivated extremism, we often see overlaps in values between families of origin and extremist groups. In the area of left-wing extremism, by contrast, we often find – as illustrated, for example, in the biographies of the central figures of the RAF's social-revolutionary terrorism – extreme differences in values between these microsystems (see Chapter 2.3).

### Exosystem

The exosystem can be considered as a kind of agglomeration of formal and informal social structures that surround a person's mesosystem, but to which the person does not belong themselves. However, the social structures of the exosystem are in contact with or encompass a person's direct environments and influence or dictate processes and activities in the various microsystems. Larger institutions are meant here 'as they operate at a concrete local level. They encompass, among other structures, the world of work, the neighbourhood, the mass media, agencies of government (local, state, and national), the distribution of goods and services, communication and transportation facilities, and informal social networks',<sup>16</sup> including online networks. With regard to the specific range of phenomena we are concerned with, the security apparatus (primarily the police and intelligence services) or, in more abstract terms, the security architecture of a society is particularly relevant here. The various civic and governmental stakeholders in the area of extremism prevention are also included in this category.

It is obvious that the social structures mentioned here must be considered in terms of their significance for the particular extremist environment on which prevention is focused – in two respects. First, these structures delimit the opportunity space for extremist groups: which resources can they access? What options do they have for communication and movement to promote themselves and recruit members? How vulnerable, how open to influence is the social system that they seek to change? Secondly, a society's exosystem also delimits the opportunity space that that society has to protect itself by means of preventive and repressive measures that are part of a comprehensive counter-extremism strategy: what is the state of the security apparatus? What technical intelligence capabilities are in place? What possibilities of 'ideological' influence exist? How can extremist propaganda be countered – both online and offline?

If we narrow our focus to the phenomenon of terrorism, the interaction dynamics between the various system levels become especially clear: generally speaking, the clashing systems – that of the terrorist groups and that of the society being attacked – attempt to exploit each other's weaknesses in order – from the viewpoint of the terrorist group – to cause the greatest possible amount of damage with the smallest possible risk of detection – or, from the viewpoint of the social system being attacked, to apprehend the terrorist enemy. As 9/11 savagely demonstrated, terrorist groups – especially when willing to sacrifice their own lives for their cause – are capable of causing immense

<sup>16</sup> Bronfenbrenner 1977, 515.

material and immaterial (political, psychological) damage with the deployment of minimum resources. In contrast, no amount of resources can guarantee a social system absolute security against terrorist attacks.

### Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the highest system level. It does not relate directly to the environment of the individual person 'but to general prototypes, existing in the culture or subculture, that set the pattern for the structures and activities occurring at the concrete level'.<sup>17</sup> These include cultural and subcultural norms, values and ideologies as they appear in specific economic, political, judicial and cultural systems and thus affect the 'lower' systems. The microsystem, mesosystem and exosystem must thus be considered manifestations of the macrosystem: the way in which our working world, our education system, or our political landscape manifest themselves on the exosystem level is an expression of a corresponding values and laws on the macrosystem level. It is at the macrosystem level of a society that the cultural and subcultural basic patterns that regulate organisation and behaviour on the lower system levels are established. They appear explicitly in a formal, institutionalised form – for example in the form of laws. However, their establishment is primarily implicit: such patterns are informal and generally constitute unconsciously held worldviews and values of the members of the society that are expressed in everyday life through corresponding habits, routines and traditions, and manifest behaviourally in the form of things 'we just don't do'.<sup>18</sup>

The influencing factor 'extremist/terrorist ideologies' found in the inner circle of the model is theoretically also embedded in the macrosystem level, which is why a direct interaction arrow has been added for clarification. Of course, it goes without saying that these sorts of ideologies are not shared and supported by the majority, but only by subgroups within society. In terms of the macrosystem, the differences between the various value sets, systems of norms and ideologies that can be found in the various groups in a society – even in terrorist microsystems – and the interactions between them are of particular importance. For instance, as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, there were changes in the law and – at the exosystem level – an expansion of Germany's security apparatus with a view to countering the threat of Islamist terrorism. Comprehensive prevention programmes were also organised that gave rise to a multifaceted prevention landscape at the national, regional and local levels (in detail: Chapter 6).

The contradictions on the macrosystem level between different cultural orientations, values, systems of norms and ideologies can be seen as catalysts for the development of the various phenomena of radicalisation and extremism.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> As an older study by Tololyan (1988) suggests, the history of a nation as well as its myths and legends should be included here, as these influence the worldview of a society or subgroup and can motivate people towards extremist/terrorist behaviour. A clear example of this is the state terrorism of National Socialism. This was founded in symbolic, (allegedly) identity-conferring and, above all, romanticised interpretations of historical events (for example, World War I) and cultural roots (for example, the Nibelung saga) which gave rise to the 'master race' mania, which in turn acted as the central motivational driving force for the Nazi terror regime.

## Interaction dynamics of 'person – ideology – environment': what we (don't) know

We will now consider what sets the model in motion; what drives the development dynamics of radicalisation, as it were. We examine this in a general sense here and at a theoretically abstract level, without attempting to anticipate the more nuanced and detailed views to come on cases of radicalisation involving individuals (Chapter 3.3), groups (Chapter 3.2) and large social groups (Chapter 3.1).

If we consider how our theoretical model as a whole is reflected in radicalisation/extremism research, we can observe many findings on the influence of individual system levels or variables found in the model on radicalisation and the diverse manifestations of extremism (see here, in particular, Chapter 3). It is unfortunate, however – especially with regard to the design of preventive approaches to the phenomena – that the research so far provides only very superficial and rarely empirically proven, multidimensional insights into the interaction between the different variables of the system as a whole. It is difficult to establish the extent to which the influences of the different variables strengthen, moderate or even neutralise each other. In-depth knowledge of this sort of multiple interaction is particularly important for the successful, effective design of prevention practices.

It should also be noted in this context that extremism is not a phenomenon that is restricted to the individual. In terms of classical sociology, extremism concerns patterns of behaviour that themselves relate to the behavioural patterns of other actors. This becomes particularly problematic when extremist behaviour is translated into criminality and violence.

The model of the contextual structure of radicalisation illustrates that the radicalisation of individuals and groups must be generally understood as a systemic circular process, in which three system-theoretical dynamics in particular should be taken into consideration.<sup>19</sup>

Firstly: radicalisation (individual or at the level of the group) in a society impacts various systemic levels ranging from microsystem (for example, family, terrorist groups) to macrosystem (for example, legislation, value orientations) structures and is, for its part, influenced by reactions on these levels.

Secondly: it is socio-cultural, societal – generally conflict-laden – conditions that trigger radicalisation, which is itself a reaction to these conditions (in detail: Chapter 3.1).

Thirdly: radicalisation must be seen as a phenomenon that is influenced by numerous factors and creates diverse new conditions, which in turn impact all sub-systems. This system-theoretical approach does not make a judgement about the causes of radicalisation, extremism or terrorism. Rather, these phenomena appear equally as cause and as effect of changes in the systemic, socio-cultural structures of a given society. Thus, terrorism, for example, is not a static variable, but a process of criminal activity – with a corresponding impact on all the actors and system levels involved.

<sup>19</sup> This is based on the description by Rennert (1989, 16), who formulated these system-theoretical theses in regard to the phenomenon of drug addiction. According to the current state of theory and research, it can be transferred almost exactly to the phenomena of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism discussed here.

## What does this mean? – Practical conclusions for extremism prevention

From this system-theoretical point of view, we can derive several conclusions for the design of extremism prevention, which will be set out here in summary.

### *The prevention of extremism calls for realistic goals*

In accordance with the necessary conceptual distinctions we have undertaken to explain, the prevention of extremism should not be equated with the prevention of radicalisation, as is sometimes suggested in public discourse. Prevention efforts must focus on stopping radicalisation from leading to criminal acts and violence. Radicalisation is – as we have emphasised – a side effect of processes of social change and the conflicts they bring and generally opens up corridors for renewal, for a new balancing of interests between social groups. Primary radicalisation prevention would thus have to aim at the elimination of social conflict – an ultimately utopian undertaking, since conflicts are inevitable within society. For this reason, a priority should be placed on minimising the potential of radicalisation resulting in criminal acts and/or the formation of extremist positions, whilst safeguarding, to the greatest extent possible, the potential for innovation that is inherent within radicalisation and radical protest.

### *The prevention of extremism as a macro-social task*

The dynamics of interaction between the various system levels clearly demonstrates that extremism prevention must be understood, and above all designed, as a macro-social task (for more detail here, see Chapter 6). Ultimately, all stakeholders on all system levels have a responsibility to participate in efforts to prevent and combat extremism- and terrorism-related phenomena, even if this is merely the responsibility of not remaining indifferent to extremism or its potential victims.

### *The prevention of extremism as a constantly adapting practice*

The various interactions between person, ideology and the environment with all its subsystems determine the enormous dynamism of both individual radicalisation processes and radicalisation as it occurs within social groups. Radicalisation is continually being reconstructed; the factors that condition it re-emerge constantly at the individual, small-group and macro-social levels. Reactions must be adjusted accordingly – and this applies to both repressive and preventive approaches to the phenomena. Prevention practices in the various extremism-related fields (see Chapter 2) and areas of activity relating to universal, selective and indicated prevention (see Chapter 5) must adapt accordingly. In the process, we must ask, in a spirit of critical reflection, whether our preventive approaches are still appropriate. This calls for a systematic evaluation practice that scrutinises preventive activities (see Chapter 4).

### *Design extremism prevention activities on a case-by-case basis*

The theoretical framework set out here presents the fundamental characteristics of radicalisation as observed in social practice: radicalisation occurs as a process and

always displays individual, socio-spatial and socio-temporal/historical peculiarities. Not every right-wing extremist becomes radicalised in the same way, just as different radical milieus and groups with the same ideological references (such as Salafism) are sometimes subject to highly disparate radicalisation dynamics. Moreover, these radicalisation dynamics manifest themselves differently at different times due to different socio-temporal/historical configurations of influence. The causes and consequences of each and every individual and collective process of radicalisation are highly specific. The preventive and repressive approaches to each radicalisation event must therefore be case-specific: a one-size-fits-all strategy will not work.

### *Design extremism prevention activities around lifeworlds*

In this field of activity, in which political and religious attitudes – worldviews – play a key role, the need to organise prevention practices in a case-specific way necessarily entails a need to take account of 'lifeworlds'. As mentioned above and discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.1, radicalisation phenomena are an expression of underlying social conflicts. Generally speaking, they cannot be understood in isolation or without their interactions with other social developments and occurrences of radicalisation. And the various individual and institutional actors perceive these conflicts in very different ways from the perspective of their respective lifeworlds,<sup>20</sup> beliefs and values. In connection with combating extremism, therefore, highly divergent everyday realities and worldviews collide. If we just consider the worldviews of the extremists, civil society institutions and the security authorities, it is quite apparent just how much disparity in terms of beliefs and views of the world we are dealing with in this field of activity. To paraphrase Berger and Luckmann (1987, p. 3): what is 'real' for a right-wing extremist or Salafist is by no means 'real' for a social worker or the police! Responsible extremism prevention must always bear this in mind. It must engage with extremist worldviews and understand them – without accepting them. And it must be aware of the values that underlie its own foundational ideas and interpretations of social affairs in this world.

### *Extremism prevention as a dialogue*

There is a three-fold need for dialogue in the field of extremism prevention:

#### *Firstly – dialogue to coordinate measures*

In light of the diversity of actors directly and indirectly involved in dealing with extremism and active in the various fields of (universal, selective and tertiary) prevention, the comprehensive exchange of views and information is essential. The key goal here is the coordination of measures and interventions that generally run in parallel. The need for this becomes extremely clear if we consider the area of indicated prevention in connection with exit processes. These often involve parallel repressive (prosecution/penal system) and preventive measures (exit programmes) that require close, case-by-case coordination between the law enforcement authorities and civil society institutions.

<sup>20</sup> The non-technical way we are using the term 'lifeworld' here primarily draws on the way the term is used in sociology. For our purposes, 'lifeworld' refers to the everyday practices and theories, traditional ways of doing things, the everyday news flow and the culture (architecture, music, literature) that the people of a particular society, a particular milieu or a particular group share or with which they are typically confronted in their everyday lives (for more details with regard to the themes discussed here: Kemmesies 2019).



### *Secondly – dialogue as a means of understanding different lifeworlds*

In order to take account of lifeworlds, there needs to be open dialogue that is able to explore the motives and worldviews that underlie each particular case of extremism. It goes without saying that this is a huge challenge, since communication with extremist actors and milieus is generally heavily influenced by the strategic and tactical calculations of the dialogue partners. Communication strategies are needed here that are situational and case-specific.

### *Thirdly – dialogue as an instrument of conflict transformation*

In view of the general finding that radicalisation builds on social conflicts that are given an ideological spin or interpretation by the various extremist groups, so as to exploit them in pursuit of their own interests, a platform for the exchange of views between the societal groups involved in each conflict is essential.

Transparent and open dialogue must be encouraged as a means to transform the conflicts that drive radicalisation and thus potentially fuel extremism. Social protest and the radicalisation that can emerge from it should always be seen as an early warning indicator – at the very latest when parallel developments are observed in different groups and milieus. Protest should be taken seriously as a call to society and to the competent political bodies to engage with the underlying conflicts. If this call is ignored, it will inevitably become louder – possibly until it erupts in violence or even, in the extreme case, in the form of terrorist attacks entirely in the spirit of the 19th century anarchist concept of the ‘propaganda of the deed’.<sup>21</sup> This results, from the perspective of conflict theory, in the practical necessity of taking the visible and invisible dimensions underlying every conflict into consideration:<sup>22</sup> the visible dimension of manifest behaviour as well as the unobservable and generally hard to ascertain dimension of attitudes towards and conflicting evaluations of each conflict. Situations involving social interaction and communication are often unclear as a result. This is the case because it is possible to react with agreement or rejection towards radical, extremist behaviour but not towards the non-communicated, invisible conscious and unconscious presuppositions and motives of the actors. To address this, a forum for discussion, a dialogue must be created that makes this hidden dimension visible by rendering the unspeakable sayable and communicable.<sup>23</sup>

If every radicalising tendency is considered exclusively via the logic of security policy as an attack on society and a security risk, there can never be more than a superficial confrontation with the manifest behaviour, e.g. the violence. The deeper causes thus remain obscured. As a result, the hidden depths of the conflicts remain untouched and can continue to manifest themselves in violent acts and the various forms of extremism. In this respect, open dialogue between the conflict parties must always be considered a fundamental component of a whole-society approach towards extremism prevention.

<sup>21</sup> For more detail about this, see for example Hoffman 2018.

<sup>22</sup> For more detail about this: Kemmesies/Weber 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Reference can be made here to the methods of conflict transformation that have now been elaborated, see for example Berghof Foundation 2019.

The rather abstract and theory-based requirement profile outlined above of an extremism prevention that is flexible, case-specific, lifeworld-oriented, constantly takes current developments into consideration and is based on dialogue, has to be put in concrete terms. This is the task of the following chapters. This sort of practical concretisation of prevention practices should be guided by the following questions in accordance with the complexity and dynamism of the various forms of extremism: when is it necessary to contact whom in what way, with which aims and by which means, and in which (physical geographical and social) place?

## Summary and outlook

This chapter sets out key findings from an overview of the research carried out in the last decade and condenses them into a theoretical framework. The findings are often still too abstract, however, to be translated directly into implementable extremism prevention practices in the form of a whole-society approach. Evidence of how radicalisation processes differ across societies and times remains very vague in terms of their possible application in the form of practical measures simply because it is still not possible to comprehensively describe what makes, for example, Salafist interpretations or worldviews so attractive *right now in particular* and how their interactions with other extremist worldviews can lead to reciprocal strengthening. Equally, general research findings on (socio-)spatial differences in the frequency of radicalisation will also remain without practical value if we are unable to identify more closely why Salafist or right-wing extremism meets with an apparently positive response specifically *in this place*, in this town, in this region and *in this milieu with these particular persons*. Further, it is of little help in shaping prevention activities when no distinction is made between radicalisation at the individual, small-group and collective levels. As Chapter 3 illustrates, the susceptibilities we see at the individual level differ from those at the level of large societal groups – there is a requirement for further research here.

Nevertheless: we have to act immediately, and prevention practices must of necessity be designed partly on the basis of a knowledge of the various phenomena of radicalisation and extremism that remains deficient. To ensure that we act responsibly under such conditions, practical measures need to go hand in hand with evaluation, and links between academia and practice should be enhanced.

However, in terms of shaping future academic and prevention practices around the phenomena examined in this Handbook, we can consider one thing established beyond doubt: radicalisation in general and extremism in particular are sensors that should be taken seriously and important indicators of the condition of a society and the conflict lines currently drawn within it. Every instance of radicalisation is thus also a reflection of social conflicts. When it is understood correctly and when its appearance does not immediately trigger a defensive reflex and the disproportionate responses that this brings, radicalisation creates opportunities – it should not be sweepingly equated with the risk of criminality. Controlling the risks and making use of the opportunities rooted in social radicalisation requires an even deeper understanding of the conditions that lead people to become involved in and, above all, to get out of radicalisation. However, we will be able to tap into this deeper understanding only when we are prepared to look at the phenomenon of radicalisation in an open and value-neutral way and reflect on it without immediately imposing the goal of combating and repressing its ‘radicalism’.

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# CHAPTER 2

## Forms of politically motivated crime

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- Right-wing populism and right-wing extremism
- Salafism, Islamism and Islamist terrorism
- Left-wing extremism
- Transnational extremism in Germany

# CHAPTER 2.1

## Right-wing populism and right-wing extremism

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This chapter provides an overview of organised right-wing populism and right-wing extremism in Germany. The two terms are not interchangeable. Actors are only considered right-wing extremists if they disregard central values and rules of the democratic constitutional state, in particular the concept of human rights, the principle of civil liberties secured within a system of institutional checks and balances, and finally the principle of political pluralism, i.e. a legitimate diversity of interests, worldviews and opinions. The term right-wing populism is usually used by researchers to describe parties and policies that claim to defend the 'true interests' of the people against an allegedly corrupt and decadent political elite. Here, 'people' and 'elite' are conceived as homogeneous entities. Populist leaders want to give expression to the 'common sense' of the 'man in the street' against the 'out-of-touch political class'. Right-wing populism overlaps with right-wing extremism above all due to its anti-pluralist tendency. Actors involved in right-wing extremism may, but do not necessarily have to be populist in the sense defined here. They often also regard themselves as representatives of an elite whose role it is to show the people a path that they themselves are unable to recognise.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first provides an overview of the most important actors, their political significance and the image they present by means of symbols and slogans. The second part deals with ideology and programmes and the third with organised activities and strategic approaches, both internal and external.

## Actors, symbols, policies



Logo of NPD



Logo of NSDAP



Picture of the party magazine 'Deutsche Stimme'

The National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) is the oldest right-wing extremist party in Germany and, for a time, assumed a dominant role in the field of right-wing politics. The party logo is vaguely reminiscent of NSDAP (Nazi party) symbolism in its use of the colours white and red. Since its founding in 1964, the NPD has undergone several profound transformations and has experienced varying degrees of success at different times. Following German reunification, the party became more radical and strategically concentrated on the eastern federal states, where it correctly assumed that particularly fertile grounds would exist for the growth of the party. The ideological proximity of the party to historical National Socialism and its links to violent subcultures resulted in two applications to ban the party being brought before the Federal Constitutional Court. The judges in Karlsruhe ruled not to issue a ban in January 2017 because, although the party does endeavour to eliminate the free and democratic basic order of Germany and replace it

with an authoritarian, ethnic 'Volksgemeinschaft' (literally 'Community of the People', implying ethnic homogeneity), which would be a violation of human rights, they claimed that there was a lack of 'significant concrete evidence' that 'makes it appear to be at least possible that this activity will result in success'.<sup>1</sup> The party ceased to have any representation in state parliaments in 2018 and obtained 0.1% (2017: 0.4%)

of second (proportional representation) votes in the 2021 parliamentary election.

As of January 2018, the NPD still held over 326 seats on local councils (out of a total of approx. 200,000 for the whole of Germany), of which 258 were in eastern Germany and 68 in western Germany.<sup>2</sup>

The party also has a record of activity at the municipal level in registering demonstrations (particularly in connection with anti-asylum protests). In this context, it has often employed the label 'civic initiative'. The party's 'Kommunalpolitische Vereinigung' (local political association, KPV) is the collective representation of all its elected representatives. Its most important advertising medium is the party newspaper, 'Deutsche Stimme' (German Voice), the print edition of which is distributed by the party's own publishing house based in Riesa, Saxony, with excerpts also published on the party's website. The youth organisation 'Junge Nationalisten' (Young Nationalists, JN); (founded in 1969), which also has its headquarters in Riesa, used to publish the magazine 'Der Aktivist'. The Berlin-based 'Ring Nationaler Frauen' (Ring of National Women, RNF) was established in 2006 ('as women, we have a duty not to let our people die out').<sup>3</sup> However, no activities have been registered on the part of the RNF in recent years. An organisation with close ties to the NPD is 'Junge Landsmannschaft Ostdeutschland' (Young Homeland Association of East Germany, JLO; formerly: 'Junge Landsmannschaft Ostpreußen'), which helped organise the annual 'Funeral March' to commemorate the bombing of Dresden. One of its basic demands is the restoration of the German Reich within its 1937 borders.

While the second legal attempt to ban the NPD was ongoing, the more moderate 'Alternative für Deutschland' (Alternative for Germany - AfD) managed to achieve spectacular electoral successes, overtaking the NPD. Founded in 2013 in response to the European debt crisis, it achieved 7.1% of the vote in the 2014 European elections (NPD: 1.0%). While it failed by a narrow margin (with 4.7%) to reach the 5% threshold in the September 2013 parliamentary election, it subsequently gained seats in numerous state parliaments and won 12.6% of second votes in the September 2017 parliamentary election (NPD: 0.4%). A result of 10.3% in the September 2021 parliamentary election enabled it to gain a foothold in the German party spectrum.

Unlike the NPD, the AfD emerged as an alliance of heterogeneous protest movements and was not a product of the far-right scene. However, it underwent a process of transformation in the wake of the European elections and



Logo of JN



Cover of the magazine 'Der Aktivist'



Logo of RNF



Logo of JLO



Map of the German Reich with the borders of 1937

1 Federal Constitutional Court.

2 Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

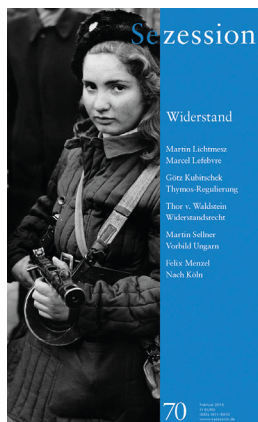
3 Cited in: Ministry of the Interior and Sport of Rhineland-Palatinate.

in reaction to the ‘refugee crisis’. Its approval ratings, which had dropped for a while, rapidly rose once more. The economically liberal wing around the economist Bernd Lucke and Hans-Olaf Henkel, the former President of the Federation of German Industries (BDI), split off, with parts of the remaining party drawing closer to the profile of the European ‘populist radical right’ (along the lines of Heinz-Christian Strache’s ‘Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs’ (Freedom Party of Austria), the French ‘Front/Rassemblement National’ around Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders’ ‘Partij voor de Vrijheid’ in the Netherlands), while clearly distancing itself from the NPD.



JUNGE ALTERNATIVE

Logo of  
Junge Alternative



Cover of the journal  
‘Sezession’

**PEGIDA**

Logo of Pegida



Wirmer flag

There are overlaps with the NPD milieu on the right wing of the AfD around Thuringian party leader Björn Höcke, Brandenburg party leader Andreas Kalbitz, who was expelled from the party in 2020, Saxony-Anhalt party leader André Poggenburg, who resigned in 2018, and other party members. Some sections of the AfD, such as the youth organisation ‘Junge Alternative für Deutschland’ (Young Alternative for Germany – JA: blue and red logo similar to that of the mother party), have closer links to this wing. Various elected AfD representatives

have attracted public attention for their racist statements on several occasions.<sup>4</sup> AfD committees have been monitoring the activities of the various sub-organisations and ‘Der Flügel’ (The Wing), its far-right faction. Since the party as a whole has become a ‘suspected case’ for the federal and state domestic intelligence services in recent years, leading members of the party have frequently called the legitimacy of the German domestic intelligence services into question.<sup>5</sup>

The journal ‘Sezession’ published by the ‘Institut für Staatspolitik’ (Institute for Government Policy) based in Schnellroda/Saxony-Anhalt, which is close to the right wing of the AfD, distances itself from historical National Socialism, but exhibits a predilection for authors on the anti-liberal right from the Weimar period who contributed to the rise of National Socialism (such as Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, Edgar Julius Jung, Ernst Niekisch, Carl Schmitt and

Oswald Spengler).<sup>6</sup> The party has taken a critical stance towards the Nazi regime by invoking the national-conservative military resistance of Count Stauffenberg. This is underpinned by the Wirmer flag (black and yellow cross against a red background, designed for the future Germany by Josef Wirmer, a member of the plot to kill Hitler on 20 July 1944), which is frequently flown at demonstrations held by the ‘Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident’ (Pegida). On several occasions, Götz Kubitschek, co-founder of the Institut für Staatspolitik, editor of the journal ‘Sezession’ and managing director of the small publishing house Antaios, has appeared as a guest speaker

at Pegida events. In 2016, he founded the initiative ‘Ein Prozent’ (One Percent, a ‘resistance platform for German interests’) and called for the AfD to organise a vigil in front of the Chancellery in December 2016, claiming a direct connection between the attack on the Christmas market perpetrated a week earlier at Breitscheidplatz in Berlin and the ‘illegal mass migration’ for which they held Chancellor Merkel responsible.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Pfahl-Traughber 2019, 9 et seq.

<sup>5</sup> Deutschlandfunk.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Backes 2018; Weiss 2017, 148–154.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Kamann in: Die Welt, 21 December 2016.

Kubitschek’s intimate circle also includes Viennese fraternity member Martin Sellner, the founder of the Identitarian Movement, whose German branches are considered to be far-right. With its campaign invoking ‘The Great Replacement’ launched in summer 2015, the ‘Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland’ (Identitarian Movement Germany, IBD) proclaimed

that ‘uncontrolled mass immigration’ was a deliberate political enterprise for the promotion of a multicultural society and to discriminate against the indigenous population. The symbol of the ‘Identitarians’, the Greek letter lambda in yellow on a black background, stands for the Lacedaemonians (Spartans), who heroically resisted the superior strength of the Persians at Thermopylae in 480 BC to save (according to this interpretation) ‘the identity of the Occident’. Based on the assessment of the German domestic intelligence services, the radicalisation of these groups is manifested in its recruitment of activists from right-wing extremist organisations.<sup>8</sup> Former JN office holders are now active as ‘Identitarians’ as well as in the ‘Ein Prozent’ initiative. The Identitarian Movement diminished in importance from 2019 after Götz Kubitschek declared the project a failure.

There is a gap between the NPD and AfD milieus that cannot be overlooked, even if it has narrowed over time. This was clearly revealed by analyses of the Pegida movement in Dresden. In January 2016, 53.3% of Pegida supporters surveyed stated that they would vote for the AfD, but only 8.7% for the NPD.<sup>9</sup> NPD speakers have not attended Pegida events. After the AfD’s national executive committee ruled in 2016 that it was incompatible with Pegida, their relationship remained ambivalent for some time. The official party line was to distance itself from Pegida, but this view was not shared by all the party’s representatives. The incompatibility ruling was lifted in March 2018.<sup>10</sup> Since then, AfD politicians have often spoken at Pegida demonstrations, and their speeches have repeatedly underscored Pegida’s close ties with the AfD.

From 2014 to 2017, anti-asylum initiatives sprang up across the Federal Republic. These typically ran Facebook groups, organised local protests and disrupted regional asylum-related information events. In the course of these developments, the far-right has succeeded in many places in tapping into discourses that are widespread among large parts of the population, recruiting new supporters and cooperating with non-extremist actors. The unifying factors were the refusal to accept refugees and a sweeping rejection of Islam. Some of the same people were once again mobilised in 2020/21 during protests and demonstrations against the government’s measures to contain the Covid-19 pandemic. Right-wing extremist actors took part in many rallies and marches. In some regions in eastern Germany, right-wing extremists even achieved a dominant presence in the anti-Covid protests. The protests used slogans such as ‘Resistance’, ‘Merkel has to go’ and ‘Lying press’. New anti-democratic networks sprang up, with deep connections to the right-wing extremist sphere. A conclusive assessment of these developments is not yet possible at the time of writing.<sup>12</sup>



**EIN PROZENT**<sup>8</sup>

**EINPROZENT**

is a network that supports right-wing activist groups such as the ‘Identitarian Movement’ with financial resources via crowdfunding campaigns. ‘Ein Prozent’ describes itself as a citizens’ initiative that views itself as a resistance platform for ‘German interests’.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Ein Prozent’.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior 2017, 63 et seq.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Patzelt 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Die Zeit Online.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Kleffner/Meisner (ed.) 2021.

The 'Pro-Bewegung' (For-Movement) was one of the first associations on the far right to dedicate its activities to the 'fight against Islamisation'. It emerged in the mid-1990s from the 'Bürgerbewegung pro Köln' (Citizens' Movement for Cologne) and was concentrated in North Rhine-Westphalia until its almost complete dissolution in 2017/18. The 'German Defence League' (GDL; logo: Nordic cross in black, red and gold with a circular white border), whose name was modelled on the 'English Defence League', came onto the scene much later (2010). This organisation does not have a party structure, but does share a predominantly anti-Muslim message of protest with the former 'Pro NRW' movement, which it articulates loudly, particularly at demonstrations. Its symbol modifies the Wirmer flag, taking the Nordic cross design, but adapting the colours to black, red and gold. The cross represents the defence of the 'Christian West' against 'Islam'.



Nazi symbols/  
insignia of banned  
associations

Christian crosses are not used by contemporary National Socialists ('neo-Nazis'). Odinism (with its defence of the strong Nordic gods against the 'weakling religion' of the Nazarenes) is more widespread among them than Christianity, even if the peculiar breed of 'Aryanised Christians' is not altogether absent. The neo-Nazi scene emerged in the former West Germany in the late 1960s and considered itself to be in the lineage of historical National Socialism or certain undercurrents thereof (such as the 'NSDAP Left' around the Strasser brothers). Following German unification, parts of this scene merged with groups that had originated independently in the GDR and which profited from the social fractures caused by transformation of the economy and political system. The scene would undergo many changes in the decades to come due to crackdowns and bans of organisations. It initially reacted by founding

new groups, but later increasingly turned to informal networking that relied on the new communication technologies that were spreading rapidly (infolines, computer bulletin boards, internet forums, messenger services). Rallies at both the national (e.g. the annual 'Funeral March' that started in 2000 commemorating the 1945 bombing of Dresden) and international level have

been important means of holding the scene together. To avoid falling foul of Germany's hate-crime laws (not only traditional symbols of Nazism such as the swastika and the Hitler salute are punishable in Germany, but also the insignia of other banned associations), they deploy codes such as '18' or '88' (derived from the alphabetical sequence of the first letters in 'Adolf Hitler' and 'Heil Hitler', respectively). The scene adapted its aesthetics to appeal to the expectations of the 16–24 age group. Many 'comradeships' reduced the focus on the leader and became open to new, originally 'left-wing' issues (anti-globalisation, welfare reform) while adopting aesthetic elements and forms of action from their militant 'anti-fascist' counterparts.<sup>13</sup> A high point of this development was the emergence of 'national black blocs', whose innovation was to borrow the look of the 'Autonome' movement (covered faces, Palestinian keffiyehs, badges with modified slogans, baseball caps). This first began to occur in Berlin around 2002, but soon afterwards appeared in the Rhineland and Ruhr Valley, spreading quickly elsewhere due to imitation. The 'Autonomen Nationalisten' (Autonomous Nationalists) developed a following and had a trend-setting effect in the Nazi-oriented scene.<sup>14</sup> At demonstrations, they were more aggressive than other groups, forming 'black blocs' and attacking both political opponents and

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Thein 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. van Hüllen 2010. See also Chapter 2.3 in this volume.

the police. The signs they use to signal their allegiance, such as branded clothing ('Consdaple', 'Pit Bull', 'Thor Steinar', etc.) or Germanic/Celtic runes (Celtic cross, Odal rune, triskelion, etc.) are only noticeable on closer inspection.

The decline of the NPD, which was closely intertwined with the neo-Nazi scene, and the threat of a ban on the party incited the formation of small parties. The ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court of January 2017 that the party should not be banned (and which also raised the threshold for prohibition) only encouraged this trend. As a result, the quasi-Nazi parties 'Die Rechte' (The Right), founded in 2012, and 'Der III. Weg' (The Third Path), founded in 2013, spread to numerous German states. The party logos of both these parties adopt the aesthetics of the Nazi era, but the symbols they employ are acceptable under criminal law ('Die Rechte': black and white arrow on a red background suggesting the colours of the NSDAP; 'Der III. Weg': Roman numeral three with oak leaf wreath). As a party, 'Der III. Weg' has managed to attain a hegemonic position in the neo-Nazi scene in certain regions, including the Vogtland, Upper Franconia and Southern Thuringia. In Plauen, Saxony, 'Der III. Weg' owns two properties, which serve as organisational centres and enable them to exert political influence within the community.<sup>15</sup>



Logo: Die Rechte



Logo: Der III. Weg

In addition to the neo-Nazi scene, the German domestic intelligence services list 'subcultural right-wing extremists' as a separate category with a high propensity to violence but a low level of organisation. This spectrum was dominated by the skinhead subculture for a long time, and the unmistakable features of its members made them easy to identify (buzz cuts, heavy-duty shoes or boots, bomber jackets, tattoos, etc.). Yet by the late 1990s, influences from other spheres had begun to creep in. As a result, hairstyles and clothing became more varied, making it less easy to pinpoint the political affiliation of the wearer. Their shared taste in music (consumed with copious amounts of alcohol) is the most powerful linking element, although here too, styles and content have changed. For example, the scene adopted 'hatecore', a musical genre originally hailing from New York, using hateful, racist lyrics. Nevertheless, concerts with warlike band names ('Sturmwehr', 'Sturmtrupp', '12 Golden Years', 'Strongside') and lyrics charged with hate are the most important glue holding the scene together.

As far back as the early 1990s, Nazi rock and white-power music had already begun to attract a great deal of public attention as a catalyst of violence and a 'gateway drug' to the right-wing extremist scene. There are those who dispute such views on the significance of far-right rock music.<sup>16</sup> The phenomenon received new publicity with the uncovering of the NSU murder spree. The band 'Gigi & Die Braunen Stadtmusikanten' had already glorified the murders in the track 'Döner-Killer' in 2010, before the identity of the three-strong NSU terror group was exposed. And songs by the iconic German right-wing extremist band 'Noie Werte' ('Kraft für Deutschland' and 'Am Puls der Zeit') could be heard in the video in which the NSU claimed responsibility for the deeds. Thuringia and Saxony have remained strongholds of the scene. In July 2017, for example, the 'Rock gegen Überfremdung' (Rock against Foreign Inundation) festival took place in Themar, Thuringia. With an audience of over 6,000, this was one of the largest events of its kind ever held in Germany. And in Saxony, a former inn in Torgau-Staupitz was refurbished as a permanent venue for the scene, with ten concerts taking place there every year.<sup>17</sup>



The band Gigi & Die Braunen Stadtmusikanten

<sup>15</sup> Kulturbüro Sachsen e. V. (ed.) 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Hindrichs 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Saxon State Ministry of the Interior.

Neo-Nazi groups have tried with varying degrees of success to recruit young people from the 'subcultural' spectrum. This explains overlaps with motorcycle clubs like the 'Hells Angels', 'Outlaws' and 'Bandidos', even if the right-wing extremists active in these clubs have often discontinued their former political activities. Conversely, some right-wing extremist groups (such as the 'Weiße Wölfe Terrorcrew' (White Wolves Terror Crew), 'Aktionsbüro Rhein-Neckar' (Rhine-Neckar Action Bureau) and 'Brigade 8') adopted organisational principles from motorcycle clubs, using English titles for functions (referring to 'members' using the English word and to their 'President' and 'Vice President'). Similar attempts at exerting influence can be found in the martial arts scene, which has become increasingly important in the spectrum of right-wing extremist subcultures in recent years. Some neo-Nazis use their training to prepare for street fighting or for 'Day X', the day on which their revolution will supposedly overthrow society. In addition, martial arts events, neo-Nazi-owned training facilities and right-wing martial arts labels bring in large sums of

money each year.<sup>18</sup> The attempts of right-wing extremists to grow their influence in the extremely popular world of football fandom has received more public attention. The best known of the football clubs involved was Borussia Dortmund, which is not only an extremely popular club, but also has a highly active urban 'neo-Nazi scene'. Alongside the 'Borussenfront' group of right-wing extremist Dortmund fans, the following fan groups were known to the federal government in 2017 to have associations with right-wing extremist groups: 'Karlsbande Ultras' in Aachen, 'Division Duisburg', 'Standarte Bremen', 'Nordsturm Brema' and 'City Warriors' in Bremen, 'Blue Caps LE' in Leipzig, 'Elbflorenz' and 'Faust des Ostens' in Dresden, 'New Society (NS) Boys' in Chemnitz, 'HooNaRa' (for hooligans, Nazis and racists) also in Chemnitz and 'Inferno Cottbus'.<sup>20</sup> Attempts by 'Autonomous Nationalists' to infiltrate the ultras scene undetected were not entirely unsuccessful, as they shared many similarities with the ultras in terms of habitus, style of dress, propensity to violence and the leader principle. As part of a 'new front', the network 'Hooligans gegen Salafisten' (Hooligans against Salafists, HoGeSa) emerged,

gaining notoriety throughout Germany following a violent demonstration in Cologne in 2014. It subsequently appeared under different names (such as 'Bündnis Deutscher Hooligans', i.e. Alliance of German Hooligans) positioned somewhere 'between the new anti-Muslim scene and the traditional right-wing extremists'.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Claus 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Senate Office for Interior Affairs and Sport 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. response of the Federal Government 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

### ULTRAS

The terms 'ultras' and 'ultras scene' collectively refers to fanatical football fan groups, especially those over which right-wing extremist groups strive to gain influence.

### HOOLIGANS GEGEN SALAFISTEN<sup>19</sup>

A network that gained attention in 2014 through violent demonstrations and protests and which consists of violent hooligans and members of right-wing groups. Ideologically, the network was located between two camps: the new anti-Muslim scene and traditional right-wing extremists.



HoGeSa Cologne

The closest links developed between neo-Nazis and organised groups of right-wing extremist skinheads such as the 'Hammerskins' from the USA. The 'Blood & Honour' organisation founded by British skinhead, musician and band leader (of the band 'Skrewdriver') Ian Stuart Donaldson in the 1980s ('Blood & Honour' was used as a slogan by the Hitler Youth, among others), its youth organisation 'White Youth' and the paramilitary group 'Combat 18' ('18' for AH, i.e. 'Adolf Hitler') were banned in Germany in 2000, but continued their activities underground.

Several groups that operated at the intersection of neo-Nazi organisations and openly right-wing extremist skinheads developed right-wing terrorist approaches. The best-known and most detailed case (the reports of the parliamentary investigation committees in Dresden, Erfurt, Wiesbaden, Stuttgart, Munich and Berlin fill thousands of pages) is that of the 'National Socialist Underground' (NSU), which emerged from the association 'Thüringer Heimatschutz' (Thuringian Homeland Protection) in the late 1990s. The group is accused of nine murders of immigrants of Turkish and Greek origin and of a policewoman (between 2000 and 2006), along with further attacks and bank robberies.<sup>22</sup> The 'Blood & Honour' network supported these right-wing terrorists with weapons, money, apartments and strategic contacts.<sup>23</sup>

Consequences of the failure of the security authorities to uncover the NSU included structural changes to Germany's security architecture and an intensification of preventive surveillance of organisations from which right-wing terrorism can potentially develop. This has led to an increase in proceedings against groups suspected of planning violent acts. These changes have had the greatest impact on the neo-Nazi scene. In January 2016, officers searched flats belonging to the suspected operators of the right-wing extremist internet platform 'Altermedia Deutschland' in North Rhine-Westphalia, Baden-Württemberg, Berlin, Thuringia and the Catalan town of Lloret de Mar. In March 2016, the Federal Minister of the Interior banned the neo-Nazi group 'Weiße Wölfe Terrorcrew', an association formed in 2008 by fans of the North Rhine-Westphalian skinhead band 'Weiße Wölfe' (White Wolves). The 'Gruppe Freital' (Freital Group) was declared a terrorist organisation and was accused of several bomb attacks on refugee shelters in Freital, Saxony, and on an alternative housing project in Dresden. The same applied to two members of the group 'Old School Society', against



### SKINHEADS

The term refers to the subcultural scene that emerged in Britain in the early 1970s characterised by a cult of dominant masculinity. In Germany, close ties developed between parts of the skinhead scene and young neo-National Socialists.



Combat 18



NSU perpetrators and victims



Convicted perpetrators from the Freital Group

<sup>22</sup> Extensive information on the NSU and the reasons for the failure of the security authorities to prosecute them can be found in the many thousands of pages of reports prepared by investigation committees commissioned by parliaments at the federal and state level.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. among others Hoffmann 2017, 151 et seq.; Kulturbüro Sachsen 2017, 16 et seq.





Old School Society

whom the Federal Public Prosecutor General brought charges.<sup>24</sup> The group 'Nordadler' (Northern Eagle), against whose members searches were carried out in Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, Bremen and Thuringia in mid-April 2018, was also accused of, for example, considering the preparation of attacks on political opponents and procuring weapons and explosives.<sup>25</sup> The right-wing terrorist organisation 'Revolution Chemnitz' was established in Chemnitz in September 2018, and its members were convicted in court in May 2021.<sup>26</sup>

### REICHSBÜRGER

Designations such as 'Reichsbürger' (Reich citizen), 'Reichsbürgertum' (Reich citizenry), 'Reichsideologie' (ideology of the Reich) or 'Reichsbürgerbewegung' (Reichsbürger movement) collectively refer to people who assume the continued existence of the German Reich and dispute the legitimacy of the Federal Republic of Germany as a state. This group must be distinguished from that of the 'Selbstverwalter' (sovereign citizens) who describe themselves as 'stateless persons' because they do not feel they belong to any 'government in exile' or imaginary state. They therefore often lack the emblems used by 'Reichsbürger', which are sometimes ornate, sometimes simple, sometimes resemble caricatures, and are sometimes bizarre (i.e. those of the 'Reich Movement', the 'Government of the German Reich in Exile', the 'Free State of Prussia', the 'Principality of Germania', the 'Republic of Free Germany', the 'Kingdom of Germany' or the 'Federal States' of 'Baden', 'Bavaria', 'Saxony' and 'Württemberg').



Reichsbürger

As a result of several high-profile violent crimes, the 'Reichsbürger' (Reich citizens) and 'Selbstverwalter' (sovereign citizens) movement became the targets of the investigative authorities. In April 2018, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office issued information concerning house searches of 'Reich citizens' who were suspected of planning major acts of violence. The suspects identified themselves as subjects of the 1871–1918 German Empire and rejected the legitimacy of the government of the Federal Republic of Germany. They had joined forces to replace the Federal Republic with a constitutional order based on that of the former Empire and, to this end, had also 'considered [...] killing certain people should this be necessary'.<sup>27</sup>

A number of universities are home to fraternities with right-wing extremist tendencies. A complaint was filed against the Bavarian domestic intelligence services for this reason in 2015, explicitly mentioning the fraternity Frankonia of the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, but this was dismissed as unfounded by the Administrative Court of Munich in 2018.<sup>28</sup>

On the one hand, the actors, symbols and beliefs of right-wing extremism and right-wing populism demonstrate a great diversity of programmes, organisations and strategies, so it would be wrong to view them as forming a homogeneous mass. On the other hand, large

parts of the spectrum indeed see themselves as being part of a movement. This is demonstrated by the events they use to mobilise support: in response to the killing of a young German by an asylum seeker in Chemnitz, right-wing extremists and populists succeeding in mobilising several thousand people within a single day for street protests in late August 2018. In the week following the killing, various groups and tendencies within right-wing extremism

and populism assembled in Chemnitz on multiple occasions. On 1 September 2018, the AfD registered a demonstration together with Pegida in Chemnitz, which was also attended by members of the right-wing populist voters' association 'Pro Chemnitz'. The front rows of the march were occupied by the AfD's parliamentary group in Saxony and a number of AfD party functionaries from other federal states, the leaders of Pegida, the chairman of the 'Ein Prozent' association and leading representatives of the 'Institut für Staatspolitik' (Institute for State Policy). Former members of the banned 'Blood & Honour' network, the 'Heimattreue Deutsche Jugend' (Homeland-Loyal German Youth, HDJ), the NPD, 'free comradeships' (a term referring to informally organised neo-Nazi groups), the far-right hooligan scene and other far-right groups joined the demonstration.<sup>29</sup> The united action received widespread coverage in the media, triggering a divided response within the AfD. In any event, it showed the mobilisation capacity of the right-wing extremist and right-wing populist camp.

## Goals and motives

Right-wing populism and right-wing extremism do not have a single homogeneous ideology or programme, but rather draw on various ideas from the anti-liberal right. This is often a selective process, and sometimes a contradictory one. The motives of the political actors are often only loosely based on these ideas, and are frequently opportunistic in nature. To understand the driving forces behind the various groups, it is necessary to be aware of the theoretical sources from which the scene's leading intellectuals derive their ideas, and also to consider the diverse and complex sets of factors guiding the actions of each individual actor.

In contrast to Islamism, fragments of right-wing extremist ideology (in Germany as in other European countries) are widespread among large parts of the population. For many years, public opinion research has repeatedly arrived at the conclusion that, despite efforts to use education as a means to eradicate such ideology, xenophobia, chauvinism and prejudices towards certain minorities (such as Jews, Muslims, migrants and homosexuals) remain firmly rooted in the population,<sup>30</sup> however much one may argue about the specific percentages determined by individual studies. Right-wing extremists and right-wing populists echo such attitudes, which are common in all socio-economic milieus – extending even into the 'middle of society'.<sup>31</sup> In reference to the NSU investigation committees in the German Bundestag, it was revealed, among other things, that individual police officers in Baden-Württemberg belonged to the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>32</sup> Based on their findings, the NSU investigation committee also concluded that 'unconscious processes of institutional discrimination reflected in routines of unequal treatment of minorities'<sup>33</sup> could be identified as having played a role in police investigations. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the report of the Independent Commission on Antiziganism (anti-Roma prejudice) published in May 2021 and various reports from civil society all share the conclusion that racist discrimination is part of everyday police practice.<sup>34</sup> Based on a survey of 213 police officers in Duisburg, a

<sup>24</sup> Cf. response of the Federal Government 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Federal Public Prosecutor General 2018a.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 2018c.

<sup>28</sup> Süddeutsche Zeitung 2018a.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Nattke 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. among others Zick/Küpper/Hövermann 2011; Decker/Brähler 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Biskamp 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. German Bundestag, 656.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 879.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. ECRI 2020.

2003 study determined that 13.6% of the respondents were xenophobic.<sup>35</sup> These and other findings support the assumption that right-wing extremist attitudes are also present among the police and security authorities. The reform measures that have been taking place in the police since 2013 will remain an ongoing task in the coming years.<sup>36</sup>

The historical pool of ideas of the anti-liberal right is highly diverse. Nationalism has often been the lowest common denominator. The political scientist Kurt Sontheimer distinguishes three currents that reached the height of their influence in the interwar period and then, following the catastrophe of the Third Reich, continued to effect the right-wing fringe in a strongly diluted form.<sup>37</sup> 'German Nationalism' strove to unite all Germans in one state, upheld the political structures of the Wilhelmine authoritarian state and took a defensive stance vis-à-vis the 'social question', as its adherents feared the loss of social privileges. It firmly rejected social revolutionary experiments. The 'Neue Nationalismus' (New Nationalism) was sustained by the generation of front-line soldiers who had experienced the 'total war' that obliterated class boundaries. Their aim was an intellectual, political and social counter-revolution ('Conservative Revolution') levelled against the ideas of the French Revolution that would ultimately overcome traditional class boundaries in the context of a predominantly ethno-culturally defined 'people's state'. And the third current, the 'Völkisch' (derived from the German term 'Volk', i.e. nation, people) movement, defined the state they propagated in terms of biological racism by applying the laws of the animal kingdom to human society. The categories of 'race' and 'blood' were considered decisive criteria for judging the 'quality' of a nation. The racial substance of the German people was to be preserved and promoted through racial hygiene, eugenics, selection and breeding. The racist nationalism of the 'Völkisch' movement was compatible with utopian thinking and could be combined with elements of social revolutionary programmes.

There were overlaps between these currents, which would also shift over the following decades. Friend-foe structures were also subject to constant change. Anti-communism, which had long been a dominant force, diminished in significance after the end of the Soviet Union. Anti-Semitism receded into the background after 11 September 2001, while Islamism (a term subject to often very broadly ranging interpretations) advanced to become the 'no. 1' enemy. Initially as a response to the 'Neue Linke' (New Left), the 'Neue Rechte' (New Right) emerged as a movement, providing a number of key ideological elements often used by today's right-wing populists and extremists.

The basic critique of modern mass society raised by the 'Neue Rechte' (consumerism) bears great similarity to that of the 'Neue Linke'. What distinguishes it from the latter is what it identifies as the main causes of 'decadence', i.e. the doctrines of egalitarianism as propagated in their different variants: Christianity, Judaism, Marxism and Liberalism. Proponents of the 'Neue Rechte' believe this has led to the levelling of naturally evolved differences and, along with diversity, has also eliminated original creativity.

The 'Neue Rechte' is also fundamentally critical of the idea of 'human rights' and rejects the concept of 'one world'. The notion of a single humanity is held to be a fiction; it is the diversity of different races, peoples and ethnicities that is real. Furthermore, its adherents claim that human beings are only capable of engendering culture as part of a nation or

ethnic group. If individuals are torn from their 'natural habitat' and transplanted into a foreign environment, cultural decline and moral decay, they conclude, are inevitable. This means that the intermixing of peoples is tantamount to 'ethnocide', with the 'melting pot' representing a state of decadence and, at best, cultural mediocrity.

The NPD found it easy to integrate this concept into its party platform. In the Bamberg Programme it adopted in 2010, the NPD emphasised the legitimate 'diversity of nations as bearers of cultures', but rejected any 'multicultural' amalgamation in the interest of 'preserving the substance of the German nation'.<sup>38</sup> The consequences of this view became clear in a draft prepared for party officials, in which the NPD demanded the 'repatriation of foreigners', which included 'passport Germans', i.e. German citizens who did not fulfil the biological requirements: 'A German is someone who is of German origin and was thus born into the ethnic-cultural community of the German people [...]. An African, Asian or Oriental can never become German, as the awarding of printed paper (a passport issued by the Federal Republic of Germany) does not change the biological hereditary factors that are responsible for the physical, mental and spiritual characteristics of individuals and nations [...]. Members of other races therefore always remain foreign bodies, physically, mentally and psychologically.'<sup>40</sup>

Such statements prove the party's proximity to the ideas promoted by historical National Socialism, and the applicants in the ban proceedings were able to provide ample evidence for this. The Nazi-aligned milieu of 'Kameradschaften' (Comradeships), 'freie Kräfte' (Free Forces) and 'Autonome Nationalisten' (Autonomous Nationalists) largely remains true to this pattern, even if 'copycat fascism' (uniform fetishists in high boots) has gone out of fashion, giving way to new styles (e.g. black hoodies and trainers). Even the Identitarian Movement with its trademark 'ethnopluralism' sets itself apart more through novel forms of action and public self-presentation than by means of any innovative ideas. The alarmist warning of a 'Great Replacement' is borrowed from the writings of French writers Jean Raspail and Renaud Camus. Camus alleges that the French government intends to liquidate its own population by means of unchecked immigration. The threat scenario portrays migrants as malicious invaders of the natural habitat of an indigenous population that requires protection. The defence of the identity of Europe (and not just of Germans) is not new either: 'Nation Europa' was the title of the most important publication seeking to unite the 'national camp' in the years 1950 to 2009.

An ideological demarcation line can be discerned within right-wing populism and right-wing extremism particularly in their relationship to world religions. The NPD, neo-Nazi groups and parts of the 'Neue Rechte' cannot declare themselves defenders of the 'Christian West', as they are ambivalent or even hostile towards Christianity. They share Nietzsche's criticism of Christianity, which accuses the religion of corrupting the Occident with its weak, sentimental ethics of compassion. In its place, they propagate Neo-Paganism,



### ETHNOPLURALISM

*The 'ethnopluralism' concept espoused by the 'Neue Rechte' replaces the hierarchy of 'races' with the idea of equal-ranking 'ethnicities', which are viewed as 'organic' entities. The prohibition on race mixing is the key common feature they share with the biological racism of the National Socialists. The concept has been deemed, with some justification, 'differentialist' racism.<sup>39</sup>*

<sup>35</sup> Schweer/Strasser 2003.

<sup>36</sup> APUZ 2019, 36-42.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Sontheimer 1983 (1962).

<sup>38</sup> NPD 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Taguieff 1991.

<sup>40</sup> NPD 2012.

worshipping Odin or an Aryanised Jesus, ‘purified’ of his ‘contamination’ with Judaism. When faced with the alternative of ‘Judaism or Islam’, preference is given to Islam. When right-wing populists proclaimed an alliance with the Jews (representatives of the right wing of the Knesset) against ‘totalitarian’ Islam in Jerusalem in 2010, the NPD reacted with strong opposition: ‘the Jew is not suddenly my friend because I am domestically opposed to Muslims’, confessed the Saxon NPD representative Jürgen Gansel in the party organ ‘Deutsche Stimme’.<sup>41</sup> And when Al-Qaida terrorists brought down the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001, neo-Nazis declared their solidarity with the mass murderers: they too were ‘in a political war with the USA’.<sup>42</sup>

An intellectual divide also becomes evident if one compares the ‘Volkstod’ (Death of the People) campaign initiated by neo-Nazi groups to the ‘Great Replacement’ propagated by the ‘Identitarians’ and representatives of the ‘Neue Rechte’. The ‘Volkstod’ campaign adopted a line of argumentation based on biological racism: the German people would die out if ‘Überfremdung’ (literally ‘over-foreignisation’, their name for large-scale migration) was not stopped. The affinity with Nazi ideology can hardly be overlooked. In contrast, the ‘Neue Rechte’ formally distances itself from National Socialism and anti-Semitism. Above all, they oppose what they refer to as a ‘totalitarian Islamisation’ that is allegedly robbing the European nations of their culture. Their formal distancing from racism (campaign placard: ‘100% identitarian, 0% racism’) applies to the hierarchisation of peoples. Yet the ‘Neue Rechte’ adheres to a homogenising construction of identity. Keeping the ‘ethnic group’ pure from foreign influences thus remains a central imperative.

However, the ideas of ‘Identitarians’ and other members of the ‘Neue Rechte’ are compatible with the new ideological pattern of thought that most of Europe’s successful right-wing populist parties follow. Its pioneers were populists Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and the Front National (since 2018: Rassemblement National, RN) in France, which has enjoyed sustained success over many years and has been led by Marine Le Pen, the daughter of the founder, since 2011. The following innovations have increased the acceptance of these parties among sections of the population and have increasingly found their way into the programmes of the German equivalents in recent years:

- ① Historical revisionism as cultivated by the NPD in almost every issue of its party newspaper (the myth of the Reich, hymns of praise to the German soldier and the ‘positive aspects’ of the Third Reich) has receded into the background or become completely irrelevant. Demonstrative anti-anti-Semitism is deployed in an attempt to clear the historical minefield that has done the most reputational damage.
- ② Instead, they make common cause with the Jews (preferably from the radical Israeli settler movement) in defending the ‘Judeo-Christian Occident’ against ‘Islam’. In the process, the differences between Islam, Islamism and jihadism often become blurred. Pious traditionalist Muslims are placed on the same level as fanatical violent criminals.
- ③ While invoking the values of the Enlightenment (and the democratic state under the rule of law), they defend the ‘Judeo-Christian West’ by castigating Islam/Islamism/jihadism as ‘totalitarian’, ‘misogynistic’ and ‘homophobic’ (discriminating against sexual minorities).

- ④ Opposition to migration is underpinned by socio-political arguments: Muslim migrants are not only considered a security risk, but also as contributing to the ‘undermining of the welfare state’.

The latent authoritarianism of populists who warn against the ‘Islamisation of the West’ is particularly evident in their admiration of the Putin regime, whose strong leader they claim robustly defends the country’s interests, upholds ‘traditional values’ and protects the country from ‘excessive migration’.

Just like the traditional elements of the right-wing extremist worldview, this new pattern of thought can also provide motives for extremist action. However, there is no direct path from thought to action. The Second Periodic Security Report of the Federal Government of Germany, which was published in 2006, summarised the state of research regarding the role of ideologies in violent behaviour motivated by right-wing politics as follows: ‘The motivation of the perpetrators is generally based on experiences of deprivation, xenophobic emotions and a generalised propensity to violence. It is relatively rare for ideologically entrenched political ideologies to trigger violent crimes. The perpetrators generally adopt the convictions of the clique they associate with in their leisure time and support xenophobic objectives in the name of the group that offers them security, protection and recognition. Therefore, most perpetrators, at least at the time a crime is committed, have a decidedly xenophobic and a (usually tenuous) right-wing political orientation.’<sup>43</sup> Even in a study on the narrow circle of ‘multiple and serious offenders’ (Federal State of Saxony, 2001 to 2011), about three quarters of the subjects demonstrated only a low degree of ideologisation.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, such findings should not mislead the observer to completely ignore the role of ideologies in violent behaviour. Ideologically shaped friend-foe schemas can also be found in cases where the perpetrators evince a lack of self-reflection and fail to provide well-founded reasons for their criminal acts. Moreover, in politically motivated group crimes, it is the more highly ideologised actors who contribute significantly to the formation of a political identity in the broadest sense. These actors often play a key role within groups of multiple and serious offenders motivated by right-wing ideas: ‘They revealed an explicit ideological commitment, had contacts to the “Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands” (National Democratic Party of Germany – NPD), emerged as leaders or (inflammatory) speakers (e.g. at demonstrations), were producers of ideology and/or participated in violent discourse’. While none of them authored extensive ideological tracts, some were identified as leaflet writers, ‘sticker and textile designers’ or as ‘lyricists of far-right rock bands’.<sup>45</sup> One of them worked as an editor of a periodical with neo-Nazi affinities. In most cases, the ideological references were not recognisable in the form of fully developed texts, but rather in the terse, yet effective forms of communication of political symbolism.

As numerous studies show, politically motivated groups are characterised by a partly formalised, partly informal division of labour, within which practitioners and ideologues cooperate but generally assume separate functions. However, the sometimes astonishing rate of conversion and reconversion suggests that ideological paradigms of interpretation are frequently only internalised to a limited extent.

41 Gansel in: *Deutsche Stimme*, 4 January 2011.

42 Domestic intelligence services, Brandenburg 2001. For more on Islamism, see Chapter 2.2 in this volume.

43 Federal Ministry of the Interior/Federal Ministry of Justice 2006, 155.

44 Backes/Haase/Logvinov/Mletzko/Stoye 2014, 175.

45 Backes et al. (note 15), 175 et seq.

## Activities

### Internal impact (organisations, structures, offerings)

Right-wing extremism and right-wing populism display a variety of organisational forms. In addition to officially organised parties with a formal membership structure, there are also groups that are more movement-like and which are often only loosely connected in the form of networks. The spread of the internet and social media has elevated the importance of loose networks, as has the prohibition of many groups in Germany. The latter has been directed in particular against neo-Nazi organisations, which have, as a result, started to avoid forming structures under the German law on associations. Both of these areas, i.e. party-based and movement-based right-wing populism and extremism, have their theorists, who produce periodicals and run publishing houses, distribution services and internet forums. Some of these are intended for true believers and sympathisers and fulfil an important identity-reinforcing function, while others address a wider audience and are situated in a grey area between hard, anti-constitutional right-wing extremism and soft right-wing populism.

In 2020, the German domestic intelligence services identified a total of 33,300 people as organised right-wing extremists. This figure excludes sympathisers and those who merely vote for right-wing extremist parties. As shown in Table 1, this total has changed considerably in the years since 2018. The category that has changed the most is 'other potential right-wing extremists in parties', as the members of the AfD subgroups 'Junge Alternative' and 'Der Flügel' have been included in this category since 2019. Other potential right-wing extremist formations active in electoral politics are far less dynamic in comparison. The membership of the NPD has been in decline for a number of years. This was not least the result of the rise of the increasingly right-wing populist AfD, which channelled political protest more successfully than its competitors on the far right.

**Table 1: Members of right-wing extremist organisations, 2018–2020**

	2018	2019	2020
Party members (total)	5,510	13,330	13,250
NPD	4,000	3,600	3,500
Die Rechte	600	550	550
Der III. Weg	530	580	600
Other potential right-wing extremists in parties	380	8,600	8,600
Members of party-independent or party-unaffiliated structures	6,600	6,600	7,800
Predominantly structureless potential right-wing extremists	13,240	13,500	13,700
Total after deduction of multiple memberships	24,100	32,080	33,300
Of which violent right-wing extremists	12,700	13,000	13,000

Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior (ed.), *Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution 2020, Berlin 2021*. Among other right-wing extremists in parties, the German domestic intelligence services registered members of the youth organisation and 'Der Flügel' of the AfD.

Aside from individuals,<sup>46</sup> neither the AfD as a whole nor any of its internal right-wing subgroups were under surveillance by German domestic intelligence services before the summer of 2018. It was only in the second half of 2018 that several state offices announced that they were conducting surveillance on the youth organisation 'Junge Alternative'. In January 2019, the federal domestic intelligence services declared the AfD youth organisation and the AfD association 'Der Flügel' to be 'suspected cases'. Table 1 records only a fraction of those involved in the 'Reichsbürger' and 'Selbstverwalter' scenes; the German domestic intelligence services included 1,000 active members of these movements under each of the headings 'Members of party-independent or party-unaffiliated structures' and 'Predominantly structureless potential right-wing extremists'. For a substantial number of those active in this scene, business interests seemed to outweigh political interests. The Augsburg judiciary heard a particularly serious case in 2018. The defendants, aged between 54 and 63, had sold fake documents as IDs and, according to the prosecution, persuaded real estate owners that, under the 'Law of the Allies', a German could not own residential property, meaning that they would, in all likelihood, lose their property following the imminent demise of the Federal Republic of Germany. As a means of averting this, the defendants charged a 'fee' – ultimately embezzling more than 100,000 euro.<sup>47</sup>

Illegal sources of funding are likely to constitute only a relatively small percentage of the total financial resources. Many groups ultimately owe their existence to the idealism of their members and donors. Only parties that are successful in elections (with results above 1.0% at the state level and 0.5% at the federal level) are eligible for state funding. High revenues are generated through the production and distribution of audio media, the organisation of concerts and martial arts events, and the sale of clothing that is typical of the subculture. A percentage of the proceeds are used to finance subcultural activities.

The relationship of the parties to the structures of the broader movement is complicated ('comradeships', Free Forces, hooligans) and is by no means always governed by an organised division of labour. Since the mid-1990s, the NPD has used 'comradeships' with Nazi affinities as auxiliaries (at demonstrations and during election campaigns) and as a reservoir of new recruits. However, the activists recruited from this source were not always willing to submit to party discipline. The NPD's ties to violent groups compromised its ability to mobilise during elections.

The AfD's relationship with the 'Gidas' (i.e. the offshoots of Pegida based in other cities), the anti-Covid-measure demonstrations and the groups involved in these is similarly complicated, even if the damage to the reputation of the AfD resulting from the involvement of its members in acts of violence has been minimal to date. Adopting a welcoming attitude towards supporters from the broader movements could jeopardise the AfD's strategy of distancing itself from right-wing extremism and crafting an image as unequivocally loyal to the constitution. This was especially true of those active in the Identitarian Movement who participated enthusiastically in 'Gidas' while under surveillance by the German domestic intelligence services.

### External activities (handling of conflicts, recruitment, mobilisation)

After the AfD was temporarily weakened as a result of its split in the summer of 2015, its transformation from a predominantly national-liberal to a national-populist force was rewarded with increasing success in mobilising voters. Smaller competitors in the field of

<sup>46</sup> The Bavarian domestic intelligence services placed the Bavarian AfD party leader, Petr Bystron, under surveillance owing to his alleged contacts with the Identitarian Movement until he entered the German Bundestag, upon which surveillance ceased for legal reasons.

<sup>47</sup> Süddeutsche Zeitung 2018b.

anti-Islamic propaganda, e.g. 'Pro Deutschland', who were hampered by an internal conflict in the 'Pro-Bewegung',<sup>48</sup> and 'Die Republikaner', did not run in the 2017 parliamentary elections. The small party 'Die Freiheit', whose leader Martin Stürzenberger was under surveillance by the Bavarian domestic intelligence services due to anti-Muslim statements and who also made an appearance as a 'Gida' speaker, dissolved in December 2016.<sup>49</sup> 'Pro Deutschland' and 'Pro-NRW' followed a year later. The party that suffered the most from the success of the AfD was the NPD, which had long been the dominant political force to the right of the mainstream Union parties (CDU/CSU). Weakened both financially and organisationally and deprived of its key topics, it achieved only 0.1% of second votes in the 2021 parliamentary election, its worst result since the beginning of its series of electoral successes in the early 2000s.

**Table 2: Vote shares of right-wing populist/extremist parties in national elections, 2013–2021 (in per cent)**

	Parl. Elect. 2013	Europ. Elect. 2014	Parl. Elect. 2017	Europ. Elect. 2019	Parl. Elect. 2021
AfD	4.7	7.1	12.6	11.0	10.3
Pro Deutschland	0.2		--	--	--
Pro NRW	--	0.2	--	--	--
Die Republikaner	0.2	0.4	--	--	--
NPD	1.3	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.1
Die Rechte	0.0	--	0.0	0.1	--
Der III. Weg	--	--	--	0.0	0.0
Total	6.4	8.7	13.0	11.4	10.4

Source: Official election statistics.

The fact that the NPD, despite its temporary successes at the regional level, would ultimately fail to sustain its success nationally is a predictable outcome not only due to the similarity of its programme to that of historical National Socialism, but also in view of the party's inability to transform electoral successes into large-scale membership recruitment. Even at its peak, the party never exceeded 7,000 members. In contrast, the AfD was able to appeal to political spheres (national conservatives, national liberals, Christian fundamentalists) that remained largely out of reach of the NPD.

The NPD viewed electoral politics and street politics as equally important pillars of its activity. The AfD began as a conventional electoral political formation. Only in the course of its right-wing populist transformation did it become at least partially amenable to the 'Gida' protest. The Dresden-based Pegida and its offshoots have brought types of activity usually associated with left-wing protests to culturally conservative, middle-class circles. The heated anti-asylum and Islamophobic sentiment spread by Pegida and its offshoots is considered a catalyst for the rise in violence motivated by right-wing ideas in 2015/16.

The success of organised right-wing extremism in a local context can often not be measured in terms of membership numbers or positive election results. According to Matthias Quent and Peter Schulz, right-wing extremists are successful in cities and municipalities when they make 'territorial gains'.<sup>50</sup> This can happen firstly by means of

'provocation gains', e.g. through graffiti, stickers and public appearances, which they use to present themselves as actors to be taken seriously. In addition to these 'provocation gains', the authors describe, in a second step, what they refer to as 'displacement gains'. Right-wing extremists can claim such gains when other groups (non-right-wing extremists or migrants) are displaced from social spaces. The next stage in escalation for the right-wing extremists is to make 'territorial gains', which serve to consolidate the 'displacement gains' in such a way that, for those affected by right-wing violence, the spaces become permanent zones of fear that they avoid for an extended period of time. The highest level of 'territorial gains' is reached, according to Quent and Schulz, when 'normality gains' set in, i.e. when right-wing extremist groups are perceived as normal political actors and displacement struggles against migrants or opponents of right-wing extremists no longer appear to be an issue at the local level. Such forms of action have become clearly apparent in recent times, especially at the municipal and regional level. New right-wing extremist actors, such as the 'Ein Prozent' group and the 'Identitarians', have described this strategy as the 'patriotic appropriation of space' that serves to 'take back both urban and rural space from the left-liberal elite'.<sup>51</sup> The campaign 'Zusammenrücken in Mitteldeutschland' (Close Ranks in Central Germany), which is mainly organised by former HDJ activists, even called for right-wing extremists to settle with their families in the new German states (mainly Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia) and implement targeted space-seizing strategies there.<sup>52</sup> The 'Identitarians' opened a political housing project in Saxony-Anhalt with an AfD member of the state parliament. An 'Ein Prozent' information centre was established in Brandenburg. Such centres are intended as bases from which various forms of activity can be deployed to gain influence in the local community.

In the past, the right-wing protest scene has steadily increased its mobilisation capacity by adopting methods that have been tried and tested by the left. They have also changed their forms of organisation and protests in response to social media. 'Flash mobs', for which invitations are sent by email, SMS and other messenger services or via weblogs and newsgroups, can be easily used for political actions and require minimal time to organise. Impressive examples of this were the nightly torchlight processions of 'Die Unsterblichen' (The Immortals, whose name was partly based on the left-wing protest group 'Die Überflüssigen', i.e. The Superfluous) organised by the Nazi-oriented 'Widerstand Südbrandenburg' (Resistance in South Brandenburg) in Brandenburg and Saxony (peak in 2011/12). In each case, 20–50 people dressed in black with white 'death masks' marched through the city centres, disappearing as quickly as they had emerged. As part of this campaign, spontaneous, unannounced torchlight marches with over 200 participants took place in the Saxon towns of Bautzen and Stolpen in 2011. They held banners protesting against the alleged imminent 'Volkstod' (death of the people), implying the presence of an emergency situation that called for immediate counteraction. The campaign inspired imitators throughout Germany thanks to its clever choreography and the online distribution of videos made by the organisers themselves.



Torchlight procession of 'Die Unsterblichen'

<sup>48</sup> Ministry of the Interior of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia 2017, 28 et seq.

<sup>49</sup> Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, for Building and Transport 2017, 194 et seq.; Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, for Building and Transport 2018, 189–193.

<sup>50</sup> Quent/Schulz 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Ein Prozent e. V. 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. MDR Aktuell.

The 'Identitarians' also used innovative forms of protest, such as 'hardbass', which originated in Russia and is widespread in Central and Eastern Europe: people wearing white masks and carrying banners dance in front of iconic buildings (e.g. mosques) to rhythmic, deafening techno music (holding placards with slogans such as 'multikulti wegbassen', roughly translated as 'blow away multiculturalism with loud bass'). After the suspected sexual murder of a female student by an Afghan refugee, the 'Identitarians' around Freiburg Cathedral recreated 'crime scenes' using dolls smeared with fake blood.<sup>53</sup>

The means of communication being used are changing dramatically. Classical print media (newspapers, magazines, books) have diminished in importance compared to writing distributed online – and often free of charge. Audio-visual formats previously available only to those with the funds to meet the steep costs associated with the necessary technology, can now also be used by small groups. New initiatives (including the

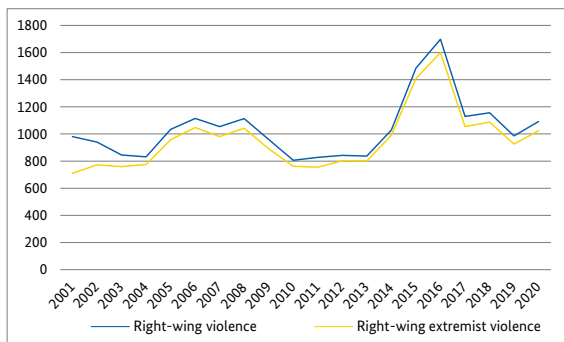
### AUTONOMOUS NATIONALISTS

*A loose association of actors from the right-wing extremist scene who outwardly imitate forms of activity and clothing of the left-wing 'Autonome' scene as well as a propensity to violence.*

'Autonomous Nationalists' and 'Identitarians') often start in 'virtual space' and only develop from there to become relevant 'in real life'. Right-wing alternative media have gained in prominence. The magazine 'Compact' is an impressive example of this, providing a mouthpiece for representatives, among others, of the AfD, the Identitarian Movement

and the 'Neue Rechte'. The same applies to media with links to the Russian state (RT, 'Sputnik'), which support right-wing populists in various European countries.<sup>54</sup> Troll and bot networks such as 'Reconquista Germanica' organised online campaigns via social media in an attempt to influence the 2017 German parliamentary election in favour of the AfD.<sup>55</sup>

As numerous studies on politically motivated violence show, organised right-wing extremism and violence by no means go hand in hand. The majority of the violent criminals registered every year cannot be correlated with any known organisation. And conversely, many of the right-wing extremists under surveillance by the German domestic intelligence services behave largely in accordance with the law. Only a minority systematically use violence as a political tool.



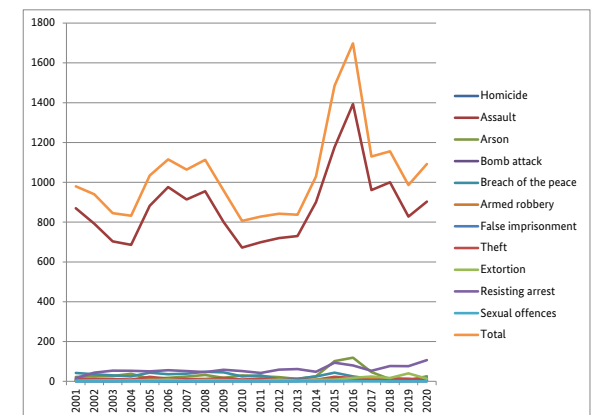
Politically motivated crime – right-wing and right-wing extremist acts of violence, 2001–2020

The state criminal police offices registered 1,092 'right-wing motivated' acts of violence in 2020. Of these, the German domestic intelligence services assessed 1,023 (i.e. the majority) to be 'right-wing extremist'. The level of violence therefore remained below that reached during the refugee crisis, but was still high compared to the previous several years. Civil society counselling services for victims of right-wing violence report significantly higher

figures. They also register cases in which the victims of right-wing motivated violence do not want to report it to the police. This can be due to issues with their residency status, bad experiences with state authorities (e.g. as refugees) or fear of social pressure (e.g. in villages or small towns). Following a massive increase in 2015/16, the counselling services for victims of right-wing violence saw numbers fall again in 2020 to the level of previous years.<sup>56</sup>

If one subdivides the violent offences committed according to the type of offence, the following picture emerges: violent offences such as those typically committed by terrorist groups requiring elaborate underground planning (explosive attacks, robberies, deprivation of liberty and extortion) are particularly dangerous, but play a quantitatively insignificant role. Most right-wing violence consists of physical assaults (directed against 'foreigners', 'Kanaken' (a racist slur applied mostly to people of near and middle eastern descent), 'social misfits', 'homosexuals', 'left-wing parasites'). These are very often accompanied by emotional expressions of hatred, and are frequently spontaneous acts perpetrated under the influence of music and alcohol that appear to be an 'expression of deficient emotional self-control'.<sup>57</sup> Homicides constitute only a small part of the violent crimes. Nevertheless, a multiyear view reveals an alarmingly high number of victims: for the period between 1990 and 2017, 83 fatalities were officially recognised in the Federal Republic of Germany as the consequence of right-wing violence. Research by journalists and civil society even suggests that a total of 150 people have been killed in right-wing violence since 1990.<sup>58</sup> As events such as the recent attacks in Halle and Hanau and the murder of CDU politician Walter Lübcke in Kassel (2019) have demonstrated, further targeted violence aimed at migrants, members of hated minorities and representatives of the state are to be expected.

Categorising acts of violence according to targets or 'issues' reveals that 'hate crimes' are by far the most dominant. The victims of hate crimes are typically not attacked because of their individual behaviour, but rather because of their association with an 'enemy group'. In 2020, around 73% of 'right-wing motivated' violent crimes were deemed 'xenophobic'. This figure could be inflated in the area of violent acts that were assessed as anti-Semitic. This is because, when in doubt, the authorities responsible for gathering data tend to classify these crimes, the motivations for which are often particularly difficult to assess, as 'right-wing motivated'.<sup>59</sup> The counselling services for victims of right-wing violence classify the registered cases according to the victims' own assessments. Their figures therefore differ from the state statistics: racism is named here as the dominant criminal motive and also accounted for roughly 61% (809 cases) of right-wing assaults in 2020.<sup>60</sup>



Politically right-wing motivated acts of violence by offence, 2001–2020

56 Cf. Association of Counseling Centers for Victims of Right-wing, Racist and Antisemitic Violence 2018.

57 Möller/Schumacher 2007.

58 Cf. Jansen 2018.

59 Cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior/Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Antisemitismus, Antisemitismus in Deutschland – aktuelle Entwicklungen 2017.

60 Association of Counseling Centers for Victims of Right-wing, Racist and Antisemitic Violence 2018.

53 Ministry for Interior Affairs, Digitalisation and Migration of the State of Baden-Württemberg 2017.

54 Cf. United States Senate 2018.

55 Cf. Ebner 2018.

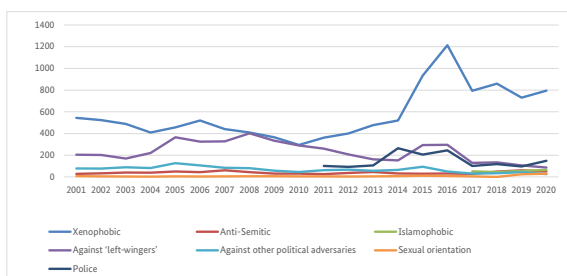


### CONFRONTATIONAL VIOLENCE

*Confrontational violence refers to politically motivated offences that are committed in direct connection with confrontations between hostile groups, and between such groups and the security forces. The proportion of confrontational crimes among all politically motivated violent offences has increased considerably since the 1990s, and remained high between 2001 to 2020. In 2020, around 24% of 'right-wing motivated' acts of violence were registered as confrontational offences.*

Offences that fall under the rubric of confrontational violence exhibit specific features that set them apart from the majority of violent right-wing offences, especially in the segment 'right against left'. Firstly, the proportion of group perpetrators is significantly higher than in the case of xenophobic violence.<sup>61</sup> Secondly, right-left confrontations are more often preceded by preparatory actions.<sup>62</sup> Confrontational violence grows out of the opposing images of self and other that militants on both sides possess. They define themselves in part

through their hatred of their ideological opposites. Both sides allege that the state is complicit in working with their adversaries and claim that violent action is justified in the name of self-defence.



Politically motivated acts of violence by target, 2001–2020

Confrontational violence against police officers is usually a consequence of the role played by security forces during demonstrations. While violent attacks against 'state power' were long the domain of left-wing militancy, this changed with the emergence of the 'Autonomous Nationalists'. By now, the originally punk slogan 'All Cops Are Bastards' (ACAB) can be encountered in all militant milieus. A hostile image of the police has long been cultivated in Nazi-oriented media.<sup>64</sup>

Only a small minority of perpetrators are motivated by sophisticated political ideologies.<sup>65</sup> Their typical social profile has barely changed over recent decades: in the vast majority of cases, the violent offenders are unmarried men under the age of 25 who have often committed previous offences as juveniles. Low to medium levels of educational achievement are predominant. The majority of those who have a school-leaving certificate are unskilled and skilled workers. The proportion of unemployed is much higher than in the peer group as a whole. Involvement in teenage gangs is often accompanied by an above-average number of family-related sources of stress (separation and/or divorce of parents, experience of residential care) along with frequent involvement

This also applies to a new line of confrontation that appeared for the first time in Germany in 2012 during the North Rhine-Westphalia state election: right-wing extremist anti-Muslims vs. Islamists/Salafists.<sup>63</sup> In 2020, the police recorded 65 acts of violence against Muslims and Muslim institutions ('Islamophobic') with a right-wing background.

in violence as both perpetrators and victims: "The motivation of the perpetrators is generally based on experiences of deprivation, xenophobic emotions and generalised propensity to violence."<sup>66</sup> Certain occasions and circumstances make violent behaviour more likely: group activity, shared consumption of hate music, lowering of inhibitions through the use of alcohol. Of course, there are also right-wing extremist perpetrators of violence who deviate considerably from the social profile described here. If one compares 'typical' perpetrators with their victims, an 'asymmetrical perpetrator-victim constellation' becomes apparent:<sup>67</sup> victims are predominantly somewhat older, married, better educated and frequently have a migration background.

## Outlook

Organised right-wing extremism and right-wing populism in the Federal Republic of Germany is undergoing rapid transformation. While the hard forms of right-wing extremism that are closely oriented to historical National Socialism persist, they are losing ground compared to softer, less easily classifiable phenomena. In contrast to the Nazi-oriented NPD, which long dominated the right-wing fringe of the party system, the more moderate AfD managed to enter the German Bundestag for the first time in 2017 (following a series of state-level successes). The European elections of May 2019 confirmed this trend. In September 2021, the AfD again entered the German Bundestag, albeit with a slightly lower share of the vote than four years earlier (2021: 10.3%; 2017: 12.7%). The refugee crisis not only increased the mobilisation capacity of party-based right-wing populism, but also broadened the social foundation for street protests with a critical to hostile stance towards granting asylum to refugees, on the militant fringes of which police authorities temporarily registered a sharp increase in politically motivated (hate) crimes – with perpetrators who had not previously committed offences in this context. Anti-Muslim attitudes assumed a more prominent role in justifying violence and in channelling protest and mobilising voters. The anti-Covid-measure protests of 2020/21, by contrast, were associated with the circulation of anti-Semitic conspiracy narratives.<sup>68</sup> Whether the AfD is more likely to absorb or stimulate politically motivated violence in the process of establishing itself is too difficult to predict at present. The softer image of right-wing populism, its intellectual refinement by means of arguments borrowed from the repertoire of the 'Neue Rechte' and the fluid boundaries it shares with right-wing extremism make it more necessary than ever for academic research, security authorities and civil society to adopt a nuanced approach. The free and democratic basic order and the values of the German Basic Law provide a framework for assessing threats to democracy. Reflecting upon the fundamental values and rules of an open society can help to better classify political developments and to devise effective prevention strategies. This volume proposes a range of ideas for this purpose.

61 Cf. Senate Office for Interior Affairs and Sport/Department for Domestic Intelligence 2007, 31; for more on left-wing extremist adversaries, see Chapter 2.3 in this volume.

62 Cf. Kohlstruck/Krüger/Krüger 2009.

63 Sydow 2012.

64 Cf. State of Brandenburg/Ministry of the Interior 2013.

65 Cf. Frindte/Neumann 2002; Neubacher 1998; Wahl 2003; Willems/Würtz/Eckert 1994.

66 Zweiter Periodischer Sicherheitsbericht, 155.

67 Willems/Steigleder 2003, 5–28.

68 Cf. Jahresbericht Antisemitische Vorfälle in Deutschland 2020.

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## CHAPTER 2.2

### Salafism, Islamism and Islamist terrorism

Klaus Hummel, Andreas Rieck

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The Islamist spectrum in Germany is diverse and extraordinarily complex. However, this is not a purely German problem: it is also the reason why, for example, Algerian writer Boualem Sansal describes Islamism as a ‘cloud of fog’ made up of organisations and informal actors. This ambiguity also applies to the term ‘Islamism’ (also referred to as ‘political Islam’), which harbours ambitions for power within the state and strives to organise society, the economy and law and order according to Islamic principles.

Should ‘Salafism’, or rather the Salafist movement, with its fundamentalist outlook and its highly diverse networks and ideological currents, be considered part of the Islamist spectrum? Just how difficult such assessments are is shown by the recent history of Salafism, whose figurehead Nasir ad-Din al-Albani<sup>1</sup> was still of the opinion that ‘the best policy is to stay out of politics’. Egyptian Salafists held similar views, but only up to the point when, following the fall of Hosni Mubarak in 2011, they had the opportunity to form a coalition with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and jointly assume power in the state. For jihadists who are currently globally active, on the other hand, such considerations have become completely obsolete. They are concerned solely with the fulfilment of what they see as a central religious duty: the jihad against the ‘near’ and the ‘far enemy’ (i.e. against the pro-Western ‘vassal’ regimes in Muslim-majority countries and against ‘the West’). Therefore, the Islamist spectrum represents, on the one hand, a multifaceted and mutable phenomenon in which the transitions between fundamentalism and political activism as well as between non-violent and militant extremism or terrorism are fluid. What unites the spectrum, on the other hand, is a worldview in which constitutional secular orders, social pluralism and the equality of men and women are to be subordinated to an Islamist interpretation of ‘God’s law’ whenever the political opportunity arises.

The distinction between Islam and Islamism is not self-evident. Critics of Islam contest the distinction with the argument that Islam is already a religion with political ambitions.<sup>2</sup> Others – often Muslims who pursue a peaceful form of Islam, and who therefore also criticise the terms Islamism and jihadism as disparaging – insist on a strict separation between Islam and Islamism.

For our goal of explaining Islamism in Germany, it suffices to refer to the concept of the ‘compatibility of Islam with Islamism’ as coined by the German extremism researcher Armin Pfahl-Traughber.<sup>3</sup> Instead of disparaging Islam in general, as right-wing populist groups do, this enables an analytic separation of Islam and Islamism, while, however, simultaneously challenging the one-sided instrumentalisation thesis – the alleged abuse of peaceful Islam by Islamists.

The central challenge for both repressive and preventive measures is to identify differences – above all the difference between piety within the scope of freedom of religion and a form of piety that dictates to others what they should believe, what they should wear and how they should defend their faith.

1 Muhammad Nasir ad-Din al-Albani (1914–1999) taught in Damascus and, from 1961 to 1979, mainly in Saudi Arabia, where he repeatedly caused scandals with his stringent conservative views, but was later rehabilitated. To this day, he remains one of the most important authorities for contemporary Salafists.

2 Cf. Islam expert Tilman Nagel 2005.

3 Pfahl-Traughber 2007, 62–78.

However, it is also vital to distinguish between the various actors across the Islamist spectrum. This is required, firstly, because the adherents of political Islam, Salafist fundamentalism and global jihad differ in their origins, organisational form and activities, in some cases considerably. Secondly, a failure to identify these internal distinctions and the differences from the Islam of most Muslims in Germany plays into the hands of terrorists and runs the risk of a counter-productive stigmatisation that could promote precisely that which must be prevented at all costs to ensure internal security: the expansion of the jihadist milieu in Germany.

## Islamism, Salafism and jihadism

While Islamism and Salafism in Germany share some characteristics that are typical of the situation in this country, they are primarily – as in other European countries – ‘imports’ from various Islamic core countries, mainly by way of migration, but in the last 15 to 20 years also through mission work and conversion. For this reason, we must first explain the most important developments that have shaped the overall phenomenon and have thereby had a decisive impact on the Islamist scene in Germany.

Islamism is a phenomenon that first emerged in the 20th century and which can be interpreted in the broadest sense as a response to the era of Western political and cultural domination over Islamic states, which reached its peak after the First World War. The capitulation of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 also took away the last ‘anchor of hope’ for Muslims in Africa and Asia, most of whom had already been under direct or indirect European rule prior to 1914. The Turks’ successful resistance to a planned further partition of their remaining territory in Anatolia ended in 1923 with the founding of the Turkish Republic, which adopted a determined course of westernisation under Mustafa Kemal ‘Atatürk’. In 1924, the Ottoman ‘Caliphate’, which had existed since 1517, was also formally abolished, which meant that a central symbolic institution for Muslims worldwide ceased to exist. The re-establishment of a pan-Islamic caliphate, associated above all with a return to former power and greatness, has since been a declared (long-term) goal of various Muslim movements, including the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in 1928.

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, whose political activism – under the slogan ‘Islam is the Solution’ – had evolved into a movement of 500,000 regular members and even more sympathisers by 1948, became the model for numerous similar movements in the Arab world and the Islamic world generally. Although ‘fundamentalist’ movements that propagated the absolute primacy of Islamic



### PAN-ISLAMISM<sup>4</sup>

*The Pan-Islamism movement emerged in the late 19th century as a reaction to the dominance of European imperialism and colonialism in the Islamic world at that time. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897) was the most important visionary of pan-Islamic ideology and called for the political unification of all Muslims to ward off their further loss of power and the infiltration of European norms and laws into Muslim societies. The concept of Pan-Islamism intends a return to a caliphate or unitary Islamic state whose legal foundation is based on Sharia.*

4 Kreutz 2019.

values and rules in society had already existed before the 20th century, what was new was the understanding of Islam as a ‘religion and ideology’ that also adopted forms of organisation and political slogans from European ideologies (e.g. the goal of ‘social justice’) that had emerged in the West, imbuing them with an Islamic colouring.

In Egypt, the Muslim Brothers were banned and persecuted between 1954 and 1970, and during this period, some of them became radicalised. This was particularly the case with Sayyid Qutb, who was executed in 1966 and whose writings were to have a decisive influence on the emergence of jihadism (see below). However, from 1971 until the organisation was banned again in 2013, a pragmatic branch of the Muslim Brotherhood almost constantly grew in influence both among professional associations and in parliamentary elections, culminating in the election of Muhammad Morsi as Egyptian president in 2012. Local branches of the Muslim Brotherhood were mostly declared illegal in other Arab states, but they gained freedom to operate in Jordan, Libya and even Saudi Arabia, among other countries (see below). In Palestine, *Hamas*, which was founded in 1988, grew to become the strongest political force and in 2006 won the majority of votes in the self-governing Palestinian territories, overtaking *Fatah*. (*Hamas* went on to seize control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 by force of arms following Israel’s complete withdrawal in 2005.) In Pakistan, the Islamist political party *Jama’at-e-Islami* has been legally active almost continuously since the founding of the state in 1947 and has participated in elections since 1970; similarly organised groups emerged in Afghanistan in the 1970s. Necmettin Erbakan (1926–2011),<sup>5</sup> an engineer with a German doctorate and the pioneer of Turkish Islamism, which became a major force from 1970 onwards, was also ideologically close to the Egyptian Muslim Brothers.



Logo of the Muslim Brotherhood



Logo of Hamas

### HEZBOLLAH<sup>6</sup> OR HIZBULLAH

*Translation: the ‘Party of God’. Hezbollah is a Lebanese Shiite militia that was founded at the instigation of Iran after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and follows Iranian directives. It made its mark with its extravagant suicide attacks and achieved the withdrawal of the last Israeli troops by 2000. Subsequently, Hezbollah remained an armed state within a state in Lebanon, with a highly professional ‘army’ and other sections organised like government departments.*



Hezbollah (Lebanon)

In contrast to the above-mentioned Sunni-based variants of Islamism, Shiite Islamism, which attained political power in Iran with the revolution of 1978–79, whence it subsequently spread to other Shiite areas (e.g. to *Hezbollah* in Lebanon or ideologically similar Shiite organisations based in Iraq,<sup>7</sup> Afghanistan and Pakistan since the early 1980s as well as in Yemen since roughly 1994), currently receives little attention.

It should be noted, however, that Sunni and Shiite parties and groups to which the term ‘Islamist’ has come to be generally applied since the 1970s have one thing in common: their efforts to gain political power

as a means of implementing their conceptions of an ‘Islamic society’. This usually includes the demand for ‘full implementation of Sharia’, including corporal punishment for specific crimes and limited rights for women. Islamists adopt various approaches to achieve their goals. The means they use range from terrorist attacks and armed struggle to political competition within a state’s legal framework and a silent ‘long march through the institutions’. Despite their rejection of ‘un-Islamic’ laws and concepts, Islamists are often flexible in appropriating and ‘Islamising’ Western models, as demonstrated by the political and legal system of the ‘Islamic Republic of Iran’ proclaimed in 1979, for example. For this reason, the once common term ‘fundamentalists’ is inaccurate when applied to Islamists. On the other hand, it aptly describes the movement of the *Taliban*, which ruled over large parts of Afghanistan from 1995 to 2001,<sup>9</sup> and what has now become the worldwide movement of Salafism.

Salafism is a relatively new phenomenon in Germany and Europe. However, it had already become a powerful force in the Islamic world as early as in the 18th century. The preacher Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb (1702–1792) initiated the movement to promote a strict monotheism (*tauḥīd*) on the Arabian Peninsula, purified of all ‘un-Islamic reforms’ (*bida’*, sing. *bid’a*) and relapses into ‘superstitious’ practices, such as the worship of stones and trees, but also of saints’ graves (the latter a phenomenon universally widespread in ‘folk Islam’ as it is still actually practised).

Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb won over the local tribal leader Muhammad Ibn Sa’ud to his teachings and established a political alliance that has lasted over 250 years, giving rise to the present Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (territory conquered 1902–1934) and two predecessor empires, each of which were crushed by the



### TALIBAN/TALEBAN<sup>8</sup>

*The Taliban (literally ‘students of religion’) movement emerged in southern Afghanistan in late 1994 as a reaction of local Pashtuns to the anarchy and infighting among the ‘mujahideen’ that had followed the overthrow of the pro-Soviet Afghan government in April 1992. Their leaders were Islamist veterans of the resistance to the Soviet invasion. By 1996, the Pakistan-backed Taliban had seized Kabul and proclaimed an ‘Islamic Emirate’. After it was crushed by the American invasion in 2001, the Taliban returned to power in 2021 after a prolonged guerrilla war and the retreat of foreign forces.*



Taliban flag



### WAHHABISM<sup>10</sup>

*Wahhabism is an Islamic movement that emerged in the Arabian Peninsula in the 18th century. The followers of Wahhabism, the Wahhabis, subscribe to the rigid and dogmatic monotheistic interpretation adopted by its founder, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb (1703–1791). The Wahhabis call themselves muwahhidun (strict monotheists) and are guided by the wording of the Koran and the traditional sayings and actions (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad. They fundamentally reject all ‘unlawful innovations’ that developed after the early Islamic period, especially the worship of people ‘besides God’ or those acting as ‘mediators’ between the faithful and God, as is typical of Shiite Islam and Sufism.*

<sup>5</sup> Erbakan founded five successive Islamist parties starting in 1970, each of which was banned but continued under new names (National Order Party 1970–71; National Salvation Party 1973–1980; Welfare Party 1987–1997; Virtue Party 1997–2001; Felicity Party since 2001). The AKP, led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, emerged from a reform wing of the latter party in 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Philipp 2011; Bickel 2013.

<sup>7</sup> In Iraq, Shiite Islamist groups were harshly persecuted until the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, but gained all the more influence afterwards.

<sup>8</sup> Steinberg 2011.

<sup>9</sup> The political programme of the Taliban in these years was limited to the implementation of Sharia (in accordance with a rigid interpretation of Islamic rules and prohibitions) and the reunification of the country that had been torn by civil war under their rule. It may have been updated and extended after their return to power in 2021, but it remains basically ‘fundamentalist’.

<sup>10</sup> Elger 2018; Bauknecht 2018.



Logo of the Muslim World League (MWL)



Flag of Saudi Arabia



Flag of Al-Qaeda

Ottomans (1744–1818; 1824–1891). In Saudi Arabia, ‘Wahhabism’, the fundamentalist interpretation of Islam based on the teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb, remained the official doctrine of the state, which gained worldwide influence through its control over the holy sites of Mecca and Medina as well as its oil wealth. Through its construction of mosques and religious schools worldwide since the 1970s, it has been exporting a model of Islam which, in addition to Wahhabism, was also influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood. After waves of arrests in Egypt, many Muslim Brothers settled in Saudi Arabia, among other places, and influenced the religious discourse there, be it through the *Muslim World League*, which was founded in 1962, or through religious universities in Saudi Arabia, which contributed to the international propagation of the Salafist movement.

Jihadism, or jihadist groups to be more precise, developed as early as the 1970s out of the radicalised wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, but also from more radical, political versions of Salafism in Saudi Arabia.<sup>11</sup> While the latter still targeted the ‘near enemy’ (see above), the decade of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979–1989) saw the germination of a global jihadist movement which drew fighters from all over the world and which, in the 1990s, explicitly wanted to engage the ‘far enemy’, i.e. Western powers. Its masterminds included scholars such as Abdullah Azzam (1941–1989), a Palestinian educated at the Egyptian Islamic university *Al-Azhar* who is still held in the highest esteem in radical Islamist circles. Azzam postulated that jihad is the individual duty<sup>12</sup> of any Muslim capable of bearing arms as long as any Islamic country was occupied by ‘infidels’. Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri<sup>13</sup> were also part of Abdullah Azzam’s circle in Afghanistan prior to the founding of *Al-Qaeda* (1988) and were influenced by him. Up to the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989, not only did the Islamist Afghan *mujahideen*<sup>14</sup> enjoy the full support of the West, but the several thousand volunteers from Arab and other Islamic countries who had travelled to Afghanistan for ‘jihad’ were also not yet regarded in the West as a future security risk. (Abdullah Azzam, who had established a liaison office for such early ‘global jihadists’ in Peshawar, Pakistan, was even able to raise funds in the USA on lecture tours.)

This was to change fundamentally in the 1990s, when Bin Laden, initially operating from Sudan, set up an international network of radical Islamists. At that time, Arab ‘Afghanistan veterans’ made their presence known with numerous attacks, especially in Algeria and Egypt, with some travelling to new ‘theatres of jihad’, such as Bosnia, Chechnya and Tajikistan. In Afghanistan itself, the fall of the pro-Soviet regime in 1992 transitioned seamlessly into a power struggle among the *mujahideen*, from which the *Taliban* emerged as a new movement in late 1994. Osama Bin Laden found refuge within

the sphere of control of the *Taliban* after his expulsion from Sudan, and from there he issued a long call for jihad against the USA with detailed arguments in August 1996. In Afghanistan in February 1998, he, al-Zawahiri and two other extremists proclaimed a ‘World Islamic Front to Fight Jews and Crusaders’ and called for the assassination of Americans worldwide, whether military or civilian.

## Islamism in Germany

Until the late 1990s, radical Islamism played only a minor role in Germany. Until 2001, it was still classified by the police as a quantitatively and qualitatively insignificant subsection of the phenomenon of ‘politically motivated crime by foreign offenders’ (see Chapter 2.4). And in social terms, as well, radical Islamist groups and individuals led a marginal existence that went nearly unnoticed by the media and scientific research.

One exception was the ‘*Caliphate State*’ proclaimed by Cemaleddin Kaplan (Hocaoğlu) in Cologne in 1994, which was later continued by his son Metin Kaplan.<sup>15</sup> The *Caliphate State* can be considered a ‘German’ phenomenon insofar as such a project would not have been possible in Turkey. At that time, Islamist groups and parties were still subject to state restrictions or even persecution in that country. For example, the ‘Islamic Community *Milli Görüş*’ (IGMG), an offshoot of Necmettin Erbakan’s Turkish ‘National Salvation Party’ (see above) founded in 1973, was mainly active in Germany until the 1990s, maintaining its headquarters in Cologne. With its exclusively Turkish followers, the IGMG, or representatives of the Saadet Party and the Erbakan Foundation, represent a numerically significant object of observation for the German domestic intelligence services.



Logo of IGMG

Like the AKP, which is currently in power in Turkey under Erdoğan, all of these organisations can be considered offshoots (albeit distant) of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood or their ideologically close relatives. The ‘Brothers’ have been present in Germany since 1958, playing a central role in the expansion of the movement in Europe and, acting through the offshoot *Islamische Gemeinschaft Deutschland* (Islamic Community in Germany, IGD) – another group monitored by the domestic intelligence services – successfully organising numerous mosque communities throughout Germany under a single roof. However, the organisational link to the Muslim Brotherhood is not always apparent. This applies not only to a small number of genuine Muslim Brothers at the core of the movement, but also to offshoots or individuals who are at least closely related to the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>16</sup> In the past, there were initiatives that tried, for instance, to found mosques in various federal states, but claim to be non-partisan, denying any organisational links to the Brotherhood. One such group, the *Sächsische Begegnungsstätte* (Saxon Meeting Place, SBS),<sup>17</sup> still exists. This diffuse type of organisation illustrates how difficult it is to assess the influence of political Islam. Another example of this is the DITIB,<sup>18</sup> which, until a few years ago, still

11 Cf. Hassan 2016.

12 Islamic law distinguishes between an individual duty (*fard ‘ain*), which applies to each individual Muslim capable of performing a particular act, and a collective duty (*fard kifāya*), which is considered fulfilled if performed by a sufficiently large number of Muslims.

13 The Egyptian doctor Ayman al-Zawahiri was imprisoned for several years as a member of the group ‘Al-Jihad’ following the 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat. From 1985, he remained mainly in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where he became the right-hand man of Osama Bin Laden (and, after the latter’s death in 2011, the new ‘Emir’ of Al-Qaeda). He is responsible for the bulk of Al-Qaeda’s propaganda writings and videos from 2002 onwards.

14 The Arabic term ‘*mujahideen*’, ‘*mujahidin*’ or ‘*mujahidun*’ means ‘those who struggle’. In the 1980s, the term had consistently positive connotations even in Western media, being considered tantamount to ‘Islamic freedom fighters’. While Western attitudes have changed, militant Islamist groups of all stripes continue to refer to their armed fighters as ‘*mujahideen*’.

15 See Schiffauer 2000 for more information on the ‘*Caliphate State*’, which was banned by the German Minister of the Interior in December 2001. Metin Kaplan, who had led the group since 1995 was extradited to Turkey in 2004, where he remained imprisoned until 2016.

16 Cf. Vidino 2017.

17 Cf. domestic intelligence services of the Free State of Saxony.

18 DITIB (Diyaret İşleri Türk İslam Birliği = Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs), a registered association in Germany since 1984, is under the supervision of the top Turkish religious authority.

acted as a state partner of German authorities, but is now also regarded as problematic in Germany in view of the increasing signs of Islamisation in Turkey.



Logo of HuT

Other branches of the Muslim Brotherhood include organisations that share a common focus on Palestine. These include *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (HuT),<sup>19</sup> which was later transnationally active, and the Palestinian *Hamas*. Banned in Germany as early as 2003, HuT led a shadowy existence for a time, but has recently drawn attention to itself again with online initiatives such as *Reality Islam* or *Generation Islam*, attempting to mobilise supporters by means of a headscarf debate, for example. *Hamas* and the Lebanese Shiite movement *Hezbollah* made their presence known by organising massive street protests against Israel (including one on 'Jerusalem Day', which was introduced by Ayatollah Khomeini back in 1979, celebrated on the last Friday of the month of Ramadan),<sup>20</sup> a phenomenon that has increased sharply since *Hamas* took power in the Gaza Strip and the subsequent 'Gaza wars', during which Israel has carried out heavy air attacks (2008–2009, 2012, 2014, 2021) (see below). However, the non-Salafist Islamist scene in Germany, which is dominated by Turkish and Arab migrants, is not known to have been the origin of any terrorist activity. The same applies to the phenomenon of foreign fighters. Although individuals from Islamist milieus in Germany were known to travel to Afghanistan or Bosnia to perform 'jihad' as early as the 1990s, since 2001 foreign fighters have been recruited almost exclusively from other, 'Salafist' milieus (see below).

## From Islamism to Salafism

Going almost entirely unnoticed by the public, a German-speaking Salafism began to emerge in the early 2000s. This breed of Salafism was unlike 'typical' Islamism, which sees Islam as a religion and political mission or a political 'ideology' (see above). The new German Salafism was long considered apolitical by many, even by Muslim autocrats. After all, Salafism is indeed 'fundamentalist' above all else, i.e. its intention is to revive the supposed 'purity' of early Islamic religious practice. The early Islamic ideal also explains the Salafists' striking, provocative appearance: a bushy beard and ankle-length trousers for men and a *niqâb* (face veil) for women, as well as the admonishing index finger as their central symbol. This is meant to testify that there is only one God (*tauhid*), and that even the smallest form of 'association' (*shirk*), be it in the form of worshipping Muslim saints or visiting graves, is already considered idolatry. Another distinctive feature of the German Salafist scene is that its language is peppered with Arabic Islamic terms that at times comes across as incomprehensible gibberish to non-Muslim German native speakers. Almost all Salafists make an effort to learn Arabic in order to understand the Koran and important Islamic religious texts in the original, so their use of these terms is a matter of course.

Salafists attach the greatest importance to the strictest possible observance of Islamic rules and precepts and to missionary work (Arabic: *da'wa*, literally: 'call'), the latter not only among 'lax' Muslims in order to lead them onto the 'right path', but also among

non-Muslims, from whom Salafists should otherwise generally isolate themselves and keep as far away as possible (*al-walâ wal-barâ'a*).<sup>21</sup>

The Salafist call to Islam (*da'wa salafiya*) may be limited to instruction within the immediate family circle, or take place at bookstalls in pedestrian zones, or it may manifest itself in the form of Sharia police, who admonish Muslims to refrain from gambling, drugs or even contact with non-Islamic members of the opposite sex. Such diversity harbours an expansive force that has allowed Salafism to swell into a rapidly growing movement. This expansive tendency is also rooted in the interactive character of the Salafist movement. While everyone is urged to live and propagate the 'true Islam', there is not always agreement within the Salafist spectrum on how this should be achieved, what kind of *da'wa* should be followed, what methods applied, what goal pursued. For example, networks based around some self-proclaimed scholars are primarily dedicated to acquiring 'religious knowledge', while others tend to challenge mainstream society with their 'true religion'. Those Salafists with populist agendas are particularly dependent on inciting a reaction from mainstream society as a means of expanding their influence, which brings us to a second reason for the virulence of Salafism: the ability of influential figures to cause a stir and gain media attention using provocative methods.

The most important period in this respect were the years from 2010 to 2015, when there were reports of an Islamic school in Mönchengladbach,<sup>22</sup> riots in Solingen and Bonn,<sup>23</sup> and Sharia police in Wuppertal (see below), which even prompted the German chancellor and the federal minister of the interior to make statements. Interaction with New Right groups such as *Pro NRW* also played an important role, resulting in the emergence of specifically anti-Salafist formations such as *HogeSa* (abbreviation of 'Hooligans gegen Salafisten', i.e. Hooligans against Salafists) or even feeding into the *Pegida* (abbreviation of 'Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes', i.e. Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident) movement in Dresden (see Chapter 2.1). One of the best-known and most momentous projects was the *Lies!* (Read!) campaign launched in autumn 2011, in which free copies of the Koran (translated into German) were distributed at stands in pedestrian zones.<sup>24</sup> According to an investigation carried out by security authorities of the biographies of German jihad fighters in the Syrian-Iraqi theatre of war, one in five jihadists was involved in this initiative before leaving the country.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, the impact of the '*We love Muhammad*' campaign, which was launched in 2016 following the ban on '*Lies!*' and in which biographies of the prophet were distributed, remained low compared to the Koran campaign.



Logo of the Lies! campaign

<sup>21</sup> The polar concepts of *walâ* and *barâ'a*, which can be traced back to the Koran, Surah 5 verse 51, constitute a theme in many contemporary propaganda writings, especially those authored by militant Salafists who declare loyalty (*walâ*) to brothers/sisters in the faith and enmity towards or 'avoidance' (*barâ'a*) of 'infidels' to be an essential duty of faith for all Muslims.

<sup>22</sup> Spiegel Online, 30 August 2010; Spiegel Online, 9 October 2010; Spiegel Online, 15 October 2010.

<sup>23</sup> In May 2012, the right-wing populist party Pro NRW deliberately provoked Muslims by displaying caricatures of Muhammad at demonstrations in front of mosques in Solingen and Bonn. Counter-demonstrations by Salafists resulted in violence against police officers (29 injured in Bonn, 5 May 2012); cf. Die Welt, 2 May 2012; Spiegel Online, 5 May 2012; Die Welt, 10 October 2012; Spiegel Online, 19 October 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Abou Taam/Dantschke/Kreutz/Sarhan 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Federal Criminal Police Office / Federal domestic intelligence services / Hessian Information and Competence Centre against Extremism 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in Jerusalem in 1953 by the Palestinian scholar Taqi ad-Din al-Nabhani. Since the 1970s, its propaganda has concentrated on the demand to re-establish a pan-Islamic caliphate. Today, HuT is banned in most Arab states and Pakistan, but it gained influence in the 1990s, including in Central Asia, for example.

<sup>20</sup> In April 2020, all activities of Hezbollah were banned in Germany, including the 'Jerusalem Day' Marches.

There were also political reasons for the rise of Salafism starting in the 2000s. The attacks perpetrated by *Al-Qaeda* in the USA on 11 September 2001 were a key defining event, which in turn triggered a chain reaction of further events of global importance to Islamism. '9/11' not only marked the beginning of the 'Global War on Terrorism' proclaimed by then US President George W. Bush, the most important events of which were the invasions of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), but also led to 'Islam' and 'the Muslims' becoming a perennial concern of Western media. Many Muslims in Germany and other Western countries suddenly felt as if they were collectively under general suspicion, and quite a few even considered the 9/11 attacks a 'conspiracy' or a 'fake' fabricated to put Islam and Muslims in a bad light. Muslims in various countries, however, also openly expressed their sympathy for the deeply symbolic and visually powerful attacks, which had revealed the vulnerability of the USA to the entire world. Muslims in Western countries generally exercised greater caution, but there were undoubtedly many *Al-Qaeda* sympathisers in the Muslim diaspora, as the subsequent 'careers' of thousands of jihad volunteers have shown.

Amazingly, the attacks of 11 September 2001 even led to an unprecedented wave of conversions to Islam in Western countries, including Germany. The importance of religion to Muslim migrants has grown since then, whether as a reaction to an often subliminal, but still widely noticeable scepticism of Western societies towards Muslims in general, or to the significantly increased presence of Islamic and Islamist content on the internet since 2002. Even back then, this content already covered a broad spectrum, ranging from conservative mainstream Islam to Islamism of various varieties and 'non-political' Salafism to *Al-Qaeda* propaganda and it has since increased considerably in scope and, to some extent, in its radicalism (see below), especially thanks to social media like *YouTube*, *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Telegram*, which have acted as powerful interactive multipliers.

One reason why Salafism in particular gained so many followers after 2001 is its internationalist message, which holds a particular appeal for 'uprooted' young Muslims among second and third generation migrants. More than other Islamists, who usually organise themselves according to their country of origin, Salafists propagate the ideal of the *Ummah*, i.e. the community of all Muslims throughout the world, and gather 'birth Muslims' and converts into a pious community of 'brothers' and 'sisters', where ethnic origin plays no role whatsoever (at least in terms of how they present themselves to the public). In particular, the practical 'fraternity' demonstrated by Salafists at meetings organised for religious lectures, 'Islam seminars' and joint leisure activities<sup>26</sup> exerts a great attraction, for example, on young people lacking an intact family and/or tight-knit peer friendship groups. In the case of young non-Muslim Germans who convert to Islam, the influence of their peer groups often played a role, but so did the attraction of a clearly structured system of values and rules that, after decades of 'anything goes', offered an alternative way of acting out their youthful 'otherness'.

<sup>26</sup> A good impression of this 'practical fraternity' was conveyed, for example, by a video produced in 2011 by the Islamic Cultural Centre in Mönchengladbach entitled 'Wir vermissen Dich – Der Dawa-Film' (We miss you – The Dawa film), which featured preachers including Sven Lau, Pierre Vogel and Hassan Dabbagh (excerpts can still be viewed on YouTube).

## Non-militant Salafist actors and activities

Three key tendencies can be identified within the field of non-violent Salafism.

In numerical terms, 'Salafist aspirations' are currently shared by an estimated 12,150 persons nationwide (as of 2020), making it the 'only Islamist group with a significantly increasing number of members'.<sup>27</sup> Salafist networks currently have about ten times the number of followers of the Muslim Brotherhood (1,350 followers) and have even surpassed the Turkish IGMG (10,000 members), which for years enjoyed by far the largest membership within the Islamist spectrum.

A second trend has been an increasing willingness to use violence. This is revealed by the fact that, though the overall number of Islamists in Germany was in decline until recent years, the number of those among them who were willing to use violence was rising.

At nearly the same time, i.e. from around 2014–2016, another trend emerged involving an increasing fragmentation and 'informalisation' of Salafist organisations. To understand these developments, it is important to become familiar with the relevant Islamist actors, their activities and the rationales behind their actions.

Salafism is a transnational phenomenon organised primarily in the form of worldwide networks of scholars and followers. It is disseminated via online sermons, short or long-term visits of well-known preachers to Europe or by devoted disciples and young recruits on a national and local level. While the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, has an organisational core with strict rules of membership, Salafism is a heterogeneous movement that does not require its preachers to have a formal Islamic education to act as imams or to proclaim Islam. The same applied to the nationwide Islam seminars launched in Germany after 2000, which were the first to enjoy a multi-ethnic audience there. Those who were involved in the early days, such as Imam Hassan Dabbagh from Leipzig, were not only concerned with teaching the fundamentals of Salafism (religious doctrine, Arabic, Koran), but also with disseminating a narrative of the oppression or disadvantage experienced by Muslims in Germany that could be used to foster loyalty (*walā*) among 'true Muslims'. A similar black-and-white logic is also used to encourage a siege mentality by the Muslim Brotherhood, who draw attention to anti-Muslim tendencies or excesses and know how to exploit them to further their own projects.<sup>28</sup>

It was possible to identify people within the Salafist spectrum who pursued a much more confrontational agenda and were already active before the emergence of jihadist organisations in Germany (see below). They were concerned less with imparting knowledge on a small scale and more with 'filling halls', with street *da'wa* or with explicitly challenging mainstream society. Their aim was made explicit in the name of their network (which was banned in 2016): '*Die Wahre Religion*' (The True Religion, DWR) no longer merely formulated a claim to Muslims that they represented true Islam, but also, and more importantly, purported to be the best of all religions. The most prominent representatives of this provocative populist faction included the Palestinian Abu Nagie, initiator of the nationwide Koran distribution campaign

<sup>27</sup> Federal domestic intelligence services 2019, 175.

<sup>28</sup> A German example is the founding of the Marwa El-Sherbiny Centre in Dresden, with links to the Muslim Brotherhood. The centre was named after Marwa El-Sherbiny, whose murder during court proceedings in 2009 had xenophobic or anti-Islamic motives.



'Lies!', Sven Lau, who made headlines in September 2014 with his 'Sharia police' patrolling Wuppertal,<sup>29</sup> and, in particular, German convert and ex-boxer Pierre Vogel. With his powerful physical rhetoric, he was able to 'empower' all those young German Muslims who felt forced onto the defensive and who lacked role models they could identify with.

In order to develop an understanding of Islamist organisations, an obvious step is to take a look at mosques and their imams. It must be emphasised that the absolute majority of mosque communities make important contributions to social coexistence.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, however, it serves the purpose of some Islamist mobilisation strategies when Muslim places of worship, as evidence of the Muslim presence in Germany, are generally discredited. It is important to note in this regard that it is precisely the representatives of provocative and populist Salafism who have accelerated a development in which private meeting places, residences and the internet have become the central sites of community-building. And it is not necessarily those who act as the imams of congregations who become prominent spokespersons, but rather those with rhetorical talent who are not only filled with an authentic zeal for their religion and for missionary work, but also know how to reach young people with a vivid, natural and often humorous 'youth language'.<sup>31</sup> Using these methods, they are able to sell even extremely conservative or reactionary messages and policies, such as the full-face veil for girls and women, as a desirable, 'authentic Muslim way of life'. This is evidence of the growing potential of an antagonistic or demonstrative religious practice that can assume the most diverse forms and accommodate the most diverse intentions. When demands are made to allow time for prayer during school lessons or when expressions of sympathy are made following terrorist attacks, the question therefore arises as to how to deal with this in a way that is sensible and not counter-productive.

An important reason why non-militant Salafists are also under observation by the German domestic intelligence services and why, after the banning of groups of obvious jihadist orientation (see below) in 2016, association bans were also imposed on DWR and their 'Lies!' campaign<sup>32</sup> is their often openly expressed negative attitude towards democracy and the liberal democratic constitutional order. Abu Nagie and other radical preachers have polemicised against Germany's political and legal system in their lectures, 'Islam seminars' and writings. Based on the premise of an absolute primacy of 'Allah's laws' over 'man-made laws', some Salafist preachers even denounce democratic elections and parliaments as a form of 'idolatry' (preferably using the derogatory term *tāghūt*).<sup>33</sup> In their view, 'true' Muslims must submit to 'Allah's laws' alone, otherwise they leave the path of strict monotheism already demanded by the principle *Lā ilāha illā llāh* ('There is no deity but Allah'),<sup>34</sup> and thus the path of Islam.

29 Abou Taam et al., op. cit., 99. A court case against those involved in this initiative ended in November 2016 with the acquittal of all defendants.

30 Cf., for example, Spielhaus/Mühe 2018.

31 Wiedl/Becker 2014.

32 Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community 2016.

33 The term *tāghūt* (plural: *tawāghūt*), which appears several times in the Koran, literally means 'transgressor'; i.e. someone who disregards the 'laws of Allah'; be it through the worship of 'idols' or through tyrannical, arbitrary rule. In today's Islamist usage, *tāghūt* is used as an insult, especially for 'un-Islamic' forms of government, which is often considered to include the governments of Islamic states that do not rule according to the stipulations of the Sharia.

34 The first part of the Islamic creed. The second part is 'Muhammad rasūlu'llāh' (Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah).

## Jihadist structures and their propagation

The public perception of Islamism, Salafism and indeed of Islam as a whole is shaped by the danger emanating from the growing number of 'potential Islamist terrorists', which currently comprises nearly 1,100 individuals (including 'relevant persons') according to police estimates. This is understandable from the standpoint of the security authorities, as acts of violence that they attribute in particular to Islamic 'Gefährder' (person regarded as a potential terrorist/extremist threat), who numbered nearly 560 in December 2021 – including jihad returnees and supporters of the 'Islamic State' (IS) who travelled to Germany as part of the recent wave of migrants – actually pose a genuine threat. This is true not only with regard to the attacks (few so far) that have been carried out in Germany, but also with regard to the 'jihadisation' of the Islamist milieu, as indicated by the rising numbers of suspected potential Islamist terrorists. This one-sided view of the Islamist spectrum, which also pervades the research landscape, is problematic, however, if it slides into a general suspicion of Salafists, Islamists or Muslims as a whole. It is therefore all the more important to examine jihadist structures and their associated dynamics more closely.



Flag of Islamic State

In parallel to the spread of Salafist networks in Germany, structures have also begun to develop since the start of the new millennium that view the use of violence as a legitimate means to fight for the interests of Islam and Muslims.

An important role in this was played by the network of the Egyptian imam Abu Omar in the area of Ulm and Neu-Ulm;<sup>35</sup> his connections to the militant Islamist group *Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya* in Egypt and to contemporary Salafism represent a textbook case of the hybrid ideology of Jihadism. It was precisely this milieu from which several early foreign fighters were recruited, some of whom – specifically the 'Sauerland Group' that was arrested in 2007 – also planned attacks in Germany after their return. Although simplistic accounts often blame Salafism for violent jihadist activism, it can be shown that the processes are more complex and involve a 'mixture of the integration and distancing (or autonomy) of radical jihadist networks with respect to local mosque communities and the supra-regional Salafist scene'.<sup>36</sup> The question of violence even forms a key dividing line within the Salafist scene in Germany. While jihadist agitators operating from Austria could still be dismissed as 'mama's boys' by preachers in Germany in 2005, similar groups would increasingly emerge in Germany as well, including *DawaFfm*<sup>37</sup> or DWR, which began to make jihadist language socially acceptable in various ways. Suddenly, such groups were publicly referring to 'jihad as the military



Sauerland Group: The blue drums contained chemicals for building bombs.

35 Die Tageszeitung (taz) 2007.

36 Cf. Malthaner/Hummel 2012, 275.

37 Frankfurt missionary network *DawaFfm* distributed videos on its own channel on YouTube starting in 2008 and supported the Koran distribution campaign 'Lies!' from 2012. It was banned in March 2013.

service of the Muslims’, to ‘*takfir*<sup>38</sup> over the rulers’ or even to ‘chain *takfir*’. The latter declares anyone to be an infidel who does not classify an infidel as such. (‘He who does not declare the kafir to be a kafir is himself a kafir.’)

Remarkably, militant positions were even propagated by individual jihadist preachers who acted as imams of smaller mosque communities. A prominent example is the Egyptian-Austrian Mohamed Mahmoud,<sup>39</sup> who, after serving a prison sentence in Austria in 2011/2012, made rapid progress in promoting jihadist discourse in Germany. He achieved this through the interactive project *Millatu Ibrahim*, in which the work of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi was translated,<sup>40</sup> through a strong online presence and by establishing – or rather taking over – a mosque in Solingen.

Until it was banned in May 2012, *Millatu Ibrahim* formed the core of a current of jihadism that would be continued in the form of successor organisations such as *Tauhid Germany* (banned in March 2015). Its most important leaders, however, left the country, most of them later joining Islamic State. One of those who acted as imams was the alleged IS recruiter Abu Walaa,<sup>41</sup> who was also associated with the later assassin Anis Amri (see below). While these preachers made no secret of their jihadist ambitions, others are more guarded, such as Abdellatif Raouli, the person behind the *DawaFfm* network, who also inspired Arid Uka to carry out the first Islamist attack in Germany in March 2011. This also applies to other, largely unknown propagandists, who mostly remain below the threshold of criminally punishable activity, but are nevertheless perceived within the scene as potential supporters of the jihadist cause. It therefore remains a key challenge for security authorities to identify and contain jihadist-oriented individuals, be they imams, informal leaders of private meetings or ‘media activists’, not to mention potential terrorists.

Islamist extremists claim to profess the ‘true Islam’, thereby frequently coming into conflict with non-Muslims, but also with other Muslims, even with those who share many of their views. Certain events that occurred abroad have had a catalysing effect on this, including, first and foremost, the ‘Arab Spring’ that began in 2011, which for a time increased the scope of action available to Islamists and jihadists in many countries of the Middle East and North Africa, and the many-sided war in Syria, which has been ongoing since 2011. These events were also reflected in Germany in the tensions between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, in friction between the Yazidis and Kurds persecuted by IS on the one hand and IS sympathisers on the other, and in disputes between ideological networks that are inclined towards different jihadist camps – e.g. *Al-Qaeda* and IS.

This is illustrated by the example of *Al-Qaeda*-affiliated activist Bernhard Falk, who in the 1990s, as a member of the ‘Anti-Imperialist Cells’, still considered himself the

last representative of a left-wing radical tradition. While he continues to propagate a supposedly legitimate resistance to Western or US ‘imperialism’ to this day, he now does so within the framework of the *Caliphate State* group mentioned above, remnants of which still exist. Moreover, he considers this reconcilable with his advocacy of *Al-Qaeda* – but not of IS, which he strongly criticises.<sup>42</sup>

Intra-jihadist differences, which have even prompted purging operations within Islamic State, show how much various individual agents of ‘true Islam’ believe themselves to be on the right path and therefore also take the (Islamic) law into their own hands. This kind of independent action also includes cases in which young Muslims, acting outside of mosque organisations, build their own ‘Lego Islam’ in groups that meet at people’s homes or via *messenger* services and then commit an attack without any connection to mosques or Salafist preachers – as happened in the case of a certain *WhatsApp* group (see Chapter 3.2).<sup>43</sup>

But while it is important to consider the formation of different extremist camps and the tensions between them, one should not overlook the similarities, alliances and overarching subcultural dynamics. There are a number of common platforms for action that transcend potential differences. A wide variety of Islamists show solidarity, for example, with ‘political prisoners’, as exemplified by the Islamist prisoner aid organised by Bernhard Falk or similar initiatives like ‘al-Asraa’ (The Prisoners) and ‘Wacht auf’ (Wake Up), but also with Islamist aid organisations ranging from ‘Ansaar international’ to ‘Helfen in Not’ (Help in Need), which have enabled highly diverse actors from the Islamist spectrum to unite.

Even if some conflicts have a serious background, for example when Pierre Vogel or Hassan Dabbagh received death threats from IS, they also offer the possibility of either fostering solidarity or sharpening contrasts. Ultimately, the question of whether Pierre Vogel’s criticism of IS meant that he was evading his jihad responsibility, making him an infidel (*kāfir*) (on Vogel’s – somewhat belated – criticism of IS, see below), led to a serious discussion of such issues in a certain milieu. This increasingly takes place by means of Salafist and jihadist media, which function as echo chambers. In addition to the dominance of religious websites that appear to be Islamic but are often really Salafist, the main problem here is a large number of non-public, semi-secret *messenger* groups or *Telegram* channels that are clearly committed to global jihad or Islamic State. Besides the internet and outside the scope of established mosque organisations and imams, informal local structures and actors can also often be important vehicles for the propagation of jihadist convictions within a vulnerable milieu.<sup>44</sup> Meeting places ranging from fitness centres and kiosks to Islamic groups that meet in people’s homes to prisons are sites where propagandists who hold no formal office, but rather view themselves as ‘callers to Islam’ (*dā’i*), ‘supporters’ (*munāsir*) or veterans of global jihad, can often make an undetected contribution to the jihadisation of their environment.

38 *Takfir* (‘to declare infidel’) is the Arabic term for excommunication from the community of Muslims, for which a number of conditions must be met according to Islamic law.

39 Mohamed Mahmoud (aka ‘Abu Usama al-Gharib’) relocated to Turkey in April 2012, before the *Millatu Ibrahim* group was banned. From there, he had himself smuggled into Syria after a further imprisonment in 2014. He appeared in an IS propaganda video in June 2015, in which, after an inflammatory speech, he took obvious pleasure in shooting a Syrian prisoner. In November 2018, he was reportedly killed in an air strike in Syria.

40 Abou Taam et al., op. cit., 104; Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (b. 1959 in Nablus, Palestine) is considered one of the most influential living ideologues of contemporary jihadism. His 1984 polemic ‘*Millatu Ibrahim*’ (The Community of Abraham) emphasises the need for Muslims to renounce any form of allegiance to ‘idolaters’ (see footnote 20 above, *al-walā wal-barā’a*).

41 Iraqi preacher ‘Abu Walaa’ (real name: Ahmad Abdulaziz Abdullah) was arrested in Hildesheim in November 2016. He was sentenced to ten years and six months in prison in 2021.

42 Cf. Abou Taam et al., op. cit., 115 et seq.

43 Kieffer/Ceylan/Hüttermann/Zick/Dziri 2017.

44 Hummel 2014.

## ‘Theatres of jihad’ as drivers of radicalisation

Only a few jihadist preachers or activists active in Germany or Austria have openly encouraged people to join extremist groups in foreign countries.<sup>45</sup> Such calls came far more from various ‘theatres of jihad’, which is also where Mohamed Mahmoud took refuge (see above) – not least in order to further promote the spread of jihad discourse from these locations. This illustrates how important international conflicts are in cases of radicalisation, as they represent the topical point of reference for a ‘theology of violence’ that stylises the merits of jihad as the ‘highest form of worship’, typically by giving examples from early Islamic history.<sup>46</sup> Lectures that highlight the bravery, spirit of sacrifice and heroic deeds of individual contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad (*sahāba*) with many anecdotes, supported by works of classical Arabic literature, are therefore particularly popular. Especially the first generations of Muslims, i.e. the ‘pious predecessors’ (*al-salaf al-sālih*), from whom the Salafists derived their name and on whose religious practice their movement is based, were already idealised in medieval Islamic historiography, and today’s preachers and jihad scholars tend to embellish their qualities as virtuous role-models and fighters even further.

Even without explicitly discussing jihad, Salafist preachers and authors perform a function of ideological socialisation by encouraging a willingness to undertake jihad in principle. They tend to portray Muslims as victims both of direct Western aggression, e.g. in Afghanistan or Iraq, and of exclusion, discrimination and Islamophobia in Germany (see above) and other countries of the diaspora. In addition, they warn more or less urgently of the dangers posed by ‘infidel’ and ‘decadent’ Western societies, especially for Muslim women and children, whose value system and Islamic morality could be undermined by all kinds of bad role models. In general, the situation portrayed is of being surrounded by hostile ‘infidels’ who present a myriad of challenges to good Muslims, including the need to shoulder hostility in forms ranging from nasty looks on the street to ‘harassment’ by the police.

Another popular theme in which some preachers (e.g. Abu Dujana) specialise is death, which can happen to anyone unexpectedly and at any time, and the subsequent Last Judgement with the choice of paths between ‘paradise or hell’.<sup>47</sup> This serves to incite both fears of divine punishment and expectations of rich rewards for exemplary Islamic behaviour, the latter also being a key theme of jihadist propaganda.

Since Salafists, especially newly and re-converted ones, are frequently filled with religious zeal, the step from mere ‘da’wa’ to ‘really wanting to do something’ is, often enough, quite small. There were more than enough online calls to action, reinforced by cleverly composed video footage showing both Muslim victims of violence and the

fighting power of the ‘*mujahideen*’ in various countries. A key event was the scandal uncovered in May 2004 concerning the torture and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib by American guards. This was grist to the mill of jihadist online propaganda worldwide, which had already started to appear in late 2001. It lent new credibility to the appeal of *Al-Qaeda* and other groups to all Muslims with a ‘sense of honour’ to stand by their oppressed brothers and ‘disgraced’ sisters. It has been shown that German Muslims were among those who sought military training for ‘jihad’ abroad, as in the case with the three members of the ‘Sauerland Group’ (see above). Until 2010, the region of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan was the preferred destination for such extremist adventurers, who often made their way there without Pakistani visas and with the help of smugglers. There were also German-speaking jihadists in this region, such as the Chouka brothers,<sup>48</sup> who addressed their messages to undecided sympathisers in Germany, urging them to leave the ‘land of the infidels’ and emigrate (*hijra*)<sup>49</sup> to the ‘land of jihad and honour’. Starting in 2008 there were also calls to take women and children to Pakistan in order to allow them to grow up in an ‘Islamic’ environment, and in some cases this call was heeded.<sup>50</sup>

In retrospect, German-speaking jihadists played only a minor role in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Most died as a result of American drone attacks or in combat operations against the Pakistani army, and only a few have carried out verified attacks in Afghanistan.<sup>51</sup> However, from 2012, the second year of the armed insurgency in Syria, that country became the prime destination for jihad fighters from all over the world, including over 1,000 from Germany. Multiple factors favoured this development:

Firstly, events in Syria, starting with first unarmed demonstrations against the Assad regime in spring 2011, were abundantly documented using smartphone cameras and could be followed virtually in real time online.

Secondly, until around the end of 2015, it was very easy to enter the rebel-controlled area in northern Syria, both for travellers from Europe and for those from various Arab and Asian countries, as Turkey did little to obstruct people from crossing the border, or even encouraged them.

Thirdly, from September 2015 until Russia’s military intervention, victory against the Syrian regime often seemed within reach, and propaganda suggested to those willing to wage jihad that their families could also live there safely and comfortably in confiscated houses (which was indeed true in some cases).

45 The highest sentence so far against a suspected German-speaking recruiter for IS was imposed on the Bosnian Mirsad Omerovic (‘Ebu Tejma’), who preached in Austria for a long time; cf. Die Presse (Vienna), 14 July 2016. Denis Cuspert (‘Abu Talha al-Almani’), who, alongside Mohamed Mahmoud, served as the most important leader of the Millat Ibrahim group in 2011–2012, left Germany for Egypt in 2012, later going to Syria, where he joined IS in 2014 at the latest, appearing in various IS propaganda videos. He was reportedly killed in Syria in January 2018.

46 Cf. Lohker 2016.

47 ‘Abu Dujana – The Pleasure Destroyer – Death’; ‘Abu Dujana – Hell’.

48 Moroccan-Germans Yassin and Mounir Chouka, who grew up in Bonn, moved to the Pakistan-Afghan border region (North Waziristan) in 2008 and appeared in a series of German-language propaganda videos made by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IBU) in the years thereafter.

49 The Arabic word *hijra* has a religious connotation, i.e. it alludes to the emigration of the first Muslims from Mecca to Medina together with the Prophet Muhammad in 622 AD, which is considered highly worthy of merit, as they left their possessions behind for religious reasons. In this sense, contemporary jihadist groups, especially IS, have always propagated ‘emigration to the theatres of jihad’ in their propaganda.

50 Cf. El Hadad/Holtmann/Prucha 2016, 220 et seq.

51 These included Cüneyt Çiftçi from Ansbach (Bavaria), who died in a suicide attack in the Afghan province of Khost in March 2008 and became known as the first German suicide bomber.

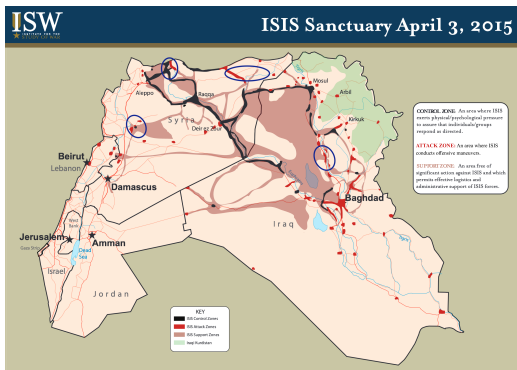


Proclamation of the caliphate in 2014  
(Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi)

Finally, the rapid triumph of Islamic State in northern Iraq and eastern Syria in 2014 generated a wave of enthusiasm among extremists worldwide, which motivated tens of thousands of foreign fighters to join the ‘caliphate’ proclaimed in June 2014.

Since the end of 2012, security authorities in Germany have responded to this by confiscating passports and restricting the validity of identity cards of ‘potential terrorists’ and others suspected of intending to leave for Syria. However, hundreds of people – including women and children – have

not been deterred by such measures and have attempted to reach Turkey directly by land or air or via detours. Since 2016, most such ‘emigrants’ have been stopped from continuing their journey to Syria in Turkey at the latest. Once the civil wars in both Syria and Iraq reached a turning point in the same year, the ‘jihad’ there lost much of its appeal, and in 2017 – the year which saw the near annihilation of IS military presence in both countries – only a few isolated departures of Islamist individuals from Germany to Syria came to the attention



Spread of the self-proclaimed caliphate (as of 3 April 2015).  
Source: Institute of the Study of War.

of the authorities. Criminal proceedings have been conducted against more than 100 jihadists who have returned to Germany, and dozens of prison sentences have been imposed. Of the jihadists who did not return from Syria and Iraq, evidence suggests that roughly 300 of them died there in combat or as the result of air strikes. Some 100 fighters were captured by the enemy and remain in custody in Syria or Iraq (as of December 2021).

## New topics and targets for radicalised Muslims in Germany?

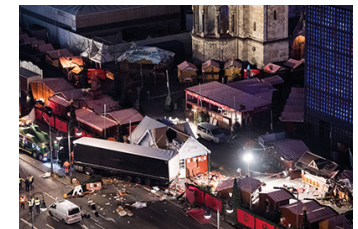
There is evidence to suggest that the radicalisation of Muslims in Germany will not result in departures to ‘jihad areas’ in significant numbers again in the foreseeable future. The rapid rise of Islamic State in 2014, followed by its almost complete destruction by the end of 2017,<sup>52</sup> can be seen as another watershed and probably the beginning of the end of the ‘global jihad’ movement that emerged in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Although Islamist or Salafist groups will continue to exist in many African and Asian states, fighting their respective governments and also carrying out attacks against Western individuals and targets, these forms of ‘jihad’ are likely to attract volunteer fighters almost exclusively from neighbouring countries in each case. For Muslims in Germany,

an appealing ‘jihad’ that would make ‘emigration’ worthwhile had already ceased to exist by 2018. Neither Yemen or Somalia nor Mali nor other West-African countries can offer prospects comparable to those of Syria and Iraq between 2012 and 2015. The return of the Afghan Taliban to state power in August 2021, for its part, has given ‘moral uplift’ to jihadists close to Al-Qaeda worldwide, but it will not make Afghanistan a new destination for jihadists from Western countries, because inviting and facilitating new foreign fighters would serve no purpose for the Taliban.

Consequently, online jihadist propaganda – which targets Muslims worldwide, including those in Germany who are suspected of sympathising – has, since late 2015, already resorted to inciting its audience to carry out attacks in their home countries, preferably against ‘soft’ civilian targets and also without the use of explosives, which are often too difficult for terrorist amateurs to procure or manufacture and detonate on their own. As a result, a number of major attacks were committed in Western countries (including Nice, London, Berlin, Stockholm, Barcelona and New York) using trucks and other vehicles, as well as attacks with few casualties using knives and axes. The perpetrators included individuals who committed their crimes in the countries they had only entered relatively recently as ‘refugees’, including Tunisian Anis Amri, who killed eleven people and injured 60 others, some seriously, in Berlin on 19 December 2016.

Overall, Islamist-motivated attacks in Germany have thus far only succeeded in killing and/or injuring victims on 12 occasions. The first ‘successful’ attack was carried out in March 2011 at Frankfurt Airport, where Arid Uka, a student who had been inconspicuous until then, killed two American soldiers, seriously injuring two others (see Chapter 3.3). In the period from 2000 to 2021, a total of 23 planned Islamist attacks were thwarted in advance by the work of the security authorities, and the police have considerably intensified their pressure on the Islamist and Salafist scenes in Germany in their pursuit of suspected potential terrorists. So far, returnees from ‘jihad areas’ have had next to no opportunity to become active as recruiters again in Germany, one reason for this being the decline in any incentive to emulate them (see above). (However, the ‘returnees’, including women and children – some of whom were subjected to years of paramilitary drilling and ideological incitement in IS kindergartens and schools – are a general cause of concern for the security authorities, as it is suspected that many of them have not yet mentally abandoned IS ideology.)

The question therefore arises as to which direction the radicalisation of Muslims could take in Germany in the future, and what kind of deeds it is feared radicalised persons may commit in the years to come. Since the demise of Islamic State, its surviving activists and an anonymous community of sympathisers have propagated more and more acts of online sabotage of all kinds in order to damage the economy of the ‘infidels’. Nothing of this nature has occurred in Germany so far, perhaps because the proposed ‘actions’, such as poisoning drinking water, setting forest fires or manipulating rails to derail



Attack in Berlin (Breitscheidplatz)



Arid Uka, crime-scene photograph

<sup>52</sup> By the end of 2017, IS had lost all its previously held territories in Iraq. In the Syrian border area near Iraq, a final IS enclave held on until near the end of March 2019. Thereafter, IS has only operated as a guerrilla movement, occasionally attacking Syrian and Iraqi troops in desert areas.

trains, lack the 'heroic' element that is generally important to radicalised Muslims.<sup>53</sup> Until 2016, one of the recipes for the success of IS was that it could provide a constant stream of images and videos of fighters with a warlike demeanour hastening from one victory to the next or – in the retreat phase – at least relentlessly resisting overpowering enemies and managing to surprise them with sudden counter-offensives. Since the end of 2017, 'revenge for the destroyed caliphate' would have been a conceivable motive for attacks, but this theme has not been addressed in the propaganda thus far. Instead, the fiction continues to be upheld of a continuing 'caliphate' to which one must pledge allegiance and serve as a 'soldier', now preferably by carrying out attacks wherever one lives.

One issue that could generate greater mobilising power for the Islamist scene in the coming years, including in Germany, is the Palestinian conflict. Since *Hamas* took power in the Gaza Strip, this conflict has intensified almost continuously over the last thirteen years. It has now been imported into Germany by Palestinian migrants, but also by other Muslims of Arab or even Turkish origin who feel solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

During demonstrations against the state of Israel on the occasion of the (third) Gaza war in the summer of 2014, anti-Semitic and anti-Israel slogans were chanted in Germany. Something similar occurred in December 2017 at a large demonstration in front of the Brandenburg Gate against the announced relocation of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which was attended by Turks as well as Arabs, and again in May 2021 during another Gaza war between Israel and *Hamas*.<sup>54</sup> The anger against Israel and against 'Jews' in general that was vented at such demonstrations could be a warning sign of potential terrorist attacks against Jewish and Israeli people and institutions in Germany in the coming years.

Unlike France, for example, no major anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish acts of violence have been committed yet in Germany by Islamist terrorists.<sup>55</sup> (An arson attack on a synagogue in Wuppertal in 2014 was not even assessed as 'anti-Semitic' by the competent court.)<sup>56</sup> However, there is a risk that this may change in the future. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine that a new 'jihad movement' could develop from the hatred that is clearly focused on Israel, as the practical obstacles to this are too great. *Hamas* and *Islamic Jihad* in the Gaza Strip do not recruit foreign fighters, and the borders between Israel and its Arab neighbours have so far proved nearly impossible to cross, even for the local population. The only foreign 'jihadists' Israel currently regards as a potential military threat are Shiite militias from Iraq, who are active in Syria with the help and guidance of Iranian 'Revolutionary Guards' (as well as the Lebanese *Hezbollah* and Shiite militias from Afghanistan and Pakistan).

<sup>53</sup> However, in June 2018, a Tunisian man was arrested in Cologne who, among other things, was accused of obtaining large quantities of the poison ricin for an attack plot in Germany. He was sentenced to ten years in prison in March 2020. In October 2018, an attack on the ICE railway line between Augsburg and Munich failed for technical reasons. A Iraqi suspect was arrested in Vienna in March 2019 and sentenced to life imprisonment in December 2020.

<sup>54</sup> Spiegel Online, 11 December 2017; Spiegel Online, 12 December 2017.

<sup>55</sup> AFP, 1 January 2017.

<sup>56</sup> Goldberg, *Jüdische Allgemeine*, 12 February 2015; Spiegel Online, 18 January 2016.

## Conclusion: What is the future of Islamist extremism in Germany?

Islamist extremism has long established itself as a third force alongside left-wing and right-wing extremism. Exacerbated by major antagonisms at the national and international level caused by conflicts and growing migration pressure, no easing of tensions is in sight, especially given the current global successes enjoyed by populist political actors.

Against this backdrop, it is all the more important not to view the dangers posed by different forms of extremism in this country in isolation from the question of how politics, the media, the security authorities, organised Muslims and prevention stakeholders address the problem while avoiding counter-productive effects.<sup>57</sup> In terms of a 'securitised' perspective, whose perception of the Islamist spectrum and Muslims overall is shaped by Islamist terrorism, an important question will concern the extent to which security agencies succeed in tracking down Islamist terrorist groups, preventing attacks and, to further this purpose, pursuing a 'holistic approach' to combating terrorism.<sup>58</sup> For there is no doubt that the containment of Islamist extremism is a task for society as a whole that cannot be limited to security policy measures alone. Prevention is therefore at least as important, as is the promotion of democratic attitudes and respect for those with different opinions at the earliest possible stage.

For prevention, the question arises as to whether extremism should be addressed at all, and if so, in what way, with which partners, which type(s) of extremism should be addressed, and moreover whether there are other problem situations (drug exposure, crime) or skills (resilience to extremism, media literacy, etc.) that potentially require attention. In this regard, findings from radicalisation research are indispensable. This includes the fact that social contacts with previously radicalised individuals are of crucial importance for processes of turning to jihadism as well as for the emergence of certain regions as corresponding focal points (e.g. Wolfsburg or Dinslaken-Lohberg). The future of Islamist extremism and the dangers associated with it will, therefore, essentially depend on whether it is possible to counter the spread of jihadist convictions in specific social environments or at the neighbourhood level. An important prerequisite is the involvement of civil society and 'informal' actors who have the necessary credibility and passion and are able to stand up for democracy and pluralism.<sup>59</sup>

However, there are also both international and Germany-specific factors that could facilitate the future success of prevention measures. It is possible that, with the rise and fall of IS, not only has the movement of 'global jihad' passed its zenith, but so has the pan-European wave of Salafism that took on a particularly 'internationalist' form in Germany, with spokespersons of varying ethnic origins, including prominent German converts who would in turn also find favour among young Muslims of Arab and

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Pisoju/Hummel 2014.

<sup>58</sup> Bjørgo 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Ritzmann 2018.

Turkish descent.<sup>60</sup> Even though Salafist preachers in Germany have generally avoided promoting leaving the country for ‘jihad’ (see above), they have always emphasised the sense of togetherness of the *Ummah* and the obligation of all Muslims to show mutual solidarity, organising, among other things, numerous shipments of aid funded by donations to Syria since 2012. Solidarity with fellow Muslims in need and accusations against the actual or alleged creators of their problems were thus common to both the propaganda of extremist groups and the actual support and verbal appeals made within the bounds of the law by Salafists in Germany.

This is not to say that German-speaking Salafists, among whom most of the fighters who left Germany to join Islamic State were recruited, would mourn the latter’s demise today. Some Salafist spokespersons have for years taken a clear and credible stand against the crimes of IS, including Pierre Vogel, who could only bring himself to do so in spring 2016 (which was, at least, half a year before the start of the major offensive against IS in Mosul), but then – despite calls for his murder in official IS publications – only went as far as publicly condemning IS as an ‘idiotic state’.<sup>61</sup> The attitude towards the Islamist fighting groups that remain in Syria since the demise of IS, which have lost further ground since spring 2018 due to new offensives by Syrian regime forces, is likely to be more ambivalent. It is to be expected that their now imminent total defeat will also have a certain demoralising effect on the German Salafist scene.

Perhaps even more important is the fact that the rapid rise of Salafism over the last ten years has exhibited many of the characteristics of a ‘fashionable youth subculture, and, like any youthful fashion, this trend – not least as a result of the actions of competing Muslim actors – may also become ‘old-fashioned’ again and shrink to the size of a die-hard scene of ‘hardcore fans’. The many criminal proceedings in recent years against Syria fighters and their alleged supporters in Germany together with the bans imposed on influential associations (see above) may have contributed to this. While for a long time it was ‘cool’ to be a Salafist and to draw attention to oneself by adopting the corresponding habitus, the negative consequences have outweighed this appeal for some years now. These range from rejection on the part of an increasingly Islamophobic majority of the population to problems at the workplace (where employment is sought and found outside the Salafist scene) to increased police attention. The number of Muslims who, in view of this situation, consider the Salafist line of ‘separation from infidel society’ to be counter-productive is thus likely to increase. As a result, moderate Muslims who have long shied away from confronting radicals in Germany could potentially take a more offensive stance against them in the future.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, in looking for possible target groups for prevention, we must not only consider ‘returnees’ and their families (see above), but also non-juvenile (or no longer juvenile) prisoners convicted of Islamist-motivated acts relevant to national security. The security authorities are concerned with this group because, in most cases, they have (or will have) served their sentences after four to eight years of imprisonment, but

thereafter still have to be classified as ‘potential terrorists’. In some cases, measures for ‘de-radicalisation’ and social rehabilitation have already been initiated, the success of which is still uncertain. In other, more serious cases, the authorities have taken steps to have prisoners deported to their country of origin immediately after their release (which is, of course, only possible in the case of foreign nationals). No less relevant, however, are all the ‘new radicals’ who, with their prior histories of criminality and often violence, only discover radical Islam in prison. In times of heated debates about refugees and Islamophobia, it also remains to be seen whether further attacks will occur from among those who first arrived in Germany with the wave of migration starting in 2015.<sup>63</sup> It is still too early to give an all-clear.

<sup>60</sup> This became apparent upon evaluating the data of many people of Arab and Turkish origin who were under investigation by the Federal Criminal Police Office in national security proceedings. In addition to jihadist propaganda videos, these individuals had stored comparatively harmless lectures by Pierre Vogel and other German converts.

<sup>61</sup> ntv, 14 April 2016.

<sup>62</sup> In June 2017, Berlin lawyer Seyran Ateş took a stance in this regard by opening a ‘liberal mosque’, for which, however, she was also criticised by German Islamic associations; cf. Spiegel Online, 12 June 2017; Deutsche Welle, 21 June 2017; Spiegel Online, 2 July 2017.

<sup>63</sup> In addition to the attack committed by Anis Amri in Berlin (December 2016), this demographic group carried out attacks with fatalities in Würzburg (regional train), in Ansbach (July 2016), in Hamburg (July 2017), in Dresden (2020), Würzburg and Munich (2020). Some attacks planned by new immigrants have been successfully thwarted since 2016; investigations and criminal proceedings are still ongoing in some cases.

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# CHAPTER 2.3

## Left-wing extremism

*With articles by:*

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## Left-wing extremism

Armin Pfahl-Traughber

The following comprises a concise description and assessment of left-wing extremism in Germany.

Since it is occasionally misunderstood, we will first provide a definition of the term: from the point of view of extremism research in the field of political science, left-wing extremism can be defined as a 'name for all left-wing terrorist views and actions which, invoking the notion of greater social equality, negate the foundations of modern democracy and an open society'.<sup>1</sup> The term therefore does not apply to mere criticism of capitalism, nor does it encompass every call for socialism. As long as democracy, the separation of powers, individual and human rights, pluralism and the rule of law are accepted, these are to be regarded as legitimate views within an open society.

This article is divided into three parts: first, it will address the actors, symbols and content of left-wing extremism, after which it will turn to its goals and motives. It will conclude with a discussion of left-wing extremist actions and their internal and external impact.

The footnotes refer the reader repeatedly to literature for further reading on the topic, mostly in the form of illustrative examples. This should not obscure the fact that research on left-wing extremism is generally still quite underdeveloped. Only a few introductions or general accounts exist, and most of these are outdated.<sup>2</sup> The same applies to research on the communist branch of left-wing extremism, which had its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, few researchers have directed their attention to the organisations in question. While numerous works on left-wing terrorism have been published, the majority of them focus solely on the 'Red Army Faction' and not on the other groups. Furthermore, very few studies have been published on the 'Autonome', which has existed as a violence-oriented subculture for decades. Most of these were written by former members or sympathisers of the subculture.

### Actors, symbols, content

Actors involved in left-wing extremism can be distinguished according to their primary forms of action, which include political organisations, political parties, subcultures and terrorism.

The last-mentioned area is purely of historical interest and therefore does not require much attention here. It should be enough to note the following general points: from the late 1960s, various left-wing terrorist groups emerged that would draw attention to themselves by carrying out attacks and assassinations. These included groups that are nearly forgotten today, such as the 'Anti-Imperialist Cells', the 'Socialist Patients' Collective' and the 'Tupamaros West-Berlin', but also more significant ones, such as the '2 June Movement', the 'Revolutionary Cells' and

the 'Red Army Faction'. Since these groups have ceased to exist since the end of the 1990s, there is currently no left-wing terrorism to speak of (even if some of the group members of that time remain free and their identities unknown).



#### ANTI-IMPERIALIST CELLS<sup>3</sup>

*Left-wing terrorist group in Germany that was active in the 1990s and saw itself as the successor to the RAF. In total, the group consisted of just two activists; one was Bernhard Falk, who converted to Islam during his time in prison and became a Salafist.*

#### SOCIALIST PATIENTS' COLLECTIVE<sup>4</sup>

*The aim of the left-wing terrorist 'Sozialistisches Patientenkollektiv' (Socialist Patients' Collective), founded in 1970, was to convince the public that mental disorders are caused by capitalist society.*

#### TUPAMAROS WEST-BERLIN<sup>5</sup>

*A left-wing terrorist group that was active for a short time in the late 1960s and adopted forms of action of Latin American urban guerrillas.*

#### 2 JUNE MOVEMENT<sup>6</sup>

*The name of the left-wing terrorist group refers to the anniversary of Benno Ohnesorg's death. On 2 June 1967, a demonstration was held in Berlin against the Persian Shah Reza Pahlavi. During the demonstration, student Benno Ohnesorg was shot dead by a police officer. After various attacks inspired by RAF practices, the group disbanded in 1980.*



#### REVOLUTIONARY CELLS<sup>7</sup>

*Small independent left-wing terrorist groups that were active between the 1970s and 1990s. Specific characteristics of their line of action and form of organisation: the activists did not live underground, but in an illusory bourgeois world. They were considered 'after-work terrorists' because they planned the attacks before or after carrying out their occupation.*

*These smaller groups, the 'cells', were networked in different places in the Federal Republic of Germany and functioned without centralised control.*

#### RED ARMY FACTION<sup>8,9</sup>

*Left-wing terrorist organisation founded in 1970, which committed 34 murders and numerous attacks with explosives and bank robberies in Germany until its dissolution in 1998. Its self-declared aim was to overthrow the capitalist social order. The 'German Autumn' refers to the climax of their terrorism in 1977.*



<sup>1</sup> For further details, see: Pfahl-Traughber 2014a, 15-28.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. for older comprehensive accounts: Langguth 1983; Moreau/Lang 1996; also, for more recent comprehensive accounts: Bergsdorf/van Hüllen 2011; Pfahl-Traughber 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Dietel/Hirschmann/Tophoven 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Pfahl-Traughber 2014a, 168-170.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 167-168.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 170-171.

<sup>7</sup> Dietel/Hirschmann/Tophoven 2006; Pfahl-Traughber 2014a, 173-176.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 153-165.

<sup>9</sup> Siemens 2007.

When examining contemporary left-wing extremism, the focus should first be placed on the party-oriented variants. These include the ‘German Communist Party’ (DKP),<sup>10</sup> which has 2,850 members,<sup>11</sup> making it the largest left-wing extremist party in Germany. Its logo features a hammer and a sickle, allowing it to be symbolically associated with classical Marxist-Leninist communism. Founded in 1968, the DKP has always seen itself as a ‘party of the revolutionary working class’ and had up to 40,000 members in the 1970s and 1980s. Since it not only considered the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as its political model but also received substantial financial support from that state, it lost not only much of its membership, but also its prospects for the future after 1990. Nevertheless, supporters of the rapidly ageing DKP still participate in many left-wing anti-capitalist demonstrations and regard themselves as part of such protest movements.

The Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD)<sup>12</sup> can be considered Germany’s second largest left-wing extremist party. Having emerged in 1982 from the Maoist ‘K-Gruppen’, it follows a predominantly Maoist ideology, but with elements of Stalinism,<sup>13</sup> and currently has some 1,800 members. The MLPD insists, in distinction to other organisations with a Marxist or socialist orientation, that it represents ‘true socialism’.



#### GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY (DKP)<sup>14</sup>

The DKP is a successor party to the KPD (Communist Party of Germany), which was banned in 1956. It was re-founded in 1968. The DKP took over both policy and party members from the KPD. The DKP is a small communist party with Marxist-Leninist ideologies. In the 1970s and 1980s it was one of the extremist organisations in the Federal Republic of Germany with the largest number of members. In the past, it was controlled by the GDR. In this form, the DKP was an intervention device dependent on the Socialist Unity Party (SED). Reunification also ushered in a process of decline for the party. Despite a drop in membership, the DKP continues to be active in left-wing protest movements.



#### MARXIST-LENINIST PARTY OF GERMANY (MLPD)<sup>15</sup>

The party was founded in 1982 and claims to represent ‘true socialism’. It has a pro-Maoist and pro-Stalinist orientation, which explains its isolation both from the political left in general and from other left-wing extremists. The MLPD has an estimated 2,000 members.



#### K-GRUPPEN<sup>16</sup>

Collective term for Marxist-Leninist and Maoist groups and parties of the 1970s, some of which emerged from the disintegrating 1968 movement and the ‘New Left’. After this disintegration, its members became involved in various transitional organisations, such as the green-alternative movement (anti-nuclear movement).

While it also uses the hammer and sickle as symbols in its logo, it considers the DKP to represent a reprehensible ‘revisionism’ that reflects a deviation from a Maoist-Stalinist form of socialism. As a result, the MLPD is completely isolated within the political left and on the left-wing extremist spectrum. Two further facts about the party stand out: it has considerable financial means derived from donations, and the leadership of the party and associated organisations consists for the most part of members of a single family.

On a side note, the party formerly known as the ‘Party of Democratic Socialism’ (PDS) and currently known as ‘Die Linke’ (The Left)<sup>17</sup> deserves mention. Given that it emerged in 1989 from the dictatorial ruling ‘Socialist Unity Party’ (SED) of the GDR, it always retained left-wing extremist tendencies. In the decades since then, however, it has become perceptibly more moderate, which has led to a reassessment of the party. In its present form, it can no longer be categorised as a left-wing extremist organisation. Nevertheless, left-wing extremist groupings and institutions still exist through which individual functionaries and elected representatives exert influence on the party as a whole. The party leadership does not distance itself from or criticise these pockets of extremism for their views. They include the ‘Antikapitalistische Linke’, the ‘Cuba Si Working Group’, the ‘Geraer/Sozialistischer Dialog’, the ‘Communist Platform’, the ‘Marxist Forum’ and the ‘Socialist Left’.

Left-wing extremist political organisations include ‘marx21’ and the ‘Sozialistische Alternative’ (SAV), the special feature here being their Trotskyist orientation.<sup>18</sup> They are the largest of Germany’s 20 or more Trotskyist organisations, with around 300 members each. One feature of their basic strategy is ‘entryism’. This refers to openly or covertly joining other, usually left-wing organisations, where they can leverage their unity and commitment to gain greater influence. Members of both organisations have also joined Die Linke with this intention. Members of ‘marx21’ were successful in achieving key functions as elected officials or holding positions within the party, though the members of the SAV did not succeed in this. Both groups/organisations are tolerated within the party, and they have been able to develop their political influence there.

One particularly prominent left-wing extremist political organisation is ‘Rote Hilfe’ (Red Aid),<sup>19</sup> with a relatively high membership of 9,200. This organisation, which was founded anew in 1975 (a precursor in the Weimar Republic had been allied with the then Communist Party of Germany), presents itself as a social aid organisation that claims to support people suffering political persecution. These also include perpetrators of violence. The organisation has repeatedly drawn attention to alleged misconduct on the part of the judicial authorities and the police, which they consider to be agents of a repressive state apparatus that they hold in contempt. However, this is often not a matter of selfless civic engagement, as shown by the fact that the support the group has offered to police detainees has occasionally been discontinued once the latter cooperate with the police. This openly demonstrates the organisation’s dismissive attitude towards the institutions of the constitutional state. Some left-wing democrats



Rote Hilfe e. V.

10 Cf., e.g., Fülberth 1990; Hirscher/Pfahl-Traughber 2008.

11 All data on supporters or members of left-wing extremist groups are taken from the Annual Reports on the Protection of the Constitution of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior and were current at the end of 2017. There are good reasons to be critical of them, especially since they sometimes only represent general estimates. However, no other data is available to work with.

12 Cf., e.g., van Hüllen 2007; Müller-Enbergs 2008.

13 Drechseler/Hilligen/Neumann 2003, 627-628 (Maoism), 937-939 (Stalinism).

14 Pfahl-Traughber 2014b.

15 Langguth 1983; Pfahl-Traughber 2013a.

16 Langguth 1983, 124-125.

17 Cf., e.g., Pfahl-Traughber 2013b; Pfahl-Traughber 2014a, 111-124.

18 Cf., e.g., Brandt 2017, 69-95; van Hüllen 2014.

19 Cf., e.g., Blank 2019; Pfahl-Traughber 2014a, 131 et seq.

**GEGENSTANDPUNKT<sup>20</sup>**

In 1992, the former ideologists of the 'Marxist Group' founded a new publication, a quarterly journal entitled 'GegenStandpunkt'. The Marxist Group therefore came together as 'GegenStandpunkt' in a different organisational form.

**GEGENSTANDPUNKT**

who are members of the organisation are not entirely aware of this.

The group 'GegenStandpunkt' also falls under the category of left-wing extremist political organisations. It is a continuation of the 'Marxistische Gruppe',<sup>21</sup> which was founded in 1980 at several universities. Activists from this group disseminated aggressive and destructive criticism, disrupted seminars

and lectures and promoted their ideas through publications and events. Their elitist posturing and deep cynicism, however, ultimately resulted in their isolation. What is striking here is their effort to place members in positions of power in society, the state and the economy. Once these activities became public in the early 1990s, the group disbanded. As early as 1992, however, an informal successor organisation arose around a magazine of the same name: 'GegenStandpunkt'. Its current 3,000-strong membership is particularly active at universities.



Cover of journal

**ANTI-KAPITALISTISCHE LINKE<sup>22</sup>**

The 'Antikapitalistische Linke' (Anti-Capitalist Left) is a political current founded in 2006 within the party 'Die Linke'.

**CUBA SI WORKING GROUP<sup>23</sup>**

Working group of the party 'Die Linke', which shows solidarity with socialist Cuba. Its aim is material and political solidarity with the Cuban regime.

**GERAER/SOZIALISTISCHER DIALOG<sup>24</sup>**

An association of working and interest groups founded in 2002 within the party 'Die Linke' which act without federal recognition (criteria of the federal charter). Their aim is to develop a social form of socialism. They strive to strengthen and spread Marxist-socialist positions within the party.

**MARXIST FORUM<sup>25</sup>**

Founded in 1995, the 'Marxist Forum' is a working and interest group, but with no official nationwide association. Its activists are organised within the party 'Die Linke' and other left-wing structures.

**COMMUNIST PLATFORM (KPF)<sup>26</sup>**

The 'Communist Platform' is an openly active association within the party 'Die Linke' that is especially committed to anti-fascism and anti-racism and to ensuring that the party 'Die Linke' retains its communist positions.

<sup>20</sup> Pfahl-Traughber 2014a, 126 et seq.

<sup>21</sup> Cf., e.g., Federal Ministry of the Interior 1995; Fraude 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Backes 2017; Decker 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Pfahl-Traughber 2014a, 117-118.

<sup>24</sup> Die Linke; Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution 2017, 159.

<sup>25</sup> Marxist Forum; Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution 2017, 158.

<sup>26</sup> Die Linke; Jesse 2011, 83-98.

**SOCIALIST LEFT<sup>27</sup>**

Founded in 2006, the aim of this current within the party 'Die Linke' is to promote socialist alternatives. Its members' main concerns are left-wing social policy and reform communism. The current upholds a positive image of the GDR.

**MARX21<sup>28</sup>**

'marx21' is a network founded in 2007 with Trotskyist tendencies. It was formerly known as 'Linksruck'. The themes and fields of action of 'marx21' are anti-imperialism, anti-militarism and anti-globalisation.

**marx21****SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE<sup>29</sup>**

Founded in 1994, 'Socialist Alternative', referred to as SAV, is the German section of the 'Committee for a Workers' International', based in London.

**MARXIST GROUP<sup>30</sup>**

The 'Marxist Group' was formed in 1980 by formerly left-wing extremist student groups and was disbanded in the early 1990s. The basic positions of the Marxist Group are derived from Marx's main economic work 'Das Kapital'. The MG is committed to rejecting and fighting capitalism and the destruction of the state.

In addition to left-wing extremist parties and political organisations, there is also a subcultural form of left-wing extremism, most prominently the 'Autonome',<sup>31</sup> a movement consisting of small groups. It is impossible to pinpoint a year when they were founded, which has to do with their special form of organisation. Roughly speaking, one could say that today's 'Autonome' emerged between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s from the subculture of the 'Spontis' that existed at the time. Adherents of this subculture rejected rigid ideologies and structures and tried to develop alternatives to the attitudes of the 'bourgeois' society of which they were critical. After the 'Sponti' movement began to disintegrate in the second half of the 1970s, its various sub-groupings went different ways. Some became more involved in the newly founded Green party 'Die Grünen', while others soon migrated to the new left-wing extremist 'Autonome' subculture.

**SPONTIS<sup>32</sup>**

Movement that attracted many supporters in the 1970s, especially among young students. Instead of fixed ideology and organisations, they were oriented towards individual feelings and loose associations of people. In both these respects, the 'Spontis' were precursors of the 'Autonome'.

The term 'Autonome' already says a lot about their self-image. While various stories of the movement's origins are in circulation, the actual meaning of the word seems to be especially important here. 'Autonome' is the German for 'autonomous (persons)', and it is exactly this autonomy and independence that its adherents claim for themselves.

<sup>27</sup> Backes 2017, 119-135; Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution 2017, 155.

<sup>28</sup> Brandt 2017, 69-95; Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Brandt 2017, 69-95; van Hüllen 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Pfahl-Traughber 2014a, 125 et seq.

<sup>31</sup> Cf., e.g., Haunss 2004; Pfahl-Traughber 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Pfahl-Traughber 2014a, 139 et seq.

They do not want to be dependent on any structure, and they do not want to be part of a party. They reject the ways of thinking and organisational ideas of party politics due to its hierarchy and centralism. For this reason, the 'Autonome' stood in conflict with left-wing extremist parties such as the authoritarian and strictly organised DKP and MLPD from the beginning. In the face of these parties' 'authoritarian' behaviour, the 'Autonome' wish to revive the 'libertarian' left. Following the motto 'Keine Macht für niemand' (No power for nobody), they reject all rigid forms of organisation and regard internal power structures as a considerable threat to their political beliefs (for a detailed account, see the article by Deycke and Micus in this chapter).

In the subsequent decades, 'Autonome' often took part in actions by various protest movements that were directed against gentrification, globalisation<sup>33</sup> and right-wing extremism, for example. These were often issues that, in themselves, had nothing to do with left-wing extremism. Nevertheless, people affiliated with this political camp also saw such issues as opportunities to become involved in broader social issues and often demonstrated an inclination towards violence during such actions. Demonstrations often escalated and resulted in confrontations with the police. The autonomist scene often regards this as an achievement, as it makes their opposition to the police and the state all the more clear. At the same time, the 'Autonome' discredit protest movements that are largely democratic and peaceful: media coverage of violent clashes often overshadows reports on the actual motives and concerns. However, there is also a failure of these movements to distance themselves from the 'Autonome'. The presence of 'Autonome' at a demonstration usually carries a risk of violent escalation. In such cases, the organisers of a demonstration could make their intentions clear so as to disassociate themselves from the 'Autonome'.

It is nearly impossible to make statements about the social composition of the autonomist scene as the necessary research by social scientists has not been undertaken. Moreover, people within the scene tend to isolate themselves, preventing outsiders from gaining an inside view. This means we only have very general knowledge at our disposal: the majority of the 'Autonome' are probably between 15 and 30 years old, although there are also elderly 'Autonome' aged 60 years and over. The activists are frequently highly educated, having attended Gymnasium (German grammar school equivalent) or enrolled at university. They work in the social sector or live on social welfare. But here, too, there is too little data available to give more precise information. As members of a subculture, 'Autonome' can be identified by the clothing typical of the scene, which includes black trousers and jackets in particular. 'Autonome' occasionally dress 'normally' like other young people, however. At demonstrations, they like to carry their own flags bearing the anarchist 'A'.

As far as the number of 'Autonome' goes, it should first be pointed out that it is extremely difficult to provide reliable figures. There are multiple reasons for this: one cannot formally become a member of the 'Autonome' and there is no register of adherents. To be part of the movement, one simply has to belong to the subculture. This is demonstrated by both participation in demonstrations and involvement in projects. However, there is no way of measuring when someone is clearly affiliated

<sup>33</sup> 'Gentrification' refers to the restructuring of residential areas, especially in big cities, which ultimately results in a sharp increase in rents and therefore in low-income residents leaving these areas. 'Globalisation' stands for a worldwide economic policy that relies on a free market economy and leads to growing social inequality in both developing and industrialised countries.

with the group. Moreover, many young people with views that are critical of mainstream society also move in 'Autonome' social circles. However, the extent to which they have actually adopted the rather diffuse ideology of the 'Autonome' is difficult to determine. On the whole, therefore, the only way to get an idea of the potential numbers is to refer to the estimates made by security authorities. These assume 7,400 active members and rising (from 7,000 in 2017, and 6,800 in 2016).

This form of organisation, which is characterised by loose associations with no uniform structure, has repeatedly triggered fierce internal conflicts. The starting point of these struggles was the insight that the continuity of political commitment is only possible with binding cooperation. However, this would mean a more solid form of organisation, which would bring with it the risk of a concentration of power at the top of the organisation. These controversies led to the emergence of the 'Postautonome'.<sup>34</sup> This term refers to former 'Autonome' who want to place their activities on a firmer organisational footing. By doing this, however, they are breaking

with a fundamental principle. The most significant examples of this movement are the network 'Interventionistische Linke' (Interventionist Left) founded in 2005, which has approximately 1,000 supporters, and the '...ums Ganze!' (All or Nothing) alliance, which was founded in 2006 and has a current total of around 330 supporters. While the former group is willing to forge alliances with non-extremist left-wing individuals, the latter define themselves explicitly as a 'communist alliance' (for a detailed account, see the article by Baron in this chapter).



#### **INTERVENTIONIST LEFT<sup>35</sup>**

*The IL is a Germany-wide network with a focus on anti-capitalism. It was founded in 2005 with the intention of better organising autonomist groups with different ideological tendencies.*

#### **...UMS GANZE! – KOMMUNISTISCHES BÜNDNIS<sup>36</sup>**

*The alliance '...ums Ganze!' (uG) was founded in 2006 and is active across Germany. It is one of the leading post-autonomist groups and comprises several small, local autonomist scenes.*

## Goals and motives

'Left-wing extremism' is a collective term; in other words, it covers a considerable range of political phenomena. What these phenomena have in common is that they express a desire to replace the democratic constitutional state with a 'society without domination and without class'. However, there are differences in the way they seek to achieve this goal. Two ideological 'extended families' can be distinguished here: the anarchist and the communist currents.

The former want to smash the 'bourgeois state' following a revolution and replace it with a society with no state and with no intermediate stage preceding this. In contrast, the communist parties first want, following a revolution, to establish a socialist state with dictatorial competences whose role is to make society ripe for communism without

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Baron 2016; otherwise, extremism research has not yet dealt with this phenomenon.

<sup>35</sup> Pfahl-Traugber 2014a, 136 et seq.

<sup>36</sup> Baron 2017.

### **POLITICS OF THE FIRST PERSON**<sup>37</sup>

*First-person politics concerns the politicisation of the 'private' or the 'personal' and thus the rejection of a separation between the 'public' and the 'private'. First-person politics has had a major influence on the many new social movements, including the left-wing movement. On a second level, first-person politics fundamentally demands individuals to speak only for themselves, thereby rejecting any claims to representation.*

domination. These two types of left-wing extremism can be subdivided into additional ideological directions:<sup>38</sup> the anarchist milieu includes both 'Autonome' and traditional anarchists. The 'Autonome' propagate a 'diffuse anarchism' and a 'politics of the first person', accompanied by a hedonistic individualism and a limited interest in theory. In contrast, traditional anarchist circles were more concerned with the ideas of the 19th century classics of the ideology.

The communists, on the other hand, invoke Marx, and often include Lenin as a second role model. At this point, however, the directions become increasingly differentiated: there are Marxist-Leninist groups that also draw on Mao, Stalin or Trotsky. Often enough, there is a competitive aspect to this that sometimes takes on bizarre features. An example of this are the followers of Trotskyism: each of the more than 20 existing groups assumes that the other groups are misinterpreting the ideological and strategic doctrines of Trotsky.

In terms of the above groupings, the following classifications can be made: the DKP can be categorised under Marxism-Leninism. The MLPD tends towards the Maoist-Stalinist strain of Marxism-Leninism. The various Trotskyist groups also invoke Marx and Lenin, but also consider their eponymous figurehead to be a further role model.

These constituent groups of left-wing extremism are well aware that the masses are not on their side and that a revolution can take place at best in the distant future. They therefore view the present as a non-revolutionary situation and merely try to strengthen their own organisational structures. This is achieved, on the one hand, by acquiring members and, on the other hand, by means of protests. Those who engage in the latter seize on alleged or real political and social problems in order to increase their membership and to score sympathy points among the general public. One further important goal is to form alliances with left-wing democrats.

Traditionalist anarchists, by contrast, derive their ideological direction from the classics of anarchist literature, which are reprinted in new editions that reinterpret their ideas for the present day. However, the traditionalists only make up a minority of anarchists, with the 'Autonome' forming the majority. The latter do not specify a precise goal apart from the demand for greater self-determination without state interference. Talk of a 'politics of the first person' suggests that this is more a matter of a lifestyle than anything else. The 'Autonome' are specifically concerned with the expansion of 'free spaces', such as their own houses and cultural centres. Such spaces are considered to be models for the life of a better future society. Since these spaces are often squats or occupied buildings, they are 'defended' with particular enthusiasm in the event of a police eviction. Yet an approach based on the idea of 'free spaces' does not give rise to long-term political objectives.

Left-wing extremists are mainly concerned with gaining influence within society as a whole. Were they to fail in doing so, they would 'vegetate' in political isolation. The demand for a socialist dictatorship or for the dismantling of the existing state does not garner broader acceptance within society as a whole or even in relevant sectors of society. For this reason, left-wing extremist groups tend to seize upon certain problem areas that motivate political protests in an open society. These problems may be either imagined or actual dangers or contradictions. The decisive thing is that the criticism is seen as legitimate by the outside world without mention of any left-wing extremist ideological 'baggage'. The fact that left-wing democrats and left-wing extremist groups reject the same political phenomena is what makes this possible. One can usually furnish sound reasons for these political alliances; they are generally not fundamentally left-wing extremist.

This will be illustrated here with examples of some spheres of activity.<sup>39</sup> In this context, 'anti-fascism', which ostensibly refers to the rejection of right-wing extremism, deserves special attention. Combating right-wing extremism represents a fundamental democratic position. Nevertheless, left-wing extremists exploit the issue to advance their own interests. The key tool used for this purpose is alliance politics: they take part in protests against right-wing extremist groups, thereby seeking to make common cause with non-extremist leftists as well. By this means, 'Autonome' can then often appear to be merely critical young people who might be a bit over the top, but basically just want what is right. The problematic dimension of their movement is left out of the equation; after all, they are helping in the fight against right-wing extremism. The fact that left-wing extremists, like their right-wing counterparts, are also striving to overturn the democratic constitutional state, albeit with different objectives, is thus set aside.

The situation is similar with 'anti-gentrification' and 'anti-globalisation' protests: the former is concerned with the consequences associated with the restructuring of certain residential areas in large cities. This leads to rent increases that many residents are no longer able to afford, forcing them to move out. It is therefore a real social problem that the 'Autonome', in particular, seize upon to justify violent acts. This includes setting fire to what they consider luxury cars in gentrified neighbourhoods (though it should be noted that many less politically committed individuals have also participated in such acts of arson). 'Anti-globalisation' also addresses genuine political problems, as globalisation entails negative results for developing countries stemming from free market policies. Activists regularly protest against this in a democratic and peaceful way. Often enough, however, 'Autonome' use such demonstrations to draw attention to themselves through acts of violence.

Various motives can be discerned behind these acts, including those that touch upon the psychological dimension of violence, to the extent that such acts are considered to generate an emotional stimulus. Thus, throwing a stone intended to strike a police officer or someone from the right-wing extremist scene is seen as an act of liberation. Again and again, members of the 'Autonome' scene describe confrontations with security authorities as if they were merely taking part in a daring game. This dimension must not be ignored, regardless of the political background. The point here is that one chooses certain objects of attack that fit one's ideological orientation. In this respect,

<sup>37</sup> Haunss 2008, 447-474.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Pfahl-Traughber 2014a, 29-68.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Pfahl-Traughber 2011, 163-182; Pfahl-Traughber 2014a, 181-194.

both dimensions, the psychological and the political, are joined in a reciprocal relationship. It is important to emphasise this, as one-sided emphasis is often placed on one dimension over the other when debating their relative importance.



Picture with banner of the Anti-Germans ('Nieder mit Deutschland' – Down with Germany)

In closing, there is a source of dissension within left-wing extremism that deserves mention here: attitudes towards Israel and the Middle East conflict. Since the early 1950s, this political camp has demonstrated a pro-Arab or pro-Palestinian character. The reason for this was that Israel receives support from the West, because of which it was relegated to the 'imperialist camp'. In the early 1990s, the 'Anti-Germans'<sup>40</sup> (Antideutsche) emerged within left-wing extremism as a tendency that sought to position itself in opposition to 'German nationalism' and in support of its victims. The latter included the Jews and hence

Israel. The 'Anti-Germans' thus adopted a pro-Israeli stance and sometimes even vilified pro-Arab left-wing extremists as anti-Semitic. Even though this conflict has already passed its peak, it paralysed the German far left. It was important to point this out to explain why one may well encounter left-wing extremists with Israeli flags.<sup>41</sup>



### IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS

*The (revolutionary) Marxists strive for a society free of domination and class as the ultimate goal following the establishment of a socialist dictatorship. They can be distinguished according to which respective 'classics' they still rely on, which not only include Marx and Engels, but also Lenin, Mao, Stalin and Trotsky.*

#### MARXIST-LENINIST<sup>42</sup>

*This term refers to the official state ideology of the GDR and the Soviet Union. This represents a further development of the dogmas of Marxism and Leninism with ostensibly scientific pretensions.*

#### MAOIST-STALINIST<sup>43</sup>

- *Maoism: Chinese revolutionary and communist movement founded by Mao Zedong, which draws from the social and economic theory of Marx and Lenin.*
- *Stalinism: Stalinism refers to the theoretical and practical further development of Marxism on the basis of authoritarian bureaucratic methods of a totalitarian form of rule.*

#### TROTSKYIST

*A political tendency going back to Leon Trotsky, the basis of which is the theory of a permanent, socialist and worldwide revolution under the leadership of workers' councils. They see themselves as Leninists and reject Stalinism.*

<sup>40</sup> Cf., e.g., Bigalke 2004; Hanloser 2004.

<sup>41</sup> Drechseler/Hilligen/Neumann 2003, 632-633.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 627-628 (Maoism) and 937-939 (Stalinism).

<sup>43</sup> Brandt 2017, 69-95.

## Actions

### Internal impact (organisation, structures, offerings)

As already indicated above, left-wing extremism can also be differentiated in terms of organisational form.

Political organisations and parties prefer more rigid structures. In these areas, there are formal memberships and clear responsibilities. Among organisations of the communist type, it is not uncommon to find pronounced hierarchies oriented towards Lenin's model of 'democratic centralism'. This often leads to an authoritarian arrangement with elite leadership groups, to which ordinary members are required to subordinate themselves in order to maintain a uniform party line. Such arrangements, which are found in the DKP<sup>44</sup> and MLPD, are rejected by other left-wing extremist groups, including the anarchists and the 'Autonome'. They point out with some justification that absolute freedom cannot proceed from prior subordination. For this reason, they organise themselves in the form of small decentralised groups and networks.

In both ideological and organisational terms, therefore, these are entirely different phenomena. Nevertheless, they can all be united under the term 'left-wing extremism', as they all seek to implement a 'society without domination and without class' to replace the democratic constitutional state. According to German domestic intelligence services, the total number of people to whom this label may be applied is 32,000. Though the figure has fluctuated somewhat in the last few years, it has recently exhibited an upward trend (2017: 29,500, 2016: 28,500). The number of 'Marxist-Leninist and other left-wing extremist groups', i.e. left-wing extremists considered to be communist, is given as 24,000. There was a slight increase in this category compared to previous years (2017: 21,400, 2016: 20,900). The traditional anarchists remained stable at 800, while the 'Autonome' grew in numbers to 7,400.

However, these figures are not truly reliable. They are mostly estimates made by German domestic intelligence services, and such estimates are difficult to make due to the lack of rigid structures, especially among subcultures.

It is also useful to consider how the situation has changed over time. In the 1970s and 1980s, the DKP alone had around 40,000 members and was thus 25 per cent larger than all of today's left-wing extremist groups put together. The prominence of this group has thus experienced a quantitative decline, which had to do with the dissolution of the GDR. However, the 'Autonome' scene remained unaffected by this, as it was not oriented towards the old one-party (SED) state. The number of 'Autonome' has remained largely constant at 6,000 since the early 2000s, with only slight fluctuations.

It is also interesting to compare these figures with those relating to other forms of extremism. The equivalent numbers are 24,100 right-wing extremists and 26,560 Islamists. The potential number of persons engaged in left-wing extremism was thus higher than both.

<sup>44</sup> In the case of the DKP, however, the proclaimed standards do not hold up in reality. Two tendencies have been in a state of conflict for years: while some want to open up more to the various new protest movements, the others insist on retaining their identity as a traditional workers' party. The resulting controversies limit the party's potential political sphere of influence.

What is also worth noting in terms of the internal aspects of left-wing extremism is the relationship the various movements share with each other: they are all united by the ultimate goal mentioned above, i.e. the achievement of social equality, and by their extremist orientation. Apart from that, differences exist that often render cooperation impossible. One can generally say that almost all left-wing extremist groups take part in 'anti-fascism' or 'anti-globalisation' demonstrations, since these concern a common enemy and issues of common concern. However, there are differences when it comes to the attitude towards violence: for the 'Autonome', it is something already necessary in the present, whereas the communist groups only want to exercise violence in a revolutionary context. Consequently, there is also no cooperation in this sphere of activity. Moreover, the DKP and the Trotskyists occasionally succeed in cooperating with left-wing democrats, something the MLPD fails to do due to its dogmatism.

### *External impact (handling of conflicts, recruitment, mobilisation)*

If one wants to assess the social relevance of organised left-wing extremism, an obvious first step is to look at the results of federal and state elections.

In broad terms, it can be observed that none of the parties has succeeded in entering the Bundestag or a state parliament. The only exception is the 'Communist Party of Germany', which crossed the five per cent threshold for election several times between 1945 and 1956. In recent elections, the DKP and MLPD have tended to receive between 0.1% and 0.2% of the vote. Exceptions to this have been local strongholds, such as Bottrop for the DKP, but this is usually attributable to particularly high levels of engagement on the part of local groups. In general, it can be said that left-wing extremist parties have never had any particular relevance in elections, even in their better times. An exception could be made for the PDS, depending on how one assesses their performance in the 1990s and 2000s.

With respect to the external impact of left-wing extremist groups, their presence in protest movements is important, though they often lack the necessary sensitivity. In order to forge a common front in opposition to globalisation, neo-liberalism and right-wing extremism, democrats often tolerate cooperation with left-wing extremist groups. However, this is not usually a conscious act, for instance when both participate in the same demonstration. Nevertheless, it has occurred that contemporary supporters of the GDR (such as the DKP) or Mao supporters (such as the MLPD) have taken to the streets together with left-wing democrats to oppose alleged or actual grievances. In such cases, democratic leftists often make no effort to dissociate themselves from left-wing extremism, but the contrary is true with regard to right-wing extremism. 'Autonome' are also usually tolerated in such movements until violent acts occur; such acts tend to undermine the concerns of the actual participants.

This brings us to another external impact: politically motivated criminal acts. In Germany, these are all included in the category PMK-links ('Politically Motivated Crime – left'). This is a broad category that refers to violations of the law accompanied by a 'left-wing' political attitude. The latter does not necessarily have to be extremist in the strict sense.

Therefore, a separate distinction is required here, namely that between PMK-links and offences motivated by left-wing extremism. Applying this terminology, there

were a total of 7,961 criminal acts perpetrated in Germany in 2018 (2017: 9,752), of which 4,622 (2017: 6,393) were considered to have a left-wing extremist background. The total of 1,010 violent incidents (2017: 1,648) included arson, bodily harm, breach of the peace and resisting arrest, among others. These do not include damage to property, coercion/threats and other offences totalling 3,612 cases (2017: 4,745 cases).

The published data on violent acts also provides insights as to their intended targets. According to the data, the largest share of 625 out of 1,010 cases was directed against the police or security authorities. This was followed by 264 attacks on right-wing extremists or persons believed to be right-wing extremists. A total of 49 violent incidents took place during demonstrations against gentrification. Actual bodily harm (Körperverletzung) accounted for a large proportion of these acts of violence: 301 out of 1,135 violent acts perpetrated against the police and 162 out of 264 acts directed against right-wing extremists. Among Germany's federal states, North Rhine-Westphalia has the highest number of such crimes, followed by Berlin and Hamburg. However, if the population of each state is taken into account, it becomes evident that left-wing extremist violence tends to be a phenomenon that takes place in major cities, although other regions are also affected.

When examining the data on the trends in violent crime in 2017, it must also be considered that a large proportion occurred in the context of the protests against the G20 summit in Hamburg. Such major events usually mobilise the left-wing extremist scene. They therefore represent a distinct phenomenon within the overall picture. Moreover, familiar patterns can be identified: those who mobilise for such summits demonstrate a clear willingness to commit violence, which is evident not only from statements made in mobilisation videos. Even if police misconduct sometimes occurs on such occasions, one should not confuse the cause with the effect. The starting point is always the left-wing extremist tendency towards violence, which quite deliberately seeks conflict with security forces and prepares for this with special exercises. A summit of this kind represents an important issue around which the subculture seeks to mobilise support. And for this reason, the rate of violent acts increases in such contexts in particular.

Detailed information on the general social characteristics of the perpetrators and suspects is currently unavailable. Neither the security authorities nor social scientists have so far investigated the specific profile of left-wing extremist violent offenders. Two studies by the Berlin domestic intelligence service are the exception to this. These studies presented and analysed relevant data covering the years 2003 to 2008 and 2009 to 2013.<sup>45</sup> Although these studies are specific to Berlin, the data they present is nevertheless interesting, as Germany's capital is considered to be a stronghold of the violent left. According to these studies, over four fifths of suspects were men and nearly four fifths were under 30 years of age. There were no standout characteristics regarding the level of education. Approximately one third were unemployed, one third school pupils and one third students. Two fifths had already committed other criminal acts before.

Furthermore, there were also findings regarding the offences themselves: more than three quarters were committed or initiated by groups. Of these groups, most had more

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Senate Office for Interior Affairs and Sport. Department for Domestic Intelligence 2009, 2015.



than ten members, which speaks for the importance of group dynamics in the way such crimes come about. If one compares this with the data on non-political youth violence, striking similarities can be found with respect to age structure and gender. This suggests that political motives are not the only factor guiding behaviour. It appears to be the mutual interplay of a combination of political and non-political factors that motivates such acts of violence. This was the first time that specific information was available on the suspects responsible for 'left-wing violence'. It is also worth noting that not all the acts analysed in these reports were the work of left-wing extremists, as it includes a small number of violent acts committed by left-wing actors who are not involved in organised left-wing extremist activities.

Beyond these figures, the published information does not yield many further insights into the incidence of left-wing extremist violence. It therefore has little more to offer our analysis: while it can be assumed that a major proportion of these violent acts originated from the 'Autonome', no evidence for this supposition can be found, as the published data is not based on an enquiry of this kind. Furthermore, the category 'bodily harm' is a rather diffuse collective term, as it includes incidents of violence of varying intensity. In this respect, the data fails to provide any insights into the extent to which inhibitions to commit acts of violence are reduced. Individual case studies may provide more information here. However, the extent to which they may be generalised remains unclear. Considering the risk of a biased interpretation, it is nearly impossible to derive general assessments of trends on this basis.

## Overall appraisal of the risk potential of left-wing extremism

How can the risk potential of left-wing extremism be assessed? This question demands a nuanced answer that distinguishes between the various levels at which the phenomenon being examined manifests itself.

The first question to ask concerns the risk of violence: the accounts of relevant activities have made it clear that the potential for violence should be considered high. However, the intensity of violence is limited to bodily harm; assassinations such as those formerly committed by left-wing terrorists have ceased to occur since their decline. Nevertheless, the actions of the 'Autonome' sometimes assume the possibility of considerable bodily harm, even with potentially fatal consequences. However, this is not the only danger involved in their exercise of violence. By means of such actions, they discredit democratic and peaceful protest movements that wish to draw attention to worrying political and economic developments. But even these peaceful protesters occasionally fail to distance themselves clearly from the 'Autonome'.

Another potential danger is when left-wing extremists stand for election. The situation here, however, is unambiguous, as left-wing extremist parties have been unable to win seats in any of Germany's elected assemblies. None of the candidacies in question has been able to make a respectable showing, and most have not won more than 0.3% of votes. By contrast, extremist tendencies within the party 'Die Linke' do represent a problem, one that goes beyond the party-internal forums and platforms where they thrive. There are high-office holders and elected representatives who cooperate with left-wing extremist groups to varying degrees. This problem does not receive nearly as much attention as it deserves – neither within the party nor in wider society. If 'Die Linke' wants to be perceived as a democratic party, it should distance itself and

clarify its position accordingly. This also applies in particular to the 'Autonome', who are not only critical of society, but also violence-oriented. Yet there is a lack of critical awareness within the party that would treat such issues as taboo.

Finally, we should address the level of society as a whole: while left-wing extremism received a great deal of public attention in the 1970s and 1980s, this dissipated in subsequent decades. There were understandable reasons for this, since the potential danger of both Islamism (see Chapter 2.2) and right-wing extremism (see Chapter 2.1) was indeed higher. However, this does not mean that left-wing extremism is no longer relevant. There is also another aspect that needs to be considered: adherents of these positions sometimes tackle real political and social problems. In this way, they attempt to influence the broader public, purporting to be, for example, the most consistent opponents of right-wing extremism. The 'anti-fascism' articulated in this way serves the purpose of self-legitimation. However, this ignores the fact that the rejection of fascism does not necessarily signal a commitment to democracy. The 'Autonome' should therefore not be considered allies of democrats.

Our observations thus far have made it clear that the phenomenon of left-wing extremism is a complex one. On the one hand, the various groupings share a common stance that is directed against the foundations of modern democracy and an open society in the name of 'social equality', and this common front invites the collective use of the term as described above. On the other hand, internal differences must not be ignored. This applies not only to the ideological differences we have outlined, but also to styles of action and social composition. This should be emphasised in particular in relation to the 'Autonome' – a group which, because of its movement-like character, does not represent a homogeneous phenomenon. It is also important to differentiate when addressing the question of preventive measures. These can and must differ significantly in their orientation depending on the specific target group.

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## Postautonome (Postautonomists)

Udo Baron

For some time now, Germany's 'Autonome' scene has been suffering from internal disputes, increasing fragmentation and a high turnover of members. The main reasons for this are unresolved organisational debates and a lack of theoretical unity. These have plunged the 'Autonome' scene into a fundamental ideological and structural crisis. As a response to growing internal criticism due to their aloofness to theory, their lack of organisation and their self-absorption, some of their members have started to organise and network in ways that are permanently changing the 'Autonome' movement.

Against this background, undogmatic associations such as the 'Interventionist Left' (IL) and the communist alliance '...ums Ganze! – kommunistische Bündnis' (uG) have emerged in recent years. These organisations, which view themselves as 'post-autonomists', have their roots in the tradition of the 'Autonome', but can no longer be considered part of it. The prefix 'post-' is intended to express their will to question and overcome fundamental aspects of autonomism. 'Postautonome' accuse 'classic Autonome', i.e. those left-wing extremists who are hostile to organisation and hierarchy and tend to be averse to ideology, of having a reduced and instrumental conception of theory. They claim the latter's modus operandi is unsystematic and therefore also devoid of any long-term prospects, preventing the development of truly revolutionary politics due to a desultory campaign strategy and the fetishisation of militancy. By contrast, while remaining on the autonomist spectrum, 'Postautonome' wish to pursue a policy of strategic alliances, uniting revolutionary and moderate leftists in support of a policy of breaking with capitalism.

## Self-image

Like the 'classic Autonome', the groups that consider themselves to be 'post-autonomist' share a worldview consisting of Marxist and anarchist elements with the goal of establishing a society free of domination. The issue of property also plays a central role for 'Postautonome', as a society free of domination does not seem possible to them without first overcoming private ownership of the means of production. In contrast to the 'classic Autonome', however, they are open to different left-wing extremist worldviews and thus tend to be ideologically undogmatic. They understand the revolution they envisage as 'a dialectical process of awareness-raising and learning that must develop in a wide range of social struggles within capitalist society'. It is not thought of as an abrupt process, but rather as a sort of transformation of the existing order and thus a long-term and complex process that is 'preceded and followed by many small ruptures that take place along the lines of struggle'.<sup>46</sup>

The 'Postautonome' understanding of their enemy is no different from that of 'classic Autonome'. For 'Postautonome', too, the state represents 'brute force, repression, fascism'. Besides right-wing extremists, the police as the representatives of the hated state are the number one enemy of all 'Autonome'. From the point of view of the 'Postautonome', therefore, debates on militancy and organisation in the 'Autonome' scene since the beginning of the 1990s should be seen as an indication

<sup>46</sup> Interventionist Left 2019.

that the politics of the 'Autonome' lack homogeneity and are frequently incapable of making left-wing extremist forms of action acceptable among the public. In response to this development, 'Postautonome' are attempting to organise their own actions and create networks in the face of resistance from within the autonomist spectrum.<sup>47</sup>

## Structures

The 'Autonome' scene is not homogeneous, but can rather be differentiated into what are generally loosely organised groupings lacking a uniform ideological superstructure. Formally, the 'Autonome' reject organisational structures and leaders. They organise themselves mostly by way of small groups that have come together through personal contacts or around specific projects, actions or issues. This in turn limits their ability to act and to establish a public profile and also means that groups dissolve as quickly as they come into being. 'Postautonome' regard these conditions as the cause of the crisis of the 'Autonome'. In contrast to the latter, the 'post-autonomist' approach has a long-term vision and follows a strategy of small steps. This includes a policy of creating broad-based alliances that extends into the democratic spectrum of society. For example, 'Postautonome' aspire to form both strategic alliances with 'Autonome' and campaign-related alliances with the democratic spectrum. They want to involve as many people as possible and radicalise them in the medium term by deliberately exacerbating current (crisis) issues. 'Postautonome' make targeted attempts to intervene on current political topics and make them the subject of their ideological agitation. For example, they were centrally involved in organising the protests against the opening of the new building of the European Central Bank (ECB) in Frankfurt am Main in March 2015 and in the preparation and organisation of the protests against the G20 summit held in Hamburg in early July 2017.

This form of action requires a certain measure of openness and transparency in the way the actors present themselves politically, as well as personally and ideologically. The 'Postautonome' benefit from the fact that, in contrast to the 'Autonome' of the 'classic' camp, they are generally older and mostly well educated, often with established careers. This makes it possible for them to establish diverse networks far into bourgeois society and to exploit these networks to further their political goals.<sup>48</sup>



Left-wing 'Autonome' in Berlin – no-go area for police officers

## Militancy

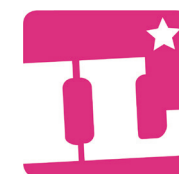
'Autonome' typically exhibit a high propensity to violence. Even if not all of them use violence, they usually endorse its use. The term 'militant' not only describes those who actively exercise violence, but also those who accept violence as a necessity or sympathise with violent actions.

The readiness to use violence on the part of left-wing autonomists is based on a clear conception of who their enemy is. This centres on the state and right-wing extremists – or those whom 'Autonome' hold to be right-wing extremists – who, according to their view,

sustain the state. In order to fight them, 'Autonome' consider all forms of resistance to be legitimate, including the use of violence. For them, politically motivated violence acts as the 'midwife of a new society', because in order to establish a society free of domination, the state as the guarantor of the previous order must first be radically eliminated.<sup>49</sup>

To adapt a phrase from the Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung, the 'Autonome' conceive of 'capitalist relations of production' as exerting 'structural violence' on their citizens by means of societal structures such as values, norms, institutions and power relations, preventing them from freely developing according to their talent and potential. They infer from this supposed 'violence of the system' a natural right to resist, citing social scientist Herbert Marcuse. Accordingly, the Autonome regard the violence they exercise as constituting 'counter-violence', i.e. as a reactive and therefore legitimate means of breaking through the prevailing violence and bringing about change.<sup>50</sup>

'Postautonome' follow this approach, but in contrast to 'classic Autonome', their relationship to violence is mainly tactical. On the one hand, they distance themselves from the use of violence. On the other hand, they emphasise that, for them, it is a matter of choosing the means appropriate to their own ends. Their desire to avoid losing potential allies within the democratic spectrum is the likely reason for this position.<sup>51</sup>



'Interventionist Left'

## 'Interventionist Left' (IL)

The IL is currently the most important 'Postautonome' grouping. It had its origins in 1999 when, in an initial phase, undogmatic individual left-wing extremists met for 'consultations' to look for ways to increase the capacity for action and visibility of the 'radical left' in Germany. From 2004 onwards, the IL deliberately opened up these meetings to left-wing extremist groups from the 'Postautonome' spectrum with the aim of uniting currents associated with the 'Autonome'.

The IL later went on to organise itself into a nationwide network of principally left-wing extremist groups, but also non-extremist groups and individual activists. This was followed by an intensive organisational debate that took place from 2010 onwards and concluded with the restructuring of the IL from a network to an organisation, which was documented by a 'Zwischenstandspapier' (interim status paper) published by the IL on 11 October 2014. Numerous autonomist groups, such as the 'Antifaschistische Linke Berlin' (ALB) or the alliance 'Avanti – Projekt undogmatische Linke', the latter of which had been active in northern Germany for a long time, have since been absorbed into the IL and now function as part of a network of 25 local IL groups nationwide. Others, such as the Göttingen-based 'Antifaschistische Linke International' (A.L.I.) and the Basisdemokratische Linke (BL), belong to the IL as independent groups.<sup>52</sup>



Logo of the 'Antifaschistische Aktion'



Logo or banner of the 'Avanti – Projekt undogmatische Linke'



'Antifaschistische Linke International' (A.L.I.)

49 Cf. Bergsdorf/van Hüllen 2011, 34.

50 Cf. Galtung 1982; Marcuse 1966.

51 Cf. Baron 2016.

52 Cf. *ibid.*, 72 et seq.

47 Cf. Lower Saxony Ministry of the Interior and Sport 2016, 13.

48 *Ibid.*, 16.

According to the interim status paper, the IL is oriented substantively towards 'the long-term goal of a radical transformation of social relations'. A necessary 'component of such a radical transformation is the revolutionary rupture, which in turn is preceded and followed by many small ruptures that take place along the lines of struggle'. This is because, in order to 'clear the way to a liberated society, it is necessary to abolish private ownership of the means of production and the generation of surplus value by means of capital, which is the basis of economic power, and to overcome the bourgeois state apparatus as guarantor of this system of property ownership'.<sup>53</sup>

In order to be compatible with the democratic spectrum, the IL tries to uphold a moderate public image. Its representatives deliberately cast themselves as ideologically undogmatic and refrain from wearing clothes typical of the scene and from engaging in violence at demonstrations. This does not mean, however, that they have ceased to be militant. Rather, they hold back on the question of violence for tactical reasons. This allows the IL to function as a point of contact between the violence-oriented left-wing extremist spectrum, dogmatic left-wing extremism and democratic potential protesters.

### '... ums Ganze! – kommunistisches Bündnis' (uG)



Logo or banner:  
'...ums Ganze!'



'Kritik&Praxis'



'Autonome Antifa' mainly uses the red/black flag

According to its own account, the uG alliance was founded in 2006 in order to 'organise radical-left social criticism on a supra-regional level and render it capable of action'. Its members include a variety of primarily anti-German<sup>54</sup> groups, such as 'Kritik&Praxis' from Frankfurt am Main, 'Redical M' from Göttingen, 'Theorie.Organisation.Praxis' from Berlin and 'autonome antifa [w]' from Vienna.

As the uG's own website makes clear, they understand capitalism not only as an economic system, but also as a comprehensive relationship of domination that is 'inherent in the current social order – in the way that individuals, companies and national economies have to reproduce themselves in capitalism every single day'.<sup>55</sup> The state, capital and the market form a conflict-ridden system of social domination that manifests itself in every daily situation and can be combated 'only as a whole'. In this view, the bourgeois state is the guardian of law and therefore stands outside capitalist competition, safeguarding its preconditions. In order to put an end to the violence emanating from the state, it is the opinion of the uG that the rule of the state and capital as well as

'the form of state which attempts to govern and control this coercive and conflictual order in a more or less authoritarian way' must be abolished in favour of a communist society free of domination.<sup>56</sup> However, the alliance's underlying understanding of

<sup>53</sup> Interventionist Left 2019.

<sup>54</sup> In the early 1990s, a new current emerged within the autonomist spectrum: the 'anti-Germans', who turned against what they saw as German nationalism. Against the background of German reunification, anti-German activists feared a strengthening of nationalism within the united Federal Republic and a return to National Socialism. During the 1990 Gulf War and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, they demonstrated unconditional solidarity with the state of Israel and its key ally and protector, the USA, which resulted in a break with the other 'Autonome'.

<sup>55</sup> 'ums Ganze!' 2018a.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

communism remains vague, despite extensive position papers. Although it distances itself critically from GDR-style state socialism, describing it as a failed experiment, its repeated reference to the 'Communist Manifesto' by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels suggests a classical understanding of Marxism.

The largely anti-German orientation of the uG reveals itself above all in the fundamental critique it directs at the Federal Republic. For example, in a campaign appeal entitled 'There is an alternative – Kommunismus statt Schweinesystem!' (Communism instead of this rotten system) published on its website in July 2014, the alliance criticises what it sees as Germany's ever-increasing dominance in Europe.<sup>57</sup> German Unity Day in particular is a special focus of uG-organised protest events that receive broad media attention.

Both 'Postautonome' alliances played a leading role in the planning and execution of protests against major political events. In 2017, for example, the IL and the uG mobilised against the G20 summit in Hamburg alongside the 'classic Autonome'. The IL in particular participated in the 'NoG20 Alliance' together with democratic organisations such as Attac and parties like 'Die Linke' and tried to dominate the protest movement. While the 'classic Autonome' were mainly evident because of their violent excesses, the 'Postautonome' attempted to block the access roads to the summit site and to Hamburg city centre during the summit. In doing so, they kept the police forces occupied, thereby creating the space for acts of violence on the part of the 'Autonome' in parts of Hamburg that were rendered nearly inaccessible to police protection. Even after the event, both alliances have neither distanced themselves from the acts of violence, nor condemned the groups involved. The IL, for example, stated the following with regard to the violent acts: 'We have said before that we will not distance ourselves and that we will not forget on which side we stand.'<sup>58</sup>



Banner of 'NoG20' from Hamburg

### Outlook

Developments within the 'Autonome' scene show that it has been in a state of ideological and structural crisis for some time. However, increasing efforts on the part of some of 'Autonome' to create broader networks are indicative of a possible change within this spectrum towards a higher degree of organisation and alliance-making. This 'post-autonomist' approach could offer the ideal solution for a successful reorientation of the autonomist spectrum.

However, it is doubtful whether the 'Postautonome' will ultimately be able to dominate the 'Autonome' spectrum as a whole. After all, their approach is highly controversial, as it runs counter to the self-definition of the 'Autonome'. Above all, the departure of certain local IL groups from the IL, such as the IL Münster and the A.L.I. in 2021, which were associated with fierce criticism levelled against the IL, cast doubt on the future viability of the 'Postautonome' project. If the 'classic Autonome' ultimately hold their ground, the internal conflict and disorientation of the autonomist scene will most

<sup>57</sup> 'ums Ganze!' 2018b.

<sup>58</sup> Interventionist Left 2018.

likely continue until the movement as a whole reaches the point of marginalisation and insignificance. If, on the other hand, the trend towards post-autonomism manages to perpetuate itself, 'classic Autonome' could be transformed into networked, organised and ideologically charged 'Postautonome'. This could significantly increase the impact of the autonomist scene and, in the long run, the post-autonomist movement could pose a challenge to the democratic constitutional state (see the following article by Deycke and Micus).

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- 'NoG20' banner from Hamburg: © dpa.

## The radical left and the issue of organisation

Alexander Deycke, Matthias Micus

For decades, things seemed straightforward: the majority of the radical left in Germany that did not become entrenched in one of the rigid theoretical edifices of Marxist-Leninist origin was oriented towards the guiding principle of autonomy and critical of any kind of formalised organisation going beyond small, local-level, grassroots democratic groups.

However, since the protests against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm at the latest, a trend towards more binding organisational approaches has become evident in the undogmatic radical left. With the 'Interventionist Left' (IL) and the '...ums Ganze!' alliance (uG), two 'post-autonomist' organisations have emerged whose longevity and supra-regional expansion stand out in a scene otherwise characterised by fragmentation. Although their membership numbers seem to be relatively limited according to the German domestic intelligence services,<sup>59</sup> they shape the public perception of left-wing radicalism in the Federal Republic of Germany, especially in virtue of the leading role they frequently play in large-scale protest events, such as the G20 summit in Hamburg in July 2017, or in ongoing campaigns like 'Ende Gelände' and 'Nationalismus ist keine Alternative' (NIKA).

The IL in particular combines more rigid structures with a strategy of radicalising protest activists from outside the scene. Through its activities and campaigns on issues affecting broader segments of society as well as an openness to form civil society alliances, the IL seeks to convince people of the need for a change of system. These developments give experienced observers cause for concern that, should they continue and extend their reach, a new 'challenge to the democratic constitutional state that should not be underestimated',<sup>60</sup> i.e. the increased potency of radical left-wing activities, could be a possibility. But does a higher degree of organisation automatically equate to – depending on one's point of view – a higher chance of overthrowing the existing political system or a growing threat to its stability?

Helmuth Lethen, a literary scholar and once a member of the Maoist KPD-AO, has put forward the thesis that the sectarian K-groups of the politically and emotionally heated seventies played a stabilising role for society as a whole and 'that they served the objective function of preserving the state'.<sup>61</sup> According to Lethen, revolutionary energies released around 1968 were absorbed by the apparatuses of the Marxist-Leninist movement: 'The apparatus was a self-destructive funnel that swallowed the energy of the movements internally in a self-perpetuating system of repetitions'.<sup>62</sup> Instead of bringing about a revolution, the K-groups became entangled in 'symbolic practices', such as months of demonstration planning and mutual surveillance among comrades, who were permanently urged to engage in ultimately fruitless activity, constantly

running the risk of being convicted of revisionism or deviationism and of being expelled after being worn down in soul-destroying procedures.

A mechanism with similar effect has been noted with regard to the Social Democratic Party in Imperial Germany, which was the socialist party with the largest membership of its time and a model for Marxist movements everywhere: 'The "organisational patriotism" [...] which finally elevated the unity of the movement and the preservation of organisations to the highest political value and, by confusing the end with the means, transformed itself into organisational fetishism nevertheless contributed indirectly to the integration of the working class into state and society'.<sup>63</sup>

The fact that the founding of the organisation seems not only to have released new forces, but also to have tied up these same forces, is also suggested by the opinions expressed by two former members of the IL in the magazine 'Arranca': 'On location in Berlin, the amount of work required for the maintenance of a nationwide organisation and the navel-gazing that goes along with this, which has already increased enormously in recent years, is already proving instead to act as a brake on interventionist politics'.<sup>64</sup> 'We were mainly busy filling committees, attending alliance meetings, supporting demonstrations and campaigns, approving the projects of other working and local groups and presenting our own projects in plenary sessions. Social struggles became a side issue'.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, it stands to reason that radical political organisations with more long-term goals, such as the post-autonomist groupings discussed above, which aim to increase their membership, seek coalitions with other civil society activists, or at least pursue continuous public relations work, are often enough subject to the practical constraint of relative moderation. After all, visible structures and members who identify themselves openly as such are easy targets for law enforcement agencies if there are indications that the groups may be involved in criminal activities or even terrorism. In a study on preventive measures in the Swedish radical left scene, Swedish researchers came to the conclusion that, among other things, cooperation with others outside the scene – a key strategy of the IL in particular – had led to a decrease in violence in the six-year period examined.<sup>66</sup>

But this is not the only reason why the undogmatic radical left – despite recent trends towards 'post-autonomism' and some notable successes – is wrestling with the creation of more rigid forms of organisation. Scepticism regarding institutionalised collective action has a long heritage; the question of the appropriate form of organisation on the path to social, political and economic upheaval has preoccupied the radical left since its origins. Should the form of an organisation be focused on the purpose of facilitating violent revolution? Should it be oriented towards political competition in the reviled 'bourgeois' state? Or should it above all act to anticipate principles and structures of future society in the present? The different answers to the question of organisation have constantly been – and remain to this day – connected with different

<sup>59</sup> According to the annual report of the German domestic intelligence services, the post-autonomist structures of the IL and uG have a membership of some 1,330 people, while the total number of 'Autonome' or 'violence-oriented left-wing extremists' is placed at roughly 7,400. Cf. Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution 2018, 118 et seq.

<sup>60</sup> Baron 2016, 78.

<sup>61</sup> Lethen 2012, 18.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Groh 1973, 59.

<sup>64</sup> DSAN 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Zweiter Mai 2016.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Wennerhag/Jämte, 19.

ideas concerning the analysis of the present, the revolutionary subject, human nature and the transformation process.

The disintegrating 1968 movement and its student pacesetters revived discussions of older organisational models and, following the dissolution of the ‘Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund’ (Socialist German Student Union, SDS), split into various organisations along historical lines of conflict. Some followed the Leninist model of the dogmatic vanguard party, forming the Maoist and sometimes Stalinist K-groups and the DKP. Others formed local anti-authoritarian grassroots democratic groups or became ideologically more flexible ‘Spontis’, which took up left-communist and, soon thereafter, anarchist ideas.

Since the successful ‘wildcat strikes’ had raised hopes for the possibility of a proletarian revolution in 1969, both sides that emerged from the decay of the ‘extra-parliamentary opposition’ (APO) initially pursued a similar strategy of ‘factory interventions’ – although they differed considerably from their working-class contemporaries in terms of what they understood this to mean in practice and in their ideas more generally. At the same time, alongside the obvious differences, surprising similarities became apparent between ‘Spontis’ and K-groups. While the early ‘Spontis’ claimed only to provide an impetus to the working class towards revolutionary self-organisation that would enable them to find ‘the form of organisation appropriate to their historical situation’<sup>67</sup> on their own, the ‘Sponti’ groups of the ‘Revolutionärer Kampf’ in Frankfurt and the ‘Proletarische Front’ in Munich formed rather tight internal forms of (cadre-like) organisation characterised by discipline, selectiveness and informal hierarchies.<sup>68</sup>

These sometimes showed greater proximity to their K-group comrades than previously assumed, although – unlike the latter – they did not strive for national organisation. Because they saw themselves as radical opponents of the state and also strictly rejected its socialist reframings in Moscow, Beijing, Albania and Cambodia, adopting the form of a political party was out of the question for them – a further point of contrast to the K-groups. But it was only after the ‘Spontis’ expanded their activities (neighbourhood work, squatting, the women’s movement), which also blurred the boundaries between them and the ‘new social movements’, that their organisational structures lost their binding force, unravelling to become a countercultural milieu.<sup>69</sup>

The ‘Autonome’, who appeared on the scene at the cusp between the seventies and the eighties and who see themselves in many respects (militancy, decentralisation) as heirs to the ‘Spontis’, continued the trend of radical left politics that had intensified since the mid-seventies (‘the private is political’, ‘politics of the first person’). Yet the varying theoretical discussions and societal analyses made by ‘the’ Autonome themselves down the years have been strikingly misleading and superficial (‘We all have a “diffuse anarchism” in us’)<sup>70</sup> and, in any case, hardly suitable as a guide for action. This has resulted in the ‘Autonome’ gaining the reputation as being devoid of theory and oriented towards action.

67 Kapsler 2018, 85.

68 *Ibid.*, 97 et seq.

69 *Ibid.*, 155.

70 *Thesen zur autonomen Bewegung von 1981 (also two edited versions from the 1980s and 1990s)*, cited in: *Kongreßlesebuchgruppe 1995*, 276.

They have no clear image of either the form that a future society should take or of the transformation process; the only thing that seems certain is that they attach great importance to a self-determined life and the self-transformation of the individual for overcoming the many ‘contradictions’ of society. The lack of a clear goal also means that there are no criteria for measuring the success of autonomist politics. The successes and failures, strengths and weaknesses of the ‘Autonome’ movement remain the subject of heated discussion by its activists.

The infrastructure of local left-wing alternative scenes – which includes not only self-managed alternative pubs and youth centres, but also left-wing bookshops and infoshops as well as housing projects, which serve as places for exchanging information and holding meetings focused on certain events or groups – plays a pivotal role in maintaining the network-like organisation of the ‘Autonome’ movement. The same was true of magazine projects like ‘radikal’ or ‘interim’ before online publications and platforms took over their function.

Group activities arise mainly in connection with specific anti-fascist activities and campaigns; the groups act in a conspiratorial manner, with contacts only established via trusted personal acquaintances or friends. The different groups within a city are coordinated – if at all – by means of assemblies attended by multiple groups. Regional and supra-regional conventions are occasionally organised to prepare campaigns or to affirm their cause.<sup>71</sup> An early document of the self-understanding of the ‘Autonome’ states the following:

*‘We have no organisation per se. Our forms of organisation are all more or less spontaneous. Squatters’ councils, phone trees, plenary meetings of ‘Autonome’, and many, many small groups that come together at short notice to carry out some actions, meet up at demonstrations, etc., and more long-term groups that do things like ‘radikal’, Radio Utopia or some completely illegal actions. There are no rigid structures like parties etc., and no hierarchy at all. For example, to this day, the movement has not yet produced a single exponent like Negri, Dutschke, Cohn-Bendit, etc.’<sup>72</sup>*

In their formative phase, the ‘Autonome’ demarcated themselves on two sides of the radical left spectrum: on one hand, from the alternative movement, which was at that time finding a way to assert its interests within the existing system by means of the Green Party, and, on the other hand, from the strictly hierarchically organised, dogmatic K-groups, which were already beginning to disintegrate.<sup>73</sup> Even decades later, the organisational politics of the K-groups still represents the negative example par excellence from which any form of institutionalised collective action must distinguish itself.<sup>74</sup>

However, at the same time, the complaints about the (non-)organisation of the ‘Autonome’ are probably nearly as old as the movement itself. A reader’s contribution to the 1987 edition of ‘Libertäre Tage’ laments ‘the entire weakness and asthmatic ephemerality of autonomist politics’.<sup>75</sup> They manoeuvre themselves haphazardly ‘like a tightrope walker from one large-scale project to the next’.<sup>76</sup> Many issue-based groups

71 Cf. Haunss 2013, 26-42.

72 *Thesen zur autonomen Bewegung von 1981*, cited in: *Kongreßlesebuchgruppe 1995*, 275.

73 Cf. Haunss 2013, 27.

74 DSAN 2014.

75 *Autonome L.U.P.U.S.-Gruppe 1987*, 17.

76 *Ibid.*, 11.



fell apart after only a few months. They lacked the continuity to avoid repeating the same mistakes, as well as clear, long-term goals for autonomist violence, which was too often merely an expression of subjective feelings.

It has also been noted that the loose structures sometimes tended to encourage informal hierarchies instead of preventing them. This led to the conclusion that: ‘The building and networking of militant cores is a prerequisite for us to break the cycle of repeating rhythms of the movement, to form a link between the movement and everyday life. An organisation that transcends both while still having to comprise both.’<sup>77</sup>

In an analysis of the issues of the Berlin autonomist magazine ‘interim’ published between 1988 and 2001, Sebastian Haunss concluded that debates on organisation and self-definition were the most frequently covered topic of all the articles, closely followed by the topic of gender relations.<sup>78</sup> Surprisingly, he found that criticism of the ‘Autonome’ movement’s hostility to organisation surged in the early 1990s, which was a phase in which their ability to mobilise was relatively high.<sup>79</sup> Once again, the campaign policy, their incapability of learning and the isolation of the ‘Autonome’ from the rest of society were subjects of criticism. The same applied to the one-sidedness of the group’s representatives, who only took their own personal experiences and feelings as the starting point for political action, standing in the way of an analysis of objective conditions.

New organisational approaches emerged as alternatives to past autonomist politics. Examples of these are the groups ‘Für eine linke Strömung’ (F.e.l.S), the ‘Antifaschistische Aktion/Bundesweite Organisation’ (AA/BO) and, as early as 1989, the organisation ‘Avanti – Projekt undogmatische Linke’. Since they distinguished themselves from previous autonomist structures in numerous respects, above all in their form of organisation, while at the same time retaining a connection through common issues, ideas and practices, as well as the use of the same subcultural infrastructure, the label ‘Postautonome’ was established for the above groups and their successors.

‘Post-autonomism’ is therefore far from a recent phenomenon. On a purely organisational level, the groups named above differ from classic autonomist groups above all through their demand for a supra-regional or national format, their pursuit of continuity and a division of labour required by their broader range of activities. However, the ‘Postautonome’ also distance themselves sharply from the model of the ‘political party’.

They believe informal hierarchies should be contained with the help of distinctly grassroots democratic decision-making processes, consensus politics and, if necessary, imperatively mandated delegation and personnel rotation.<sup>80</sup> The AA/BO stood out in this respect by attempting to formulate a new theoretical approach to radical left politics in the form of ‘revolutionary anti-fascism’<sup>81</sup> and notably by aiming to draw attention to its activities in the ‘bourgeois’ press. Paradoxically, this means that the ‘Postautonome’ are continuing, professionalising and expanding the campaign policy they originally criticised in strong terms.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Haunss 2004, 134.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 137, 139.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Autonome Antifa (M)* 1994.

<sup>81</sup> The phrase ‘revolutionary anti-fascism’ harbours the notion of a form of anti-fascism that sees its task not only in repelling the extreme right, but also in committing itself to the struggle against a combination of social conditions (capitalism, racism, sexism, etc.) that allegedly make fascism possible. Cf. Keller 2011, 95 et seq.

The two large post-autonomist structures of the present day, i.e. the Interventionist Left and the ‘...ums Ganze!’ (uG) alliance, were formed or at least appeared publicly for the first time as a response to the protests against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm. The uG alliance was mainly composed of antifa groups to whom the protest organised by the IL seemed to lack depth and who saw a dangerous proximity between the IL and right-wing critics of globalisation. The uG activists justified their organisation with the goal of achieving ‘continuity in political action and a development towards a common theoretical basis’ and formulated the demand ‘not to stop at blind actionism’.<sup>82</sup>

With a current total of 13 member groups, uG is considerably smaller than the IL. The ‘...ums Ganze!’ groups view themselves as ‘anti-national’ and are critical of any cooperation with civil society – e.g. with NGOs – but also of alliances with forces of the radical left that are reviled as reformist, such as the IL.

The IL, into which groups such as Avanti and F.e.l.S. merged, is different in this respect: it is interested in ‘short-term tactical alliances and long-term strategic alliance work’.<sup>83</sup> It opposes the ‘cynical criticism of the existing order, which only criticises without opening up perspectives for action’.<sup>84</sup> Since the first steps were taken towards its foundation in 2004, the IL has gradually solidified its structures, from initial loose meetings of various groups and individuals to a ‘structured exchange’ and finally ‘to a binding organisational structure’.<sup>85</sup> Its aim is to transform itself from a network into a unified organisation, although the discussion process regarding the question of organisation can hardly be described as resolved.<sup>86</sup>

For example, some member groups continue to act relatively independently, do not operate as IL local groups, but rather retain older group identities. Sometimes there are two groups of members in a single city, as in Göttingen and Heidelberg. According to its website, the IL is represented in 32 cities, but the online presence of individual groups has not been updated for some time, suggesting that this figure may not reflect the current situation. It is possible to make donations to the IL as an association.<sup>87</sup> Emily Laquer, who even took part in a talk show on one of Germany’s main television channels as an IL spokesperson after the G20 protests, is the most prominent example of approaches to the re-personalisation of radical left politics among the ‘Postautonome’ in general and the IL in particular. Finally, both large post-autonomist organisations are also represented in Austria: the IL with two groups, the uG alliance with one.

However, blanket categorisations of uG as anti-German and the IL as anti-imperialist require a more differentiated view.<sup>88</sup> For example, uG does not make an exception to its fundamental anti-state attitude towards the state of Israel, and it does not hold back on its solidarity with Kurdish autonomy movements. As a result, prominent anti-German thinkers are critical of uG.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, although anti-imperialism undoubtedly

<sup>82</sup> *ak wantok* 2010, 199.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>84</sup> *Interventionist Left* 2014, 19.

<sup>85</sup> *Bernhardt* 2019.

<sup>86</sup> *Interventionist Left a.*

<sup>87</sup> *Interventionist Left b.*

<sup>88</sup> *Baron* 2017.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Grigat* 2007.

forms part of the IL's heterogeneous theoretical canon as reflected, for example, in its solidarity with the Venezuelan Maduro regime, it by no means functions as an ideological lens that can explain everything.

The dissonances between the two most important post-autonomist organisations become particularly apparent during major protest events like the Hamburg G20 summit. Indeed, mutual criticism and demarcation are what allow these organisations to form their respective identities.<sup>90</sup> After all, extremely vague – if not downright non-existent – notions of a revolutionary transformation process<sup>91</sup> or even a palpable alternative to the much-criticised current social order have thus far offered few starting points for these organisations to sharpen their own profiles.

It has been pointed out that the positions of 'Postautonome' on the issue of violence have changed compared to 'classical' autonomist attitudes and are moreover contradictory.<sup>92</sup> The IL and uG are in favour of civil disobedience, as expressed above all in blockades. They do not call for violence in offensive terms, but nor do they condemn it in principle. While riots such as those in Hamburg's Schanzenviertel on the Friday of the G20 summit were not initiated by 'Postautonome' groups, they did not expressly criticise them. Instead they gave contradictory assessments, the diagnosis of a positive symbolic value of the resistance being offset against complaints about its negative effects for their own work (loss of trust, isolation, distraction from policy, etc.).<sup>93</sup>

This raises the question of whether the 'Postautonome' act as a point of contact 'between violent left-wing extremists and moderate leftists', encouraging violence and its acceptance,<sup>94</sup> or whether they play a moderating role on the issue of violence.

In conclusion, the following must be noted: the radical left was engaged in the balancing act of reconciling freedom from hierarchy and the effectiveness of binding organisation even before the founding of the IL and uG, yet no ideal solution has presented itself to date. As in many other areas, it is an 'anti-attitude' that unites the various actors, in this case opposition to a centralist party structure.

Moreover, organisational consolidation has not yet brought about ideological consolidation, with the result that the radical left we are dealing with remains highly plural. In the light of the account provided in this article, it remains far from clear whether we can expect Germany's left-wing radicals to become stronger and their willingness to use violence to increase due to post-autonomist groups.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Kirsche-Humboldt, in: taz from 20 May 2017.

<sup>91</sup> For example, the IL 'Zwischenstandspapier' states: 'A necessary component of such a radical transformation is the revolutionary rupture, which in turn is preceded and followed by many small ruptures that take place along the lines of struggles. In order to clear the way to a liberated society, it is necessary to abolish private ownership of the means of production and capital utilisation, on which economic power is based, and to overcome the bourgeois state apparatus as guarantor of this system of property ownership', IL, Zwischenstandspapier, 29.

<sup>92</sup> Baron 2016, 71 et seq.

<sup>93</sup> Interventionist Left c.

<sup>94</sup> Baron 2016, 72.

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## CHAPTER 2.4

### The most important manifestations of transnational extremism in Germany

Sercan Bayrak, Murat Sandikci

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The phenomena described by the German police using the term ‘politically motivated crime – foreign ideology’ goes hand in hand with the category ‘foreigner extremism’ coined by the German domestic intelligence services. The latter is a collective term for various types of extremism whose common characteristics are their origin in foreign countries and their transnationality. For both the German security authorities and society at large, the most relevant transnational extremist organisations are currently those with ties to Turkey. Some of them have existed for several decades and maintain a constant membership base, yet have been subject to little in the way of research. To describe these phenomena simply as ‘imported conflicts’ would fall short of the truth. Successful prevention work requires a sound knowledge of both the actors and the content conveyed by them, as well as of the structures and forms of action of the organisations in focus. Last but not least, prevention work must address the questions of why young people in Germany are drawn to identify with transnational extremist organisations and what alternative identity constructions Germany has to offer them.

## Definition of terms and focus

### ‘Politically motivated crime – foreign ideology’ and ‘transnational extremism’

Crimes are classified as ‘politically motivated crime – foreign ideology’ (PMC-foreign ideology) if there are indications that the perpetrator has an attitude of characteristically non-German origin that constituted a decisive motive for perpetrating the crime. This applies in particular if these crimes are committed with the intention of influencing conditions and developments at home and abroad or influencing conditions and developments in the Federal Republic of Germany from abroad. PMC-foreign ideology offences can also be committed by German nationals.<sup>1</sup>

However, the Federal Republic of Germany is a defensive or well-fortified democracy (streitbare or wehrhafte Demokratie). In addition to being bound by values and the state’s willingness to defend these values against extremists,<sup>2</sup> this term also illustrates a commitment to protect the constitution pre-emptively. The state intervenes not only when extremist groups violate laws (politically motivated crime), but also even before an actual crime is committed. In Germany, this is the task of the domestic intelligence services.

Extremism prevention begins even one step earlier and aims to prevent people from radicalisation and joining extremist milieus. The successful prevention of extremism requires knowledge of which extremist groups exist, who the actors are, what their motivation is and what forms of action they use. Only then can radicalisation be recognised at an early stage and counteracted accordingly.

This chapter will provide an account of extremist organisations and their milieus that are active in Germany but have their origins abroad and have become transnational – i.e. they act across national borders. The German domestic intelligence services traditionally use

the term ‘foreigner extremism’ in this context, even if the actors involved are not always ‘foreigners’ in the legal sense.<sup>3</sup> In his book *Der Mythos der Nation im Transnationalen Raum* (The Myth of the Nation in Transnational Space), Emre Arslan refers to ‘transnational transfers’, by which he means financial, personal, organisational and ideological points of contact between ultra-nationalist mother parties in Turkey and their offshoots in Germany. Today, all the organisations categorised as ‘foreigner extremism’, including those from both the right-wing and left-wing extremist ends of the spectrum, have established overarching, pan-European structures with their own ‘German branch offices’. The strongly hierarchical natures of these organisations means that their followers who reside in Germany receive political-strategic guidelines from their respective countries of origin, which they willingly put into practice. The long-term aim is always to strengthen the central organisation in order that it may implement its political agenda at the local level.

#### Excursus

#### Transnational migration

*Any analysis of migration as a transnational phenomenon must focus on the activities of migrants at the political, economic and socio-cultural levels that traverse national borders. Transnational socio-cultural activities include, for example, visits and other means of maintaining contacts with family and friends in the country of origin and membership of social organisations there. Before the ‘discovery’ of transnationality, the concerns of researchers were centred exclusively on ‘normal’ migrants who changed their place of residence permanently (‘international migration’ or ‘internal migration’), or with those who returned to their home country after an extended stay (‘re-migration’). However, the reality has become more complex:*

*‘More and more people live here and “abroad”. They develop transnational networks, expand their habitats, experiences and norms across national borders and appear on the world stage as globally networked civil society actors who demand self-confident co-determination and rights of participation within the nation-state.’<sup>4</sup>*

*Thanks above all to the global linkages created by the internet, all kinds of transnational social relationships are now being established. This enables migrants to overcome spatial distances and maintain almost the same level of cognitive and emotional engagement with their country of origin. They can therefore directly follow and assimilate the social and political developments that take place there from Germany.*

*‘But personal contacts and the physical mobility of people alone do not create transnational relationships. Today, communication technology and online networks also mean an increasing number of us are in contact with people all around the world – even people we have never met and in places we have never visited.’<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Federal Criminal Police Office 2016; to allow a more differentiated view of the case figures, the field of PMC-foreigners has, as of 1 January 2017, been divided uniformly into the subcategories of Foreign Ideology and Religious Ideology.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the concept of extremism, see Chapter 1.

<sup>3</sup> However, religiously motivated endeavours, such as those of Salafism, do not fall into this category. For this, see Chapter 2.2 ‘Salafism, Islamism and Islamist terrorism’.

<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Römheld 2011.

## Focus on Turkey

The following will exclusively address extremist organisations originating in Turkey. There are good reasons for this. There are about three million people of Turkish descent living in Germany. (Germany tends to officially speak of 'Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund' or 'people with a migration background', which officially refers to the migrants, and their children and grandchildren). Even though about half of these are German citizens, many of them are still closely focused on the country of their ancestors. For no small number of these migrants, their original national identity – be it Turkish or Kurdish – comes first. However, studies have also shown that, for these people, a close bond with Turkey does not have to conflict with a bond with Germany.<sup>6</sup>

For many, their "Turkish hybrid identity" expresses itself through an interest in political developments in Turkey. Accordingly, in addition to numerous cultural organisations, there are also a large number of political societies in Germany that maintain such bonds with Turkey and enable cross-border participation in events taking place there. However, among the political organisations with ties to Turkey are some that are classified in Germany as extremist. In terms of membership and the extent of their activity, the most important extremist migrant organisations in Germany are now all of Turkish origin.

The focus on Turkey is also justified in view of the police crime statistics: the majority of politically motivated crimes with connections to a foreign ideology committed in recent years had a connection with internal Turkish conflicts – for all the fluctuations in overall numbers.<sup>7</sup>

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
PMC-foreign ideology	1,345	2,650	1,617	2,487	1,897	1,016
of which subcategory 'PKK/Kurds/Turkey'	808	1,518	1,028	1,873	1,394	446

This is because, whenever there is a political crisis in Turkey, elements in the Turkish and/or Kurdish communities in Germany respond with demonstrations and rallies. These events frequently result in damage to property and in violations of the German Associations Act (*Vereinsgesetz*) and German Assembly Act (*Versammlungsgesetz*). However, acts of violence such as resisting arrest, offences involving bodily injury and even arson attacks are also committed in Germany in connection with intra-Turkish conflicts.

One area of activity that both extremist and non-extremist organisations from Turkey have discovered for themselves is election campaigns for Turkish presidential and parliamentary elections. Since the reform of Turkish election law in 2012, Turkish citizens living abroad have been able to cast their votes locally in their country of residence. Up until then, in the absence of postal voting, they were forced to travel to Turkey to exercise their right to vote. For this reason, political organisations in Germany are now becoming more involved in these election campaigns and canvassing for their mother parties in Turkey or for affiliated parties that are legal in Germany, where the parent organisation is banned there. Their primary goal is to mobilise supporters to vote.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Schührer 2009; Federal Agency for Civic Education 2009.

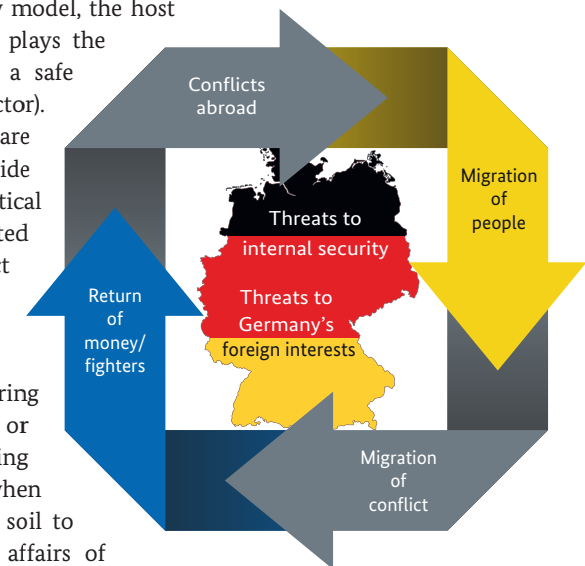
<sup>7</sup> For more information, see the nationwide case figures on 'Politically Motivated Crime' published annually by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community.

## Explanatory models for transnational extremism

### Classic explanatory model

The classic explanatory model for 'foreigner extremist' phenomena takes the form of a cycle. It is based on the assumption that a political conflict existing abroad (push factor) triggers the migration of people who are actively involved in or affected by this conflict. As soon as it is not just a question of individual people migrating, but rather of groups beginning to form in the host country that sympathise with the conflicting parties from the home country, which are generally political organisations, the conflict migrates along with them. The result is 'conflict import'. This 'imported conflict' is then continued in or from the host country, albeit in a different way. For example, if sovereignty over a territory is at stake – as has been the case in recent years in northern Syria, which is predominantly populated by Kurds – the indirectly affected actors in the new country of residence act in response to the conflict, but in different ways from their comrades-in-arms at home. Alongside demonstrations and other protest actions, support often takes on the form of collecting donations. The cycle is complete when the funds collected are transferred to the country of origin or when people are recruited as activists or fighters and (re-)migrate there.

In this classic, idealised explanatory model, the host country – in this case Germany – plays the 'merely' passive role of providing a safe retreat or base for action (pull factor). The conditions prevailing here are generally more democratic and provide greater opportunities for political activities. However, the imported conflict may have a negative impact on the internal security and foreign affairs of the host country. Threats to internal security include, for example, attacks on the police during non-peaceful demonstrations or violent clashes between two conflicting parties. Foreign affairs are affected when efforts are undertaken on German soil to forcibly intervene in the internal affairs of another state. This can compromise the peaceful coexistence of the Federal Republic of Germany with other states or Germany's relationship with their governments. The use of force does not necessarily have to take place on German territory. It may also be merely prepared in Germany.



## Newer explanatory approaches

What the classic explanatory model does not take into account are the social conditions prevailing in the country of residence. However, study of these phenomena over many years has shown that the simple ‘conflict import’ hypothesis clearly does not explain everything. This is especially true for people who are part of transnational extremist milieus and have no migration experience themselves, but who are descendants of former migrants or even people with no migration in their family history at all. In such cases, it is necessary to identify further factors for the emergence or maintenance of transnational extremist milieus.

In his essay ‘Transnationale Migrantengruppen und der Transport von Konflikten’ (Transnational Migrant Groups and the Transport of Conflicts), Jan Hanrath writes that many researchers would assume ‘that it is precisely the conditions in the host country that contribute significantly to the development of the identities and orientations of migrants, and thus to the resulting conflict dynamics’.<sup>8</sup> For example, experiences of discrimination can trigger radicalisation tendencies, especially among young people, drawing them to transnational extremist milieus (push factor). In reference to this phenomenon, Hanrath writes that ‘experiences of discrimination, frustration and general

xenophobia on the part of the host society contribute to an intensification of the tendency towards segregation and exclusion’. Young second- and third-generation immigrants therefore think ‘along ethnic lines’ during the important phase of identity formation, Hanrath explains.

Parents who already belong to extremist milieus can also exert a pull effect on their children. This phenomenon can be observed in all ‘foreigner

extremist’ groups – both nationalist and left-wing extremist. It is common for two, if not three generations of a family to be active members of the same organisation. The close family ties already characteristic of Turkish and Kurdish culture and the collectivism that prevails there contribute to the fact that values – including political values – are usually adopted without being questioned.

But it is not only family ties that potentially pave the way to extremist milieus. In the phase of self-discovery, young people in particular orient themselves towards identity-forming concepts they acquire from their friends. In this regard, it has frequently been observed that young Germans with no ethnic roots in Turkey turn to the Turkish/Kurdish left-wing extremist milieu. In a way that is comparable to those who convert to Islam and are particularly prone to radicalisation, these young people learn the Kurdish language very quickly or familiarise themselves with the ideological foundations of the organisation to which they belong. Some of them even go so far as to join the armed struggle in the relevant crisis area, knowing full well that they could pay for this commitment with their lives.<sup>10</sup>

### COLLECTIVISM<sup>9</sup>

*Collectivism is a general term for socio-political views expressing values and norms derived from the interests of the collective (e.g. community or group). The individual citizen subordinates him- or herself to the interests of the collective and acts according to the shared system of values and norms.*

<sup>8</sup> Hanrath 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Federal Agency for Civic Education 2016; Hillmann 2007.

<sup>10</sup> For other potential causes of youth radicalisation, see Chapter 3.

## Actors and agendas

The political agendas of the transnational extremist associations discussed in this chapter vary according to the type of organisation. **Separatist groups** aim to dissociate their region of origin from an existing state structure and to establish their own state. **Nationalist organisations** are characterised by an exaggerated awareness of their own nation which is accompanied by the devaluation of other national groups. **Left-wing extremist groups** aim for a socialist or communist system of rule in their home countries (see Chapter 2.3).

Most of the ‘foreigner extremist’ organisations represented in Germany condone the use of violence in order to achieve their political goals and maintain armed units in their home countries. For Germany, they usually publicly renounce violence in order to avert the risk of state repression. Nevertheless, they exercise violence in their ‘area of retreat’, which is what they use Germany for – violence directed, for example, against political opponents or police officers.

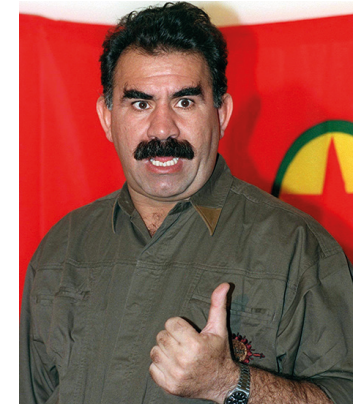
### The separatist ‘Kurdistan Workers’ Party’ (PKK)

With about 14,000 supporters nationwide, the separatist ‘Kurdistan Workers’ Party’ (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, PKK) is the transnational extremist organisation with by far the largest number of members in Germany. The PKK was founded in 1978 as a Marxist-Leninist party. Its aim was to establish an independent state of ‘Kurdistan’ in the lands of Kurdish settlement, which stretch across Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. This was to be brought about by means of a guerrilla war, which has reportedly claimed approximately 40,000 lives since its proclamation in 1984, including not only members of the Turkish armed forces and PKK militias, but also police officers and civilians. The official demand of today’s PKK, which has come to be more strongly influenced by Kurdish nationalism, is greater political and cultural autonomy for the Kurds in their countries of origin, especially in Turkey.

The PKK was founded by Abdullah Öcalan, who was born in south-eastern Turkey in 1949 as the son of a Turkish mother and a Kurdish father. Öcalan moved to the Turkish capital of Ankara in the early 1970s to study political science. There he came into contact with socialist ideas and became involved in a left-wing extremist underground organisation. Eventually, together with his companions, he created the ‘Kurdistan Workers’ Party’, which sought from the beginning to achieve its goals by force of arms. Öcalan soon had to leave Turkey and remained in Syria for almost twenty years, not leaving again until 1998. In the following year, during which Öcalan was on

### GUERRILLA<sup>11</sup>

*The term refers to an armed group that engages in combat, for example with the army of its own country. The literal translation of guerrilla is ‘little war’.*



Abdullah Öcalan, founder of the PKK – the organisation’s logo can be seen in the background

<sup>11</sup> Heinritz-Fuchs/Lautmann/Rammstedt/Wienold 2007.

the run after being effectively deported by the then Syrian head of state Hafez al-Assad, he was arrested in Kenya by Turkish special forces and taken to the prison island of Imrali in the Sea of Marmara. There he is serving a life sentence, which was commuted from a death sentence following the abolition of capital punishment in Turkey.

The PKK became important for Germany when a large number of Kurds emigrated here in the 1980s and 1990s. Among them were PKK supporters who wanted to remain active for their organisation. However, when they attacked the Turkish Consulate General in Munich in June 1993, taking twenty hostages in the process, while committing around sixty assaults and arson attacks on Turkish institutions such as banks, travel agencies and associations at the same time, the PKK was banned by the Federal Minister of the Interior (BMI) in November of the same year. In March 2017 and again in January 2018, the BMI reaffirmed the ban, arguing that the nature, aims and organisational apparatus of the PKK had essentially remained the same.



Instrumentalisation of the victory sign by the PKK scene

While the PKK was initially merely considered to be a criminal organisation in Germany, the judiciary now agrees that it constitutes a 'criminal and terrorist organisation abroad' under sections 129a and 129b of the Criminal Code. In addition, the PKK was placed on the European Union's list of terrorist organisations in 2002. The legal consequences of the listing are above all financial and economic sanctions in the form of the freezing of assets. However, there is no mechanism in place such that a ban on an association in

Germany would automatically result in a motion by the Federal Republic of Germany to include the corresponding organisation on the EU list of terrorist organisations.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the ban and the inclusion on the EU list of terrorist organisations, the PKK continues to see itself as the only legitimate representative of the Kurdish people, including in Germany, and thus makes a claim to leadership that other Kurdish organisations have so far failed to achieve. This in turn affects the way its supporters view themselves, as displayed in their lack of tolerance for criticism of the PKK. The PKK also draws on a broad circle of sympathisers within German society. This consists mainly of people who, out of 'solidarity with Kurdistan and the Kurds', easily overlook the criminal and even terrorist traits of the PKK.

## The Turkish nationalist 'Ülkücü' movement

For several years now, the most important nationalist movement in the field of foreigner extremism has been the Turkish 'Ülkücü' movement ('Idealist' movement), whose members are referred to as 'Grey Wolves'. This movement glorifies Turkishness and regards itself as the only true guardian of Turkish values and culture – of which it, however, holds an inflated view. In doing so, its members stir up intolerance towards other ethnic groups, which is counter to the definition of international understanding as protected in Article 9 of the Basic Law and therefore a threat to social harmony. Supporters of the 'Ülkücü' movement have an authoritarian conception of society and an above-average interest in weapons; these and the above characteristics invite the classification of at least parts of the Turkish nationalist scene as right-wing extremist.

<sup>12</sup> Research Services of the German Bundestag 2011.

Traditionally, nationalistic Turks have been drawn to the 'Nationalist Movement Party' (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP). The MHP is a legal party in Turkey and is represented in the Turkish parliament. Its logo consists of three white crescents on a red background – often simplified as 'cCc'. Another symbol widely used within this scene is the 'wolf salute' formed with the fingers of the right hand, which looks confusingly similar to the 'silent/hushing fox' hand gesture used in German schools.

The expression 'Grey Wolves' is the translation of the Turkish term *Bozkurtlar*. This is how the Nationalist Movement refers to its young male adherents. In the 1970s, the right-wing 'Grey Wolves' formed paramilitary units that regularly sought violent confrontations with left-wing student groups. Incidentally, young female supporters of the Nationalist Movement are referred to as *Asena*. Both names derive from Turkish origin mythology, according to which the Turks are descended from the she-wolf Asena.<sup>13</sup>



The 'wolf salute' used by Turkish ultranationalists

The narrative of 'European Turkishness' (*Avrupa Türklüğü*) plays a major role within the Turkish nationalist milieu. The founder and long-time leader of the MHP, Alparslan Türkeş, coined this term as a guest speaker at the general assembly of his supporters in Germany in 1995. At that time, he called on those present to accept German citizenship for pragmatic reasons – according to the logic of 'Become German, stay Turkish'. Joining political parties and accepting positions of responsibility served the secondary purpose of manifesting specifically Turkish interests within society.<sup>14</sup>

Since the 'Ülkücü' movement and the umbrella organisations and associations subsumed under this term are banned neither in Turkey nor in Germany, nor are considered terrorist, there are virtually no sanctions for them to fear. However, like all the organisations listed here, they are observed by the German domestic intelligence services, which may entail restrictions, e.g. when renting function rooms or applying for tax exemption as a registered association.

## Turkish left-wing extremist organisations

Most left-wing extremist endeavours within the area of 'foreigner extremism' are also offshoots of main organisations based in Turkey. The Federal domestic intelligence services put the number of people involved in Turkish left-wing extremist organisations at around 2,550.<sup>15</sup> The 'Marxist-Leninist Communist Party' (Marksist Leninist Komünist Parti, MLKP) and the 'Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist' (Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist Leninist, TKP/ML) are particularly prominent among these, especially through their cooperation with the 'Kurdistan Workers' Party' (PKK) and with German left-wing extremist organisations.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Arslan 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bozay 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Federal domestic intelligence services 2018.



The MLKP was founded in 1994 and has about 600 supporters in Germany. The TKP/ML was founded as early as 1972, but has been split into two camps since the 1990s. It currently has about 800 supporters in Germany. Both organisations share roots in the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. Their common goal is to overthrow the Turkish state and establish a communist society. They are also united by their view of themselves as the vanguard of the working class and ethnic minorities in Turkey. However, to defend their interests, they resort not only to political means, but also to arms. In particular, the guerrilla unit of the TKP/ML, the 'Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey' (Türkiye İşçi Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu, TIKKO), carries out terrorist attacks in Turkey and is involved in clashes with security forces. According to the TKP/ML, between 24 and 28 November 2016, there were battles with Turkish security forces in south-eastern Turkey which saw the death of 24 members of the TIKKO.



Emblem of the TKP/ML and its armed units, the TIKKO

After the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the MLKP very openly rallied for the fight against the 'Islamic State' (IS). MLKP members fought together with the military wing of the PKK, mainly in Kurdish-populated northern Syria and northern Iraq. The MLKP's call was answered by sympathisers not only from Turkey, but also from Germany. When the Turkish military launched its 'Operation Olive Branch' in the northern Syrian city of Afrin on 20 January 2018 with the primary aim of driving the Kurdish 'People's Defence Units' (YPG) out of the region bordering Turkey, the left-wing extremist groups responded aggressively. They declared that their fighters would resist the Turkish military, whom they described as 'occupiers'.

In Turkey, the TKP/ML and the MLKP are banned as terrorist associations – but not in Germany. Nevertheless, they do not openly present themselves as a party here, but rather run peripheral organisations with similar interests and help organise events, demonstrations and other actions. They also cooperate with German left-wing extremists on certain occasions.

The '**Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front' (Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi, DHKP-C)** is an organisation banned both in Turkey and in Germany. It emerged from the 'Devrimci Sol' ('Dev-Sol'), which was founded in 1978 and banned in Germany in 1983, and was included in the ban as a substitute organisation of the Dev-Sol in August 1998. In Turkey, the DHKP-C engages in terrorist acts. It began a series of attacks there in June 2012, which were justified as acts of retribution for the deaths of activists at the hands of Turkish security forces. While these were initially directed against police institutions and personnel of the police, other Turkish and US institutions and individuals were later targeted by attacks. For example, in March 2015, two DHKP-C members took a prosecutor hostage in his office in the central courthouse in Istanbul. During the attempt to free him, there was an exchange of fire with the police in the course of which both the prosecutor and the perpetrators were shot and killed. The tightened security measures following the failed coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016 led to a significant decrease in DHKP-C attacks.

In Europe, the activities of the DHKP-C are non-violent in nature. Nevertheless, it has been on the European Union's list of terrorist organisations since 2002, and has been considered a terrorist organisation in the USA since as early as 1997. Functionaries of this banned organisation behave in a conspiratorial manner, e.g. they use aliases and frequently change their place of residence. Its supporters have founded front

organisations, referring to themselves as the 'Anatolian Federation' (Anadolu Federasyonu) or the 'Popular Front' (Halk Cephesi).

An important part of the DHKP-C spectrum is the music group 'Grup Yorum', founded in 1985 in Turkey, which presents itself as a group with a 'revolutionary socialist conception of music'. In addition to their activities as musicians, the group's members also take part in demonstrations, strikes and occupation actions. Due to their close links to the banned DHKP-C, proceedings are frequently opened against the musicians for membership of a terrorist organisation. Most of them have been arrested at least once, which is why the line-up of the band often changes. 'Grup Yorum' also performs in Germany, especially in front of audiences sympathetic to the DHKP-C. Their concerts serve, among other things, as propaganda for the banned organisation, as the band uses these events to distribute the organisation's publications and to display banners and pictures with reference to the DHKP-C. Concerts occasionally also include speeches by cadres of the organisation.



Emblem of the DHKP-C-affiliated music group 'Grup Yorum'

Unlike the MLKP or TKP/ML discussed above, the DHKP-C shares a rather distant relationship with the Kurdish PKK. They accuse the PKK of having excessively alienated itself from its original revolutionary aims, thereby transforming itself into a nationalist organisation. Accordingly, no joint events are held in Germany, nor did the DHKP-C support the PKK with its own units in the fight against the 'Islamic State' (IS).

## Organisations and forms of action

In assessing extremist organisations, it is important not to look only at their most obvious outward activities. After all, it is perfectly possible for extremist organisations to construct an incomplete or distorted public image by means of their high-profile participation in local city festivals, ostensibly apolitical cultural events or youth sports tournaments. One also needs to consider the inner workings, structure and internal mechanisms of these organisations, as well as what they offer their members. Only then will the critical aspects and recruitment and mobilisation strategies of extremist organisations become recognisable to specialists and non-specialists alike. This, in turn, is essential for the successful prevention of extremism.

### The separatist 'Kurdistan Workers' Party' (PKK)

Over the years, the PKK sympathiser scene in Germany has been able to build up a broad network of both illegal and legal organisations. Registered Kurdish associations play a central role in this, as their members are almost exclusively supporters of the PKK – and span multiple generations. These associations are organised under the umbrella of the 'Demokratisches Gesellschaftszentrum der KurdInnen in Deutschland e. V.' (Democratic Social Centre of Kurds in Germany, Navenda Civaka Demokratik ya Kurdên li Elmanyayê), or NAV-DEM for short. The NAV-DEM website includes a list of its member associations. These are described by the security authorities as 'PKK-affiliated associations' and are under observation by the German domestic intelligence services.



Emblem of the NAV-DEM, the umbrella organisation of PKK-affiliated associations in Germany

The organisations that are directly linked to the PKK and are therefore considered illegal are defined as such by the 'Congress of the Kurdish Democratic Society of Kurdistan in Europe' (Kongreya Civakên Demokratîk a Kurdistanîyên Li Ewropa, KCDK-E). The KCDK-E implements instructions given by the PKK's top leaders, who are based in the Qandil Mountains in northern Iraq. For this purpose, it utilises the premises of 'PKK-affiliated associations'. Even if both the legal and the illegal organisations include the word 'democratic' in their names, the organisations they refer to are anything but democratic. The PKK is a strictly hierarchical cadre organisation with an authoritarian style of leadership; it leaves nothing to chance and employs internal discipline and punishment mechanisms.

In order to penetrate as many areas of society as possible, the PKK has established numerous sub-organisations targeting women, young people, students, and the various faiths represented within the Kurdish ethnic group. The youth organisations, known as 'KOMALEN CIWAN' (Communities of Youth) or 'Ciwane Azad' (Free Youth), which are also affected by the BMI's ban on activities, are particularly effective. They mainly make appearances at demonstrations or in 'hit-and-run actions'. The latter refer to militant actions such as throwing Molotov cocktails. The 'Association of Students from Kurdistan' (Yekîtiya Xwendekarên Kurdistan, YXK) mainly tries to use university premises for propaganda events to support the PKK, rallying students for external events.

The activities around the PKK that receive the most attention from society at large are the demonstrations organised by the registered associations. These are usually registered with the local police authority and address current events in the Kurds' countries of origin, especially Turkey and Syria. During the reign of terror of the 'Islamic State' in Syria and Iraq, numerous demonstrations took place against the occupation of Kurdish cities by this terrorist organisation. Demonstrations regularly include demands for the release of PKK founder Abdullah Öcalan from his life imprisonment, or for the lifting of the PKK ban in Germany. These demonstrations are often attended by crowds of a hundred participants or more, which always include not only young men, but also women and children.



PKK supporters in Berlin

A far smaller audience is aware of internal activities of the PKK scene, in which they celebrate the founding of their party or commemorate their deceased fighters. Such events, whose participants usually span multiple generations, are characterised by militarism and a militant spirit. Young women and men – most of them certainly raised in Germany, if not born there – march into the event halls in uniform, waving PKK flags. As they do so, they shout in Kurdish: 'The martyrs are immortal!' and 'Long live Apo!' Apo is short for Abdullah and, within this milieu, is the name generally used

for Abdullah Öcalan, around whom an absolute personality cult is still practised 20 years after his arrest. On his birthday, celebrations are held in the associations, with small children singing birthday songs for the PKK founder. They grow up with the idea that Öcalan is the only legitimate leader of the Kurds in a seemingly never-ending struggle against oppression and subjugation.

A process that goes completely unnoticed by society – due to its criminal nature – is the collection of funds for the PKK's party apparatus and for supplies and equipment for its guerrilla fighters; but the PKK also needs large sums of money for its elaborate media apparatus and other propaganda activities. For this reason, as many fellow Kurds as possible are expected to make large financial contributions, the level based on their income, during the annual 'fundraising campaign'. Due to such practices, the PKK now receives well over ten million euro each year in Germany alone. An almost continuous increase can be observed: in 2020, the PKK raised more than 16.5 million euro just through its annual fundraising campaign in Germany. Over the past ten years, this has allowed the PKK to more than triple its income from donations. Total donations in Europe are estimated at over 30 million euro.<sup>16</sup>



Cult of personality around Abdullah Öcalan

Mention was already made above of the PKK's elaborate media apparatus. In addition to TV stations, magazines and websites, the daily newspaper *Yeni Özgür Politika* (New Free Politics, YÖP), which is published in Germany with a circulation of about 10,000 copies, plays a special role. This freely available Turkish/Kurdish-language publication is one of the PKK's central mouthpieces here in Germany. It is used to disseminate organisation-specific content and general political statements by PKK functionaries. Online social networks are increasingly used to mobilise the public for events.



The PKK daily newspaper *Yeni Özgür Politika*

## The Turkish nationalist 'Ülkücü' movement

The 'Föderation der Türkisch-Demokratischen Idealistenvereine in Deutschland e. V.' (Federation of Turkish-Democratic Idealist Associations in Germany, *Almanya Demokratik Ülkücü Türk Dernekleri Federasyonu, ADÜTDF*) is the largest group within the ultra-nationalist 'Ülkücü' movement. Its members refer to it exclusively as 'Türk Federasyon'. The ADÜTDF was founded in 1978 in Frankfurt am Main, where it is still based. In addition to the ADÜTDF, the umbrella organisation 'Türkische Konföderation in Europa' (Turkish Confederation in Germany, *Avrupa Türk Konfederasyon, ATK*) unites ten other national associations, e.g. from France, Belgium and the Netherlands. The ADÜTDF has about 170 local associations across Germany. They refer to themselves as 'idealist associations' (*Ülkü Ocağı*) or 'Turkish cultural associations', and are mainly distributed among the federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, Hesse and Baden-Württemberg.



Emblem of the ADÜTDF, the largest umbrella organisation of Turkish nationalist associations in Germany

Compared to the other extremist milieus from the field of 'foreigner extremism' mentioned here, nationalist Turks rely less on high-profile activities, such as holding their own demonstrations. However, people from the 'Ülkücü' spectrum are increasingly taking part in demonstrations and public events organised by supporters of the 'Justice and Development Party' (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP*). This is due to the recent

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Federal domestic intelligence services, 2020, p. 268.

alliance between the AKP and their own party, the 'Nationalist Movement Party' (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) based in Turkey; there is therefore some overlap among supporters of the two parties in Germany. The Turkish 'idealist associations' seek representation at local city festivals with their own stands – just like the Kurdish associations close to the PKK. However, the focus at such events is placed less on spreading political messages and more on selling food. On closer inspection, however, one can recognise the unambiguous symbols used by the associations. Such public involvement on the part of these associations bears a significance that should not be underestimated, as it means gaining an accepted place at the heart of society.



Emblem of the Turkish Nationalist Movement Party, MHP

The members of the ADÜTDF see themselves as one big family and therefore attach importance to spending a lot of time together. To do this, they meet in their various association premises or in rented festival halls to celebrate different occasions. These may include Turkish or Muslim holidays, family celebrations, and also the anniversary of the birth or death of the founder of their party, Alparslan Türkeş. Even today, more than twenty years after his death, there is still an absolute cult of personality around him. His ideological theses are part of the training programme for future generations. Seminars, sometimes several days long, are held to familiarise young people with Alparslan Türkeş and his confederates, such as the avowed racist Nihal Atsız.

As a rule, these are attended by children of association members, as party adherence is still very much a family matter within the 'Ülkücü' milieu.

Koran classes, theatre groups and football teams round off the activities offered to children and youths, helping to fortify the sense of attachment young people have for the associations. It is not without reason that the 'Ülkücü' movement is characterised as a movement that is powerfully influential in the formation of identity and imparts a clear self-image to young adults and a simple worldview to go with it. At the heart of this is a glorified vision of Turkey, and its past and present heroes.

## Turkish left-wing extremist organisations

Even though the number of followers of Turkish left-wing extremist organisations is relatively modest, they have nevertheless founded several associations and clubs in Germany, which have existed for many years. Although the TKP/ML and MLKP are not banned in Germany, over the years they have nonetheless built up a network of 'peripheral organisations' with very similar agendas that pursue activities complementary to those of their parent organisations. The banned DHKP-C, on the other hand, relies on 'front organisations', which – like the peripheral organisations – are legal, registered associations.



Emblem of the ATIF

The TKPM/ML is represented in the public sphere primarily by the 'Föderation der Arbeiter aus der Türkei in Deutschland e. V.' (Almanya Türkiyeli İşçiler Federasyonu, ATIF) or its European umbrella organisation 'Confederation of Workers from Turkey in Europe' (Avrupa Türkiyeli İşçiler Konfederasyonu, ATIK) as well as by the 'New Democratic Youth' (Yeni Demokrat Gençlik, YDG).

Activities commonly undertaken by these organisations include running information stands, participating in demonstrations and holding commemorative events in honour of the founder of the TKP/ML party, İbrahim Kaypakkaya. However, such events may also be held to commemorate TKP/ML fighters who died in battles with Turkish security forces or to show solidarity with TKP/ML activists imprisoned in Germany.

Organisations that support the MLKP include the 'Föderation der Arbeitsimmigrant/innen in Deutschland e. V.' (Almanya Göçmen İşçiler Federasyonu, AGIF) and the European umbrella organisation the 'European Confederation of Oppressed Immigrants' (Avrupa Ezilen Göçmenler Konfederasyonu, AvEG-KON).



Emblem of the AGIF

The 'Young Struggle' group, which is also under observation by the German domestic intelligence services, is particularly active. It is considered an MLKP youth organisation and describes itself as follows:

'Young Struggle was founded in autumn 2010 via a European convention. The youth organisation, previously active under the name of Aveg-Kon Youth, organised itself to form Young Struggle during this convention. This created a Europe-wide structure for the joint revolutionary struggle of indigenous and migrant youth from the various countries represented. This was not just a change in name, but rather a necessary step in the revolutionary struggle to politicise and organise young people for a better and more just society.'<sup>17</sup>

The main activities of Young Struggle include participation in demonstrations and other protest actions. For example, its members took part in protests against the annual meeting of the heads of state and government of the 'Group of the 20 most important industrialised and emerging countries in the world' (G20), which took place in Hamburg in July 2017. More than 20,000 police officers were deployed to protect the G20 summit, making it the largest police operation in Germany's post-war history. Of the many demonstrators who protested against the event during the week-long summit, roughly 8,000 were prone to violence. Incidents included large-scale confrontations with the police and considerable damage to property – smashed windows on police vehicles, shops and administrative buildings, fires set in waste containers and destroyed streets.



Logo of the Young Struggle group

Young Struggle is also involved in organising festivals and youth camps, which are advertised with relatively harmless sounding words:

'Every year, young people from all over Europe come together to learn in solidarity, spend time together or just have a little fun. The camp is organised by young people for young people and the focus is on putting a bit of distance between us and our stressful everyday lives in a system that demands a fair bit from us every day. Our top priority, therefore, is for us to be cooperative with each other and look out for each other. Each day there are various lectures, discussions, workshops and leisure activities in which everyone can participate.'<sup>18</sup>

However, this self-portrayal shows just one side of the MLKP-affiliated scene. As already mentioned, the MLKP openly drummed up support for the fight against the 'Islamic State' after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 and even founded its own combat units to assist the military wing of the PKK in northern Syria and northern Iraq. The MLKP has also suffered deaths of its own members due to their participation in the Syrian civil war. The dead are honoured at special memorial ceremonies for those killed in Rojava – the Kurdish name for northern Syria. The most prominent example is Ivana H., a German citizen born

<sup>17</sup> Young Struggle Duisburg.

<sup>18</sup> Young Struggle.

in Düsseldorf in 1995 with West African roots on her father's side. On 7 March 2015, she was killed in a battle against armed forces of the 'Islamic State' in Tell Tamer, Syria. Since then, she has been considered a special martyr within the scene.

The supporters of the DHKP-C are organised under the umbrella of the 'Anatolian Federation' and its local associations, which nurture a strong cult of martyrs around members of the organisation who have lost their lives in terrorist actions. For this purpose, portraits of the deceased are laid out in the premises of the associations and decorated with candles. Multiple generations belong to these associations, including children who grow up with this cult of martyrdom. There is thus a risk that they will not question this cult, but rather implicitly accept it as something normal.

This glorification of these 'martyrs' also takes place in the magazine *Yürüyüş* (March). As this magazine is a central publication of the DHKP-C, the 1998 ban on the organisation also encompasses its production and distribution, which is therefore subject to the same criminal sanctions as all other activities that violate the DHKP-C ban. *Halk Okulu*, which has been published weekly since November 2019, is the successor publication of *Yürüyüş* in terms of organisation, function and content.<sup>19</sup>

The DHKP-C and its supporters also frequently hold demonstrations and run information stands to draw attention to the situation of people from its own ranks imprisoned in Germany and Turkey, e.g. the presumed European leader of the organisation. His arrest in Hamburg in December 2016 was a great success for the investigating authorities, dealing a serious blow to the DHKP-C in Germany and Europe. In response to this, the scene proclaimed the motto 'Being a revolutionary is not a crime'. Under this motto, it organised various actions, including a 'Long March' held from 31 December 2016 to 18 March 2017, which led through various German cities and into neighbouring countries and was accompanied by demonstrations.

## Conclusion

The foregoing account aimed to illuminate the field of 'transnational extremism' or 'foreigner extremism' and the category of 'politically motivated crime – foreign ideology' as employed by the police in Germany, with a focus on Turkey as a region of origin. In this account, we have shown that there are extremist milieus in Germany that have existed for decades and which still succeed in recruiting followers among younger generations. Despite their broad presence in Germany, however, these milieus seem to have received little attention from extremism prevention stakeholders until now. Contributing factors to this may include, as we have shown, the variety of approaches taken to address these transnational extremist phenomena, as well as the fact that these approaches have remained merely descriptive, resulting in a lack of analytical work on the topic.

However, a cohesive, in-depth study of transnational extremist migrant milieus which can serve as the basis of solid prevention work is needed now more than ever; not least because the potential for conflict between the individual extremist groups has also become increasingly explosive in recent years. It is not uncommon for violent clashes to occur between supporters of the 'Kurdistan Workers' Party' (PKK) and people with

a Turkish background, with both camps tending to disparage the other side.<sup>20</sup> Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, there have also been occasional clashes between 'Salafists' and people of Kurdish origin. The conflicts prevailing in the Middle East are therefore also being waged in Germany – even if not with the same destructive means and on a much smaller scale. Nevertheless, the following crucial questions demand answers: why do young people adopt identities that are the constructs of extremist organisations originating abroad? How is it possible to break the cycle of socialisation within transnational extremist milieus? What alternative means of identity formation can be offered to young people with a family background of migration in order to prevent extremism in the long term?

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Federal domestic intelligence services, 2020, p. 273.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Hanrath 2011.

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The 'wolf salute' used by Turkish ultranationalists: © picture alliance/dpa.

# CHAPTER 3

## Processes of radicalisation

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- A conflict-theoretical approach
- Processes in extremist groups
- The psychological dimension
- The role of the internet

# CHAPTER 3.1

## A conflict-theoretical approach to radicalisation

Roland Eckert

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Since time immemorial, people have been prepared to fight and, if necessary, kill and be killed for their kinship, political and religious communities. Equally, however, there have always been attempts to create the means to settle conflicts without violence. In the present day, democracy based on universal and free elections opens up an opportunity for non-violent participation in political decision-making. The state under the rule of law protects basic human rights such as freedom of speech and of assembly. With a monopoly on the use of force whose limits are established in law, the state seeks to ensure the implementation of decisions made by judicial and democratic means. Together, these are important preconditions for members of the public to renounce violence.

So far, however, this has not been sufficient to prevent certain currents of thought from attracting adherents willing to transgress the framework of the constitution and to seek to assert themselves through acts of violence. The Red Army Faction (RAF), National Socialist Underground (NSU) and Islamic State (IS) are examples from the recent past. Consequently, there is an urgent need to ask why and under what conditions doubts may arise as to the value or even the possibility of non-violent conflict regulation, even in a democratic state under the rule of law. In other words: can the conditions in which people live together, and occasionally come into conflict, be shaped in such a way that 'incentives' for politically motivated violence decrease?

In order to find this out, radical ideologies must be considered not only as a cause of violence, but also as possible consequences of life situations that make them appear plausible to some people. In the tradition of social psychology, research in this area has focused on the conditions under which authoritarian patterns of thought and behaviour develop within the family. This chapter, however, takes a different approach, one based on conflict theory: if, for a prolonged period of time, democracy and the state under the rule of law prove incapable of resolving or limiting conflicts that lead to segments of the public feeling threatened, doubts arise about the effectiveness of the existing political order. This can then increase receptivity for currents of thought according to which the communities to which people belong are destined to fight and can only secure their existence through dominating, defeating or destroying each other. Such notions can become the core ideas of political movements that seek to redefine the course of history in the name of 'higher goals'. If this is the case, it is not enough to promote democracy, the rule of law and the state's monopoly on the use of force via political education and social pedagogy; they must also be continually reaffirmed in the field of politics itself by means of concrete problem solving and conflict regulation.

The present chapter brings together findings from various research approaches in neurobiology, social anthropology, social psychology, sociology and political science to try to understand the forces that lead to the radicalisation of individuals and movements. To achieve this, it is necessary to consider, first of all, how people identify with their communities in terms of both universal anthropological preconditions and in specific cultural constructions. The ability to pursue conflict resolution by peaceful means is a central concern of human communities. Political radicalisation is associated with a reduction in the diversity of groups to which individuals feel they belong. This reduction is both generated by conflicts and exacerbates them. Against this background, the chapter considers how communities in the twentieth century and the present have been absolutised. Finally, I assess what this could mean for human rights and democracy today. This is discussed with reference to Jack Donovan's 2016 book 'Becoming a Barbarian'.

## Understanding radicalisation

Can we be sure that we have seen the last of total domination, mass destruction and genocide? The dismantling of the separation of powers and the return of authoritarian leaders and discrimination on the basis of ethnicity in many countries today raises doubts about the future prospects of democracy and the rule of law. To escape the shadow of the twentieth century, we want to know why and under what circumstances parts of society become politically radicalised and ultimately turn to violence. Our concern here is not, in the first instance, to focus on specific individuals or forms of radicalisation. Rather, it is to find out what triggers the process of political radicalisation and how it develops. To this end, we compare findings from a number of academic disciplines. Starting with universal patterns of human behaviour, we shall look at group processes, historical chains of events and current conflicts. The examples are taken from movements that underwent radicalisation in the twentieth century and the present, though these cannot be presented in their entirety.

### What do we mean by radicalisation?

In general, radicalisation refers to an intensification of commitment and the willingness to fight by individuals and groups in a particular field of action. It can be set in motion in the pursuit of very different personal, professional or political goals. The willingness to act is determined by strong feelings, intellectual conviction and the sense of commitment that this gives rise to in individual situations and over time. When it comes to political fields of action, it is above all the identification with a political idea, a movement or party that gains increasing importance and pushes other factors and issues into the background. The results of this process may be evaluated as positive or negative. For scholars, it is crucial to first understand it. To do this, the perspective of the actors must be reconstructed in the form of a model – regardless of whether one believes their views to be right or wrong.

Political radicalisation is mostly triggered by the loss of trust in political institutions in the wake of crises, conflicts and defeats. Within this context, it is less the actual situation of members of the public than their fear of an uncertain future that is decisive. Equally, however, the expectation of victory and the seemingly unlimited possibilities it is supposed to bring can trigger a willingness to fight and enthusiasm for war. Collective grievances and group megalomania may also lead to collective violence. In most cases, however, radicalisation is triggered by insecurity, which causes people to strengthen their faith in communities that they expect will help them in times of need and offer a better future. Furthermore, insecurities and hopes for victory often coincide and work together to drive attitudes and actions. This can be seen, for example, in the French Revolution and the enthusiasm for the Napoleonic wars that followed.

### What does the concept of community mean in this context?

The concept of 'community' refers to the inclusion of people in both interactive groups, i.e. groups with direct person-to-person contact, and 'imagined' social units that are represented by governing, legal and administrative bodies or which bring people together around an idea. The concrete features of individual communities and the ways they are differentiated from others can vary greatly. The focus of the trust and mistrust, hopes and fears of members of a group are decisive aspects of any possible radicalisation.

### What are the links between conflicts and communities?

Conflicts *within* communities lead to the formation of membership blocs. Even family disputes and neighbourhood conflicts can become violent, precisely because they cannot be avoided and may rapidly escalate to fundamental issues, i.e. to the question of mutual trust. Conflicts *between* communities, on the other hand, usually lead to a strengthening of the sense of belonging within the respective communities and can also be staged for this purpose. Many different factors may lead to radicalisation: financial and economic crises that destroy expectations of prosperity or upward social mobility; conflicts between established communities and new migrants over the 'ownership' of space and expectations of familiar forms of communication and interaction, which have the potential to sour neighbourhood relations; political and cultural shifts that call into question things that used to be self-evident – and today also the realisation that modern forms of production, distribution and consumption are ultimately unsustainable. All these developments can lead to different radicalisation processes, which then drive each other forward precisely through their opposition. Yet while loss of trust can involve many different and contradictory factors – the radicalisation that it may lead to nevertheless often follows similar patterns. These patterns are illustrated here by movements that in the past have come up against or exceeded the limits of the rule of law and democracy.

### What role do individual life circumstances play in this?

When one's own life is subject to ruptures, crises and conflicts, the desire to be part of a larger community and to fight for the idea behind it can intensify. This idea can provide the individual with alignment and orientation. Groups that become radicalised, however, consist of people with very different previous experiences, not all of which are necessarily traumatic. Individual biographies are therefore of limited value in explaining how movements emerge as a whole. Above the level of the individual, movements come into being under the influence of particular events, which we currently observe in connection with cultural change, financial crises, immigration and an escalating environmental crisis. Political movements emerge in response that promise to avert these dangers or otherwise ensure a different future. The way such movements develop determines the level of radicalism and ultimately also the use of violence and counter-violence. Such political movements regularly refer to 'imagined communities' such as classes, peoples, nations or humanity as a whole, and to their historical destiny – past, present and future.

## Foundations: The nature of human societies

### 'Interactive' and 'imagined' communities

#### Why are communities so significant?

They demarcate a space of special solidarity from an outside world of non-members, from unimportant others and especially from hostile persons and groups. This demarcation is not only carried out where it is necessary for life or for survival, but is also staged as a means of generating feelings of rivalry, excitement, anxiety or celebration, such as we experience at football matches every weekend. In the stadium, the emotional significance of community becomes tangible, visible and audible. It has always been present in human history. Neurobiologist Robert Sapolsky<sup>1</sup> concludes: 'Thus, the strength of Us/Them-ing is shown by: (a) the speed and minimal sensory stimuli required for the brain to process group differences; (b) the unconscious automaticity of such processes; (c) its presence in other primates and very young humans; and (d) the tendency to group according to arbitrary differences, and to then imbue those markers with power.'<sup>2</sup>

#### What role do kinship and local communities play in this?

Family and kinship, as 'interactive communities' where everyone knows each other face to face, have always played a fundamental role in the sense of belonging. However, this feeling is additionally reinforced by family stories, family photos and rituals on occasions such as birth, coming-of-age, holidays, marriage and death. The other main form of community that is upheld by shared experiences is the neighbourhood or local community, which is also strengthened by neighbourly assistance and local festivals. In all these 'interactive communities', there is a fundamental interest in common norms and values. And this always includes a notion of 'normality'. This refers to expectations placed on women and men, children, the young and the old, and an expectation of mutual assistance. These are integrated into structures of meaning that point beyond the immediate present and individual persons, and they usually include the expectation of being able to overcome even extraordinary stresses and threats by means of collective action. Where such expectations are disappointed, discord can quickly escalate.

#### What does this imply for the assessment of other communities?

One perceives other communities, in the first instance, from the perspective of one's own group. In addition to curiosity, otherness always also creates insecurity. Other communities are therefore 'assessed' in terms of one's own values, although this does not make a negative result inevitable. The highlighting of differences can be used to criticise both the other group and one's own. Where other communities are evaluated negatively from the point of view of one's own group, this is called ethnocentrism, i.e. the idea that the culture of one's own group is superior.<sup>3</sup> Such 'pre'-judgements (the literal meaning of prejudice) precede new experiences and often influence their interpretation. They can also become entirely detached from immediate experiences to serve as ideological constructs of difference that may legitimise hostility, domination and exploitation.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sapolsky 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 392.

<sup>3</sup> For details, see Antweiler 1998, 19–81.

### Does this amount to racism?

It can lead to it. In the ideology of racism, i.e. the systematic development of racist ideas, the differences between peoples were or are considered to be biologically, i.e. genetically, predetermined. This results in the idea of an irrevocable superiority or inferiority and, in the case of conflict, a 'natural' enmity that benefits one's own group. After the collapse of 'racial science' in the face of modern genetic research, such conceptions of difference are now more likely to be established on the basis of cultural traditions. These are, however, also interpreted as basically unchanging and ultimately irreconcilable. In both constructs, people are seen as belonging to homogeneous groups, whose genetic or cultural characteristics more or less determine the behaviour of individuals. In the case of outgroups, this homogeneity is simply *assumed*; for the ingroup, whose heterogeneity is more evident, it is understood as something that *should be*. Through a 'collective singular' that refers to origin, *the German, the Russian, the Arab, the African, the Muslim, the Jew*, etc. is conceptually anchored to a specific identity that is considered to determine them. If one's own group identity is evaluated positively and that of *another* group negatively ('the sub-human'), interests in distinction, i.e. being something 'better', and consequently in domination, exploitation or slavery, can be more easily satisfied. Colonial rule has rooted its hierarchies deeply in the collective memory of the rulers and – in an inverted form – of those who were or still are subjugated. Ideas of natural or God-given superiority can be quickly updated when cultural, economic and political conflicts arise. Nor have they disappeared in the course of decolonisation – on the contrary: migration flows reaching the countries of the former colonial masters today are reviving them with renewed brutality. Being subject to threats, violence and genocide are enduring and intergenerational experiences that pose a constant challenge to concepts of justice.

Following Antweiler,<sup>4</sup> however, one should use the fighting term 'racism' sparingly. That is because every idea of a community already contains notions of difference, which inevitably include a degree of evaluation. There are diverse and powerful traditions everywhere rooted in looking down on some other – not only between societies, but also within them. For the very reason that today we can choose which traditions we want to keep and which to abandon, individual communities need to define how they differ from others and how they want to be 'better'. It is also important to show tolerance and respect towards such ideas, as long as they do not define the others as inferior in essentialist terms. The accusation of racism should therefore not be extended arbitrarily, but should be limited to those ideas of difference that question the human dignity of others.

### Are peoples and nations also communities?

Beyond 'interactive communities' such as families, groups of friends and local communities, 'imagined communities' that transcend local neighbourhoods, such as nations, religious communities and communities of those who share a worldview, are of particular importance. These have historically been formed in the course of economic, cultural and political interdependence and particularly as the result of military conquest. They are not a constant presence, but are rather embodied by representatives and brought to mind by means of particular narratives recounted, for instance, during celebrations, as part of education, or in certain texts.<sup>5</sup> We also look to such 'supra-local'

<sup>4</sup> For the conceptual distinction between ethnocentrism and racism, see *ibid.* 60–64.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of 'imagined communities' was developed by Benedict Anderson in his book of that title (1988) in terms of the 'nation', but it can also be applied to other 'large groups' (Lemberg 1964) to which people consider themselves or may be considered to belong.

political and religious communities to meet our basic needs for security, protection, help and a sense of meaning that cannot be satisfied by family and local community alone. Some of the imagined communities are institutionalised as tribes, peoples, empires, states or religious communities, whereas others function more as ideological communities of (competing or cooperating) interests and values. All of them, however, are understood to be built on a shared legacy and/or as projects for a common future and are supported by the hope that, if necessary, they will help their adherents or members to overcome extraordinary stresses and threats and/or to realise new opportunities.

Communities that cannot be experienced in the form of person-to-person contact, but are instead organised supra-locally or even just in the mind, are mostly modelled on interactive communities. In this way, they mobilise the feelings that we associate with immediate community. As in the French national anthem 'allons enfants de la Patrie', the 'people' are understood as an extended family, the 'nation' as a neighbourhood on a larger scale, members of a 'social class' as individuals brought together by a common fate and working towards a common goal, faith communities in terms of the church, i.e. the house of God in which 'brothers and sisters in Christ' gather. Historically, it was mostly religious affiliation that distinguished communities from each other. Consequently, and not only in Islam, but also in Christianity and Buddhism, religion has been used time and again to fight, expel and destroy other communities: 'Gott mit uns' (God with us) was still engraved on the belt buckles of German soldiers in the Second World War. Even when a country's rulers have established their position by war, they will not only seek to stabilise their power via coercive means, but will also try simultaneously to establish the idea of a community. The philosophy of the 19th century was particularly productive in ascribing essentialist notions to ideas such as people, nation, class and race – and even the idea of humanity itself. These ideas are still sources of identification for people today. They are not only the product of historical conflict situations, but also of theories that were considered scientific in their time. Above all, however, they are the result of the search for certainties that hold people together even in critical situations.

### Does community always mean conflict?

There is a reciprocal effect. Conflict often precedes community building. The idea that Germany is a nation with a one-thousand-year history first became widespread during the wars of liberation against Napoleonic rule. It then took on a life of its own and was realised sixty years later in the form of 'Lesser Germany' (without Austria) by means of 'blood and iron' (Bismarck). When put into practice, the central ideas of different communities need not clash, but they may do so: the struggle between worldviews is waged all the more relentlessly the more each side believes itself to be in possession of *the* truth. The Kulturkampf ('culture struggle') between the newly founded German Empire and the ultramontane ('beyond the mountains', i.e. dominated by Rome) Catholic Church with its dogma of infallibility provides a foretaste of the 20th century. These two sides competed for the loyalty and hopes of many people after the founding of the Empire in 1871. We have by no means left the age of wars over belief behind.

Nevertheless, neither form of community – interactive or imagined – is programmed for conflict from the outset. It takes something else to trigger conflict – both between and within communities: the idea (justified or unjustified) that one has to assert oneself against others, competition for land, economic resources, linguistic and cultural recognition, the validity of one's 'truth', and, above all, the competition for political power, the power to

shape events and to dispose of resources. At that point, national sentiment escalates to become chauvinism, i.e. enmity towards other peoples and nations; class identity turns into class struggle; common faith is used to justify war against unbelief *and* unbelievers. It is usually assumed that any loss suffered by the other side is simultaneously a gain for one's own. When such conflicts escalate, at some point the conviction can arise that there can be only victory or ruin. When that time comes, ideas of community can gain power over life and death.

## Violence or law – a question of conflict resolution

### Is violence part of human nature?

Throughout history, people have always been prepared, if necessary, to fight, kill and die not only for themselves but also for the communities to which they felt they belonged.<sup>6</sup> And this willingness has always also been celebrated in heroic stories, in celebrations and songs. It is therefore not simply 'instinctive', but, in its concrete form, requires cultural reinforcement and orientation. Consequently, it is nonsensical to assume a 'natural' heroism in the sense of heroic readiness to fight and to believe that peacefulness is a sign of decadence, while fighting, self-sacrifice and violence are a human, specifically male, calling that can at best be 'tamed'. Most people prefer peace to war, and militarism, as history from Sparta to the military state of North Korea shows, is itself a product of collective training programmes. Both fighting spirit and peacefulness are human possibilities; both are practised; and they tend to be institutionalised in different strata of a society, such as warriors and priests.

### What is the alternative to fighting?

Attempts have always been made to limit or end the escalation of conflicts through avoidance strategies, arbitration procedures and treaties.<sup>7</sup> However, the anarchic, i.e. non-state-regulated, initial situation of the struggle of 'all against all', on which Thomas Hobbes based his state theory in 1691 following the bloody civil war between religious communities in England, still exists today, e.g. in 'failed' states. It also continues to determine events at the international level – despite all the UN agencies and treaties.<sup>8</sup>

### So has humanity not come far on the path to peace?

On the contrary! Wherever experience shows that cooperation creates added value, there is an interest in getting along peacefully. Within states under the rule of law, the principle is followed that courts decide in place of weapons and 'vigilante justice' or revenge is replaced by court decisions.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, however, states are largely sovereign, i.e. anarchic, actors in the struggle or cooperation with other states – and possess ever more terrible military means. When conflicts escalate and states issue mutual threats, the probability increases that attempts at mediation or reconciliation will fail. At least, in the form of the United Nations and other international organisations, rudimentary control

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Sapolsky 2017, 570-579.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Roberts 1979.

<sup>8</sup> Structurally, the UN is reminiscent of Iceland over a thousand years ago, which had an 'Althing' for jurisprudence, but no state monopoly on the use of force. Aggrieved parties, legitimised by a decision of the Althing, therefore had to resort to self-help, recruit comrades-in-arms and give them a share of the expected booty.

<sup>9</sup> A given legal system can, of course, itself become the object of conflict, especially if it does not offer procedures that are recognised as fair or if these only apply to the members of an ingroup, but not to those considered 'others' in a given case.

systems have been set up which, in principle, could be enhanced and expanded to create a global system of laws. However, the success of such efforts will remain limited as long as people look primarily to their own states to provide security, a consequence of the fact that international institutions have so far proved largely toothless. This is precisely the core of an increasing number of current conflicts: more and more people hope to escape the problems and conflicts of the present by retreating to nation-state or ethnic sovereignty. However, these problems and conflicts are increasingly global in nature. The re-nationalisation of politics acts as a self-reinforcing process that ultimately reduces everyone's ability to manage global challenges.

### What does the rule of law need to survive?

If the law is to endure as an alternative to violence, there must be an ongoing common effort to continually re-establish it, safeguard it and adapt it to new conflict situations. That is why democracy, the rule of law and human rights should not only be considered as end-states or final goals of national and international politics, but also as instruments for social change and development that allow joint decisions to be taken and revised peacefully. Unfortunately, they receive less sustenance from pre-constitutional, especially religious traditions,<sup>10</sup> than from their ability to overcome crises, regulate conflicts and create opportunities. However, these achievements are unstable and constantly endangered because new conflicts are continually emerging that have to be dealt with. Even if most people have an interest in the services provided by state and supranational institutions, not everyone reliably contributes to the necessary costs.<sup>11</sup> Individual states have only a limited ability to influence conflicts that press in from other countries and regions of the world. Yet this is precisely what governments are often expected to do. Financial crises, refugee flows or external threats can therefore trigger feelings of powerlessness. This can lead to calls for a truly 'defensible' community, which some may ultimately seek in a 'completely different', i.e. authoritarian, order.<sup>12</sup>

## Foundations: Social identity and radicalisation

### Identity and identities

#### Is radicalisation also related to our personal identity?

In the course of our lives, we have a variety of social affiliations that we are given or actively choose. The image we have of ourselves refers, on the one hand, to a 'personal identity', i.e. to our experiences of things like our own bodies and our personal feelings. At the same time, however, it is oriented towards the various and shifting social affiliations that become important for us over the course of our lives. Our identity is therefore fundamentally diverse, often contradictory and remains unfinished throughout life.

<sup>10</sup> As Böckenförde assumes. Cf. Böckenförde 1964/1999.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Olson 1971.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Weiß 2017.

The groups to which we belong (or consider ourselves members of) and the position we occupy in them are sources of a 'social identity'.<sup>13</sup> This can be perceived in both positive and negative terms: one can be proud of belonging or ashamed of it. The assessment of the group by third parties plays a role here: one wants the group to which one belongs to be assessed positively. If a group is looked down upon, this can lead to a negative self-image, the construction of a counter-identity or a struggle for recognition of the group. This is why, alongside economic and political deprivation, discrimination against individuals and groups on the basis of culture also has far-reaching consequences in terms of the emergence and development of conflicts.

#### How should we deal with this diversity of identities?

We can identify with or distance ourselves from individual aspects of our identity to varying degrees. In the words of Amartya Sen, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics: 'There are a great variety of categories to which we simultaneously belong.' He lists over twenty significant affiliations for himself.<sup>14</sup> However, not all possible affiliations are permanent features of our identity. Many are only situationally significant, fleeting or peripheral and tend to be used for self-description on a case-by-case basis. Some, however, are biographically important because we identify with them to a high degree or because they are initially imposed on us irreversibly, as with assignment of gender, ethnicity or religious faith. Sen criticises what he calls 'identity disregard' when, for example, the association of actors with a community is not taken into account in neoliberal conceptions of the market. Above all, however, he sharply attacks the notion of 'singular affiliation' when it assumes that 'any person preeminently belongs, for all practical purposes, to one collectivity only – no more and no less'.<sup>15</sup> First of all, he finds the equation of mere individual advantage and rational action to be misleading (positing the individual as a 'rational fool'); second, he sees a close connection between the 'singularisation' of identity and the use of violence. The 'solitarist belittling of human identity [...] can be invoked [...] in support of fomenting intergroup strife'.<sup>16</sup> 'The illusion of singular identity, which serves the violent purpose of those orchestrating such confrontations, is skilfully cultivated and fomented by the commanders of persecution and carnage'.<sup>17</sup>

#### But what reduces the plurality of identities?

Sen leaves open why and under what circumstances assigning people to multiple categories make sense and how, by contrast, identity may be restricted to a single affiliation or one that dominates all others. Here his argument needs to be supplemented: the restriction of the diversity of identity is mostly generated by prior conflicts and even more so by the experience or fear of violence. It is therefore first of all a consequence of events and not necessarily a fundamental cause. It can certainly be drilled by individual conflict parties via training, exercises and rituals, and made tangible, put to the test, stabilised and enhanced through contact with the enemy. Moreover, these days, it may also take the form of individual efforts in finding a personal identity. Whatever was

originally cause and effect: there is a close interaction between the focus on a single social identity and the escalation of conflicts, and this is likely to drive any political radicalisation.

## Ingroup preference

#### Is there a 'natural' egoism of the group?

In the famous 'minimal group experiments',<sup>18</sup> a general tendency to prefer the ingroup became evident – even in test subjects who were assigned in the experiments to an entirely irrelevant (both for the question of the study and for the participants themselves) category, i.e. a 'minimal group'. The results show (according to Gertrud Nunner-Winkler<sup>19</sup>) that the preference for one's own group is already directly linked to the process of categorisation, i.e. the conceptual classification of belonging. This would mean that it is not necessarily caused by an ideology preceding categorisation (racism, nationalism, separatism, missionary calling, class struggle, etc.). Without doubt, however, the preference for the ingroup can be enhanced and justified by such ideologies. In general terms, communities are created via the categorisation of group membership that every society undertakes and which may be more or less significant for the people concerned. However, the historical process of categorisation and the political consequences that eventually follow from it are not necessarily directly related. They may even be separated from each other by centuries. An example of this is provided by the Christian missionaries to the South Slavs. Both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches established religious communities among the South Slavs following the Great Schism of 1054. Only centuries later did these groups define themselves as separate peoples, each with a claim to statehood, finally even going to war in the 1990s.

#### Is the evaluation of 'the other' always negative?

No! There is reason to be sceptical regarding Sapolsky's assumption that categorisation already implies negative evaluations of the outgroup.<sup>20</sup> We know only for sure that prejudices presuppose categories, but not that categories already imply negative judgements. Categories can be associated with positive, negative and even neutral expectations. Our everyday experience also speaks against a direct connection between categorisation and denigration: the curious question to a stranger, 'Where are you from?', is not from the outset an expression of xenophobia, but can on the contrary signal a friendly interest in another person or another community. The awareness of another culture can certainly lead to a desire to learn about its ways of life and thus to learn about alternatives that can broaden the horizons of one's own community. For Germans, the French were never just 'hereditary enemies', but always also role models in art and life. Taoist, Buddhist and Sufi teachings and initiations are now also accepted as guides to personal development in the 'West'. It follows that enmity and struggle between communities are always possible, but rarely inevitable. In principle, relations can be mutually positive.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Tajfel/Turner 1986, 7-25.

<sup>14</sup> Sen 2007, 19.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Tajfel 1982.

<sup>19</sup> Nunner-Winkler 1998.

<sup>20</sup> Sapolsky 2017, 390.

### How can this be achieved?

In Henri Tajfel's experimental groups, favouring one's ingroup was demonstrably correlated with disadvantageous treatment of others. However, this was already predetermined by the experimental design: the financial resources to be distributed in the experiment were scarce and therefore suggested the formation of preferences. Between membership of one group and discrimination against another was thus the assumption that the advantage of one side was tantamount to the disadvantage of the other side, i.e. that – technically speaking – there was a zero-sum game, because advantage and disadvantage cancelled each other out in the sum. In reality, however, it is not always about such 'zero-sum games'. Incentives to cooperate are effective, as Muzafer Sherif found out in his famous 'Robbers Cave' holiday camps.<sup>21</sup> This fact is politically of the utmost importance: even if a preference for one's ingroup (regardless of ideology) is likely under conditions of scarcity, it should not be concluded from this that 'after all, nothing can be done'. Politics is always also the art of resolving such zero-sum games, bringing higher-level viewpoints 'into play' and negotiating compromises. Important for this process of conflict transformation are those who, as 'impartial judges', as mediators or arbitrators, can highlight commonalities among groups or even reward cooperation, as the European Union has (so far) successfully done to end the Bosnian war.

Bismarck's observation that 'You can't govern with the Sermon on the Mount' is only valid if one reduces Jesus's provocative demands to personal attitudes, which certainly all too often remain impotent. However, if one takes them as a mandate to shape political structures so that solidarity is created across individual communities and zero-sum situations are overcome, they can certainly be applied in a political context. Even the biblical parable of the 'Good Samaritan' does not so much illustrate love for one's 'neighbour', but precisely the overcoming of ethnic and religious boundaries that separated Jews and Samaritans. In this view, the love of one's neighbour that is realised in one's ingroup is not thereby dissipated, but rather may be extended, in emergency situations, in favour of 'strangers' who have 'fallen among the robbers'. The preferential interest towards one's own group still applies, but now extends further as 'enlightened' self-interest – especially when institutions of conflict resolution are structurally built in. The West did a better job of realising this in international politics after the Second World War than thirty years earlier, when, in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, the winners' gains were measured in terms of the losers' losses. Our attention should therefore be on conflicts where zero-sum assumptions are operative and can turn into hostility. And we should not avoid talking about conflict issues out of concern that prejudices may arise, but should rather name and address them.

### Do small group experiments have anything to teach politics?

The ingroup preferences demonstrated in the small group experiments are certainly highly likely to also apply to 'imagined communities', 'large groups' and 'collectives' that have an inbuilt claim to the solidarity of their members. The findings of evolutionary biology, neurology and social psychology agree that the cognitive processes used to demarcate 'us' and 'them' are universal, regardless of group size and the characteristics used for classification. 'Numerous experiments confirm that the brain differentially

processes images in milliseconds based on minimal cues about race or gender.'<sup>22</sup> But judgements attributed to differences and the possibility of understanding between groups are a very different matter: these are the results of particular historical processes in each case. That is why such evaluations can also be actively shaped, at every level.

### If communities are universal, what do they achieve for their members?

Political scientist Russell Hardin offered an explanation of the anthropologically ascertainable preference for one's own group in 1995.<sup>23</sup> He refers to the 'epistemological comfort' of communities in which there is always already a body of shared knowledge. With this knowledge, the world becomes familiar, predictable within limits and one may take action with a degree of confidence. This knowledge contains the cultural codes that define patterns of mutual expectation: group 'insiders' are familiar with this and know what they can expect. This does not initially apply to strangers. That is why people are often cautious at first. Not only recognisable dangers but just the fear of not recognising a possible danger can lead to an aversion to strangers, as we have all experienced on holiday in faraway countries. From this it is easy to conclude that one's own group and its shared norms are better while denigrating other groups. What is natural within one's own group is then taken for that which should be the case. Hardin describes this ethnocentrism as an example of the 'is/ought fallacy', i.e. the 'naturalistic fallacy'.

### Does this also apply to imagined communities?

They, too, thrive on the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. The sense of meaning that they provide, though rooted in the mere idea of belonging to a community, goes far beyond the above-mentioned 'epistemological', i.e. knowledge-based 'comfort', especially when seen in struggle with others. Because we are not just inhabitants of a world that has been handed down to us, but are ourselves always generating the world anew based on our ideas, we allow ourselves to be seized by the latter. Many of our life problems can only be solved collectively, i.e. by working together. Human beings are therefore not only egoists, but also altruists, i.e. unselfish, and this aspect of humanity is mostly oriented towards the communities to which we belong. In their myths of origin and of the future, all religious and political communities rely on the power of the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. In this way, they use the trust and the energies that are released in the identification with the 'we' and can thereby achieve results that would be impossible for isolated individuals. Such hopes are not only directed at existing communities, but also at as-yet unrealised communities, as formulated, for example, in various religious, ethnic, separatist, communist and anarchist visions of the future. And increasing numbers of people live in hope of a democratic and open world that respects and safeguards the conditions of community life.

We thus have to conclude that people live in communities and can consider them to be their reality even when not immediately present. So the question cannot be: 'Community – yes or no?', but rather: 'How can we stop communities from absolutising themselves or becoming involved in wars with others?' And how can we ensure that they are nevertheless capable of managing crises and motivating their members to achieve all those things that can only be achieved as part of a community?

21 Sherif/Sherif 1977, 167-192.

22 Sapolsky 2017, 388.

23 Cf. Hardin 1995.

## Between solidarity and hostility: transitions and tipping points

### What is the relationship between group solidarity and hostility?

Whether a tree may be felled, an animal slaughtered or a human killed is ultimately not determined by 'instincts', but anchored in the symbolic order of communities via traditions, taboos or laws. By drawing a line between one's own and other communities, decisions are also made about who may take advantage of services provided by or within the community, who is excluded when resources are scarce and who may be fought as an enemy when conflict arises. Conflicts generate or reinforce ideas of community built on solidarity on both sides. Solidarity with the people to whom we feel a sense of belonging, i.e. the Bible's 'love of one's neighbour', as a 'positive obligation', is one of the highest callings of humans as social beings. In many cultures, however, there are also 'negative obligations', as in the commandment: 'Thou shalt not kill!' They usually also apply to people who do not belong to the same community.<sup>24</sup> These two commandments can come into conflict with each other. In times of conflict, fulfilling our positive duties towards our 'neighbours' may require us to suspend the 'negative' duty not to harm others. When radicalised, even the idea of a neighbourly, ethnic, religious or national community can lead to the desire for homogenisation. This can then give rise to discrimination or the expulsion or even extermination of those who do not (or should not) 'belong'. It may also generate a desire for 'irredenta', i.e. the annexation by war of territories in which 'kinfolk' live.

### Are there tipping points at which solidarity turns into hostility?

Solidarity with one's ingroup turns into hostility against another group at the latest when people become convinced that they are being disadvantaged, disrespected or attacked by that group. However, it is rarely possible to clearly predict when such a tipping point will be reached. While reducing the perceived situation to a clear distinction between 'friend and foe' certainly helps to deal with the uncertainty, it also intensifies the conflict. Conspiracy theories often emerge in such situations, claiming to identify 'who is to blame'. They often also suggest an inevitable struggle in which concern for one's own justifies attacks on the other. Once one's worldview is reduced to friend and foe, light and dark, confidence-building measures become difficult and open hostility is more likely. Long before the situation becomes catastrophic, the drama of the situation is played up by those seeking to use the threat potential to gain personal advantage and/or to mobilise additional solidarity. At any given moment, it is therefore difficult to distinguish reality from fiction.<sup>25</sup> The more complex the situation and the more dramatic the assessment of the feared consequences of an imminent struggle, the more likely it is that fear and paranoia will spread.

### Can this be illustrated with examples?

The 'Strength of Us/Them' (Sapolsky) has also had terrible consequences outside Europe. *The partition of India* in 1947 was planned to avoid ethno-religious conflicts, but immediately triggered a bloodbath, expulsions and endless streams of refugees, because for many it was now a matter of *one (and only one) permanent affiliation*.

*The break-up of Yugoslavia* in 1990 resulted in a similar development on a smaller scale. It was now a matter of securing land for one side or the other and restoring an ethnic

or religious homogeneity that had been lost. In both conflicts, the parties seemed to see matters in terms of 'now or never' and 'all or nothing'.

In *Rwanda*, the German and Belgian colonial authorities transformed the 'Tutsi' and the 'Hutu' from the occupational designations of cattle breeders and arable farmers, respectively, into 'peoples' based on the speculations of European race theorists, despite the fact that there were no religious, cultural or linguistic differences between the two groups. Kings and chiefs were then recruited from among the Tutsis in a system of 'indirect rule'. Families were 'assigned' to one people or the other on the basis of the number of cattle they owned, and this was recorded on each identity card. The colonised accepted this definition and expanded it to include anatomical features such as body size and nose shape. When, after the end of colonial rule, land became scarce and control of goods provided by the state became increasingly important, civil war broke out, escalating into a precisely planned genocide in 1994 – in which the victims were mainly Tutsis, but which also claimed the lives of Hutus who opposed it.

Sapolsky looks at this dynamic from the perspective of evolutionary biology and sees – similar to Sen – a fundamental danger: 'We can think our way to deciding who is a relative, who is an Us. And thus [...] we can be manipulated into thinking that some individuals are more related to us, and others less so, than they actually are [...]. There are numerous ways to get someone to think that an Other is so different that they barely count as human.'<sup>26</sup> These categories can be – or can become – associated with powerful and negative feelings. This is done in particular by engaging the 'insular cortex', which produces feelings of disgust in the brain and can be activated by appropriate metaphors: 'Metaphors We Kill By'.<sup>27</sup> Contemporary examples from Germany include slurs such as 'Zecken' (ticks), 'Bullenschweine' (bull-pigs), 'braune Küchenschaben' (cockroaches), 'Infektion' (infection), 'links versifft' (filthy left), etc.

### By contrast, what process is cooperation based on?

The consequences of demarcation between communities denounced by Sapolsky are likely in the case of a crisis or conflict, but by no means inevitable. We all belong to communities that set themselves apart from others and draw meaning, life satisfaction and, if necessary, solidarity and security from them. If this were always associated with disregard for or even a willingness to destroy members of outgroups, we would live in a state of constant feud with other communities – and ultimately resort to vendettas, as is common in stateless societies. Homes would once again become fortified strongholds. Some may wish for this because they are stimulated by and feel drawn to the idea of heroic struggle itself; others focus more on the victims of such struggles. It is therefore important for them that their own community is compatible with tolerance and respect for other groups, that compromise is possible<sup>28</sup> and conflicts can be mediated or settled in court before becoming matters of life or death. At first, however, this is not simply a question of having the right attitude and is certainly not one of human nature. Rather it has its own preconditions, which concern the relations between potential opponents. These preconditions have been tested in game theory.<sup>29</sup> It is all about trust, and trust

<sup>24</sup> Nunner-Winkler 2005, 157-178, 167.

<sup>25</sup> *The rationale for the 2003 Iraq War was an example of just such a fiction that was as sad as it was tragic.*

<sup>26</sup> Sapolsky 2017, 570.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 553-579.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Neidhardt 2013, 417-439.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Axelrod 1984.

is ultimately based on the repeated experience of positive reciprocal responses to concessions. How difficult it can be to build trust in this way is something we have not only seen in efforts to contain Cold War hostilities through confidence-building measures and their institutionalisation in the OSCE, but is also evident at present in European and international affairs. Where it fails, the retreat to the presumed security of the smaller community, i.e. these days to the nation-state, is the natural reaction. And where even states fail, there is a retreat to tribes, gangs, syndicates and the rule of warlords, as in the Balkan wars of the 1990s or today in Somalia and Libya. However, this retreat to the smaller community can also take an identitarian turn. Anyone interested in establishing a community dedicated to 'the struggle' in order to conform to a heroic male image usually not only has an enemy, but will also seek and find one.

### What do political crimes have to do with the us/them divide?

The genocides of the twentieth century were most definitely committed 'for' imagined communities that, in the perception of the respective actors, needed to be saved or helped to achieve 'final victory'. By assuming that differences were irreconcilable, and conflict inevitable, communities that had once been based on solidarity in times of need became dedicated to struggle and the belief that their enemies had to be defeated or destroyed. This explanation does not 'excuse' the perpetrators of the acts that followed, but it does clarify the processes of definition that determined whether people would become perpetrators or victims. The only thing that can prevent our world from backsliding into such struggles between light and darkness is the appreciation of the diversity of communities, mutual respect for differences and, internationally, the negotiation and agreement of confidence-building measures – and ultimately the enforcement of legal rules under police or military protection.

## Particularist orientations and struggle

### What effect do conflicts between groups have within an ingroup?

Sociologists distinguish between 'particularist' and 'universalist' orientations. Particularism means giving preference to personal relationships and the members of one's own group over other relationships, while universalism is the name for the equal treatment of people without consideration of particular friendship relationships or group membership. Traditional societies tend to be built along particularistic lines, whereas states under the rule of law distinguish between a particularistic 'private' sphere, which is specifically protected, and a public and professional sphere, in which universalistic norms demand equal rights and duties for all citizens. Civil society organisations and political parties are hybrids that create a 'sluice' between the spheres in the formation of political will.

Particularist solidarity always entails the creation of external boundaries. These can be strengthened in case of conflict, which can then also have considerable consequences inside a group: when the external world is perceived as hostile or dangerous, it leads internally to increased pressure to conform, thereby influencing, for example, pedagogical methods and contents. The consequences that follow from a perceived threat to the group include the replacement of occasional loyalty by full obedience, the policing of group boundaries and a prohibition on personal relationships, friendships or marriage outside the group. The morality of these measures is considered self-evident and this is reinforced by means of a definition of the special 'essence' of the community that needs to

be defended. What is considered authoritarianism today, i.e. valuing command structures and obedience, was named and surveyed by the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, who explained it primarily in terms of family dynamics. This, however, is itself in need of explanation. From the perspective of conflict sociology, authoritarian structures are likely to be related to the perception of external threats. Patriarchy, i.e. the rule of the father over the family group, is particularly prevalent where men learn from an early age that they have to defend their families, their wives, their kin and their neighbourhood. And this remains the case as long as there is no law underpinned by the power of the state that can regulate conflicts. It is therefore threat scenarios, not religions, that are ultimately the cause of patriarchy. However, religions can give such arrangements their blessing and thus pass them down through the millennia. Identification with the hero, authoritarian education and violent conflicts then reinforce each other with perfect circularity: history is reduced to the history of war.

### Do particularistic orientations in hostile groups thus exert a reciprocal reinforcing effect?

The 'internal morality' (Max Weber) generated in this way makes the exclusion and denigration of other groups likely, even if they follow a similar orientation. Fear, hatred and anger towards the others are now looked upon with approval. Violence can quickly ensue, and pre-emptive strikes are frequently justified in the name of self-defence. Hardin describes this in relation to the Balkan wars of the 1990s, when the question of the distribution of territory following the break-up of Yugoslavia led to ethnic affiliations whose significance had faded over time, becoming ideologically significant once again. In such conflicts, universalism as such can also come to be seen as the enemy: communists opposed cosmopolitanism, which in their eyes lacked the 'class point of view'; right-wing anti-universalist thinkers of the 1920s saw in 'Western liberalism' the arch-enemy of national and personal identity. In our day, the manifestos of resurgent right-wing populists are again questioning the validity of human rights.

## Universalist orientations

### How then do universalist orientations come about in the first place?

Universalism is historically the result of the generalisation of ethical precepts. It represents an expansion of the space in which justice is demanded. A classic formulation of this is Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative: 'Act only according to that maxim<sup>30</sup> whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law.' When norms of equality transcend personal and kinship relations, they become the basis of impartial law and modern administration. However, many conditions have to be met for them to come about. It is often cooperation and alliances against third parties that have led to the formation of cross-community perspectives. The downplaying of group norms in favour of equal treatment for all is likely to be advocated especially by people who suffer from the pressure to conform in their group. Groups that suffer from discrimination therefore often demand equal treatment according to universalistic criteria, while, however, simultaneously reinforcing their own particularistic orientation as a protective factor. Historically and ethnologically speaking, in many cases it has taken mediation by impartial arbitrators and conciliators to escape the circle of hostile expectations.

<sup>30</sup> Maxim: a principle or rule for behaviour.



Universalism can also be boosted by educational processes that point beyond groups of origin; as can professions that are not inherited but rather must be acquired through achievements or qualifications. They help to create space for the universalisation of affiliations. However, where universalism has prevailed, it has only done so slowly and after overcoming many obstacles, as demonstrated, for example, by the processes that led to the enfranchisement of African-Americans in the USA and women in Germany and, eventually, also in Switzerland. Universalism is therefore anything but self-evident. It is true that its origins are not found in modernity. Evangelising world religions have always proclaimed that all people are equal before God and that the community of faith takes precedence over kinship ties. As the foundation of the state under the rule of law, however, universalism is one of the most significant inventions of modern history. What is disputed, however, is its area of application both within the state and beyond.

#### How do universalist orientations enhance community life?

Today, large areas of modern societies are regulated by transpersonal norms. In the judicial system, government bureaucracy, schools, healthcare and social welfare, every woman and every man has a basic entitlement to be treated according to objective criteria. That is why 'Justitia', the Roman goddess of justice, already wears a blindfold over her eyes. The establishment of administrative structures that function 'without regard to the person' (more precisely: the person's friendship, kinship or ethnic affiliations) is central to processes of modernisation and ultimately also to individual liberties. However, there can be difficulties establishing such structures in all those societies in which an individual's life is still determined by kinship loyalties, and where 'nepotism' is therefore by no means considered an aberration, but rather demanded as the fulfilment of due solidarity. Particularism thus impedes the development of modern administration and justice. But these are ultimately the foundation of public liberty.

#### Can universalism also become a danger?

The universalising, i.e. inductive, procedure that Kant proposed, namely to ask for the 'maxims' of action and then to test them for their generalisability, is initially suitable for guiding responsible practice. However, there is a new danger that can emerge whenever such general and therefore rather abstract principles are used as the basis for further deductions or derivations. This began with Robespierre's attempt to enforce 'virtue' through 'terror'. Even today, principles that may make sense in general can overwhelm existing ways of life and the particular rights they entail if they cannot be effectively adapted to local contexts. This can become a problem wherever universalistic and particularistic orientations clash in the rights they each entail – as can be seen, for example, in conflicts over school curricula and urban planning priorities.

In modern times, exclusive communities have even been founded in the name of universalist values. These have then at times acted all the more relentlessly against dissidents under their claim of general validity – to the point that pyres were lit, guillotines erected and mass graves dug. The twentieth century then saw the disastrous triumph of nineteenth-century ideologies that, in enforcing the derivations they each made from general principles, finally no longer allowed any contradiction and elevated 'partisanship' to the supreme imperative. Ever since the French Revolution, these historical experiences have made it clear that the universalisation of morality is always in danger of negating itself. If the conclusions drawn from more or less abstract principles go beyond a limited core morality while simultaneously legitimising unlimited power of enforcement, respect

for alternative ways of life and the rights inherent to each dwindles. We may conclude, therefore, that radicalisation can arise either from the clash of particular loyalties or from the perpetual temptation to impose a set of general 'principles' – which may be particularist or universalist – without regard for alternative or critical ways of life.

## Processes

### Emotions and narratives

#### What role does struggle play in stimulating radicalisation?

We all know the emotions from sporting competitions that can be associated with the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. We pay a lot of money to be swept up in excitement, 'fever', anxiety, courage, rage or victory in the stadium or in front of the television. It is estimated that information about sporting competitions accounts for one third of all broadcast news. As long as the playing field is marked off from the 'real world', as long as there is a referee on the pitch and as long as victories and defeats are only temporary, it is 'just a game', even if it sometimes takes a huge police presence to make sure it stays that way. We just need to look at a football stadium to see how strong emotions are carefully staged by both the organisers and the most extreme fans – emotions that can then be difficult to contain.

The force rooted in human nature that causes us not only to suffer emotions but also to long for them and seek them out also operates in disputes between political communities. But it cannot explain their radicalisation as a whole. Loyalty and solidarity with the communities to which we belong are aspects of the social responsibility and political participation that are the duty of every citizen and are therefore essential and worthy of recognition. This is precisely why people have to react when they see their communities threatened. At this point, many people increase their commitment while simultaneously downplaying the importance of other affiliations – in other words: they become radicalised. Their solidarity, their identification and their willingness to make sacrifices focus on the conflicts in which their community finds itself. However, it is not only in response to threats, but also as a result of overestimation of one's own powers (and especially when a threat is followed by a rapid increase in strength) that ruinous wars are instigated in collective megalomania.

#### In what ways are struggle and war legitimised and justified?

'Narratives' emerge, i.e. stories that frame each new struggle that arises with eternal meaning. Three mythical concepts from the philosophy of history determined our fate in the twentieth century: *the origin*, *the decisive struggle* and *the future* of a community. All powerful ideologies develop notions about the origin and goal of imagined communities and link these to the exigencies of current struggles.<sup>31</sup> *Some examples:* A heroic past is linked to the prospect that a people will dominate a given territory in the future, but this territory will first have to be (re)conquered. *Or:* The freedom from domination of a 'primitive society' will return after the revolution and a period of socialist transformation once productive forces are fully developed. *Or:* Only a caliphate and a life lived according to the rules of the earliest generations of Muslims can win the decisive

31 Cf. Mühlmann 1964.

battle against the liberal and decadent West and enforce the commandments of Allah for the benefit of all true believers. Common to all these narratives is the belief in the return of an original unity at a higher level. This return, they proclaim, will not happen by itself, but will have to be achieved in a struggle, which will involve much privation and, inevitably, violence. This will require the willingness of all members of the community to make sacrifices – and, to that end, other loyalties and opposing moral qualms must take a back seat.

## Radicalisation and totalitarian rule

### Where can such radicalisation lead?

The twentieth century was shaped by the radicalisation ideologies of fascism and National Socialism, on the one hand, and communism and Bolshevism, on the other. These still mark the two poles on the linear scale of extremism. With the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc, the historical-philosophical narrative of communism lost its persuasive power. This makes the drawing of parallels between ‘left-wing extremist’ and ‘right-wing extremist’ increasingly empty. Nevertheless, a study of the historical development of National Socialism and Bolshevism reveals processes and results that remain significant today: institutions designed to regulate international conflicts were destroyed, anti-universalist radicalisation made advances, authoritarian states under charismatic leaders expanded. Structures that Hannah Arendt and Carl J. Friedrich<sup>32</sup> previously identified in the rule of National Socialism and Bolshevism have emerged again with the ‘Islamic State’.<sup>33</sup> Given such ominous developments, it is important to keep the lessons of the 20th century in mind.

Radicalisation begins with small steps: the boundaries between opposing groups are demarcated more clearly, offers of dialogue are rejected, confrontational events are planned and compromise is ruled out. The sharpening of contrasts is a means of conflict escalation. Efforts to understand the other side are increasingly reduced to spying out or, where appropriate, even adopting the opponent’s strategies.<sup>34</sup> At some point, factual arguments are no longer discussed on their merits but are dismissed from the outset as biased – e.g. attributed to ‘bourgeois science’, dismissed as the inventions of a ‘corrupt media’ or even attributed to a ‘Jewish world conspiracy’. The use of the ‘right’ partisan language becomes obligatory: those who do not use the approved slogans are already considered suspect. Those who are undecided quickly get caught in traps by failing to use the appropriate language or to profess the expected views. Worldviews are sealed off: anyone who refuses to differentiate between good and evil in the prescribed manner is already considered to be siding with the enemy. Even the solidarity on one’s own side, which is willingly provided at first, and then becomes expected, is finally enforced with threats.

### Is this the path to the total state?

At some point, people begin to question the integrity of rivals within their own ranks. The notion of a struggle for survival, which is initially used to mobilise the hesitant and

motivate those who are fighting, eventually serves to legitimate the liquidation of those who have not submitted in time as ‘enemy agents’. In this way, the contours emerge of the coercive regime that will be imposed in the event of victory. Anyone who attempts to analyse patterns of political radicalisation based on events in the twentieth century will conclude that it was not so much the original ideals of the actors but the forms of political and military struggle that determined the outcome in the end. Totalitarian rule emerges as permanent civil war.

### Weren’t National Socialism and communism completely opposite phenomena?

In terms of their ideological foundations, they certainly were. And there will certainly be no attempt to consider them equivalent here. However, in seeking to realise their respective ideas, they established highly similar structures. And precisely that is instructive. In National Socialism, Hitler not only propagated a solidarity that was exclusive to the ethnic German ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ (national community) from the very beginning, but also clearly declared his anti-universalist goals, his eliminationist anti-Semitism and his belief in violence. The unimaginable, however, was not seriously considered possible by many who, early on, still believed that they had to stand by the community of their people in solidarity – until the shift of power was irreversible. And it is precisely this self-deception that should be a warning to us today: all those who were considered not to belong to the ethnic German Volksgemeinschaft were persecuted, killed or expelled. The Nazis confronted their opponents with violence, forced neutrals to conform, and murdered rivals in their own ranks – and all this was legitimised by the ‘noble’ goal of achieving the Volksgemeinschaft. The imposition of ideological unity throughout formerly ‘apolitical’ areas of life through ‘mass organisations’ in work, sport, leisure and youth work ultimately led to very similar structures in the Nazi state and the Soviet empire.

In the case of communism, the logic of gaining and maintaining power by violent means quickly subsumed the original goals. In the days of Marx and Engels, it was still possible to believe that ‘the free development of each will be the condition for the free development of all’ (Communist Manifesto of 1848). With Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin (and again with Mao and Pol Pot), the road to state terror then quickly became apparent: the Bolshevik coup of 1917 against the socialist-led coalition government (called the ‘October Revolution’), the replacement of the ‘people’ by the ‘proletariat’, the disempowerment of the ‘workers’ councils’ by a ‘vanguard’ in the form of the party, the disempowerment of party members through ‘democratic centralism’ and finally the ban on ‘factionalism’ – all exemplify the path from originally universalist ideas towards the totalitarian rule of a leader in the name of freedom and equality (postponed, however, to the future). Even ‘fraternity’ finally only applied to the cadres – to the extent that they had not yet been excommunicated and killed. With the help of what was called ‘collectivisation’, the surplus product of the economy was entrusted to a newly formed class, the ‘nomenklatura’. The torments that this regime inflicted on those that came under its rule, and which were in irreconcilable opposition to the ideals of Marx and Engels, were still being downplayed in the 1970s (including by Western intellectuals) as a ‘transitional period’ that would lead to ‘true’ communism. But because all opposition had been eliminated, the structures of unfreedom and inequality ossified and carried on burying their victims over many decades.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Arendt 1951; Friedrich 1957.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Müller 2016, 27-32.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Eckert/Willems 1996.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Koenen 2017.

### What does this mean for today?

Even in a parliamentary democracy, the inherent role of competition means that dualist sloganeering ('Freedom or Socialism!') is unfortunately all too common. However, the likelihood of having to enlist the support at some point even of previous opponents – a structural consequence of recurring elections – suggests a certain moderation. Those in positions of power can step down without fearing for their lives and are therefore more willing to do so. As long as the separation of powers is respected, as long as there are no parliamentary supermajorities with the ability to amend the constitution, and as long as fundamental rights are enshrined as unchangeable elements of the constitution, those who have lost will always continue to have another chance. When political views or personal claims to power are treated as absolute, on the other hand, it leads to the temptation to question the separation of powers, which is then seen as an obstruction: to make the judiciary subservient; to censor, buy out or expropriate the press; to imprison or kill anyone who voices effective criticism, until no one is left who can call the regime into question.

## The strategic role of violence

### What is the role of terrorist violence?

The answer to this question is found in specific historical processes. Politically motivated violence almost always arises within radicalised movements, but not every case of radicalisation leads to political violence. And not every politically motivated act of violence aims to arouse fear and terror. Today, we can certainly hope that the environmental movement will not discredit its universalist goals through the use of violence. However, politically motivated perpetrators of violence see themselves as the spearheads of political movements and are also recognised as such by sections of these movements. Through their acts of violence, they can directly destroy trust in public security, which can take a long time to restore. The actors know this and frequently believe that a new order can only emerge from violence.<sup>36</sup> Their acts can therefore not be reduced to the psychological problems of individuals. Emotional meaning, philosophical legitimisation and instrumental purpose can always interact in the overstepping of moral boundaries.

### Is violence also an advertising medium?

Not only the act of violence itself, but also its staging and display on the internet deliver a powerful message: violence suffered generates solidarity with the victims, and violence perpetrated heralds courage, strength and future power over life and death. Both attract attention – much more than, for example, deaths caused by traffic accidents. Violence is an efficient means of compelling public attention<sup>37</sup> and of encouraging copycats.<sup>38</sup> In view of the competitiveness of their market, journalists can hardly avoid reporting on these events and thereby evading their role as 'co-terrorists'.<sup>39</sup> It would also be unacceptable to the victims and their relatives if their suffering were not shared and publicly acknowledged. It is never just an individual fate – rather, it always symbolises the failure of the state to protect. Failures (such as those that came to light in pursuit of the NSU and

<sup>36</sup> Frequently drawing on Sorel 1912.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Waldmann 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Berbner 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Kemmesies 2006, 229-246.

the surveillance of Anis Amri) must be investigated so that trust in the state and the rule of law is not permanently damaged. The possibility of downgrading terrorist attacks to the level of traffic accidents by ignoring them and thus avoiding copycat effects therefore does not really exist. Physical violence will always remain shocking, and precisely for that reason will be used again and again to fuel escalation.

## Altruism, i.e. the selflessness of politically and religiously motivated violence

### How do perpetrators of political violence justify their acts?

Politically or religiously motivated violence is 'altruistic' in the eyes of the perpetrators because it does not primarily serve personal gain as much as the 'salvation' or 'victory' of an imagined community or a 'truth' for which one is prepared, if necessary, to die and in the name of which one is therefore also allowed to kill. The 'tipping point' has finally been reached. Altruism is therefore not, as occasionally assumed, the solution, but part of the problem from the outset. Initially, i.e. before it becomes routine, violence motivated by a political or religious belief is neither demonic nor banal, but is understood as a heroic service. To those who perform it, it is not a crime or a routine fulfilment of duty, but a test of their heroism. This heroic view was explicitly emphasised in Germany during the murder of the European Jews and 'Gypsies' as a means of overcoming the moral inhibitions of those who staffed the extermination camps. Thus, SS leader Himmler exclaimed in his Posen speech of 1943: 'Most of you must know what it means when 100 corpses are lying side by side, or 500 or 1,000. To have stuck it out and at the same time – apart from exceptions caused by human weaknesses – to have remained decent fellows, that is what has made us hard. This is a page of glory in our history which has never been written and is never to be written ...'<sup>40</sup> The notion of heroic action – as also became clear during the proceedings of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia – still pointed the way from 'patriot' to 'war criminal' in the 1990s and is still celebrated in the home countries of many convicted war criminals today. Criminal sanctions are reinterpreted as badges of honour by those who share their views.

## Events and attitudes

### Key events

#### What radicalises people in this way?

Those who feel safe find it easier to be liberal. However, the increased identification with imagined communities and their ideas does not necessarily arise from direct experience. It is related to hopes and fears for the future. These usually arise on the occasion of key events, even those that have not been experienced personally but rather via the media. This explains the initially paradoxical results of surveys in which people express concerns about the future generally but not about their own future; in which they reject immigration but not those immigrants they know personally. Dramatic events change how one views the world when they reveal that politics and the state are seemingly

<sup>40</sup> Quoted from *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Volume IV*, 563.

powerless to counter a threatening development, as the reaction to the 2015 mass flow of refugees to Europe showed.

### What does this mean for prevention?

The mere expectation of conflict can generate fear and hostility towards others, which may then turn out to be mutual. It therefore follows that prejudices are not the ultimate causes of radicalisation. Consequently, it also follows that it is not enough to assign the task of combating prejudices to teachers, educators and therapists. Rather, they must be recognised and dealt with as they arise in individuals *and* society. They are often attributed to family dynamics in early childhood. In individual cases, this can certainly increase the likelihood of fearfulness, aggression and ingroup/outgroup thinking.<sup>41</sup> The childhood experience of powerlessness in the face of violence perpetrated by adults can explain violent fantasies and acts of violence in adolescence.<sup>42</sup> However, neither of the latter can adequately explain how prejudices take particular forms and generate a willingness to take political action. These are formed in the social context and thus partly with reference to conflict situations and significant events. Violence prevention must therefore be carried out in an ongoing process of conflict management and transformation at the macro-level of societies. It can only be achieved to a limited extent through social education, as indispensable as intervention and support are for individuals and groups.

## Events and prediction

### Can events and developments that lead to fear and radicalisation be predicted at all?

In individual cases, certainly. The climate crisis, for example, will certainly spread fear and distress and lead to struggles over resources around the globe. But future developments are not always so clear-cut. Nevertheless, those who are interested in the escalation of conflicts have always known that individual events are effective causes – and can be planned and manufactured for that purpose. People change their worldview not so much through continuous discourse, but often spontaneously and unpredictably: in the face of new challenges and possibilities for action that not even they themselves had expected. The political significance of a social affiliation is often barely visible before a conflict breaks out. But when dramatic events occur – whatever their causes – affiliation can suddenly become extremely important. Feelings of outrage or the sense that new possibilities are opening up can lead to huge increases in the radicalisation of individuals and groups. Because this kind of development is event-dependent and therefore discontinuous, the predictive value of attitudinal data is fundamentally limited, however we collect it. The study 'Student und Politik' ('Student and Politics') undertaken in West Germany in 1961,<sup>43</sup> which predicted authoritarian anti-communism, was refuted five years later by the 'anti-authoritarian' student movement, which joined the civil rights movement in the USA and anti-imperialist movements around the world.

### Is the probability of events significant here?

Views of probabilities and risks certainly inform personal attitudes. However, it is difficult to verify their accuracy. Journalists are often tempted to derive trends from single events

'because otherwise no one would read it'. The fact that events seem to occur 'more and more often' as a result of this attitude is thus an artefact of competition for the scarce commodity of public attention. Probability calculations in the true sense, on the other hand, play only a minor role in the emergence of fear and anxiety. While it only takes one event to trigger fear, a feeling of security needs the long-term absence of such negative experiences. Single events can therefore, contrary to all statistics, already function as 'proof' that a given reality is the case ('So that's how it is!') rather than merely being data points that can conceivably point towards it. Politicians then find themselves under pressure: who can be the first to claim to be on top of the 'new situation'? The reality of appearances can therefore serve as a driving force of radicalisation, independent of statistical reality. An assassination (as in Sarajevo in 1914) can be interpreted in such a way that it becomes a world war that ultimately devours its authors.

## Complex conflict situations and events

### Do any complex conflict situations currently exist that have powerful effects and that we should keep an eye on?

There are critical constellations of forces that can lead to violence and to spirals of retaliation. They also need to be named. At the same time, however, we should be careful not to place entire population groups under suspicion or to pass judgement on them. A current example: immigration from regions where state power has been weak has led to a fundamental contradiction between a patriarchal (i.e. under the rule of the father) morality based on kinship and an egalitarian (i.e. based on the principle of equality) morality based on individualism. Some immigrants come from regions where the rule of law does not provide security. Many belonged to marginalised minorities, for whom the protection of the clan depended on the constant willingness of the men brought up to fight for it, and for whom a woman's 'honour' determined her exchange value on the marriage market. The ethical views of women and men raised in such places were primarily determined by kinship, which was decisive for their security and social success. Such ideas of honour were given a religious underpinning in ancient times, not only in the Islamic world, but also in Christian countries, e.g. at the edges of Europe, such as among the Greece Maniots, in Corsica or in Scotland. Such 'sacralisation' grants these notions of honour the hyperstability of articles of faith. This is why the rules of kinship loyalty and patriarchal rule can still appear compelling even where they contradict German law, which today is directly committed to the protection of the individual – even *vis-à-vis* their clan. The ('Western') individualisation that is celebrated today as 'emancipation' has only developed over a few centuries. It is a result of educational opportunities and the reflexivity inherent in them, because every man and woman is now their own author. And it is supported by trust in a state-guaranteed legal and social security that enables a certain independence from the tribe. Seen in this light, individualisation and emancipation are an almost unique phenomenon in world history. Preserving them in the future is likely to be of global interest.

However, it may also be that it is not so much the survival of the patriarchal order, but precisely the loss of the control that family and kinship once exercised that leads to instability and delinquency among migrants. If both phenomena (a patriarchal self-image and personal neglect) coincide, as is the case with some petty criminals, the result is an explosive mixture in which all that remains is an individualised form of traditional male

<sup>41</sup> Wahl 2000, 273.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Sutterlüty 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Habermas/von Friedeburg/Oehler/Weltz 1961.

aggressivity: a man who believes he has to struggle on as a lone fighter. In this situation, promises that offer to give this individualised willingness to fight a religious significance after all can prove particularly attractive. We must therefore conclude: where kinship groups formerly represented a central guarantee of social security and were maintained via patriarchal authority, the willingness of men to fight and the preventive separation of the sexes, the integration of the next generation into an environment that lives according to individualistic rules is often difficult and risky.<sup>44</sup>

### Does an orientation towards pre-modern norms and ideas of honour also benefit young people?

Group solidarity and the willingness to fight, which served to secure existence in stateless societies, are not only relics of past times, but also offer particular advantages today. They can be used to achieve dominance for one's own clique over competing groups and individuals in schools, youth centres and 'on the streets'.<sup>45</sup> Kinship solidarity also sustains the businesses of many small traders. Finally, mafia-style 'crime clans' base their criminal activities on the unbreakable solidarity of kinship and 'Godfatherhood', which gives them a profitable unique selling point.

### What does it mean for personal relationships when patriarchal and individualistic orientations clash?

Those used to such traditional values may misinterpret the behaviour of people who have grown up in an individualised milieu with far-reaching consequences – and vice versa. In Western youth culture, revealing clothing and permissive attitudes no longer signal that a woman has abandoned honour and respect in any way. Love does not mean submission; women and men exercise their self-determination not only in entering into relationships, but also in breaking them off. And while it is true that intimate partner violence also exists in the more individualised population groups, it becomes more likely when different conceptions of honour clash. Beyond the immediate suffering of the affected individual, it can also trigger a general fear of loss of self-determination or even of the liberties won in struggle over the last century. When it comes to increasing the likelihood of minorities integrating successfully, special attention must therefore be paid to such complex situations and the types of crime that they may give rise to. They should not only be punished under criminal law, but – for example, in the safe spaces provided by Crime Prevention Councils – should be examined for opportunities to promote prevention via policework, schooling and socio-educational means. This should be carried out in ways that avoid stigmatising the members of any ethnic or cultural milieu as potential perpetrators.

## A structural change in the public sphere?

### Conflict perception and its generalisation

#### How does community solidarity develop in a time of global migration?

In the course of conflicts of any kind, solidarity is enlisted. Disputes arise not only between families and neighbourhoods, but also between supra-local and imagined

communities: over land, over housing and the means of production, over jobs, over the profits of business, over whether a given language may be used at school or in official situations, over religious and cultural dominance, over rights of rule, over the autonomy or assimilation of entire population groups. Some conflicts are also stirred up specifically to generate solidarity *in one group* through hostility *towards another*. As such conflicts play out, the recognition of the conflict parties in their collective 'honour' plays an increasing role. Conflicts become generalised, clothing takes on symbolic meaning, flags are raised to make the separation of 'us' and 'them' immediately recognisable.

When the future is at stake, the more solidarity one can generate for one's movement, the better. To this end, we see an increasing use of identity-based narratives of origin, of the future and of current threats. In the name of religious, ethnic and political communities, support is solicited from all those who are assumed to have a similar affiliation. Ethnic, communal (defined by religious affiliation) and other, e.g. anti-capitalist, environmental or human-rights-based political movements criss-cross the globe, heralding the globalisation of community-based identities.

We can see solidarity being cultivated and demonstrated particularly in the various diasporas (created by migration or displacement). At the same time, we see suspicion and aggression being directed towards anyone assumed to be hostile because of their affiliations. As a result, images of friend and foe are increasingly based on sweeping generalisations. In terms of its origins, Palestinian hostility towards Israel, for example, can be clearly distinguished from European and especially German anti-Semitism, because it was a reaction to the experience of expulsion and the settlement of Palestinian territory. Nevertheless, these days, the two are increasingly merging into a common set of hostile stereotypes. Conversely, solidarity with Israel can quickly turn into hostility towards all Muslims. In broad terms, ideologies tend to generalise and perpetuate the dividing lines around which conflicts are formed. The expectations or fears of opposing sides focus on increasingly general categories, to which ever more people are assigned as 'friend or foe', until this distinction itself becomes the basis of all politics. Even the enemies of liberalisation and universalisation are creating global networks today, for all that they ostensibly insist on the ethnic or political uniqueness of their respective communities. They are united by the struggle against a transnational culture and against international decision-making bodies. Chauvinism, i.e. hostility towards other peoples, faiths and communities, has long since become a transnational programme, whose prophets and high priests act on a global scale. New forms of far-right politics (including the *Neue Rechte* in Germany and the *Alt-Right* in the USA) are part of this. To see this simply as a continuation of a National Socialism that refuses to pass away with its old followers would be to trivialise it. The situation is more dangerous: both National Socialism and fascism generally were only particular historical manifestations of the broad tendency of anti-universalist thinking in the name of a conservative revolution that is being revived today in the face of global conflicts and is being propagated around the world in the name of *ethnicity, nationality or faith*.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> For more on this, see Eckert 2012a.

<sup>45</sup> For more on this, see Eckert/Reiss/Wetzstein 2000, 101-158, 406 et seq.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Weiß 2017.

## Elective affinities

### Is identification with a community only ever about affiliations that are handed down?

No. These days, belonging is often an autonomous and proactive choice. People can also show solidarity with the fate of groups with which they initially have little connection. Such imaginary identifications also give life meaning. These days, it is remarkable how quickly the situation of victims who have ‘fallen among robbers’ transcends the circle of those directly affected and finds its advocates in the name of human rights. In historical terms, this can be seen as the expansion of the radius of the circle of solidarity. Just as the nation superseded neighbourhoods, tribes and other local authority groups in the modern period and was used by young people to emancipate themselves from the latter, today it is ideas of transnational classes, religious and value communities that are coming to the fore. Ultimately, elective solidarity can transcend humanity as a whole to even include the animal world. But it can equally be reduced to narrowly defined religious, national, class, ethnic, regional or kinship communities that may be used to create exclusive identities and to propagate these through global networks. Imagined communities of one scope or another exert a special fascination on young people precisely because they point beyond the horizon of their immediate familial or local origins. (For example, the orientation towards an ‘Ummah’, the community of all believers in Islam, is capable of emancipating young Muslims from a conformity that their clan expects – and it can do so precisely because it points to a religious legitimacy that cannot be questioned by the clan.)<sup>47</sup> Intensifying one’s identification with an ethnic or religious origin is thus not only to be thought of as a process of asserting a commitment to previously existing traditions, but also as detaching oneself from the power of immediate interaction in kinship and neighbourhood. This applies all the more when ethical principles are generalised in cosmopolitanism.

## Digital networks

### In a digital age, how do social networks affect the possibilities of identification?

Groups generate feelings in their members, but conversely, feelings also generate groups. Powerful individual sensations such as love and hate, which in the past would often have remained isolated due to the impossibility of being shared and which would thus have had no possibility for communal realisation, can today come together in virtual forums. At some point, this may even lead to face-to-face contact. Blogs bring together political views, emotions, hopes and resentments, which may become the basis for the formation of directly interactive groups. In this way, viewpoints that have always existed in isolation can come together and grow in strength. Mutual reinforcement and radicalisation can thus progress without a physical presence in the environment of those who become subject to them and without the opportunity for others within that space to exert any influence on them. Digital channels are therefore becoming increasingly important for the recruitment of followers of certain ideologies. Virtual groups, i.e. groups formed online, unite – and this can be an explosive mixture, not only for the groups themselves, but also for those they oppose. Notions of disgust, hatred and violence can also be the seed of ethnocentric group cultures. Information and disinformation are automatically

forwarded to users with similar profiles and their success is measured in clicks. Likes can be generated automatically and bought and sold online. ‘Haters’ and ‘trolls’ take up the fight, ‘brigading’ each other’s blogs, accounts, websites and groups, algorithmically generating crowds of followers and ultimately influencing election decisions. The online data stored by companies on personal preferences (and specifically gathered through participation in social networks) can be hacked, bought and used – and this can yield commercial and political benefits.

## Heterogeneity instead of homogeneity?

### Does this mean that the ‘transport infrastructure’ for opinion formation has fundamentally changed?

To assess the dramatic political consequences of the shift in the media landscape, a comparison may be useful. In the 1950s, following the widespread uptake of radio and television, it was feared that the one-way communication of the ‘mass media’ would level all cultural differences. This ‘mass communication’, as it was called at the time, also certainly contributed to the establishment of mass participation political parties that drew support from different walks of life. The media market of today functions differently: it is not so much commonalities but differences that are collected in the databases of internet companies and deployed to mobilise public support in a highly ‘targeted’ fashion in commercial and political advertising. Centrifugal tendencies in culture and the public sphere have thus prevailed. Because the information that passes through the networks is not always publicly accessible, but is rather transmitted to selected individuals according to algorithms, the possibility of quickly correcting false reports decreases. By dismissing opposing viewpoints as ‘fake news’ or the ‘inventions of a corrupt press’, external criticism can then be warded off. With the analysis and exploitation of individual preferences in the mass data generated by social networks and other online services; and with the emergence of completely new professions such as bloggers, influencers and data analysts with a background in psychology, new and unexpected opportunities have also opened up in the influencing market, including ideological influence. The consequences of this ‘structural transformation of the public sphere’ are not yet foreseeable.

In terms of radicalisation, the important thing is that in isolated circles, closed worlds are emerging today that lack societal checks on what is otherwise considered ‘morality and decency’. Among human beings, destructive emotions and a willingness to act destructively are always present. Unlike in the ‘old’ media, the internet largely lacks ‘gatekeepers’, i.e. ‘bouncers’ who take responsibility for what information is let in. While every published leaflet has to comply with the relevant press laws, the internet and its social networks remain largely free of regulation. This is then the starting point for communities of the like-minded to push the boundaries of what can be said, to break taboos that are necessary for civilised life, to free aggression from the shackles of ‘political correctness’ and to release it from respect for human rights – first on the web, but then also in public on the streets and squares and finally in all aspects of life.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Buschbom 2013, 18–21.

## Crises, cultural transformation and reaction

### Crises and loss of trust

#### Aren't we ultimately dealing with real conflicts?

Conflicts over imaginary differences are also real. This is the fatal lesson of racism, which has made skin colour or nose shape the mark of difference with terrible consequences. Nevertheless, not every conflict is due to a merely imaginary line we draw. What is taking place today is rather a virtual escalation (taking place online) of manifold conflicts that are, however, quite real in their origins. At the centre of this is currently the crisis-ridden development towards a supranational world society that spans many countries. Environmental conflicts, economic crises and migration flows create ineluctable pressure for legal frameworks that nation-states can no longer provide. At the same time, supranational agreements and organisations are proving fragile, as they are often unable to cope with the contradictions that can cause any body that relies on consensus decision-making to grind to a halt.<sup>48</sup> Even shifting decisions to the global level can trigger a longing for supposed 'good old times', when people 'still' knew what was at stake and who had to decide in each case. Global financial and economic crises have also shaken confidence in politics and politicians. The development of market economies, on which the hopes of people all round the world were pinned for decades, is now also showing its downside, and not only in terms of the environment. Capital movements cross all borders and follow a speculative logic that has detached itself from a market economy in which those who act must also be liable for the consequences of their actions, as textbooks once taught. Organised irresponsibility is no longer the hallmark of an uncontrollable centralised economy; today it characterises above all the unregulated financial sector that uses the 'securitisation' of loans to 'spread' its risks ad infinitum or to shift liability to the state. Oligarchs no longer base their wealth on the privatisation of national assets as in the Soviet Union after 1989, but on outmanoeuvring uncoordinated national tax authorities. Such global developments can also have consequences at the local level, where, however, they cannot be managed. Financial crises, for example, have led to capital flight and to monetary policies that have caused property prices in major cities in 'safe' – i.e. state-regulated – countries to soar. 'Gentrification' (i.e. the buying up and converting of properties by investors in formerly low-cost residential areas) then triggers defensiveness and hostility among established residents and leads to the establishment of local communities bound by common circumstance. Above all, in a world where financial transactions are becoming ever more opaque, people are increasingly scared.

Since the climate crisis can ultimately only be overcome through global agreements, it is also likely to trigger strife and discord in the future and make a retreat to sector-specific, regional and, above all, nation-state politics based on self-interest appear attractive. The re-nationalisation of global and European politics would then likely become a self-reinforcing process: the more individual states question multilateral regulations, the more compelling re-nationalisation becomes for the other states as well. Against this background, everything is to be welcomed that contributes to achieving global understanding on combating financial speculation and tax fraud, conflict resolution in the face of the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and multilateral measures, e.g.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Olson 1971.

to deal with the climate catastrophe. By contrast, attempts to prevent summit meetings by means of street violence and the occupation of buildings are unlikely to contribute to this goal and can discredit the very protests that they are intended to support, and for which, in most instances, a good case may be made.

### Conflicts over immigration

#### What is the significance of migration in this context?

Ordinarily, immigration and emigration are normal processes, but when large groups are involved in a short period of time, there are consequences. This is true not only for societies that take in immigrants, but also for the countries of origin, which lose a portion of their young, active and educated population. This was the case in the former East Germany after the Wall came down and is still a cause of doubt today as to whether reunification was really a blessing. The 'brain drain' that Eastern Europe has experienced, i.e. the emigration of more highly qualified people, also contributes towards scepticism among those left behind regarding the path of development their countries have chosen.<sup>49</sup>

Societies of destination for migrants come under stress when the number of immigrants increases rapidly in a short period of time and the duration of this increase is not foreseeable. In Germany, net immigration was about five million between 1988 and 1992 and a further million around 2015. At such peak levels, doubts can arise as to whether the degree of economic security and cultural stability that the population has enjoyed can be maintained in the future. People's sense of security always depends upon an environment that is somewhat familiar to them, whose opportunities and risks are predictable and which they can influence within certain limits. The reasons for opposing 'mass immigration' do not always lie, as is often assumed, in pre-existing xenophobia or racism on the part of the locals. Rather, at first one does not know what (and who) to expect. Fear and xenophobia can be triggered by a succession of spectacular events, either locally or carried by news coverage.<sup>50</sup> Mirroring this, anxious migrants emphasise the value of their imagined communities of origin, which they may fortify in their imaginations as fundamentally different from 'the West'. This phenomenon has been observed in the demands made of the faithful by many imams from the Middle East invited to preach by mosque organisations in Germany.

#### What role does the neighbourhood play in this?

The neighbourhood is certainly still the most important space for integration and disintegration. It is here that problems and conflicts arise that require particular attention and assistance. No group wants to become a minority in its traditional neighbourhood. In concrete terms, this is about the language used at school, the need for agreement between educators and parents on curricula and teaching methods and the behaviour of students towards each other as individuals and groups. It is important not to overlook this by assuming an optimistic, but perhaps overconfident universalism. Instead, it needs to be dealt with by providing assistance at the local level. The notion of unrestricted immigration – that an unlimited number of foreigners may settle permanently – gives many established residents cause for concern – especially when jobs, affordable housing

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Krastev 2019, 13.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Willems/Eckert/Würtz/Steinmetz 1993.

and social security seem to be at risk. When established populations then move away, it leads to progressive spatial demarcation – which in turn does not make the integration of new citizens any easier.

However, it is not only neighbourhood problems that cause concern. Long-term concerns, such as fears about demographic developments in the immigrants' countries of origin, are also commonly highlighted when immigrant numbers rise. It should therefore not be assumed that fear of migration can always be traced back to 'completely different problems' (upbringing, workplace issues, 'false consciousness', etc.). Even if it is rarely rooted in directly personal experiences, it nevertheless does concern people's overall trust in their local, regional and national communities. Migrants are not trusted until experiences of cooperation with them disprove the 'preventive mistrust' they are initially subject to – while, conversely, the migrants themselves learn to trust the host population.

**However, as Germany's Willkommenskultur ('welcoming culture') has shown since 2015, there are many who see things quite differently.**

The willingness to go against the grain and trust in the possibility of developing understanding with 'strangers from strange lands' also has special biographical preconditions, and depends not only on factors such as level of education and experience of living abroad, but also on previous experiences with neighbours, not to mention religious convictions. These are the factors that distinguish cultures of trust and of mistrust towards strangers today. Migrants encounter both the helpfulness of open-minded cosmopolitans and people with religious convictions and the hostility of those who feel that their local or national identities are threatened. This drives a culture war within society, which in turn makes it harder to organise the global forms of cooperation that will become necessary in the future.

## Changing values: emancipation, its rejection, and cultural polarisation

**Have cultural differences in our society not also increased independently of migration?**

Definitely. But, as discussed above, people's experiences and evaluations of precisely this individualisation differ enormously. In itself, this is nothing new, but has always existed, progressing in fits and starts, and was a significant topic among the urban upper classes of antiquity and the Renaissance. In the eighteenth century, students and tutors reacted against their poor living conditions by developing a belief in their personal talent (their 'genius') and escaped into a dreamed-up realm of the German or even the Greek spirit. In the early twentieth century, the sons and daughters of the rising educated bourgeoisie (Bildungsbürgertum) proclaimed their claim to a way of life 'on their own initiative, under their own responsibility, and with deep sincerity', according to the 'Meissner Proclamation' of 1913. These historical movements have always referred to the wider community represented by the idea of a people, a nation, a faith, a class or humanity.

For sixty years now, there has been a renewed push in favour of individual self-determination, which ultimately finds its reference point in humanity. The consequence of this change in values in parts of society is that the 'normality' of a traditional superiority, e.g. of the old over the young, of men over women, of whites over people of colour, heterosexuals over homosexuals, old residents over newcomers, has increasingly

been called into question. At the same time, standards of personal integrity have become stricter. Sexual liberalisation goes hand in hand with the condemnation of 'sexism'. What used to pass for a compliment can now be considered a 'microaggression'.

**Isn't that a welcome development overall?**

Certainly. But we have to recognise that this goes hand in hand with profound shocks to a 'normality' that once existed. Much of what was 'always' accepted as 'unchangeable' or 'natural' is, according to the 'modern' viewpoint, considered 'group-based misanthropy'. Clearly the criteria for justifying personal thought and action have shifted in sections of the public over the last sixty years. It has taken a long time for resistance to this change in values to take political form and for open conflict to break out. Perhaps we have lulled ourselves too much into a false sense of security since the successes (at least in legislative terms) of the US civil rights movement. In the 1970s, people in the USA still spoke of a 'silent majority' that rejected what the 'liberals' considered progress. Parts of this majority, namely the workers in traditional industries, have meanwhile come under increasing economic pressure as a result of the digital revolution and the outsourcing of production sites to 'low-wage countries'.<sup>51</sup> The once 'silent majority' has now become a 'vocal minority'. It wants to win back the political majority it once had, and there are opportunities for it to do so – not only in the USA.

**How did this transformation come about?**

The structural basis for this new push towards individualisation is the rapid expansion of the education system in the second half of the 20th century. The proportion of school-leavers entitled to attend institutions of higher learning each year has increased almost tenfold in the last sixty years. In all the empirical studies undertaken in recent decades, education appears to be one of the most important protective factors against right-wing extremism. This may certainly be in part due to the selection mechanisms built into the education system, which confront some of the students with experiences of failure.<sup>52</sup> The civilising effect of education is thus by no means automatic. Education also exposes people to reactionary worldviews, which can make sense at some point from the perspective of preserving vested interests. At present, however, hand-in-hand with a global media system, international contacts and foreign exchanges (not to mention increasing opportunities to experience cultural diversity as enrichment at the local level), the number of cosmopolitan 'citizens of the world' has increased dramatically. As a result, those who keep faith in 'self-evident' traditional values come under moral pressure, are considered politically incorrect and feel excluded from public opinion-making, even though they still believe they have a majority behind them. This creates an opportunity for intellectual counter-elites to radicalise themselves in support of a vanishing but time-honoured 'normality', to take up the fight against the new demands made upon them and to 'rally' 'resentment', 'anger' and 'rage'. Mainstream parties are thus caught in the dichotomy between old and new values. Parties that can clearly position themselves on one side or the other, on the other hand, are successful.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Gest 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Eckert 2012b, 160-167.



## Political movements and their transformation

### Populism as a strategy

#### Is this why populist strategies are successful?

'Populism' takes on a special meaning in this situation as a strategy of new *and* old elites. Helmut Dubiel<sup>53</sup> reconstructed the history of left-wing and right-wing protest movements and came to the conclusion that there are moments in social history in which 'collective experiences of felt offense, status anxiety and frustrated expectations of happiness are dislodged from established discourses and legitimisation models and take on a directionless potential which lies peculiarly opposite the spectrum of political traditions. [...] The struggle for the constitution of a new legitimacy becomes the secret rationale of a political conflict.'<sup>54</sup>

This statement from 1985 provides an insight into the developments of the next thirty years: following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the economy of the former East Germany was fully caught up in the structural transformation of the global economy, which had been causing increasing problems for West German, British and American industry, and which even affected the GDR, which was unable to expand exports rapidly enough to meet its need for foreign capital. For many residents of the former East Germany, the closure of so many enterprises was connected with a sense of loss of recognition of their life's work. At the same time, the interactive communities that had been of particular importance in enabling people to live a private existence away from the state and the party in the GDR were also weakened: families and friendship groups were reduced by migration, local communities disintegrated, businesses were closed, housing estates were demolished, campsites were sold off by the Treuhand. Finally, with the welfare state reforms of Gerhard Schröder's 'Agenda 2010', many members of the public who had lost their jobs after the events of 1989–90 were subjected to a further test of endurance. The sentiments that many feel today ('It wasn't *all* bad') are therefore likely to express something like a collective experience of offence in Dubiel's sense – as also seen in Germany in the post-war period. Similar processes have meanwhile taken place in Eastern and South-Eastern European countries, with young and active people migrating 'to the West'. The 'brain drain' has weakened liberal elites and benefited parties that promise security through traditionalist ideas.

#### And in West Germany?

In West Germany, too, the belief in an increase in general prosperity proclaimed after the fall of communism was shaken by neoliberal 'deregulation' during the financial crises.<sup>55</sup> Around 2015, civil wars in Asia, the Middle East and Africa again led to high levels of immigration. And when these crises appear to be out of control, people lose faith in governments (and more generally in states and supranational orders) – regardless of whether there were alternatives to their actions or inaction. This is when populism takes root.

<sup>53</sup> Dubiel 1986, 79–91.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Macroeconomists and economic historians Christof Trebesch, Manuel Funke and Moritz Schularick have shown that the recurring financial crises over the past 140 years have each triggered political shifts to the 'right' and criticise the lack of political willingness to implement a reorganisation of international finance. In: Trebesch/Funke/Schularick 2018.

#### What are typical populist arguments?

If one momentarily disregards the shock tactics used to capture public attention, the core of the argument is the assertion that the course of political decision-making has not corresponded to the interests and wishes of the people – however defined – but has only served to benefit 'the ruling elites'. Both 'the' people and 'the' elites (and, within the latter group, 'the' press) are seen more or less as fixed entities. As a consequence of this, central elements of the framework of the modern constitutional state are ultimately called into question: the call goes up for the general will of the people (Rousseau's 'volonté générale') to take precedence over the separation of powers (Montesquieu) and the various individual liberties. Since their electoral victories in Hungary and Poland, populist parties have used the appeal to 'the' will of the people to try to eliminate critical and opposition groups and to prevent them from exercising their rights. The de-legitimisation of those alleged to have belonged to the old 'regime' culminates in the accusation that they had been in the habit of passing off their – in fact interest-driven – decisions as having no alternative. This accusation may be more or less true on a case-by-case basis. Nor is it tied to a particular political direction. It was made by the 'New Left' fifty years ago as well as by the 'New Right' of today. In the struggle against the 'establishment', for example, it was Herbert Marcuse who half a century ago said that scientific and technological progress had created an opportunity to overcome 'late' capitalism and to 'leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom', but was being prevented by 'repressive tolerance' and 'consumer terror' in the interest of 'the valorisation of capital'.<sup>56</sup> For today's New Right, it is 'natural' hierarchies, the self-preservation of their community and their unique cultural traditions that are being sacrificed on the altar of a formal universalism as a result of migration and demographic change ('The Great Replacement'), and this is being passed off as unavoidable with reference to alleged humanitarian obligations.

#### Does this overlook the fundamental differences between left and right?

Ideas of what actually constitutes 'the people' have always been fundamentally opposed on the left and on the right, as well as internally disputed and contradictory in each case. In the anti-authoritarian phase of the New Left, those who were already 'emancipated' were to take the leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom; soon afterwards, the K-Gruppen (splinter groups that remained following the disintegration of Germany's radical student movement) envisaged 'the masses' as the revolutionary subject in the global class struggle. Today, in addition to a generalised 'anti-fascism', left movements are primarily concerned with the assertion of possibilities for political organisation in the name of 'justice' and 'equality' and thus with protest against the self-movement of a deregulated, globalised and speculative 'casino capitalism'. This may include confrontations in which international networks of militant groups become involved, as was the case in 2011 with 'Occupy' in New York, in 2013 and 2015 with 'Blockupy' in Frankfurt and in 2017 with the protests against the G20 summit in Hamburg.

For right-wing populism, on the other hand, the concept of the 'people' is tied to an ethnic or cultural homogeneity that needs to be saved or restored. In some militant right-wing groups, this is also used to justify violence directed at migrants. The desire for homogenisation is not only directed against immigrants, but in many countries also against long-established minorities and above all against the liberal individualism of

<sup>56</sup> Cf., e.g. Marcuse 1968.

the cosmopolitan Western ‘elites’, who, it is claimed, grant the right of self-determined ethnicity to foreign minorities, but not to their own people. The most important difference between left-wing and right-wing populism therefore remains the way each defines the democratic subject. Is it defined in terms of the ‘liberté, égalité and fraternité’ of the citizenry or in terms of an exclusive ethnic and cultural affiliation?

### Accusations of populism generally refer to political strategies.

As early as 1916, Vilfredo Pareto tried in his *Tratatto di Sociologia Generale* to uncover the strategic mechanics that operate independently of individual ideologies. For Pareto, there are three actors: a ruling elite, a non-ruling elite and the ruled people. When the ruling elite is no longer ‘vital’ (i.e. ready to fight) but has become ‘decadent’ (i.e. tired of fighting), a counter-elite tries to draw the ruled people to its side in the struggle for power and, with their help, to overthrow the rulers. The ruling elite then tries to prevent this by raising the hopes of the ruled for system transformation. When the counter-elite has won, sooner or later it too turns into a decadent and battle-weary ruling elite and tries to stay in power safely through collusion and favours – with the consequence that it too will sooner or later be challenged by new counter-elites. This ‘cycle of elites’ is described by Pareto in terms of vitality and decadence, which tends to raise eyebrows today. However, his model does a good job of explaining the strategy of capturing power by making unlimited promises to a people – and likewise the strategy used by the threatened elites to hold on to power by making similar promises and, if necessary, by forming coalitions with some of those attacking them. Both strategies, that of capturing rule and that of defending it by means of unrealistic promises, are today called populist.

### What is the fundamental significance of this?

Populism often points to unresolved or emerging systemic problems that contribute towards the loss of confidence in governments and, moreover, to the de-legitimation of the constitutional order. (For example, joining the euro made it impossible for the Mediterranean states to devalue their own currencies while simultaneously making it easier for them to take on debt. The northern exporting nations, on the other hand, have benefited from the accession of the southern countries through the overall lower exchange rate value of the euro. If the German mark still existed, its exchange rate value would be 30 per cent higher than its conversion rate is today.<sup>57</sup> One can imagine what this has meant for Germany’s foreign trade successes, but equally what the euro has meant for countries in southern Europe.) But the fundamental critique that underlies populism is about more than that, namely about the space of social possibilities itself.

### How can we recognise what is possible?

Whether something is ‘possible’ or ‘impossible’ and whether something is prevented or forced by a deliberate or ‘systemic’ conspiracy is partly a question of fact and requires concrete analysis: where is there room for manoeuvre and where, on the other hand, must existing or foreseeable limits to possibilities be respected? It is therefore necessary to address the assumptions made by populists by confronting them with the facts regarding the possibility that they be realised and with their consequences: populists often try to prevent this by means of a blanket denial of facts. In the dispute over the greenhouse effect, this strategy is once again taking on grotesque forms. Fact-checking

with regard to the individual measures demanded or opposed by the various groups should therefore be the top priority. Existing problems must be recognised as such and dealt with quickly so that they do not become entrenched in conspiracy theories. What is socially possible, what the consequences of its realisation would be and whether it would then still be desirable can only be determined in a debate on factual issues. Such questions are therefore rarely included in opinion polls or even referendums (such as the one on Brexit). Here, scientists and academics have an important role in the democratic process. Furthermore, criticism of democracy can be countered by more effective control of the financial markets, by transparency in party financing, by fighting corruption, by granting tax exemptions for civic engagement and by promoting independent research on fundamental issues of dispute.

### How dangerous is this populism?

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt,<sup>58</sup> professors at Harvard University, came to a startling conclusion after comparing many hundreds of historical case studies: populist movements that attack parliamentary democracy from the left or the right are themselves too unstable to seize power on their own because of their narrow range of political issues and their orientation towards ephemeral trends in public opinion. Only when formerly moderate parties take up their issues and eventually form alliances with them does the chance of a new majority arise, which can then be used to wheel the state in the direction of authoritarianism. If we formulate this thesis in the terms developed by Pareto a hundred years ago, the counter-elite does not ultimately establish a new regime ‘in the name of the people’ on its own, but only when its temporary apparent success leads to an alliance with a section of the old elites. And it is this that has led to the end of democracies based on the rule of law.

## Extremism as a result of radicalisation

### What do we actually mean by ‘extreme right’ and ‘right-wing extremism’?

Populist demands and promises that are unrealisable and arm themselves against criticism with claims based on conspiracy theories may be wrong and highly dangerous, but they are not necessarily extremist in themselves. However, they can ultimately contribute towards the erosion of an order in which political decisions are bound to and limited by constitutional rules. The term extremism is used in two different ways. On the one hand, it refers to the ‘extremes’ of ‘right’ and ‘left’ as the end points of an imaginary linear political continuum, one above all focused on the distinction between the fundamental preferences for ‘preservation’ as opposed to ‘change’ and ‘hierarchy’ compared to ‘equality’ that can occur in any system of decision making. These days, voters are still generally able to position themselves clearly on this continuum, despite all the contradictions and transformations of our era. However, it is not sufficient to consider the radicalisation processes underway today as extreme values located on one (and only one) axis of attitudes.

At the same time, ‘extremism’ has become established in modern Germany as a term for ‘aspirations’ that are incompatible with the democratic state under the rule of law as formulated in the constitution. The first model is expressed using the terms ‘extreme right’

<sup>57</sup> According to Theo Weigel, who as German finance minister was involved in the launch of the euro.

<sup>58</sup> Levitsky/Ziblatt 2018.

and 'extreme left'; the second, constitutional definition with the adjectives 'right-wing extremist' and 'left-wing extremist'. However, the two meanings can become confused. At the left or right end of the traditionally linear continuum of political orientations, anti-constitutional attitudes are indeed most prevalent. But they also occur among those who classify themselves in the 'centre' or vote accordingly, as opinion polls have repeatedly found, not only recently, but since the beginning of electoral research in the 1950s. With Islamism and Jihadism, a new dimension has been added that can hardly be fitted into the traditional right-left scheme.

#### What follows from these conceptual difficulties?

The present text is based not on the linear but on the constitutional definition of extremism: when, for example, the 'inviolable dignity' of the human being is restricted to members of one's ingroup, when incitement to hatred takes place, when the press is obstructed or attacked, when democratic procedures and the constitutional frameworks that govern them are rejected and political goals are pursued by violence or the threat of violence, then this is extremism. Seen in this light, extremism of whatever flavour, with its disdain for the fundamental principles of liberal democracy, marks an advanced stage of political radicalisation, where it is no longer just about replacing those who happen to be in power, but about weakening or overthrowing the parliamentary and constitutional 'system' in the name of a religion, a people or a future imagined as free of domination. However, this does not only happen at the right and left ends of a continuum, but can also go hand-in-hand with radical libertarian convictions that want to deprive the state of the financial means with which it pursues social policy to secure human dignity.

## Violent groups take on a life of their own

#### Where does the use of violence occur?

Radical groups that are willing to use violence become established within political movements: left-wing 'autonomists' with their black blocs, who attack central banks, political summits and the police that protect them; right-wing 'brotherhoods', who feel a calling to fight to create 'nationally liberated zones' (no-go areas for foreigners) and against immigrants and their political advocates; Salafist agencies appealing for 'jihadists' to go and fight abroad; nationalist 'Grey Wolves' who dream of the unity of all Turkic peoples; Kurdish freedom fighters and many other small political sects, many with long traditions behind them. This does not mean that all these movements can be put on the same level in terms of the form they take, their targets, the numbers of groups and individuals involved and the levels of violence they tend to use. Right-wing extremist violence is mainly directed against those classified as people of colour, Jews, 'foreigners', homeless people and other outsiders of society, who are beaten to death, set on fire and shot. More recently, such groups have also begun to target politicians and representatives of a state that takes in and protects refugees. Left-wing extremist violence in the seventies, eighties and nineties was mainly directed against representatives of the state, 'capitalism' and members of the American armed forces. Since the self-dissolution of the RAF in 1998, however, hardly any homicides have been reported. These days, violent left-wing extremist German groups fight together with their allies who have travelled from abroad against a police force that has to separate 'right-wing' and 'left-wing' marches or protect conference venues and city districts. In terms of fatalities, right-wing extremist violence

has been far out in the lead for thirty years, followed by Islamist terrorists, who stage demonstrative massacres in the 'West'.

#### Is this willingness to use violence a result of group dynamics?

Violent groups everywhere prove their affiliation to their respective imagined communities with their personal commitment to the radical action: confrontations with counter-demonstrators and the police, street and house fights at G20 summits and attacks on refugee shelters are not only intended to attract public attention and are not only directed against 'enemies', but at the same time function as rituals of a transformation that turn lonely and isolated individuals into heroes of a militant alliance. Within their tight-knit groups, the 'new dawn' they dream of, a future based on solidarity and community, already appears to have arrived. There is no contradiction between the love and mutual assistance shown within the group and hatred and the violence it shows towards its enemies. Such bands of comrades bestow rewards on their 'heroic' members in the form of affirmation, respect and veneration; they make a promise of a glorious future in this world – or even the next. By means of songs, stories and deliberately staged physical 'contact with the enemy', the transition from isolation into the great *communitas*<sup>59</sup> or the path from an 'alienated' past into an 'authentic' future is celebrated.

Yet the structure of these groups has changed in the last twenty years with the new opportunities provided by the internet. While, in the twentieth century, such groups were mostly hierarchically organised 'brigades', parties and 'factions', today they are increasingly likely to be decentralised 'networks' – comparable to business franchises – organised virtually around a political idea. Among racist organisations, people have long spoken of 'leaderless resistance' as a means to propagate this flexible form of violent struggle. For a long time, police and security agencies still expected hierarchical structures, such as those found in the RAF. In this way, by adopting the strategy used by 'Combat 18', the militant wing of the British racist and neo-Nazi movement 'Blood and Honour', the Zwickau-based 'NSU' (which had contact to Combat 18 via the 'Thüringer Heimatschutz' and the neo-Nazi scene in Chemnitz) was able to stay off the radar of German authorities, whose efforts were guided by the official EU definition of terrorism.<sup>60</sup> Today, the internet provides many open and covert opportunities for communication, organisation and training without any need for hierarchical structures. The use of weapons no longer has to be practised on abandoned military bases in Czech forests, but can also be learned in first-person shooter games. This has also changed the significance of the phenomenon of terrorist 'lone wolves': such individuals usually act alone, but may also be part of local, regional and global communities of like-minded people and build their strategies of violent action on this basis. They may also take inspiration from the strategies of their enemies. Oslo, Boston, Paris, Brussels, Nice, Charlottesville, Berlin, Christchurch, El Paso and Halle stand in virtual proximity.<sup>61</sup>

#### Who will look out for the rule of law?

First of all, this is the task of those with official 'responsibility', i.e. security agencies, police and judiciary. Civic victim support organisations, however, can raise public

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Turner 1996.

<sup>60</sup> The concept of 'leaderless resistance' was developed by Ku Klux Klan activist Louis Beams in the USA in the early 1980s. Small cells operating independently of each other are supposed to trigger race war with a 'propaganda by the deed', according to British nail bomber David Copeland, whose attacks were in turn copied by the NSU trio in Cologne (cf. Eckert 2015, 31-52).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Brennan 2019.

awareness and mobilise private and state assistance. Civic initiatives that have been opposing national socialist marches for more than a quarter of a century show that resistance to such anti-constitutional intentions must not be left to 'official' politics and state agencies alone. Rather, as has been shown several times, these must themselves be subject to vigilance by the press and civil society, because extremist networks can also spread within them. Compared to the violent militant groups, these civic initiatives have an initial strategic disadvantage: they are typically only loosely organised and usually have no interest in adopting the organisational forms of their opponents, because their members want to maintain the diversity of their affiliations and loyalties even under the current circumstances. At the same time, they are repeatedly exposed to attempts by violent groups to infiltrate their demonstrations and start violent confrontations that will draw attention to themselves and provoke their opponents. They try to 'subvert' state regulations, e.g. by deliberately breaching a ban on face coverings at demos to force the police to take action and thus, following the self-dispersal of the registered demo, to spread riots throughout entire neighbourhoods, as occurred most recently in Hamburg in 2017 ('Welcome to Hell').<sup>62</sup>

## Stages of escalation

### Do political movements change over time?

The conditions of emergence and initial motivations in political movements do not necessarily determine the characteristics that later prevail in them. Rather, the profiles of individual groups change continuously in competition with each other and in the struggle with opposing groups. Movements in particular are subject to continuous and ongoing change in response to unfolding events.<sup>63</sup> This makes it difficult to predict their development. Consequently, it is hard to foresee how movements that are currently radicalising, especially the New Right and global Islamism, may develop in the future. Personal experiences are often processed differently by different actors: among the German New Left of the seventies, some embarked on the 'march through the institutions', learning political pragmatism and a willingness to compromise. 'Revolutionaries' separated themselves from these 'revisionists' and, in the name of ideological purity, or what they called 'objective necessity', took action against 'sell-outs' and those who 'deviated from the party line'. Still others joined terrorist groups. Even today, 'apostates' are fought as traitors.

### Are there regularities in these processes?

There are great differences among movements. Attempts have been made to trace the stages of escalation, and although these must by no means be understood as 'laws of development', they should be taken into account when politicians and state agencies attempt to avoid further escalation.<sup>64</sup>

In the *first stage*, fundamental conflicts generate a willingness to protest within society. In Germany, the disputes over nuclear power plants, over the stationing of missiles in the 1980s and over Stuttgart 21 or the Hambach Forest in the last ten years can be included

under this stage. Violent confrontations may occur – intentionally or unintentionally – within the context of demonstrations. At this stage, the reaction of the security forces is of particular importance. They can contribute to limiting the escalation if they succeed in preventing *and* avoiding violence, even when the political leaders of the movements or representatives of the state are unwilling to compromise or wish to 'set an example'.

In the *second stage* of escalation, political movements experience a competition between 'movement entrepreneurs', each seeking to outdo the others in terms of their determination to fight. In this phase, the militant groups willing to use violence as described above are formed. Violence then no longer occurs only in 'the heat of the moment', but is deployed strategically or tolerated by certain factions. Moral inhibitions are lowered by degrading opponents as 'pigs' or 'scum'.

In the *third phase*, this escalating competition can lead individual groups down the path to the terrorist underground. With the emergence of the RAF within the anti-imperialist movement around 1970, the NSU in the xenophobic milieu of the 1990s and *Jihadism* in post-colonial Islamism of the current era, we can trace the escalation towards terrorism with a time lag in each case. In the future, too, the radicalisation of political movements may lead to the formation of violent groups, and terrorist cells may at some point take on a life of their own, because they consider weapons to be more effective than mere words.

## Mutual influence between opposing groups

### How do violent right-wing, left-wing and now also Islamist extremists affect each other?

Mutually hostile groups tend to validate each other in their struggle. By means of spectacular and, in particular, violent confrontations, both sides can gain publicity, present themselves as victims of their opponents' attacks and thus justify their own methods of struggle. Vigilantism, i.e. 'taking the law into one's own hands', is a matter of principle not only for the radical right in their struggle against immigration and its advocates, but also for the radical left in their fight against 'the fascists': violence is justified with the argument that the state is not fulfilling its tasks. Both try, more or less successfully, to dramatise each confrontation as an example of the large-scale conflicts they consider themselves to be caught up in. Micro-parties that consider themselves to be in the tradition of the Bolshevik and anarchist fighters of a hundred years ago infiltrate non-violent demonstrations, seeking to escalate existing conflicts as a means of bringing about the 'coming insurrection'. For Islamists, the hostility of violent right-wing groups reinforces their view that Islam and Western culture are incompatible; and the more violence that emanates from immigrants and Islamist terrorists, the more likely it is that the right-wingers will arrive at the same conclusion. Peace is illusory for both sides as long as it is not secured by the dominance of their own group. By pointing to the violence of the other side and their own role as victims, all sides demand solidarity from the communities they can reach, while also attacking the state under the rule of law, whose monopoly on the use of force they neither recognise nor attribute to the other side. Interactions of this kind can escalate the hostility of entire movements if they are not thwarted by non-violent majorities in the movements themselves and, if necessary, by the security forces of the state.

<sup>62</sup> Institute for Protest and Movement Research, Centre for Technology and Society, Hamburg Institute for Social Research 2018.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Blumer 1969.

<sup>64</sup> Eckert/Willems 2002, 1457-1480.

A research report entitled ‘Loving Hate: anti-Muslim extremism, Islamism and the Spiral of Polarization’<sup>65</sup> describes the matching patterns in the narratives of Islamophobia and radical Islamism: the ‘demonisation of the foreign group’, the claim of ‘victimisation of the ingroup’ and the ‘conspiracy’ as an explanation of why people who do not share the same views are ‘deluded’.<sup>66</sup> If they are to attract broader support, radicalised groups need issues that allow them to ‘get a foot in the door’. They find these in alleged evidence of ‘Islamisation’ and ‘Islamophobia’ – or provide each other with the evidence.<sup>67</sup> Both sides concur in praising ‘masculinity, militancy and warrior culture’.<sup>68</sup> ‘Both spectrums aestheticise struggle, war, soldiering and heroism to underpin a sense of identity.’ And they need each other as a ‘negative projection surface for their exclusive identity offerings’.<sup>69</sup> Dramatic events serve both as a means of ‘ratcheting up’ escalation. ‘They learn from each other, use trolling to undermine political discussions by means of emotional provocation.’<sup>70</sup> Both sides drive the polarisation of society and the ‘erasure of the grey zone’<sup>71</sup> while trying to expand and integrate their own milieu. All these theses are supported in the study with quotes and screenshots. As the authors conclude: ‘The mutually reinforcing confrontation between Islamist and anti-Muslim resentments shakes the foundations of the open society’.<sup>72</sup> While the threat of Soviet communism is largely history, the liberal-democratic state under the rule of law is increasingly caught in the crossfire between right-wing extremist and Islamist hostility, each of which drives the other on.

## Identity politics: masculinity and the banalisation of evil

An earlier section of this chapter discussed Amartya Sen’s thesis that reducing the multiplicity of our identities to a singular identity ultimately leads to violence and inhumanity. Complementing this thesis, it was pointed out that it is mostly the intensification of social conflicts that makes such a narrowing of identities appear attractive. At the same time, ideologies built around an irreconcilable opposition between a ‘realm of good’ and a ‘realm of evil’ are constantly circulating and contribute towards the recognition, spread, normalisation and escalation of violence as a political tool. This is already evident in the hatred that suffuses the internet’s verbal street battles. Placing legal limits on this and ensuring the inviolability of human dignity (without criminalising reasonable opinions) remains the difficult task of legislators and the police.

65 Fielitz/Ebner/Guhl/Quent 2018.

66 *Ibid.*, 20 et seq.

67 *Ibid.*, 22.

68 *Ibid.*, 26.

69 *Ibid.*, 27 et seq.

70 *Ibid.*, 32.

71 *Ibid.*, 52.

72 *Ibid.*, 58.

## Anger and hate – aggressive emotions and their rehabilitation

### Are anger and hate on the internet and at demonstrations a consequence or a means of radicalisation?

The public expression of emotions is by no means new if one looks at mass movements through the centuries. What could be new is that their propagation in many specialised corners of the internet, similar to pornography, increasingly gives rise to the desire for direct participation – and perhaps also the chance to get on television. But another aspect could be more important: political messages appear more authentic and credible through the depiction of the emotions associated with them. Peter Sloterdijk<sup>73</sup> is convinced that ‘rage (together with its thymotic siblings: pride, the need for recognition and resentment) is a basic force in the ecosystem of affects, whether interpersonal, political or cultural’.<sup>74</sup> These ‘negative emotions’ were ‘managed’ in the past by religious institutions and political movements. In today’s globalised situation, however, ‘no politics of balancing suffering on the large scale is possible that is built on holding past injustices against someone’.<sup>75</sup> He therefore pleads for a ‘culture of rationality’ that abandons this attempt at balancing and returns to the old liberal values of the rights to life, liberty and property.<sup>76</sup> Yet whether replacing the legal right to social assistance with voluntary donations<sup>77</sup> from the rich would dampen this rage is doubtful.

In contrast to Sloterdijk, his former employee Marc Jongen wants to rally and organise the ‘rage’ and its ‘siblings’ again, claiming that Germany suffers from a ‘thymotic undersupply’ and thus the ‘emasculatation of our people’ and can no longer defend itself against thymotically stronger cultures that are still capable of hate. There therefore needs to be ‘a change in the tone of this anger’, this is ‘necessary for survival [...]’. It should not be blind, this anger, but it must first resume its rightful place ...! Here, Marc Jongen<sup>78</sup> agrees with Götz Kubitschek, the editor of the New Right magazine ‘Sezession’: not ‘uncontrolled aggression’, but the ‘weakening of the readiness to defend oneself’ already signalled an ‘emergency’ for the New Right in 2009.<sup>79</sup> Accordingly, Kubitschek called for the rejection of tolerance in its current form.<sup>80</sup> As the neo-Nazi rock band ‘Störkraft’ proclaimed in the early nineties: ‘rage, pride in every man, blood and honour for the fatherland!’ Jongen and Kubitschek are building the bridge today to the heroic visions of (by no means ‘conservative’) ethnic-nationalist vitalism of the first half of the twentieth century. At the same time, Kubitschek recommends that his followers in the right-wing *Alternativ für Deutschland* (AfD) party ‘provocatively push forward into the boundary areas of what it is only just permitted to say and do’. This should then be followed by ‘efforts to present oneself as harmless’: i.e. ‘the attempt to ward off the accusations of one’s opponents by displaying one’s own harmlessness and emphasising that nothing that one is demanding falls short of civil society standards’.<sup>81</sup>

73 Sloterdijk 2010.

74 *Ibid.*, 227.

75 *Ibid.*, 228.

76 *Ibid.*, 228 et seq.

77 Sloterdijk on 13 June 2009, FAZ.

78 Jongen 2016.

79 Kubitschek 2009a.

80 *Ibid.* 2009b.

81 *Ibid.* 2017, 26 et seq.

### What does this mean for politics?

As inevitable as it is that ‘thymos’, i.e. anger, pride and rage, will become involved in conflicts, arise within them as action-determining affects, drive them on, or even seek them out, it is unsuitable as the foundation for a political programme. Its only effect is to pour further fuel on the fire. By contrast, pride, the third element in Plato’s doctrine of thymos, to which Sloeterdijk and Jongen refer, could in fact – contrary to the demands of the New Right – mean precisely that one does not repress or even deny outright the historical aberrations of one’s nation, though one nevertheless loves it. One can, and indeed should – in the knowledge that one could have become a perpetrator oneself – proudly accept them as imposing an obligation to work towards a humane future. Furthermore, our ‘thymic supply’ is never endangered, not even in peacetime, but can find a home in team sports, in working for the police or the fire brigade, as a rescue diver in flooded caves, in extreme climbing in the Alps and on adventure holidays. ‘Real men’ do not need wars for this, as was thought a hundred years ago. The thymos whose recognition and satisfaction the New Right misses today led even cultivated thinkers like Ernst Jünger into the vicinity of violent militant extremist groups back in the 1920s. In any case, we should be careful not to underestimate the emotional incentives for political and martial violence – or to trivialise the conflicts in which they are used.<sup>82</sup> The denigration of tolerance, however, is not new and not only ‘right-wing’. Radical leftists were still declaring tolerance to be a bourgeois concept, and therefore irrelevant, in 1968. It may well be that the new nationalisms that are spreading all over the world will indeed become political rallying points for such negative impulses. But in light of the victims of the last century, to join Jongen in gambling on this is more than obscene.

### Violent masculinity

#### Does the ‘singularisation’ of identity that Sen warns against come into play here?

Currently, the debate about ‘identity’ is taking on the form of a new culture war. This concerns not only the contemporary significance of militant impulses such as ‘anger’, ‘hate’ and ‘rage’, but more fundamentally what ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ are ‘in themselves’. Here, left-wing and liberal viewpoints clash with right-wing and Islamist ideas. Feminism was initially successful in challenging outdated concepts of masculinity and femininity. Such ‘gender roles’ are defined in social discourses and often determine professional opportunities, power and dominance. This gave rise to ‘gender mainstreaming’ as an attempt to enforce ‘gender-sensitive’ practices in all areas of society – in principle this applies not only to women but also to men. ‘In gender studies [...] gender is understood as a mechanism through which social positions, work, power, resources and recognition are allocated differentially and hierarchically.’<sup>83</sup> Psychophysiological differences, i.e. those which are in part conditioned by differences in the body, which may be expressed in terms of different preferences between women and men, are not fundamentally excluded, but tend to be ignored – as Barbara Duden pointed out years ago.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> For more details, see Weiß 2017 *op. cit.*

<sup>83</sup> Definition of the ‘Centre for Gender Studies and Feminist Futurology in Marburg’.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Duden 1993.

### And how does the other side argue?

As the feminist movement has succeeded, for instance, by securing the introduction of quota rules, those rejecting feminism and openly opposing it have also grown more vociferous. Opponents are not only concerned that every instance of preference being given to someone because of their gender also entails another person being disadvantaged on the same grounds. They consider that what they call ‘gender insanity’ is establishing a new dogma that denies the different physical and psychological dispositions of men and women that have come about as the result of evolution. The new-born human being, they claim, is seen as a *tabula rasa* upon which anything may be inscribed.<sup>85</sup>

#### Who is right here?

One should not let oneself be drawn in to the ‘genes or discourses’ discussion. The genetic division and recombination of hereditary information is undoubtedly both a result and a means of the evolution of life. The adaptability of many living beings depends on the variation of the genome in the course of generations, which is guaranteed above all by sexual dimorphism. At the same time, even genetically (not to mention culturally!), this dichotomy is not without gaps, but allows alternatives, e.g. transformations at birth and in the course of life, as well as hermaphroditism. Genetics thus supports not only binary but also diverse and ambiguous bodily identities. In any case, the only thing that should ultimately matter is the self-determination of those affected, regardless of the various attempts to provide a complete theoretical understanding.

The New Right, however, defends the role model of the man as a heroic fighter and potential ruler – a model that indeed runs through millennia of history. They are thus not merely concerned with recognising differences in affective psychology *between* (and *within*) the sexes, which are not only possible but probable given the role of hormones, but demand that ‘fighting’ be culturally enshrined as a masculine and ‘caring’ as a feminine trait, each with its own evolutionary role. This dualism is said to be already evident in the fact that ‘hard’ men are more attractive to women than ‘soft’ ones – and vice versa. Even if the ‘Neanderthal’ type is erotically successful: evolution does not issue any political orders and does not legitimise any conclusions that prejudice the self-determination of individuals with regard to partners, sporting activities and professions. Rather, one should remove barriers and calmly wait and see how and where people then position themselves. It may well be that some men or women would welcome a return to traditional gender roles – not least because they believe that would involve less discourse. And likewise, some of those who journeyed to Raqqa to join IS may have been partly influenced by the desire to be considered a ‘real’ man or a ‘real’ woman. It is not for us to decide such things, but we can cope with them as long as girls are treated on an equal footing in the workforce and the public sphere, and as long as boys are not again incited (including by their mothers) to ‘fight, become men!’

#### In a liberal order, would everyone be free to follow their own inclinations?

The struggle for recognition would certainly not be a zero-sum game. What we feel and how we see ourselves could be privatised in the same way that religious confession already is, so that the like-minded can join together, opposites can attract and everyone can respect each other. However, sexuality, or ‘desire’ (Butler), which is part of personal identity, triggers ambivalent feelings of pleasure, displeasure and disgust. Many people believe both that they

<sup>85</sup> Cf. plant physiologist Ulrich Kutschera (2016).

feel what is good and that what they feel is good – and refuse to acknowledge anything that does not correspond to this. Trusting one's own feelings without at the same time elevating them to a general principle is an attitude that requires significant cognitive competence. However, if a person's own feelings are accompanied by the idea that only by being made to apply to the whole of society can they secure the continuity of the family or the morale of their community, then tolerance and respect become improbable. Of course, it is quite possible that this does not benefit the family or the people.

## Violent masculinity and 'unambiguous' identity?

### Is there a connection between gender/sex and rage?

In every football riot, among biker gangs and hooligans, right-wing and left-wing street and house fighters, and for the last twenty years in first-person shooter games – a largely male domain – the love of, or addiction to fighting is likely to be 'a factor'. Sublime feelings can be aroused not only by peace, but also in competition, violence and war – mostly in men, but certainly also in women. Hooligans describe how they anticipate the fight: 'The tingling in the stomach, the anticipation has always been there. It's like a drug.'<sup>86</sup> This emotional stimulation is used commercially on the internet and should not be underestimated. Media models can always encourage 'copycat' projects. In gangsta rap, sexism and violent fantasies are part of the business model. Nor is hate crime an act of desperation and certainly not a 'cry for help'. Violent masculinity is expressed in an extreme form in the neo-Nazi music scene, as Thomas Kuban powerfully showed in 2012.<sup>87</sup> Sales are continuing to grow and the scene threatens at some point to expand beyond organising 'just' music festivals.

## The banalisation of evil

### What consequences can the ideologisation of such emotional states have for social peace?

An example of this is Jack Donovan from the radical right-wing 'Alt-Right' movement in the USA, whose ideas are currently being imported into the New Right in Europe. They (alongside other publications, which in Germany are particularly associated with the Antaios publishing house) make clear – this time without any attempt to portray themselves as 'harmless' – what the destination is. How far and how permanently such ideas will find favour beyond the narrower circle of neo-Nazis, right-wing biker gangs and the New Right is a question that remains unanswered. Donovan already argued in 2016<sup>88</sup> for the re-polarisation of gender. He combines this with a rigorous rejection of universalist values and human rights. For him, the singularisation of social identity feared by Amartya Sen has become an entire chauvinist programme. In 2018, Jack Donovan proclaimed: 'Only barbarians can defend themselves.'<sup>89</sup> The strength of the barbarians, he says, lies in the fact that they can still hate what is lost to men in the 'Empire of Nothing', i.e. in the decadence of a liberal and capitalist society. And Donovan makes it clear how this is to be countered: a man can only gain identity as a member of a 'gang' or a 'tribe' and must continually fight for it against the 'Empire of Nothing'. Moral universalism is 'a poisonous,

emasculating philosophy for any man who adopts it.'<sup>90</sup> It 'is a philosophy for men who have surrendered. They have surrendered their land, their history, their women, their dignity and their identity. They've become impotent half-men who deserve to be victims and slaves.'<sup>91</sup> 'If tribal identity is everything that matters, then, in the absence of tribal identity, nothing really matters.'<sup>92</sup> A 'moral gear switch ... allows men to shift dynamically from caring loyally and consistently for those close to them to killing outsiders with no remorse when necessary.'<sup>93</sup> Real men 'are alive without apology, bold and willing to fight for and seize what they want and what they need for them and theirs. Because anyone outside the tribe is no one to them, when they take, they take from no one.'<sup>94</sup> A theory of drives serves as justification: 'The drive to conflict is the fate of men. It is tragic, but all life is tragic' because it must be a struggle that ultimately ends in death.<sup>95</sup> 'Barbarians say "yes" to life. They take what they want from the Empire and leave the rest to rot.'<sup>96</sup>

### Is this really more than a romantic 'male fantasy' that idealises aggressive impulses?<sup>97</sup>

Yes, much more! This text and others like it express an absolutised particularism that is to be realised through men's willingness to fight. Violent fantasies in themselves are not a specifically modern or specifically right-wing phenomenon. They are already expressed in the games of 'innocent' children, have always played a role in myths and fairy tales, in Roman arenas, in the custom of executing people at the stake, in lynchings, in the torture of witches and in politically and religiously motivated violence generally. Executions have been a public spectacle for centuries and still are today thanks to the internet. However, the chance to realise such fantasies of violence outside the virtual world is all the more likely when social conflicts are reduced to 'friend-foe relationships'. When the 'obliteration' of the other is considered 'necessary' ultimately depends on perceptions and interpretations. If, as Alain de Benoist of the French Nouvelle Droite believes, personal identity depends on the ability to name an enemy,<sup>98</sup> people with a different language, a different faith, a different skin colour quickly become enemies. The conspiracy theories that are developed so that people can see themselves as victims who are under attack and thus justify their aggression do not necessarily have anything to do with any reality, as the history of anti-Semitism has shown time and again. In a (perceived) 'state of emergency', a tipping point, feelings of power and powerlessness can become decisive – and potentially capable of eliminating any remaining moral concerns. The diverse juxtaposition and interplay of personal, kinship, neighbourly, national and humane loyalties that usually determines our lives in times of peace is then destroyed. As the twentieth century has shown: gaining the power to rule over life and death can have its own fascination. The first thing to be sacrificed are the rights to protection of those who are not considered 'one of us'. And the scope of those who are excluded from the category of 'us' can expand over time. Even if Donovan pays his taxes as he professes, ultimately everyone outside the tribe he has joined can potentially be excluded. The interplay between belonging and exclusion thus unfolds its pernicious effect.

<sup>90</sup> This is a translation of the title of the German edition of *Becoming a Barbarian*, 'Nur Barbaren können sich verteidigen'.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Theweleit 1987/89.

<sup>98</sup> de Benoist 1985, 104.

<sup>86</sup> Interview by Steinmetz in: Eckert/Reis/Wetzstein 2000 op. cit., 381.

<sup>87</sup> Kuban 2012.

<sup>88</sup> Donovan 2012.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 2016.

### Why are such inhumane ideas spreading again today?

As problems and problem-solving efforts have been shifted beyond the local to the European, international and transnational levels, global processes and decisions have gained significance. Many of these are not only unresolved, such as the issue of migration flows, they are also difficult to comprehend in their abstractness. The decline of traditional industries as digital technology has become the new basis for economic development (a 'Kondratiev wave') has had existential and tangible effects in concrete life situations. Moreover, in view of the threatening consequences of climate change, a responsible politics will not be able to avoid painful restrictions on our lifestyle. Alongside this, however, the desire to 'take back control' and to overcome one's own powerlessness is likely to increase. In the Alt-Right movement's declaration of war on any ethics that cross tribal boundaries, one can already see a radicalised rejection of the extension of responsibility and the expansion of decision-making levels at which technical and economic globalisation could (at best) be controlled and shaped. In the barbarian ideology, by contrast, this is to be replaced by the violent enforcement of gangs, tribes and peoples. It adds a new threat to the 'ethno-pluralist', 'one people, one culture, one country' ideology that has so far predominated in the worldview of the New Right by propagating the 'moral gear switch' for 'killing outsiders with no remorse when necessary'. What is 'necessary' in each case, i.e. where the tipping point lies, can then be quickly designated in each case by means of conspiracy theories. The claim one is 'protecting one's own', which still sounds defensive in the older New Right, can then quickly turn into aggressive visions of annihilation. They would thus point the way back to the not-so-distant past, when fanatical and unscrupulous rulers of all stripes sent people and peoples to their deaths in the name of their imagined future communities.

### So are we in danger of repeating history?

As a reminder, the 'banality of evil' that Hannah Arendt observed at the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the organiser of the extermination of the European Jews,<sup>99</sup> did not come about by chance, but was – historically speaking – the result of a 'banalisation' of the extermination of 'outsiders' that took place over many decades. And such a banalisation is being promoted again today: the deliberate breaching of taboos and a subsequent tactical self-portrayal as 'harmless' are aspects of New-Right strategy. But as to where the journey may ultimately lead, Jack Donovan's 'Barbarians' leave no doubt. Hardly anyone alive today bears any guilt for the extermination camps of seventy-five years ago. But anyone who opens the gates to the 'banalisation of evil' once again today is guilty.

## Amnesia as a programme?

### Can we not learn?

This chapter is an attempt to understand and thus explain radicalisation processes and hostility to democracy and the state under the rule of law against a background of social problems and, in particular, the current development towards a global society. It appears that memories of the horrors of the twentieth century are fading in subsequent generations. Even the sons and daughters of the perpetrators and victims are now approaching the ends of their lives. But they are protesting one final time at the attempts to erase the culture of

remembrance by redefining it as a 'cult of guilt'. They point out what opportunities for learning are destroyed when we turn our gaze from history.<sup>100</sup> Yet they are not concerned with the past, but with the future. As the social reformer, educator and philosopher John Dewey reminds us, 'Hitler did not fail to translate the following sentence, which he formulated in a speech in 1922, into reality: "The people need pride and strength of will, defiance and hatred, and hatred again, and hatred again!"'<sup>101</sup> Eighty years ago, the fusion of rage, hatred and pride that some, forgetful of history, are once again demanding today in the name of 'thymotic restoration' was celebrated in elegant simplicity and vociferous grandeur at Nuremberg as the *'Triumph of the Will'* (Leni Riefenstahl) and subsequently raged murderously throughout Europe. Very few of those who cheered in Nuremberg eighty-five years ago knew what terrible deeds and suffering would soon be in store for them. Today's polemics against an alleged 'cult of guilt' want to make us forget all this. By contrast, if anything can lead step-by-step to a solution to the conflicts and contradictions of globalisation, it is not the rehabilitation of rage, anger and violent masculinity, but the *'Triumph of Reason'*, i.e. the recognition of diversity at all levels of world society and a concomitant respect for the dignity of all human beings. And for this it is worth rallying, peacefully and without weapons, wherever necessary.

99 On the basis of which statement she has been wrongly accused of trivialising genocide. Cf. Arendt 1963.

100 Niklas Frank, whose father was responsible as the Governor-General of Poland for mass exterminations, recognises his father's rhetoric in the slogans of the New Right. (Der Spiegel 6 September 2019; Panorama 10 October 2019).

101 Dewey 1954, 10.



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## CHAPTER 3.2

### Dynamics, structures and processes in extremist groups

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Extremism and terror emanate from groups. But what constitutes an extremist group? Which are the principal structures of groups? What group dynamics can be identified in extremist groups to explain why people join these groups, what holds the groups together or even why do people leave such groups? What risks posed by extremist groups can be traced back to group dynamics? This chapter discusses these questions about group dynamics in extremist groups based on research on these groups and on extremism, radicalisation and terrorism. It will be shown that for groups, the social identification of people and the establishment of a group identity are particularly important. Roles, norms, values and the establishment of relationships, networks and communication structures in extremist groups are regulated to ensure tight cohesion. Demarcation and the struggle against ‘enemies’ are as important a part of the extremist group as commitment to the group identity. Even though there are some research deficits and there is still surprisingly little knowledge about group processes and dynamics in extremist groups, some ideas for prevention and intervention can be derived from the research. It should be noted that this chapter makes a number of references to extremism and terrorism in Germany because that is where I have conducted most of my research. However, my findings and analyses of group dynamics can be generalised to many groups, especially since they are based on international research literature.

## Extremism as a group phenomenon

In 2016, a group of young German males, most of them minors, carried out a jihadist terrorist attack only four months after setting up a WhatsApp group chat. The group thus became radicalised at breakneck speed.<sup>1</sup> This was a modern kind of group – a digital group based on the WhatsApp platform – and it developed astonishingly intense group dynamics. Right from the start, the group’s founding myth set the stage for later radicalisation: it began with the ‘first major address’, which is how the self-proclaimed leader, the ‘Amir’ of the group, referred to his initial message, and the naming of the group itself: Ansaar Al Khilafat Al Islamiyya. The young men who belonged to this group were expected to follow the orders of the ‘Amir’. The ‘Amir’ ran a tight ship, and the members were led by him and a close circle of followers in an extremely authoritarian and intelligent manner. Individual members were encouraged or sanctioned depending on their individual motives and needs. The group negotiated relations with other groups, parents, Islam and the mosque communities, as well as identities, aspirations and religious questions. In the process, it increasingly developed its own extremely narrow, fragmentary and very un-Islamic ideology. This was a ‘Lego-Islam’, composed of speculations, fragments of sermons delivered by terrorists and Quranic verses in such a way that it formed an over-the-top image of the group as fighters for the caliphate. The group gave itself rules, such as a system for admitting and expelling members. It mediated everyday problems and developmental tasks that are normal for young people. Without the members’ subordination to the authoritarian and hierarchical group – which they willingly and repeatedly committed themselves to – and the constant regulation of their behaviour by means of group dynamics, it would be virtually impossible to understand the radicalisation that ultimately led to

two members carrying out a bomb attack on a Sikh Temple. This was the act of a group, not a collection of individuals. Yet it was not the act of a terrorist organisation, but of a small, self-appointed group that invoked a larger organisation (the ‘Islamic State’, ‘IS’). The group’s own ideology and identity as IS fighters, its vision of becoming mujahedin and joining an idealised caliphate, its circulation of images of its ‘enemies’ and its mistrust even of parents, mosque communities and other extremist groups were crucial to the acts of individuals. Virtually every aspect of this took place and was negotiated digitally in group chats, with only a few face-to-face meetings between members, which had been arranged digitally beforehand.

Very similar examples could be found in other known terror groups, whether digital or analogue. The left-wing extremist terrorist group Red Army Faction (RAF), whose terrorist attacks shook West German society in the 1970s, had similar narrow and authoritarian structures and group dynamics.<sup>2</sup> The trial of the right-wing extremist terrorist group ‘National Socialist Underground’ (NSU), which at its core consisted of a terrorist cell embedded in a support network, recently concluded with convictions.<sup>3</sup> This historic trial, which took from May 2013 to July 2018 to process the many details of the case, also revealed a tight-knit and well organised group dynamic that made it possible for the members to carry out ten murders, as well as robberies and hate crimes.<sup>4</sup> The terrorist trio Beate Zschäpe, Uwe Mundlos and Uwe Böhnhardt had their own coordination structure and group dynamics and could rely on a well-organised support environment. The current boom in small groups and terror cells within the spectrum of right-wing extremism follows a tradition that was already evident in the early days of the NSU.

These three examples from different times and regarding terrorist groups with radically different ideologies make it clear how relevant an understanding of group dynamics is, not only for understanding radicalisation and extremism, but also for recognition, analysis, prevention and intervention. Extremism and terror emanate from social groups, and radicalisation processes take place in groups. The current article is written based on this seemingly simple assumption. It concerns extremist groups, i.e. collectives of individuals who cooperate and undertake coordinated activities, communicate and interact directly using analogue or digital means, share extremist ideologies and goals, and in the most extreme case, commit an extremist act. These groups are organised and embedded in organisations. However, we are less concerned here with organisations and their structures, though they are discussed in Chapters 2.1 to 2.4. The aim of this chapter is rather to take an interdisciplinary look at dynamics between group members, i.e. individuals in relation to their social environment. This chapter ties in with Chapter 3.1 at the societal level and complements Chapter 3.3, which goes deeper into the individual level, as well as Chapter 3.4, which discusses the dynamics and influences of the digital world and digital radicalisation.

Groups cannot be understood apart from their social environment. The following exploration of the dynamics of and within extremist groups initially ignores environmental influences on groups and thus how they are embedded in historical,

<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive analysis of the chat transcript is contained in FNRP 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Aust 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Aust/Laabs 2014.

<sup>4</sup> The trial records published by a group of journalists are very informative (Ramelsberger et al. 2018).

cultural, structural and social circumstances. Of course, these have a role to play. Extremist groups emerge primarily in situations of social crisis and conflict. Extremism and terror emerge and take root more easily in regions with widespread social inequality. The terrorist groups mentioned above reacted to historical and social circumstances and intra-societal conflicts. It is important to be aware of these. Extremist groups are likewise integrated in support networks and form milieus that absolutely must be considered to explain their emergence and impact.<sup>5</sup> However, we will pay less attention to these influences in the following in order to be able to focus more closely on the groups. This is particularly important because many analyses of extremism share the hypothesis that groups and group dynamics play a decisive role, if not 'the' decisive role, in radicalising people into extremism, as well as in the area of de-radicalisation and disengagement from extremism. This is strongly supported by observations of contemporary extremism. For example, recent studies of right-wing, left-wing and Islamist and above all neo-Salafist extremism show that highly integrated small groups have a powerful ability to bind members to them and that the organisational form of small groups has increased in all global terrorist movements.<sup>6</sup> This also seems to be the case for the new extremist groups that formed in the coronavirus protests during the pandemic.

In contrast to most work on extremism and terrorism, which tends to focus on specific organisations and organisational forms, this chapter first asks which rules and processes are key to the admission of members to extremist groups. And further: which group processes and structures are essential for understanding extremism? What kinds of group dynamics lead to violent radicalisation? What kinds of group dynamics encourage cohesion, what kinds cause it to fade? What is the significance of other groups, what is the significance of 'enemies' of extremist groups? Intergroup dynamics, i.e. the way groups deal with other groups that are perceived as 'outgroups', play an essential role, as was already explained in Chapter 3.1. In the first instance, this touches on the question of how groups interact with their social context. The social environment can create and radicalise extremist groups – and can also lead to their dissolution. At the same time, intergroup dynamics can be examined to ask why individuals who have little or no extremist tendencies change when part of a group and subject themselves to extremism.

The focal point of this chapter is thus the extremist group, its characteristics, dynamics and processes within and between groups. It draws on the insights of social psychology regarding groups and explains how group processes can occur in extremist groups.

The social-psychological perspective focuses on the interaction of extremist groups and their social environment. Extremism and radicalisation are, as explained in Chapter 2, social phenomena that result from the interaction of individuals and groups with their social environment in a specific society and at a particular historical time. Radicalisation in extremist groups is a process in which individuals' allegiance to the group intensifies and they increasingly deviate from socially shared norms, values and conventions, adopting the ideologies of the extremist group and becoming hostile

towards society.<sup>7</sup> In the most extreme case, individuals undergoing radicalisation join terrorist groups, thereby becoming terrorists themselves. In the less extreme case, they join radical populist or extremist groups that do not directly pursue terrorist goals. In terms of group processes, radicalisation involves the polarisation of perceptions of reality, norms, attitudes and beliefs as well as social emotions, identities and behaviours. Within the context of the present analysis, polarisation describes a concentration on the radical or extremist group. The group, with its radical and extreme ideas, becomes the point of reference and ultimate goal of individuals, and the group becomes even more extremist as its members become increasingly polarised. It constricts its identity and beliefs, becomes ever more exclusive, exerts more pressure on individual group members, sets its sights ever more narrowly against real or imagined enemies and chooses ever riskier courses of action.

Individuals' sympathies with extremist groups may be relatively harmless at first and largely lack ideological motivation. Many analyses of online radicalisation show how individuals, some of whom are unaware of which websites and social networks they are on, are drawn into radicalisation.<sup>8</sup> This was true of Arid Uka, who killed two US soldiers and seriously injured two others in an Islamist terrorist attack in Germany in March 2011.<sup>9</sup> Our own studies of the case have shown how the perpetrator, who began as a sympathiser with few extremist ideas about Islam and the Muslim way of life, became increasingly extreme as a result of internet-based communication as well as offline experiences, eventually committing a terrorist attack.<sup>10</sup> Even in the case of this one individual, who was seemingly radicalised as a 'lone wolf', group processes played a role, which is why the term 'lone wolf' is now considered imprecise, as a renowned research group led by terrorism researcher Bart Schuurman has argued (2017). Group dynamics expert Austin T. Turk pointed out many years ago (1985) that the likelihood of individuals being radicalised rises and falls with the degree of organised group violence in a society. It follows, therefore, that for the organisation of political, physical and psychological violence, terrorism requires effective group organisation. Without a reference group or ingroup as the focus of his extreme identification, Arid Uka would not have become radicalised to the point of carrying out his attack. This group can be analogue or digital, real or imagined. What is important is the extent of social identification. A similar radicalisation process with a completely different ideological orientation was undergone by the Norwegian right-wing terrorist Anders Breivik, who killed 77 people in attacks in Oslo and on the island of Utøya on 22 July 2011.<sup>11,12</sup> Breivik was a member of the right-wing populist Fremskrittpartiet from 1999 to 2006 and was involved in its youth organisation until 2007. He was a member of a Masonic lodge of the Christian Norwegian Order of Freemasons from 2007 until he carried out his attacks and had participated in discussions on the far-right forum nordisk.nu and the website of the Islamophobic magazine Document.no since 2009. He was also involved in setting up a Norwegian branch of the Islamophobic Norsk Forsvars Allianse, an offshoot of the English Defence League, where, among other things, he presented himself as a Norwegian crusader using the pseudonym Sigurd Jorsalfar. Even though right-wing

5 On the concept of milieus, cf. the book 'Radikale Milieus' by Malthaner/Waldmann 2012.

6 cf. McCauley/Moskalenko 2008; Reedy/Gastil/Gabbay 2013.

7 Cf. the explanations in Chapter 2 and the overview in Zick 2017.

8 Cf. Chapter 3.4 and the overview model of radicalisation by McCauley/Moskalenko 2008.

9 See also Böckler/Hoffmann/Zick 2016.

10 Böckler/Hoffmann/Zick 2016.

11 Seierstad 2015.

12 Asne Seierstad's 2016 novelised biography of Breivik presents the facts clearly and is recommended.

extremist and Islamophobic groups have distanced themselves from Breivik, he has often referred to himself as a member. He constructed his own nationalist identity, which led him to justify the killing of young socialists as an act in defence of Europe. The far-right terrorist Brenton Tarrant, who killed 51 people and injured another 50 in two mosques in Christchurch (New Zealand) in March 2019, behaved in a similar way. He invoked Breivik and contemporary far-right ideologies. Tarrant had previously been active in right-wing populist and right-wing extremist groups, where he formed the ideological views that led him to believe he was carrying out the terrorist attack for 'the white race'. Especially in modern digital societies, the staging of identities that represent imagined groups plays an important role for extremism.<sup>13</sup> The role of groups in generating extremism appears to be even more important when it comes to traditional terrorist groups. The case of the German right-wing extremist terror group NSU (National Socialist Underground), which killed ten people between 2000 and 2007, committed 43 attempted murders and carried out three explosive attacks and 15 robberies, has made it particularly clear how significant group structures and group dynamics are for extremism.<sup>14,15</sup> Even though we can only speculate about many unanswered questions concerning this terrorist group and its network of supporters, the terrorists Uwe Mundlos and Uwe Böhnhardt, together with Beate Zschäpe, who was convicted in July 2018, became increasingly radicalised over many years in a situation of extremely close social bonds and group dynamics and underwent a process of escalation in their ideologies as well as their actions.

It quickly became apparent just how tightly structured the group was in terms of not just roles, norms and values, but also in the organisation of everyday life.<sup>16</sup> For the trio, the boundaries between group structure and personal relations disappeared. At least in the early days of the development of the NSU terrorist cell, group norms and collective rules appear to have been more significant than ideological development. Such dynamics, processes and group structures are found in almost all terrorist groups, regardless of whether their orientation is political, social or religious. It is vital that we understand them.

Without knowing about group structures and group dynamics, it is thus difficult to understand extremism and the radicalisation process, even when, in the age of digital communications, groups can form without direct contact or face-to-face interaction and individuals can join digital groups or networks. Radicalisation is a process of turning towards groups. De-radicalisation is a process of turning away and disengaging from groups. The process of turning towards radical groups involves accepting the identity and ideologies of a group, i.e. of 'becoming one' with the group.

## Understanding groups

Group processes are complex and multi-layered, and members of groups behave very differently from each other. In pursuit of their own social motives, each individual ends up in groups that more or less satisfy them. Groups have to be coordinated and

need structures of cooperation and communication, rules and a division of tasks. In order to understand the central structures and processes by which individuals are radicalised in extremist groups, the following connects findings from group dynamics with research on extremism, radicalisation and terrorism.

To understand extremist groups, it is necessary to first highlight the central elements that shape groups. Of course, groups differ according to their ideology. Left-wing extremism, right-wing extremism, Islamism and other extremist phenomena such as the new radical groups of Covid deniers are distinguished and compared in Chapter 2. To some extent, ideologies already create group structures, because they discuss goals, determine who is 'the enemy', create identities and are associated with specific concepts of community (see below). However, despite all the differences in the ideologies of extremist groups, the defining *group structures* are very similar. An analysis of the group dynamics of extremist groups is shaped by the question: *What constitutes an extremist group, regardless of its specific ideology, identity or practices? What structures are vital if groups are to retain members and sustain themselves?*

A second fundamental question for understanding extremist groups concerns processes and dynamics. *What fundamental processes and developments shape extremist groups?* This question is relevant to understanding the stability of groups and how they influence each other. Groups with an extremist orientation, no matter how cellular and isolated, do not automatically become radicalised in an unchecked manner to the point of carrying out terrorist attacks or other acts of violence. Extremist groups do not form out of nowhere or in a social vacuum, nor do they form unchanging filter bubbles, even if this seems to be the case with some digitally isolated networks. They do tend to isolate themselves, especially when they are being persecuted or planning attacks, but even then, they interact with others and respond to their environment. Extremist groups emerge within societies and absorb the crises and conflicts that exist in those societies. This conditions the emergence of such groups and also their dissolution and processes of change, such as when one group is absorbed by another extremist group or movement – sometimes one that has newly emerged. Because groups change, it is worth asking *if there are typical group lifecycles*.

Extremist groups come together, and they can fall apart. This can be influenced by failures to cooperate or to coordinate as well as conflicts within and between groups or with opponents. They can fragment into smaller groups or be taken over by other groups and movements. Some extremist groups persist for a very long time, despite all attempts to combat them. Larger alliances may even persist despite massive military opposition, as in the case of Al-Qaeda, which has existed since 1993. This is partly possible because the group developed out of a social movement, later breaking up into splinter groups, which remained in communication with each other. One aspect of the group dynamics of extremist groups is that they are under constant internal pressure. They thrive on conflicts and struggles, e.g. for positions of power. So how do radical groups develop? So far, extremism research has largely failed to develop any theories on this. However, research into groups in the field of social psychology offers interesting models of group development that are relevant for our understanding.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> I have presented an approach that sees radicalisation as social staging in more detail elsewhere (Zick 2017a).

<sup>14</sup> Köhler 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Aust/Laabs's 2014 book on the NSU is highly recommended.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ramelsberger et al. 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Roberts/Herrington 2010, 43-56.

While the first two questions, concerning group dynamics and group formation, are fundamental to any analysis of social groups, understanding the radicalisation and cohesion of extremist groups requires further in-depth research. Extremist groups demand a lot from their members, who are required to distance themselves from society, and in some cases even to break intimate social bonds or to convert to a different religion.<sup>18</sup> This makes them all the more dependent on their ability to recruit members.<sup>19</sup> It is now known that the Islamic State terrorist group (IS) professionally organised the recruitment of fighters from the West on the internet and through Western recruiters.<sup>20</sup> Extremist groups in particular demand authoritarian forms of obedience, loyalty and ideological conformity and place obligations on their members on the basis of admission criteria and through admission rituals and rules. This was something the West did not first learn about from the recruitment of Islamist fighters. The RAF had a tightly organised and very authoritarian form of recruitment. Right-wing extremist groups and neo-Nazis have developed initiation rites and rituals for accepting members.<sup>21</sup> In addition, extremist groups have a particular tendency to define their identity as a scarce resource and demand proof of identity. They are also constantly in danger of their members not obeying instructions, setting their own priorities, or not fulfilling group norms. Moreover, they are in danger of being exposed by 'outsiders' or undermined from within.

Research on recruitment, mobilisation and entry into extremist groups has identified some important dynamics and made contributions to a key question: *how do individuals become members of extremist groups?* It is necessary to explain how people who have individual relationships, perceptions, emotions, attitudes, etc. become part of a group. Extremist groups have dynamics that regulate the behaviour, thinking, emotions and relationships of individuals and exert an influence that changes them. In extremist groups, measures to create group cohesion – i.e. bonding, commitment, and unity – as well as social influences and peer pressure determine the stability and development of the group. Similarly, groups develop a uniformity that is necessary if they are to endure. It is important to understand the processes that bind individuals in groups and how cohesion is established or jeopardised.

The process by which an individual's identity shifts to that of 'group member' is crucial to our understanding of extremism and radicalisation. The actions of groups, their cohesion and the processes by which individuals become group members can be understood as a process of identification. Processes of demarcation from other groups also play an important role in identity and identification. Extremist identities are phenomena born of conflict. Extremist groups, especially those whose goals involve aggression or violence, are shaped by intense conflicts with societies and other groups. The conflict between extremist groups, their social environment and the institutions that respond to them is what holds extremism together and the point around which it pivots. The extremist identity that group members share is based on processes of differentiation from other groups. Although they shut themselves off from society,

18 This has been well researched recently in relation to Islamist extremism (cf. Ferguson/Binks 2015).

19 The analysis of conversion processes is also the focus of current research on Islamist extremism. Much research, for instance, has focused on online recruitment (cf. Davies et al. 2015).

20 The 2018 brochure by Daniel Köhler and Julia Ebner, which is available for free online, provides a good overview.

21 An interesting approach to understanding ritual violence and initiation rites in different violent groups is provided by Perlmutter 2004.

extremist groups need other groups in order to establish an identity and for the cohesion of the ingroup, i.e. the reference group. If radical and extremist groups are successful in distinguishing themselves from other groups, they may also succeed in becoming (larger or smaller) social movements, which are then able to absorb members of the majority society who were previously less extremist.<sup>22</sup> This will be discussed in more detail below.

If our questions have so far focused on development and radicalisation, when considering prevention and intervention, we need, in particular, to look closely at how groups end and how individuals exit extremist groups. An important practical question is: *when and why do members leave extremist groups, when do groups dissolve?* Group research also offers interesting approaches to this, and extremism research has made some important observations on the exit of group members.

Prevention and intervention efforts as well as analyses carried out by institutions concerned with the security of civil society build on the basic question: *what risks do extremist groups pose?* In fact, indexes and indicators of the risk potentials of extremist groups can be developed on the basis of the phenomena described above. They will be presented in detail later, because they suggest a new and comprehensive perspective, albeit one that is difficult to grasp.

The following section will first look at our initial observations more closely and discuss fundamental questions of how to understand group processes in greater depth. Specific extremist groups, regardless of whether they are right-wing extremist, left-wing extremist, ethnic-national separatist or Islamist, will not be considered separately, but always from the perspective of generalisable group processes. It is thus assumed that the basic group dynamics, structures and processes are not essentially different in terms of their social psychology. We will nevertheless subject this assumption to scrutiny at the end of this chapter, mentioning some key differences between the various current extremist milieus. Likewise, numerous research gaps and unfinished academic undertakings become apparent when we consider what is known about the processes and dynamics of extremist groups. Only when these have been identified can challenges for prevention and intervention be inferred, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

## Central elements of extremist groups

Groups are more than collections of individuals, regardless of how different the members and their psychological dispositions for extremism might be.<sup>23</sup> Groups are more than categories, i.e. organisational units that can be used for classification, such as nations, religions or social classes. Nor are groups to be equated with the structures and elements of the societies into which they are integrated. Groups have their own reality and can be distinguished from individuals.<sup>24</sup> The psychologist Kurt Lewin (1952)

22 In the case of the highly heterogeneous protest group Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident), this was easy to observe (cf. Zick/Küpper/Krause 2016). It was able to connect with majority views, using the ideology of resistance to supposedly mainstream opinion to establish the idea that it was a movement with which people could identify.

23 Chapter 3.3 in this volume and the report on psychological factors influencing radicalisation by Zick et al. 2019 provide an overview of what is known about psychological influencing factors.

24 A good overview of group research is provided by the social psychologist Rupert Brown 2001.

emphasised that groups have their own 'Gestalt'. This means both that individuals behave differently in groups than they do outside groups and that groups create their own lifeworlds. Groups possess unique characteristics that result from the network of relationships between their members. The social psychologist Salomon Asch (1952) also made an analogy with water: although water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen, we do not comprehend it if we consider the two elements separately. Similarly, a group is more than the sum of its parts. In the European tradition of empirical social psychological group research, it has become increasingly accepted that people behave differently in groups in ways that cannot be reduced to the psychology of individuals.<sup>25</sup> By joining a group, the individual is transformed into a group member.

Essential to any group, whether it exists in a particular habitat in the real world or merely in digital 'space', is a structure that enables cooperation and coordination. Research on group processes in small groups as well as what is known as 'intergroup research', which deals with relationships between groups, has determined essential elements of groups.<sup>26</sup> As units, groups shape their own reality. This 'group reality' develops from a shared perception of being a member of the same social unit and the manifold relationships between members of this unit. Various things follow from these perceptions of group activity and group dynamics, such as the emergence of key structures and elements of the group that are adopted by the members and influence their behaviour.

Group researchers have defined, systematised and interpreted the key structural elements that are necessary or sufficient for groups in different ways. They can already be found in the definitions of groups. According to this, a group is essentially determined by a relationship. Henry Clay Lindgren<sup>27</sup> said: 'If two or more persons stand in any relationship to each other, they form a group.' Another classical definition of groups refers to contact and interdependence: 'A group can be defined as a majority of individuals who are in contact with one another, respond to one another and experience commonality in essential ways.'<sup>28</sup> A more sophisticated definition lays down further key elements: 'A social psychological group is an organised system of two or more individuals who are connected in such a way that, to a certain extent, common functions are possible, role relationships exist between the members and norms exist that regulate the behaviour of the group and its members.'<sup>29</sup> In addition to the members, groups consist of further organisational units, subgroups and networks. This is especially true of modern extremist groups, which are well organised on a professional basis. This has been well researched in relation to Islamist terrorism. Modern Islamism, for example, has developed not just jihadist groups such as the Islamic Jihad Union, the Taliban Mujahedin, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan or Al-Qaeda, but also support units such as media departments. These groups possess departments that are responsible for communication and which are not generally studied by the analysis of group activities. There are also prominent social networks that are founded by radical individuals or groups, some of which then maintain themselves autonomously, virally

<sup>25</sup> Abrams/Hogg 2006.

<sup>26</sup> An excellent review of small group research is found in Hare et al. 1996; on intergroup research, see Abrams/Hogg 1990.

<sup>27</sup> Lindgren 1973, 347, cited in Sader 1994.

<sup>28</sup> Olmsted 1959, 21, cited in Sader 1994.

<sup>29</sup> McDavid/Harari 1968, 237, cited in Sader 1994.

and mechanically, and form connections via key individuals and/or other networks.<sup>30</sup> The following section outlines the most important structural elements that define and distinguish groups, including extremist groups. Ten elements will be explained and related to extremist groups. For a simpler overview, they are assigned to three groups. The initial group of elements determine the structures of groups. The second group of elements are concerned with group dynamics, while the third group includes elements that concern groups in their context.

#### Structural elements:

- 1 Group size
- 2 Interaction and communication structure
- 3 Heterogeneity and homogeneity of members/composition
- 4 Organisational structures
- 5 Norms and values

#### Dynamic elements:

- 6 Bonding and social motivation
- 7 Groups as developmental niches of socialisation
- 8 Persistence and cohesion

#### Contextual elements:

- 9 Social and spatial proximity
- 10 Ideology, identity and cohesion (attraction)

1 Group size. Groups can be distinguished and categorised according to their size. Size is closely related to organisational aspects, i.e. responsibility for cooperation and coordination. Determining the size of a group helps to define what kind of group it is: a dyad, a micro group or small group, or – with regard to extremist groups – an imagined (religious) community, a movement that functions like 'the caliphate' (IS ideology), the 'race' (right-wing extremist ideology) or 'the rule of the oppressed' (left-wing extremist conviction).<sup>31</sup> In terrorist milieus, there are also lone wolves who carry out attacks by themselves and seem to cooperate less closely with groups directly. However, almost all analyses show that they have usually been involved in groups in the past and that lone perpetrators are particularly prone to identify with groups and claim to have committed the act for 'the community'. Extremism also throws up cellular structures, which appear to be growing in importance in modern terrorism. Cells have been formed by jihadists groups, right-wing extremist organisations, and left-wing extremist autonomous groups. The case of the two London Islamists who hit a man

<sup>30</sup> Cf. the current overview by Nitsch 2018.

<sup>31</sup> It is not easy to determine the number of members that make up each kind of group. It is now standard to assume that a dyad consists of two members, a micro group of two to six members, a small group of three to 30 people and a large group of more than 30 people.



outside a barracks with their car in May 2013 and then killed him with a meat cleaver is an example of an extremist cell, as is the so-called 'NSU'. Small groups or cells consist of leaders, organisers who take on the task of coordinating activities and organising relationships, members who are involved but have no overarching influence, and fringe figures. The '2 June Movement' and the core group of the 'Red Army Faction' were organised as small groups and cells. When cell structures form in extremist milieus, this indicates a danger of attacks (see below).

② **Interaction and communication structure.** The size of the group has an influence on how the interaction and communication necessary in groups are organised. The groups mentioned so far mostly relied on face-to-face contacts and close consultation. Larger groups, such as terrorist networks, rely on more decentralised control of organisational details.<sup>32</sup> Interaction and communication must also be structured and organised differently than the more that groups turn away from prevailing norms and become radicalised. Extremist groups usually have very close-knit leadership circles. These make use of highly organised systems for control of operational details, so that the leadership does not have to communicate and interact with the subgroups and members. At the centre is an ideological leadership that is stable over time and provides infrastructural resources. Below the leadership level, there is an operational level that is supported by communities and may possess its own networks. The contemporary proliferation of cell-based structures appears to be a response to terrorism's becoming more global and larger-scale, as cells are more mobile and more likely to evade law enforcement. At the same time, terrorist movements, including Islamist terrorists, are increasingly accepting the idea of leaderless resistance.<sup>33</sup> Cells have a face-to-face interaction structure, while often no longer interacting with the broader movement for which they claim to be struggling. Further contemporary aspects include the professional organisation and maintenance of activist networks on social media. In the area of jihadism, organisations including @HSMPress and @almanarnews became well known through the activities of the Al-Shabaab terror group and Hezbollah, respectively. These networks form groups that stand midway between the actual terrorist groups, other networks, and non-direct members.

③ **Heterogeneity and homogeneity of members/composition.** Groups can be homogeneous or heterogeneous in terms of social class, religion, ethnicity and gender. Groups can also be homogeneous or heterogeneous in terms of attitudes, ideologies and social motives. In organisational terms, the degree of variation among group members is also relevant to the question of why certain extremist groups form. Homogeneous groups are denser and allow for easy identity formation and control, but heterogeneous groups are more inclusive and allow very different kinds of people to join. The heterogeneity and homogeneity of groups is relevant to the appeal of digital extremism and extremist online networks.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the hypothesis of 'filter bubbles' or echo chambers is often linked to the assumption that digital groups in particular tend to form homogeneous groups and that this tendency towards homogenisation promotes

<sup>32</sup> For more details, see the study by Enders/Jindapon 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Gray 2013, 655-671.

<sup>34</sup> Alain Van Hiel 2012 conducted an extensive analysis of the psychological profiles of political activists, moderate parties, communists, anarchists and right-wing extremists and showed that the heterogeneity in the groups is higher than assumed by the common hypothesis that the members are homogeneous, or, in everyday language, that they are all 'on the same wavelength' (cf. also the analysis by Wojcieszak 2010).

extremism or the radicalisation of the group (see also Chapter 3.4).<sup>35</sup> Groups can also be characterised and classified as homogeneous or heterogeneous according to the ages of their members. Specifically with regard to radicalisation in extremist groups, peer groups can be distinguished from other age-heterogeneous groups. Youth groups have a different dynamic to groups that vary in age. With regard to the question of what role the diversity of members and subgroups plays in extremist groups, no reliable studies are available. However, it stands to reason that these factors are particularly relevant for globally organised extremist groups and in terms of the ability of groups to integrate their members. For example, it could be assumed that in France jihadist networks have emerged primarily because the precarious living conditions in the outskirts of the French metropolises have effectively created homogeneity.<sup>36</sup> In Germany, jihadist groups seem to be largely attractive to young people who are dealing with 'normal' developmental tasks and are looking for a quick 'solution' in groups.<sup>37</sup> In addition, it can be observed that, due to virtual networking in almost all radical and extremist milieus, the heterogeneity of groups and networks is increasing more and more.

④ **Organisational structures.** Groups have recognisable organisational structures and forms and can be distinguished according to these. These have already been addressed with regard to interaction and communication (see Element 2 above). The organisational structure of groups always includes the definition of roles. To successfully recruit members, mobilise, carry out propaganda and, in the extreme case, carry out attacks, extremist groups need to be fairly effective at defining different roles within the group. Roles are patterns of expected behaviour associated with a given position in the group. They represent divisions of responsibilities and provide group members with clear social expectations and with information about relations between group members. They also provide members with self-definitions and position them within the group. Roles thus facilitate the functioning of the group. Roles are associated with prestige, which is expressed through the hierarchy within the groups. Status and prestige positions, i.e. social hierarchies within groups and among the leadership, play an important role in organisation. Any organisation of individuals that develops into a group is accompanied by the formation of hierarchies. In radical and extremist groups, hierarchies and the question of leadership are extremely significant. Looking at the widest possible variety of terrorist groups, it is evident that leaders and their entourages, what could be called an elite, emerge in every group. This seems to be especially true when there is a higher degree of organisation and the objective of an extremist group is clearly geared towards acts of terrorism. In Germany, the Red Army Faction (RAF) was primarily influenced and led by Andreas Baader and to a lesser extent by Ulrike Meinhof, as the name 'Baader-Meinhof Group' suggests.<sup>38</sup> New jihadist groups such as Al-Qaeda, the so-called Islamic State (IS), Boko Haram and many others have been shaped by leaders and internal struggles for leadership, and this is an important factor in the dissolution as well as the radicalisation of groups.<sup>39</sup> Even the NSU terror trio, which certainly had a support environment, appears to have been largely organised like a family, with Beate Zschäpe

<sup>35</sup> However, this has not yet been sufficiently proven empirically, as Christian Montag 2018 shows.

<sup>36</sup> Loch 2017.

<sup>37</sup> We have shown this in the analyses of the WhatsApp group mentioned at the beginning as well as in interview studies (cf. Srowig et al. 2017).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the updated and comprehensive documentation by Aust 2017.

<sup>39</sup> In this context, reading Smith 2015 is recommended.

at its head. It has long been known that leaders in groups are at the top of the hierarchy not so much because of character traits or the charisma they are assumed to exude, but rather because they are ascribed the role by the group. The leadership position and its attendant charisma are ascribed to them – and the leaders can themselves bring about this ascription by means of social pressure and influence.

In addition to leadership, organisation is also – and above all – a matter of communication networks. Online social networks, in particular, are a decisive characteristic of contemporary extremist groups, but also of less extremist radical networks. Groups such as the extreme right-wing ‘Identitarian movement’ in Europe, for example, have larger virtual networks than active offline members.<sup>40</sup> Communication networks conform to a set of rules that create the possibility of and facilitate communication between different roles. Communication networks regulate who communicates how with whom and about what. They are often formalised and are essential for task specialisation, reward systems and the determination of influence and power. As a result, they also serve to protect leaders. On the whole, extremist groups with a high probability of terrorism have hub-and-spoke-shaped networks. They communicate through central leaders who monitor and control flows of information. There is less free communication between the members. In (neo-)Salafist and Islamist groups, preachers seem to be particularly important as hubs for uniting members who are separated in time and space in the communication process. The virtually complete analysis of communications by the young neo-Salafist WhatsApp group mentioned at the beginning of the article, which was carried out by the Forschungsnetzwerk Radikalisierung und Prävention (FNRP),<sup>41</sup> has generated a very clear image of the network, its main communication structures and influence. The group was founded with the goal of carrying out an unspecified attack, and pulled in or pushed out adolescent Muslims with rapidity, leading to an attack within only a few months. Right from the start, it was characterised by highly authoritarian structures that were shaped by constant monitoring by the self-proclaimed leader, who called himself ‘Amir’ and presented himself as an IS ambassador. This went so far that his apparently religious texts, which he compiled himself and set at a distance from customary Islamic views, were taken by followers to be the true Islam.

Based on the Global Terrorism Database, Joshua Kilberg (2011) analysed 254 left-wing extremist, right-wing extremist, jihadist and other terrorist groups according to their typical structures. He distinguishes four types, namely: 1. Terror groups with a market

structure, which tend to pursue leaderless resistance. They have few central structures and are more likely to be found in the realm of left- and right-wing extremism. They are initially less focused on carrying out terrorist attacks. 2. Groups with an ‘all-channel structure’ are high-level networks with leadership. They are also less strictly controlled, but they enable dense connections among members. The leadership has more of

a motivational and ideological function. Social-revolutionary terrorist groups could be assigned to this group. 3. A third type of group is organised like a wheel (hub-spoke networks), with communication taking place through the leadership. They tend to be found in societies with civil rights and freedoms. Kilberg cites the Basque group ETA as an example. 4. Bureaucratic groups, on the other hand, are centrally controlled and functionally highly differentiated terrorist groups. They have propaganda departments, media departments, weapons groups, etc. They are organised like ‘governments’. Here, Kilberg mentions Hezbollah. There is now also sufficient evidence that the IS terrorist organisation was highly bureaucratically organised and institutionalised.<sup>43</sup>

⑤ **Norms and values.** Groups are usually organised by means of explicit or implicit norms. Groups have certain rules of behaviour and communication and values that make them recognisable, mark their identity and represent behavioural expectations. Group norms are formed through interaction and become a distinctive part of the group. They are closely linked to the identity of a group. Particularly in extremist groups, ideologies in the sense of overarching ideas and beliefs are less relevant than social norms and group values that become tied to ideologies or appear in the ideologies. The extent to which terrorist groups can be classified according to characteristic orientations has been answered in various ways by researchers. It has been proven that ideologies encompass and generate norms, but so far we know of no comparative study that focuses on the concept of norms. This is a shortcoming, given that prevention and intervention need to model and discuss alternative normative systems.<sup>44</sup>

The following elements of groups are relevant in determining group dynamics:

⑥ **Bonding and social motivation.** Radical and extremist groups place high demands on their individual members. This is even more true for terrorist groups. They require high levels of commitment, dedication and obedience to group norms, ideology and hierarchy, possibly even the willingness to undertake criminal acts or to commit violence, as well as to leave one’s familiar world behind and to leave and distance oneself from one’s previous environment. A central issue and task for extremist groups is to establish bonding and cohesion. Because of the high costs they place on members, which primarily stem from the requirement to detach themselves from their familiar environment and subordinate themselves to the group, extremist groups need to provide individual members with clear structures that enable bonding and require motivation. At this point, the question arises as to why individual members willingly accept the high costs and requirements that groups impose on them, at least until alternative paths – de-radicalisation programmes or leaving the scene voluntarily or involuntarily (arrest, persecution by the group, etc.) – appear more attractive. This question plays a major role in why people join such groups, which will be discussed below, but it is effectively impossible to separate the social motives involved in joining from those of group dynamics, the propagation of ideologies and identities and the coordination of groups.

Individuals have specific relationships to the groups they are members of, so it makes sense to ask why groups that deviate considerably from society’s norms, face considerable pressure and have rigid structures are so attractive. A key answer from

### ETA<sup>42</sup>

Abbreviation for ‘Euskadi Ta Askatasuna’ (‘Basque Country and Freedom’). ETA was an underground organisation until 2 May 2018. It fought for a free autonomous Basque Country, which was to extend territorially to the north of Spain and south-west of France. ETA was classified as an ethnic-separatist terrorist group.

<sup>40</sup> Zúquete 2018.

<sup>41</sup> FNRP 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Separatismus in Spanien 2012, in bpb.

<sup>43</sup> Lister 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Turk 2004.

social psychology concerns the importance of extremist groups for satisfying social motives that can only be fulfilled together with others. Maruta Herding and Joachim Langer (2015) studied young German jihadists who grew up in Germany and identified three central motives. Firstly, they found that extremist groups assist adolescents with social reorientation, especially if they are having difficulties with identity formation. Secondly, the need for 'action', e.g. thrills, protest and provocation, plays a role. Some qualitative studies have identified sensation-seeking as a motive.<sup>45</sup> Thirdly, extremist groups are of particular interest to young adolescents who have experienced social deprivation and whose lives so far appear to be 'failures'.

Our own case analyses of right-wing extremist and jihadist groups suggest that there are additional motives that play a key role in adolescents joining extremist groups. In a review of the key social motivations of individuals, social psychologist Susan Fiske (2013) identified five motives that explain why people are often willing to pay a price to engage in aggression and violence against others (as well as to help others). We were also able to find these motives in a comprehensive case analysis of the radical biographies of a variety of right-wing extremist and Islamist young offenders. According to this, groups can provide people with brief and extremely intense forms of satisfaction of social motives that they cannot adequately satisfy in their current living environment. The main motive is probably the social motive of belonging, i.e. the desire for strong and stable relationships. Radical groups promise and organise strong affiliations. In Islamist groups, notions of 'brotherhood' can be found again and again. Secondly, groups also satisfy the cognitive motive of understanding the social environment, sharing meaning and significance with others, and developing predictions about which opinions and actions will produce which effects. Some prominent theories of radicalisation, for example, cite the quest for significance as a central motive that drives individuals into terrorist groups; in particular, the group around terrorism researcher Arie Kruglanski advocates this approach.<sup>46</sup> In an interview with the author of this article, for instance, a former Islamist who had intensively researched terror in Syria and violence against Muslims said that his motivation had been to find out 'what was happening there' and that terrorist groups had given him clear and concise explanations.

The quest for significance is probably cited most often in terrorism research as the central motive for radicalisation. This is particularly due to the fact that young people in the phase of detachment from their parental homes develop their own identity and begin to search more intensively for the meaning of life. Linked to this is a third social motive, which is more cognitively driven. People want to exert control and influence; they want to 'do something well', as the former jihadist interviewed by the author put it. They want to see a connection between their behaviour and what follows from it. Young people develop beliefs and opinions, practise behaviours and develop feelings about social and political issues. These can appear radical to the people around them. Extremist groups appear to offer a means to make a difference and exert an influence. Fourthly, individuals are motivated to attain positive self-worth. They want to appear to be good and hope to improve as they develop. In an interview with the author of this article, a former Salafist claimed that the Islamist group he was a member of had suggested 'We are better'. Jürgen Manemann (2015) believes that IS recruiters target

precisely this motive. He claims that they offer their followers a sense of purpose and promise a strong identity and/or sense of superiority as part of the Islamist community. According to Manemann, this applies to many other extremist groups as well. Fifthly, individuals seek relationships based on trust and want to be certain about who they should distrust. Adolescents in particular want to be perceived and need to put opinions and behaviours to the test, and for this they need a trusting environment. Extremist groups offer this. These social motives are universal. All members of a society have them and try to satisfy them together with others, especially in groups; they are not specific to extremist groups. But that is precisely what makes them significant. Extremist groups seek out individuals who exhibit these motives and offer quick gratification at the cost of submission. In my opinion, this is a particular risk of extremist groups. Their radicalism also proves itself by offering radical solutions.

⑦ **Groups as developmental niches of socialisation.** With regard to the significance of extremist groups for fulfilling social motives, I have described them elsewhere (Zick 2017a/b) as a developmental niche. He has pointed out that, given the issues around the inclusion of (especially young) people in modern societies, extremist groups are successful in recruiting members because they offer them protection and care. Analysing cases of adolescent Islamists and other radicalised perpetrators, researchers in Bielefeld have shown that extremist groups are successful in recruiting individuals precisely when they appear to contribute to satisfying their central socialisation motives, i.e. offering them a niche for development that their 'normal' living environment does not or cannot provide.<sup>47</sup> According to Charles M. Super and Sara Harkness (1985), developmental niches comprise three central dimensions: (a) a specific group culture, which includes customs, a system of protection and care, and an 'education'; (b) a physical and social environment for everyday life; and (c) psychological support from 'caregivers'. The culture also includes the language typical of radical and/or extremist groups, which may be formed both online and offline. For online networks and the communication and networking of group members on social media in particular, the development of group-specific language is an especially important element for generating identity and cohesion within the group process.<sup>48</sup> Developmental niches provide the material for action scripts, values, norms, and so on, i.e. the important elements that define groups. Ultimately, individuals in groups that function well as developmental niches develop a sense of belonging that provides them with meaning and identity. Extremist group dynamics thus do not consist exclusively of extraordinary activities that are highly charged with significance, they also equip their members with everyday cultures. The research team around Thomas Hegghammer (2017) has recently undertaken to comprehensively document what they call 'jihadi culture'. Jihadi culture encompasses everything that its members do when they are not fighting or that does not serve the purpose of attack. According to the analyses, this also includes poetry, singing, rituals, and preferences for clothing, food and other everyday objects and practices. Nashids (Islamic religious chants) are particularly popular forms of music and are also sung by the jihadists. Islamist terrorists are not the only groups for whom music is important. The right-wing extremist music scene is also extremely large, extensive and diverse. And in such circles, literature, poetry, parties, folk evenings, shared meals and many other cultural elements also play a role.

45 Cf. Srowig et al. 2017; Zick 2017a.

46 Cf. Kruglanski/Fishman 2009.

47 We have elaborated on this in further works (cf. Srowig et al. 2017; Roth et al. 2015).

48 Cf. Bouchard 2015.

Different extremist niches can shape the process of radicalisation and everyday cultures differently. Access to extremist groups often occurs via ideologically framed events and activities. The consolidation of group identity can take place in this inclusive network niche, which is also embedded in non-extremist but still radical niche worlds within mainstream society. Radicalisation towards violence can be facilitated by conflict niches in which direct confrontation with 'enemies' and outgroups is sought, whose devaluation simultaneously elevates the ingroup. The group process takes place and identity formation is structured in these niches. Radical and extremist groups develop specific communal cultural practices, rituals and roles, as well as techniques for recruitment and mobilisation. They provide practical opportunities for conflict, such as participation in online disputes, which is described as online jihad. Arie Kruglanski, Jocelyn Bélanger and Rohan Gunaratna (2019) have stated that terrorist groups are based on three pillars. They fulfil their members' needs, furnish them with narratives about the world, and provide a network. These three pillars are the basis for establishing bonds and relationships.

**8 Persistence and cohesion.** Groups can be divided into ad hoc groups and established groups; they can exist for different lengths of time. Radical and extremist groups can develop into movements if they succeed in remaining attractive in their society over a prolonged period of time and attracting direct or indirect support, including by means of online propaganda and the establishment of subcultures.<sup>49</sup> There is an ongoing discussion among researchers of right-wing extremism regarding the extent to which the diverse and heterogeneous right-wing extremist groups that exist constitute a movement. In Germany at least, such groups have been a constant presence since the 1990s, despite all their differences, criminal prosecution and social change. Right-wing populist movements are discussed in a similar way because groups such as Pegida, the Identitarian movement and other new right-wing and right-wing populist groups – including those formed to protest against Covid policy – not only see themselves as movements, but have also exhibited a certain longevity. Below we will show that research into social and political movements has made important contributions to understanding group dynamics.

The persistence of a group over time is closely linked to cohesion within the group. Cohesion refers to the forces that reflect how strong the motivation is to remain in a group. This motivation of the members can be broken down in terms of strength and weakness, with the assumption that permanent members occupy more central positions. The social psychologist Michael Argyle proposed as early as 1969 that groups could be distinguished in terms of the combination of persistence and cohesion. In modern societies, for example, families are increasingly becoming small groups with flat hierarchies and less clear divisions of responsibilities than in traditional families. From this observation alone, it has been possible to deduce hypotheses for the development of extremist groups as a 'counter-movement'. Argyle further distinguishes groups according to which primary tasks they fulfil for individuals, i.e. whether they are to be understood more as problem-solving groups or creative groups, for example. It would also certainly be possible to differentiate among radical and/or extremist groups according to which tasks they pursue and how they fulfil them. This would be relevant for group research, but no studies have yet been carried out in this area. Moreover, tasks are mostly studied within the context of roles within such groups or as means of binding members to ideologies and/or identities.

49 Cf. Andersen/Sandberg 2018.

Elements describing how groups are embedded in their context:

**9 Social and spatial proximity.** Extremist groups cannot be understood without considering their relations of embeddedness, proximity and distance in relation to other groups and the society in which they operate. Terrorism researchers Stefan Malthaner and Peter Waldmann<sup>50</sup> have applied the concept of 'social milieu' to terrorist groups. This makes sense insofar as extremist groups can be determined by *spatial proximity* – either analogue and definable in geographical terms or via virtual networks or imagined societies. Groups also establish interaction and communication structures and group cultures on the basis of the central elements discussed above; furthermore, they are in contact with the broader non-extremist environment. They are thus embedded in further social contexts, which have an effect on the extremist group. By introducing the concept of 'terrorist milieus', Malthaner and Waldmann underlined that terrorist groups depend on the support of their social environment, be it to obtain resources such as members, information or equipment, or to enable their members to embed themselves in 'normal' lifeworlds. The groups, together with other groups in a social environment, form a milieu.

**10 Ideology, identity and cohesion (attraction).** Previous research as well as prevention and intervention efforts distinguish extremist groups according to their central ideologies and goals (Chapter 2).<sup>51</sup> Ideologies are among the central distinguishing features of extremist groups. Right-wing extremist, left-wing extremist, religious fundamentalist and political separatist groups ascribe to the ideologies of extremist movements and develop specific group ideologies. The ideologies are different. They grow out of historical roots and justify the central objectives of radical and extremist groups. They must also be clearly distinguishable according to the logic and identity of the groups themselves, so that they can fulfil the function of identity formation. An aspect of the identity of an extremist group that sets itself apart from the social consensus but does not or not yet pursue terror, or of an extremist group that seeks to overthrow the system, is the distinction from mainstream society and from the group's specific 'enemies', i.e. outgroups. Groups distance themselves from them and stipulate their intention to fight them in order to secure victory for their goals and ideologies. At the same time, other extremist groups and resistance movements belong to the outgroups. Extremism is interdependent and competitive.<sup>52</sup> Neo-Salafist groups fight with other Islamist groups,<sup>53</sup> right-wing extremist groups seek conflicts with Islamist groups. An obvious example is the creation of the German right-wing hooligan group 'HoGeSa' (Hooligans against Salafists), as well as left-wing extremist groups, who stand in political and violence-based rivalry with right-wing extremist groups.<sup>54</sup>

For extremist groups, *radical identities* are as central as shared ideologies. Without social identification, members of extremist groups do not adopt ideologies, therefore ideology and identity are considered together here as common elements. Identities create a sense of belonging. These two elements together determine, on the one hand,

50 Malthaner/Waldmann 2012.

51 Cf. Backes/Jesse 2006.

52 Fathali Moghaddam 2018 speaks of joint radicalisation and impressively traces how extremist groups 'whip each other up' and engage in mutual radicalisation.

53 Cf. the studies of the research network FNRP 2017 and the overview by Logvinov 2017.

54 Cf. also Backes 2006.

the cohesion of groups and, on the other hand, the social influence that the group has on its members and its significance for them. Influence in groups is generated through group-specific communication and interaction, as outlined above. Extremist groups need strong social cohesion, i.e. a force that pulls members of the radical group together. The groups need to create a close-knit mutual dependence that is focused on the achievement of shared goals, i.e. a bond that creates solidarity and unity within the group.<sup>55</sup> Social cohesion is a very significant factor in groups and the social environments of groups. It therefore has a role to play in terrorism research, especially with regard to the development of counter-strategies. In order to detach members from groups, for example, life outside the group should be made as attractive as possible for those who quit; conversely, unattractive environments are more likely to lose people to radical groups.<sup>56</sup>

## Group processes and developments

Groups are independent entities composed of the elements detailed above. They are not static entities. They develop, i.e. they are founded, gain and lose members, are forced to react to internal crises and conflicts and can also break up again. Extremist groups develop and change in specific ways related to the fact that they are in opposition to society as a whole and usually in competition with other extremist groups. This makes it all the more important to understand not only the structures and elements of groups, but also their development and group processes. Group research has developed models for this, but they have not yet been applied effectively to radicalisation processes or empirically tested. It is nonetheless important to mention them here in order to be able to better understand group developments in the future.

The group researcher Bruce Tuckman (1965) compiled many studies and researched in detail how groups organise their members' relationships and carry out specific tasks. His model can be applied to extremist groups because, in a sense, an extremist group is constantly engaged in specific tasks related to radicalisation, identity formation and cohesion in line with more or less clearly defined goals. Tuckman starts from an initial orientation phase, the formation of the group. In this phase, the group members first try to get to know each other, and relationships and communication channels are formally organised. During this phase, certain information is more important for the members than in the later phases. For extremist groups, which can form online or offline, ideological information is less important in the early phase of group development than information about commonalities, similarities or emotional information that creates a bond with the group. In the second phase, a phase of conflict, rivalry among group members sets in. Through the exchange of ideas, expectations and needs, differences of opinion arise that lead to intragroup conflicts. When these are resolved, e.g. by means of an authoritarian strategy of role distribution and a centralised network in which communication goes through a single person (the leader or an inner elite), a third phase of consolidation (norming) either begins or the group fails. In this phase, group norms are negotiated and group rules are made explicit. This can create a group identity and a sense of community, which enables higher motivation. In the fourth

phase of implementation (performing), the task is then carried out collectively. In the case of an extremist group, this means that the group functions in this phase to carry out tasks such as recruitment, mobilisation, ideology consolidation, and the planning and execution of acts together. The fifth stage of dissolution may occur if the group fails to perform the tasks that define it and to live up to its identity criteria.

Social psychologists Richard L. Moreland and John M. Levine (1982) developed a similar model, which has become well known.<sup>57</sup> They divide the development of groups into five phases. First, a group begins with the investigation phase. The group is formed, members take on new roles and there is a systematic effort of recruitment and initiation. Groups also develop a founding myth. In this phase, members become familiar with the group. The second phase is one of group socialisation. Members are required to adopt group structures (roles, values, etc., see above). In doing so, the members also change the group. At this point, some recruits may become full members of the group. The third phase is maintenance. In this phase, roles are negotiated and intragroup conflicts occur, with the result that the commitment of some members in the group may decrease. This phase may give rise to fringe members, who do not have the same status as full members. Their commitment to the group may decline, which creates the need for a fourth phase of resocialisation measures. If these do not work, the group could decline into a phase of remembrance, only maintaining itself by remembering and reflecting on its traditions. The various phases entail specific role transitions. Specific roles are defined and are accepted by individuals in relation to entry, acceptance, deviation and, potentially, exit from the group. Group development can thus be understood in terms of roles. This role-based model could also be applied to extremist groups and may be helpful in analysis and prevention. However, this model – as mentioned above – has not yet been taken into account in extremism research, prevention and intervention. This is because radicalisation research has tended to focus on its own models at the expense of models developed by basic research on small groups and conflicts between groups. The former will be mentioned briefly, although they concern less the development of groups than the development of group members.

With the exception of historical research and some work in the political sciences, radicalisation research has been less concerned with systematising the development of groups than with the processes of radicalisation undergone by individuals both before and during the phase of group membership. Since individual radicalisation in groups understood in this way encompasses different societal and social levels, historical roots, diverse actors and concrete environmental factors (i.e. it is highly complex), no simple model of radicalisation in the form of group development can be found. It is not possible at this time to identify a model for the development of extremist groups that is both theoretically sophisticated and empirically tested. However, key foundational elements and processes can be outlined in such a way that radicalisation processes can be better understood.

Rainer Kilb proposed a theoretical developmental model of youth radicalisation in 2015. It is based on the general group models outlined above, but focuses on the development of radicalisation in young adolescents. The model has seven stages. Radicalisation initially begins with a 'tendency towards patterns of psychosocial compensation with violent, dualistic, totalitarian, patriarchal, oppressive, militant features, which can be traced back to,

<sup>55</sup> Fedes/Nickolson/Mann/Doosje 2020; cf. the introduction to social psychology by Hogg/Vaughan 2005.

<sup>56</sup> The study by Pickering/McCulloch/Wright-Neville 2008 demonstrates this very well empirically.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Moreland/Levine/Cini 1993.

among other things, grandiose projections involving the desire for the restoration of lost territory or status or former glories.<sup>58</sup> This is followed by a search for orientation and the experience of elevated personal value (being better than others). It is especially relevant during the phase of recruitment by extremist groups. After this comes acceptance into the group, which brings an experience of being welcome as well as elevated self-worth. Fourthly, there is full membership in the community of collective struggle, which goes hand in hand with social orientation, social security, integration and the experience of the possibility of adopting a new social identity and thereby becoming a different person. Fifthly, on the basis of this membership, a group community emerges that is accompanied by a 'serious game character' and fantasies of greatness and, sixthly, by excessive experiences of omnipotence and transgression of boundaries. In the seventh stage, the group solidifies, and ideologies and identities become a way of life. In the process, however, feelings of insecurity and fantasies of escape may arise, which in the end could also lead a member to leave the group as a result of their own cognitive processes or alternative offers. This is an ideal model: it outlines a model of progressive radicalisation in a group. However, it has not been empirically tested in a systematic way and, unfortunately, has not been applied to a specific extremist group, although this would have been possible. In this model, too, the social motives of individuals, which are apparently easier to satisfy in extremist groups, play an important role.

The social motives of potential group members have already been mentioned as reasons for radicalisation. A number of models now exist that describe the process of radicalisation assuming a developmental model of groups. In a much-cited journal article, terrorism researcher Randy Borum (2011) reviewed and compared many theories and models. Based on his synthesis of terrorism and radicalisation research, he proposes a simplified model, which is reproduced in Figure 1 with one addition by me.



Fig. 1: Model of radicalisation based on Borum 2011, with influence of propaganda

According to this model, the radicalisation of individuals who progressively embrace ideologies and violence begins with a constant sense of grievance, accompanied by complaints about their social circumstances. In my view, this also includes socially shared emotions of fear and threat, which are significant for the development of social movements.<sup>59</sup> In many cases of Islamist radicalisation, young people in the early stages of radicalisation become obsessed with thoughts of systemic unfairness and chronic feelings of injustice.<sup>60</sup> They associate their failures at school, crises in the family, attachment problems, etc. with their membership of the Muslim group and

the oppression of Islam. This is transformed by extremist propagandists and agitators into a state of assertion that principles of justice no longer play any role in the current state of affairs. After this denunciation of fairness and justice comes a phase in which the irresolvable injustice of the world is attributed to others, i.e. to 'enemies', 'evildoers', or, however it is defined, to the 'system', which the propaganda and agitation of the extremist group declares to be responsible. In this way, terrorist groups absolve themselves of all blame, which is attributed to their opponents. Once this fundamental attribution has taken place, group members can finally withdraw from their conventional living environments and the devaluation of the enemy can begin, with violence and terror ultimately appearing legitimate. According to Borum's model, radicalisation into extremism is a process of turning towards extremist groups and away from the conventional, non-extremist living environment. In my opinion, however, the transitions between the phases only work if the terrorist groups succeed in binding members of the groups to themselves through identitarian agitation and propaganda and in holding them together through ideologies and identities. Therefore, I have added the factor of 'identitarian propaganda and agitation' to the model in Figure 1.

An alternative understanding of the process of group radicalisation, one that takes into account societal as well as group-specific and individual factors, is the attempt to identify 'radicalisation pathways'.

Movement researcher Donatella della Porta (2018) has proposed a relational approach to the analysis of radicalisation processes, which can also explain individuals' entry into extremist groups.<sup>61</sup> Her approach tries to link processes of social change, such as modernisation, cultural change and changes in traditions, to individual, psychological processes. She argues that radicalisation to violence results from interactions among individuals, for example when supporters or members of political movements come into conflict with state security authorities and come to increasingly justify the use of violence as a result. She cites several examples that show the extent to which radical movements have their roots in confrontations with police who act oppressively. Radicalisation thus results from an aggressive and potentially violent conflict between groups. In della Porta's view, conflict, e.g. with the police, can fuel radicalisation, which is why radical groups sometimes directly seek it out. This is consistent with observations from Germany. Here, there have been some cases where neo-Salafists provoked conflicts with right-wing extremists in public spaces, and the groups tried to involve the police in the conflict as 'enemies' of both sides. Many similar cases can be observed where right-wing extremist groups seek out conflicts and violent escalations with left-wing extremist groups, or left-wing extremist groups do so with the police. Conflict between groups is an important reason for radicalisation, but equally for the creation of cohesion and escalation. At the same time, polarisation within extremist groups, which corresponds to radicalisation, also depends on how well groups can establish the kinds of networks mentioned above. The research group around della Porta has distinguished various radicalisation paths, which are listed in Table 1.

<sup>58</sup> Kilb 2015, 20.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Johnston 2016.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Beilmann/Jahnke/Neudecker 2017.

<sup>61</sup> For an introduction and summary, see della Porta 2018.

**Table 1: Paths of radicalisation (Bosi/della Porta 2012)**

Path	Dominant motivations (micro-level)	Recruitment-relevant networks (meso-level)	Perception of context (macro-level)
Ideological	Ideological, identity	Family and territorial traditions	Potential revolutionary situation
Instrumental	Aspiration to change	Political groups	Closed opportunities
Solidaristic	Experiential cognition	Peer group	Escalation of political conflict

According to this schema, individuals may find their way into groups when the latter a) provide ideologies and identities, b) establish relationships with social networks that are important to them, such as families and physically close groups, and c) when their view of reality is shaped by the belief that the social situation demands a revolution. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Leninist groups in Italy are cited as examples where radicalisation is predominantly ideological. Instrumental radicalisation, which aims at the betterment of social conditions, is more likely to take place in politically narrow groups that expect to benefit from radicalisation and conflict with society. It is motivated, for example, by the perception that peaceful conflict resolution is unlikely or impossible. The Basque group ETA is given here as an example. Group-specific radicalisation based on solidarity is more likely to be motivated by emotional experiences of anger, resentment, degradation, etc. It is linked to recruitment into peer networks and escalates with the extent of the political conflict that the group constructs or enters into. Islamist groups in Europe, which are mainly composed of adolescent males, would be examples of this path of radicalisation. This approach is interesting in that it brings research on extremism closely into line with research on social movements and protests, thus explaining modern manifestations of extremism and actions of extremist groups.

However, the processes and dynamics need to be researched in more detail in order to understand the specific processes in extremist groups. This will be done in the following paragraphs, which will look in more detail at the entry phase, becoming a member through identification, conflicts between groups and their importance for cohesion, and ways to exit groups.

## Recruitment and entry into the group

A special and essential phase in radicalisation that is also and especially relevant for the question of early detection and prevention is entry into extremist groups. The threshold for becoming a member of extremist groups is incredibly high, and any analysis and practical intervention has to answer the question of why individuals take on the costs of extremism, even given all the promises that the groups make of easy solutions, utopian visions or power. Research shows that, before joining groups, individuals generally undergo a period of increasingly intensive searching. This is not yet considered to be a group process. Before joining a group, many notorious future terrorists searched intensively for information in their environments – and more recently above all in social networks – and consumed offers from ideological groups or opinion leaders, thereby becoming attractive to the groups that actively recruited

them. Entry into groups occurs in a mutual process of searching by individuals and recruitment by the group.

Recruitment has also been researched relatively extensively, as this phase is also significant for early detection.<sup>62</sup> Recruitment by groups follows certain basic principles: a) reciprocity: ‘We will give you an identity and help you out of the crisis; society does not want you. In return, you get to be part of the excluded group’, b) a binding commitment to totalitarian categories (defined by the group), norms, values and rules, c) scarcity, which ascribes to the group the attributes of vanguardism and martyrdom, d) the duty of proof, which consists in the requirement that those to be recruited demonstrate their conversion and adopt a new biography, e) proof of sympathy, and f) recognition of authority, which has been demonstrated in online recruitment processes in particular.<sup>63</sup> Recruitment processes generally follow these principles. As part of this, groups develop initiation and admission rites and rules (see above). These make the groups more attractive to those who are accepted, who feel a sense of accomplishment at having cleared the hurdles. Individuals or groups who are targeted for recruitment may remain anonymous. They first get to know moderate and relatively harmless facets of the groups and are only required to do minor favours for the group in the initial period. The efforts that potential members put in early on makes them more willing to justify the commitment to their new group later on.

Moghaddam (2009) has studied various terrorist groups and recorded how recruitment is adapted to different individuals and contexts. In the first phase, recruiters are highly skilled at addressing the specific desires and aspirations of potential recruits in a targeted fashion. This could be world conquest, working for a good cause, humanitarian issues, escaping Western consumerism or the dream of a martyr’s place in paradise after carrying out a suicide attack. In the second stage, commonalities such as the ‘Islamic family’ are emphasised and the recruit is required to turn their back on old habits. Belonging to the Islamic State (IS), for example, is glorified as participation in true Islam, as spiritual renewal and as the promise of a new identity.<sup>64</sup> It is suggested to the new members that they will soon be valuable members of the exalted and illustrious Islamic world of the new caliphate. In the third stage, the sense of belonging to IS is emphasised even more. It is increasingly emphasised that the members are now in possession of the sole truth, that they are the elect and superior to unbelievers.<sup>65</sup> In the fourth stage, the lines of demarcation to other believers, unbelievers and those who do not belong become increasingly radical and absolute. At this point, only relationships within the Islamist group exist. Superiority and ‘chosenness’ are emphasised again and again. The idea that it is a right and even a duty to kill dissenters or ‘infidels’ is increasingly voiced. Violence is trivialised. Group activities, such as the gruesome ritual of collectively watching beheading videos, become everyday entertainment. The final stage in radicalisation is departure to combat zones, i.e. in the case of IS to Iraq or Syria or other territories claimed by the group. There, they learn the craft of killing in training camps. During this experience of being in a group with other men and women who are willing to kill, the participants are brutalised, cruelty increases and previously held inhibitions about killing disappear.

<sup>62</sup> Dunbar 2022; for an overview of various hypotheses on drivers, see also Allan et al. 2015.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Guadagno et al. 2010.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. the studies on IS by Dahmer 2015 and Mekhennet et al. 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Reuter 2015.

Via in-depth interviews with jihadists living in Western democracies, terrorism researcher Quintan Wiktorowicz (2006) identified four components of development that fit both the above models and empirical observations. First of all, potential group members can be observed to undergo ‘cognitive opening’. This arises, in Wiktorowicz’s view, when people who are in contact with extremist milieus become mentally receptive to such extreme worldviews. This is followed by a search for religious meaning, adaptation of the extremist interpretation of reality as a framework for one’s own perception and finally submission to complete indoctrination by the group.

Another well-known model is the one proposed by terrorism researchers Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko,<sup>66</sup> which they derived from numerous analyses and studies of terrorist individuals and groups. They distinguish between mechanisms for the radicalisation of individuals, which are replaced by radicalisation in groups, which in turn can flow into the radicalisation of large groups. According to this theory, at the individual level, experiences of discrimination and victimisation increase a sense of grief and the possibility of slipping into the group. Likewise, sharing experiences of discrimination enables close relationships with other members of a terrorist group to develop. At the group level, radicalisation is driven by an extreme shift to the all-important identification with the group, accomplished by means such as extreme cohesion, isolation of groups or members, threats, rivalry for positions in the group, confrontations with state power, or conflicts and divisions within the group. Larger extremist movements, which cannot maintain close contact with their individual subgroups, radicalise the groups and their members by means of ‘policies’ oriented solely towards struggle, which they justify by referring to attacks they claim are being carried out on their communities by a broader ‘enemy’ (the ‘Muslims’, the ‘Ummah’, the ‘elites’, ‘capital’). Radicalisation through a shared hatred of enemies and via the image of martyrdom are two other paths that McCauley and Moskalkenko identify in their analyses. Similarly, Dounia Bouzar (2016) has distinguished four stages of recruitment for Islamist groups: firstly, isolation from family and the social environment; secondly, eradication of individuality; thirdly, attachment to radical ideology; and fourthly, dehumanisation of enemies. This describes almost the entire radicalisation process (see below).

Regardless of how entry takes place and how it is organised, group research shows that every time a new member joins, it creates tensions in the group. In addition, entry points vary and must be based on the individual characteristics of the groups and individuals. According to research on group dynamics, key criteria for entry are a certain level of mutual commitment on the part of both groups and potential members, the group’s decision-making criteria and the willingness of existing group members to change roles. Extremist groups develop appropriate rules and criteria to manage this. Ideologies have functional rather than substantive significance at entry; that is, their content may be less relevant than their function in satisfying social needs. They are the social bonding agent of the group.<sup>67</sup> With regard to the question of who seeks out extremist groups, research tends to look for personality factors in addition to social motivations.<sup>68</sup> The results of this are rather inconsistent<sup>69</sup> and initially only

relevant in the group context insofar as successful extremist groups have diagnostic skills to analyse personality structures and are capable of interpreting and evaluating the motives of potential future members. However, this is not enough; after all, the adoption of identities and ideologies plays the decisive role. For the entry process, extremist groups need arguments that balance the benefits of entry against the high costs of extremism. Entry into a group can turn people into outsiders, disqualifying them because they have to change their appearance and behaviour, and make them ‘enemies’ of other groups. The incentives at entry are identities, exclusive ideologies, the possibility of cohesion and the awareness-raising that is promised. Entry sets the stage for subsequent processes.

## From individual to group member

Overall, radicalisation is a process of seeking and finding an identity.<sup>70</sup> The search for meaning and the desire for personal significance<sup>71</sup> are part of this. In the absence of answers or when individuals have experiences of insignificance in their social environment, this can lead to feelings of powerlessness to act and increased radical and extreme thoughts and emotions. This in turn increases the likelihood of identifying with extremist groups and ideologies. In the group, there is a turning away from the previous environment and a radical change of identity, which is then exclusively determined by the extremist group and is accompanied by an exclusive self-image that is completely dependent on the extremist group.

As mentioned above, it is enormously important for the group formation phase and the persistence of groups that they establish cohesion and commitment to ideologies. Radicalisation in groups can be understood as a change of identity or the adoption of a new extremist social identity.<sup>72</sup> The entry of individuals to groups and radicalisation in groups is accompanied by depersonalisation. This is possible because groups provide members with an extreme self-image to adopt, in which the exercise of violence is perceived as part of their identity and actions are carried out on behalf of the group. Depersonalisation refers to a process in which individual characteristics, thoughts, emotions, as well as relationships increasingly fade into the background and the person increasingly incorporates group thoughts, emotions and relationships into their own identity.

In addition to the change of identity, commitment (i.e. the members’ self-commitment to roles and goals) and obedience play an important role. To build commitment and become further radicalised, extremist groups may make use of opportunities for social influence and mutual support, leadership styles adapted to the given circumstances, systems of reward and punishment and social identification. In our opinion, offering members a chance to present themselves as valuable and significant plays a particularly important role. Self-presentation is decisive, as many empirical similarities in analyses of right-wing extremist or Islamist-oriented groups and of school attackers show.<sup>73</sup> Radical individuals present themselves using symbols of violence, which are

<sup>66</sup> McCauley/Moskalkenko 2008/2012

<sup>67</sup> Cf. the overviews by Pisoiu 2013 and Daalgaard-Nielsen 2010.

<sup>68</sup> Pisoiu et al. (2020).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. also Chapter 3.3. as well as the analyses by Srowig et al. 2018 and the study by Lützing 2010.

<sup>70</sup> Zick 2017a.

<sup>71</sup> Kruglanski et al. 2013.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Zick 2005.

<sup>73</sup> See Böckler/Leuschner/Zick/Scheithauer 2018.



transfigured as ‘pure emotion’ and allow them to appear as idols. In his ‘Manifesto 2083’, Anders Breivik styled himself as a knight and defender of the West. He seemed to be absorbed in an exuberant self-presentation. The attacker in New Zealand who executed 50 people in a mosque in March 2019 went so far as to interview himself in his manifesto. In other words, he prepared his self-presentation for the media.

The psychology-oriented radicalisation researcher Fathali Moghaddam (2005) has developed a staircase model on terror based on empirical observations. It is shown in Figure 2.

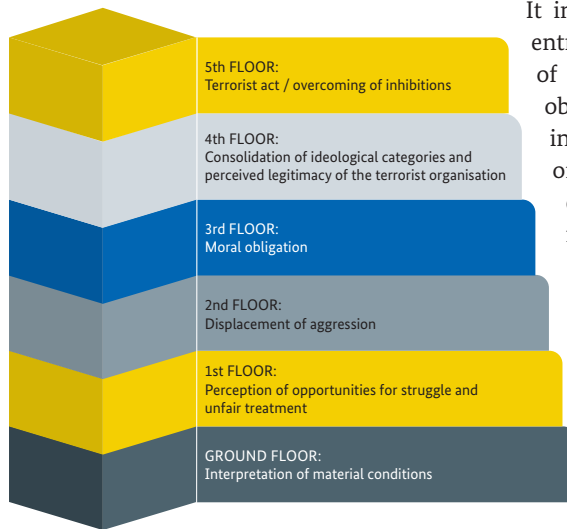


Fig. 2: Staircase model according to Moghaddam based on Young et al. 2013

It includes both group processes – from entry to the terrorist act – and the change of identity and the establishment of obligations to the group. This model takes into account the fact that not all members of terror groups have to go to the furthest extreme, i.e. the act of terror. They can remain on a given floor as experts. Group processes are organised on each floor according to roles and tasks. On the first level, the ground floor, the psychological interpretation of material conditions shapes entry. When individuals who claim that they are suffering and being judged unfairly approach terrorist groups, they receive confirmation for their feelings of injustice on the ground floor together with reinforcement that they are entitled to something better.

This has already been made clear in the analysis of entry (see above). For Moghaddam, the sense of disadvantage, lack and frustration in comparison to other groups, especially hostile groups (relative deprivation), shapes and drives radicalisation at the beginning. Terrorist organisations have members who specialise in agitation and radicalisation on this and the following floors. On the first floor, members are offered opportunities to fight against the perceived injustice. On the second floor, the aggression that is generated is shifted to focus on the enemies of the group. This can also be seen in the model represented in Figure 1 (see above). Here, feelings and myths of threat play a role in radicalisation together with new feelings of self-efficacy. On the third floor, moral engagement to the terrorist group takes place. The ability of groups to suppress moral concerns among members is relevant here. On the fourth floor, there is a consolidation of thinking about the group’s goals and legitimation of the terror organisation. On this floor, ideological indoctrination (influence) takes place. On the fifth floor, the act of terror is then appropriated; inhibitions are eliminated and acts of terror take place. Here, the conformity and compliance of the members play a primary role.

This model, however, overlooks the processes that shape the acts, which are ultimately crucial for extremist groups. The staging of the act and other group practices is highly significant. This is supported by clear and unambiguous action scripts. Similarly, the staging of the geographical and social spaces in which groups carry out attacks

is not arbitrary. The groups ascribe a symbolic significance to them. Perpetrators place themselves in the limelight by carrying out attacks, and mark the areas where they create chaos and disorder as group spaces. An analysis of 160 violent attacks perpetrated in the USA between 2000 and 2013 shows how significant places are as staging grounds. The majority of attacks (45.6%) took place in commercial spaces, such as shopping malls and pedestrian zones followed by educational institutions (24.4%). Government institutions were targeted less often (10%), as were public areas (9.4%), residential areas and neighbourhoods (4.4%), places of worship (3.8%) and health facilities (2.5%). The terrorist attack in Paris on 13 November 2015 also followed a precise spatial orchestration. The series of attacks was carried out by coordinated groups. It began at 9.20 p.m. with suicide bombings at the Stade de France football stadium. This was followed five minutes later by shootings in two bars, a restaurant and at 9.40 p.m. the attack with 89 civilian victims in the Bataclan music club. Most of the people killed were young people who were out to have fun.

## Conflicts between groups

Extremist groups are in constant conflict with other groups, i.e. outgroups (external groups) or enemies of their own ideology and identity, or groups that threaten them. These can be groups that fight them (security agencies such as the police), but also extremist counter-movements or civil society groups. Outgroups may be portrayed as exceptionally threatening depending on the threat they pose to cohesion. Intergroup dynamics and demarcation play a prominent role in the development of group identity.

Social psychologist Andreas Beelmann (2020) emphasises that the key radicalisation factors are identity at the emotional level, prejudice at the social level and violence at the ideological level. According to social identity theory, the development of a new identity defined by the extremist group is the decisive basis for the adoption of the ideologies and all other characteristics of a group as well as the willingness to carry out acts of terror.<sup>74</sup> This social identity is given its weight by the group. The self-worth that the group provides in this way can be increased and maintained through the devaluation of the outgroups. Here, groups that are similar to the reference group are more threatening to identity than groups that are more distant.<sup>75</sup> Extremist groups are therefore constantly dependent on producing and constructing negative images of the enemy and communicating to members that the destruction of the enemy is a legitimate and necessary action.

The ‘enemy’ is also staged in such a way as to facilitate identification by group members. In this regard, subcultures and their output in the form of linguistic and visual images and music play a central role for extremist groups. The heterogeneous groups of any extremist spectrum are held together by common cultural practices that stage ingroup-outgroup differences (friend-foe patterns). This also explains the special significance of cultural symbols, such as the significance of music in the area of youth-oriented extremism, through which friend-foe stagings are expressed, especially in

<sup>74</sup> For an overview of the social identity approach see Reicher/Speers/Haslam 2010.

<sup>75</sup> See Zick 2005 for a summary of the theory.

right-wing extremism.<sup>76</sup> If the group and its symbols do not fulfil the social motives of identity and affiliation, the individual is likely to exit the group and reject it.

## Getting out and the end of groups

Extremist groups try at all costs to keep their members in the group. Groups strive for firm cohesion. The disengagement of members and the dissolution of extremist groups are processes in their own right that cannot be explained by an analysis of group dynamics alone. Jones and Libicki (2008) have documented this impressively in the case of Al-Qaeda, which uses extreme violence to influence possible drop-outs and has developed a high level of social pressure as well as an internal surveillance and security system. Certainly, extremist groups can also be dissolved by the authorities, as may occur when they are outlawed or through detection and prosecution by the legal authorities. Their dissolution and/or the disengagement of members can also be produced by infiltrators, who dissolve the group's bonds from within. However, this is not the subject of our analysis, which is concerned with group-specific factors. Extremist groups particularly try to prevent members from leaving when drop-outs have knowledge and information about the group and letting them leave would pose a risk. Terrorist groups have therefore been known to carry out executions of members who become a problem for the group. Equally, there are cases of individuals leaving the group to protect it. This was, for instance, the case in the WhatsApp group mentioned above.<sup>77</sup> The question of when and why people leave extremist groups is of great interest for prevention and intervention.

Research on distancing and disengagement (detachment, letting go) has made important observations on phases of termination of membership of terrorist groups.<sup>78</sup> It distinguishes between the push and pull factors that bind or unbind people in groups. For example, fear of negative sanctions by the groups prevents people from leaving. Factors that promote disengagement are disillusionment, self-doubt, experiences of violence in the group, a lack of goals, disappointment with relationships in the group, costs of obedience, exhaustion, loss of status or trust, stigmatisation by society and/or unresolved questions of meaning that were attached to the group. High costs of alternative relationships outside the group, such as those arising from starting a family, can also promote de-radicalisation, a reduction in commitment or disengagement.<sup>79</sup> The analysis of group processes can facilitate group-based de-radicalisation work. Intervention to promote de-radicalisation succeeds, according to research, when entry processes can be slowed down or made more difficult; working with radicalised individuals helps to promote dissent within the group, calling leaders into question and thus facilitating exits.

<sup>76</sup> The extremism researcher Anna-Maria Haase (2014) has examined such representations in right-wing extremist music. She distinguishes three central groups of negative images of enemies. Firstly, the music is characterised by popular misanthropic stereotypical images that stress the cohesion of the group (the nation, 'US') and contrasts to others (enemies, inferiors) and ascribe characteristics such as 'lazy', 'dirty', 'deceitful', 'ready to resort to violence' and 'disrespectful' to the groups that are to be fought or even eradicated. Secondly, there are racist-dehumanising images of enemies that make them seem no longer human, and thirdly, enemies can be stylised as resistant to categorisation, i.e. they are threatening because they are vague and dominate everything, and only the ingroups know the truth.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. FNRP 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Bjørge/Horgan 2009.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Gadd 2006.

The factors that can lead to the end of an extremist group have not yet been systematised. Both extremist and less radical groups are generally more likely to disband, and to do so more quickly, when their identity and goals become irrelevant and their founding idea can no longer bind members to the group. Numerous terrorist groups throughout history have therefore dissolved, such as, most recently, the Basque group ETA. The transfer of members from one extremist group to another and the transformation of an entire group into another are also not very well researched. Group research has shown that the end of the group is near when the internal binding forces and identifications in the group are weaker than alternative binding forces and offers of identity outside the group.<sup>80</sup> However, when the factors that bind people to extremist groups no longer apply, this does not automatically indicate that factors exist that will drive people out of such groups. The social and societal context in which groups are embedded is a crucial factor in binding people to groups and weakening binding forces. The following section considers factors that are significant for disengaging (detaching) as well as binding forces.

## Risk of extremist groups

From the perspective of group research, the question of what dangers and risks extremist groups pose is not only a practical one. Risk and threat analysis has become a topic of research. Group research assumes that, in modern societies, groups can be more significant for individuals than societies, because the latter are losing their ability to bind. This can be clearly observed in the fact that regions where democracy is weak produce more terrorist groups, and that the integration of terrorist groups into democratic processes weakens the groups.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, social structures and developments lead to the emergence of groups and generate their contours. With regard to radicalisation, a key question is how radical or extremist societies are and whether this causes individuals to move from the centre to the extremist fringe or join groups there. The radicalisation of societies also takes place by means of and in groups. Even radicalised 'lone wolves' who are not (or no longer) members of groups share the social identities of imagined groups or become radicalised with reference to groups. However, it has also become clear that not all individual group members become radicalised to the same extent. It is therefore imperative for democratically oriented societies to maintain an accurate assessment of the risk of existing groups, especially extremist groups, and thus protect themselves from the extremism and radicalism of groups.

Assessing threat and risk potential is easier in the case of groups with an unambiguously terrorist orientation. Ehud Sprinzak (1998) has systematised indicators for assessing the terrorism potential of groups. The Terrorism Potential Index (TPI) also takes into account historical, cultural and contextual factors, such as conflict cultures in societies, communal conflicts in areas where extremist groups are active and social instability; this makes the index extremely interesting. Factors that directly influence the groups are taken into account, such as rival groups and support networks. It also pays attention to factors belonging to the immediate situation in which a group finds itself, such as triggering events that promote radicalisation. An example would be

<sup>80</sup> Cf. van de Wetering/Zick 2018.

<sup>81</sup> Waha 2020.

attacks on people and groups with whom a terrorist group identifies. Finally, the index distinguishes group-specific factors and factors that describe the organisation of the group, such as group dynamics or behavioural tendencies in the group. Table 2 lists the warning factors derived from this.

**Table 2: Warning indicators for the terrorism potential in radicalised groups according to Sprinzak 1998**

Indicator	Increase in terrorism potential due to:	
1	Intensity of delegitimisation	Extent to which the group questions the legitimacy of its opponents (delegitimisation potentials)
2	Moral inhibition and taboos against violence	Societal structures concerning the legitimacy of violence; groups operating in fragmented political cultures with a history of violence pose a greater risk
3	Previous experiences of violence	Members' experience of violence, conflict and weapons
4	Rational assessment of risks and opportunities	Extent to which the radical group has calculated the necessity and feasibility of confronting its enemies with violence
5	Organisational, financial and political resources	Extent to which the radical group has the means to support a terrorist campaign
6	Sense of impending stress	Extent to which a radical group feels threatened by its enemies; the more immediate and catastrophic the threat, the greater the risk that the group will resort to terrorism
7	Competition between groups	Degree to which a radical group is competing with another group for a shrinking constituency and terrorism; it is seen as the way to keep the group on top
8	Age of the activists	Extent to which the radical group is composed of young activists; the greater the concentration of activists between the ages of 18 and 25, the greater the risk
9	External influences and manipulation	Nature and extent of support for radical organisations; money and training support from foreign governments, etc.
10	Sense of humiliation and need to take revenge	Extent to which the radical group is subjected to physical oppression or torture or feels humiliated by its enemies (revenge motive)
11	Presence of violence-oriented leaders	Degree to which the leader or leadership of the radical group exhibits a history of violent behaviour; the more violent the leaders, the greater the risk of terrorism

There are a number of other risk models and threat approaches currently being developed and tested in research and practice.<sup>82,83</sup> However, these are less focused on the question of the risk of the various extremist groups in terms of all the characteristics and elements of the group process mentioned here, and more on individuals, even if they are linked to groups. Overall, research that understands extremist groups as independent of individuals and focuses on group processes, dynamics and mechanisms is still relatively weak.

## Challenges for research

Many, if not all, social psychology textbooks emphasise that any attempt to classify groups in terms of specific factors needs to take into account the special significance of subjective experience and psychological processes. For instance, individuals can identify with groups that do not exist in reality, such as caliphates or racially 'pure'

nations. The central elements according to which groups define themselves are a sense of belonging, common goals and norms, identification, and the evaluation and valuation of the members among themselves. They shape the social psychology of groups, including extremist groups. The German social psychologist Manfred Sader has pointed out that group researchers do not allow a definition of groups to be imposed on them. Essential to defining groups, he says, is understanding how groups define belonging; pursue goals; share norms, behavioural rules and tasks; differentiate roles; have external contacts; identify with reference persons and differentiate themselves spatially and temporally from the broader environment; etc. This chapter is intended to contribute towards this understanding, which is just as relevant for the analysis as it is for practice, i.e. dealing with extremist groups and their members. However, in documenting the essential structures and processes of extremist groups, we have had to point out again and again where analysis and research are lacking. Understanding groups means researching them with their dynamics and as independent entities. Such research is largely lacking. The aim here is not to reiterate all the gaps in research, but to mention topics that can encourage further study.

The 'group view of extremism' suggests understanding extremist groups within the context of other groups. There is a lack of comparative studies in this regard.<sup>84</sup> Extremism research needs to undertake more comprehensive quantitative comparative research of the kind that Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog (2016) undertook in a large-scale study of jihadist groups. Gambetta and Hertog compiled an extensive sample of jihadists spanning many countries and examined the connection between education and affinity for extremist groups. However, these analyses only shed light on the motivation to join groups – which is only one of the many factors that describe group dynamics. Far more detailed and comprehensive studies are needed on the differences in group structures and processes among the various extremist phenomena.

So far, there have been far too few comparative analyses of group dynamics in different extremist groups that ask about the differences and similarities among extremist groups in formation, dissolution and dynamics.<sup>85</sup> Studies have been carried out (see above) that compare groups historically, politically, criminologically and especially with regard to ideologies,<sup>86</sup> but there is a lack of systematic analysis of group processes and the dynamics of mutual demarcations of extremist groups. One important research question, for example, would concern how structures in different extremist groups create cohesion. Similarly, sufficient attention has not been paid to comparisons of extremist groups with other groups such as gangs, sects or organised crime.

Such analyses are worthwhile, as a study by Alimi, Bosi and Demetriou shows.<sup>87</sup> They compared a Cypriot group (Enosis-EOK), the IRA and the Fatah-Tanzim group. The results show differences along the dimensions of a) the relationship between the terror group and its social environment (escalation spiral), b) the competition for power within the groups, c) the relationship between members and security actors, and d) the relationship between the terror movement and counter-movements. They show, in the

<sup>84</sup> In the *Jahrbuch für Extremismus- und Terrorismusforschung 2017/18 (I)*, Pfahl-Traugber traces further findings of comparative research.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Zick 2017c.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Backes/Jesse 2006.

<sup>87</sup> Alimi/Bosi/Demetriou 2012.

<sup>82</sup> On jihadism, see e.g. Borum 2015; Fischer/Pelzer 2016; on warning behaviour and threat assessment, Meloy/Hoffmann 2014.

<sup>83</sup> We ourselves are currently developing a European database on the risk and protective factors relating to different phenomena of terrorism (Alberda et al. 2021). Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to obtain long-term funding for this across national borders.

first instance, how differences along these dimensions determine the characteristics of the various groups. At the same time, they also reveal the extent to which a change in the targets of terror promotes radicalisation. The emergence of extremist counter-movements thus led to radicalisation in all groups. As soon as alternative extremist groups appeared, the group became radicalised.

Jerrold Post (2010) has compared another aspect of terrorist groups. He proposes a more psychological view of the differences between groups, suggesting that young people's loyalty to parents and families, as well as their parents' relationship to mainstream society, explain different motivations for joining nationalist-separatist and social-revolutionary terrorist groups. To this end, he cites results from interviews with Islamist and Palestinian terrorist groups.

On the basis of this system of risk factors distinguished by Sprinzak (Tab. 2, above), Post and his co-authors differentiate five typical extremist groups: nationalist-separatist, social-revolutionary and religious-fundamentalist groups, non-traditional religious extremists and 'new religions' (closed religious sects and cult groups), and right-wing-oriented or right-wing extremist groups. They differ qualitatively and according to the time and place in which they develop.<sup>88</sup> This analysis also takes into account the reaction of extremist groups to each other. The authors use 32 variables, applying them to each of the groups and combine in order to uncover significant differences, which can be identified relatively clearly. These factors can be used to develop preventive measures. Firstly, historical, cultural and contextual characteristics are important for all terrorist groups and can be easily identified using publicly accessible sources and expert knowledge. However, this is less true for new religious groups. Secondly, group characteristics, processes and structures can be classified as important for predicting terrorism across all five group types. Group ideologies and goals, experience with violence, authoritarian leadership and decision-making, organisational processes such as recruitment, training and the breaking down of members, and group psychological processes such as humiliation and revenge, threat awareness and negative characterisation of the enemy are particularly important, according to Post et al. Thirdly, leaders and leadership structures are more important than other factors in new religious groups. The closed and intense environment of new religious groups means that leadership and socialisation processes take on extreme significance, with charismatic leaders playing an important role.

The group dynamics explored in this paper are thus similar in many groups according to the view of studies and field reports. In a sense, terrorist groups are less different from a social psychological point of view than they would appear from the meaning and staging of their ideologies, messages, external features, etc. Of course, the various radical, extremist and terrorist groups differ in terms of their history, geographical location, ideology and, above all, their ideological goals and enemies. However, looking at similarities in group dynamics results in different typologies than looking at political or religious ideologies.

The constellation of risk factors and comparisons of extremist groups point to the complexity and heterogeneity of group processes. Some extremist groups are also more long-lived than small groups, cells and online networks that emerge and dissolve

again. Especially with regard to extremism on the net (see Chapter 3.4 in the present volume), the question arises as to the persistence and cohesion of extremist groups. Groups that are active both online and offline seem to be more stable than groups that only exist online.<sup>89</sup>

In order to study groups more closely, research would have to be planned over a far longer time scale. Moreover, it would actually have to be conducted within the groups, which is of course effectively impossible for ethical, moral, legal and methodological reasons. Research is dependent on analyses from outside and reports 'from within', i.e. from within radical groups. Analyses based on working with former members of extremist groups can be helpful, but such analyses are often subject to retrospective perception bias of former radical, extremist or terrorist individuals. Unfortunately, no simulation studies or research syntheses are available, although they offer an alternative and important complement to studies that explore groups 'from the outside'. Much improvement is still necessary in the analysis of the dynamics and processes of such groups both in theories on group processes of radicalisation and in methodological terms. There is no systematic effort to ensure a close and intensive exchange of theories and data between representatives from various areas of research and practice working with groups.

The account given so far of group elements and group dynamics is an initial attempt to transfer knowledge from small group and conflict research to our understanding of extremist groups. Yet the analysis of extremism at the 'group level' has its limits. Radicalisation to extremism is not solely a group phenomenon. An important question that must follow any analysis of the extremist group is how phenomena within and between groups relate to their historical and social context. The emergence, development and dynamics of extremist groups are a reflection of historical, social and individual circumstances. This analysis should have made it clear that this must always be taken into account.

Extremist groups form in situations of societal uncertainty, address these and become attractive if they can bind people who respond to their alternative visions of society and promises of salvation. They also offer them new social identities. Groups are the hinge between society and the individual. Bearing in mind that people in groups are not to be understood as individuals but as members of a collective whose personal identity shifts to a group identity underscores how relevant knowledge about group processes is for the phenomenon of radicalisation. Radicalisation processes are ultimately extreme group processes.

The question of how much extremism and terrorism can be expected to change also needs consideration. Compared to old forms of terrorism, contemporary terrorism is more indiscriminate and symbolic in terms of the selection of 'enemies and victims'. It is more likely to be organised around small groups and cells; weapons are more unconventional and the typical motives are less amenable to understanding in terms of a political left-right schema.

In addition, many societies are in a high state of tension, which is generated by populist movements. The Covid-19 pandemic has enormously increased these tensions through the formation of new populist, extremist and sectarian groups.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Post et al. 2002a, b.

<sup>89</sup> This has recently been shown by analyses of Pegida groups in Europe by Berntzen/Weisskircher 2016.

The polarisation created by, for example, right-wing populist and Alt-Right groups and parties, especially by means of misanthropic propaganda, is taken up and used by existing right-wing extremist groups and cells, especially since they can use such propaganda to make connections to right-wing extremist beliefs that can be found right in the mainstream of society.<sup>90</sup> Yet polarisation is not the end of it: societies are also being divided by globalisation, isolation and brutal competition. Things are getting tougher. This inspires ideas of resistance and the formation of groups that counter the idea of a (free-market) liberal and open democracy with utopian visions of a return to the nation-state and establish new identitarian movements.<sup>91</sup> This also applies to groups shaped by the history of migration. Due to experiences of discrimination and perceived or actual inequalities/unequal treatment, they are increasingly successful at using exclusive utopian religious visions to form groups and recruit young people. The current neo-Salafist groups visibly document this.

## Challenges for practice

An overview of group processes indicates that precise analyses of group dynamics are not only useful but also possible. It also shows how group extremism can be represented in terms of group structures and dynamics. This should be relevant for prevention and intervention, which are presented in Chapters 5 and 6. A study of group dynamics and processes should result in the systematic development of work with extremist or radicalised groups on the basis of solid, scientifically supported and well-tested group analyses and approaches. It is about more than working with individual group members: the aim is 'group prevention and intervention'.

Yet approaches devised on the basis of a systematic analysis of group dynamics are virtually nowhere to be found in prevention and de-radicalisation practice. While prevention and intervention work is carried out with and within groups and while many projects and other initiatives undertake this, the need is for approaches to group dynamics that take into account the aspects and findings mentioned above. Specific approaches are needed, such as those developed by Charles Rojzman as 'social therapy'.<sup>92</sup> Another good example is the comprehensive and academically informed social work of the city of Aarhus.<sup>93</sup> It includes group-specific prevention and intervention packages. Many other approaches in education and social work emphasise group work, although it is not always easy to see whether they follow a specific approach.<sup>94</sup>

Especially for early prevention, an understanding of extremist group structures and dynamics is of great importance. Research shows how it is precisely in the early stages that people become extremist through attachment to groups. Many de-radicalisation approaches also target groups, but they focus on disengaging individuals from groups or de-radicalising them. Group therapy or group work with highly radicalised or even extremist groups is less common. Outside Germany, group approaches to de-radicalisation and distancing from terrorist groups are more common. These also

involve approaches to rehabilitation and reintegration into social networks. In their overview of approaches to radicalisation prevention, Rauf Ceylan and Michael Kiefer<sup>95</sup> underline how essential social groups are for prevention. Prevention that targets radicalised people and people with extremist views needs to know which groups these individuals are in and which groups they can be placed in after a successful project or measure. In that regard, it should also be borne in mind that prevention and intervention work is also a group process, because those who are working against extremism do so as members of communities and are perceived as such by those they want to reach. Ultimately, therefore, it is also worth thinking about what groups are needed to take away the power of extremist groups and mitigate risks of violence.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Zick/Küpper 2018.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Zick/Küpper/Berghan 2019.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Rojzman/Rothenbühler/Rothenbühler 2015 and Rojzman 1997.

<sup>93</sup> Documented by Agerschou 2014/15.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. for example de Meere/Lensink (n.d.).

<sup>95</sup> Ceylan/Kiefer 2018.

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## CHAPTER 3.3

### The psychological dimension of radicalism, extremism and terrorism

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## Introduction: The significance of the individual actor

When discussing radicalisation processes, extremism or terrorism, public debates often focus more on the individual actors than on other meso- or macro-level factors related to the phenomena (see Chapter 1). As a result, disproportionate significance is usually placed on the motives and motivating factors of individuals/perpetrators, and the impression is often given that individual motivating factors, such as identity crises or the search for meaning and significance, are the central causes of extremism and terrorism. Furthermore, public discourse on how to combat violent extremism and terrorism also tends to focus on measures that address the problem at the level of the individual. Particularly when it comes to prevention, existing approaches focus almost exclusively on the individual: prevention or de-radicalisation measures are mostly aimed, directly or indirectly, at the individual person (see Chapter 7) and are nonetheless often considered a key component of counter-extremism and counter-terrorism strategy.

However, the factors that determine extremism and terrorism are more diverse (see Chapters 1 and 3.1). The level of the individual person is only one of many, and there is much to suggest that it is not even the most significant. Nevertheless, the body of existing research on this topic contains many studies and publications that take the explanatory variable of ‘the individual’ as their subject. Many of these deal with biographical details of terrorists, including the works of Marc Sageman, Edwin Bakker and Paul Gill. The psychological approach to the phenomenon appears to predominate, while attempts to explain it in terms of political science or conflict research do not seem popular at all.

Especially after terrorist attacks, questions about the motives and personalities of the perpetrators preoccupy the public, and explanations are usually sought in their biographies, mental states or personal experiences. Even though experts agree that psychopathological disorders play only a minor role, if any, in the actions of terrorists, there is always a temptation to first look for an explanation for such crimes in any potential personality disorders, identity crises, experiences of discrimination or traumatic experiences of the perpetrators. Our common sense apparently makes it difficult for us to see terrorists as average, psychologically healthy people, and it is seemingly part of our moral revulsion at their deeds (as criminal, barbaric, cowardly and deceitful) to deny them ‘normality’.

Why do the general public and parts of academia pay more attention to the role of the ‘individual’ than to other variables? Perhaps it is because specific individuals, their biographies and their personalities appear easier to grasp and understand than opaque political conflicts or complex organisational contexts. In any case, this one-sided focus on individual actors and concomitant neglect of factors belonging to the other system levels (micro, meso, macro; see Chapter 1) can lead to a distorted view. Furthermore, the bulk of findings on the role of the ‘individual’ originate from biographical research dealing exclusively with a small section of terrorist actors, namely those who have committed or attempted acts of terrorism. It is well known that this group represents only the tip of the iceberg, because individuals’ involvement in terrorism occurs within the context of a variety of roles (e.g. in the areas of support, training, recruitment and ideology) that are less often the focus of biographical research.

Another source of bias is the problem of terminology, which tends to be very imprecise in distinguishing between ‘radicalism’, ‘extremism’ and ‘terrorism’. The idea that these are different degrees of the same phenomenon is widespread, not only among lay people. In prevention practice, for example, all kinds of measures are too often grouped together under ‘prevention of radicalisation’, ‘prevention of violent extremism’ and ‘de-radicalisation’ or exit assistance. In the assumption that radicalism is necessarily a precursor of extremism and terrorism, many prevention measures are marketed as violent extremism or terrorism prevention, broadly in line with the belief that: ‘If we had done nothing at this early stage, the person would certainly have become a terrorist later on.’ Yet though there are intersections and movements between ‘radicalism’, ‘extremism’ and ‘terrorism’, the distinctions between these different phenomena, which appear to be particularly important at the level of the ‘individual’, are all too often given insufficient attention.

This chapter will deal with the influencing factor of ‘the individual’ – in full knowledge that the phenomenon of extremist radicalisation can only be understood multidimensionally. Other relevant factors at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels (see Chapter 1) are dealt with in the other contributions to this chapter. The aim of this contribution is to show the multiple paths towards political violence from the perspective of the individual actor and to point out many misconceptions that make a holistic understanding of relevant radicalisation processes difficult, especially for the practitioner.

## Radicalisation processes at the level of the individual – various manifestations

Although radicalisation processes cannot be understood holistically without including the other levels of analysis (micro, meso and macro) (see Chapter 1), the following will focus on individual pathways, motives and possible push and pull factors that determine the radicalisation process.

We will not distinguish between the different phenomena (right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism, Islamist extremism) here, as the psychological and social processes of radicalisation are always similar. Instead, it seems more important to distinguish between various manifestations of radicalism, extremism and terrorism. Although these can intersect and there can be movement between them, they can also be very clearly distinguished from each other. Especially when it comes to the prevention of violent extremism, i.e. when individuals are the object of prevention efforts, a precise classification of these manifestations within the overall spectrum of political activism is indispensable for a reliable diagnosis. Individuals can hold radical or extremist attitudes. They can act in line with their attitudes in a non-violent or violent manner. These actions can be spontaneous, planned or even part of a systematic strategy of violence. The paths leading to the consolidation of radical or extremist attitudes, the paths leading to engagement in protest movements, extremism or even terrorism, are described as radicalisation processes.

Depending on whether the underlying attitudes and ideologies – and the goals subsequently pursued – are radical or extremist and whether violence plays a role in

the actions, radicalisation processes can lead to different manifestations. This chapter is not concerned with terminological differences. Nevertheless, it seems useful to describe the possible states or process phases individuals may be assigned to when they are considered part of a target group for violent extremism prevention:

- Individuals can hold radical or extremist attitudes (for the distinction between radicalism and extremism, see Chapter 1).
- Individuals can act in accordance with radical attitudes or radical political opinions (political protest).
- Individuals can join or support so-called extremist organisations that pursue non-violent strategies to pursue systemic change (extremist aspirations). They are then included within the ‘potential of persons’ (Personenpotenzial) of organised extremism.
- Individuals with radical attitudes or radical political opinions may commit violence in a predominantly unsystematic manner – often within the context of demonstrations (escalation violence, Eskalationsgewalt).
- Individuals may commit violence in a predominantly unsystematic and unorganised manner in accordance with extremist attitudes or political opinions (extremist violence).
- Individuals may use violence systematically as a conscious strategy to achieve political goals or can support such a strategy (terrorism).

Although these manifestations are very often presented as interrelated (radicalism leads to extremism, which is not far removed from terrorism), at the level of analysis of the individual, they can also be considered as independent areas. Someone who is involved in an extremist organisation can be clearly distinguished in terms of motives, background and actions from another person who engages in terrorist activities. Even if the goals of extremist Islamism and of related terrorist organisations – to give just one example – seem to overlap in part, involvement in extremism may in fact lead an individual to reject terrorism. This is because illegal actions by members of extremist organisations or suspicious links to terrorists result in state reprisals such as organisational bans and are thus harmful to the organisation. To summarise: extremism and terrorism can often share long-term goals, ideologies and sympathiser milieus, but rarely individual actors.

At the level of analysis of the person and with a view to the requirements of target group-oriented prevention of violent extremism, a clearer differentiation between radicalism, extremism and terrorism seems necessary.

There is much to be said for assuming that these are entirely different processes, which may occasionally interlock, but very often appear opposed. Figure 1 uses a two-dimensional model to illustrate possible manifestations. The first dimension distinguishes between attitudes and behaviour. The second dimension differentiates between violent and non-violent manifestations. The distinction between ‘radical’ and ‘extremist’ is made according to a definition derived from an understanding of Germany’s free democratic basic order in line with the majority opinion of German experts. Radicalisation processes that need to be prevented are those that lead to the consolidation of extremist attitudes, the use of violence and engagement in extremism or terrorism.

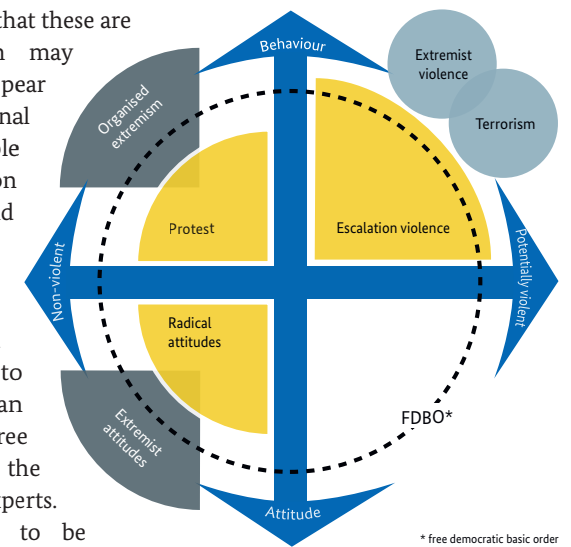


Fig. 1: Differentiation of possible manifestations according to the dimensions of ‘behaviour/attitude’ and ‘violent/non-violent’

The popular, everyday understanding of radicalisation processes generally sees them as a sequence of phases that begins with an individual being exposed to a radical ideology and ends with the use of violence. Especially in the 2000s, an understanding of radicalisation became established among the public and to some extent also in security circles that increasingly sees it as a preliminary threat stage that can potentially lead to terrorism. The attacks of 11 September 2001 in the USA and other acts of violence in the years that followed made it clear to the intelligence services in the Western world that focusing solely on known terrorists or terrorist milieus is not sufficient to prevent attacks in time. Many of the people involved in these attacks were not known to the security authorities or only became terrorists shortly before the attack. As a result, the intelligence services expanded their focus to include an assumed pre-terrorism phase, with the hope of detecting developments that could lead to terrorism early on and thus preventing attacks. The result was a sort of ‘securitisation’ of the concept of radicalisation. Driven by the fear of generating ‘false negatives’ (overlooking a threat), ‘false positives’ (falsely assessing something harmless as a threat) were to be accepted in order to increase the probability of early detection of terrorist acts.

This new approach is often associated with a much-cited report by the New York Police Department entitled ‘Radicalization in the West’. It describes four distinct phases that show how radicalisation processes lead Muslim individuals to violence (*Pre-radicalization*, *Self-identification*, *Indoctrination* and *Jihadization*). Such models, which researchers now consider very simplistic, still shape the general understanding of radicalisation.

Critics of this study – and of this approach in general – point out that, for the vast majority of people who develop radical or extremist attitudes at a certain stage in life, no further development towards violence can be detected. Conversely, people who engage in terrorism are not necessarily always holders of a radical or extremist

ideology, at least not at the time of their affiliation with the respective group. John Horgan, one of the most renowned terrorism researchers, has even stated that: “The idea that radicalization causes terrorism is perhaps the greatest myth alive today in terrorism research.”<sup>1</sup>

When it comes to the individual actor, this lack of nuance in understanding the various manifestations is highly significant, as it distorts the view of the processes more than when we view them from the macro-perspective. Instead of assuming that radicalisation is linear, following a sequence from the development of radical attitudes to engagement in extremism and terrorism, we should instead understand that each process is distinct. A linear process is clearly less frequent in reality than the general understanding would suggest. The paths into extremism and terrorism seem to be diverse and highly individual. They do not follow simple, standardised trajectories, and it is very difficult to reliably predict them on the basis of psychological and micro-social radicalisation indicators alone.

The need for a clear distinction between the attitudinal level, on the one hand, and the behavioural level (extremist violence, organised extremism and terrorism) on the other is further supported by a number of observations that focus on analysis at the level of the individual.

In quantitative terms, the presence of extremist attitudes among individuals seems to be a very widespread phenomenon, estimated at a low double-digit percentage of the population. In contrast, the number of individuals committing extremist crimes (politically motivated crimes) and those involved in organised extremism (extremist potential of persons) is estimated to be in the low five-digit range for Germany as a whole. The number of persons actively involved in terrorism is even lower and, even after the return of those who travelled to join the so-called ‘Islamic State’, is in the very low four-digit range (number of persons regarded as a potential terrorist/extremist threat).



#### POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CRIME (PMC)

*Crimes are considered politically motivated if, in consideration of the circumstances of the act and/or the attitude of the perpetrator, there are indications that they*

- *are intended to influence the democratic decision-making process, serve to achieve or prevent political goals or are directed against the realisation of political decisions,*
- *are directed against Germany's free democratic basic order or an essential aspect of it, the existence and security of the Federation or of one of the 16 German states, or aim at unlawfully impairing the official conduct of members of the constitutional organs of the Federation or of a federal state,*
- *jeopardise the foreign interests of the Federal Republic of Germany through the use of force or preparatory acts aimed at such use,*
- *are directed against a person because of their political views, nationality, ethnicity, race, skin colour, religion, ideology, origin or because of their external appearance, disability, sexual orientation or social status, and the offence is causally connected to this or is directed against an institution/thing or an object in this context.*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Knefel 2013.



#### PERSONS REGARDED AS A POTENTIAL TERRORIST/ EXTREMIST THREAT (GEFÄHRDER) AND RELEVANT PERSONS

*In the area of threat prevention, police authorities can classify a person as a ‘person regarded as a potential terrorist/extremist threat’ or ‘relevant person’ on the basis of existing information. These are police terms and not legal definitions.*

*A person regarded as a potential terrorist/extremist threat is one for whom certain facts justify the assumption that they will commit politically motivated crimes of considerable gravity.*

*A person is to be considered a ‘relevant person’ if they assume the role of a leader, supporter/logistician or actor within the extremist/terrorist spectrum and there are objective indications that justify the prognosis that they will promote, support, commit or participate in politically motivated offences of considerable gravity. A contact or companion of a person regarded as a potential terrorist/extremist threat and of a person accused or suspected of a politically motivated offence of considerable gravity may also be considered a relevant person.*

In the following, the differences between extremist attitudes, extremist violence and organised extremism and terrorism are discussed in terms of analysis at the level of the individual.

### Extremist attitudes

At the level of attitudes, extremism is predominantly a matter of thought and opinion, the freedom of which enjoys a high level of protection in democratic societies. It expresses itself in the individual in attitudes and beliefs, which are difficult to identify and investigate. If such attitudes do not manifest themselves in behaviour, they usually remain a private matter for the individual. Extremist attitudes and ideologies are usually characterised by a simplistic, reductionist and dualistic way of thinking (‘us versus them’, persecutors/the oppressed, right/wrong) that stokes the fear of danger. Extremist views are not receptive to multiple perspectives and are not capable of integrating them. This is a mental attitude that can lead to conflict and violence.<sup>2</sup>

Numerous studies show that a significant proportion of the population of Germany exhibits extremist attitudes. A recent study by the University of Leipzig concluded that the prevalence of right-wing extremist attitudes has been stable in Germany for years. This is exemplified by surveys carried out in 2016 and 2018. According to these studies, support for a



#### CHAUVINISM<sup>3</sup>

*An exaggerated patriotism that leads to hostility and discrimination against other nations, states and peoples. In certain circumstances, chauvinism can also lead to warmongering.*

#### SOCIAL DARWINISM<sup>4</sup>

*The term Social Darwinism takes its name from the British naturalist Charles Darwin, whose findings from the theory of evolution were applied to human society. His hypotheses about the ‘struggle for existence’ and the ‘survival of the fittest’ from the theory of evolution have been used in many ways throughout history and have also been transformed into racist ideologies. Today, Social Darwinist approaches are advocated by radical right-wing movements, who consider that marginalised groups have no benefit to society and, on this basis, deny them equality.*

<sup>2</sup> Suedfeld/Tetlock/Streifert 1992; Lloyd/Dean 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Hillmann 2007, 122.

<sup>4</sup> Lenzen 2015, 16.

right-wing authoritarian dictatorship was expressed by 5% of the population in 2016 and 3.6% in 2018, chauvinism by 16.7% in 2016 and 19% in 2018, xenophobia by 20.4% in 2016 and 24.1% in 2018, anti-Semitism by 4.8% in 2016 and 4.4% in 2018, Social Darwinism by 3.4% in 2016 and 3.2% in 2018, and trivialisation of National Socialism by 2.1% in 2016 and 2.7% in 2018.<sup>5,6</sup>

In a study of the attitudes of Muslims in Germany, a research team from the University of Jena found that 15% belong to a group described by the authors as 'strictly religious with a strong aversion to the West, tending to accept violence and with no tendency towards integration'.<sup>7</sup>

These and numerous similar findings show that the number of people with extremist attitudes in a society is very high, which strongly calls into question the usefulness of this criterion for predicting terrorism and politically motivated crime. It turns out that extremist attitudes very rarely lead to violent extremism, politically motivated violence and terrorism.

## Extremist crimes, organised extremism



### POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CRIME (PMC) IN 2018

*Number of politically motivated criminal offences in 2018: total: 36,062, of which PMC-right: 20,431, PMC-left: 7,961, PMC-foreign ideology: 2,487, PMC-religious ideology: 586.*

If extremist attitudes are followed by corresponding actions, we can speak of extremist crimes or organised extremism. Extremist attitudes can motivate criminal offences ranging from propaganda offences to the most serious acts of violence. Thousands of politically motivated crimes associated with extremist ideologies are registered in Germany every year.

However, engagement in extremism can also be non-violent, e.g. as part of a strategy that distances itself from violence only out of opportunism and instead follows a legalistic approach. Such engagement usually presupposes membership of an organisation or affiliation with a group that has a plan or intention to transform a political or social system and provides structures for channelling an ideology. In contrast to extremism on a purely attitudinal level and extremist violence that does not follow a systematic strategy, organised extremism ultimately relies on a degree of organisation, which structures the cooperation of several individuals to achieve common goals. In this, extremist attitudes or an extremist ideology provide the ideological framework for a strategy – usually proclaimed, at least externally, to be non-violent – that aims to change the political or social order through mobilisation. This form of extremism is characterised by the aspiration to transform and overthrow the ruling political or social system by non-violent means, apparently within the existing system.

In addition to its role in motivating criminal offences, extremism also becomes an object of attention for the security authorities when such ideologies are instrumentalised by organisations as an ideal framework for relevant actions. The German domestic intelligence services use the term 'extremist aspirations' to classify such politically or religiously motivated activities. Extremist aspirations are said to be present when ideologically motivated behaviour is directed against Germany's free democratic basic order or the existence or security of the federal government or one of the 16 German states. The criteria

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Decker/Kiess/Brähler 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Decker/Brähler 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Frindte et al. 2011.

for defining extremism are derived from the rulings of the Federal Constitutional Court and are explicitly cited in the Federal Act on the Protection of the Constitution (BVerfSchG).<sup>8</sup> If, for example, there is a suspicion that the proclaimed and propagated ideology of a group is not compatible with Germany's free democratic basic order, this group will be observed by the domestic intelligence services. However, such an ideology alone is not sufficient to ban an organisation. The extremist aspirations must already pose a real threat to the pillars of democracy and a free constitutional state based on the rule of law, i.e. there must be a real danger that the system could be overthrown. The Federal Constitutional Court, for example, recognised that the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (National Democratic Party of Germany – NPD) is anti-constitutional in spirit and shares deep similarities with National Socialism, but dismissed the Länderkammer's (Chamber of State) application for a ban because the NPD is not in a position to eliminate democracy in Germany.



### EXTREMIST POTENTIAL OF PERSONS

*According to the 2018 Report on the Protection of the Constitution, the extremist potential of persons in Germany numbers well over 100,000. These are members of organisations that are classified as extremist by the domestic intelligence services. Right-wing extremist organisations have an affiliation of 24,100 persons and left-wing extremist organisations have affiliation of 32,000 persons.*

*The number of those oriented towards Islamism/Islamist terrorism amounts to approx. 26,500 persons. The number of those oriented towards foreign extremist organisations (excluding Islamism) amounts to 30,350 persons.*

Returning to the perspective of analysis at the level of the 'individual', the group of people in the 'extremism' category can be described as follows: these are persons who commit crimes out of an extremist motivation (PMC offenders) as well as persons who join or support extremist organisations (potential of persons of extremist organisations).

## Terrorism

The key features of organised extremism (organisation, strategy to overthrow the system) generally also apply to terrorism. In addition, involvement in terrorism necessarily includes a willingness to carry out or support violent acts that contribute towards achieving the organisation's goals.

Activities of individuals within the framework of terrorism, in contrast to activities within the framework of organised extremism, are criminal offences as soon as they go beyond a mere expression of sympathy (this is the current legal situation in Germany). Terrorist and extremist organisations often pursue similar goals, but the former seek to achieve them using violence. Terrorism is therefore a strategy of violence that is deliberately used to achieve political goals. There is no international consensus on what is called terrorism, because there is no consensus on the legitimacy of the political demands of such organisations. It can therefore occur that certain actors are regarded as terrorists by some and as freedom fighters by others.

However, terrorist activities by individuals are not limited to the direct use of violence. Most perpetrators convicted of terrorist offences have carried out or attempted acts of support. Focusing solely on the perpetrators of terrorist attacks inevitably leads to an underestimation of the phenomenon. An analysis of terrorist offenders with links to Al-Qaeda in the USA, for example, identified the following specific roles:<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> German Bundestag 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Simcox/Dyer 2013.

- **Active participant:** Person who has actually committed or attempted acts of terrorism.
- **Aspirant:** Person who demonstrated an interest in terrorism but did not have the necessary planning and/or skills.
- **Facilitator:** Person involved in the preparation of acts of terrorism by financing or providing means.
- **Trained aspirant:** Aspirant (see above) who received training in a terrorist training camp but did not have specific plans for an attack.
- **Ideologue:** Person involved in the preparation of acts of terrorism by encouraging and inciting.

It is worth noting that both the 'aspirant' and the 'ideologue' are not operationally active and rarely engage in acts that provide grounds for prosecution.

If terrorist organisations are considered in the countries where they are based, numerous other functions or roles can be identified, for example those related to management and logistics. If such terrorist organisations control and administer a territory (as the so-called Islamic State did in Syria and Iraq until 2017), even normal administrative tasks can be assessed as involvement in terrorism.

Moreover, functions or roles can change over time. It is quite possible that some individuals experience a change in role or function in the course of their involvement and thus change in terms of level of the danger they present. Others, however, retain the same role throughout.

The diversity of tasks and roles associated with terrorism and necessary for the continued existence of terrorist organisations shows above all that terrorist assailants represent only a small section of the group of people who are active in terrorism. Findings from studies that deal exclusively with those who directly carry out terrorist attacks provide very little insight into other kinds of terrorist actors.

## Who is vulnerable to extremism and terrorism? – Risk factors

Do some people possess an above-average vulnerability to extremist radicalisation? The question of risk factors, i.e. characteristics of individuals that lead to a higher susceptibility to extremist radicalisation, has occupied research for some time.

Extremist or terrorist individuals can be recruited from all strata of society and consequently show great heterogeneity in terms of their social and economic backgrounds. Does this also apply to their personality profiles?

So far, researchers have not succeeded in determining a uniform personality profile of 'the terrorist'. On the contrary, numerous researchers (e.g. Crenshaw 1998)<sup>10</sup> emphasise that terrorist individuals are not abnormal and do not display above-average levels of psychopathologies. In fact, the common feature seems to be their apparent normality. Furthermore, there is also a lack of the necessary empirical evidence to conclude the existence of deviant psychological dispositions that would suggest a propensity for extremism and terrorism specifically.

<sup>10</sup> Crenshaw 1998.

Demonstrating such risk factors requires an appropriately targeted process of psychological diagnosis, followed by an explorative clinical engagement with the individuals that goes far beyond what is practically feasible, for example, when the presence of terrorists becomes known. (In order to prove that a factor is causal for extremist radicalisation, this factor should, if possible, be diagnosed before radicalisation occurs. Otherwise, it cannot be ruled out that the psychological factor is in fact the result of radicalisation.)

The relevant literature often cites personality traits associated with a vulnerability to extremist radicalisation (narcissism, authoritarianism, low frustration tolerance, negative identity,<sup>11</sup> etc.). However, such characteristics are not specific to extremist radicalisation. They are also found in larger groups of people who do not become radicalised extremists. Moreover, due to the conceptual ambiguities in the listing of risk factors, most research does not sufficiently distinguish between the radicalisation of attitudes and the radicalisation of actions. As explained above, the latter is often understood as a continuous process. This is problematic, however, as the vulnerability factors for the development of radical attitudes may be different from those that ultimately make it more likely that an individual will commit an act of violence. Particularly when it comes to the act itself, situational factors seem to be decisive (opportunity to act, peer pressure).

Notwithstanding the assumption of an appropriate level of scepticism, the most important risk factors that are considered relevant for radicalisation processes in academic literature will be presented in the following.

In addressing the question of how terrorists differ from other individuals, Louise Richardson's<sup>12</sup> research has identified three characteristics that can be found in a large number of them: terrorists see the world in a simplistic black-and-white manner. They identify strongly with others who they perceive to be disadvantaged or oppressed. They are also obsessed with taking revenge for injustices they have directly and/or indirectly experienced.

As early as the 1970s, characteristic features of right-wing extremists were identified (monism, simplicism and preservatism) that outline a tendency to treat ambivalence as illegitimate, to perceive the world in a simplified way, to divide it into good and evil and to want to restore a lost, often mythical order.



### CHARACTERISTICS OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS<sup>13</sup>

*'Monism': Monism is a philosophical position according to which all processes and phenomena in the world can be traced back to a single basic principle. Monists regard ambivalences as inadmissible and thus suppress any opinions that do not correspond to their beliefs.*

*'Simplicism': Simplicism describes the tendency to oversimplify an issue or problem by focusing on only one part of an argument and ignoring or excluding all complicating factors. Unambiguous attributions regarding causes and countermeasures are applied equally to all phenomena. History, according to this view, is a result of the clash between good and evil, with all evil forces attributed to a particular concept of the enemy.*

*'Preservatism': Preservatism is the protection or preservation of something considered important. It pursues the restoration of a lost, often mythical order of privileges and authority. Usually this trait occurs as a reaction to displacement or loss of status during a period of major social change. The need for preservation or restoration can emerge, for one, as pro- or anti-state and, for another, in the form of individualism or collectivism.*

<sup>11</sup> There are three popular hypotheses in this context: 1) According to the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, frustration regarding political, economic and personal needs and objectives plays an important role in the development of aggression. 2) The Negative Identity Hypothesis emphasises the role of feelings of rage and helplessness over the lack of alternatives. 3) The Narcissistic Rage Hypothesis draws attention to the underdeveloped 'self', which has failed to overcome the phase of primary narcissism during development (transition to the adult self).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Richardson 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Lipset/Raab 1971.

In an overview of risk and protective factors for right-wing extremism, Andreas Beelmann<sup>14</sup> lists a number of individual risk factors in addition to societal and social influencing factors: extremist radicalisation seems to be primarily a phenomenon of late adolescence and early adulthood. This is a phase of life in which young people are dealing with the tricky developmental task of assuming a stable identity that provides a reliable source of self-esteem and is independent of childhood role models (parents or educators). If this developmental task is not accomplished, a fragile or troubled identity can emerge, and this can be susceptible to the promises of identification offered by extremist narratives. Accordingly, the identity of radicalised persons is often based excessively on unchangeable or relatively rigid group characteristics, such as ethnicity, religion or nationality, which support the fragile identity concept by means of their supposed clarity. Identification with extremist narratives functions as a source of meaning and significance. In extreme cases, this can lead to involvement in terrorism.

Beelmann also lists other risk factors from the area of social-cognitive competences: a low ability or willingness to empathise and adopt other perspectives increases the risk of radicalisation. The same applies to low basic cognitive skills and knowledge, especially regarding social or political issues, deficits in moral development and moral attitudes. A tendency to distort information processing (e.g. attribution errors, faulty perception of injustice), the experience of a threat (e.g. fear of losing social status) and a black-and-white worldview (dividing people into ‘friend’ and ‘foe’ or ‘good’ and ‘evil’) have been found to raise susceptibility to radicalisation and increase the likelihood that violence is advocated as a means of achieving political goals.

However, the social learning experiences that people have with members of outgroups can reduce the risk of radicalisation. If such intergroup experiences are lacking or, even worse, if they are negative, major prejudices can arise. At the same time, positive contact experiences can be protective against radicalisation. Low social competence, as a general risk factor, has a decisive influence on the impact of the social learning experience. A particular problem for the risk of radicalisation is posed by contacts with peer groups that display negative behaviour or are extremist in nature, whether in real life or via digital media. On the one hand, ‘bad company’ is a consequence of problematic starting conditions; on the other hand, it increases the risk of radicalisation enormously.

Regarding the role of problematic personality traits, Beelmann points out that there is a connection between extremist attitudes and social dominance orientation and authoritarianism. Additional, more general risk factors that could influence violent behaviour include impulsiveness and looking for ‘kicks’ (i.e. sensation or thrill-seeking). Furthermore, Beelmann assumes that an increased sensitivity to injustice, i.e. increased attention towards and preoccupation with perceived injustice vis-à-vis one’s social ingroup, can be considered as a risk factor, even though this thesis has not yet been sufficiently verified.

However, these and other risk and protective factors mentioned in the literature are by no means reliable indicators of vulnerability or resilience within the context of radicalisation. Although these risk factors are repeatedly observed in radicalised persons, they are not specific to radicalisation. Nonetheless, the concept of risk and protective factors enjoys wide acceptance in practice, as it provides arguments for extending violent extremism prevention to upstream areas.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Beelmann 2017.



### RISK ASSESSMENT

*In connection with the development of so-called risk assessment instruments to assess the risk of violent extremists (e.g. VERA, TRAP), many indicators named as risk factors appear in the literature, which seem to be more or less comparable. They are either easy to observe, to assess through existing information about the person or to determine through discussions with the person (e.g. within the context of prevention measures) or with their close contacts.*

*It should be explicitly mentioned here that such risk assessment instruments are not psychological tests. They are – contrary to a widespread idea in practice – not comparable with classical test procedures from the fields of performance testing, differential psychology or psychological diagnostics. It is not known whether they meet the quality criteria (validity and reliability) applicable in this area or whether they have even been tested in accordance with the rules of test construction with regard to this question. Test construction requires the existence of a recognised theory regarding the constructs on which the test is based as well as a precise definition of the latent characteristics that are suitable for recording the variables to be assessed. This and other characteristics of the topic of ‘radicalisation’ (especially its many references to a variety of academic disciplines and the importance of influencing factors from other system levels – apart from the person) complicate the construction of test procedures that seek to map a radicalisation process or predict its development. The risk assessment instruments that are becoming increasingly common in prevention practice are therefore unlikely to be able to provide a valid assessment in a specific case. However, they can have an added value in the education and training of professionals by providing an initial access to a very complex field of action.*

*The indicators of the risk assessment instrument ‘VERA-2R’ are listed here as an example: <sup>15</sup>*

- ‘Beliefs, attitudes and ideology’ risk category: Commitment to ideology that justifies violence; Perceived grievances and/or perceived injustice; Dehumanisation of designated targets associated with injustice; Rejection of democratic society values; Expressed emotions in response to perceived injustice; Hostility to national identity; Lack of empathy and understanding for those outside one’s own group.
- ‘Social context and intention’ risk category: Seeker, user or developer of extremist materials; Target of attack identified (person, group, location); Personal contact with violent extremists (informal or social context); Expressed intention to commit act of violent extremism; Expressed willingness and/or preparation to die for a cause or belief; Planning, preparation of acts of violent extremism; Susceptibility to influence, control or indoctrination.
- ‘History, action and capacity’ risk category: Early exposure to violence-promoting, militant ideology; Network of family and friends involved in violent extremism; Violent criminal history; Strategic, paramilitary and/or explosives training; Training in extremist ideology in own country or abroad; Organisational skills and access to funding and sources of help.
- ‘Commitment and motivation’ risk category: Motivated by perceived religious obligation and/or glorification; Motivated by criminal opportunism; Motivated by camaraderie, group belonging; Motivated by moral obligation, moral superiority; Motivated by excitement and adventure; Forced participation in violent extremism; Motivated by acquisition of status; Motivated by a search for significance in life.
- ‘Protective and risk-mitigating indicators’ category: Reinterpretation of ideology; Rejection of violence as a means to achieve goals; Change in concept of the enemy; Participation in programmes against violent extremism; Support from the community for non-violence; Support from family members, other important persons for non-violence.

In prevention practice, other low-threshold indicators of radicalism or vulnerability are also used to assess individuals and/or to support an ‘indication’ that justifies their inclusion in an appropriate prevention programme. This usually involves examining the individual’s attitudes, interpreting existing biographical information and evaluating relevant personality traits. In carrying out such assessments, practitioners rely on their pedagogical experience, on the one hand, and on the findings of radicalisation research about risk factors as described above, on the other. There are few investigations of the

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.vera-2r.nl>

practical value of this type of assessment in the relevant literature databases, as very little evaluation is undertaken and published in this area.

In any case, the field of research on individual risk factors is characterised by fundamental problems of demonstrability. As mentioned above, relevant theories are mostly based on explorative research that deals with actors who have already become known. Whether the features and traits identified by this research already existed before the radicalisation of these individuals or are rather to be interpreted as effects of the radicalisation process usually remains a mystery. In addition to the methodological shortcomings, there is also the issue of the 'specificity problem'. Most of the risk factors identified are better understood as general risk factors; they are not only co-related with extremist radicalisation but also with many other behaviours that deviate from the norm or are even normal phenomena of a difficult adolescence.

The search for risk factors that are at least somewhat empirically proven may lead one to a study carried out by the University of Cologne in cooperation with the Terrorism/Extremism Research Unit of the Federal Criminal Police Office.<sup>16</sup> This large-scale study examined the effect of extremist propaganda videos on male students and vocational school pupils under laboratory conditions. The authors demonstrated that authoritarianism, acceptance of violence and low educational attainment lead to lower levels of rejection of videos with right-wing and Islamist extremist propaganda. Concluding from this that these 'risk factors' make a radicalisation process more likely or even lead to extremism or terrorism remains a matter of interpretation.

Recent findings on extremist radicalisation processes that lead to violence emphasise the role of previous delinquency and violence. This is the case, for example, in a study by 'The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism' (START) commissioned by the U.S. Department of Justice on radicalisation processes in the USA: *'pre-radicalization criminal activity and post-radicalization clique membership are strongly associated with violent outcomes among radicalized individuals'*.<sup>17</sup> A study by the Federal Criminal Police Office on the radicalisation backgrounds of persons who left Germany for Syria showed that two thirds of them came from the criminal milieu. While only four per cent of these people had been involved in politically motivated offences before radicalisation began, the proportion of such offences increased to 55 per cent in the course of radicalisation.<sup>18</sup>

A tendency to accept and commit violence thus seems to precede ideological radicalisation. The radicalisation process may thus be considered merely to rechannel or legitimise existing violent tendencies. However, this finding only applies to people who have left for Syria/Iraq in recent years or who have been recruited by IS to carry out attacks. Furthermore, it cannot be generalised to persons who perform other roles in terrorism.

## Why do ordinary people become terrorists? – Motives

What makes people commit themselves to extremist or terrorist organisations? Numerous studies have looked at the presumed motives of such individuals. In the

literature (e.g. Stern 2003, Horgan 2005, Richardson 2007), three main motives are given as reasons for joining. Joining a terrorist/extremist group can thus be seen as (1) a response to an individually or collectively perceived injustice, (2) a need for social ties, community, acceptance, and (3) a search for meaning and identity.

Jessica Stern describes terrorism as a problem of collective action where the cost of engagement must be borne by the individual, but from which the whole group benefits.<sup>19</sup> So, what are the incentives that lead individuals to become involved? According to Stern, the reasons are as varied as those for which other people choose their profession. For some, engagement in terrorism is like taxation: an individual is obliged to pay their share to address perceived injustice against their group. For others, becoming involved fulfils a need for adventure, for social inclusion, for renown and recognition or financial gain. Commitment to a terrorist cause can be a result of a feeling of alienation from mainstream society or even anomie. According to Jessica Stern, terrorism as a strategy pursues primary and secondary goals (the direct impact of violence, and the psychological and political consequences of the use of violence).

Louise Richardson<sup>20</sup> speaks of the three 'R's' (revenge, renown, reaction) in connection with the motives of the individual actors. According to this model, the immediate motives for terrorism are (1) to take revenge on those perceived to be the oppressors of one's own group, (2) to draw public attention to oneself and the cause of one's group by means of this vengeance, and thereby to gain personal renown, and (3) to obtain concessions from mainstream society/one's oppressors or to provoke an overreaction from the government. According to Richardson, revenge, the renown it brings, and the provocation of a reaction (any reaction) are satisfying in themselves and are thus sufficient to motivate terrorist engagement. If others also derive satisfaction from the revenge, the renown gained by the actor or the reaction of the government, this is naturally considered a positive side effect.

Social psychologist Arie Kruglanski,<sup>21</sup> who has worked intensively in recent years on the motivation of terrorists, developed a model that integrates a number of psychological explanatory approaches.

In Kruglanski's model, the major motivational force of radicalisation is the quest for personal significance. According to Kruglanski, the definition of what is valued and respected depends on society and culture. The goal of satisfying this basic need always becomes important when one's own person or the ingroup with which one identifies loses or threatens to lose significance, or when there is an opportunity to gain significance. Actual or perceived loss of significance can be promoted or caused by personal factors (e.g. failure, confrontation with one's own mortality, humiliation), by social factors (e.g. exclusion, disparagement of one's ingroup) or by societal factors (e.g. war, political and/or economic instability). At the same time, the prospect of gaining significance in certain situations (e.g. the prospect of renown within one's ingroup) can activate the quest for significance.

In line with current theories of motivational psychology, the restoration of or gain in significance is always in competition with alternative goals (e.g. self-preservation, well-being, starting a family, protecting the community). The more the pursuit of significance comes to the fore, the more these alternative goals are suppressed. Conversely, if

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Rieger/Frischlich/Bente 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jensen/LaFree 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Standing Conference of Interior Ministers 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Stern 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Richardson 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Kruglanski/Bélanger/Gelfand/Gunaratna/Hettiarachchi/Reinares/Orehek/Sasota/Sharvit 2013, 559-575.



de-radicalisation is successful on a motivational level, the aim of pursuing or restoring significance recedes into the background and thus gives way to other activities.

Kruglanski attributes particular importance to the role of personal, social and collective identity in radicalisation processes. According to this, the search for a meaningful identity can set the radicalisation process in motion if it encounters extremist organisations that offer themselves as sources of identification. Identifying as 'radical', 'extremist' or 'terrorist' happens most effectively in a group or a network (Kruglanski speaks in this context of the three Ns: need, narrative and network).

Similar results were obtained in a qualitative biographical study by the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA)<sup>22</sup> which identified various biographical factors and personality traits of politically motivated offenders.

The majority of the cases studied had problematic biographies. They grew up in family environments with pronounced social deprivation (lack of communication, tendency to repression and dysfunctional coping strategies via drugs or violence). Furthermore, their biographies were characterised by a failure to cope with age-typical developmental tasks (school leaving certificate, job, relationship), which are important for the formation of an adult identity.

At the beginning of the process, their radicalisation was primarily driven by a need for connection and recognition, which they believed they could satisfy by becoming part of a radical/extreme group or counter-culture. For many of them, the new 'friendship group' functioned as a primary support system.

Bjørge and Horgan<sup>23</sup> also found that, in the radicalisation of individuals, the three motivational layers (justice, social needs and the search for meaning) play a key role in all types of terrorism (right-wing, left-wing and Islamist terrorism). Their research found that the different phenomena differ in their political and ideological perspectives, but not in their social and psychological processes. This statement largely coincides with the findings of the BKA study on the biographies of convicted politically motivated offenders. Although *'... the various milieus differ in terms of ideological background, situations and processes were often the same for all forms of terrorism and extremism'*. Both studies agree that becoming part of a 'scene' tends to be a matter of expediency rather than genuinely political or religious intentions: the priority was to find acceptance, make social connections and receive emotional support. It also became clear that extremist or terrorist individuals are not fundamentally different from other, non-politically motivated offenders in terms of social characteristics, and that there are many paths that lead to extremism.<sup>24</sup>

If one recalls that most radicalisation processes begin during adolescence and early adulthood (i.e. between 14 and 25, which findings on known 'radicalised' persons, persons regarded as a potential terrorist/extremist threat and persons who have left for Syria/Iraq indicate), the importance of identity becomes clear. Adolescence is a transitional phase in which young people are searching for an adult identity, having already discarded their childhood identity. In this critical phase, some young people appear open to the forms of identification offered by extremist tendencies.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Lützing 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Bjørge/Horgan 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Lützing 2010.

To lure them in, extremist or terrorist groups have to begin by fulfilling individuals' basic social and psychological needs. According to Bjørge,<sup>25</sup> only a minority join these organisations because they already agree with their ideology and politics. As a rule, the radical thought structures are only adopted in the course of group membership.

According to Horgan,<sup>26</sup> this type of radicalisation can be described *'... as a social and psychological process of incrementally experienced commitment to extremist political or religious ideology'*.

## Processes of violent extremist radicalisation

Radicalisation processes are difficult to classify in view of the variety of psychological, group-related and socio-political factors that condition them. The earliest stage of radicalisation research was primarily concerned with the search for profiles and personalities of terrorists. In recent years, the focus has been on the paths and trajectories taken by different individuals towards violence.

In the following, illustrative models from research are used to describe these paths that can lead to involvement in extremism or terrorism. A distinction must be made between radicalisation processes that take place following commitment to a cause within a group context (classical terrorism) and those that occur when commitment to a cause takes place outside the group context.

### Radicalisation of individuals within groups or other organisational structures

This form of violent radicalisation occurs after an individual has joined a group. The first step is recruitment, which primarily involves a selection process. Terrorist groups usually select their potential members carefully, applying criteria that take into account motivation, reliability and skills. In this respect, Marc Sageman compared Al-Qaeda to an assessment centre at which candidates for a job are evaluated and selected. Group dynamics are an important aspect of indoctrination and radicalisation processes in the group context. The escalation of radicalisation to the point of legitimising violence often requires isolation from external influences, which is facilitated by 'going underground'.

According to the classical view of radicalisation processes in the context of the phenomenon of 'extremism and terrorism', organisations and groups play a leading role as recruiters, trainers and masterminds. Radicalisation thus occurs within a group, in a circle of like-minded people on the basis of direct, personal interaction. Furthermore, radicalisation is to be understood as a progressive process that leads to an increase in the willingness to use violence and can culminate in violent acts. This radicalisation process gradually pushes the individual towards a commitment to violence on behalf of an organisation; it takes place in a context that is political as well as social and psychological.

In a micro-social environment (a group), the interactions among these contextual variables usually generate a radicalising dynamic that results in changes to the

<sup>25</sup> Bjørge 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Horgan 2009.

individual's mechanisms of self-regulation and their regulative frame of reference. In this way, an individual's previous sources of self- and social control can be influenced and, if necessary, overridden or replaced by other sources of control (such as the new radical reference group). Persuasion, conviction and indoctrination succeed with the help of group dynamic processes (see Chapter 3.2). This classic form of indoctrination is called 'embedded indoctrination'.<sup>27</sup> Embedded in a social group, in a context of political tensions and usually subject to existential threats (side-effects of war and conflict such as insecurity and displacement), an individual is inevitably exposed to radical influences, which can lead to persuasion and indoctrination. This can be thought of as a communicative and interactive process that, among other things, directs relevant group-dynamic processes.

In order to better understand the involvement of individuals in extremism or terrorism, scholars are increasingly focusing on the courses that their engagement takes. The aim is to understand radicalisation processes at a deeper level than the radicalisation of attitudes.

There is a consensus among scholars that a career in terrorism usually follows a certain sequence. It begins with entry and ends with an exit from terrorism. Late-stage distancing and even de-radicalisation are thus included as possible developmental stages in the process. According to Horgan (2009), individuals who participate in terrorism pass through several stages and undergo a variety of experiences. He developed the following model to illustrate the complexity of this process.<sup>28</sup>

However, this process is not linear for everyone. One does not have to pass through every one of the developmental stages.

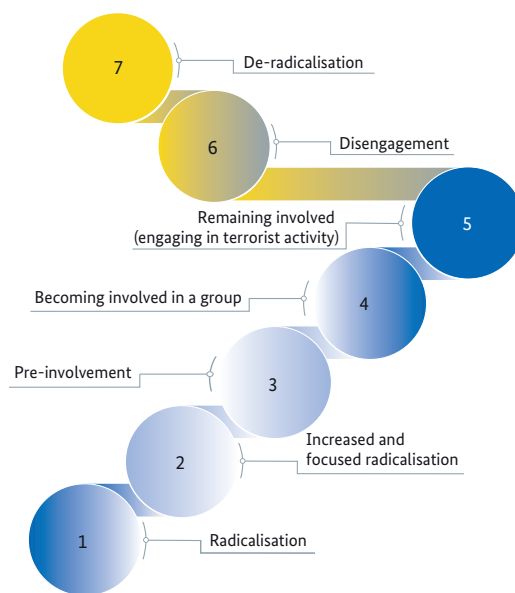


Figure 2: Stages of a radicalisation process based on Horgan (2009)

At the starting point of every terrorist biography is the **pre-radicalisation** phase: without exception, every individual who joins a group has had 'a life before terrorism', in which a wide variety of factors may have encouraged the path to extremism/terrorism. Radicalisation as a process of incrementally experienced commitment to extremist political or religious ideology is one of several risk factors that can lead to violence. There can be various reasons why an individual decides to join a terrorist cell, group, organisation or subculture.

A consolidation of extremist views and a strengthening of identification with the ideology of the group usually only takes place within the closed circle of the group during a phase of **increased and focused**

**radicalisation**. However, the acceptance or adoption of radical ideas alone does not necessarily lead to a willingness to commit acts of violence.

In the **pre-involvement** stage, the person is still searching for a place within the group structure. Involvement in the activities of the group or organisation can take various forms and manifest itself through a range of actions and behaviours at different stages of development. For example, while one part of the group is engaged in logistical support or preparing for possible combat operations, the other part may already be engaged in violent activities. The tasks assumed by any individual may well change in the course of their membership by means of role migration and ascent or descent through the hierarchy. Which function or role a group member ultimately takes on at any given time is determined in the course of events through interaction with other members, experiences within the group or by chance.

The (radicalisation) factors that make it likely that an individual becomes involved in extremism/terrorism are therefore often not suitable for predicting career progression within a group. The roles that a person takes on in the course of their career as well as the processes that may lead to disengagement from the group at a later stage are more likely to be explained by the dynamics that unfold once an individual is a group member.

According to Horgan, the stage of **violent radicalisation** always precedes involvement in violent acts. This further radicalisation to the point of committing violence leads to the development of stronger bonds of loyalty to the group. Consequently, the terrorist/extremist remains **involved** in the group.

From the moment an individual joins a group and becomes involved, not only their social environment changes, but also their cognitive and attitude structures. While one is a member of such a group, a social and psychological process unfolds – specific to each group dynamic – in which both attitudes and motives change. Various kinds of experiences may change a person and their relationships to other individuals; certain violent actions are considered to be more critical in this regard. According to Horgan (2009), together with the consequences of ageing, this usually means that every active terrorist will inevitably leave terrorism behind one day.

Turning away from terrorism can take various forms. It can take the form of an objectively ascertainable distancing from extremist and terrorist acts and/or involve a discarding of shared (group-specific) social norms, values and attitudes – in other words, a change in *behaviour* and/or *attitude*. Horgan (2009) and other scholars use two key terms in this context: *disengagement* and *de-radicalisation*.

While 'disengagement' refers to behaviour, 'de-radicalisation' involves a change in attitudes.

**Disengagement** should be seen as a process whereby the individual leaves the terrorist group or takes on another role or function within the organisation that is usually associated with a reduction of participation in criminal activity. Both forms can happen either on a voluntary or involuntary basis. However, the end of participation in violent actions can also occur abruptly with the arrest or death of the person.

Disengagement, which does not necessarily involve a change on the cognitive level, can be triggered by a specific event or develop slowly as a process.<sup>29</sup> Since a complete

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Rieger/Frischlich/Bente 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Horgan 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Bjørge/Horgan 2009; Horgan 2009.

exit from terrorism in the sense of rehabilitation includes not only a rejection of violent behaviour but also a change in radical attitudes and views (de-radicalisation), 'disengagement' is only an initial stage of the exit process. 'Disengagement' therefore does not always need to go hand in hand with **de-radicalisation**, as the latter is usually part of a longer-term process.

Furthermore, Coolsaet and de Swielande<sup>30</sup> as well as Horgan (2009) point out in this regard that 'de-radicalisation' does not mean that an individual can return to their 'pre-radicalisation phase'. On the contrary, given the experiences the individuals concerned have undergone in the form of a radicalisation process leading up to violent engagement, they cannot return to their original pre-radicalisation state of consciousness. Apart from the fact that it was the living conditions in the pre-radicalisation stage that led to radicalisation in the first place, and which would hence appear to be undesirable to return to, the goal of returning to the 'pre-radicalisation status quo' contradicts the nature of human beings as constantly evolving and learning. According to this understanding, the radicalisation process is not reversible, but can be steered in its development towards exiting and/or turning away from radical views.

### Radicalisation processes outside group structures

The relatively new phenomenon of violent radicalisation outside group contexts can be seen as an expression of a paradigm shift within terrorism itself. Already in the 1990s, the first writings appeared that promoted this form of engagement as a matter of strategy (*leaderless resistance*; *white supremacy movement* in the USA).<sup>31</sup> In Islamist-motivated terrorism, a comparable change in strategy has been observed since the mid-2000s. The use of the internet to disseminate propaganda, political platforms and tactics plays an important role here.

Terrorist groups that largely rely on the use of autonomous perpetrators accept that this means a certain loss of control and often relinquish direct influence on the choice of target, the timing of the attack and the means used to commit the crime – which are in fact key variables for the success of terrorism. Nevertheless, this loss of control is accepted as the price of remaining capable of action.

If one looks at the terrorist actors who have emerged in Germany and the wider Western world in recent years, a new type of perpetrator can be identified in addition to those who join an organisation or an organised group and plan and carry out their acts within this context. These are lone perpetrators who act autonomously, outside known structures and yet orient themselves towards the given ideology, programme and objectives of a type of extremism. The category of '*lone actors*' includes persons who operate autonomously and independently of a group in terms of training, preparation and target selection, and persons who have been trained or equipped by a group but plan and carry out their attacks autonomously. This category also includes isolated 'dyads', i.e. pairs that operate independently of a group.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Coolsaet/de Swielande 2008, 155 et seq.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Beam 1983.

<sup>32</sup> Horgan et al. 2016.

Horgan's model of terrorism careers (*pathways*) described above deals with individuals who engage in extremism/terrorism in the classical way by becoming members of organisations. This organised form is characterised by certain activities that require a division of labour and can provide entry points for investigation by the security authorities (e.g. recruitment activities, selection procedures, training, logistics, communication).

In contrast, the relatively new phenomenon of the autonomous perpetrator, who carries out their act alone and oriented solely towards the objectives of terrorism, represents a special challenge for counter-terrorism and a new field for research. Although some recent studies dealing with perpetrators of this kind suggest parallels to the behaviour of spree killers (unstable personalities, personal crises, delinquency), there is an essential difference in their motivation. While spree killers usually attack people they know in order to take revenge for personal slights, lone terrorist perpetrators are basically driven by the motivation of taking revenge for others. They generally make use of a classic terror strategy by selecting their victims as representatives of the system they wish to attack. The similarity between terrorist lone perpetrators and spree killers, which is often the subject of public discussion, has prompted radicalisation research to take a closer look at the phenomenon of the spree killer.

In the project 'Tat- und Fallanalysen hochexpressiver, zielgerichteter Täter (TARGET)',<sup>33</sup> spree killers were examined from multiple perspectives, including those of criminology, forensic psychiatry and psychology. In this predominantly young group of perpetrators, different factors apparently play a role in the development process. For example, they did not show the typical patterns of risk-taking common for violent offenders. In other words, they were rather quiet and anxious at school, showed withdrawal tendencies and avoided social contact. The perpetrators' family environment was mostly unremarkable, but their relationship with parents and siblings was characterised by ambivalence, low levels of trust and 'living parallel lives'. The perpetrators mostly attended selective schools (Gymnasium in the German system) but often struggled to do well. Over time, they developed an excessive interest in assassinations, killing sprees and mass killings. Furthermore, many of them showed signs of depressive disorders and suicidal tendencies more commonly than their peers. These spree killers documented their excessive revenge fantasies and their pronounced hatred in diaries and video and audio recordings. They showed a penchant for weapons and military symbols and dressed accordingly. Their subjective experience was characterised by feeling misunderstood, humiliated or bullied. This contrasted with their external presentation, according to which they rejected offers of contact, devalued others and acted in an unfriendly manner and without empathy. The narrowing of their thought processes to exclusively focus on hate and revenge was a lengthy process.

An evaluation of the research findings on the psychopathology of spree killers has also shown that the findings are rather weak.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, it is certain that there is a strong predisposition to psychological disorders in spree killers, and that this is particularly the case for adult perpetrators. Furthermore, it can be determined that psychotic or delusional symptoms predominate (again, especially among adults). With regard to other mental disorders that are regarded by researchers as potentially playing a role in triggering a killing spree, there is some evidence, but no reliable findings.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Bannenberg 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Giebel/Rossegger/Seewald/Endrass 2014, 323-332.

As already mentioned, attacks by autonomous terrorists show similarities to the acts of spree killers. Both groups primarily commit acts of public violence and often use similar weapons. Horgan and his colleagues<sup>35</sup> compared the two groups of perpetrators in a study. The results showed that there are few differences between them. For both autonomous terrorists and spree killers, the attacks were usually the result of a complex interplay of personal, political and social causes that drove the individual along the path to violence. For many of the perpetrators, there is evidence that a mixture of personal circumstances and an intensification of their beliefs eventually led to the idea of using violence. Sometimes personal problems led to susceptibility to an ideology, and sometimes long-standing ideological beliefs intensified as a result of personal problems. However, Horgan and his team found that there were differences in terms of (1) the degree of interaction with co-perpetrators, (2) behaviour before the crime, and (3) the likelihood of a pre-attack warning. Ultimately, the motivation of the two groups of offenders differs. Because they are not motivated by a specific world-view, the current political and security climate is unimportant to spree killers in their decision-making. In fact, for most of the individuals studied, personal grievances were the main factor. Moreover, the killing sprees studied seemed to be characterised by less preparation in terms of intent and strategy.

As far as the differences between lone perpetrators and organised terrorists are concerned, Gill and Corner<sup>36</sup> were able to show, on the basis of their analyses of publicly available information on terrorist individuals acting autonomously and in groups, that lone actors showed an increased incidence of mental disorders compared to perpetrators who acted in a group context. Nevertheless, the lone perpetrators deviated from the general population only in terms of a few disorders (namely schizophrenia, delusional disorder and autism).

The increasing number of autonomous perpetrators in recent years has serious consequences for counter-terrorism and for prevention. With regard to the actors involved, a widening of the range of perpetrator profiles can be observed. An increasing number of people are becoming active who, due to their unstable personalities or even psychological disorders in organised groups, do not fit the recruiters' demographic. Nevertheless, individuals such as Arid Uka and Anders Breivik can carry out terrorist attacks as autonomous perpetrators in the name of a cause or community. These two perpetrators would in all likelihood not have managed to join an organisation due to their lack of integration skills.

Because autonomous perpetrators have usually received no instruction in training camps where, for example, the construction of explosive devices is taught, they cannot act nearly as professionally as group members with relevant experience. Mainly for this reason, they therefore prefer means of committing crimes that can be used without prior training (homemade explosives, knives, everyday objects such as cars and lorries). Autonomous perpetrators predominantly attack so-called soft targets and are largely independent in their target selection. The situation within organised groups is different: here, the selection of a certain attack target requires consideration and a decision at the leadership level, which takes into account various angles (the message that the act conveys to different target groups, the possible reaction of opponents, etc.).

<sup>35</sup> Horgan/Gill/Bouhana/Silver/Corner 2016, final report for the US Department of Justice.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Gill/Corner 2017.

It is becoming clear that autonomous perpetrators pose a different threat. They usually move under the radar of the security authorities and are more difficult to detect in the run-up to the crime than organised groups of perpetrators (the danger of silent radicalisation).

The internet appears to play a major role in the radicalisation of autonomous perpetrators, as growth in this area has been accompanied by an increasing shift of extremist and terrorist-related activities to the internet over years. This is especially true for activities aimed at recruiting sympathisers and supporters. Extremist and terrorist organisations distribute propaganda, ideological writings, training plans and bomb-making instructions online, for example. The underlying strategy apparently aims to radicalise many individuals and encourage them to act without them having to visit crisis areas or join larger groups (rainmaker strategy). The opportunities provided by the internet are used to lower the access thresholds to terrorist groups and the inhibition levels to direct engagement in terrorism.

Individuals who have no connection to radical environments or crisis areas usually come into contact with extremism and terrorism via online propaganda. It reaches its target audience everywhere, pursuing a range of goals: from arousing interest, to confirming existing tendencies, to connecting and communicating with like-minded people, to leading them to extremist or even terrorist actions. Most of these propaganda activities are controlled by organisations and – as experience with the so-called Islamic State has shown – are carried out at great expense.

This shows clearly the importance of organisations even in the radicalisation of autonomous perpetrators. For them, too, the propaganda and programming of such organisations play a central role. These organisations provide the ideational framework without which many autonomous perpetrators would not be able to plan, execute and stage their acts as acts of terror. Organisations that expressly consider violence as a legitimate means to achieve political goals thus represent the most important crime opportunity structure that makes terrorism possible in the first place. This also seems to apply to the phenomenon of autonomous perpetrators.

#### Case study

#### What does a radicalisation process look like?

*Numerous cases of 'lone perpetrators' documented in media reports, academic studies and/or analysis by the security authorities convey the image of unstable personalities who were influenced by extremist propaganda via the internet and thus radicalised themselves without any specific links to radical, extremist groups. Some of them become terrorists.*

*The case of Arid Uka was the subject of a detailed analysis. His radicalisation process was comprehensively examined and reconstructed within the context of his overall biographical development and with the help of the evaluation of his internet behaviour. Arid Uka is a single case and conclusions that can be drawn from his case are of limited use in generalising about the overall phenomenon of radicalisation outside of group structures. Nevertheless, his case is presented below for illustrative purposes.*

### **Biographical background**

On 2 March 2011, Arid Uka carried out an attack with a handgun at Frankfurt Airport. He killed two US soldiers and seriously injured two others. His victims were unarmed. Less than a year later, he was sentenced to life imprisonment without the usual 15-year maximum sentence as a result of the gravity of the crime. Arid Uka was not known to the security authorities until the day of the attack. His radicalisation was not noticed by anyone in his environment.

A difficult childhood began with his birth in Kosovo in 1990, a few years before the outbreak of the Kosovo War, after his parents' divorce and his father's emigration to Germany. Arid Uka followed his father to Germany as an infant and spent the first three years of his life without a mother. His living conditions only normalised when he was five, with his parents' remarriage and the family's reunification in Germany. The family lived in relative poverty with three children in a district of Frankfurt am Main that had been considered a socially deprived area for years.

The family's economic situation worsened when the father contracted a serious illness. This led to the intensification of 17-year-old Arid Uka's identity crisis. His school performance deteriorated and he had to repeat his final year at a non-academic school (Realschule). During this time, he began to turn to Islam: he practised the religion's tenets and searched the internet for more information. After finishing Realschule, he switched to an academic Gymnasium at his parents' request in order to take the higher education entrance qualification (Abitur) – which, however, appeared far too difficult in view of his modest academic achievements up to that point.

### **Radicalisation as a coping mechanism**

Everyday life at the Gymnasium overtaxed him and apparently triggered a crisis of self-esteem. In this phase, he found new companions in two schoolmates with similar familial and religious backgrounds, with whom he could explore Islam. Over the following months, this small group sank deeper and deeper into the world of Salafist thought. Over a period of almost two years, the three friends attended prayers and religious lectures by Salafist preachers and discussed these ideas among themselves. During this radicalisation phase, they cultivated a friendly companionship rooted in their belief in the superiority of Salafist Islam and an increasing distancing from non-Muslims. Nevertheless, their radicalisation was not visible to the outside world; rather, it served the purpose of self-esteem enhancement in view of their inability to perform at the academic level required by their school. The three friends saw themselves as an ingroup, met regularly after school and attended worship and religious lectures together. Because German was their common language, only the German-speaking mosques were of interest to them, and these were mostly Salafist institutions. Although the three did not become part of a Salafist subculture, they were at least regular onlookers.

Arid Uka differed in some characteristics from his two friends, who apparently overcame this radical phase unscathed. He was a loner, had hardly any social support in his family environment and spent whole nights in front of the computer. He was often absent from class, which led to his being put back a year halfway through twelfth grade – an event he hid from his parents, as he was already of legal age by then.

### **Separation from the group**

After being put back a year, he had less contact with his friends. Their joint visits to the mosque became less and less frequent. Arid Uka's interest in Salafist ideology increasingly shifted to the internet. There he found numerous sermons, lectures and writings that deepened his knowledge of Salafist Islam and later led to the development of his political stance.

A few months after being put back a year, Arid Uka decided to leave school. He let his parents and relatives believe that he had passed his Abitur.

After he had left school, his communication with others shifted almost entirely to the internet. Although the three friends continued to talk (mostly while playing a multiplayer online game), confirming each other's worldviews and making derogatory jokes about Jews, Germans, Shiites and non-Salafists in general, Arid Uka now entered a phase in which his radicalisation, unlike that of his two friends, became more deeply entrenched. He began to take an interest in political issues.

### **Intensification of the radicalisation process during a crisis**

Towards the end of 2010, he stopped communicating with his two companions. Arid Uka began a voluntary social year at a Muslim charitable care association and took a part-time job at the international mail centre at Frankfurt Airport. His job prospects became more and more hopeless and his sense of resignation increased – especially in light of the fact that he was still hiding his failure from his family. During this phase, his interest in political issues increased, fuelled by Salafist ideology. On the Facebook social network, he was presented with information on current political conflicts that he did not have to actively seek out. At this time, parts of the Islamic world were shaken by violent riots triggered after the announcement of 'International Burn a Koran Day' (the action of a radical American priest in reaction to the project to construct a mosque not far from Ground Zero in New York). Arid Uka increasingly identified with the jihadists and displayed a pronounced anti-American attitude. Isolated from his previous social environment, he sank deeper and deeper into internet activities and became increasingly active on Facebook.

A few months before his crime, he began debating political and ideological issues with strangers and showed tenacity in defending his radical views. Especially in January 2011, a few weeks before the crime, he showed himself to be aggressive and deeply influenced by Salafist ideology. He followed news about the upheavals in the Arab world, which he interpreted as an Islamic uprising against un-Islamic tyrants, and intensified his search for jihadist propaganda on the internet. In contrast to the period before autumn 2010, by early 2011 he had no more contact with a real-world environment. He no longer forwarded the propaganda material and ideological jihadist writings he came across in the last two months before the attack to acquaintances or discussed them as before. Due to his lengthy exposure to Salafism, he appears to have been very open to the messages and argumentation of jihadist propaganda during this time.

As a result, Arid Uka's radicalism came to a head within a few months and culminated in the attack he committed on 2 March 2011. On the eve of this act, he found two videos on Facebook that encouraged him in his plan: a clip in which dying was presented as the beginning of a blissful time in paradise for Muslims, as well as a propaganda video in which smiling faces of jihadists who had been killed were shown as proof of

their entry into paradise. He found further confirmation of his intention a few hours before the attack in a fatwa written by Abdullah Azzam (*Defence of the Muslim Lands*). Among other things, it legitimised participation in jihad even as a lone perpetrator and the killing of innocent people.

Shortly after his crime, Arid Uka was arrested by federal police officers with the murder weapon in his hand. He had clearly not expected to survive.

Arid Uka's actual motivation for committing the crime was most likely a mixture of frustration, helplessness, fanaticism and suicidal fantasies. Alongside the influence of propaganda, a general affinity for violent and fighting games (e.g. on the computer or with paintball or airsoft weapons) as well as easy access to the murder weapon, which he found in his parents' flat, probably contributed to the commission of the crime.

### Consideration of the case in the light of academic findings

#### The role of risk factors – motives

In contrast to his two friends, Arid Uka's radicalisation process came to a head. Radical attitudes were realised in the form of an act of violence. This development was clearly facilitated by a variety of circumstances.

Due to his biography, as described above, the lack of support in his family environment and his social isolation, he was clearly vulnerable to indoctrination. Thanks to his work at Frankfurt Airport, he knew that he could find US soldiers there. Attacking and killing them there may well have been part of his violent fantasies in the previous weeks. He appears to have acted these out virtually in computer games, describing himself to friends as a kuffar killer.

Although carrying out the crime triggered violent physical stress reactions in him and he vomited several times after his arrest, he showed no remorse during his initial interrogation. He was sure he had done the right thing and added that he would rather go to prison than allow US soldiers to go to Afghanistan to rape Muslim women. In an interrogation twelve days after the attack and in a letter he wrote to his brother, it became clear that he was increasingly identifying with the image of the jihadist; for example, he had shortened his trousers in accordance with Salafist dress codes.

#### The role of the internet

When Arid Uka intensified his online interest in Salafist and jihadist content, he obviously already had radical attitudes that he had developed away from the internet. His intensive preoccupation with Salafism had already begun when he changed schools, within the context of his small group of like-minded friends. The two-and-a-half years they spent together led to a strong identification with Salafist Islam and a development of a sense of superiority and a desire to disassociate from non-Muslims.

This conviction was solidified in autumn 2010 after Arid Uka left the group and began to spend more time on Facebook, which played a key role in his development, and was related to many events that touched him emotionally (WikiLeaks revelations in connection with the war in Iraq, Burn a Koran Day). After withdrawing to the internet from late 2010, he lacked any opportunity to discuss the issues that he was made aware of via propaganda with friends and peers. This led to an increase in his radicalisation and ultimately to the crime.

In summary, Arid Uka's radicalisation process can be seen as only partly due to the internet. The previous, longer phase of involvement with Salafism up to the consolidation of radical attitudes took place in a real-life environment. The escalation of the radicalisation process up to the decision to use violence, however, was only made possible with the help of interaction on the internet in a phase of isolation from the real-life environment. The decisive factor was certainly that the internet lowered the inhibition threshold for actions whose performance in the real world would have required more self-mastery.

#### Interaction processes that facilitate indoctrination

In Arid Uka's case, the loss of connection to the real world (with acquaintances and peers) seems to have led to an acceleration of his indoctrination. In the critical phase before the attack, contact with the outside world fell off steeply. On the other hand, interaction with actors in the virtual environment (Facebook users) intensified. The subject of this interaction was debates on topics related to Islam, which were discussed with passionate intensity. Arid Uka already showed himself to be deeply indoctrinated here and could not be dissuaded from his convictions by counter-arguments and fierce criticism. Whether or not maintaining interaction with the real social environment could have prevented Arid Uka from realising his radical stance through violence is difficult to answer. However, during the group phase he had not shown any strong signs of imminent radical action. Moreover, the shared preoccupation with Salafism did not lead to radical actions on the part of the other group members.

With respect to the case of Arid Uka, it can be summarised that virtual interaction processes, in contrast to real ones, had an accelerating effect on the radicalisation process. This may be due to the fact that the anonymity experienced on the internet can increase the willingness to take risks. However, applying this finding to lone actors in general would require analyses of further cases of lone actors to generate similar results.

#### Comparison of the radicalisation process with classical, group-related processes

In view of Arid Uka's dependence on the internet, it was proposed that his case is one of rapid self-radicalisation (turbo-radicalisation). The analysis of his internet behaviour, however, provides convincing evidence of a protracted radicalisation process that took place over a period of three years and in the course of which the internet played an important role only towards the end.

If one compares the radicalisation process of Arid Uka as an individual actor without organisational ties with typical radicalisation processes of perpetrators who act on behalf of an organisation and who usually radicalise within a group, one finds numerous similarities. In the radicalisation processes of most perpetrators acting on behalf of an organisation, there are indications of a two-stage process:

- An initial phase of general radicalisation, in which internalisation of the ideology and identification with the worldview and goals of the 'movement' take place (consolidation of radical attitudes).
- A second phase of violent radicalisation, in which existing radical attitudes turn into violent action.

In both phases, affiliation to the group is recognisable, yet the transition to the second phase is often associated with a break and a descent into the underground (recruitment by an organisation, departure to a crisis area or withdrawal to the violent core of

a group or organisation). The different length of the two phases is also remarkable. Phase one seems to last longer in many cases and does not necessarily lead to violence; in it, clear references to extremism and the use of violence are also difficult to discern. Phase two, on the other hand, can lead very quickly to violent action.

In the case of Arid Uka, the radicalisation process seems to be similar to that of 'organised perpetrators'. He too was part of a radical group that consumed the resources provided by a radical subculture over a long period. For Arid Uka, this experience helped to complete the foundations for a later commitment to violence.

However, the second phase of Arid Uka's radicalisation trajectory seems to differ from the pathways typical of 'organised perpetrators'. Neither evidence of recruitment by third parties nor of any effort at planning could be found. In Arid Uka's case, however, in view of his state (resignation, isolation, propaganda influences, affinity for violence caused by computer games), the leap to committing violence required neither a great effort nor significant self-mastery. The planning of the violent act does not seem to have been particularly difficult for him either, given the favourable opportunity to commit the crime (his work at Frankfurt Airport, the availability of the weapon).

## Exit and de-radicalisation

### Ways out of terrorism and extremism

In accordance with Horgan's model, as outlined above, exiting terrorism or extremism is the result of further personal development. In principle, it is possible to initiate an exit at any stage of the process: during pre-radicalisation, radicalisation, violent radicalisation, pre-involvement or disengagement, or even in the phase of remaining involved. Depending on how advanced the radicalisation process is in the individual case, different intervention strategies from violent extremism prevention are applied. Depending on the strategy indicated, appropriate prevention actors can take over the implementation of the measures.

The willingness or ability to disengage and ultimately de-radicalise requires overcoming certain barriers: social and psychological dependencies on the group, costs incurred in the event of an exit and fear of loss of status and reputation as well as of retaliation.<sup>37</sup> Depending on how strong the individual's commitment to the organisation is, leaving can be more or less difficult. Klandermans<sup>38</sup> speaks of three forms of commitment (normative, affective and continuance commitment):

*Normative* commitment refers to the moral bond between the group and an individual. This bond is the result of a long-term socialisation process in which the individual's own views and behaviour are adapted to those of the organisation. Physical distance from the group and lack of communication with its members can diminish the extent of normative commitment.

Participation increases with the intensity of *affective* commitment to an organisation and vice versa. Affective commitment may decrease as a result of negative experiences (e.g. hostility within the grouping or lack of reward).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Demant et al. 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Klandermans 1997.

*Continuance* commitment to a group depends strongly on rational trade-offs (the extent of investment in the group and the appeal of perceived alternatives). If the latter offer greater benefits compared to remaining in the organisation, the willingness to leave increases.

Horgan (2009) and Demant et al. (2008) list relevant psychological and social variables that can be regarded as factors that promote exit. These are so-called push factors, which refer to certain negative social circumstances and forces that set in motion a process of rethinking through which it no longer seems attractive to remain in terrorism/extremism or in the organisation/group.

#### ■ *Disillusionment*

Members of terrorist or extremist organisations become dissatisfied and disillusioned due to differences between an idealised image and a reality that is increasingly perceived as a burden. Their experiences within the group and the subculture largely do not (or no longer) match the initial expectations. This can be caused, for example, by too much group and/or psychological pressure as well as limited loyalty among the members. The trust and sense of community they hoped to find in the group is no longer there.

#### ■ *Divergence between political objectives and operational tactics*

Some activists lose faith in the ideology and politics of the organisation when they realise that they cannot achieve the goals they have set and the future they desire by violent means. This occurrence is often triggered by their own confrontation with violent action. In her study of a group of German right-wing extremists, Birgit Rommelspacher<sup>39</sup> concludes that many people left the group following their first personal experience of violence. They experienced self-doubt when it appeared that what they believed in and fought for was both morally and politically wrong.

#### ■ *External pressure*

Particularly in the case of members of terrorist organisations who are subject to enormous external pressure (e.g. through being placed on sanctions lists, registration as potential terrorists or criminal prosecution), the desire for a carefree life in peace can develop.

#### ■ *Psychopathological distress*

Especially terrorists who have been actively involved in an organisation for a long time may suffer from psychological disorders (e.g. burnout) or physiological distress. The group itself may even no longer wish for them to remain in the organisation for security reasons.

#### ■ *Change in personal priorities and life situation (maturing out)*

In many cases, age is positively co-related with a desire to leave the group. Individuals grow out of the role of terrorist and take on another one instead, for example that of a spouse or parent, which brings with it new responsibilities. The quest for significance, need for recognition and community is now satisfied within a marriage or a family. The desire for excitement and action also diminishes with age. Furthermore, changes in both the educational or professional spheres or in private life (new friendship and/or partnership) can influence the desire to leave the group. Above all, contact with people

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Rommelspacher 2006.

outside the terrorist group can lead to a shift in viewpoint and encourage more nuanced thinking.<sup>40</sup>

In contrast to the push factors, pull factors such as the offer of de-radicalisation programmes and exit assistance seem to play a lesser role. In a recent study looking at the exit processes of 87 cases, Mary Beth Altier et al. found that the most common causes of exit processes were disillusionment with group strategy, disagreements with group members or leaders, and dissatisfaction with daily tasks and burnout.<sup>41</sup>

In any case, in terms of the containment of terrorism, the possibilities of prevention seem fairly limited. Terrorist campaigns are mostly ended by negotiations (FARC, IRA) or by military decisions (LTTE).<sup>42</sup> Dealing with people who are involved in terrorism is primarily a task for law enforcement and security agencies and less for social workers. Prevention work can flank security agency efforts in individual cases when individuals decide to leave terrorism (exit assistance) or after their criminal trial has ended when they are serving their sentence in prison (with the aim of rehabilitation). De-radicalisation measures can contribute to integrating such individuals into society and, in the best case, to winning them over as partners in the prevention of violent extremism. Otherwise, those who leave the groups can continue to be a factor of uncertainty if they take on other functions in extremist organisations, despite distancing themselves from violence. As veterans, they are ideally suited to radicalise other people who see them as role models.

When it comes to the de-radicalisation of extremist protagonists (extremist organisations and their members), there is a dilemma. An effective violent extremism prevention strategy should actually try to influence such organisations with the aim of bringing them onto the path of moderation. This can usually only succeed if increasingly moderate members determine what happens in an organisation.

However, the banning of such organisations or their observation by the domestic intelligence services leads to moderates leaving the organisation or refraining from joining it. Subsequently, the only members that remain are those who support the organisation's radical course.<sup>43</sup>

## Outlook

Violent extremism prevention practice has shown a desire to base its approaches, programmes and measures on sound evidence derived from research. Within this context, great importance is attached to research on the risk and protective factors that condition radicalisation processes, as well as on the course of such processes. For many reasons, however, research on extremism is not currently in a position to provide precise answers to some important practical questions. Rather, the examination of the state of research shows that most studies have an explorative character, do not have a sufficient data basis or do not proceed empirically. They are dealing with a difficult subject that is not easy to research for various practical and theoretical reasons.

<sup>40</sup> Horgan 2009; Demant et al. 2008.

<sup>41</sup> Altier/Boyle et al. 2017, 305 et seq.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Cronin 2011.

<sup>43</sup> See the work of Schiffauer on this, e.g. 2008.

The difficulty of accessing the phenomenon and the limitations of the validity of many research findings are well known to the academic community. This is always stressed in the literature – and rightly so. Creating an awareness of the limitations of research among practitioners and policymakers is one of the aims of this chapter.

As long as we are not in a position to massively expand research in this field, we should be duly cautious in implementing theories in the field and should subject such efforts at practical application to critical evaluation. Above all, the state of the research shows us how little we know. Practical activities that have to rely on such deficient evidence should be undertaken with caution and, in case of doubt, action should not be taken if risks cannot be ruled out with certainty. Research also shows us time and again that our approaches are not always effective (evaluation research). Such negative findings should be taken just as seriously as findings that provide good arguments for our practical approaches.

Only a broad overview that takes into account the findings of many disciplines and considers both 'best' and 'bad practices' can provide valuable syntheses of the research in this complex field. In this way, both research and practice have succeeded in identifying some patterns in recent years that appear highly useful for designing effective and impactful violent extremism prevention. The author of this paper considers a few of them worth mentioning here:

- In the field of educational work with young people who are radicalising or at risk of being radicalised, approaches that take seriously precisely those needs that are addressed by radical and extremist groups seem particularly promising. Prevention work should offer alternatives to the identities and interpretative schemas offered by extremist groups and create what are known as 'functional equivalents' (substitute offerings). Young people's needs for meaning, recognition and connection should be satisfied so that they do not turn to extremist ideologies.
- Prevention approaches that exclusively address the ideology or the 'misinterpretation of religion' run the risk of getting into an unwinnable competition with extremist ideologues, who have an answer ready for every counter-argument. Ideological debates and counter-narratives can also be discredited as a kind of counter-propaganda, undermining their intended effect.
- Recent findings on the effect of 'counter-narratives' show, for example, that the effectiveness of such messages is primarily as an instrument of immunisation. However, they seem less suited to countering extremist propaganda.<sup>44</sup> Such positive messages are most effective when they take into account the needs of the target group and their living environment.
- Especially in the area of universal and selective prevention, the strengthening of young people's defences should be the focus of the work. What are known as 'labelling effects' can produce unintended consequences in this area. This is the case when young people are subjected to explicit de-radicalisation measures and considered potential terrorists, for example, because of a vague suspicion of radicalisation or because they display radical attitudes. The use of disproportionate means may in fact serve to fuel radicalisation processes that would probably have subsided on their own without such interventions.

<sup>44</sup> Frischlich et al. 2017.



- Finally, prevention approaches that operate exclusively at the level of the individual should set themselves realistic goals. At best, in the field of indicated or tertiary violent extremism prevention, they can get individuals out of terrorism or prevent them from relapsing. This would already be a major positive effect and an important contribution to curbing violent extremism and terrorism. Violent extremism prevention should focus more on this important area. The hope that violent extremism prevention could generate immunising effects by addressing – well in advance of radicalisation processes – general risk factors that are not specific to extremism remains a promise that is difficult to fulfil.

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## CHAPTER 3.4

### Digital transformation, radicalisation processes and online violent extremism prevention

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## Introduction

The use of online media has been a natural part of everyday life for a while now. More than 60 per cent of the world's population used the internet in April 2021.<sup>1</sup> Via their smartphones, many people are online every day. In a digital society, the permanent access we have to information and the possibility of being constantly connected with others leads to fundamental changes in the human experience: 'People today – and especially those of tomorrow – think, feel, experience and act in the expectation of being "or at least being able to be permanently online, permanently connected" (POPC).'<sup>2</sup>

The dissemination of information has also changed. Today, virtually anyone can publish their own content online, including extremists. For example, right-wing extremists and Islamist extremists<sup>3</sup> make use of online media to intimidate their enemies, coordinate attacks, distribute videos of attacks, consolidate alliances or transmit knowledge about terrorist tactics. Online channels can also become targets themselves in what are known as 'cyber wars' using computer viruses, denial-of-service (DDoS)<sup>4</sup> attacks or targeted hacks. Above all, online media make it easier for extremists to disseminate propaganda, which is a key means of recruiting new followers. In contrast to traditional recruitment methods, such as distributing flyers, the internet makes it possible to reach people with no (initial) physical contact.

Of course, the use of online media is something that connects extremist individuals with all inhabitants of our digital world. As Peter Neumann puts it in the preface to a book on online hate speech and radicalisation:

'The fact that jihadist online magazines are found on the laptops of suspected terrorists and that they communicate with their comrades via messaging platforms and on social networks is not necessarily proof of online radicalisation, but rather shows that extremists, whatever their political views, are products of their age. Or do we seriously expect extremists still to write letters, book their flights via travel agents and take their photos to be developed?'<sup>5</sup>

### PROPAGANDA<sup>6</sup>

*Propaganda is the deliberate and systematic effort to shape perceptions, influence feelings and thoughts, and promote behaviour in terms of an ideology – usually one with an absolute claim to validity. Propaganda is not a characteristic of a particular ideology and is not a dichotomous feature; a particular communication can be more or less propagandistic.*

Nevertheless, fears are repeatedly raised that online propaganda increases the danger of what are known as 'distributed indoctrination' processes, in which users of online media can be radicalised by extremists who share neither their geographical nor indeed their

temporal reality. Distributed indoctrination challenges the old idea that indoctrination is always embedded in a specific context.

This chapter examines fears that the internet enables a highly simplified form of distributed indoctrination and provides insights into the role of online media in general and online propaganda in relation to extremist radicalisation processes in particular. Various roles can be ascribed to the internet in this context: as a disseminator of extremist propaganda, as an amplifier of potential effects, but also as a place where prevention can take place. Furthermore, these roles can become visible on different levels. The following points can therefore be read as a starting point for reading this chapter:

### *Extremist propaganda is widespread online*

It is a fact that extremist propaganda is widespread on the internet. It is difficult to say exactly how large the amount of extremist online propaganda is. The supply is constantly changing, not least because major online platforms are now doing more to combat extremist content. For example, in July 2020, Facebook stated that it removes more than 4000 pieces of hate-speech every hour.<sup>7</sup> An initial assessment for the German-speaking region is provided by Jugendschutz.net, the federal and state competence centre for the protection of children and young people on the internet. Jugendschutz.net reports that in 2019 (i.e. before the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which greatly changed patterns of media usage),<sup>8</sup> a total of 90,695 pieces of content that were potentially harmful to minors were checked; extremist online content accounted for 23 per cent of the violations identified.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the likelihood of encountering extremist content online seems to be increasing, according to a Finnish study: while in 2013 about 17 per cent of Finnish internet users under the age of 30 reported that they had been exposed at least once to extremist messages online, this proportion had risen to more than 60 per cent by 2015.<sup>10</sup> For Germany, a representative survey in 2016 found that some 40 per cent of 14 to 19-year-olds came into contact with extremist content at least infrequently via video platforms such as YouTube.<sup>11</sup> In a study from the USA, 30 per cent of the teenagers and young adults surveyed reported that they had recently been aware of calls for violence against a certain social group.<sup>12</sup>

### *Online propaganda does not trigger radicalisation – but can support radicalisation processes*

General surveys of the current state of research indicate that mere contact with online propaganda should not be understood as a trigger, but rather as a catalyst within a complex radicalisation process.<sup>13</sup> The changing shape of the digital society, the emergence of digital communities and the increasing importance of the internet for the everyday life of individuals have modified the landscape in which extremist radicalisation efforts are

1 Dataportal.

2 Vorderer/Klimmt/Rieger/Baumann 2015, 260.

3 Right-wing extremists and Islamist extremists are responsible for a great deal of German-language online propaganda and are therefore the focus of this chapter. The German Report on the Protection of the Constitution does not contain any figures for left-wing extremist propaganda offences or crimes involving incitement to hatred, even though a 'large number of ideological articles' were published (Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community 2021, cf. p. 128). However, this focus does not mean that other ideologies and groups do not spread online propaganda or are less extremist. In principle, online propaganda and extremism are cross-cultural and cross-ideological phenomena, and different extremist movements are more or less relevant in different countries and contexts.

4 In a DDoS attack, digital servers are deliberately overloaded by being bombarded by countless coordinated requests or emails.

5 Baldauf/Ebner/Guhl 2018, 5.

6 Frischlich/Rieger 2017; Frischlich 2018.

7 Facebook 2020a.

8 cf. Melzer/Holl/Hale/Schatto-Eckrodt/Frischlich 2021.

9 Glaser et al. 2020.

10 Kaakinen/Oksanen/Räsänen 2018.

11 Nienierza/Reinemann/Fawzi/Riesmeyer/Neumann 2021.

12 Hawdon/Bernatzky/Costello 2019.

13 Hohnstein/Glaser 2017; Meleagrou-Hitchens/Kaderbhai 2017.

undertaken. The image of a ‘puppet show’ in which only the puppeteer pulls the strings is no longer appropriate.<sup>14</sup> According to Alexander Ritzmann, radicalisation can be better understood as a ‘tango’ in which one party leads and the other allows itself to be led. Whether the strategies that propaganda uses to ‘lead’ (= push factors) are successful depends on the characteristics of the audience (= pull factors) that allows itself to be ‘led’.

There are some commonalities in the significant push and pull factors in right-wing extremism and Islamist extremism<sup>15</sup> – including in the field of online propaganda. These factors shared by different forms of extremism are the focus of this chapter; for specifics of individual varieties of extremist phenomena, we refer to the articles on specific forms of extremism in this volume (see Chapters 2.1.–2.4.).

#### *Online media also offer new opportunities for violent extremism prevention*

Online media are not only relevant for the dissemination and impact of extremist propaganda – they can also be used for violent extremism prevention. For example, social workers can engage in conversation online, and political education providers can reach new target groups. In this regard, online media thus offer unique opportunities to find out about preventive measures beyond one’s social or geographical context.

#### *The role of online media needs to be considered on several levels*

Against this background, this chapter examines the significance of online media for both processes of extremist radicalisation and for prevention approaches on three levels: the ‘macro-level’ of **digital society**, the ‘meso-level’ of **virtual communities**, and the ‘micro-level’ of the **online individual**. On each of these levels, we focus on the changed **conditions** for online attempts at radicalisation, the **effect** that extremist propaganda has on the respective targets (society, group, individual, see Chapters 3.1–3.3), and the implications that this has for violent extremism **prevention**.

## The digital society

### Radicalisation in the digital society

Nowadays, opinion-forming processes take place with the help of online media. In the past, the mass media (e.g. radio, print newspapers, and television) had the central role of mediating between the political system and members of the public in order to enable informed participation. Online, the range of media information is supplemented by countless alternative niche products, including those with extremist content. The diversity of extremist offerings benefits from three fundamental changes in the digital realm: who can publish content, how this content is selected and how content spreads in a globally networked world.

#### *Diversity of actors due to the disappearance of ‘gatekeepers’*

In the past, the media was limited in its ability to publish content by various factors, such as the number of pages in a newspaper. Professional actors, such as editors, decided

which information made it through this ‘gate’ into the public arena and was printed or broadcast. This has changed with the internet. Nowadays, virtually anyone can create their own content, comment on someone else’s contributions and reach – at least potentially – a global mass audience. Even though, at least in Germany, many people still get their news via television,<sup>16</sup> just as many people now use online media – including social media – to keep informed, and the share of online news is steadily rising across the world.<sup>17</sup> In many respects, the new opportunities for publication created by the internet means that media makers are being downgraded from gatekeepers to what have been called ‘gatewatchers’.<sup>18</sup> Much of the digital public sphere is simply no longer subject to review.<sup>19</sup> The sheer number of ways to access the digital public sphere makes it almost impossible to prevent the uploading of propaganda. For example, Facebook reported that the video of the far-right terrorist who killed 50 Muslim men and women at prayer in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019, and streamed his act live online, had initially been seen by only 200 people. However, more than one million copies of the video were found on the platform in the hours after the attack. Preserving free access to online media (for example by not having automatic upload filters that block too much content in cases of uncertainty) while also managing such huge volumes of data is a major challenge in terms of technology, personnel and regulations. There are various actors that exploit these circumstances: a rough distinction can be made between extremist media institutions, private individuals and pseudo users.

#### *Extremist media institutions*

The range of extremist media institutions includes both entertainment media and news channels. At its peak, the self-proclaimed ‘Islamic State’ (ISIS) was particularly effective at drawing attention to itself by means of highly professional, ‘Hollywood-like’ films, some of which were filmed using multiple cameras and highly complex slow-motion sequences by their own film studios.<sup>20</sup> But right-wing extremist actors also use entertainment media such as video games or music videos for their purposes.

For news, the internet offers an entire alternative news media landscape with media agencies, newspapers, radio and video channels online. Alternative news media can be understood as those offerings that see themselves as a corrective to the system of established traditional and mainstream media that is postulated to be dominant in a given socio-cultural context.<sup>21</sup> Not all alternative news media are ideologically coloured, let alone extremist, but there is content that mimics news journalism while contributing to the dissemination of politically extreme and pro-violence content. The offerings of Islamist extremists include ISIS’s own news agency, the Aamaq News Agency, which has made a name for itself among other things by disseminating reports claiming responsibility for terrorist attacks, and the glossy online magazines Dabiq and Rumiya. In the ultra-right spectrum in Germany (as well as globally), countless pseudo-journalistic websites, blogs and apparent online newspapers contribute to

<sup>16</sup> Hasebrink/Hölig 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Newman/Fletcher/Schulz/Simge/Robertson/Kleis Nielsen 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Bruns 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Engl. Bimber/Gil de Zúñiga 2020.

<sup>20</sup> For an overview, see Winter 2015.

<sup>21</sup> For an overview, see Holt/Ustad Figenschou/Frischlich 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Ritzmann interviewed by Kixmüller 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Ebner 2017.

the dissemination of distorted content and, in some cases, spread disinformation<sup>23</sup> or conspiracy theories. The lively debate about what is known as ‘fake news’ in the aftermath of the 2016 US election is just one expression of this larger ‘disinformation order’.<sup>24</sup>

It is often difficult for media users to distinguish between politically distorted opinion and factually accurate news. For example, a 2018 Pew Research Center study in which a representative sample of Americans were presented with five facts and five opinion pieces found that only 26 per cent of respondents could correctly identify all the facts as such. In the case of opinion statements, only 35 per cent recognised that they were statements of opinion and not facts.<sup>25</sup> A representative study by Stiftung Neue Verantwortung also found that the German population has a lot of catching up to do in terms of digital news literacy: less than half of the respondents could distinguish between misinformation and information.<sup>26</sup>



### DISINFORMATION

*Disinformation is deliberately distorted or made-up content with a persistent intention to deceive, such as freely invented rumours about crimes committed by refugees. Sometimes disinformation is also called ‘fake news’, but disinformation is not necessarily ‘fake’ – often correct content is put into a distorted context or given misleading headlines.*

*Targeted disinformation and propaganda are not only disseminated by extremist media institutions; other media networks – some of them with links to state agencies – are also used for propaganda purposes or play into the hands of extremist narratives. Examples of the latter include the spread of conspiracy theories by the Russian international broadcaster Russia Today (RT), or when Hungarian and Iranian news media share false news from anonymous Swiss conspiracy theory blogs. In addition, false news also spreads via commercial media channels and political actors. For Germany, the Stiftung Neue Verantwortung observed that, in addition to right-wing extremist and right-wing populist actors, sloppy work by the mass media also contributes towards the spread of misinformation. The Washington Post identified 492 false statements made by US President Donald Trump in the first 100 days of his administration. In his entire term in office, he made 30,573 false or misleading statements.<sup>22</sup>*

*The Chinese government even has an official propaganda ministry that, among other things, dresses up the detention and ‘re-education’ of the Uighur Muslim minority under inhumane conditions as a ‘war on terror’.*

It is therefore hardly surprising that propagandistic rumours and disinformation spread, sometimes with enormous success. When Germany’s Chancellor Merkel gave an interview in 2018 on the decision of a local food bank to no longer accept people with migrant backgrounds, the highly distorted article by the far-right blog ‘Halle Leaks’, in which a fake quote was attributed to the Chancellor, was shared on Facebook 134 times as often as the corresponding article by the newspaper ‘Die Zeit’ on the same topic.<sup>27</sup>

Rumours also spread faster than professional news on Twitter, as a study of all messages shared on Twitter between 2006 and 2017 that were flagged as ‘false’ shows – especially

22 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/24/trumps-false-or-misleading-claims-total-30573-over-four-years/>.

23 For example, Bader et al. 2020; Frischlich et al. 2020, Holt 2019.

24 Bennett/Livingston 2018.

25 Mitchell/Gottfried/Barthel/Sumida 2018.

26 Meßmer et al. 2021.

27 According to our own analyses: 15,791 times (Brinkschulte/Frischlich 30 March 2018, Facebook engagement via Netvizz).

because media users with little Twitter experience tend to contribute to spreading false news and thus increasing the reach of this content.<sup>28</sup>

### Private individuals

Online media also enable ‘private individuals’ with no institutional framework to become propagandists. A racist comment is quickly liked; adding the slogan ‘Call for Jihad’ to a poster of one’s favourite computer game takes only a few minutes; and a meme<sup>29</sup> supporting ‘white pride’ is quickly posted, liked or shared on Instagram. Only eight per cent of web content judged potentially damaging to the youth by the relevant non-profit agency (Jugendschutz.net) were entire profiles or channels and only two per cent were entire websites.<sup>30</sup>

Private individuals play an important role in the dissemination of extremist content. The more users share extremist content on their own accounts, upload it to other servers or spread it on other social media, the greater the reach of such content, the more difficult it is to remove content from the web, and the more difficult it often is for media users to trace the origin of information. It cannot always be assumed that private individuals are aware of their ‘propaganda activity’.<sup>31</sup>

### False identities and user groups

Extremists also use false identities and create fake user profiles for their purposes. For example, a Danish study revealed that right-wing extremists disguised themselves as jihadists and set up fake propaganda pages to provide evidence of the ‘danger’ posed by Islamist extremists.<sup>32</sup> News reports have shown how German right-wing extremists have posed as ‘concerned citizens’ to stir up hatred of refugees.<sup>33</sup> Our own analyses show how right-wing extremists in Germany use fake accounts to simulate higher turnouts at their events, thereby spreading insecurity.<sup>34</sup>

And other actors are also getting in on the act: in the run-up to the 2016 US election, Russian provocateurs used fake online profiles on search engines or social media to launch ultra-conservative campaigns in support of Donald Trump, who later became US president. According to reports, such campaigns led to demonstrations that were attended by several hundred Republican Party supporters.<sup>35</sup> The same networks of pseudo users also interfered in the German Bundestag election campaign, tweeting, for instance, about attacks by people with a migrant background and linking them to Islamophobic narratives.<sup>36</sup>

28 Vosoughi/Roy/Aral 2018.

29 Memes are culturally typical ideas, styles or knowledge content that spread from account to account. Mostly, the term is used colloquially for interesting or amusing online content that spreads quickly on the net. It often involves images that are combined with a certain text message.

30 Jugendschutz.net 2016.

31 Individual representatives of the state can also support (or oppose) propagandists in this way. For example, former US President Donald Trump often denied in his tweets that support for the far-right was growing and thus indirectly supported/legitimised racist statements.

32 Farkas/Schou/Neumayer 2017.

33 Local Times Erfurt 2016.

34 Schatto-Eckrodt/Boberg/Wintterlin/Wintterlin/Quandt 2019.

35 Collins/Poulsen/Ackerman 2017.

36 Appelbaum/Pomerantsev/Smith/Colliver 2017.

In light of the sheer mass of online content, however, it is not enough to create an online group or post something on Facebook – only content that attracts attention can have an impact. Whether this succeeds depends, among other things, on how algorithms work.

### Recommendation algorithms play into the hands of extremists

Much of the content that users see is selected in advance by algorithms. Algorithms are – somewhat simplified – fixed chains of events linked by conditions: ‘if a then b’, ‘if not a then c’. All processes that take place in computers or smartphones are ultimately based on algorithms. Most critical discussion focuses on algorithms that select content in a personalised manner based on user preferences. For example, since 2012, the algorithm on which the Google search engine is based has been using personal user data to offer them a particularly ‘good’ search result, for example to recommend restaurants in their city and not on the other side of the country.

Algorithms also recommend extremist content. For example, YouTube’s recommendation algorithm works with ‘keywords’ or ‘tags’ that are associated with videos on the site. If a video is viewed that is tagged with the keyword ‘Islam’, the probability increases that other videos with the same or similar keywords will be recommended for viewing afterwards. Extremists can take advantage of this to infiltrate propaganda into seemingly harmless subject areas.<sup>37</sup> Even non-political, non-violent search queries can lead to extremist material. For instance, one of our studies shows that it takes just two clicks to get from content on YouTube made by the Federal Agency for Civic Education to Islamist extremist videos.<sup>38</sup>

Extremists also take advantage of the fact that many social networks use recommendation algorithms to take ‘trends’ (aka ‘trending topics’) into account in their recommendations. Studies focusing on the 2017 German federal election campaign have shown that propagandists try to distort these trend statistics with the help of fake accounts. For example, the hashtag #Verräterduell (traitor duel) was posted on a huge scale during the television debate between the chancellor candidates.<sup>39</sup> Fake likes, shares and views of this kind are cheap: 100 automated ‘views’ can be purchased for less than a euro.<sup>40</sup> In light of this, the number of ‘likes’ or ‘trending topics’ should never be directly understood as a reflection of real opinion. An analysis carried out by the NGO #ichbinhier together with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue<sup>41</sup> showed that five per cent of all accounts interacting with hateful content on Facebook are responsible for half of all likes.

Once media users have subscribed to a particular far-right channel on YouTube, they are more likely to receive recommendations for other far-right channels on the platform.<sup>42</sup> The same can be observed for content relating to the ‘involuntary celibate’, or incel subculture, characterised by an intense hatred of women and feminism, which are accused of judging men according to their attractiveness and denying them their ‘rights’ to sex as a result.<sup>43</sup> The incel movement has been linked to various attacks and

37 Ahmed/George 2017.

38 Schmitt et al. 2018.

39 Grimme/Assenmacher/Adam 2018.

40 Frischlich/Quandt 2019.

41 Kreißel et al. 2018.

42 O’Callaghan/Greene/Conway/Carthy/Cunningham 2015.

43 Papadamou et al. 2021.

mass murders.<sup>44</sup> Even when someone with a ‘far-right’ search history and someone with a ‘far-left’ search history watch the same video, they are subsequently recommended different videos to watch next – the probability that the former is confronted with a video that is critical of violence is far lower.<sup>45</sup> It is feared that this could create extremist filter bubbles.

However, studies show that the filter-bubble hypothesis<sup>46</sup> probably does not apply in as dramatic a form as usually assumed.<sup>47</sup> It is true that Google search results are specifically tailored to each user – but as a rule the changes are minimal: for example, merely affecting the order in which articles on a given topic appear in each individual’s search results. Moreover, this does not affect the ‘most prominent’ results at the top, but rather the results displayed a little further down.<sup>48</sup> In general, the major effect of online media is to enable people to broaden their horizons – even across national borders and language barriers.

### Extremists take advantage of global networks

The media have always informed us about events beyond our geographical or temporal horizons, but the internet makes this particularly easy. Propagandists make use of this, referring to conflicts around the globe, such as the persecution of the Rohingya in Burma, to lend support for their arguments of threats and persecution.<sup>49</sup> Such foreign conflicts are also reflected in German-language propaganda, which often refers to events abroad (see also Chapter 2.4).

Online media also makes it possible to experience distant events ‘in real time’. Facebook has offered a live-streaming function since 2016, which allows users to send videos live to their friends from any online device with a camera. Platforms such as Snapchat offer short videos that automatically delete themselves after 24 hours (known as ‘Stories’). As early as 2018, Jugendschutz.net noted that extremists were making strategic use of such live-streaming tools to enable participation in extremist life.<sup>50</sup> The right-wing extremist terrorist attack in Christchurch, for example, was broadcast live on Facebook.

Thanks to the global reach of the internet, Russian-financed advertisements can be adapted as right-wing populist memes for use in the German Bundestag election campaign.<sup>51</sup> It is, after all, far easier for extremist actors to form global networks online than it would be if meetings had to take place physically. Especially when it comes to sharing information, coordinating transnational actions or exchanging propaganda materials, online media provide effective infrastructures.

44 Speckhard/Ellenberg/Ash 2021.

45 Regnér 2014.

46 See infobox: Parisier 2011.

47 Haim/Graefe/Brosius 2017.

48 Flaxmann/Rao 2016.

49 Benigni/Joseph/Carley 2017.

50 Frankenberger/Hofmann/Ipsen/Oezmen/Zarabian 2018.

51 Frischlich 2018.



#### FILTER BUBBLE

*The filter-bubble hypothesis assumes that recommendation algorithms lead to media users being confronted online only with certain content that is pleasing to them, while everything else is automatically filtered out. Since people prefer content that confirms their own opinion, it is assumed that dissenting opinions are filtered out completely.*

To summarise our findings at the level of the digital society, we can conclude that the internet provides relevant actors with access to digital public spheres. These means are abused to produce and disseminate extremist propaganda. Recommendation algorithms and global networking play into the hands of extremists and can increase the reach of extremist content. However, violent extremism prevention can also make use of the same possibilities.

## Prevention in the digital society

Digitalisation enables more actors to spread propaganda online. Accordingly, universal radicalisation prevention (for details on different forms of prevention, see Chapter 5.1) in the digital society needs various actors, which can be roughly divided into 1. institutions, 2. civil society, 3. the media and 4. platform operators.

### Institutions

#### Authorities

Alongside institutionalised prevention by civil society actors (see Chapters 5 and 6), public authorities can also play an important role in strategic education about prevention services. For example, the European Commission provides a range of general information on extremism within the framework of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). RAN has issue-specific working groups dedicated to various types of extremism and seeks to create links between prevention actors from EU states and to promote exchange on both a practical and theoretical level. RAN YOUNG was created as a platform to specifically encourage and promote young people's engagement in radicalisation prevention and to make their voices heard. The websites of government bodies and official initiatives in different countries also publish general and country-specific information and materials on the topics of extremism, radicalisation and prevention (for example the Federal Agency for Civic Education in Germany, the US Homeland Security's Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships or the United Kingdom's Commission for Countering Extremism). However, to our knowledge there has been little empirical research as to how well this information is actually penetrating the digital spaces in which young people live.

Our practical experience tells us that there is still too little awareness of reporting systems for problematic content, such as those offered by the International Network Against Cyber Hate (INACH), an organisation that aims to take action against hate and discrimination on the internet at an international level via an online complaint form.<sup>55</sup> Here, wide-reaching educational campaigns would be desirable.

In general, government agencies could also use online media to raise awareness of their own offerings and to enable dialogue with members of the public. National, regional and local government each have their own areas of responsibility in dealing with online propaganda, but these cannot be discussed in detail here. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 offer more

detailed information on the prevention services offered at the various administrative levels in Germany.

It is also desirable that political actors help to strengthen fundamental democratic attitudes by taking a strong stance against violent extremism, as is the expansion – or at least continuation at the same level – of media awareness-raising campaigns and programmes. Furthermore, we need a discourse of diversity – and not only in the context of immigration – which needs to start with childhood. A pluralistic understanding of societies can help to create resilience against racism and ideological thinking in general.

### Schools

Schools have a central role to play in teaching digital literacy to young media users. The variety of extremist propaganda on the internet and the spread of disinformation pose new challenges for educators, parents and students. However, there are various projects that support educational institutions in addressing this challenge. The klicksafe project in Germany and the Internet Matters and CONTRA projects, for example, which are presented above, address the need to teach media literacy and provide information in schools and classrooms (for an overview of the German prevention landscape, see Chapter 7).



#### EXAMPLES FROM THE WORK OF KLICKSAFE

*Klicksafe is an awareness campaign to promote media literacy in dealing with the internet and new media on behalf of the European Commission. In addition to information for parents, its offerings include concrete lesson plans for educators to work with pupils on topics such as online propaganda, hate comments or disinformation.*

*Specifically, these lesson plans analyse symbols, slogans and mechanisms of the right-wing extremist and Islamist extremist scenes in Germany using real examples from social networks and examine their effectiveness, or examine hateful content and negative stereotypes.*

*Especially when interpreting signs of possible radicalisation, particular prudence and knowledge are needed in order to avoid pre-judgements that can prevent fruitful discussion and promote experiences of exclusion. Self-evaluation forms and factual information help teachers to assess their own prior knowledge and to proceed in a sensitive manner. Stories of drop-outs help to make the fascination of extremism tangible, to illustrate how views can change and to provide insights into ways out of radicalisation. The options available for those who wish to help family, friends or others whom they realise have fallen prey to such ideologies are shown in the form of examples of reporting and assistance systems and training in arguing against extremist views.*

*Debunking disinformation using methods such as the 'faktenfinder' (fact finder) launched by Germany's 'Tagesschau' news programme or the 'Hoaxmap' (for false reports about refugees) can protect against the rapid spread of extremist opinions. Schoolchildren are often particularly excited by the ability of Google Reverse Image Search to unmask manipulated images. This allows the place of origin of the image before it was manipulated to be determined so that the image can be classified correctly. The pupils learn that the density of false information is higher on social media than on traditional portals with a gatekeeper function. Conspiracy theories, filter bubbles, echo chambers and the algorithmisation of our information world can be flanking topics of the lesson unit.*

<sup>52</sup> Schmitt et al. 2018b; Schmitt et al. 2020; Ernst et al. 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Rieger et al. 2017; Schmitt et al. 2018b.

<sup>54</sup> Schmitt/Ernst/Rieger 2020.

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.hass-im-netz.info/melden.html>.





### EXAMPLES FROM THE WORK OF INTERNET MATTERS

*Internet Matters is a non-profit organisation that provides comprehensive services at no cost to promote media literacy among young people in the use of the internet and new media. The organisation is supported by various (digital) companies with the common goal of raising awareness of dangers and risks in the online sphere in order to create a safe digital environment for children and teenagers. In addition to information and resources for parents, the platform offers concrete materials that educators can use to deal with topics related to 'e-safety' (safety in the digital space).*

*Internet Matters not only provides information on radicalisation and extremism, but also addresses other potential dangers that can lurk online, such as cyber-bullying, identity theft, online pornography or fake news and disinformation. The website provides information on all of these topics, advice on prevention, dos and don'ts for dealing with those affected, as well as materials for use in practice and links to further useful resources. In addition to the topic-specific offers, Internet Matters also provides parents and educators with age-specific advice, for example in the form of e-safety checklists, everyday activities to promote media literacy or age-appropriate apps.*

*Against the backdrop of the dynamic development of the internet and the fact that the lifeworlds of young people today are fundamentally different from those of previous generations in terms of digital possibilities, the platform (with the help of tool kits and similar resources) also aims to create awareness and understanding among adults about online practices of children and young people and to introduce the latter to a conscious use of new media from a young age with the help of their adult caregivers.*



### EXAMPLES FROM THE WORK OF CONTRA

*In the EU research project CONTRA, learning materials were developed to prepare young people for attempts at manipulation and harassment on the internet by enabling young people to recognise and critically engage with problematic content and empowering them to come up with ideas for action.<sup>52</sup> To achieve these goals, the focus was on promoting media literacy. The learning materials serve for primary prevention and deal with the development of a working definition of online propaganda (awareness and sensitisation: what is propaganda, how can you recognise it?), an analytical-critical reflection of the content and how to deal with it, and the strengthening and representation of one's own position in this context (empowerment).<sup>53</sup>*

*Since the focus of this project is online propaganda, the learning units also convey knowledge about how the internet processes and disseminates information – for example, the learning units include exercises on the manipulation attempts and mechanisms of online propaganda (what rhetorical and visual means are used?) as well as on how online media offerings work (how automated algorithms work, filter bubbles). The issue of disinformation is also addressed.<sup>54</sup>*

*The promotion of critical media skills also seems important in view of a frequent imbalance: a very media-savvy and 'digitised' extremist propaganda machinery is often opposed by mixed experiences in dealing with digital media on the part of prevention. Therefore, there is also a need for teachers to familiarise themselves with the topic and fill any gaps in their knowledge of online propaganda and how algorithms work.*

### Civil society

In addition to teaching pupils how efforts may be made to manipulate them, parents and educators also need to remain up-to-date about relevant topics. Here, the websites of prevention organisations such as ufuq.de or ltai.info provide information materials at no cost and with low barriers to access. Especially for older media users with little online experience, it can be difficult to recognise or check disinformation and online

propaganda.<sup>56</sup> This is probably in part because they lack the appropriate skills for navigating the digital news landscape.<sup>57</sup> In this respect, there is a lack of digital literacy programmes beyond the context of school.

Overall, civil society has an important role to play in the dissemination of non-extremist online content. Whether in the form of young people telling their own stories online or artists advocating for a pluralistic democratic society in their work – the internet needs all these different voices. The bulk of media users tend to be merely consumers of online content; far fewer of them produce their own content or commentary, and a tiny proportion are responsible for the majority of online content.

The disappearance of the 'gatekeepers' not only increases the probability that media users will come across problematic content on the net, but also that they will report such content.<sup>58</sup> This certainly requires a certain degree of 'digital courage' – a sense of civic responsibility is something that should be emphasised again and again and made possible for all users through simple reporting procedures and instructions. At a time when live videos of terrorist attacks such as the Christchurch shooting are circulating, each individual should ask themselves what ethical and legal principles they are violating before sharing content online. Studies show that a simple reminder to share accurate content leads to a significantly lower spread of disinformation,<sup>59</sup> consequently, media users themselves can do quite a lot to increase information quality online.

### Media

Most Germans still keep informed about world events (in part) via offline mass media. This is no longer the case in many other countries.<sup>60</sup> In Germany, therefore, the established media play an important role in shaping opinions about terrorism and extremism.<sup>61</sup> The emergence of fact-checking organisations shows that this is also the case when it comes to making reliable information available in the face of digital disinformation. Dealing with propaganda, terrorism and disinformation poses great challenges for journalists.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, they themselves are often the targets of manipulation attempts by extremists.<sup>63</sup> Providing journalists with training to deal with extremist propaganda, hate comments<sup>64</sup> or disinformation, of the kind provided by the US NGO firstdraft.com,<sup>65</sup> can help to remedy the situation. A good overview of the manipulation of the 'attention economy' by extremists and how the media can deprive extremist fires of oxygen is provided by Phillips 2018.

<sup>56</sup> Guess/Nagler/Tucker 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Meßmer/Sängerlaub/Schulz 2021.

<sup>58</sup> Beyond the reporting mechanisms offered by the platform providers themselves, there are other hotlines for propaganda, hate speech and other problematic content, for example the Demokratiezentrum BW.

<sup>59</sup> Pennycook/Epstein/Mosleh/Archar/Eckles/Rand 2021.

<sup>60</sup> Newman et al. 2021.

<sup>61</sup> Brosius/Esler 1995; Frindte/Haußecker 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Weichert 2007; Marwick/Lewis 2017.

<sup>63</sup> Frischlich/Boberg/Quandt 2017; Preuß/Tetzlaff/Zick 2017.

<sup>64</sup> For example, Antonio Amadeu Foundation, Kahane 2015.

<sup>65</sup> firstdraftnews.

## Platform operators

Service providers such as Google, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook cannot be absolved of responsibility for the dissemination and toleration of extremist content. The German Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) is – despite all justified criticism – a first step towards holding service providers accountable. For too long, little has been done to counter terrorist cells or those that come together on social networks to spread hatred, prepare and plan attacks or share bomb-making instructions. Propaganda has not been permanently deleted. It should be noted that since the introduction of the NetzDG (and its further developments), platform operators have taken more decisive action against violent extremism on the internet. For example, jugendschutz.net reports that the deletion of content harmful to minors is now functioning much better.<sup>66</sup> Between January to July 2018, more than 500,000 items of content on Twitter, Facebook and Google were reported, of which 17 per cent were deleted by the operators.<sup>67</sup> The situation is more difficult on less mainstream social media platforms, some of which explicitly define themselves by rejecting censorship ('Gab.ai'), supposedly promoting free speech (Gab's 'Dissenter') or, in the case of imageboards (4Chan, 8kun, etc.), a culture of trolling.

At the same time, the deletion of content must always be carefully considered within the context of the fundamental right to freedom of expression – it is not without reason that freedom of expression is a central democratic value. Determining what constitutes 'hate speech' or 'propaganda' is often difficult and depends on the context. Different actors can understand the same content differently. This is where standardised procedures quickly reach their limits. The possible side effects of various recommendation algorithms should also be discussed. For example, viral posts that spread lies about refugees might be unintentionally 'rewarded' by algorithms in terms of monetisation via online advertising platforms, ranking or reach.

Platform operators could therefore develop prevention strategies that approach the issue both in terms of the detection of problematic content and on the level of algorithmic functions. For instance, companies and platform operators could make use of what is known as micro-targeting, as discussed below. For example, the ReDirect project, initially implemented by Alphabet, shows users who search for extremist content on YouTube anti-extremism videos as 'advertises' before the actual video.<sup>68</sup> An initiative founded by refugees called '#Search racism – find truth' tried to do something similar in the German-speaking world, showing short videos before xenophobic right-wing populist YouTube videos.<sup>69</sup>

In summary, one can say that prevention at the level of the digital society must include all prevention stakeholders. Continuous exchanges of views and the creation of broad networks are the basis for successful prevention work at the societal level. However, neither propaganda nor prevention should be understood solely as social 'macro' phenomena; social dynamics and the (online) groups that media users belong to, their virtual communities, likewise play a central role.

<sup>66</sup> Glaser et al. 2017.

<sup>67</sup> Gollatz/Riedl/Pohlmann 2018.

<sup>68</sup> Redirect.

<sup>69</sup> #search-racism-find-truth.

## The virtual community

### Radicalisation in virtual communities

Who we are is shaped in part by the social groups we belong to and identify with, such as our families, friends, religion or nationality. The possibility of being constantly connected to others in our group through online media does not change the fact *that* we come together as groups. However, it can be expected to change *how* we come together. Online media offer countless opportunities to participate in virtual groups and find like-minded people. Consequently, they can also serve as an infrastructure for extremist groups, helping to interpret and consolidate certain collective identities – such as being 'German' or 'Muslim' – in terms of extremist ideologies.

### Virtual groups as an effective infrastructure for extremists

Online, it is particularly easy to find groups that share one's interests or experiences, even when members are widely dispersed in real life. In 2020, ten years after the introduction of the group function, 25 million people in Germany alone were part of a Facebook group.<sup>70</sup> Most of them are probably not even politically active, let alone involved in extremist ideologies. However, groups can also be used for extremist purposes: for example, according to media reports, the right-wing terrorist organisation 'Revolution Chemnitz' planned its attack with the help of a chat group in the instant messenger Telegram.<sup>71</sup> Telegram is considered the home base of a variety of extremist activities in Germany.<sup>72</sup> In the course of the radical protests against measures aimed at combating the COVID-19 pandemic by the 'Querdenker' ('lateral thinker') movement, Telegram also emerged as a central contact point for followers of conspiracy theories;<sup>73</sup> popular channels belonging to a former pop star and an author of cookbooks disseminated anti-Semitic content in large numbers.

### Lack of data on the use of virtual groups

Comparatively little is known about the use of virtual groups by extremists in particular, although such groups were already considered a central recruitment tool by Al-Qaeda.<sup>74</sup> What we do know, for example, is that anti-Semitic cyber-hate groups can attract thousands of members in a very short time and that hundreds of Facebook groups encourage their users to celebrate their identity as 'Tea Party' members.<sup>75</sup> Germans who participate in political Facebook groups also tend to believe in conspiracy theories more than non-members<sup>76</sup> – however, it is unclear whether these groups contribute towards a stronger belief in conspiracy theories or whether they simply attract such people to a greater extent. On Facebook, members of Salafist groups post intensely emotional content and demonstrate hostility to outgroups, but implicitly distance themselves from the presumption that they want to convince others.<sup>77</sup> Joining such online groups

<sup>70</sup> Facebook 2020b.

<sup>71</sup> Machowecz et al. 2018.

<sup>72</sup> Bloom/Tiflati/Horgan 2017; Urman/Katz 2020.

<sup>73</sup> Including Holzer 2021.

<sup>74</sup> Torok 2010.

<sup>75</sup> Morin/Flynn 2014; Oboler 2015.

<sup>76</sup> Kaczins et al. 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Bouko/Naderer/Rieger/Van Ostaeyen/Voué 2021.

can be very quick; often all it takes is one click. By contrast, groups on other platforms sometimes require a more intense engagement before they welcome new members, including a statement of why one wants to join. While closed groups with entry barriers can help to protect the privacy of media users, they also make it harder for researchers to investigate such forums.

Of course, this does not only apply online: the tension between privacy rights and the need to collect and evaluate information exists both online and offline. Reports on the 'inner life' of extremist groups are therefore mostly made by investigative journalists who have gone 'undercover' to infiltrate such groups.<sup>78</sup> Such approaches always create ethical dilemmas and run the risk of fostering distrust of journalism (often demonised in right-wing circles as 'the mainstream media') within extremist echo chambers.<sup>79</sup>

### *Extremists (also) dwell in echo chambers*



#### **ECHO CHAMBERS**

*The echo chamber hypothesis assumes that people prefer content that confirms their own opinion. In the case of an echo chamber, users actively prefer media (for example, by clicking certain posts) that support their opinion and avoid those that spread dissenting opinions and views. Similar to the filter-bubble hypothesis, it is feared that echo chambers can lead to one-sided (homogeneous) opinion environments over time.*

Similar to the filter-bubble hypothesis, the empirical evidence for echo chambers<sup>80</sup> is mixed. Most media users consume very diverse media – they read the newspaper, scroll through Facebook and watch TV. This diversity limits the likelihood of echo chambers.<sup>81</sup> However, extremist subcultures in particular take care that their members do not consume too much 'deviance'.<sup>82</sup> For example, studies show that people who believe in conspiracy theories interact on Facebook mainly with other people who also believe in such theories,

but not with people who consume scientific sources – and vice versa.<sup>83</sup>

The more extreme the political opinion, the more likely media users are to turn away from dissenters.<sup>84</sup> Over time, this can create the impression that one's own (perhaps more extreme) attitudes represent the majority view. A survey of participants in a digital neo-Nazi forum in the USA showed that people who spent a lot of time there tended to overestimate the consensus of the general population – they felt more in the right.<sup>85</sup>

Virtual groups can distort the way information is handled even when they are not closed echo chambers. This is often achieved by processing information differently when a collective identity is addressed in people, for example when talking about 'our (German/Muslim, etc.) women'.

78 Schreiber 2016.

79 Cf. also Eppert et al. 2020.

80 See infobox: Sunstein 2007.

81 Dubois/Blank 2018.

82 Neumann/Baugut 2016.

83 Del Vicario et al. 2016.

84 Bright 2017.

85 Wojcieszak 2008.

### *The misuse of collective identities and (possible) consequences*

How we think, feel and even what we remember is influenced by how much we identify with the social groups we belong to, i.e. our collective or social identity. If we perceive ourselves primarily as part of a group (for example, as German or Muslim), we feel, think and act for that group.<sup>86</sup> Extremists try to take advantage of this. For example, the 'global faith community' (Ummah) is a significant element of the Muslim faith. Islamist extremists misuse this to justify their violence. For example, the self-proclaimed caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared in his proclamation of 'ISIS' that it was a place where 'Arabs and non-Arabs, whites and blacks, inhabitants of the East and the West are brothers'.<sup>87</sup> Just as loudly, right-wing extremists promote a global 'White Pride' or call on people to defend the 'Western civilization'. Some even dream of reviving the colony of Rhodesia, according to reports in the New York Times.<sup>88</sup>

Online media can also play an important role in maintaining a common identity for extremist movements with a foreign connection (see Chapter 2.4), as they link diaspora communities with each other. A survey of Turkish and Kurdish media users in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium on the Gezi protests<sup>89</sup> in Istanbul showed that people with Turkish or Kurdish ancestry used social media during the protests to network more with other Turkish and Kurdish people in Europe and Turkey.<sup>90</sup> Increased networking with the culture of origin does not in any way mean turning away from the host society – people have a variety of collective identities; multiple identities can be an important factor of resilience.<sup>91</sup> The extremist appeal to a collective identity can even strengthen the rejection of online propaganda: in our own studies, German students rejected right-wing extremist propaganda more strongly than Islamist extremist propaganda. Among Muslim students living in Germany, it was exactly the opposite: they were more critical of Islamist extremist propaganda.<sup>92</sup> Radicalisation only arises when a single extremist identity becomes fundamentally oppositional (see also Chapter 3.2).

### *Construction of extremist identities*

Virtual groups can be particularly attractive for people who feel excluded and socially isolated offline. Studies show that social exclusion fosters extremist attitudes<sup>93</sup> and engagement in virtual groups makes one care more and more about the virtual group, even if it is a 'white pride' group.<sup>94</sup>

One of the rare insights into how extremist groups form in digital media is the interdisciplinary analysis of the WhatsApp conversation of a German group of Islamist extremist youths who planned an attack on the Sikh temple in Essen.<sup>95</sup> In this analysis,

86 Tajfel/Turner 1979.

87 Atwan 2016.

88 Ismay 2018.

89 The Gezi protests began in Istanbul in May 2013 with a small group of activists protesting against the planned transformation of Gezi Park into a shopping centre. The police responded with full force and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan strongly condemned the protests. In the following days, the protests spread to other cities and were increasingly directed against the country's authoritarian leadership.

90 Giglou/Ogan/d'Haenens 2018.

91 Haslam et al. 2016.

92 Rieger/Frischlich/Bente 2019.

93 Lyons-Padilla/Gelfand/Mirahmadi/Farooq 2015; Pfundmair 2018.

94 McKenna/Bargh 1998.

95 Kiefer et al. 2017.

authors from various disciplines describe how group phenomena, such as the establishment of centres of authority or identity construction processes, can be traced on the basis of chat histories (for details on the study, see Chapter 3.2).

### *Distortion of collective memories*

Membership of (virtual) groups also shape our memories. Memories are socially shaped. Through repetition and mutual confirmation, memories of the same event, such as the same war, can differ between different groups. This also applies to the way memories of one's own nation's colonial past are dealt with,<sup>96</sup> as these are often narrated significantly differently in extremist circles compared to outside these circles.

Propagandists often paint the past of their social group in a rosy, nostalgic light. They celebrate the comradeship of the SS or glorify the 'purity' of those who lived in the time of Mohammad.<sup>97</sup> Right-wing populists and right-wing extremists often refer to an ethnically 'pure' country (in Germany, they often look back to the Wilhelmine empire); Islamist extremists enthuse about the time of the Islamic world empire. In both cases, the image that emerges is of a utopian past in which peace and order reigned, men were still 'real' men and women knew their place. 'Make America great again', the rallying cry of former US president Donald Trump, is echoed in how both right-wing and Islamist extremists invoke the time of the Crusades to present themselves as descendants of a centuries-long struggle. Studies from the Netherlands show that such 'collective nostalgia' can foster prejudice against foreign groups. Those who think nostalgically of the Netherlands of the past are more likely to find that being Dutch is a 'birthright' that people cannot acquire as immigrants.<sup>98</sup>

### *The staging of intergroup conflict*

The demarcation of an idealised ingroup against one (or more) demonised outgroups plays a central role in radicalisation processes (see also Chapter 3.2) and can be considered a core element of propaganda and other types of misinformation, such as conspiracy theories.

### *Use of conspiracy theories*

Conspiracy theories are explanations for events that contradict the usual explanatory patterns, the basic assumption being that these events are caused by a secret plan by powerful individuals. Theories about conspiracies are not wrong per se – in the history of mankind, there have always been situations in which powerful people have acted covertly to the detriment of society. However, conspiracy theories in the narrower sense have three characteristics that make them problematic:<sup>99</sup> (1) Conspiracy theories assume an unrealistic degree of power on the part of the conspirators, attributing to them virtually unlimited control (far beyond what is physically possible). Among other things, they are supposedly able to keep knowledge almost completely secret for a long time. Mathematical simulations show that this is highly improbable even with just a few hundred insiders.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Spinney 2017.

<sup>97</sup> Clarke/Ingram 2018.

<sup>98</sup> Smeekes/Verkuyten/Martinovic 2015.

<sup>99</sup> Baden/Sharon 2021.

<sup>100</sup> Grimes 2016.

(2) Conspiracy theories defy refutation: contradictory facts are interpreted as part of an even larger conspiracy, and cognitive processes themselves are often doubted – for example, science or journalism as a whole are demonised. This is why conspiracy theories often also involve disinformation.<sup>101</sup> (3) Conspiracy theories often represent what is known as a Manichean worldview, which reinterprets the aforementioned 'us versus them' conflict that is typical of propaganda as an apocalyptic end-time struggle that can be won only through violent defence. Only when all three characteristics come together<sup>102</sup> or when others are denied their right to a non-conspiracist opinion do conspiracy theories in this narrower sense leave the realm of democratic coexistence.<sup>103</sup> Extremists resort to such conspiracy theories – examples include assumptions about a global conspiracy against 'Islam' or white supremacist speculations about a 'great reset'.<sup>104</sup>

The feeling of being threatened by 'the others' can encourage aggression and violence. Studies show that people who feel threatened by members of an outgroup are more likely to advocate aggression against that group and to carry it out themselves.<sup>105</sup> Those who believe in conspiracy theories are more willing to accept violence and to use it.<sup>106</sup> In such a climate, hate speech against 'others' thrives particularly well.

### *Hate speech as a tool of polarisation and radicalisation*

Hate speech<sup>107,108</sup> is widespread on the internet. In a representative survey, 73 per cent of Germans over the age of 14 reported seeing hate comments on the internet at least occasionally.<sup>109</sup> For people under 29, who tend to spend a lot of time online, the figure is as high as 94 per cent. Especially in the aftermath of attacks, the web is flooded with hateful comments.<sup>110</sup>



#### **HATE SPEECH**

*Hate speech refers to communicative attacks on members of certain social groups that are motivated by a distorted attitude of the perpetrators towards these groups, for example racist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic or sexist prejudices. Different forms of expression and enactment of hate speech can be distinguished; it may be more or less explicit.*

Hate speech can change readers' attitudes towards the denigrated groups and encourage them to express themselves more negatively about the group in question.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, hate speech can also directly harm those who are being attacked: those who see hate speech on the internet tend to trust other people less.<sup>112</sup> Last but not least, hate speech can promote further radicalisation processes: those who are discriminated against and feel excluded are more supportive of radical ideas.<sup>113</sup> Hate speech could thus encourage radicalisation among

<sup>101</sup> Schneider/Schmitt/Rieger 2020.

<sup>102</sup> Baden/Sharon 2021.

<sup>103</sup> Cibik/Hardoš 2020.

<sup>104</sup> Rieger/Schneider 2018; Schneider/Schmitt/Ernst/Rieger 2019.

<sup>105</sup> Böhm/Rusch/Gürek 2015.

<sup>106</sup> Jolley/Patterson 2020; Lamberty/Leiser 2019; Rottweiler 2020.

<sup>107</sup> See infobox: *ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Schwertberger/Rieger 2021.

<sup>109</sup> LFM 2020.

<sup>110</sup> Kaakinen/Oksanen/Räsänen 2018.

<sup>111</sup> Hsueh/Yogeeswaran/Malinen 2015.

<sup>112</sup> Näsi/Räsänen/Hawdon/Holkeri 2015.

<sup>113</sup> Lyons-Padilla/Gelfand/Mirahmadi/Farooq 2015.

its victims. In summary, hate speech can contribute to the polarisation and division of societies in the long run and promote future radicalisation processes. Mathematical simulations show that even subtle discrimination by the majority society can severely shake trust between social groups and damage intergroup relations over generations.<sup>114</sup> It follows from this that the virtual community could play a central role in radicalisation processes. Virtual groups can serve as the infrastructure for organising action and can distort the perception and memory of users. Extremists misuse collective identities for their own purposes and contribute to the polarisation of society through conspiracy theories and hate speech. But virtual groups and group identities are not only important for propaganda – prevention can also benefit from addressing a collective identity in the virtual community.

### Starting points for prevention in virtual communities

Violent extremism prevention at the level of the digital community primarily concerns the space of online communities, digital groups that can be open – or very tightly closed. In accordance with the variety of extremist groups described above, which extends from open profiles or group accounts to isolated, walled-off portions of the internet, prevention efforts at this level can or should 1. also use the internet to address groups at risk, 2. research the dynamics of online groups (alongside offline groups) and leverage this for prevention and 3. promote the reduction of prejudices and prevent experiences of exclusion online.

### Addressing vulnerable groups, including in their online communities

Since virtual groups provide an infrastructure for the circulation of extremist ideas (see above), it is important to create counter-offers, counter-arguments or even counter-narratives in the ‘places’ where recruitment takes place, both online and offline. Online civil courage is a vital part of this. This is precisely the intention of the #IAMHere initiative: it organises groups of people who want to oppose hate messages on Facebook, who go into online comments and discussions that are flooded with hate to offer alternative narratives. It has already spread to countries including Sweden, Germany, Poland, Italy, France, Canada and India.<sup>115</sup> Actions and initiatives of this kind, which seek to counter online hate speech in those spaces where opinions become consolidated, show what such prevention offers can look like. The prerequisite for this is to gain access to digital groups of interest, to strike the right tone, and to be familiar with the issues, culture and scene that one is ‘moderating’. Moderated discussions could also have a preventive effect on potentially vulnerable fellow readers, as practical experience has shown. The Extreme Dialogue project builds on the stories of people who have left extremist scenes and other people who have been affected by extremism. It shows the perspectives and personal experiences of people who are familiar with various extremist scenes from the inside and, on this basis, offers prevention material to promote dialogue about extremism, violence, hatred and exclusion.

114 Uhlmann/Korniychuk/Obloj 2018.

115 Including Bateman 2019.

### Researching online group dynamics to enhance prevention efforts

As the analysis of the WhatsApp communications of a group of young adults planning an attack on a local Sikh temple in Germany makes clear, the members of that group were encouraged by the group’s leader to see everyone else as ‘enemies’. Contrary opinions were nipped in the bud, doubters were excluded from the group and thus from information regarding planning. But these doubters are vital, and they must have the courage to report radicalisation that is taking place in secret spaces. It is important to promote civil courage in different areas early and systematically, for example in projects such as ‘School without Racism – School with Courage’, a network that not only covers German schools, but also exists in a similar form in countries including Belgium, Spain, Denmark and the Netherlands.<sup>116</sup>

### Combating prejudices – preventing experiences of exclusion

Online media can play an important role in the construction and promotion of collective identities, especially for people who feel excluded ‘offline’. Online prevention can therefore, on the one hand, offer resources that promote non-extremist interpretations of collective identities and, on the other hand, contribute towards a reduction of prejudices in order to reduce experiences of exclusion. Intercultural projects, for example in the areas of e-learning, gaming or peer-to-peer networks, could better integrate their activities here and, above all, become more visible. At the same time, such online groups can contribute towards the reduction of prejudice via the promotion of intergroup contacts<sup>117</sup> – even where there is a long history of animosity, as in the case of the Israel-Palestine conflict.<sup>118</sup>

Given the importance of hate speech and conspiracy theories in extremist online offerings, it also seems sensible to target such content specifically. For example, the No Hate Speech Movement,<sup>119</sup> an international initiative organised by the Council of Europe, which has now set up local and regional campaigns in numerous different countries, offers advice and information on dealing with hate speech and launches national initiatives.<sup>120</sup> The EU-funded COMPACT (Comparative Analysis of Conspiracy Theories) research network provides various materials for dealing with conspiracy theories in schools on its website.<sup>121</sup> In the anthology *Online Hate Speech*,<sup>122</sup> various practitioners describe their experiences in dealing with such phenomena.

Not every piece of propaganda or every prevention effort has the same effect or effects everyone who is online. The effects of media – and this also applies to propaganda – depend on an interaction between the characteristics of the medium and the distinct characteristics of the individual user. In addition to the fundamental structure of digital society and the attraction of virtual communities, it is therefore necessary to consider the ‘online individual’.

116 School without Racism leaflet.

117 Pettigrew/Tropp 2006.

118 Walther 2009.

119 School without Racism leaflet.

120 Titley/Keen/Földi 2015.

121 www.conspiracytheories.eu.

122 von Kaspar/Riffin/Gräser 2017.

## The online individual

### The radicalisation of the online individual: an interplay of push and pull factors

We live in a world in which digital communication technologies, especially our smartphones, enable us to be quasi-permanently online. The resulting phenomenon of permanent availability ('permanently online, permanently connected', POPC) has far-reaching consequences for users. Studies show, for example, impacts on sleep quality, students' academic performance, and feelings of information overload and digital stress. On the other hand, smartphone use can satisfy basic needs, for example by contributing to a sense of control. Social media can furthermore foster a sense of belonging.<sup>123</sup> Extremists also take advantage of this.

Whether and how contact with internet propaganda has a radicalising effect also depends on the individual dispositions (push factors) of a user. Current media effect models emphasise the importance of such specific individual interactions between media and personal characteristics in certain social contexts.<sup>124</sup> Accordingly, one should not assume that the internet has a 'general' effect in radicalisation dynamics, but should rather consider the precise interplay of media and personal factors. When considering the potential for radicalisation of the online individual, push and pull factors can thus be understood as an interaction between characteristics of the medium (pull factors), for example online propaganda, and characteristics of the individual (push factors).

#### *Pull factors on the part of the medium*

As already observed, online media make it possible for people to remain in permanent communication with each other. Via online media, friends and acquaintances can, for instance, offer each other support and encouragement and we can look up information where this would not have been possible in the past. Online media are thus a vital means of orientation, and extremist groups make use of this. In addition to the social and identity-forming functions already discussed (see the section above on the digital society), online media can also be used for personalised communication, for example via instant messaging apps or via what is known as 'micro-targeting'.

#### *Concrete guidance*

Today, people often look for answers to their questions on the internet. Sometimes it is the first place we look. If we don't know something, our first instinct is often to google it. This also applies to uncertainties about the correct practice of religion. When searching for questions about the Muslim lifestyle, such as 'Am I allowed to drink Red Bull as a Muslim?', young people often end up on bait sites and blogs with Islamist extremist propaganda. The same applies to searches for beauty and lifestyle topics, which, for example on the popular photo-sharing platform Instagram, are cleverly interwoven with calls for militant struggle.

<sup>123</sup> Vorderer/Hefner/Reinecke/Klimmt 2018.

<sup>124</sup> Valkenburg/Peter 2013.

Even recipes have been used to try to snare young people: on the YouTube channel 'Baclava Cuisine', right-wing extremist activists from the Identitarian movement tried to combine lifestyle topics such as vegan cooking with the rejection of Jewish food. Such 'modern' right-wing extremists are sometimes also called nipsters, a portmanteau of 'Nazi' and 'hipster'.<sup>125</sup>

#### *Targeting individuals*

Online media not only facilitates the provision of information, but also targeted and active communication with individual users. A special feature of online media compared to classic 'mass media' such as television is the possibility of interactive, personalised content. Via instant messenger apps (WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.), questions, concerns or problems can be addressed interactively and individually. In this way, users feel accepted and supported. The structures of social media facilitate the feeling of being 'seen': 'likes', 'shares' or comments help to satisfy the need for belonging and significance.

The specificity of personal communication in messaging apps promotes connectedness and suggests privacy and intimacy.<sup>126</sup> Former Salafist Dominic Schmitz (2016) reports that friendship or love can develop between recruit and recruiter in such situations. French journalist Anna Erelle reports how she – disguised as a young Muslim woman – was contacted by 'ISIS' recruiters and courted in Skype conversations that lasted for hours.<sup>127</sup>

The intimacy of private online conversations is also used by extremists in carrying out attacks. For example, according to news reports, 'ISIS' members mentored the perpetrators of the attacks in the German cities Ansbach and Würzburg in 2016 via WhatsApp or Telegram during the operations.<sup>128</sup>

In order to identify potentially interested people, extremists can also use what is known as micro-targeting: the personalised presentation of adverts in social media. Platforms such as Facebook offer advertisers a huge volume of data on their target group, which can be used to direct messages with great precision. Until 2017, it was also possible to specify 'Jew haters' as a target group; as recently as May 2018, it was possible to select people interested in violence and Salafism.<sup>129</sup>

#### *Attractive stories*

In many cases, it is not the medium itself that shapes propaganda effects, but the content and the way this content is conveyed. Not every appeal or propaganda has the same potential to promote radical attitudes or even contribute to violent radicalisation. However, which content is capable of motivating radical attitudes and behaviours is still unclear in many respects.

With regard to the potential effect of online propaganda as a push factor, it can generally be stated that most young adults tend to react with aversion to propaganda videos.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Klicksafe, *Right-wing extremism has many faces, et seq.*

<sup>126</sup> Baaken/Schlegel 2017.

<sup>127</sup> Erelle 2015.

<sup>128</sup> Leyendecker/Mascollo 2016.

<sup>129</sup> Researched by the authors, 24 May 2018.

<sup>130</sup> Rieger/Frischlich/Bente 2013; Rieger/Frischlich/Bente 2019.

Like other movies, propaganda videos are rated better if they are produced in a professional, high-quality manner, in short: if they tell a good story. Such videos are perceived as more attractive and stimulate identification processes, including in the case of extremism.<sup>131</sup> Here, the entertainment potential also plays an important role: for example, extremists use typical features of entertainment to disguise calls for violence on Instagram and to insert their hateful ideologies into the ‘mainstream’.<sup>132</sup>

In general, it can be said that both right-wing extremists and Islamist extremists often directly address the lifeworld of their audience with their propaganda. Hashtags are hijacked in order to smuggle extremist topics into discussion on popular television programmes, or opinions are shared on current events.<sup>133</sup>

Another strategy is videos in which young jihadists or right-wing extremists talk about their personal journey to jihad or the jihadist scene in order to motivate others to follow suit (‘lifestyle activists’).<sup>134</sup> However, it is always the interaction between the medium (or media content) and the individual that is decisive. Therefore, a strong media effect should not be assumed per se – even if the story told is good.

### *Push factors on the part of the individual*

Ultimately, media users decide for themselves whether to watch a particular propaganda video or take certain counter-messages to heart. Although research is still in its early stages, certain push factors have been identified that could promote radicalisation processes or greater receptiveness towards extremist messages (see also Chapter 3.3).

#### *Existential fears*

Existential fears in particular seem to play an important role. Existential fears are fears that arise ‘from human nature’ – from our inability to control the future, the inevitable uncertainty of what awaits us, from our knowledge that we are ultimately mortal, or from our inevitable inability to be with others on a truly permanent basis – our existential loneliness.<sup>135</sup> Existential fears are not permanently activated in everyday human life, but are made salient by certain situations, such as when we are excluded by others or feel insecure.

A large number of studies show that people who are insecure prefer more radical groups.<sup>136</sup> Similarly, people who have been reminded of their own mortality are more likely to tolerate racism, violent military intervention, aggression and even suicide bombings on behalf of their ingroup.<sup>137</sup> A sense of exclusion also encourages the acceptance of terrorism.<sup>138</sup> Such existential fears also weaken rejection of extremist propaganda videos,<sup>139</sup> potentially opening the door to more radical ideologies and thoughts.

131 Morten et al. 2017; Frischlich et al. 2018.

132 Frischlich 2021; Schmitt et al. 2020; Schwarzenegger/Wagner. 2018.

133 Schmitt et al. 2017.

134 Rieger/Frischlich/Bente 2013.

135 Jonas et al. 2014.

136 Hogg et al. 2007; Hogg/Blaylock 2012.

137 McGregor et al. 1998; Greenberg et al. 2001; Pyszczynski et al. 2006.

138 Pfundmair 2018.

139 Frischlich et al. 2015; Rieger/Frischlich/Bente 2017.

### *Addressing needs*

With regard to personal characteristics, previous research has already investigated different factors that can increase susceptibility to online propaganda. For example, people who have a need for clear hierarchies and order, prefer rules and a simple worldview and are willing to punish those who rebel against authority (i.e. people holding authoritarian attitudes) or who accept violence as a means of conflict resolution, rate extremist propaganda videos more positively.<sup>140</sup> Individuals who already hold more radical views also rate propaganda more positively.<sup>141</sup>

As Meleagrou-Hitchens et al. point out in their research review on the role of the internet in radicalisation processes, it should not be forgotten that extremist online content offers users simple, reductionist answers to complex socio-political questions and concrete assistance in engaging in violence (see above). Online media can facilitate the search for such materials for people with a corresponding attitude, although it should be noted that even during the peak of ‘ISIS’, the actual share of ultra-violent propaganda videos in their propaganda strategy was small.<sup>142</sup>

But it is not only material that is authoritarian or glorifies violence that can be found online; many offerings are also aimed at the need for self-efficacy. Clicking through the output of the ultra-right pseudo-press, for example, one observes that many of these blogs explicitly call for active participation in demonstrations, donating money, ‘liking’ the page or distributing stickers.<sup>143</sup> In this way, they offer media users ‘easy’ ways to support their cause, while also arousing the need to ‘be able to make a difference’. ‘ISIS’ offered something similar: in sophisticated propaganda strategies, sympathisers were asked to upload materials to new servers and distribute them online, thus avoiding deletion by platform operators and increasing the propaganda’s reach.<sup>144</sup> This enabled ‘jihobists’ to actively participate in the digital ‘caliphate’.<sup>145</sup>

Finally, propaganda also addresses the need for meaning. The search for meaning in life (and the associated desire to be something ‘special’ or someone ‘important’) is a key factor in radicalisation processes.<sup>146</sup> Videos glorifying militants and martyrs, likes from other members of the community, conspiracy theories promising that you are one of the few who have understood ‘the truth’ – they all promise to make the individual feel special.

Taken together, online media have an effect on individual radicalisation processes in an interplay of push and pull factors. With the help of attractive stories, offers of identification and digital one-to-one support, extremists try to win new followers and support members in carrying out actions. Whether these pull factors succeed depends on various push factors on the side of the individual. In particular, existential fears, the search for meaning, a need for simple answers and hierarchies, and the desire for self-efficacy can act as push factors weakening the rejection of extremist offers. Here, prevention must find alternative means to meet users’ desires and needs.

140 Rieger/Frischlich/Bente 2013.

141 Morten et al. 2017.

142 Winter 2015.

143 The authors’ observations based on analysis of prominent ultra-right alternative media.

144 Stern/Berger 2016.

145 Neumann 2008.

146 Kruglanski 2009; Kruglanski et al. 2013; Webber/Kruglanski 2018.

## Approaches to prevention for the online individual

Extremism prevention approaches at the narrow, almost private level of the online individual should be based on the needs of the recipient – their push factors – and should make use of their own pull factors. Besides offering guidelines for young people, which should (also) be provided online, a personal approach and attractive content are particularly important. The latter should 1. focus on authentic stories, 2. expose recruitment attempts on the part of extremists and 3. work with positive influencers.

### *Authentic stories as a building block of radicalisation prevention*

Learning by means of stories, life stories and biographical experiences is a proven method in education to encourage concern and empathy while simultaneously providing credible information about events. In our experience, the stories of people who have exited the right-wing extremist scene or interviews with German converts returning from jihad are effective in discouraging young people because of the brutality they contain.

Overall, such stories, narratives and reports that oppose extremist messages are of central significance for the grand narrative of democratic pluralistic society. The term ‘counter-narrative’ is somewhat misleading in that it is not always necessarily about ‘countering’, but also a matter of making positive arguments that are central to the larger message of democratic pluralistic society.<sup>147</sup> Consequentially, the idea of mere ‘counter’ narratives is discussed critically.<sup>148, 149</sup>

Research on videos that advocate against extremism and for democratic pluralism in the broadest sense shows that such videos are particularly effective if they tell a good story – just like propaganda videos.<sup>150</sup> Looking more closely at various ‘genres’ of counter-messages, it is especially personal stories of drop-outs who authentically report their own mistakes without condemning others that evoke positive reactions from young adults and promote identification with democratic actors. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that videos against extremism can directly lead to the rejection of extremist ideologies<sup>151</sup> let alone to de-radicalisation.<sup>152</sup> Similarly, the presentation of arguments matters. Counter-narratives with two-sided arguments generated less reactance and were thus more likely to influence the attitudes of young adults than counter-narratives with one-sided arguments.<sup>153</sup>

Various prevention actors work with such life stories: for example, the Violence Prevention Network’s German-language multimedia website ‘Die Tränen der Dawa’<sup>154</sup> (Tears of the Dawah) allows the audience to experience the radicalisation of two friends through videos. Various country-specific EXIT organisations such as EXIT UK<sup>155</sup> also illustrate the stories of right-wing extremists and their exit from the scene in videos or texts.

<sup>147</sup> Qasem/Nordbruch 2017.

<sup>148</sup> Ernst et al. 2017.

<sup>149</sup> Schmitt et al. 2017.

<sup>150</sup> Frischlich et al. 2017, 2018.

<sup>151</sup> Morten et al. 2017.

<sup>152</sup> Doosje/van Eerten 2017.

<sup>153</sup> Schmitt/Caspari/Wulf/Bloch/Rieger 2021.

<sup>154</sup> Die Tränen der Dawa.

<sup>155</sup> EXIT UK.

### *Reflecting on pop-jihadist culture on the internet – exposing recruitment attempts*

The aestheticisation of extremist statements in combination with lifestyle elements from youth culture is a problematic mixture that needs to be reflected on, for example in a teaching context.<sup>156</sup> In concrete terms, such sites can be looked at in class and used as examples to reveal propagandistic intentions. Ufuq, for example, has produced a handbook that offers educators advice on dealing with the issue of Salafism in schools.<sup>157</sup> The EU-funded PRECOBIAS project<sup>158</sup> aims to a cross-phenomenal awareness of extremist communication strategies and to explain the cognitive functioning of such propaganda messages to young people. For this purpose, the project has developed numerous materials and lesson plans for teachers as well as an online course for young people explaining how extremist propaganda exploits cognitive distortions in natural human thought processes.

Prevention programmes can also take advantage of the creativity and desire for self-efficacy of young media users to create their own content. The project ‘#bildmachen – Politische Bildung und Medienpädagogik zur Prävention religiös-extremistischer Ansprachen in Sozialen Medien’ [#takeapicture – Civic education and media education for the prevention of religious extremist speech in social media], which is led by ufuq.de, aims to empower teenagers and young adults to resist religious extremist content. The website www.bildmachen.net features a ‘Hall of Meme’ with the best pictures from the workshops, which can be saved and shared. A similar initiative<sup>159</sup> was organised within the framework of the European Union’s AMITIE project: in a workshop, students from Seville created eight memes in order to speak out against racism and discrimination in a humorous way.

### *Positive influencers*

The previous section shows that it is necessary to provide democratic role models for young people searching for their place in the world. In the case of anti-racist, anti-jihadist and democratic YouTube offerings (such as the German-language YouTubers ‘Datteltäter’, or video series produced by state institutions and educational organisations working on extremism),<sup>160</sup> the question arises whether the academic approach is the right way to reach young people from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Here, too, there are sometimes major obstacles to understanding. An analysis of the contents of counter-messages shows that, overall, many videos against extremism follow a ‘top-down’ approach, for example experts giving lectures.<sup>161</sup> German Salafist Pierre Vogel’s way of lecturing may seem clumsy and un-academic to many, but he has reached thousands of young adults with it.

<sup>156</sup> Klicksafe.

<sup>157</sup> Ufuq.

<sup>158</sup> Precobias.

<sup>159</sup> Amitiecode.

<sup>160</sup> Educateagainsthate.

<sup>161</sup> Rieger/Morten/Frischlich 2017.



## Conclusion: radical and online?

Digitalisation has changed many things. In addition to new and expanded possibilities for participation and (social) inclusion, online media also create new opportunities for the dissemination of extremist online propaganda. There is significant concern that online propaganda could trigger radicalisation processes. However, it is better understood as a catalyst than as a trigger of radicalisation processes.<sup>162</sup> The internet offers extremists new 'opportunity structures' at the levels of the digital society, the virtual community and as a result of individuals being permanently online and connected.<sup>163</sup> Yet radicalisation depends on a variety of push and pull factors, media content being only one of them. Moreover, the same opportunity structures can also be used for the prevention of extremism.

Overall, the digital society offers structures and functions that can have a favourable effect on the diversity and spread of online propaganda: the elimination of the media's classic gatekeeping function, the amplification of content through algorithms, and the possibility of global networking and thus direct contact and participation in the extremist lifestyle can play into the hands of extremist activists. The digital society also offers new approaches for the prevention of radicalisation. In addition to the transfer of knowledge and the inclusion of such diverse social subsystems as politics, the media and the education sector, a crucial aspect of successful violent extremism prevention at the macro-level of society as a whole is the role of the service providers that operate the digital infrastructure.

Virtual groups and communities play an important role as infrastructure for extremist groups and in the construction of (extremist) identities. Between extremist echo chambers and seemingly harmless Facebook groups, attempts are made to abuse the national or religious collective identity of media users in order to spread conspiracies and hatred and to falsify memories of a 'glorious' past. Radicalisation prevention must therefore also be present in the virtual world – it cannot only be extremists that are allowed to influence identity formation. Hatred against individuals and social groups must be countered in the (semi-)public spaces of the networked society; such discrimination not only harms the direct victims, but also contributes towards further polarisation and radicalisation processes among the members of affected groups – victims and perpetrators alike. When the digital society is overflowing with hate speech against Muslims, this fuels individual experiences of exclusion – an important push factor for radicalisation processes. Prominent disinformation about rising crime by immigrants in Germany feeds the narrative of fear promoted by right-wing extremists.

Individuals who feel discriminated against and insecure can become more receptive to the messages of extremists as a result. Their 'protective shield' against radical influences<sup>164</sup> 'crumbles', so to speak. In a world where we are almost permanently online via our smartphones and connected to our network of (digital) contacts, personal contact with extremists beyond geographical borders and the micro-targeting of potential supporters have also become easier.

At the same time, the effect of propaganda does not happen in a vacuum: societal, social and individual circumstances influence the extent to which propaganda can develop its 'pull effect'.<sup>165</sup> Prevention should start with these factors and, as well as educating people about propagandistic pull factors, should also focus on individuals' lifeworlds and personal push factors in order to pre-empt extremist offers with democratic suggestions. Even if the internet is a fundamentally transnational phenomenon and is used to communicate across national borders, prevention approaches are often tied to national circumstances and embedded in national contexts.

Once someone has turned away from society and towards radical virtual groups, it becomes increasingly difficult to reach them, no matter how well dissenting voices are presented. At a certain point, they will probably not receive the message at all, and if they do, it will be reinterpreted in terms of their extremist worldview. In primary prevention, however, it is essential to provide democratic online content, reliable information, civil commentary and identity-forming spaces so as not to leave the field to extremists.

Prevention actors should always bear in mind the risk of side effects through discrimination or 'aggravation' when creating appropriate content for broad online dissemination. Long-term monitoring is (also) empirically indispensable here (see Chapter 5).

In general, each of the three prevention levels (macro, meso, micro) offers specific challenges and advantages. Broad, societal macro-prevention, for example via educational campaigns or fact-checking initiatives, can achieve the greatest reach; at the same time, these cannot take account of individual factors and potential side effects, which makes it difficult to verify effectiveness in individual contexts. Personal contact and direct exchange at the micro-level, taking into account individual characteristics and tailoring appropriate (online) offerings, is believed to be particularly effective, but also extremely resource-intensive, and there can be ethical issues with its 'enactment', for example in micro-targeting for prevention purposes.

It is therefore possible that the meso-level of virtual groups and discussions within social groups are a particularly viable basis for preventive offers on the net. Involving entire towns and cities, as, for example, the Strong Cities Network seeks to promote in an offline context,<sup>166</sup> would also be conceivable in local online groups. Intercultural cooperation between equal partners, as demonstrated in social psychology within the framework of the contact hypothesis,<sup>167</sup> can also help to break down prejudices, promote a change of perspective and break through the limited black-and-white worldview of extremists on the internet.

<sup>162</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens/Kaderbhai 2017.

<sup>163</sup> Engesser/Fawzi/Larsson 2017.

<sup>164</sup> Doosje et al. 2016.

<sup>165</sup> Frischlich 2018b.

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# CHAPTER 4

## Evaluation and quality management in violent extremism prevention

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Measures for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) have witnessed a great deal of innovation, differentiation and professionalisation in recent years. Many new approaches have been developed and tested, mostly in the form of temporarily funded, short-term or pilot projects. Actors have been facing constant pressure to deliver quick results or shift to the next approach to secure funding. Knowledge transfer across projects under these circumstances remains a challenge. Increasingly, however, the call for consistent monitoring, evaluation and learning from P/CVE measures is being heard and answered. Nevertheless, evaluations and internal learning efforts have their limits if the necessary data cannot be obtained and if there are deficits in coordination and knowledge management. While evaluations can aim at improving internal quality management of P/CVE measures, they also depend heavily on prior implementation of quality management strategies.

This chapter provides an overview of the main tools for organising evaluation and quality management in the context of P/CVE measures and the key distinctions among them. It proceeds in three steps: first, it clarifies the differences and interdependencies between evaluation and quality management and provides insights into the toolboxes for both. Second, it discusses institutional conditions for evaluation and quality management, and supplements this with an international comparative perspective, tackling the question of how to set up structures to organise and govern evaluations. Third, it discusses the main challenges and opportunities at the key steps of an evaluation process, focusing first on the planning of evaluation, then on implementation, and, lastly, on uptake. The chapter concludes with some key recommendations.

## The toolboxes of evaluation and quality management

It is important to be aware of both the differences and the interdependencies between evaluation and quality management. The American Evaluation Association (AEA) defines evaluation as ‘a systematic process to determine merit, worth, value or significance’.<sup>1</sup> Evaluation is thus an empirical examination of an evaluation subject and includes the collection and analysis of data necessary to answer a guiding question or questions. Transparent assessment criteria<sup>2</sup> and a design that is appropriate for the specific evaluation subject and its goals<sup>3</sup> are key standards of evaluation – for more details, see Section 2.1 of this chapter. In the case of P/CVE, evaluation can be directed at various subjects, such as specific projects, programmes or interventions, infrastructure, policies, institutions or organisations.

Quality management describes processes and measures taken within an organisation to define and monitor goals and activities in order to enforce quality standards and satisfy clients and stakeholders.<sup>4</sup> It can include the monitoring of input, output and outcome criteria of a programme or institution (for more details, see the section *Plurality of approaches to evaluation* below). Like evaluation, quality management is concerned with the relevance and effectiveness of a certain subject. For example, the Federal Agency for Civic Education

in Germany (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, bpb) could permanently monitor the participant turn-out in their funded programmes over time (or perform an audience analysis for their journal) as part of their quality management. This could, however, also be one building block of an evaluation that explores the effectiveness of these programmes. Evaluation can focus on the same questions and criteria as quality management and, in this way, evaluation and quality management can overlap.

Quality management is however distinct from evaluation in that it specifically describes an ongoing or regular process largely implemented by the organisation itself.<sup>5</sup> The term evaluation encompasses a much broader set of guiding questions, subjects, time frames, and agents. Evaluation, in contrast to quality management, can be – and often is – conducted by external evaluators outside of the organisation, e.g. to ensure a neutral stance towards the subject or because of limited internal resources. Moreover, evaluation is often a one-time process, and not ongoing, even though it can take a considerable length of time. Furthermore, evaluation also applies to a broader universe of subjects and guiding questions than quality management does. While quality management usually means analysing a subject with regard to whether it satisfies stakeholders and clients,<sup>6</sup> evaluation often entails challenging the key concepts and fundamental operations of a subject, also identifying disruptions in the operating procedures that may not be directly associated with the satisfaction of the clients and other stakeholders, but can have direct or indirect, long-term or short-term implications.<sup>7</sup> Staying with our example of the bpb, an evaluation would not only ask for participant turn-out (as an output criterion), but could, for instance, question why turn-outs are declining. Are the key features of the programme still aligned with societal needs for civic education? Are the programmes notoriously underfunded? Are the marketing activities appropriate for the specific programmes? Evaluation is therefore also concerned with causal mechanisms between different aspects of the evaluation subject (for example, between staffing and specific roles, operations, marketing, [financial] resources, concepts, output and outcomes). This enables it to understand failure or success more fully and to adjust and improve the subject accordingly. Quality management, therefore, is often the starting point of an evaluation process. In the following, we will introduce some key distinctions between approaches to evaluation and to quality management.

### Plurality of approaches to evaluation

Extremist phenomena can manifest themselves in many different ways. Radicalisation processes that lead to extremism can also be considered highly specific to individuals and require, on a societal level, a wide range of measures to counter or prevent them. But which methods are effective in P/CVE? This is one of the key questions evaluation is facing. The diversity of P/CVE measures requires evaluators to adapt their designs individually to each subject of evaluation for meaningful results.<sup>8</sup> In order to create evaluation designs that are appropriate for the subject matter, a wide variety of assessment tools are needed.

Different evaluation approaches pursue different aims, such as assessing the impact of an intervention, its implementation or the concepts behind it. Moreover, prevention takes place in highly varying contexts with regard to its clients, stakeholders, objectives, locations, time

<sup>1</sup> AEA 2021.

<sup>2</sup> DeGEval 2021.

<sup>3</sup> AEA 2021.

<sup>4</sup> DeGEval 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Stockmann 2002, 5, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Stockmann 2002, 27.

<sup>7</sup> Stockmann 2002, 17–18.

<sup>8</sup> Nehlsen et al. 2020, 2.

frames, funding and other challenges. The plurality of evaluation approaches and methods caters to the diverse contexts of intervention programmes and their needs. Evaluations can differ in terms of timing (*ex ante*/before, *during*/concurrent, *ex post*/afterwards), the stakeholders and actors involved (project participants themselves, external organisations) and their focus and goals (accountability, learning or improving performance).<sup>9</sup> Evaluation funding itself varies as well. It is partially dependent on the aforementioned differences in evaluation approaches and partially defined by the circumstances in which stakeholders propose, plan and implement them.

### Basic types of evaluation

A first basic distinction can be made between summative and formative evaluations<sup>10</sup> (for a third approach reflecting more complex settings, see Example 1). A summative evaluation is an evaluative review that retrospectively makes an overall assessment of the subject of evaluation. It is often conducted at the end of projects or measures. Its goal is to assess their impact and/or take stock of the overall structure and process orientation. Ideally, this is based on measurable outcomes (e.g. increase of political knowledge in the target groups, the reduction of violent behaviour, a decrease in anti-democratic or racist dispositions) or by documenting observable developments (e.g. new forms of cooperation, cooperation outputs, structural reforms). A typical summative evaluation question may be 'Did the intervention have an impact in the sense of the previously defined preventive goals?' Very often, summative approaches are used for accountability and may inform decisions on the continuation or discontinuation of an intervention programme. The validity of outcome measures and evaluation documentation and their alignment with the actual intervention goals are therefore critical for all actors. A more detailed summative evaluation not only focuses on the resumption of a programme but also on its improvement by analysing the causal mechanisms responsible for its success or failure. These kinds of summative evaluation are often expected to occur at the end of an intervention programme, but can also take place at any other point on the programme's timeline to review the results.

Formative approaches, on the other hand, assess the implementation process of a project or intervention. The focus is thus much more on influencing the continuing work of a programme and on how current processes affect the outcomes. Formative approaches can also provide important background information for causal analysis in summative evaluations. Aspects of a formative evaluation can include communication between stakeholders, workloads, conflicts and hurdles occurring during facilitation, organisational hierarchies, etc. Formative evaluations are of particular importance in the active management and improvement of projects, measures and programmes.<sup>11</sup>

The literature on evaluation provides us with long lists of different evaluation models, which vary in scope and how they combine various evaluation approaches. They cannot be comprehensively and adequately addressed within this chapter.<sup>12</sup> The CIPP model represents just one example of the many different commonly applied evaluation models, but it nevertheless serves as an illustration of how evaluators can combine different approaches to

research multiple guiding questions.<sup>13</sup> The CIPP model differentiates four types of evaluation: context evaluation, input evaluation, process evaluation and product evaluation. The CIPP model can be seen as an overarching, comprehensive approach that can meet a full range of evaluation needs, engaging different stakeholders in 'supporting their uses of evaluation for both program improvement and program accountability'.<sup>14</sup> A context evaluation assesses the alignment of the intervention aims, objectives, target group(s) and the organisational context, and answers the question: 'What needs to be done?' An input evaluation focuses on the resources of an intervention regarding funding, materials, infrastructure, staffing and skills, and tries to answer the question: 'How should it be done?' A process evaluation responds to the underlying question: 'Is it being done?' It thus addresses the actual operation and facilitation of a programme and identifies challenges and conflicts which can occur during its execution. A product evaluation (equivalent to a summative approach) finally assesses the outcomes and impact of the intervention on its target group(s), answering the question: 'Is it succeeding?' Not all four types of evaluation are always called for, so consideration should be given as to which is the most appropriate for a given subject matter.

### External and internal evaluation

Evaluations can be conducted either from within an organisation (internal evaluation) or from outside (external evaluation).<sup>15</sup> External evaluations are carried out by neutral and objective evaluators outside the organisation under evaluation. They usually show high levels of methodological knowledge, but can lack specific field expertise. A close cooperation with their clients, i.e. the organisation that is being evaluated, can compensate for the lack in organisational knowledge.

Internal evaluations are becoming increasingly important. They are carried out either by the team implementing the programme (self-evaluation) or by other individuals within the organisation who were not directly involved in the programme and its implementation (in-house evaluation). Internal evaluations can usually be integrated more easily into the organisational routines, and the evaluators have a high level of field expertise. This, however, can reduce the objectivity of the evaluation process and its results.

Internal and external evaluations have different perspectives, and each serves its own purpose, but they can also be complementary, for example in assisted internal evaluations, in which implementing teams are supported by external evaluators in applying suitable evaluation approaches and methods.

### Evaluation in complex and evolving settings

There are still significant gaps in knowledge and research on radicalisation and de-radicalisation processes. This results in a lack of indicators to assess the quality and impact of P/CVE measures. To compensate for these gaps, alternative approaches can be used when evaluating complex social phenomena such as the prevention of extremism. One approach that focuses on impact mechanisms is the realist evaluation model, which is primarily concerned with the question: 'What works for whom in what circumstances and in what

<sup>9</sup> Stockmann 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Scriven 1967.

<sup>11</sup> Scriven 1991, 168–169.

<sup>12</sup> For an overview, see: Möller et al 2020; see as well Alkin/Christie 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Stufflebeam 1983.

<sup>14</sup> Stufflebeam/Zhang 2017, 17.

<sup>15</sup> Owen/Rogers 2012, 143–149.

respects, and how?<sup>16</sup> This approach draws attention to the specific social and geographical contexts in which projects, measures or programmes are implemented.<sup>17</sup> The model tries to address the control group problem (in randomised controlled trials [RCTs] or related designs), which is a particular challenge for impact evaluation in the context of P/CVE.<sup>18</sup>

A further approach is empowerment evaluation.<sup>19</sup> Assisted internal evaluation, as mentioned above, plays an important role in this. Third-party evaluators support and advise implementing organisations in the evaluation. This enables project teams to develop their evaluation skills in the course of an internal evaluation (e.g. for developing evaluation designs, using data collection methods, conducting analyses and preparing reports).<sup>20</sup> This can lead to what is referred to as 'evaluation capacity building', i.e. building evaluation expertise and making it available for future evaluations in implementing organisations. In addition, assisted internal evaluations can help create acceptance for evaluations, increasing their usefulness.<sup>21</sup> They are particularly useful where data cannot easily be accessed by external evaluators due to data protection, privacy or ethical concerns. Such issues are common in the sensitive environments of P/CVE. Empowerment evaluation can help to take these concerns seriously, enabling evaluation where it would otherwise be impossible and thus supporting learning and accountability. Ethical concerns can also be mitigated by proper quality management systems, which contribute to the knowledge base within an organisation or project that can be accessed both internally and, under certain conditions, externally. This will be discussed briefly in the following.

#### Example 1:

### Developmental evaluation as a tool for practitioner empowerment and learning in P/CVE in Germany

*Lists of evaluation types often stop at the two classic categories of summative and formative evaluations, overlooking a third type: developmental evaluation (DE).<sup>22</sup> Summative and formative approaches cover a wide range of evaluation needs, but they share a basic assumption which may not always be realistic: they presume that the project under evaluation can reach a more or less final form (at least for a while). Summative evaluations thus aim to assess the status quo, while formative evaluations aim to help the evaluand, improve its work and get closer to its goal. DE, on the other hand, assumes that, for some evaluands, change and development are permanent rather than transitional. It therefore aims to support this change through evaluation.*

*In fast-paced fields such as P/CVE, it is not always possible to finalise ways of working. The demands of prevention evolve continuously, regarding both society's understanding of extremism and its reaction strategies. To meet these demands, new and adapted prevention approaches continue to emerge, financed via funding that is often renewed but rarely sustained. Entangled in these dynamics, prevention practitioners engage with*

<sup>16</sup> Pawson/Tilley 2004, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Pawson/Tilley 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Nehlsen et al. 2020, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Fetterman 1994.

<sup>20</sup> Fetterman/Wandersman 2005, 48.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Brinkmann et al. 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Patton 2010; Gutknecht-Gmeiner 2015.

*new clientele, adapt and professionalise their practice, collaborate and compete with other practitioners, and engage with the academic community by means of publications, conferences and evaluation. The challenges they (must) face are ever-changing, and their work environment is complex. In response, they are constantly finding new and often innovative ways to fulfil their roles.*

*The relevance of the results produced by classic evaluations may therefore (rapidly) diminish. For instance, an evaluation might show that a counselling approach met the goals set for it in the period assessed by the evaluation, but the target group may since have changed. In DE, evaluative questions are therefore derived from informational needs that are relevant at the current developmental stage of the organisation, and can be changed if the relevance does. At any such stage, multiple kinds of data can be helpful. Data collection could, for instance, aim to improve the team's knowledge base before changes are made, or assess the effects caused by changes after the fact. DE is therefore open to a wide methodological variety; evaluators are responsible for ensuring any data collection and analysis meets the proper scientific standards.<sup>23</sup>*

*DE is iterative in practice: changes in practices or procedures are planned and implemented, appropriate informational needs are identified, and data is collected and interpreted. Then, the new status quo is examined, and a new evaluative cycle begins. Within this process, evaluators and practitioners form a tight-knit team of 'co-creators'. Evaluators contribute evaluative experience and expertise, and function as 'constructive critics' and advisors, while practitioners drive the development process, and bring the expertise in their work and field to the table. Together, they discuss evaluative steps, their results, and the development process itself. DE ideally ends when an overarching developmental or evaluative goal is reached.*

*For practitioners in P/CVE in Germany, who are finding new answers in a dynamic and complex working environment, DE is a new and promising approach. However, it is challenging and resource-intensive for both practitioners and evaluators, who need to be flexible and open to a rather unpredictable process, as well as willing to engage meaningfully and work closely together. These prerequisites also need to be supported by an openness on the part of funding agencies. With adequate resources, DE has the potential to empower practitioners and to enable fast-paced and impactful learning. For an example of DE principles in practice in a P/CVE project in Germany, see Schmidt et al. (2022).*

## Key elements of quality management

Simply put, a quality management system is a collection of organisational processes and functions aimed at the continuous improvement of the quality of an organisational entity.<sup>24</sup> This includes systematising methods, policies, procedures, processes, resources and structures to ensure that, firstly, a project's responsibilities, schedules, relationships, contracts and agreements are met, and secondly, that learning within or across projects is made possible by better monitoring and assessment of the implementation of strategies, identification of problems and generation of solutions. The aim is to establish the infrastructure necessary for a project or an organisation to function, to implement its mandate, and to increase its

<sup>23</sup> Patton 2016, 296.

<sup>24</sup> See for an overview of definitions and organisational challenges: Junk 2021.

viability and effectiveness. Organisations are always full of competing activities and comprise a variety of fluid entities – and in the context of project work in P/CVE settings, as outlined above, these problems are aggravated. Evaluations are often constrained by a lack of data – or at least a lack of access to data for those conducting the evaluation. A quality management strategy should address these issues and provide clear guidelines and rules for accessing different types of data.

Implementing and organising a quality management system can be divided into two basic processes: specialisation and coordination. Specialisation refers to breaking down a new system or a key process into subprocesses and assigning staff and resources accordingly. Coordination is understood as the reconnection of the various subprocess outcomes to form a coherent system. The key to initiating a specialisation process is to be clear about the theory/theories of change of a given organisational entity or measure, as this defines the relevance of information to be categorised and stored and of daily routines and processes. The theory of change is an explanation of the expectations of how activities will ultimately translate into meaningful outcomes. Identifying, understanding and prioritising activities (both formal and informal) form a necessary first step – and sometimes a lengthy one – for implementing categories for reporting and data collection (monitoring) and for defining processes of exchange. Thus, while knowledge bases and monitoring systems are key for any quality management strategy, there is a second important pillar: quality management might require a change in organisational culture, one of sharing and exchanging instead of retaining information.

### *Challenges and necessities of creating knowledge bases in P/CVE*

Knowledge is not just information. Reports often merely contain information (e.g. who met whom and when) rather than knowledge (e.g. how a problem was addressed and what was learned from it). That does not make reports less valuable. On the contrary, in the case of reporting systems in P/CVE measures, it is this very basic information on operative details that forms the basis for later analysis. The management of this information is challenging as well: data protection and ethical safeguards regarding the storing and processing of this information need to be carefully thought through and systematically implemented. Consolidating knowledge, however, is more challenging than collecting information – not only because it requires time to allow for reflection and writing/narrating. Turning tacit knowledge (experiential) into explicit knowledge (codified, often written but also shared in formats such as workshops) is important and challenging as well.

P/CVE measures have often relied on verbal or ‘learning-on-the-job’ approaches for the sharing of knowledge. While these may still be important, they require face-to-face communication and a significant amount of time as well as relatively stable staffing levels, thus limiting sustainability, impact and efficiency. Systematically documenting experiences needs to be the bedrock of any quality management system. This helps to store details about how a task was completed, to retain information and develop institutional memory, and to communicate and share information more clearly.

### *Continuous monitoring and reflection*

There are various tools and formats that help fulfil requirements for continuous documentation. They serve as the building blocks for monitoring systems. Such systems depend heavily on the mandates and structures of the relevant organisations, and

can therefore vary greatly. The first core element is databases, including, for instance, software-based case documentation. These ensure that knowledge is being gathered and made accessible for analysis. Ideally, the data gathered from case files also includes the option to add further critical documents such as agendas and minutes of meetings, handover notes, after-action reviews following critical incidents, and document types that allow for open-ended reflection on critical junctures and lessons learned. Since there are bundles of multiple activities and even networks (formal and informal) of prevention actors around individual clients, especially in secondary and tertiary prevention, it can be valuable to include some stakeholder-mapping documents, which respond to questions like ‘Where is the knowledge on further actors?’ and ‘Who are my knowledge partners in these activities and in the current life of my client?’.

Monitoring is a continuous internal process to track progress against the theory of change and an implementation plan (as stored in GANTT charts, for instance). Monitoring can take the form of regular reports on a clearly defined schedule in the midst of implementation processes. This allows project coordinators and project teams to identify good and bad practices, to learn from them, and to tackle problems before they become unmanageable.

Here, communication and discussion are key to making the leap from capturing experiences (as a means of prioritising and analysing practices) to learning. Regular reflection and debriefing workshops at all levels of an organisation are important tools. While these workshops have an internal component, P/CVE measures include working in formal and informal networks with other organisations, and P/CVE is a rapidly developing field with a fast-changing knowledge base. Ideally, project teams should be part of tailored communities of practice, leveraging expertise and fostering new ideas about implementing P/CVE projects.

While evaluation and quality management often focus on one project, one organisation or one clearly defined programme or network, they are contingent on an institutional environment that enables (or constrains) any evaluative endeavour. The following section focuses on these structural conditions for evaluation.

#### *Example 2:*

### **Online media as instruments of primary prevention and their evaluation**

*Content distributed via the internet can serve as an instrument of primary prevention: thanks to the enormous reach of the World Wide Web, such content has the potential to be seen by an extraordinarily high number of individuals – including those who might not (easily) be reached by other forms of primary prevention. The German Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, bpb) aimed to grasp this potential and cooperated with a professional production company, selecting three creators to produce short videos on the topic of fake news. Detailed information about this project, the instruments that were tested by evaluating the videos and the results of the tests can be found in Theis et al. (2021).*

*The videos were published on their creators’ social media profiles (on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram). Their purpose was to explain what fake news is, how it can be identified and how users can deal with it. One of the main challenges in this project was to identify suitable creators. To reach the target group (adolescents of low-to-medium*

socio-economic status who use mass media primarily for entertainment and enjoy short, humorous videos), the creators ideally had to be capable of authentically communicating information about a relatively serious subject in a humorous way. Moreover, it was important that the creators come from the same communities as the target group and have followers on social media with the right kinds of profiles. It was hoped that users would perceive the information in the videos as credible if they were familiar with the creators and followed them regularly.

There are various ways to approach an evaluation of such short videos.<sup>25</sup> One possible approach is to analyse the effects of the videos on its audience. However, measuring individual effects is challenging, as digital media grant users a high degree of anonymity. In the context of this project, a short questionnaire was tested as an instrument to measure subjective perceptions of the credibility of the videos' source. The questionnaire was distributed via a link in the information box below the videos and the creators asked the users to complete it after watching the video. A relatively high number of users followed the creators' requests. In the case of creator 1, almost 400 users completed the questionnaire. The users gave the sentence 'I think the statements about fake news in the video of creator 1 are true' an average of 2.95 on a scale ranging from 1 (not true at all) to 4 (absolutely true). Thus, they perceived the video as relatively credible. In general, the results of the questionnaire tested here support the assumption that digital media such as these videos have the potential to contribute to civic education and can therefore serve as instruments of primary prevention. The questionnaire has been validated as an effective test instrument for source credibility. Nonetheless, evaluating the use of online media contains challenges and makes individual methods of evaluation such as interviews or group discussions with selected users (or user groups) relatively difficult.

## Organising and steering evaluation

The success of evaluations depends not only on defining clear goals and appropriate methods, but also on the organisational and institutional structures through which they are managed and implemented.<sup>26</sup> Implementers of P/CVE programmes from within and outside of governments face an array of important questions: who decides how evaluations are commissioned, funded and implemented? Who has the power to influence these decisions? And how do actors implement the results of evaluations? Ideally, the contracting authorities would strategically decide which programmes and efforts are evaluated and make sure the evaluation results lead to adjustments at the intervention, programme and policy levels in order to improve P/CVE in the long run. But as many countries have only recently started evaluating P/CVE and related activities in crime prevention and civic education in a regular and structured manner, these organisational structures and processes often do not yet exist or are not fully implemented so as to steer and support evaluations in the best possible way.

Structures for organising and managing evaluations should be established deliberately for this task instead of reflecting institutional path dependencies or ad hoc decisions. This can ensure that all actors support evaluations as a tool to learn, adjust and guarantee accountability. While the specific arrangement needs to fit the context and institutional culture of a given country, actors can build on experience with evaluation and auditing

<sup>25</sup> See Theis et al. 2021 for a more detailed description of potential approaches used in various studies.

<sup>26</sup> Glazzard/Jones 2020.

in other policy fields, such as development assistance and foreign policy, as well as other countries' experiences with establishing organisational structures to manage P/CVE evaluations. Researching and comparing how the governments of Canada, Finland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom organise evaluations, we have found that governments face very similar systemic challenges in steering P/CVE evaluations.<sup>27</sup> They concern three levels: the **formal rules** by means of which P/CVE policy and funding bodies guide their implementing partners; evaluation **capabilities** among funders, implementers and evaluators; and the **cultural** and social norms that influence whether and how evaluations are conducted and utilised.

In practice, parliaments and government ministries are the primary funders of P/CVE programmes and responsible for formulating, overseeing and adjusting P/CVE policy and implementation. As such, they play a central role in evaluation for accountability and learning. Setting formal rules to require mandatory external evaluations when allocating P/CVE funding can be an effective tool to both oversee spending and to learn about measures that have been implemented. Apart from that, these political actors can encourage (self-) evaluation by governmental and non-governmental implementers alike and support capacity building in the form of evaluation training and toolkits that enable it. Governments can also, for example, provide help desks with evaluation experts who can advise implementers on how to plan for evaluations, recruit external evaluators and act on results. Even when they choose to make evaluations mandatory, governments still need to invest equally in building the capacity of implementers to plan interventions ahead of time in a way that allows them to be evaluated. Formal rules should be designed to enable made-to-measure evaluation strategies that fit the implementers' needs.

This does not mean, however, that funders have the greatest P/CVE evaluation expertise or that they are best positioned to decide on the manner in which different interventions should be evaluated. Implementers, researchers and evaluators often have more in-depth expertise when it comes to how (their) efforts can be evaluated. The task of governments is to enable their own institutions as well as implementers to identify and tap sources of expertise on P/CVE evaluations and invest in strengthening this expertise. To steer evaluations, governments may choose which evaluation type and timing make sense for a specific intervention or programme, and how accessible they will make the results.

It is important to have realistic expectations about what evaluations are able to do, for example in terms of impact measurement. Evaluability does not exclude any type of activity, nor does it favour some P/CVE approaches over others. It does, however, require clarity about goals and observable metrics (which could be qualitative or perception-based). For funders, it is thus important to stay in close consultation with implementers to provide support for planning and implementing evaluations, but it is not advisable for them to dictate detailed terms. The case of the Netherlands, for example, shows that a combination of mandatory evaluation, capacity support to realise this, and relative freedom for implementers to plan the details of the evaluation and choose external evaluators can work well.<sup>28</sup>

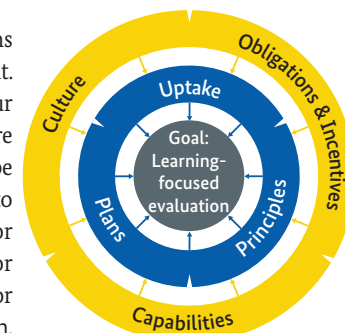


Figure 1: Six structural levers to enable and support constructive evaluations at the system and strategy levels, source: Baykal et al. 2021

<sup>27</sup> Baykal et al. 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 38–48.

Building an evaluation culture that is characterised by mutual trust, open communication and willingness to learn is a long-term process. A variety of leverage points exists to enable and support constructive evaluation (see Figure 1). P/CVE actors need an environment in which owning up to one's mistakes does not result in undue punishment. Countries that have achieved a culture of learning, evaluation and constructive discussions about failure are typified by high levels of trust, transparency and frequent, constructive exchanges between actors. On the other hand, mistrust and a lack of communication can, in the worst cases, lead to deadlock and a culture of suspicion and hostility that makes honest evaluations and learning close to impossible. A constructive evaluation culture is only possible if all stakeholders – including funders themselves – share an openness for learning from experience. Governments can invest in, encourage and incentivise such a culture by prioritising trust. This means, for example, considering the constraints implementers face when they fear financial insecurity or undue punishment in reaction to negative evaluation results. A good practice to encourage trust and learning is to hold implementers accountable by requiring evaluations early in the process if possible, but giving them a chance to adjust while ensuring they have the financial security to do so.

At the strategy level, appropriate structures and processes can also help governments plan evaluable portfolios, set principles and standards for independent, impartial and high-quality evaluations, and ensure state-of-the-art uptake procedures. Evaluations are too often launched as an afterthought with respect to projects, programmes and policies that lacked concrete goals or theories of change when originally implemented. Governments can formulate evaluation strategies to set specific learning goals and, most importantly, ensure that projects and programmes are designed to match the chosen evaluation strategy. Strategies of this kind need to balance individual project evaluations and larger programme or portfolio evaluations, ideally timed in a way that enables programming, funding and policy adjustments. Not all projects need to be evaluated, but they should be selected according to transparent criteria. Additional evaluations, research projects and meta-reviews commissioned by governments can help synthesise results and draw conclusions.

To ensure independence, impartiality and high-quality evaluations, governments can encourage or require and enable more external or mixed (internal-external) evaluation teams. Funders need to ensure that implementing organisations understand the importance of impartiality as a priority and allow for sufficient financial and staff capacity. Currently, the field relies extensively on self-evaluation. In all country case studies, quality assurance

mechanisms for evaluations were insufficient compared to other policy fields. Where high quality evaluations are carried out, they depend on a small field of highly skilled professionals to lead them. If such skilled professionals are not present, governments/funders need to set incentives and benchmarks for quality assurance and the cultivation of a field of P/CVE evaluation experts.

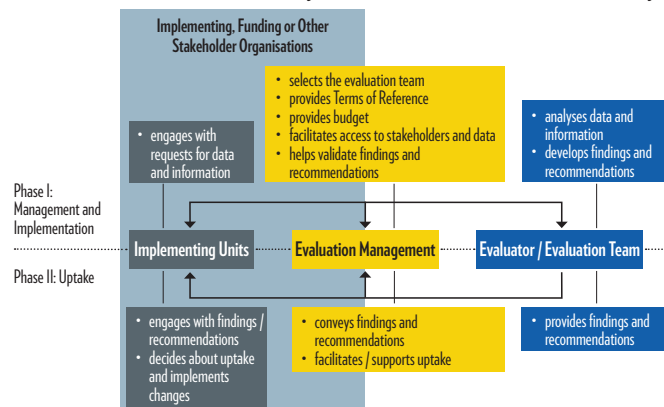


Figure 2: Evaluation management, implementation and uptake, source: Baykal et al. 2021

Managing and steering evaluations to improve P/CVE policy and practice as depicted in Figure 2 is no easy task. Much of this consists of mediating between different actors and their interests and needs, cultivating a relationship of constructive collaboration, and setting the right incentives. Appropriate organisational structures and processes that fit the particular institutional context of a country are indispensable to ensure that investments in preventing and countering violent extremism are worthwhile.

## Implementing evaluation processes

Organising evaluation in the rapidly evolving field of P/CVE is both necessary and challenging, as this chapter has outlined thus far. In many countries with active P/CVE programming, there are initiatives to foster communities of practice, to create knowledge hubs and to enable evaluation on various political and practical levels. Still, a lack of planning ahead for evaluation at the outset of programming, a lack of funding and capacities, as well as the sensitive nature of information about P/CVE mean implementing evaluation in P/CVE remains challenging. The following section discusses the key challenges in implementing an evaluation under these conditions. Based on PrEval research results,<sup>29</sup> we recommend (1) devoting enough time to **planning** with all actors involved in each evaluation effort, (2) keeping an open dialogue among actors in the key phase of **implementing** the evaluation, and (3) devising an **uptake** strategy from the outset in order to enable learning and reform. While the three steps of planning, implementation and uptake are interdependent, they each come with their own set of opportunities and challenges.

### Planning

Planning an evaluation entails a sequence of decisions ranging from the allocation of financial resources to deciding on the purpose of the evaluation, who it is intended to benefit (practitioners, funders, etc.) and how. The actors involved in these decisions have immense impact on the evaluation, as stakeholder priorities can clash when faced with the limits of what a single evaluation can address, even as their interests inevitably overlap. The planning process starts with these interests in mind, and it is therefore crucial to include all stakeholders at an early stage, as one decision can (often unknowingly) limit options later on.

Consulting with a given group of stakeholders only at a more advanced stage of planning may diminish stakeholder benefits, waste resources and lead to frustration, as it often leaves no room to change crucial aspects of the evaluation. In the following, an overview of a number of typical decisions and their implications will be given, preceded by some general guidelines on what to consider when navigating the planning process. It is important to note that, in real-life settings, the decisions outlined in the chain presented here can be and often are interconnected. This is why multiple forms and approaches to evaluation and diverse tools and guidelines have been developed, stemming from years of evaluation experience in various fields. These approaches link potential aims of an evaluation to specific procedures. Gaining an overview of the evaluation toolbox is therefore a valuable starting point for any planning process.

No planning process is the same as the next, not least because the order in which decisions can (and have to) be made varies depending on the evaluation goals. On the one hand,

29 Klöckner et al. 2021/Koynova et al. 2021/Schlicht-Schmälzle et al. 2021 – for further details, see: [preval.hsflk.de](http://preval.hsflk.de).

options are often limited from the get-go, as resources, time frames or even focal questions for the evaluation are frequently pre-defined when planning the project itself. On the other hand, though the planning process may therefore begin long before the actual evaluation commences, some decisions remain to be made once the evaluators are on board (e.g. modes of collaboration). So as not to lose sight of the evaluation's intended purpose, stakeholders should repeatedly circle back to what they set out to learn or achieve through the evaluation and adapt either the defined purpose or the plan if necessary. Having one or more clearly defined purposes and core interests can inform every other decision, thereby ensuring that initial goals are not missed because their achievement was unknowingly obstructed along the way (for example, by setting out to compare insights from stakeholder groups in a programme to facilitate better coordination, but agreeing to fully anonymous assessments for the sake of privacy). Settling on a purpose is therefore one of the key decisions of the planning process.

The **evaluation's purpose** refers to what stakeholders want to be able to do with the results of the evaluation. This may include improving the project (by reference to internal or external standards), being able to decide about further funding, or grounding future developments in the project on sound data, to name a few. One evaluation may fulfil multiple purposes at once, but there are limits to their compatibility (and to the scope of any evaluation; see below). If multiple stakeholders are involved, diverging interests and each actor's priorities should be set out transparently, so that a collective decision can be made.

The evaluation's purpose goes hand in hand with the **core interests**, i.e. the knowledge that stakeholders want to gain by means of the evaluation.

If the evaluation's purpose is to improve the project, for instance, this can refer to work with clients or collaborators, or to processes within the programme's core team. Further, different kinds of information can show more precisely what needs to be improved. Settling on core interests means deciding what you want to learn to achieve your goal. In a real-life setting, this should be outlined broadly early on within the organisation and revisited in more detail once the evaluators are on board and the evaluation begins. However, defining the evaluation's purpose and core interests (*what*) is not enough – it is also important to clarify *how* addressing the core interests can inform the targeted purpose.

No evaluation has the capacity to satisfy all possible interests. Both the **financial resources** and the **time frame** allocated to them are (understandably) limited and usually dictated by the project's budget (see also the section of this chapter on 'The toolboxes of evaluation and quality management' above). In planning an evaluation, this step therefore often encompasses clarifying what is possible rather than what would be ideal. If there is some wiggle room, this decision is nevertheless one of the first to be made, as it can be helpful to estimate which resources are needed to fulfil the intended purpose and satisfy core interests.

As stated before, evaluations can be internal or external, i.e. performed by persons from within or outside the organisation. Both forms have advantages and disadvantages. Internal evaluators (who do not have to be the implementers of the project or measure in question) usually know the organisation very well, which frequently facilitates communication and trust-building between them and the evaluated parties. External evaluators bring fresh eyes and experience from different contexts. Whether an evaluation will be internal or external is also often determined in the project's plan. For the evaluation planning process, four aspects concerning the evaluators can be seen as especially relevant, namely, how early on they will be available for consultation, which **methodological qualifications** they have, how well they

know the field of the evaluated project and how much time and energy they can truly give to the evaluation. Internal evaluators, for instance, may have to fit the evaluation around their regular responsibilities, while external evaluators may be working on multiple evaluations at once. What stakeholders expect from evaluators in these regards depends on the designated **roles and responsibilities** of the evaluators and the evaluated parties, which are determined later on and can, in turn, depend on which evaluation approach is chosen.

A large part of an evaluation's implementation (and therefore its planning) is determined by the **methods** (scientific, social-scientific) chosen to collect and analyse (quantitative or qualitative) data. The choice of methods can be narrowed by preferences identified and decisions made beforehand, which may concern the purpose of the evaluation, the core interests and questions to be answered, the specific qualifications of the evaluators (if they are set before deciding on methods), and the data that can be made available for the evaluation. In P/CVE, data is often highly sensitive and protected, either for the sake of the clients or for the institutions involved. Although deciding which method(s) to use can be a natural last step of the planning process, data availability should be considered as early as possible, since approvals and preparations for data use may require many administrative steps and a lot of time.

Thus, the planning of an evaluation should start from the end (purpose and core interests) and include all stakeholders as early as possible. By looking at the purpose(s) to be achieved and interest(s) to be met through the evaluation while simultaneously bearing in mind potential challenges, stakeholders can identify the steps and decisions necessary to arrive at the desired final evaluation design. In some cases, it may make the most sense to not view the decisions as a chain but rather as a checklist on which the preferences and possibilities of all stakeholders are reviewed simultaneously. These checklists and processes put in place during the planning phase guide the implementation phase. Proper planning allows for effective implementation. While planning should ideally take all implementation steps into consideration, there are some particular challenges (and opportunities) that occur during the implementation phase. This is the focus of the following section.

#### Example 3:

### Linking monitoring and results-oriented evaluations of exit programmes for P/CVE

*Impact evaluations are in high demand,<sup>30</sup> as they can (theoretically) inform not only on the outcomes of a project or programme (e.g. regarding its clients) but also on its societal impact. This also holds true for tertiary extremism prevention (which targets radicalised individuals, for instance in exit programmes). In tertiary prevention, both the urgency to prevent (further) radicalisation and acts of violence and the costs of prevention per individual are high.*

*So far, evaluations of exit programmes have only had the capacity to focus on outcomes. Long-term designs could try to appraise a programme's impact but are extremely challenging, both theoretically (in terms of linking an individual's [non-] development to the specific programme) and methodologically (e.g. due to low numbers of clients). Outcome-oriented evaluations nevertheless contain potential for funders and practitioners who aspire to appraise and improve a given programme.*

30 UNDP 2018.

*Before-and-after comparisons would ideally form the basis for any outcome-oriented evaluation. In order to make them realistic, programmes should start off by grounding their goals on baseline studies and context analyses. Another important basis for evaluation is the programme's own documentation, which can contain long-term and standardised information on the programme's clients. Responsible funders invest from the beginning to build these foundation stones into the design of exit programmes.*

*Most programmes use documentation to monitor outcomes on an ongoing basis. This can complement evaluations, which are carried out less frequently. Ideally, therefore, the documentation should suitably operationalise the central outcomes. Operationalisation refers to finding a 'measurable' indicator for pre-defined outcomes. Self-critical testimony of one's own past actions, the development of alternative habits of self-control, and new behavioural patterns intended to channel frustration, for instance, could serve as indicators of introspection abilities in clients.*

*Documentation is challenging and requires time and resources. Yet many programmes do follow a long-term approach to monitoring their goals and activities and are willing to invest these resources. A programme's documentation can serve as the central anchor point for evaluations, which also need indicators to answer the evaluation questions. If the available documentation is sufficiently informative (and covers the evaluation's focal points), evaluators start with a fairly strong set of initial data. If it is not, indicators need to be established from scratch, which, again, is resource-intensive. In exit programmes, this is further complicated by the limited access evaluators have to data due to heightened data security standards and ethical considerations.*

*In general, establishing indicators can serve both monitoring and evaluation. However, to reduce the resources needed to establish them, evaluation can also contribute to programme documentation, instead of only utilising it when it is a good fit. In other words, identifying suitable indicators can be an evaluation question in its own right. In fact, linking monitoring and evaluation efforts is key to solving the central challenges of attempting to grasp a programme's outcomes – and ultimately, its impact – in a pragmatic way. In addition, as the field of P/CVE in Germany has been on the lookout for appropriate indicators for (de-)radicalisation and related processes, evaluations focusing on suitable indicators could inform further research in the field.*

## Implementation

While evaluation theory (see, for example, the evaluation circle presented by Romaniuk and Fink (2012, 10)) clearly separates the implementation phase from the planning phase, practical experience shows that planning and implementation overlap. For instance, the planning phase could include stakeholder mapping and the development of a theory of change, both of which are often based on considerations about the actual evaluation process<sup>31</sup> as exemplified in the following questions: Which aspects of the theory of change should be addressed in the context of an evaluation? Which data needs to be assessed to answer the main questions? How can data be assessed? And who needs to be addressed to gather relevant data? Before the actual evaluation can start or data assessment can even be planned in more detail, the aim of the evaluation needs to be identified (see the section 'Planning' above). The objectives of an evaluation might be determined by the expectations of funders.

<sup>31</sup> Romaniuk/Fink 2012, 10.

However, these objectives cannot be chosen without taking the aims of P/CVE measures into account, as these determine possible approaches to evaluation. Thus, the identification of realistic evaluation objectives always depends on the interests and expectations of various stakeholders and characteristics of the intervention, programme, etc. at hand, and is subject to the path dependency discussed above.

The stage of a given intervention at the time of the evaluation (ex ante, ongoing, ex post; see above) needs to be considered when evaluation objectives are discussed. While results of ex ante evaluations aim to provide information about the planning stage of an intervention, ongoing evaluations rather focus on the implementation process. Finally, ex post evaluations aim to gather information about an intervention after it (or a specific phase of it) has been concluded.

This has consequences for the implementation of an evaluation. When the goal of an evaluation is to assess the innovative potential of an intervention, developmental evaluation designs can help inform the progress of model or pilot projects (see Text Box 1). In general, the identification of suitable evaluation objectives requires detailed knowledge about the intervention at hand, about methodological aspects of evaluation processes in general, and about what data is accessible for the particular evaluation process. While practitioners already possess certain data about the intervention, external evaluators and researchers might provide extensive knowledge about suitable methods of addressing the evaluation objectives. It is important to **build a trustful relationship** between all parties to allow for open discussion of the concerns and expectations of all participants. This can involve cyclical, iterative access to data or multiple interviews with the same actors to better capture their perspectives. In the context of P/CVE, where multi-agency approaches are common, the perceived neutrality of the (external and internal) evaluators is especially important.

Ideally, every evaluation process includes some **iterative aspects**, as research questions multiply or become more specific in light of the analysed information. Planning should not create a fixed template for all stages but should enable flexibility that allows the evaluative process to be adapted on an ad hoc basis where appropriate. This also extends to the methods chosen. There needs to be flexibility with regard to methodological approaches, which often range from (standardised) questionnaires and interviews to group discussions and observations. Which approach is best suited depends, among other things, on the specific evaluation objectives, the context of the intervention, and **data access**. For example, interventions via (mass) media such as the internet provide different opportunities and restrictions for data assessment than do interventions in schools or prisons (see Text Boxes 2, 4 and 5). While online interventions struggle with anonymous users, data assessment in schools and prisons faces specific challenges concerning data protection, privacy and ethical considerations. Implementation should always set aside the time necessary to address such issues. With security agencies in particular, this can be a lengthy bureaucratic process. Concerning the key evaluation questions, a combination of different methodological approaches (e.g. a combination of questionnaires and interviews) might provide more detailed information than one single approach – and this might change during the implementation phase. Combining methods in this way can guard against unforeseen restrictions in data access.

Learning from evaluations is a continuous process. The iterative aspects of an evaluation process point to this fact: interim findings need to be discussed to enable adaptation during implementation. This triggers uptake processes quite early in the evaluation. Uptake and dissemination of the evaluation results is in itself a cornerstone of every evaluation process.



Example 4:

### Evaluation of primary prevention in schools

Primary prevention in schools occurs through various forms of civics and citizenship education. Civics education in general aims at strengthening civic knowledge, competencies and values – often without a direct preventive aim. In many ways, however, these general civic-learning goals still have important long-term preventive impacts. Delli-Carpini and Keeter (1996), for example, discuss how high and equitably distributed levels of political knowledge can prevent escalating political disruptions in a society. Schools serve as societal melting pots and seismographs of political conflict. The school context therefore allows preventive programmes to reach nearly all parts of society and to quickly react to emerging conflict. Civics and citizenship education in schools occurs in at least three different spheres: formal civics and citizenship education curricula, school culture and pedagogical approaches, and extra-curricular activities (clubs, theme days, etc.). The evaluation of primary prevention in schools needs to consider all these spheres of learning.

What are the challenges of evaluating primary prevention in schools? Above all, the preventive goals of civics and citizenship education are fuzzy, especially since prevention is often only a secondary and long-term goal of civics education. It remains unclear which civic-learning outcomes are necessary to make students at different developmental stages resilient against extremism in later periods in life.

The IEA's International Civics and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)<sup>32</sup> periodically assesses a broad variety of civic-learning outcomes among teenage students. Beyond students' civic knowledge, it also assesses civic competencies and behaviour: from (social) media use and debating skills, to civic engagement and political participation. The study also investigates students' civic identities and attitudes towards current political issues. While the ICCS is certainly one of the most encompassing internationally comparative evaluations of school-based civics learning, it does not directly focus on the link between civic learning and its long-term preventive outcomes. Another aspect the ICCS neglects is the dynamic development of civic learning throughout childhood and adolescence. It provides a cross-sectional picture of 13-year-old teenagers. Developmental factors and critical developmental stages, however, play a potentially important role in extremism prevention. By analysing a broad snapshot of civic-learning outcomes, the ICCS nevertheless provides a fundamental and necessary step for evaluating primary prevention in schools. National education systems should be encouraged to participate in such assessment studies. Yet with the exception of North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany has so far neglected to participate in the ICCS.

Another challenge for evaluation occurs when the goals of civics and citizenship education and extremism prevention potentially conflict. Evaluation focusing on prevention with respect to particular ideologies may too easily impose taboos that hinder the uninhibited discussion of controversial topics in the classroom, which is a key component of civics education in democracies. Evaluation should also focus

more strongly on inequities in civics education. Empirical studies<sup>33</sup> show that access to civic learning varies greatly for students from different social backgrounds. Equal access and participation in civic learning activities for young people from all backgrounds is, however, particularly relevant for extremism prevention.<sup>34</sup>

### Uptake

The comparative analysis of evaluation structures in Canada, Finland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom presented above also features findings on the final piece in the puzzle of successful evaluations: implementing lessons learned. The uptake of results remains a challenge worldwide. The findings of a survey among P/CVE practitioners in Germany<sup>35</sup> indicate that practitioners value learning-based evaluations and only consider evaluations to be learning-based if their usefulness is demonstrated by a high uptake of their recommendations.

Recommendations are mostly targeted at practitioners, but also feature appeals to governing bodies, funders, organisation leaders, or even entire organisations. The evaluation results have the highest chance of informing a culture of learning if they are effectively presented to these various target groups. Written evaluation reports are still the most common format, but short executive summaries and workshop-based formats can be very useful as well. These **alternative presentation formats** are especially appropriate for target groups with limited time and human resources, such as federal and state executives and the practitioners themselves.

Management response allows implementers and practitioners to propose their interpretation of the results and to clarify which of the recommendations will be applied at which stage of the intervention process. At this point, **response plans** are prepared to help coordinate the uptake. But the practitioners' interpretation of the data can also be very informative during the evaluation and not only at the end of it. Taking the implementer perspective into account helps to fuel the iterative process and increase transparency. It also aids the formulation of practical recommendations that can be implemented effectively.

The formulation of **practical, well-defined recommendations** is a prerequisite for any successful adjustment in line with the demands of all stakeholders. During the process of formulating recommendations, it can be helpful to consider whether each result should be seen as evidence of an ongoing problem for further action or a goal that has been achieved, and to brainstorm with practitioners on the possibilities of appropriate adjustment. Ideally, evaluators will have the opportunity to present courses of action to all stakeholders, drawing on examples from the literature, and their own experience and observation. They can then use these preliminary results to brainstorm with the target groups on how best to (re)orient an intervention and use the gathered data to further inform the final evaluation results.

The comparative results on evaluation structures<sup>36</sup> suggest that, to support the uptake of evaluation results in this way, P/CVE actors could set up dedicated **steering groups** and formal requirements for a management response process. These are common elements of evaluation

<sup>33</sup> Köhler et al. 2018; Schlicht-Schmälzle 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Delli Carpini/Keeter 1996.

<sup>35</sup> Koynova et al. 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Baykal et al. 2021.

uptake in other policy fields. Steering groups establish open lines of communication between evaluators and other stakeholders, including the future recipients of the recommendations produced by the evaluation. This creates a learning process that already functions during the course of an evaluation and not only once there is a draft report. Throughout the evaluation process, the role of these groups is to validate interim findings and discuss the viability of potential recommendations. They thereby initiate a learning process through repeated interactions, often in a series of workshops, between the evaluation team and stakeholder representatives. Formal evaluation reports are then followed by a mandatory management response in which the leadership of the organisation in question (typically the one that commissioned the evaluation) responds to each finding and recommendation with a written statement.

The management of a project or of an organisation then decides which actions should follow and assumes responsibility for follow-up with respect to all future steps to be taken. Publishing evaluation results and management responses can help create public accountability for this process. However, as noted above, implementers need time and human resources not only to engage with an evaluation process but also to absorb and react to evaluation results. Suitable in-house capacities need to be developed in order to enable learning. It is not only P/CVE implementers who struggle with insufficient capacities to systematically engage with evaluation findings and operationalise them for their own current and future work; the same is true for the other main target group of recommendations: P/CVE funders. This capacity shortfall is often a function of the fact that many implementers in the P/CVE landscape are purely project-funded and that funders manage a myriad of bureaucratic procedures to entertain these elaborate project cycles. The incentive to maximise operational reach (i.e. serving the largest possible number of at-risk individuals or delivering the highest possible number of interventions) is often not balanced by incentives for quality and learning. Addressing this challenge is another key to building an effective evaluation ecosystem.

*Example 5:*

### Evaluating civic education projects/programmes in youth detention facilities

*Similar to other emerging fields, civic education in youth detention centres largely relies on pilot projects and faces questions of good practice, effectiveness and usefulness of the activities, while seeking ways to improve and strengthen them. Evaluation is therefore becoming increasingly important in this area and has to cater to this specific and challenging context:*

*Civic education in German youth detention facilities is a new field that various actors have been exploring in recent years.<sup>37</sup> Young detainees are a target group that is otherwise often hard to reach with civic education efforts, as the residents of youth detention facilities are rarely present in educational settings where civic education usually takes place (i.e. schools and other youth services). Organisations from a range of fields and disciplines, including social work, media education, theatre, art and musical education, bring a variety of such projects into detention facilities. These offer spaces to young detainees for discussion and reflection on topics related to participation, democracy, diversity, identity, freedom of thought and social coexistence, among others.*

*As a rather small niche in a very specific context, civic education in youth detention centres cannot draw on well-established methods. Academic research on this topic is also comparatively scarce, and those studies that do address it emphasise the points of friction and the challenges faced by those conducting and those participating in civic education in detention facilities.<sup>38</sup> Most significantly, the general conditions in detention facilities, considered as ‘total institutions’,<sup>39</sup> can diametrically oppose the contents and topics conveyed by civic education programmes (e.g. reflecting on freedom of expression and participation in a context that yields next to no opportunities to participate in decision-making). Furthermore, civic education projects in this context depend heavily on close communication and cooperation between various agents with sometimes differing interests (i.e. facility management, social services, correctional officers, detainees, practitioners, funders). These interests may influence both the resources that are made available for the projects and the goals that can be achieved via these usually short-term interventions.*

*Like the projects themselves, evaluation operates under comparatively unfamiliar and difficult conditions:*

- ❶ *Difficulties in accessing participants for impact evaluation, e.g. due to participant churn as a result of transfers, release, disciplinary exclusion, etc. or the short-term nature of the projects*
- ❷ *Considerably constricted formal conditions for data collection (setting, security checks, data protection, time)*
- ❸ *Methodological challenges due to various influencing and confounding factors in detention settings, especially for impact evaluations (Which effects can be achieved at all and to what extent can they be attributed to the (external) intervention? And ultimately: How can these impacts be assessed?)*

*To meet these challenges, evaluation designs need to adapt to the context of the given activities and programmes. The designs and the findings that follow from them have to be realistic considering the everyday life (and work) in, for instance, detention facilities, and they must be resource-efficient.*

*Highly ambitious goals of impact assessment in general civic education need to be reconsidered in favour of a focus on the expertise of practitioners and the experience of participants in the respective project situation. The methodology should follow a triangulation approach, representing the perspectives of all parties that are directly or indirectly involved in the activities. In addition to methods that focus on the expertise of practitioners (e.g. interviews), it is advisable to draw on tools or data sources that are already being used in the projects (e.g. outputs such as posters, podcasts, song lyrics, etc., or feedback mechanisms used in the group setting). This helps to avoid overwhelming both participants and practitioners as well as their cooperation partners in the detention facilities. And lastly, evaluations in this area should primarily facilitate learning<sup>40</sup> to further develop and improve this new field of activity.*

<sup>38</sup> Cf. e.g. Schneider 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Goffman 1961.

<sup>40</sup> Bressan/Friedrich/Wagner 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Borchert et al. 2020.

## Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the toolbox, challenges and opportunities for the evaluation of P/CVE measures and programmes, spanning the three phases of planning, implementation and uptake. The P/CVE field, with its sensitivities, actor networks and its reliance on temporary funding, imposes strong constraints on evaluation. Against this background, the chapter argues that the success of an evaluation depends on the inclusion of all actors at each step of the evaluation, on the structural conditions (funding, spaces for learning and uptake) and on flexibility to adapt evaluative approaches, models and templates to the given (and shifting) context. This flexibility is key: because of the unique programme conditions, no process is the same as another, and even small changes to the evaluation goals may potentially have a large impact on how an evaluation design will turn out. As no evaluation has the capacity to satisfy all possible interests, a healthy dose of pragmatism needs to go hand in hand with this flexibility.

The chapter argues that, besides external structural conditions, a proper quality management strategy in any organisational entity is an important prerequisite for evaluation. Furthermore, evaluators need to be familiar not only with the sensitivities of the field (often including data protection and ethical issues) but also with the wider toolbox of available evaluative methods. A broad understanding of evaluation helps to tailor evaluation processes that enable learning and the improvement of various aspects of projects and programmes.

All P/CVE actors – policy actors, funding agencies and implementing NGOs alike – should establish state-of-the-art uptake procedures for evaluation findings and recommendations and hold themselves accountable for compliance with their own commitments. This is arguably one of the greatest challenges in organising and governing evaluations. The comparative survey of several European countries that is referred to in this chapter found that none of the four countries analysed has so far addressed the issue of effective capacity support for knowledge uptake. Effective uptake is not only a matter of binding obligations, financial incentives for learning and evaluation managers that follow up with decision-makers about their management response plans and the commitments formulated therein. None of these elements carry weight if the people in the organisations that deliver P/CVE activities do not have the time to absorb and react to evaluation results. While P/CVE implementers should be open to evaluation and quality management, funders should invest in capacity support for evaluators and evaluation managers.

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# PART 2

## Extremism prevention in practice

- The perspective of the security authorities
- Action plans
- Programmes for the prevention of extremism
- The prevention landscape

*Introduction to the practical section*

## The prevention of violent extremism in Germany – looking to the future

Brahim Ben Slama

The purpose of this introduction is to act as a bridge between the theoretical and practical sections of this Handbook. Following the presentation of the foundations of violent extremism prevention in Chapters 1 to 4, the practical section will describe this field of action in Germany from the viewpoint of some of the key actors that have been active in its development in various capacities in recent years. The following three chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) will give a detailed account of key aspects of current and past prevention practices and offer the reader comprehensive insights into the relevant approaches, programmes and projects. The practical section of the Handbook should be regarded as an attempt to outline the current status of prevention practices in Germany in the early 2020s. In view of the fluid character of this constantly evolving field, this undertaking can only offer a snapshot of a complex reality.

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This introduction is intended to provide additional information about the requirements and expectations placed on the practical prevention of violent extremism formulated from the perspective of the needs of the security authorities. It thus focuses on work within the overall field of the prevention of violent extremism that deals with groups relevant to law enforcement. This introduction therefore concerns itself with the needs of the security authorities in a key area of extremism prevention as seen from the perspective of those bodies themselves, intended as a contribution to the overall picture in this practical section of the Handbook.

Beginning with an external view of what has been done in Germany to prevent 'Islamist' extremism and terrorism, which has been pointedly acknowledged in international literature as the 'German approach', this introduction will first outline the opportunities and limitations of a system organised along federal lines and consider their significance for prevention work.

This is followed by a brief historical overview of efforts in the field of preventing Islamist-motivated violent extremism/terrorism undertaken by the state in Germany since 2005, and which ultimately laid the foundation for current practice.

After this descriptive section, the introduction will address the central question of the effectiveness of programmes funded and developed by state actors for the prevention of violent extremism: what can and should extremism prevention achieve in this area and how can it be ensured that the intended effects are actually realised? In this context, the possibilities and limitations of the evidence-based development of prevention programmes in what is still a relatively young and small field will first be discussed, leading

to the conclusion that it is necessary to pay greater attention to the findings of research when planning programmes.

Finally, a number of conclusions will be drawn from the current state of knowledge presented in Chapters 1 to 4, and their significance for the design of prevention programmes will be discussed. In the process, certain areas with potential for development will be addressed, which – in view of the current state of knowledge and against the backdrop of an acute need for action in security-relevant areas – have to be enhanced in the future to allow prevention to fulfil its promise of achieving tangible effects in curbing violent extremism.

## The German approach?

In a 2013 article, Dorle Hellmuth describes the German approach to preventing Islamist extremism/terrorism (the country's general approach on counter-radicalisation),<sup>1</sup> identifying three characteristics that, in her view, characterise the 'German approach':

- The prevention efforts, Hellmuth explains, are directed against all forms of radical Islamism, targeting not just violent Salafism but also so-called mainstream (political) Salafism. From a German perspective, both wings share the same ideological foundation and the boundaries between them are constantly shifting.
- Compared to other European countries (the UK, the Netherlands and Denmark), which were quick to develop their own national prevention strategies against Islamist extremism and terrorism, Germany's federal political structure makes it difficult to establish a uniform prevention programme that is accepted universally by all 16 German states.
- Due to this circumstance, and because prevention is practised at a local level in the communities anyhow, the added value of a national prevention programme in Germany lies, according to Hellmuth, in the coordination and exchange between local and supra-regional actors on the one hand and between the various relevant departments on the other.

Although this characterisation of prevention practices in Germany – which is several years old now – does not appear to conform in all points to the way many prevention initiatives in this country present themselves, it does reflect an external perspective: 'Islamism prevention' in Germany as it is perceived abroad. Yet this outsider's view does seem to capture the broad outline of prevention work in Germany: 1) the

dominance of a view of threat containment that sees radicalisation as a preliminary stage of terrorism or as a phase that can potentially lead to extremist violence (see Chapter 3.3) and above all shapes the way Islamism-related phenomena<sup>3</sup> are dealt with, 2) the impact of Germany's federal structure, which assigns jurisdiction for prevention-relevant fields of

action at the regional level, and 3) the power of an effective principle of subsidiarity, which opens up ample scope for action above all for local authorities, but also makes practical prevention work more difficult in the absence of their involvement.

However, the idea that the prevention of extremism in Germany follows a uniform approach across the country is inaccurate, and 'German approach' is merely a convenient label. Against the backdrop of the reality of a federal system in which responsibility for certain areas of society lies in the hands of the German states and is not subject to executive power at the national level, there are, in fact, a multitude of programmes in Germany at federal and state levels with varying areas of focus. This inevitably results in 'tailored' approaches geared to specific regional demands and also creates a need for better coordination and agreement between the federal level and German state governments and between different ministries (vertical and horizontal exchange).

In the following chapters of the Handbook, representatives of prevention practices will discuss the general status of the prevention of violent extremism in Germany today. This will reveal the dynamic development of prevention practices, whose strategies, approaches and programmes are permanently subject to a pressure to adapt due to the constantly growing demands to address the various phenomena and the continuously shifting conditions of prevention work. Especially in recent years, the challenges have been immense. This is apparent not only in the area of Islamist-motivated extremism and terrorism, the threat of which has become increasingly noticeable even at the regional and municipal level, not least due to the departure of many German 'jihadists' to Syria and Iraq; other phenomena (right-wing and left-wing extremism) also mean we confront a different situation today. Both the quantitative growth of the individual types of violent extremism and their increasing interdependency make an effective and better coordinated cross-phenomenal prevention strategy urgently necessary.

Efforts to establish prevention programmes with respect to Islamist-motivated extremism and terrorism began in the early 2000s as a reaction to what was perceived at the time as a new threat. In Germany, for many years it was predominately state actors who developed initiatives in this area. 'Islamism prevention' strategies were often developed and adopted by committees under the guidance of the Interior Ministry according to the state of knowledge at the time. The following section presents the efforts made in this area since 2005 to establish prevention practices aimed at containing Islamist-motivated extremism and terrorism.

## State-led approaches since 2005 – a chronology of 'Islamism prevention' in Germany

The prevention efforts of the German states in the area of Islamist-motivated extremism and terrorism have increased significantly, especially since 2015. This development is clearly connected to the escalation of the problem of German 'jihadists' leaving the country for Syria and Iraq. Currently, most of the 16 German states have developed programmes with the aim of supplementing the work of the security authorities (countering threats from international terrorism and criminal prosecution) by means of prevention.

However, the beginnings of state programmes in the field of 'Islamism prevention' date back to the turn of the millennium.

*A large group of German Salafists describe themselves as mainstream Salafists.<sup>2</sup> They combine missionary work with a limited acceptance of methods of extra-parliamentary opposition, such as protest rallies and campaigns. Some of them reject violence, while others legitimise it without directly calling for it.*

<sup>1</sup> Hellmuth 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Wiedl 2014.

<sup>3</sup> For more details, cf. Hummel 2014 and Hummel/Logvinov 2014.

### **The first joint federal/Land project group: 'Prevention of Islamist Extremism and Terrorism' (PisET 1)**

The first attempt at a Germany-wide strategy was made by a federal/Land project group in 2005 on behalf of the 'Standing Conference of Interior Ministers' (IMK). The federal/Land project group 'Prevention of Islamist Extremism and Terrorism' (PisET) had the task of developing a strategy for the elaboration and coordination of joint prevention approaches and projects at the federal level and for the 16 German states in the field of 'Islamist' extremism and terrorism. This was to be done in a way that took account of existing activities and measures. The project group consisted of representatives of security authorities (State Security and German domestic intelligence services), the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the 'Programm polizeilicher Kriminalprävention der Länder und des Bundes' (The Federal/State Police Programme for Crime Prevention, ProPK) and the 'Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention' (German Forum for Crime Prevention, DFK). The strategy was to follow a whole-society approach to prevention that is not limited to police prevention and, accordingly, to present proposals that cut across ministries and hierarchical levels. The project group, which was led by the Federal Criminal Police Office's Terrorism/Extremism Research Unit, undertook a phenomenological analysis of 'Islamist' extremism and terrorism from the perspective of the security authorities and surveyed the state of the art of research in this field. In the course of fulfilling its mandate, the project group also consulted upon and developed a definition of prevention, drawing on the expertise of the DFK and ProPK in this. Based on the results of the research review and the phenomenological analysis, the group then defined the following general targets for prevention: 1) prevention of the spread of 'Islamism'; 2) prevention of radicalisation processes; 3) prevention of 'Islamist'/terrorist crimes. More specific programme and interim targets for achieving the prevention goals were derived from these general targets. The project group also formulated recommendations calling for the development of a knowledge management system to allow ongoing analysis of research findings and the results of phenomenological analysis as well as for the development of coordination and control mechanisms for existing prevention projects and the improved networking of relevant actors. In order to be able to embed the strategy in an integrative, whole-society approach, the involvement of other ministries was suggested.<sup>4</sup>

Based on the recommendations of the PisET 1 report, in May 2006 the Standing Conference of Interior Ministers (IMK) recommended that a new inter-departmental federal/Land project group should draw up an integrative, whole-society action plan for the priority project of 'Islamism prevention'.

### **Second federal/Land project group: 'Prevention of Islamist Extremism and Terrorism' (PisET 2)**

Building on the preliminary work of PisET 1, in December 2007 the Conference of Ministers-President supported the formation of a cross-departmental federal/Land project group with the aim that the competent ministries at the federal level and in the 16 German states coordinate their respective activities in the field of the prevention of 'Islamist' terrorism and extremism.<sup>5</sup> 'PisET 2' presented the results of its work in a report in September 2010 (Bericht der Bund-/Länder-Arbeitsgruppe Islamismusprävention an die Ständige Konferenz der Innenminister und -senatoren der Länder zur Verwirklichung eines ganzheitlichen

Präventionsansatzes). In this report, the experts identified eight fields of activity or subject areas that reflect a holistic approach to prevention and are not limited to measures that fall under the original jurisdiction of the interior ministries. The overarching targets are: 1) strengthening the understanding of democracy and the acceptance of the values of the free democratic basic order; 2) raising awareness of and addressing 'Islamist' ideology, propaganda and the hostile stereotypes propagated by 'Islamists' about their purported enemies; and 3) preventing 'Islamist' extremist/terrorist crimes.

The eight topic areas are:

- Development of political knowledge and democratic values among school pupils.
- Establishment of public Islamic education programmes in the German language.
- Ensuring Muslim religious officials (including imams) and other opinion-formers in Islamic communities have knowledge of German language and culture.
- Strengthening of the participation in society of young people from migrant backgrounds.
- Partnerships between state institutions, especially schools, and Muslim institutions at a local level.
- Fostering trust and the development of intercultural skills – cooperation of security authorities with Muslims.
- Media work to address 'Islamism' and prevent radicalisation.
- 'Islamist' content on the internet and in other media.

In order to implement the recommendations of the report, appropriate measures were initiated at different levels in the years following its release. For example, the central office of the ProPK programme was commissioned to lead a federal/Land project group with the aim of addressing the topic of 'Islamist content on the internet and other media' and to develop a concrete implementation plan for realising a holistic prevention approach on the basis of the PisET report. In cooperation with researchers and civil society actors, the project group developed a media package for educators to facilitate prevention work with young people.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, to cite another example, numerous measures were implemented at the level of the German Islam Conference to improve communication between Islamic associations and state actors and to facilitate cooperation in this area. Numerous projects and measures have also been initiated at the level of the 16 German states in order to contribute to 'Islamism prevention' in line with the recommendations of the PisET report.

### **De-Radicalisation Working Group in the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (GTAZ)**

With respect to the narrower area of security authorities that deal with violent extremism and terrorism (State Security and German domestic intelligence services), the 'De-Radicalisation Working Group' was established at the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (GTAZ) in Berlin in 2009 by decision of the Secretaries of the Interior of the federal administration and the 16 German states. The aim of the working group is to improve the exchange of relevant experience and information between security authorities and to develop strategies and measures that can contribute to the de-radicalisation of individuals and/or the 'Islamist' scene as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> Sammlung der zur Veröffentlichung freigegebenen Beschlüsse der 180. Sitzung der IMK (Collection of resolutions of the 180th session of the IMK released for publication) – Top 3 2006, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Protokoll der Ministerpräsidentenkonferenz vom 19. Dezember 2007 (Minutes of the Conference of Ministers-President of 19 December 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Programm Polizeilicher Kriminalprävention der Länder und des Bundes 2014.



All the authorities represented in the GTAZ take part in the annual plenary meeting of the De-Radicalisation Working Group. During this meeting, the findings of the many sub-working groups are presented and discussed. Sub-working groups are formed around specific topics proposed by the members of the De-Radicalisation Working Group. The sub-working groups meet as needed to develop proposals to address various issues.

Topics that have been dealt with by sub-working groups within the framework of the De-Radicalisation Working Group up to 2019 include the following: 'Foundations and Strategies'; 'Communicative Counter-Strategies'; 'Contact Persons and Communication Channels'; 'Deconstructing Jihadist Ideology'; 'Counter Narratives'; 'Cooperation with Judicial Authorities'; 'People with Mental Health Difficulties', etc.

Over the years, the De-Radicalisation Working Group has developed into a think tank of the security authorities. Its work has contributed significantly to increasing the security authorities' knowledge on the topic of de-radicalisation.

In 2019, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) took over the leadership of the De-Radicalisation Working Group.

### **Current approaches (model underlying the work of the Coordination Units in the 16 German states)**

Prior to 2013, a number of German states launched programmes to advance the prevention of violent extremism in relation to 'Islamism'. In Lower Saxony, for example, a project group under the leadership of the state domestic intelligence services set out to develop an action plan *'for counteracting the radicalisation of young Muslims'*.<sup>7</sup> Comparable initiatives are also known from other German states, such as North Rhine-Westphalia, Hamburg and Bavaria. Concomitant with this development, the importance of improved harmonisation and more intensive coordination between the various programmes of the different German states became an essential requirement.

The current practice, which is characterised by a nationwide umbrella strategy, only began in 2013. The core idea is the formation of prevention networks to counteract a phenomenon that likewise exhibits a network structure. The driving factor behind this development was the increasing numbers of German 'Islamists/Salafists' travelling towards Syria and Iraq, a phenomenon that is highly relevant for both the federal government and the majority of German states.

At the end of 2013, the Standing Conference of Interior Ministers (IMK) responded to the increase in jihadist-motivated departures from Germany to areas of conflict in Syria and Iraq. It agreed to organise a study to analyse the backgrounds and pathways to radicalisation of all those who have thus far left Germany for Syria. *A joint framework for the implementation of the 'Prevention Networks against Salafism' was to be drawn up at the federal level and in the 16 German states based on the findings of this analysis.* A core finding of the analyses, which were repeated in 2014, 2015 and 2016, was that *the factors promoting radicalisation and the respective importance attached to each of them are, almost without exception, associated with the local Salafist milieu.* This led to

the establishment of a new federal/Land working group with the aim of creating a new prevention plan (interstate prevention networks against Salafism).<sup>8</sup>

The working group tasked with creating and updating the plan identified five fields of action for the prevention of Salafism: *'general prevention', 'specific prevention', 'counselling of relatives', 'counselling/de-radicalisation of persons in the early stages of radicalisation' and 'exit assistance'.*

It developed a *framework that ensures a holistic, integrated prevention strategy that also remains flexible enough to account for (regional) specificities at the level of single German states and at the federal level.*

The following are the key elements:

- **Coordination Units in the 16 German states (Landeskoordinierungstellen):** The Coordination Units in the 16 German states, each of which is attached to a central office of the state administration, are responsible for the central oversight and coordination of prevention measures and also ensure the necessary flow of information between the counselling units and the security authorities.
- **Counselling units:** The core tasks of the counselling units include prevention and exit assistance measures. In order to lower the inhibition thresholds for those affected to contact the counselling units, they should not be situated within the purview of the security authorities. Instead, they should be run by civil society actors. They advise the relatives of radicalised individuals, including people who have left the country; but they also work with the radicalised persons themselves.
- **Advisory boards:** These boards are responsible for assisting, advising and supporting the Coordination Units and the counselling units in pursuing their strategic goals and day-to-day operations. The advisory boards are composed of representatives from the ministries concerned (e.g. Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Social Affairs – inter-ministerial bodies) and a variety of other actors (e.g. German Association of Towns and Municipalities, Association of German Cities and Towns, German County Association, Agency for Civic Education, domestic intelligence services, State Criminal Police Office (Landeskriminalamt), German Sports Youth, the Landesjugendring youth association, local religious associations/organisations, universities, etc.).
- **Hotline:** Not only affected individuals, but also family members and people from the local community can make initial contact via a hotline based at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and from there can be referred to the counselling units in the respective state (in addition, many state programmes have their own hotlines).
- **Municipalities:** Ideally, the municipalities provide a central contact person and offer support as required to the relevant counselling unit. For their part, they operate suitable prevention measures at the local level, if necessary with the support of the responsible counselling unit and Coordination Unit of the relevant German state.

<sup>7</sup> Schünemann 2011.

<sup>8</sup> 204. Sitzung der Innenministerkonferenz 2016. Freigegebene Beschlüsse - Top 2-3, 3 et seq. Also: 205. Sitzung der Innenministerkonferenz 2016. Freigegebene Beschlüsse - Top 2, 4.

The concept of ‘prevention networks against Salafism’ has been implemented in many German states with some adaptations to local conditions and has represented an important pillar of extremism prevention in Germany for a number of years. Prevention practices employed in ‘Islamism prevention’ in Germany have since demonstrated greater dynamism at the state level and closer cooperation between state and civil society actors.

The Coordination Units of the state programmes direct and finance the prevention work in the various regions. Most of these Coordination Units are established as part of the security authorities (Ministries of the Interior, police and domestic intelligence services). In the majority of states, however, the concrete work of prevention with the target group on the ground is carried out by counselling units that are the responsibility of civil society organisations. Many of the current prevention programmes therefore rely on cooperation between the state and civil society. This partnership is something like a trademark of the contemporary ‘German approach’ and represents a novelty compared to practices employed to combat right-wing extremism, in which large parts of the exit assistance programmes are run exclusively by the security authorities. The fact that cooperation between state and civil society actors functions with greater ease in Islamism prevention is due, on the one hand, to the peculiarities of the phenomenon and, on the other hand, to the past experiences of the security authorities in earlier attempts to establish prevention programmes in this field. One of the first attempts at the federal level to establish an exit assistance programme for ‘Islamists’ was initiated by the federal domestic intelligence services in 2010 in the form of a hotline.<sup>9</sup> Its ‘Heraus aus Terrorismus und islamistischem Fanatismus’ (Get Out of Terrorism and Islamist Fanaticism) programme, or HATIF, was discontinued in 2014 due to a lack of success.<sup>10</sup> A year earlier, the Federal Ministry of the Interior established another hotline for people seeking advice at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Nuremberg.<sup>11</sup> The ‘Advice Centre on Radicalisation’ is intended to *support affected persons throughout Germany and organise referrals to local counselling units for those identified as requiring counselling*. The Advice Centre on Radicalisation joined the prevention network against Salafism in 2013 and refers cases to the counselling units of the appropriate German states.

The De-Radicalisation Working Group of the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (GTAZ) regularly compiles a detailed overview of the current prevention network and the activities of the Coordination Units in the German states.<sup>12</sup> The following provides a few examples:

- Baden-Württemberg: The Competence Centre against Extremism in Baden-Württemberg (konex) is situated within the Ministry of the Interior and serves as a coordination point for Baden-Württemberg-wide extremism prevention.
- Bavaria: The ‘Bavarian Network for Prevention and De-Radicalisation against Salafism’, in which four ministries (Interior, Justice, Culture and Social Affairs) actively participate, is coordinated and directed by an inter-ministerial working group (IMAG). The IMAG is led by the Department for Domestic Intelligence of the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior. De-radicalisation efforts are coordinated by the Competence Centre for De-Radicalisation (BLKA/KomZ) located in the Bavarian Criminal Police Office.

<sup>9</sup> Deutschlandfunk Kultur 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Federal domestic intelligence services 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Advice Centre on Radicalisation 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Working Group – De-Radicalisation – Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2019.

- Bremen: The Competence Centre for De-Radicalisation and the Prevention of Extremism (KODEX) is directly associated with the Ministry of the Interior and is supported by an inter-ministerial steering committee.
- Hesse: The Hessian Information and Competence Centre against Extremism (HKE) is located in the Police Headquarters Department in the Hessian Ministry of the Interior and Sport (HMdIS). One of its key tasks is the cross-phenomenal coordination of all Hessian programmes and projects for the prevention of violent extremism. The HKE is assisted by a steering committee consisting of one representative each from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Culture as well as the Hessian Criminal Police Office and the Hessian domestic intelligence services.
- Lower Saxony: The Competence Centre for the Prevention of Islamism in Lower Saxony (KIP NI) is responsible for the consolidation, institutionalisation and intensification of the activities and existing networks of the various state or state-funded actors in the field of Islamism prevention in Lower Saxony. The responsibilities for prevention work in this competence centre are divided between the State Criminal Police Office and the domestic intelligence services.
- North Rhine-Westphalia: The Coordination Unit of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia for prevention work in the area of Islamism is situated in the relevant domestic intelligence services department of the Ministry of the Interior.
- Other Coordination Units exist in Schleswig-Holstein, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Rhineland-Palatinate, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Bremen, Berlin, Brandenburg and Hamburg.

### Other relevant actors

In addition to the federal and state programmes described above, which are primarily run or funded by the ministries of the interior, the measures and projects funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) within the framework of the federal programme ‘Live Democracy!’ also deserve mention. In the funding period starting in 2015, funds have been earmarked to support pilot projects for the prevention of radicalisation. The aim was to finance projects for the prevention of ‘right-wing extremism’, ‘violence-oriented Islamism/Salafism’, and ‘left-wing militancy’<sup>13</sup> (Chapter 6 provides a detailed description of the BMFSFJ programme). The resulting projects fit into the landscape of extremism prevention in Germany, thereby helping to shape a ‘German approach’. For the most part, these are run by the same actors from civil society prevention work who also cooperate with the security authorities within the scope of the prevention networks against Salafism.

Activities at the level of the European Union also seem to bear relevance for efforts to prevent extremism in Germany, primarily in the form of the European Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), which is funded by the European Commission and aims to improve networking between different actors in prevention as well as an exchange of expertise (detailed account in Chapter 7). The RAN exerts a supportive effect on prevention practices in Germany. On the one hand, this circumstance is due to the fact

<sup>13</sup> Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Live Democracy! 2015.

that numerous state and civil society actors from Germany are active in this network. On the other hand, it is because the reports produced within the scope of the various working groups are disseminated as part of prevention efforts in Germany.

The descriptive overview of the current German approach in the field of 'Islamism prevention' pursued up to this point documents, for one thing, significant developments that have occurred in particular since 2013, the year Hellmuth's article on the 'German approach' was published. For another, it reveals considerable quantitative growth in terms of programmes, actors and financial resources in the field of action of extremism prevention. Compared to the beginnings of 'Islamism prevention' 15 years ago, the current situation is more lively and complex, which in itself can be viewed as a positive development. However, high expectations are also placed on this area of the prevention of violent extremism, which focuses on de-radicalisation work and exit assistance. The state actors who are heavily involved in this area expect the large number of programmes to offer a positive effect by complementing the efforts of the security authorities in the area of law enforcement and countering threats from international terrorism.

The following section will discuss the conditions and prerequisites for increasing the effectiveness of extremism prevention programmes from the viewpoint of the expectations of the security authorities. In this account, the importance of prevention work dedicated to promoting social skills and the acceptance of democracy among young people outside the target groups relevant to security authorities is given due significance.

### The effectiveness and efficiency of extremism prevention from the perspective of the security authorities

The fundamental question in the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism undoubtedly concerns the effectiveness of preventive action. How can it be ensured that the overarching goal of the prevention of violent extremism is achieved, i.e. to secure benefits for society by generating an effect that can contribute to curbing violent extremism and terrorism?

In particular, recent developments in the area of right-wing extremism and populism as a response to the movement of migrants in autumn 2015 raise many questions from a criminological perspective about the sense and effectiveness of prevention programmes in the past. Compared to Islamism prevention, the prevention of right-wing extremism in Germany can look back on a longer tradition in which state-funded programmes often had considerable resources at their disposal. Apparently, the efforts made in this area in recent decades have been unable to stop the proliferation of arson attacks on asylum seekers or the penetration of radical right-wing ideas to the heart of society. As early as 2003, Kurt Möller expressed his doubts about the effectiveness of prevention in reducing violent extremism due to the rising levels of right-wing extremist violence at the time. Of course, this leaves open the question of how the situation would have developed in the absence of preventive measures.

In the area of left-wing violent extremism, it is also clear that there are major deficits in prevention work and that prevention practices that focus on old issues (such as communism, the one-party rule of the SED in the GDR) are not suited to managing new challenges – such as the riots that occurred during the G20 summit in Hamburg.

The phenomena-related developments described above (see Chapter 2) currently force us to consider the legitimate question as to whether we in Germany are in a position to jointly face the challenge of the various forms of extremism and whether the practices that the state pursues to prevent violent extremism in Germany are commensurate with current demands. The dynamics of radicalisation in almost all phenomena in Germany are largely conditioned by external factors, such as global crises and geostrategic shifts (e.g. the Syrian conflict, the 'refugee crisis' of 2015 and the real estate and financial crisis of 2008). Therefore, current developments such as the rise of extremism cannot simply be attributed to a failure of past extremism prevention practices. However, this is no reason to downplay the importance of ensuring effectiveness and efficiency as benchmarks for state-funded prevention programmes. Such programmes must pursue the explicit goal of reducing violent extremism in the long term. The argument that this effect cannot be verified with certainty at a later time does not mitigate the necessity of taking all the precautions in the planning phase to ensure that this goal is achieved. Quality criteria that provide orientation for the design of an effective prevention strategy are provided, for example, by research into relevant phenomena or systematic evaluation practice. There are thus two approaches that can be used to target prevention efforts more precisely: one top-down and the other bottom-up.

With the help of feedback and adaptation processes, the expansion of evaluation in this area can certainly contribute to making extremism prevention more effective. However, efforts to ensure effectiveness and efficiency should begin much earlier. The prevention of violent extremism must be framed by a well-considered strategy that defines clear objectives and takes all necessary precautions to ensure effectiveness in advance. By taking sound knowledge as a foundation and giving due consideration of quality criteria – i.e. guidelines, recommendations and general principles whose observance should guarantee the quality of programmes and projects in extremism prevention – provisions can be already made for efficiency and effectiveness during the planning phase. This naturally also applies to programmes and strategies. A knowledge-based framework strategy that is built around reliable findings from extremism and terrorism research and takes into account the realities of the field of action is the cornerstone for the effectiveness of extremism prevention.

In recent years, there have been increasing calls for evidence-based extremism prevention in Germany. This refers to prevention practice based on empirically compiled and evaluated findings of verified positive impacts, bringing evaluation and quality standards into greater focus. The main ingredients of an evidence-based strategy also include systematic meta-analyses, i.e. summaries of evaluations of single measures, and knowledge management systems for the development of best-practice approaches.

However, approaches based merely on empirical evidence do not exist in reality. Calls for evidence-based approaches are rather to be understood as an expression of an expectation that programmes and measures should be better evaluated. In the field of health care, which is often taken as the model for such approaches, evidence-based elements represent one building block among many – elements that only yield a meaningful approach in the context of an overall strategy. Further building blocks of a prevention strategy in health care include, for example, 1) the definition of the problem or a clear delineation of the object of prevention; 2) the identification and addressing of relevant parameters (risk factors and causes) whose manipulation may generate positive change; 3) the development or utilisation of logical models for achieving change

(i.e. which interventions can produce which effects); 4) the development and testing of intervention instruments devised according to these logical models and 5) ensuring their dissemination and implementation.<sup>14</sup> Apart from the fundamental question of the utility of transferring concepts from health care to the field of extremism prevention (the question also arises with respect to the transferability of concepts from general crime prevention, which are usually also oriented towards addressing deviant criminal behaviour), the importance of policy being ‘evidence-based’ is placed in context when all the building blocks of a prevention strategy are considered together. The feedback loops between output in the form of evaluation and inputs in the form of strategies and action plans can be helpful for readjustment purposes, but they alone are inadequate to ensure effectiveness and impact.

Furthermore, it is often forgotten that, unlike the prevention practices in the health sector or general crime prevention, it is hard to model practical extremism prevention in Germany using a bottom-up approach because of many features specific to the phenomena. One practical limitation for an approach based solely on empirical evidence lies, for example, in the quantitative nature of the object of consideration. Compared to general criminality, violent extremism remains a relatively rare phenomenon. Consequently there are not many prevention measures in this area. Moreover, these measures are rarely evaluated in such a way as to make systematic meta-analyses a sensible option (see Chapter 7). There is simply not enough data for an approach based on empirical evidence. Furthermore, practical violent extremism prevention is, in reality, fragmented into several individual practices, some of which – despite all efforts at coordination – are based on entirely different principles. This is an expression of the structural characteristics of Germany, which are determined by federalism and the distribution of responsibilities between numerous departments and ministries. This inevitably results in the emergence of a variety of prevention programmes that are individually tailored to different realities and needs at the local level. This situation raises legitimate questions as to whether we should refer to a single practice of extremism prevention in Germany or multiple practices, and whether evidence gained from practice in one region, for example, is entirely suitable for adapting concepts in other regions.

Due to the increased provision of funding for federal and state programmes in recent years, the field of extremism prevention has been extremely dynamic. This is seen, for example, in the increasing involvement of actors from general crime prevention in this important field of prevention.<sup>15</sup> The associated transfer of tried-and-tested concepts long employed in crime prevention is often justified on the basis of research findings that identify similarities between extremist-motivated perpetrators and perpetrators of crimes in general. A comprehensive review of the state of research on this subject, however, raises justified doubts about the generalisability of such selective findings (see Chapter 3.3). What is also often disregarded is that the characteristics of perpetrators do not allow any useful conclusions to be drawn about the target group of extremism prevention, as this group encompasses a much broader spectrum (see Chapter 3.3). As already mentioned above, the specifics of the phenomenon in question here do not permit crime prevention approaches that are typically based on addressing deviant

criminal behaviour to be simply transferred. Any transfer to this field of prevention requires due caution and should entail parallel evaluation with respect to this issue.

Instead of devoting oneself to evidence-based approaches alone or relying exclusively on transferring concepts from other fields of prevention whose transferability to the phenomenal field of ‘violent extremism/terrorism’ cannot be assured, one should consider the possibility of creating appropriate strategies based on available knowledge. In this context, and in view of the early stage of growth of this relatively new practice as described above, analysing the findings of extremism/terrorism research to identify what can be helpful in designing effective extremism prevention seems to be a thoroughly sensible alternative or supplementary measure. Such findings, which are summarised in this Handbook in Chapters 1 to 4, can be used at least to indicate the parameters for guiding a strategy for extremism prevention in the right direction.

### **Conclusion 1: Consideration of the different system levels**

Research into the phenomena that exist in Germany and into the processes that can lead to the emergence of extremism and terrorism (Chapters 2 and 3 of this book) allows the conclusion that prevention programmes also need to consider the multifactorial and processual conditionality of radicalisation processes. Following this logic, the prevention of violent extremism should be as ‘holistic’ as possible: it can only exert a tangible and lasting effect if it acts in a way that is adequate to the phenomenon itself and accounts for all the different relevant levels of intervention (person, small group, organisation and sub-societies/society – see Chapter 1) according to their respective relevance. In this regard, each prevention measure and project should be framed by an overall strategy that explicitly and verifiably pursues this comprehensive approach. As a consequence, a phenomenon-based, cross-level strategy should be reflected in a balanced relationship between prevention measures that target individuals, groups, organisations and society.

At the level of the individual, measures are required that enable appropriate (educational) influence in all stages of a radicalisation process – whether in one-on-one conversations or a group setting. What is required is the creation of offers that strengthen resilience factors among people from the target group according to the process phases described in Chapter 3.3 in order to exert a preventive effect on incipient or advanced radicalisation processes, and in order to enable or moderate exit processes and/or de-radicalisation.

The micro or small-group level requires measures and instruments to be implemented, for example, in a group setting similar to group therapy or in moderated self-help groups so as to exploit the resources of the group in order to achieve the prevention targets or – to give another example – to have an effect on a group (family/social environment of a target person) in order to achieve an indirect preventive effect. The group dynamic processes described in Chapter 3.2 should occupy the main focus of prevention practices at this level of action. This requires different methods and competences than those needed for individual case work.

At the level of social institutions and facilities, measures are required that address appropriate organisations with respect to their specific phenomena-related spectrum of activity and in consideration of the precise objective pursued. At this level, preventive action targets specific groups and/or concrete structures rather than persons (individuals or small groups). We can differentiate between three forms of intervention: 1) infrastructural measures: institutions/facilities are strengthened in order to specifically address certain

<sup>14</sup> Weine/Eisenman/Kinsler/Glik/Polutnik 2017.

<sup>15</sup> For example, in 2018 the German Prevention Congress dedicated itself to the topic of ‘Violence and Radicalism – Current Challenges for Prevention’, and, in 2019, to ‘Prevention & the Promotion of Democracy’.

target groups (e.g. young people, people from certain high-risk milieus); 2) discursive measures: offers to talk, negotiations with organisations/institutions about political and/or religious positions that have points of contact with corresponding sympathiser milieus; 3) administrative measures: issuing bans on organisations if it can be established that the purposes or activities of an organisation are contrary to the penal code or that they are directed against the constitutional order or the coexistence of Germany's many ethnic communities (as recently issued, for example, against the association 'Die wahre Religion' alias 'LIES! Stiftung' or the association 'linksunten.indymedia').

At their core, however, these administrative measures are directed towards the macro-level, i.e. the level of the norms and values of a society, even if they are specifically aimed at changes at the level of social institutions and facilities by banning certain organisations that are considered extremist. At the macro-level, the focus is primarily placed on the social and political conflicts that cause or shape violent extremism and terrorism. Specific political decisions are made and/or adjustments to norms are initiated in the expectation that they will reduce the potential for conflict.

Is the prevention of violent extremism in Germany adequate to the phenomenon? Does it equally address all levels relevant to the phenomenon? There are still no satisfactory answers to these questions in the literature, as they clearly have not yet been the explicit subject of research. However, existing surveys (e.g. as part of the BKA's Extremism Prevention Atlas – see Chapter 7) indicate that the level of the individual receives a disproportionate amount of attention in practice. In contrast, small groups and the other levels are clearly addressed less frequently. Furthermore, it seems that even at the level of the individual, many of the measures or projects that receive funding deal only indirectly with the target group. A considerable portion of measures seem to be directed at professionals and multipliers who have points of contact with the target group in focus (e.g. training courses for experts working for local authorities or in the area of schools and youth welfare services).<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to assess whether a transfer takes place with the actual target group through the involvement of these multipliers and whether a preventive impact is ultimately achieved. There are no reliable findings on this subject in the literature.

Against this background, care should be taken to ensure that direct, immediate work with individuals and groups forms the core activity of prevention at both the individual and the micro-level. Prevention projects aimed at producing info materials for others, organising expert conferences and training multipliers certainly play an important role within the framework of a prevention programme, but only as long as they support direct work with young people who are at risk or in the throes of radicalisation. However, the inadequate attention paid to relevant system levels, especially the group level, and the apparent reluctance on the part of many prevention stakeholders to engage in direct field work seem to characterise a trend that, in view of the current acute situation, gives cause for concern from the perspective of the security authorities.

In summary, with regard to the aspect of phenomenal adequacy described here, it can be said that care should be taken when developing and controlling extremism prevention programmes to ensure that the relevant levels of a phenomenon are adequately addressed according to their current significance and that a reasonable proportionality is established between direct and indirect prevention work.

## Conclusion 2: Addressing all stages of the radicalisation process

In addition to the different system levels at which radicalisation processes take place, the various process stages appear very significant for the development of a holistic prevention strategy. Individuals, groups, organisations and collectives (as described in Chapter 3) usually pass through various phases in the course of a radicalisation process. It should therefore be possible to offer targeted prevention to them in each of these phases. At each relevant level of intervention (person, group/organisation, sub-society/society), measures should be provided that can achieve a preventive effect in all stages of a radicalisation process. Regardless of the system of definitions applied (universal, selective, indicated or primary, secondary, tertiary), the prevention of violent extremism should target all relevant process phases of radicalisation and thereby tailor its offerings to the different target groups (potentially at risk of radicalisation, subject to risk factors, undergoing radicalisation, undergoing de-radicalisation and exiting). There are certainly different views on the number of stages in a radicalisation process (Chapter 3.3 refers to Horgan's stage model with the following stages: radicalisation; involvement; engagement; disengagement; de-radicalisation), but the number of stages within a radicalisation process is not decisive here. What appears crucial, on the contrary, is that the field of action of extremism prevention should encompass all stages. However, the question of how to delineate the field of action of extremism prevention seems to be the subject of some controversy in practice. Different interests obviously clash here: when it comes to defining what belongs to the prevention of violent extremism and what does not, the interests of actors in violent extremism prevention are often opposed to the interests of others who do not view themselves as actors in this field (e.g. people involved in political education, youth work, schools). Furthermore, conflicts of interest among actors in the prevention of violent extremism also arise when it comes to clarifying the questions of internal differentiation within the field of action (defining the transitions between the different areas of prevention: universal, selective, indicated). While such differences may appear theoretically justified, they also partially reflect the plurality of interests related to access to funding and target groups.

However, a clear idea of the reach of the field of action of violent extremism prevention also seems to be lacking among funders and those who require funding. This is already apparent in the distribution of prevention measures and projects. No regulation of practice in the interest of addressing all target groups/process stages can be discerned here. Instead, the evaluations made in Chapter 7 indicate that projects and measures tend to concentrate on the preliminary stages that are supposed to lead to radicalisation. A clear definition of the spectrum of violent extremism prevention (When does it begin and end?) as well as internal differentiation (interfaces between different fields of action of violent extremism prevention) seems to be of central importance for the development and management of extremism prevention programmes. There is an obvious need for clarification here. But which factors should decision-makers use as a guide in order to create better framework conditions?

When consulting the literature in the attempt to fathom the different views prevailing with respect to practical prevention, one encounters a variety of systems of definitions and conflicting concepts of prevention. The various categorisations or classificatory systems already mentioned are used in this context primarily in order to describe fields of action. In practice, both 'primary, secondary, tertiary' and 'universal, selective, indicated'

<sup>16</sup> Kober 2017.

are used as descriptors to categorise the different areas of intervention. The first type of categorisation, which has been employed as a standard in crime prevention for a very long time, is oriented towards the probability of the risk of a criminal act or its proximity in time. Accordingly, 'primary prevention' focuses on target groups exhibiting low risk or far removed in time from the possibility of a crime. 'Secondary prevention' targets groups/persons with increased risk or those who are about to commit an offence, and 'tertiary prevention' deals with persons/groups with proven risk or after an offence has been committed and pursues the goal of preventing repeat offences. By contrast, the second type of categorisation is used in current practical extremism prevention and is oriented towards features of the target groups. 'Universal prevention' addresses a large target group (total population/unselected groups of people), 'selective prevention' targets high-risk groups, and 'indicated prevention' is intended to deal with people manifesting risk behaviour (detailed account in Chapter 5).

The reasons behind this diversity of definitions are complex. In the first place, different disciplines have different understandings of the field. The different interests of various actors can also be expressed in terms of contrasting points of view. However, from the vantage point of those who promote extremism prevention programmes and expect them to yield a certain effect, the question of whether practical prevention covers the entire field of action, i.e. whether it fully accounts for the radicalisation process in all its stages, takes on decisive importance. The question therefore arises as to whether both of the two systems of differentiation used in practice meet this need. In this context, it should be noted that this question is not openly addressed in the literature. In practice, the different descriptors are all too often used synonymously. The terms 'universal, selective and indicated' are apparently regarded as modern variants that are congruent with the 'old standby' terms 'primary, secondary and tertiary'. On closer examination, this assumption proves to be incorrect.

In the field of public health, the field of action of prevention, which is classified according to target groups, is limited to the time before the full manifestation of a disease, thereby differentiating itself from the field of action of therapy. Thus, it only appears to encompass primary prevention and part of secondary prevention.<sup>17</sup> If one uses the conceptual understanding of crime prevention as a benchmark, the fields of action of 'universal, selective and indicated prevention' would only fully cover the area of primary prevention. Transferred to the prevention of violent extremism, this means that work with radicalised persons or those exiting the scene does not necessarily have to form part of prevention work. This seems at least to correspond to the view of a number of prevention actors in Germany who prefer a subdivision of prevention according to target groups and repeatedly convey this conception in their publications and at expert meetings. In this view, the scope of extremism prevention is exhausted in primary prevention. Prevention actors who address advanced stages of radicalisation often refer to their work as 'intervention', thereby distinguishing it from prevention work.

The move away from a classification of prevention approaches based on probability of risk and time is a relatively new phenomenon in Germany. The classification 'primary, secondary and tertiary' has shaped prevention work in Germany for decades and continues to be used in many areas, such as police crime prevention. The relatively

recent development towards a different classificatory schema correlates with the expansion of extremism prevention programmes after 2013 and seems to result from the circumstances and challenges specific to this field. The implementation of prevention projects in the area of secondary and tertiary prevention requires access to the relevant target groups (radical and extremist milieus, inmates in correctional facilities, etc.). Access to such target groups is understandably much more difficult for the majority of actors from civil society than access to groups targeted in primary prevention. The inaccessibility of the field of action for civil society actors, who are very often newcomers to the field of extremism prevention, could therefore be one of the reasons for the conceptual adjustment in current practice.

From the perspective of the needs of the security authorities, however, a limited form of extremism prevention with a field of action limited to preliminary work and excluding work with relevant target groups is deficient and not in line with the expectations for programmes they would choose to support.

In the areas of extremism prevention founded on the needs of security authorities, it seems crucial from the perspective of these authorities to unambiguously define where an extremism prevention practice begins and where it ends. An extremism prevention practice that considers itself as part of a security strategy should only begin with the start of radicalisation processes and cover the advanced stages leading up to disengagement and de-radicalisation. On the one hand, the reach of such extremism prevention into the preliminary stages of radicalisation processes should be reduced to a necessary degree in order to minimise risks of stigmatisation and to prevent the emergence of unintended negative side effects. A better demarcation from general support activities within the framework of youth work and political education seems necessary in this respect. No individuals should be targeted for an extremism prevention strategy oriented towards the needs of the security authorities unless they are in one of the stages of radicalisation. Prevention practices that exclusively focus on risk factors that are not specific to radicalisation should not be marketed as extremism prevention. The labelling effect could potentially negate the positive effects to be achieved here. On the other hand, the advanced stages of a radicalisation process must not be excluded from the field of action of extremism prevention. Actors in this field must dispose of the necessary points of access that make working directly with the relevant target groups possible. Practice in this area should place work with individuals and groups who are in the different stages of a radicalisation process at the centre of its activities and not be cut off from known radical and extremist milieus. While furnishing access to environments in which radicalisation occurs represents a major challenge for a new prevention practice, it should be considered more strongly as a criterion for funding. Here, civil society actors should receive the necessary support from the security and judicial authorities to facilitate their access to these milieus.

## Outlook

To return to the two central recommendations derived from the first part of the Handbook, namely to make the prevention of violent extremism as 1) adequate to the phenomenon (i.e. taking all relevant system levels into account) and 2) holistic (i.e. addressing all stages of a radicalisation event) as possible, the question now arises as to whether current

<sup>17</sup> Gordon 1983.

state-funded programmes adequately fulfil these two criteria. A clear answer to this question in turn requires the existence of functioning management mechanisms for extremism prevention practices that can provide information as to which actors work at which locations, at what time and with which target groups.

While federalism and the principle of subsidiarity make the German approach robust and flexible, the other side of the coin is that they render coordination and management more difficult. As a result of the efforts of recent years already described in this chapter, prevention practices in Germany are now better situated structurally speaking, yet more widely dispersed than they were before. In addition to numerous programmes at the state level, programmes are also in place under the jurisdiction of the federal administration. Moreover, various ministries share responsibility. At the federal level, for example, both the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth are involved in extremism prevention. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research is also increasingly active in this area. At the regional level, for example, the coordination tasks for Islamism prevention (Coordination Units in the 16 German states) are carried out in some states by the police, in others by domestic intelligence services or the Ministries of the Interior. However, other German states situate these Coordination Units within their Ministry of Social Affairs or in interdepartmental bodies. In some German states, the responsibility of state actors is limited to coordination with civil society actors who carry out counselling work. In other states, the authorities also take charge of counselling tasks. Some state programmes follow a cross-phenomenal approach; others have different structures for the different phenomena. Finally, most prevention measures are implemented in places that are the jurisdiction of other ministries (e.g. school, prison). It therefore goes without saying that full cooperation and coordination can be very difficult, not least for legal reasons (e.g. data protection).

Despite the obvious deficit in coordination, which is well recognised by all actors and should certainly be jointly addressed in the future, the development of extremism prevention in recent years can be assessed as predominantly positive. In view of developments registered among the various phenomena associated with politically motivated criminality, the expansion of resources and programmes at the federal level and in the 16 German states seems appropriate to the current needs. This documents a clear political will to bolster law enforcement and to counter threats from international terrorism with strong and effective extremism prevention. The development in recent years has been characterised by commitment on the part of nearly all German states and the widespread involvement of civil society. Extremism prevention efforts in Germany are now supported by a large number of state and civil society actors with a broad range of expertise at their disposal. Tangible progress has also been made in the area of research into causes and processes. The state of knowledge about radicalisation processes has grown appreciably in recent years, with research on prevention-related issues increasing further.

Despite this predominantly positive assessment, there are still downsides and potential for improvement that will not remain hidden from the attentive observer. The prevention of extremism in its current state is comparable to a ship without a command bridge. It is hard to tell if the course is correct.

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# CHAPTER 5

Extremism prevention in  
Germany – practical approaches

## CONTENTS

- Universal prevention
- Selective prevention
- Indicated prevention



# CHAPTER 5.1

## Universal prevention

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This chapter focuses on the prevention of the phenomenon of extremist violence as described in detail in the preceding sections.

The purpose of prevention in this context is to ensure that radicalisation processes fail to develop in the first place or to recognise and interrupt their development as early as possible. The targeted employment of prevention measures requires a theoretical framework. This Chapter (5) sets out to explain universal, selective and indicated prevention in distinction to other systems. The prevention programmes differ according to the target group addressed in each case.

This chapter will discuss the topic of universal prevention in detail. Unlike general promotion measures, the goal of universal prevention is to prevent undesirable conditions. Ideally, this involves addressing specific problems using measures of proven effectiveness. These measures target specific groups within the general population, which are, however, not selected based

on distinctive features or vulnerabilities, e.g. children of a certain age group. Universal prevention is particularly suited to realisation via cooperation among various professional groups in a ‘prevention mainstreaming’ approach. Overarching bodies, such as prevention councils at the municipal and state level, are suitable for advising, training and supporting these various actors. Following this theoretical classification, this article will provide an account of universal

prevention in the field of extremism, especially right-wing extremism. These prevention approaches have been developed based on documented risk and protective factors for radicalisation processes. Finally, we will offer specific recommendations for action, such as facilitating positive experiences with social diversity or promoting certain social skills.

## Introduction

This chapter will first derive and define the term ‘universal prevention’ within the general field of violence and crime prevention without reference to specific areas such as radicalisation or extremism, and then apply the general term in the subsequent section to the universal prevention of radicalisation. To substantiate the term, it also appears necessary to discuss the actors involved in universal prevention. At the same time, the article will address problems in demarcating universal prevention from other types of prevention and offer a critical discussion of its reach.

It should first of all be emphasised that this consideration of existing terminological distinctions is not concerned with assessing them as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, but rather with establishing how usable and useful they are in practice for the classification of preventive measures and their distinction from each other.

It should also be borne in mind that the classification of areas of prevention and thus the determination of which measures fall under the category of prevention at all and which do not are always bound together with certain interests. The term ‘universal prevention’ in particular

<sup>1</sup> Schreiber 2019.

does not allow a simple demarcation. However, categorisation often has a direct influence on access to financial resources and sources of funding, making it particularly important.

In addition, societal developments will always lead to further development of definitions and categorisations. The present discussion on the definition and classification of prevention is therefore not conclusive, but must rather be repeated periodically.

The focus is therefore on the development of a ‘working definition’ with the emphasis on its usefulness and usability for practice. The aim is to provide guidance to facilitate the development of something akin to a ‘common language’, so that everyone can understand what is meant by certain terms.

## The development of the concept of universal prevention

A distinction is generally made between primary, secondary and tertiary prevention<sup>2</sup> or between universal, selective and indicated prevention.<sup>3</sup> These subdivisions were originally developed in the field of medicine or public health and subsequently adopted by criminology.<sup>4</sup>

A further classificatory conceptual pair that deserves attention is behavioural and situational prevention, with the former focusing on the individual themselves, and the latter on making changes in individual living circumstances. In the following explanations, we assume both of these approaches to be included in the understanding of universal prevention. In medicine, the concept of primordial prevention is also used to describe the transformation of social risk factors. In prevention practices, these areas usually go hand in hand, which is why this distinction remains purely analytical. In the field of crime prevention, the ‘classic’ subdivision (primary, secondary and tertiary prevention) proposed by Caplan has become quite widespread. It is also laid down in Sections 20–24 of Volume V of the German Social Code (SGB V), and in other legislation. This model is organised according to the timeline of the occurrence of a criminal act. This set of terms can be represented as follows:

Term	Period	Objective	Risk assessment
Primary prevention	Long before the event	Prevention of its occurrence	No increased risk
Secondary prevention	Shortly before the event	Prevention of worsening	Increased risk
Tertiary prevention	After the event	Prevention of recurrence	High risk

Fig. 1: Classification according to Caplan 1964

It should be noted, however, that these terms, though they are employed by many authors, are sometimes interpreted in different ways. In particular, secondary prevention is sometimes equated with situational prevention, which aims at reducing opportunities to commit crimes.<sup>5</sup> No uniform and clear definition can therefore be said to exist.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Caplan 1964.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gordon 1983.

<sup>4</sup> The only genuinely criminological approach can be found in Tonry/Farrington and differentiates between ‘developmental prevention, community prevention, situational prevention [and] law enforcement’ (Tonry/Farrington 1994). This approach will not be pursued further here, as the prevention of radicalisation is essentially situated within developmental and community prevention. Another classification is offered by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It distinguishes between social, local, situational and reintegrative prevention according to the type and location of the measures (cf. UNODC 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g. Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (n.d.).

The Caplan model has also been criticised by a number of different authors.<sup>6</sup> The main arguments against Caplan's definition are the following:

- 'Primary prevention' cannot be rigorously defined; it is therefore impossible to adequately identify processes that could lead to problems at a later stage. For example, aggression is used as a characteristic for predicting later problems, such as violence. However, this characteristic is widespread, especially in younger age groups. It thus remains unclear what 'primary prevention' 'long before the occurrence' of violence is supposed to mean here. 'Primary prevention' does not identify groups with increased risks, though these may well be widespread in the population. The differentiation based on risk assessments shown in Fig. 1 is therefore inappropriate.
- 'Tertiary prevention' is a combination of treatment and prevention and does not constitute prevention in the strict sense. The development of the scheme 'universal – selective – indicated' had the intention of differentiating between prevention and treatment.<sup>7</sup> Since all existing problems can lead to even more severe problems, any conceivable measures to treat a problem would always have to be considered to be 'prevention', as well.<sup>8</sup> However, this becomes problematic when attempting to distinguish prevention from other areas. The objective of preventing a relapse is inherent to any treatment, at least in the subject area under discussion here, and does not need to be specifically set apart as 'tertiary prevention'.

The second classificatory model makes the distinction between universal, selective and indicated with respect to the target groups of prevention.<sup>9</sup>

Term	Target group	Example
Universal prevention	All members of a population or population group; not selected on the basis of risk level.	An anti-bullying prevention programme offered to all school children in years 7–9 in a given municipality.
Selective prevention	Selected groups of a population at increased risk; the relevant problem is not already present in the target group.	A programme for children from families with addiction problems to prevent later problems with addiction and behavioural problems.
Indicated prevention	Persons at high risk or with initial signs of problem behaviour without a 'clinical' diagnosis of the problem having been made.	A measure to support only those parents whose children have been expelled from school due to behavioural problems.

Fig. 2: Classification according to Gordon 1983, Institute of Medicine (IOM) 1994, 2009

While some parallels to the Caplan classification are apparent here, there remains a clear distinction to the previous classification.

## Towards a definition of universal prevention

A more extensive definition hails from the Institute of Medicine/National Research Council (IOM/NRC) in the USA. This classification is proposed here as a basis for further discussion. Here, prevention (e.g. of mental disorders) is preceded by promotion (e.g. of mental health). Prevention is followed by treatment and then recovery.

This exposition of the concept of universal prevention seems particularly helpful, as it is not simply taken as the starting point and basis of prevention; instead it supplements the chain of action by factoring in general promotion measures.

So what are the differences (or similarities) between universal prevention and promotion measures with respect to general goals such as mental and psychological development, health and democracy? All effective prevention interventions share elements that promote skills, abilities or experiences. Promotion is fundamental to the success of prevention. Therefore, this area cannot simply be considered in isolation; on the contrary, it overlaps considerably with universal prevention. Nevertheless, criteria for differentiation do exist. **In universal prevention, it is essential that promotion is accompanied by the goal or intention of avoiding certain problems, and this should ideally be based on proof – or at least a plausible case – that such goals can be achieved.**

The distinction between universal prevention and general promotion is therefore clear in theory, even if these areas are not always 'cut and dried' in practice. Skill-building efforts, for example, can be considered to fall under both the promotion of development and prevention. And every preventive measure also has a promotional character. The classification of measures as preventive or promotional (according to the IOM model) depends on the setting, goals, legitimation and manifestation of the problem and the programme environment.<sup>10</sup>

To put it bluntly, one could say that the explicit, i.e. direct goal of universal prevention is the prevention of criminal behaviour, while promotion already includes this goal indirectly, i.e. implicitly.

The crime prevention matrix in Fig. 4 provides an illustration of these two poles in relation to the prevention classes and to the fields in which prevention or promotion takes place.

The matrix affords an overview of the various classes of crime prevention as well as different fields and levels on which preventive action can take place. All kinds of preventive measures, whether universal, selective or indicated, can be subdivided more finely.

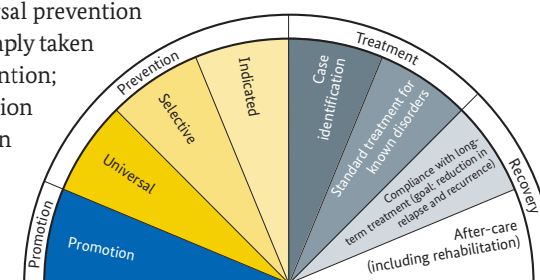


Fig. 3: Classification according to the IOM – Institute of Medicine / National Research Council (USA) 2009

<sup>6</sup> Including: Cowen 1977, 1980; Gordon 1983; IOM 1994, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> 'The classification that we propose would restrict the use of the term "preventive" to measures, actions, or interventions that are practised by or on persons who are not, at the time, suffering from any discomfort or disability due to the disease or condition being prevented. This distinction would serve to eliminate most of what is now encompassed in the old category "tertiary".' (Gordon 1983, 108).

<sup>8</sup> Greenberg/Weissberg 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Gordon 1983; IOM 1994, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Hafen 2004.

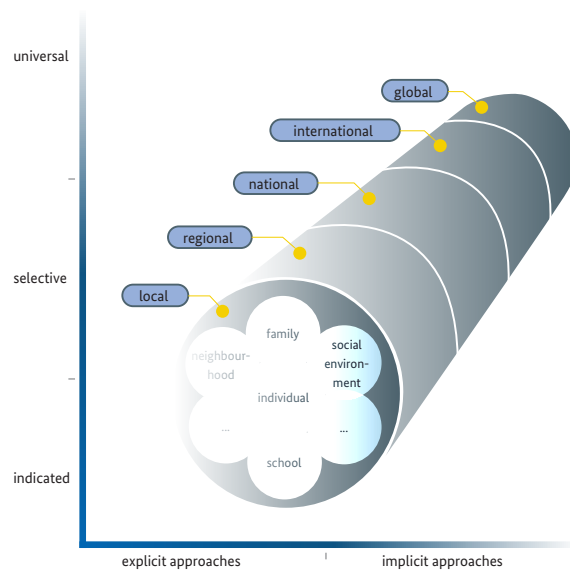


Fig. 4: Crime prevention matrix, Marks 2018

promote prevention measures and prevention strategies at the municipal and regional level.

Besides the difficulty of clearly defining and delineating universal prevention, this field harbours further problems that need to be addressed.

■ **Risk of stigmatisation:** If a measure is referred to as a crime prevention measure, there is always a danger of stigmatisation. As a result of such measures, previously 'inconspicuous' population groups may come to be thought of as at risk of becoming criminals. This risk of stigmatisation is, however, much higher in the cases of selective and indicated prevention, whose measures target specific groups. Consequently, if crime prevention were applied to the general population as a whole, this might even help to reduce the stigmatisation effect.

■ **Elusive effectiveness:** Compared to the other forms of prevention, it is often more difficult to prove the effectiveness of universal prevention measures, as more factors may influence outcomes than in the case of the far narrower measures of selective and indicated prevention. The difficulty lies in the fact many members of the target group do not benefit from the measures, as they would have favourable outcomes even without them. For this reason, the *effect size*<sup>11</sup> of universal measures is usually small. The statistical verification of effects is easier with widespread problems (e.g. violence or drug use) and more difficult with problems that only affect a few individuals within the overall group (e.g. radicalisation).<sup>12</sup> However, it is important to furnish verification

<sup>11</sup> The effect size is a statistical measure of the extent of the effect of a given factor.

<sup>12</sup> Yet, it has also been noted that, though the effect size of universal prevention is usually low, it must always be considered in terms of the population as a whole. In selective and indicated prevention, medium to large effect sizes are often achieved, but only for the respective target group. If these results are also set in relation to the total population, the effect sizes may be smaller than in universal prevention.

Preventive measures can be divided into those that have an explicit and thereby direct effect on crime prevention and those that have an indirect effect with no precisely defined objectives. Typical and significant examples of indirect approaches include numerous programmes and measures in the area of public health. These do not directly pursue goals in the area of crime prevention, nevertheless often have proven, relevant effects. As far as the levels are concerned, far more attention should be paid in future specifically to the local and regional levels. Accordingly, at the national and international level, the primary task should be to advise and

of the effectiveness of measures or at least allow for a reasonable assumption of their effectiveness in order to legitimise these measures accordingly.

■ **Lack of distress:** According to G. Rose,<sup>13</sup> the lack of immediate tangible effects leads to the 'prevention paradox': universal prevention offers many advantages for the entire population, but only minor advantages for individuals. The motivation to participate in or implement such measures is therefore usually low, although they would be the best choice in most cases.

## Actors in universal prevention

In order to achieve the desired wide reach, universal prevention measures have to be implemented using the structures of the state and civil society. Even more so than selective and indicated prevention, universal prevention is a task for the whole of society, and should therefore be understood as cutting across boundaries between fields of action and responsibility. Universal prevention therefore takes place on all the levels that influence radicalisation processes (micro-, meso- and macro-levels; see Chapter 1).

The three fundamental areas of prevention work are policy, research and practice. Fig. 5 illustrates the interconnectedness of these three fields from the regional to the international level as well as the need for cooperation between them (top-down and bottom-up) according to the principle of subsidiarity.

Cooperation can only succeed if specific preconditions for cooperation are created in each field of action. These include: a) establishing multidisciplinary working methods in each field, b) defining tasks and responsibilities for each position in each field and c) developing information and communication strategies through each field.

It is only through a slow and sometimes laborious process that a clearer self-understanding of these three main fields of prevention work can develop. In every party and every parliament there have always been politicians who specialise in domestic affairs, social policy, foreign affairs or defence, for example. This makes it correspondingly harder for prevention politicians to promote cross-cutting action, and they are therefore a rarity. The situation is similar in academia and in practice. Only a few dozen high-profile researchers across Europe currently refer to themselves as prevention scientists. And in practice, one still tends to speak of experts in youth issues, social work or addiction issues, for example, but rarely of suitably qualified prevention specialists.

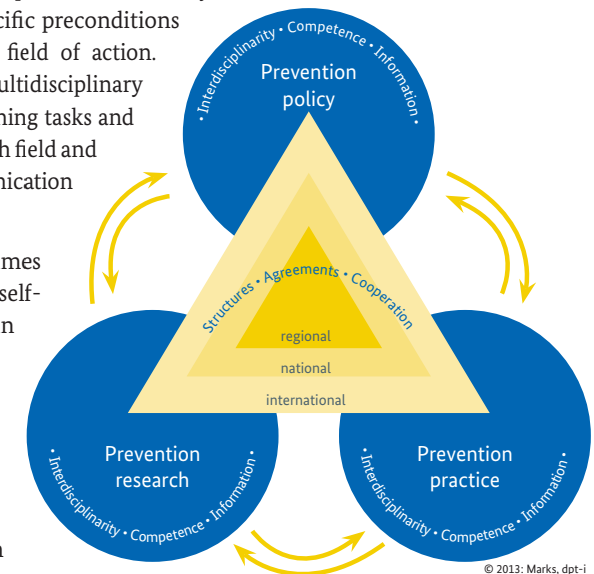


Fig. 5: Fields of prevention, Marks 2013

<sup>13</sup> Rose 1985.

It is therefore increasingly important to intensify communication and cooperation between these three prevention fields and the different levels of their activities. Creating close links between the many different initiatives, institutions and organisations with their diverse responsibilities for prevention and coordinating their activities appears particularly important. This is true at the municipal, state and national levels alike. There also need to be effective policies for sharing information and cooperation between the municipal, regional and (inter-)national levels.

Implementing the concept of universal prevention therefore requires firmly establishing prevention as an attitude and a method among various professions in a spirit of 'prevention mainstreaming'. A culture of specialisation tends to stand in the way of this. The universal prevention of the recognised causes and factors that influence radicalisation processes, for example, is neither a description of nor an alternative to social and educational work. Moreover, prevention should not be considered an additional task and burden 'on top' of other tasks.

At the same time, however, measures to promote the positive development of children and young people and other social and educational should not be arbitrarily 'sold' under the label of radicalisation prevention. On the contrary, the importance and status of social work is increased when one recognises what a key influence such measures (e.g. the promotion of social and emotional competences) have on the later resilience of young people against attempted direct or indirect influence on the part of radical individuals or organisations. One could say that prevention promotes the need for a broad range of targeted direct and indirect measures to promote the positive development of children and young people.

But how is effective and sustainable prevention work possible across all these bodies and fields of work? Where do the responsibilities lie? Which projects should be carried out by whom? Is it better to implement long-term programmes with proven effectiveness than individual measures that are limited in time? How should these be selected from the variety of offerings that currently exists?

The targeted and effective implementation of universal prevention by the various institutions and bodies mentioned does not necessarily require specialist personnel. What is necessary, however, is targeted professional support and coordination of the various actors in their respective fields so that they never lose sight of prevention as a central mission and see to its implementation.

Especially in the area of universal prevention, overarching bodies with representatives from a wide range of institutions and professions, such as prevention councils at the municipal and state level, appear suitable for this. These take on advisory and coordination functions to allow the demarcation of universal prevention highlighted at the beginning of this article to succeed through target and impact orientation. Such 'intermediary bodies' mediate between the current multitude of providers of prevention activities and the potential users. They also establish a link to those who develop these measures, giving them feedback while also providing guidance to the specialists involved.<sup>14</sup>

A high degree of professionalism in the planning and execution of prevention measures is indispensable, as ethical and legitimation considerations and, not least of all, economic

factors make demanding theoretical groundwork and effectiveness reviews essential. Preconditions for successful prevention therefore include sharing knowledge and methods and strengthening the competencies of relevant state and civil society actors. Intermediary bodies – such as the prevention councils mentioned above – can provide the necessary training measures for this while supporting the creation of networks. The range of support services they might offer includes the following:

■ **Institutionalisation of prevention:**

Elicits the involvement of day-care centres, schools, youth welfare, adult education and authorities, helps to overcome acceptance problems and define responsibilities for various tasks

■ **Continuing education:**

Gives support to specialists from different professions, such as teachers, psychologists, social workers and police officers. Participating in training and education programmes with members of other professions can help specialists to overcome conflicts rooted in silo thinking.

■ **Vocational education:**

Offering skills development opportunities to specialists undergoing vocational education (grounding prevention in curricula at institutions of higher education)

■ **Public information campaigns:**

Creating awareness of the causes of radicalisation (among parents, civil society groups, associations, public)

■ **Creating networks:**

Expanding and professionalising networks, enabling organisations to better implement universal prevention measures

For this reason, the possibilities and limitations of integration into regulatory structures should also be taken into consideration when implementing universal prevention measures. This is the only way to achieve a high level of acceptance for prevention work in all socially relevant institutions and professional groups. It must be taken into account that systems such as schools and youth welfare services have their own 'languages' and routines, with different connotations associated with 'prevention' in each case. Agreeing on definitions of prevention levels, as proposed in this volume, may be helpful in this respect.

Additional conditions for the success of universal prevention, as well as the obstacles specific to this area, can be derived from implementation research.<sup>15</sup> For example, the dissemination of programmes follows the typical trajectory of Rogers' phase model:<sup>16</sup> 'early adopters' are highly motivated and begin with implementation, and are later joined by actors for whom positive experiences of the implementation process are decisive.

<sup>14</sup> An example of this is the Grüne Liste Prävention ('Prevention Green List') developed by the Crime Prevention Council of Lower Saxony, in which prevention programmes are classified according to their verified effectiveness.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Fixsen et al. 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Rogers 2003.

## Universal prevention in the area of radicalisation

Universal prevention has a special function in the context of preventing extremism. It does not respond to acute events and is not intended to deal with individuals or groups that display problematic behaviour or have been exposed to identifiable risk factors. It intervenes at the 'pre-clinical' stage and its overall functioning is analogous to an immunisation strategy. The aim is to identify the causes of a danger that could emerge later, to analyse them systematically and to influence them in a targeted manner.

Extremist attitudes and actions have a fundamentally aggressive, violence-related, system-destroying component, because they aim at the realisation of alternative normative systems (by violent means if necessary). In order to guard against potential attacks on prevailing normative systems, various measures seek to prevent radicalisation at different points in time or to stop its progression at the earliest possible stage.

Radicalisation is a process shaped by many different individual, social and societal factors. And the process does not follow a definite pattern. Radicalisation is driven by the confluence of various factors at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels of society. A whole range of contextual factors and development conditions have now been identified that either strengthen or weaken extremist radicalisation processes (risk and protective factors; *see Chapter 3*).

For effective prevention, it is necessary to have a solid understanding of radicalisation processes and their dynamics and to analyse them. When exactly does radicalisation begin, when does a significant deviation in attitudes become apparent? When are we still in the area of freedom of expression and legitimate resistance? And at what point does a deviation from the norm become intolerable and demand counteraction? Are there latent developments and what are the first symptoms of radicalisation that need to be prevented? Under what conditions can we justifiably say that we are dealing with attitudes and behaviours that are explicitly directed against the system or against its existing norms and values and aim at their violent dismantling?

The aim of universal prevention is to exclude negative future developments, i.e. to anticipate potential extremist deviations from the norm. Measures aiming at the universal prevention of radicalisation processes are therefore more specific than general promotion of the welfare of children and young people. They specifically shape those factors whose influence is verifiably relevant for the probability of a later radicalisation. The objective is thus to interrupt developmental trajectories that potentially lead to the emergence of right- and left-wing extremist and Islamist attitudes and behaviour.

The universal prevention of radicalisation is generally cross-phenomenal in its implementation. Since the risk and protective factors involved in right- and left-wing extremism and Islamism do not differ much, it does not seem necessary to provide a differentiated account here. Judging by the content of the measures<sup>17</sup> implemented in German-speaking countries, extremism prevention has so far mainly focused on right-wing extremism.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, the following will describe this area in more detail.

As a form of political extremism, **right-wing extremism** is characterised by 'a significant deviation from applicable fundamental legal norms and values within social systems (societies and states)' and is 'aimed at the (at least partial) abolition and replacement of these norms and values'<sup>19</sup> (*see Chapter 2.1*).

In the area of right-wing extremism, universal prevention is not oriented towards specific events, but rather has a prognostic character. It assumes that a deviation from the norm and a negative development will occur in the future. However, there must be a reasonably realistic assumption or high probability of this, and the area being examined must offer adequate prognostic insights and describable development processes. Only then is it legitimate to influence and change the conditions of emergence and human behaviour in our society in a targeted and sustainable way. Universal prevention therefore depends on sound research results and theoretical development models derived from them.<sup>20</sup>

Universal prevention in the area of right-wing extremism must not be confused with measures of general democracy promotion or education. These only act on one of many known risk factors. Unlike universal prevention, democracy promotion and education serve to promote values and norms as a means of strengthening the positive features of democratic societies and raising awareness among the population accordingly. They complement universal prevention approaches and offer supplementary strategies for reinforcing resilience and building capabilities in the target group.

A similar function is fulfilled by measures of civic education, information and awareness-raising about right-wing extremism. On the one hand, these promote values in a very general sense, but they also aim to prevent specific negative developments. However, their actual preventive effect is subject to controversy and they can only promise results under certain conditions. Only where it can be proven that knowledge-based measures actually have a relevant protective effect in cases of exposure to right-wing extremism do we also refer to such measures as part of universal prevention.

Universal prevention is an instrument that uses scientific findings to influence the development risks and conditions for the emergence of right-wing extremist attitudes and actions in advance. Universal prevention measures have a multifactorial and cumulative effect at the individual, social and societal levels, i.e. they build on and reinforce each other. A majority of the measures employed in the universal prevention of radicalisation that have been studied have also been shown to influence other negative developments, such as crime, violent behaviour and addiction.

In sum: universal prevention includes measures targeted at the entire population at an average level of risk in order to make a positive impact on scientifically proven risk and protective factors of radicalisation processes or the development of key characteristics of extremism.<sup>21</sup> **Universal prevention measures address individuals in general terms by means of the social system in order, under the most favourable circumstances, to exert a preventive effect.** An example could be a measure that targets all year 7 and 8 pupils in a community, as an orientation towards a target group is still required in order to account for development-oriented factors and to enable age-appropriate communication.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Gruber/Lützing 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Baier 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Beelmann/Jahnke/Neudecker 2017, 90 et seq.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Beelmann, Gutachten 2017, 14.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

However, the selection is not based on an ascertained risk to which the group in question is exposed. If an analysis shows that one or more risk or protective factors are elevated either in the population as a whole or in a specific target group (e.g. all boys in grade 8 at comprehensive schools) compared either to the average values measured in other communities or overall (e.g. if 40 per cent of year 7 and 8 pupils were found to have xenophobic attitudes), this constitutes a **selective** prevention measure, provided that the target group for the measure was selected on the basis of this analysis.

Any measures implemented among the overall population with the intention of coping appropriately with developmental tasks (general promotion of competences such as self-esteem, self-control, social integration) represent measures of general developmental promotion (e.g. general measures of civic education, such as year 8 political science), not universal prevention measures. These become measures of universal prevention if they are employed with the specific intention of influencing the radicalisation process or the development of extremist attitudes and actions in the knowledge that the competence being promoted is important for this purpose.

The contents of the prevention approaches are based on the scientifically proven risk and protective factors. Beelmann, for example, describes key conditions for radicalisation processes at the micro-level (e.g. perceived injustice and disadvantage), the meso-level of the social group (e.g. experiences of exclusion, pronounced structures of prejudice) and the macro-level (e.g. dissemination of an ideology).<sup>22</sup> Recommendations for action for universal prevention measures in the field of right-wing extremism can also be assigned accordingly:

■ **Individual psychological measures (micro-level):**

Combating prejudice (contact hypothesis, positive experiences of social diversity), enhancement of social-cognitive competence (increase in empathy and taking others' perspectives, conflict management skills, critical self-examination, moral development), identity-finding measures, measures for positive youth development, specific forms of civic education, prevention of masculinity norms that legitimise violence

■ **Measures applied in immediate social contexts (meso-level):**

Security of attachment (attachment to school, emotional attachment to parents, attentiveness of parents), family (experience of domestic violence or violence in upbringing, conflict resolution, imparting of values), group (recognition of pro-social involvement in family, school, social environment), belonging, participation

■ **Social policy and socio-political measures for the reduction of risk-increasing conditions and the promotion of risk-reducing conditions (macro-level):**

Justice, housing, labour, social policy, integration processes, education policy, recognition, opportunities for participation and involvement, media

**Specific recommendations for action** for universal prevention<sup>23</sup> include the following:

**a. Positive experiences with social diversity**

These measures include, for example, prejudice prevention among children at the age of preschool and early primary school (e.g. familiarisation with social and cultural diversity, enabling regular contact with children from different social groups/other cultures or ethnic groups).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-59.

**b. Promotion of specific social competences and training of social-cognitive skills**

These measures are particularly suitable in the age range of 6–14, e.g. through the use of standardised universal prevention programmes (see Prevention Green List). Programmes worthy of recommendation are those that promote extremism-specific competencies, empathy and taking others' perspectives, conflict resolution, critical self-examination and moral development.

**c. Measures applied in immediate social contexts**

These measures include the promotion of parents' childrearing skills, the promotion of children's emotional bonds with their parents, the promotion of the attentiveness of parents and families, the prevention of domestic violence / violence in upbringing / norms of masculinity that legitimise violence, the promotion of positive conflict resolution, the strengthening of attachment to school and the recognition of pro-social involvement in the parental home, school and the social environment (see also programmes from the 'Prevention Green List' at [www.gruene-liste-praevention.de](http://www.gruene-liste-praevention.de)).

**d. Identity-building measures**

These measures can be applied to support positive identity formation among young people aged 12–16, especially the risk group of those who have difficulty connecting with peers who do not exhibit behavioural problems. In concrete terms, the aim is to provide young people with opportunities to try things out, to take on social responsibility, and to form identities and achieve self-efficacy. This can happen in the context of sports, leisure time, cultural activities, families, school or peer groups. Realistic and age-appropriate recognition structures are required for the successful development of a positive social identity. A variety of different prevention possibilities are conceivable within the scope of traditional youth work and should be applied, in particular, where such offers are lacking.

**e. Civic and cultural education**

This area is concerned with the communication of positive civic values for the target group of adolescents and young adults in the age range of 15–20 (e.g. democracy, freedom, rule of law, freedom of opinion, freedom of religion, trust in state organisations). Measures that are particularly suitable here are interactive measures and efforts that facilitate the active, first-hand experience of involvement in democracy, democratic action and democratic culture in school and in contexts outside of school. Recommended are low-threshold formats that are especially effective in reaching young people who are uninterested in politics or already have an affinity to relevant subcultures.

**f. Contact measures**

Contact measures are among the most important and rewarding activities of prejudice prevention. These are measures in which members of different social groups meet in person and engage in interaction. This can be done within the framework of structural measures in kindergartens and schools, e.g. through integrative teaching or the use of cooperative learning methods, in sports, leisure and cultural activities, or within the framework of student exchange programmes. This type of project is suitable for institutions, clubs, associations, as well as in connection with sports, city neighbourhoods or towns and villages. Contact measures in which the different group members meet at

eye level and pursue a common goal are particularly recommended here. Competitive situations must not be allowed to arise, and the contact should be mediated by authorities (e.g. teachers, educators, etc.). Such contact measures are suitable for all age groups and all social contexts. However, problematic contact situations should be avoided. For example, it is advantageous to have mixed groups play football against each other. However, allowing teams from different social groups play against each other results in a problematic contact situation that is more likely to have a counter-productive result.

#### g. Further measures in the framework of positive youth development

Measures based on the concepts of positive youth development refer to general aspects of the successful (or healthy) development of children and young people and are therefore only indirectly relevant for the prevention of radicalisation processes and political extremism. Scales and Leffert,<sup>24</sup> for example, have proposed the model of developmental resources and distinguish between external (externally provided) and internal (individual) resources. The external resources that children and young people need in order to develop in a healthy manner and free of problems and deficits include social support (family, school, neighbourhood), empowerment (appreciation of young people), sustainable bonds (family, friendship groups, societal role models) and creative leisure activities (sports, music, etc.). Internal resources include a willingness to learn (achievement motivation, attachment to school), positive values (justice, equality, honesty), social skills (positive contacts, good conflict resolution) and a positive social identity.

Finally, the special features of the prevention of what is referred to as **(neo-)Salafist or Islamist radicalisation** deserve mention in this context. The actors in this area face a particular challenge when it comes to defining exactly what the object of prevention is. This is already apparent in the controversial (and to date not yet definitively clarified) terminology used by the field: in addition to the terms already mentioned above, expressions used include the prevention of violence-oriented Islamism, of religiously based, religiously motivated or religion-related radicalisation or extremism, and many more. This multiplicity of terms is a result of the fact that, alongside the question already discussed in the context of the prevention of radicalisation or extremism (including right-wing extremism) as to what degree of radicalism needs to be present to justify prevention, in this case the matter of religion – and thus the right to religious freedom – also needs to be taken into account.

In short, this is explicitly not about ‘Islam prevention’, but rather the prevention of radicalisation that can potentially lead to extremism and stands in relation to a certain religion – namely Islam – with no presumptions as to the specific relationship between religion and radicalisation or religion and extremism.<sup>25</sup> This does not mean that religion does not, cannot or should not play a role in this field of prevention work. However, it does mean that the question of how important this factor is for prevention work plays a key role. In particular, the ability to grasp the significance of religion, i.e. to take into account the sensitivity of the ways religion creates a sense of meaning and identity, is always fundamental for prevention work. Indeed, only by taking this into account is it possible to distinguish between the protected sphere of religious freedom and the degrading ideology and actions of (religious) others that demand prevention.

Information about the necessary distinction between religion and ideology is therefore a central feature of universal prevention. Furthermore, universal prevention must bear in mind that religiosity can generate a protective effect against other risks (such as drug use) and can inspire people to contribute to the common good. This is also important within selective prevention, especially in programmes geared towards promoting the experience of self-efficacy. In contrast to the universal field of prevention, however, selective prevention is also characterised by a more in-depth examination of ideology, risk factors and protective factors.

<sup>24</sup> Scales/Leffert 2004.

<sup>25</sup> A possible formulation that takes these considerations into account would then be ‘prevention of religion-related (possibly even Islam-related) political extremism’.



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## CHAPTER 5.2

### Selective extremism prevention from a pedagogical perspective Target groups, fields of work, actors and approaches

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‘Selective prevention’ addresses people who appear to be at risk of turning to right-wing extremist and Islamist positions and organisations. In the following, those ‘at risk’ are understood to be individuals (occasionally also groups) whose specific positions and behaviour indicate that such processes are to be feared or are already underway. However, such indications usually lack specificity and their perception is always shaped by subjective filters and social contexts. This must be taken into account in any assessment of such indications. Otherwise, preventive approaches and prevention measures may have a stigmatising effect and exacerbate polarisation processes, possibly even processes leading to extremism.

Besides organisations and projects specifically geared towards selective prevention, everyday institutions such as schools and youth work are also important providers of selective prevention work, and they should be equipped accordingly to provide it. Selective prevention measures should always be tailored to the individuals concerned and the social system in which they are embedded. One precondition for the success of such measures is a basic attitude of acceptance and a resilient (working) relationship. The next stage is to work with the potentially endangered persons to develop alternative life paths and new social relationships. Only on this basis is it possible to encourage them to question ideological beliefs and worldviews and to stop them from turning to anti-democratic groups.

## Introduction

In the threefold model of universal, selective and indicated prevention, the field of selective prevention is probably the most enigmatic and difficult to delineate.<sup>1</sup> Selective prevention is aimed at ‘defined risk groups’,<sup>2</sup> i.e. **persons who are at increased risk of developing certain manifestations that are considered problematic or undesirable**. This sounds straightforward at first. However, at least in the field of extremism prevention, the target group for selective prevention measures is by no means clearly defined.<sup>3</sup> The relevant (German-language) literature makes it clear that the term ‘risk group’ along with the ‘risk characteristics’ or ‘risk factors’ that define this group are used in two different senses:<sup>4</sup>

Used in one way, they refer to individuals and groups who – due either to life circumstances and experiences or to ‘personality traits’ – are said to have an increased risk of radicalisation in the sense of a particular ‘vulnerability’ (here to be interpreted as a lack of protection, susceptibility) to the extremist viewpoints and groups to which they are exposed. The other sense is based on concrete manifestations: young people

who stand out due to specific attitudes, behaviours, social contacts and relations considered to be possible early signs of *affiliation* with extremist currents – either intellectually or socially – are considered to be at risk.

Another result of this broad understanding of the term (or its broad application in practice) is that the interfaces between the fields of ‘selective prevention’ and indicated prevention, which is specifically targeted towards persons who already exhibit risk behaviour, become blurred. This problem applies all the more to universal prevention:<sup>5</sup> preventive measures of this type generally share a preventive character, and universal prevention programmes – for example in schools and youth work – address **all** young people (see Chapter 5.1). If, however, programmes with identical content are directed at **specific** target groups because they are considered to be more ‘at risk’ due to certain group characteristics, they would, according to the first interpretation, already belong to the field of selective prevention.

Yet another factor gives rise to overlaps with the other two fields of prevention: the adoption of extremist attitudes and the integration into extremist groups typically constitute processual developments with fluid transitions. Categorisations used to describe such processes (is someone still considered ‘at risk’ or already ‘ideologised’ or ‘involved?’) can therefore never be ‘objective’ but are rather highly dependent on the social milieu and on who is doing the categorising (more on this below).

As a result, in practice we find a broad ‘corridor’ of different measures that can be classified as selective prevention: they range from civic education and democracy promotion programmes for school classes (e.g. all pupils in a given year) to support and counselling measures specifically tailored to individual teenagers or adults who are already active within extremist milieus.

The following considerations will first discuss how the authors define the target groups of selective prevention in the field of pedagogical extremism prevention and the reasons they choose this definition. The field of work outlined in this way forms the material framework for the further considerations of this chapter.

Our account will initially apply a **cross-phenomenal approach**, i.e. we will initially describe the target groups, potential indicators of processes of affiliation and familiarisation with extremism, as well as formats, methods and measures of prevention – as far as this is possible – regardless of whether we are dealing with the phenomenal field of ‘right-wing extremism’ or ‘Islamist extremism’. However, this approach does not suggest that these two phenomena should be equated or could be addressed in a cross-phenomenal manner, i.e. through generalised approaches to prevention. It is true that there are large areas of overlap between Islamist and right-wing extremism in terms of motives for turning to ‘radical’ or ‘extreme’ positions, ideologies and groups: highly diverse experiences of alienation or feelings of not belonging and not receiving recognition (within the family, community, as a member of a discriminated group, etc.) lead individual adolescents and young adults to become attracted to ‘problematic’ (ideological) content. However, there are also important differences between right-wing and Islamist extremist movements. These result from the characteristics

1 The fundamental question that arises at this point is to what extent the threefold division of prevention work that is common in (prevention-related) professional discourse corresponds to the practices customarily employed by actors in education. In fact, these practices frequently limit themselves to those encompassed by the terms prevention and intervention.

2 Gordon 1983.

3 In health care, for which this prevention model was initially developed, the target group of selective prevention measures is still comparatively clearly defined: according to this model, selective prevention measures target ‘defined risk groups who have a higher probability of developing a problem to be prevented (that is not yet manifest)’ (Robert S. Gordon, National Institutes of Health 1983, cited in Johansson 2012). With the adaptation of this concept for other disciplines, further meanings were added. In the context of special education, for example, the following definition can be found: ‘The purpose of selective or targeted interventions is to support students who are at-risk for or are beginning to exhibit signs of more serious problem behaviours’ (definitions of the PBS framework, cited in Kutash 2006). Developed in pedagogical contexts, this definition corresponds more closely to the interpretation commonly used in pedagogical extremism prevention.

4 Cf., for example, the different definitions in the anthology ‘They Have No Plan B’, Kärgel 2018.

5 In the literature, for example, some prevention measures are considered universal that other authors already classify as selective prevention – and vice versa.

specific to the ideological constructs that make them differently attractive to different groups of people,<sup>6</sup> from differences in how society evaluates the respective phenomena as a whole, and from variations in the social status of the individuals who tend to join these movements ('natives' versus 'immigrants').<sup>7</sup> Therefore, individual sections of this chapter will also emphasise the particular features of the various phenomenal areas and the differences between them.

This account largely excludes the prevention of '**left-wing extremism**'. Neither at the level of the phenomenon nor that of prevention is this field directly comparable with the other two areas mentioned above. Research into the causes of right-wing extremism and Islamist extremism invites the conclusion that various approaches and procedures developed in the (well-established) German field of right-wing extremism prevention can be transferred to the prevention of Islamist extremism.<sup>8</sup> However, the same cannot be said of left-wing extremism: firstly, not enough research has been done in this field that looks at comparable circumstances, i.e. ones relevant for pedagogical prevention,<sup>9</sup> that could provide a foundation for considerations of transferability and further development. Moreover, practical experience shows that established approaches from other fields of prevention cannot be transferred to the prevention of left-wing extremism, as the target groups are hard to reach using measures developed in those other fields. Furthermore, there is effectively no substantial practice of selective left-wing extremism prevention with approaches and documented experiences that could be presented and discussed for comparison. Last but not least, current phenomena in Germany summarised under the term 'left-wing extremism'<sup>10</sup> differ considerably from the other two phenomenal fields, e.g. in terms of the significance and the level of violence.<sup>11</sup>

## Distinction from crime prevention

Despite certain overlaps, selective extremism prevention differs from selective crime prevention in terms of its specific focus and its broader view of the problem: while crime prevention focuses solely on criminal behaviour and its prevention, extremism prevention also considers **political philosophies and worldviews** (e.g. those that oppose pluralism or look down on certain groups) as relevant to prevention efforts, even if these are not immediately associated with criminal behaviour. This also includes views and beliefs that are permissible under the law (which are also widespread in 'mainstream society').<sup>12</sup> This entails a strong need to legitimise the problematisation of such views and convictions, as well as the urgent necessity of carefully weighing up the possible benefits of preventive actions against their potential adverse consequences.

6 One significant difference is, for example, the religious dimension, including a tendency in Islamism to be less worldly, more 'renunciatory'. Another is the strong ethnic component of right-wing extremism compared to the ethnic openness of Islamism.

7 Cf. Glaser/Langner/Schuhmacher 2017.

8 Cf. Glaser 2016; Glaser/Langner/Schuhmacher 2017.

9 Cf. Schultens/Glaser 2013; Pfahl-Traugher 2010.

10 Unlike the areas of right-wing and Islamist extremism, this designation for current violent phenomena associated with the left-wing political spectrum is also highly controversial among experts.

11 To a large extent, these violent acts comprise what is referred to as 'confrontational violence'. In contrast to right-wing and Islamist extremism, violence targeted against individuals is not a core component of the ideology here, and as such requires justification and is the subject of intense debate (cf. Reports on the Protection of the Constitution; Schultens/Glaser 2013).

12 For example, traits like a criticism of democracy or racism are not sufficient evidence of 'extremist' attitudes – but they can act as indicators for preventive measures that can in turn prevent processes towards extremism from developing further.

Another significant distinction within selective extremism prevention is between **activities that focus on public security and those that concern youth welfare**. Actors from both professional fields pursue specific tasks in this field of prevention and are quite often involved in collaborative relationships. However, while the former is oriented towards the task of averting and minimising danger, the latter is committed to the protection and promotion of young people – especially when their paths of development take problematic directions that potentially endanger themselves and others. This inevitably leads to differences in terms of priorities when it comes to balancing the security of society as a whole and problematic consequences such as the risk of stigmatisation. There is therefore always a certain amount of tension between the two professions when it comes to their respective conceptions of prevention and what they consider the goals of prevention to be.

Experience has shown that the lack of a clear distinction between approaches focused on public security and the prevention of criminal behaviour, on the one hand, and a prevention practice that seeks to address the protection and interests of the persons concerned, on the other, often results in confusion. It is hence important to distinguish clearly between the two levels, not least in the interest of realising an effective prevention practice.

## Target groups

In the first instance, selective prevention focuses on **teenagers and young adults** who are considered to be 'at risk'. As mentioned above, the meaning of 'at risk' varies quite widely in practice: in the first place, it includes young people who stand out because of certain attitudes and forms of behaviour that indicate a (potentially) existing openness or affinity to extremism, such as in the case of those who set themselves apart from others for religious or ethnic/cultural reasons (see 'Indicators' below). These can be both individuals and groups (e.g. right-wing youth gangs).

In addition, the focus is often on groups of – predominantly young – people who are considered to be at particular risk due to certain 'risk factors' in their biography or living environment. These can include biographical background factors such as 'incomplete' family relationships, '*broken homes*' (the role of 'absent fathers' is discussed in this context, for example, and single or separated parents likewise formally fall into this category), but also temporarily acute problems in living circumstances, especially various experiences of social marginalisation or discrimination.<sup>13</sup> Other risk factors include structural factors that foster extremism, such as communities with high levels of extremist activity – for example, neighbourhoods in which Salafist preachers are active, rural areas where right-wing extremist groups are active, or schools or sports clubs where such 'tendencies' have been noted to exist.

However, if such general characteristics as social origin, religious affiliation or specific milieus are defined and employed as 'risk factors', 'completely normal' young people may become the target group of selective prevention measures without having

13 For example, a European Commission handout on this field of work states: 'A focus of this work will be on youth at the periphery of the society and at risk of marginalisation since such life circumstances can create a specific vulnerability for violent radicalisation' (European Commission 2017).

exhibited any kind of ‘problematic’ behaviour. A group thereby constructed and marked as ‘vulnerable’ could then prompt decision-makers and competent bodies in politics, education and the public to initiate measures to prevent ‘extremist’ actions and positions.

Research has identified a number of biographical, psycho-social or ‘life-experience’ factors that seem to play a role in processes resulting in extremist involvement.<sup>14</sup> However, studies of processes by which people turn to extremist groups and become radicalised also underline the fact that such processes are never the result of individual factors and are by no means inevitable – i.e. such factors can, but do not necessarily lead to people seeking out and becoming involved in such subcultures. It is therefore not possible to establish a ‘profile’ based on empirical evidence which could support the construction of such risk groups.

Against this background, another argument weighs even more heavily: selective prevention programmes, which by definition are directed at certain persons or groups more than others, inevitably contribute to the **stigmatisation** of these persons or groups. In this way, economically disadvantaged parental homes, single mothers or even patchwork families are lumped into the category of a potentially problematic environment. Likewise, the identification of ‘Muslim’ youth or refugees as supposed risk groups and thus as target groups for preventive measures inevitably promotes Islamophobic and/or racist stereotypes. Rather than hindering social polarisation, this would tend to increase it even further. In practice, such categorisations often turn out to be counter-productive: young people who see themselves as a ‘risk group’ and under ‘general suspicion’ close their minds to any programmes and communication framed in this way. Moreover, there is the danger of ‘overlooking’ certain people because they do not fall into the established risk categories. In the field of work ‘right-wing extremism’, this applies to young people who are not marginalised or who are not ‘educationally disadvantaged’, but who exhibit definite susceptibilities to right-wing extremist orientations.

In view of these imponderables and risks, we believe that it is inappropriate to use the category or term ‘selective prevention’ for individuals and groups that do not themselves display any behaviour that could indicate a potential danger. Instead, we suggest that the term ‘universal prevention’ (and/or ‘democracy promotion’) should continue to be used in such cases. Selective prevention, on the other hand, should be limited to measures that are not directed at specifically defined ‘risk groups’ (see Chapter 5.1, ‘Universal prevention’). Instead, selective prevention should, in our view, refer to behaviour that **can actually be observed** and that suggests potential processes of becoming involved in certain ideologies or groups. This also entails requirements with regard to adequate indicators, diagnostic procedures and ways of dealing with ‘suspected cases’, which we will outline below. **In the following, therefore, we will use the term ‘selective prevention’ exclusively for measures that refer to specifically observable behaviour and the specific positions of individuals and groups.**

In addition to persons directly at risk or perceived to be at risk, individuals from the **immediate social environment** of these persons are also relevant target groups

within the field of work of selective prevention. The target groups of this form of ‘indirect prevention’ include, in particular, relatives (especially parents), but also friends, classmates or trusted adults outside the family – for example a teacher who has a good relationship with a young person, a priest or a sports coach. This inclusion of the immediate social environment opens up opportunities of exerting a preventive effect on young people who cannot be reached in any other way. As in indicated prevention (see Chapter 5.3, ‘Indicated prevention’), relatives and other trusted persons can be an important positive emotional and social resource. Sometimes, however, they themselves are part of the constellations and dynamics that can encourage someone to turn to extremism and, for this reason, can also be included in selective prevention measures (see below).

Also in line with indirect prevention in both fields of phenomena is the inclusion of **professionals** as a further target group of selective prevention measures. For example, in their everyday work, education specialists come into contact with adolescents and young adults who are potentially at risk. Relevant professionals may include those from child and youth welfare services, from schools and day-care centres, or even police officers. Within the framework of selective prevention measures, they – together with other actors – may sometimes take part in counselling sessions (see ‘round table’) that deal with individual young people at risk with whom they are involved as teachers or coaches, for example. Training can help such actors from everyday professions to understand better how to identify the challenges involved and how to handle them in a professional manner (see below).

Selective prevention measures are implemented in different professional fields and settings depending on the target group. For example, work with the immediate social milieu is mainly achieved in the form of counselling services, professional actors are offered training programmes and potentially at-risk persons are primarily assisted through youth work and youth social work.

## Indicators

The reasons why individuals and groups – mostly in adolescence or young adulthood – turn to extremist worldviews and political currents are diverse and complex. Biographical crisis experiences may play a role, as well as social and personal experiences of not belonging, a lack of recognition, being devoid of prospects and low self-efficacy.<sup>15</sup> Adolescence, with the physical and emotional changes, the dynamics of familial detachment and the searches for identity that accompany it, is also of particular importance. During this time of particularly fragile self-esteem, new social contexts, new friends and new goals sometimes appear as a way to escape difficult experiences and demands. Communities formed around ideologies that offer utopian visions and a chance to become a better person can exert a special attraction on some young people going through this phase.

Apart from family and friends, it is above all education specialists (especially from schools and youth work) and other professionals (e.g. from clubs and associations or

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Beelmann 2019; Macdougall/van der Veen/Feddes/Nickolson/Doosje 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. for a summary of right-wing extremism: Schuhmacher/Glaser 2016; for Islamist extremism: Glaser/Herding/Langner 2018.

community organisations) who notice changes in young people and have to deal with their adoption of ideologies and openness to extremist ideas. That is why it is they, more than anyone else, who ask for indicators and ‘characteristics’ that can be used to identify a particular ‘threat of extremism’ or ‘radicalisation’ faced by young people and a corresponding need for pedagogical action. This is true for right-wing extremism, but even more so for extremist Islamism – a comparatively new issue, yet one that has come to attain a high profile in social discourse.

The underlying need is understandable. Nevertheless, it often results in attempts to describe clearly identifiable, distinct and objective ‘risk characteristics’. The definition and selection processes at the end of which a selective or even indicated (see Chapter 5.3.) need for prevention is assumed for certain persons or groups are anything but ‘objective’, however: actors from politics, security authorities, social work and education define ‘conspicuous’ behaviour on the basis of their own biographies, social status, individual occupational experiences, within the framework of their professional duties and in the context of social conflicts.<sup>16</sup> The criteria applied are therefore contingent on specific specialist perspectives and values as well as current debates, but the resulting classifications and categorisations can have a highly labelling and stigmatising effect.



### RELIGIOUSLY BASED EXTREMISM?

*Against the background of the aloofness of many multipliers to religion and a generally highly ‘Islam-critical’ public discourse, Muslim youth (or those who are interpreted as ‘Muslim’ by their environment) are sometimes quickly suspected of ‘radicalisation’. This is especially the case when these youths refer to Islam in a positive or provocative way – for example, when they express the wish for a prayer room at school or refer to religious norms of which they themselves usually have little knowledge. Sometimes this is held against them as an expression of withdrawal and segregation, or their behaviour is interpreted as a potential inclination towards extremism or Islamism. This indeed cannot be ruled out. Such positions and forms of behaviour are always a good reason to talk to young people about their motives and interests. It then typically turns out that is not a matter of withdrawal or even Islamism, but rather the opposite: when young people emphasise parts of ‘their’ culture or religion, it is very often based on the need to be recognised as part of society, along with the particularities (or what they declare to be so) of this culture or religion. When emphasising Islam, they are often less concerned with religious matters than with Islam as a statement, as part of how they view themselves – something they want to assert in the face of many voices of criticism, scepticism and racist hostility, and something for which they are struggling to gain recognition more offensively than their parents and grandparents did in the past. This form of protest and searching on the part of young, more or less religious German ‘Muslims’ is thus initially emancipatory in nature and motivated by a desire for integration (even if it often leads to conflicts and takes on a provocative appearance), as they aim to be recognised as equal members of a heterogeneous society. (Only in very rare cases and in interaction with other factors does this lead to processes of turning to extremist ideologies or propaganda for extremist groups.) However, while slogans such as ‘Black is beautiful’ or ‘Gay is good’ are widely accepted and have become commonplace sayings, a youthful ‘Proud to be Muslim’ quickly comes under suspicion of radicalisation.<sup>17</sup>*

<sup>16</sup> In this regard, the assumption that specific views and forms of behaviour of young people are clear signals of possible conversion processes, coupled with the assumption of the existence of certain ‘risk groups’, would lead to almost every young person being suspected of extremism.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Müller 2017; El-Mafaalani 2018.

The following ‘indicators’ for the field of ‘selective prevention’ are therefore expressly intended only as an aid in orientation for this process. They should not be regarded as adequate indicators of an increased level of risk or even of incipient ideological and social conversion processes, but merely as signals or ‘points of attention’ that should prompt pedagogical action. They should never be considered in isolation, but rather always in the context of certain developments. Moreover, they do not replace specific discussions and assessments by specialists made on a case-by-case basis.

### ① (Increasing) anti-democratic statements and symbols – religious or political provocations

A one-off statement that is critical of democracy may be either an expression of inner political dissatisfaction or a provocation to attract attention. The same applies to displaying extremist symbols and signs (swastikas, right-wing extremist numerical codes such as 18 for Adolf Hitler, the IS flag, hand sign of the ‘Grey Wolves’, etc.). Repeated statements that reject a democratic understanding of society, as well as the use of certain terms or the display of identifiers should always prompt people to take a closer look, investigate and take action, even if this is merely a ‘successful’ strategy of provocation. Pedagogical sensitivity is required here to distinguish between increasing identification with extremist political positions or worldviews and mere provocation. The field of prevention of ‘religiously based extremism’ poses a specific challenge for (mostly non-Muslim) specialists (see box): here, a special degree of sensitivity is required in order to be able to distinguish between a merely intensified turn to religion, ‘confrontational religious expression’ as a form of provocation and a growing affiliation with a religiously motivated political ideology.<sup>18</sup> The situation is similar in the field of left-wing political extremism: here, for example, it is often necessary to recognise whether violence is actually advocated as a political means or whether one is ‘merely’ dealing with demonstrative militancy.

### ② (Increasing) incapacity for dialogue, claim to truth, ideologisation

Being young means trying things out, which also applies to the capacity for argumentation and dialogue. Here, ideologically laden lines of argumentation potentially afford decisive advantages for young people – among other things, the possibility of being right and winning arguments. A one-sided understanding of history, religion or nation may also represent an apparently secure bastion of knowledge that peers, parents or teachers often do not dare to address. While this grants young people the right to form their own views, it may also make it increasingly harder for them to acknowledge alternative interpretations. In some cases, the end result may be a central pattern that is just as common in right-wing extremist milieus as in Islamist ones: ‘If everyone is against you, you know you’re on the right path.’ The one-sided insistence on one’s own point of view and on ‘unequivocal’ truths is probably in most cases a ‘normal’ expression of youthful trial and error; in some cases, however, it can mark an increased susceptibility to ideologically motivated interpretations and the start of a process of adopting them.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Ufuq 2016.

### 3 (Increasing) group-related patterns of rejection

Adolescents move within social spheres in which generalising (sometimes shifting) patterns of rejection vis-a-vis other social groups are common. Ideologies thrive on such rejection constructs and associated processes of demarcation, valorisation and denigration. Therefore, when individuals or young people associated with a group begin to *increasingly* employ such constructs, this may well be seen as a critical phase with regard to becoming affiliated with extremist ideologies.<sup>19</sup> Examples that *potentially* point to such a process of turning to extremism, but always require pedagogical intervention, include the denigration of refugees, other religions and beliefs, or nationalistically based dynamics of denigration and valorisation (including ‘Kurdish’ vs. ‘Turkish’, for example).

### 4 (Increasing) social ties to extremist individuals and groups

In a significant number of cases, entry into political and religious extremist structures takes place through personal relationships: a good friend, a big brother, a cousin or even a love affair are often the first contact with an extremist group, the reason for engaging with its content for the first time, and also a major reason for continuing to do so. In the process, the ideological messages themselves may not be relevant at first, or only to a limited extent. However, in the course of increasing personal involvement, they usually gain in importance or are gradually adopted. Initial contacts with extremist actors may also be merely short-term in nature – e.g. motivated by curiosity and the desire to try something out. But should such contacts intensify, increased attention is required on the part of educators – even if the young people themselves have not (yet) shown signs of extremist positions or behaviour.

### 5 (Increasing) social exclusion

In addition to processes that can directly result in turning to extremist ideologies or organisations, other factors should be mentioned which, although they are far less likely to initiate a process of identification with extremist positions and scenes, can nevertheless be considered to be among the motives for such processes. While social exclusion is not ‘endangering’ per se, it can be a decisive factor and a visible signal of turning towards political-ideological extremism. This applies to all varieties of extremism. It can be a response on the part of the social milieu of the individual in question to processes of conversion to extremism that are already underway (and to associated changes in behaviour), and this response may even reinforce these processes. However, exclusion can also be an initial (co-)trigger for a dynamic of this kind: for instance, sometimes young people end up adopting outsider roles within their peer group, and this can make them more receptive to ideological indoctrination. As with all other indicators, it is particularly important here too for teachers, family, good friends and others to monitor processes of change: does social exclusion take place in several places, or is it only a case of friends drifting apart, as can happen at certain ages?

<sup>19</sup> Kurt Möller, Nils Schuhmacher, Kai Nolde and Janek Rothe developed the empirically based concept of ‘generalising rejection models’ (PAKos) and derived pedagogical needs and possibilities for action from it on the basis of the ‘KISSeS’ model. Their model is based on the concept of group-based hostility towards people and expands it, among other things to include a qualitative dimension, with the goal of developing a perspective on attitudes of rejection and how to deal with them that can be used in practice (cf. Möller et al. 2016).

### 6 Violence and the (increasing) endorsement of violence

Where violence begins is a matter of debate. In its multifaceted nature, violence can be simultaneously cruel and consensual, prohibited and legitimised and – emanating from any type of community, institution or individual – directed against people, objects or institutions. This is another reason why the ‘endorsement of violence’ is a difficult indicator to define when it comes to ascertaining an increased risk of extremist radicalisation. Nevertheless, an individual’s acts of violence as well as an (increasing) endorsement of violence in pedagogical contexts are always indicators of a need for pedagogical action.

In the context of the prevention of extremism, such a need for action exists in particular when an apparent tendency towards violence is coupled with an (incipient) interest in political ideologies and worldviews and/or views that are anti-democratic or denigrate certain groups. For example, the dissemination or repeated viewing of violent videos linked to political messages (which, in the field of religiously based extremism, are often packaged as allegedly religious messages) and a lack of critical engagement with these videos may be indicative of potential risks. (If an individual’s own violent behaviour or the violent behaviour of others is politically/ideologically justified, one should also consider whether a need for indicated prevention may already exist.)

Furthermore, the observation can be made time and again, especially in right-wing extremist milieus, but also in their Islamist counterparts, that an (initially) non-political fascination with and willingness to use violence can also be a motivating and incentive factor for interest in these milieus and their activities. Studies have shown this to have been the case for some members of violent, right-wing youth subcultures in the 1990s and early 2000s; however, it is also discussed as a motive for participation in jihadist movements. Therefore, under certain circumstances, a general, initially non-political affinity for violence may also help cultivate an attraction to extremist groups – and thus indicate a need for selective prevention.

It must be noted, however, that a certain fascination with (especially virtual) violent phenomena is certainly a common tendency exhibited by many male adolescents, and some females, even if the vast majority never get involved in extremist scenes. In this respect, it is particularly true for this ‘indicator’ of selective prevention that it must never be evaluated in isolation, but only in conjunction with other indicators and developments in order to avoid making premature conclusions (often guided by the emotions of the observers).

### Interim conclusions

The fundamental challenge in determining possible indicators and signals lies in the fact that from the – always subjective and often only selective – perception of ‘problematic’ statements and behaviours, it is never possible to draw clear conclusions about the positions, affiliations or worldviews behind them. The perceived phenomena and processes can be quite ordinary developments in puberty and in the transition to adulthood in which young people try out different positions and behaviours, often enough in full awareness of the fact that these are ‘offensive’. Moreover, the way such behaviours are perceived varies greatly from person to person. A provocation for one person (such as advocating Sharia law in discussions or saying ‘I’m proud to be German!’) may appear to another as a pedagogically useful springboard for discussion,

while a third party could already view it as an alarm signal indicating an 'extremist' development. While this is certainly true in suspected cases of right-wing extremism, it applies particularly when young people refer to 'true Islam': in such cases, social discourses may tempt the listener to hastily place these young people's positions and behaviours under 'suspicion of extremism'. Conversely, when it comes to right-wing extremism, the observation can be made that people are often 'under-sensitive' in their perceptions and actions.

The 'weighing up' required in this regard necessitates not only looking into things more deeply, but also a holistic perspective that includes the social context of the young person's activities. Thus, substantive radicalisation takes place in the form of action-reaction processes in which educators themselves are sometimes involved. Here are two examples of this: 1. In many cases, anti-democratic attitudes are also an expression of inner dissatisfaction and a lack of social recognition. Such statements need to be met with concern while also being challenged; anything else is ineffective. 2. Constructs that denigrate others always serve to valorise whoever makes them, thereby reflecting unsatisfied needs in contexts in which young people feel 'worthless'.

What seems important here is to take a careful look to find out what is hidden behind the perceived phenomena. Then the choice of the right intervention tool or form of assistance is crucial for addressing the causes as opposed to their symptoms (see 'Goals' and 'Measures' of selective prevention below). The proper handling of such a 'catalogue of indicators' of this kind is a highly challenging task: firstly, it presupposes a certain closeness and a phase of providing support to the young people. Secondly, it has to form the basis of pedagogical or preventive measures to be implemented (if necessary) by the educators themselves.

## Goals of selective prevention

The overarching goal of selective prevention measures is to prevent or preclude

- the intensification and consolidation of positions, attitudes, and forms of behaviour that denigrate other persons and groups and are hostile to democracy and freedom (anti-pluralistic) and/or violence-oriented
- people joining or permanently integrating into far-right or Islamist extremist subcultures.

So that preventive measures can be derived from these abstract, overarching goals, they must be 'broken down' to specific goals at the action level in consideration of the different motives behind the processes that cause people to shift towards extremism. These goals for action should be based on a well-founded knowledge<sup>20</sup> of what is conducive to developments to be prevented in a specific constellation and what can counteract them in each individual case. This is the only way to define goals for action and suitably conceived preventive measures.

For work with **people perceived to be at risk**, action goals for selective prevention can be identified on two levels:

### ① Strengthening democratic resilience

As in universal prevention, **attitudes** and **skills** that increase the '**democratic resilience**'<sup>21</sup> of the respective persons to extremist content should be strengthened. These include:

- strengthening skills of perception, classification and judgement with respect to anti-democratic, anti-pluralistic choices of interpretation and affiliation
- promoting democratic awareness and the democratic capacity to act
- promoting the ability to change perspectives and the willingness to identify and acknowledge different points of view
- promoting solidarity and empathy.

### ② Promoting ideological and social distancing

It is also important to bear in mind that those targeted by selective prevention may already have an initial interest in or attraction to extremist positions and groups, which should be **interrupted or reversed**. Growing closeness towards extremist content or groups is often a consequence of experiences of deprivation and a lack of options in other social contexts, as well as personal crises. Extremist groups incorporate such experiences into their narratives in order to win young people over to their cause. As in indicated prevention, the aims here should be to **challenge extremist ideologies/ confront affected individuals** as well as to seek to counteract the **biographical causes** of processes that lead to extremism and the forces that cause acute crises.

20 Ideally, these are empirically validated findings. Where these are not (yet) available, prevention concepts can also be based on theoretically supported plausibility assumptions derived, for example, from findings on comparable fields of work or related processes.

21 Edler 2017; Tempelmann (n.d.).



*Specific goals include:*

- providing support in coping with difficult experiences that can be conducive to processes of turning to extremism
- promoting the ability to deal constructively with difficult situations
- developing alternatives to the integration offerings of extremist groups
- questioning and undermining extremist interpretative frameworks
- pointing out alternative, non-extremist options for action, sources of meaning, forms of participation and protest
- stabilising acute life situations (for highly problematic cases).

The action goals on these two levels can be used to derive specific selective prevention measures in work with young people at risk (see 'Measures' below).

Prevention work with **people in the immediate social environment** as well as with **multipliers** (see 'Target groups' above) should also contribute to the pursuit of the high-level goals described above (strengthening resilience and promoting the distancing of people at risk). However, there are other goals for action that go beyond this:

For example, for **counselling work with the social milieu** – i.e. with family members, friends and other close persons who turn to the services for advice – the following objectives can be formulated at the action level:

- jointly determining whether a problematic situation that requires support from the service exists and what kind of situation it is
- when a case is taken up: strengthening or restoring family relationships and the ability of the parties involved to communicate with each other
- working through and addressing family conflicts that could be a potential component of dynamics that encourage the turn to extremism
- encouraging positive developments in young people who are potentially at risk, mediated through the persons receiving counselling.<sup>22</sup>

Training and skill-development **work with multipliers** should include the following action goals:

- knowledge and classification skills with regard to potential indicators for the need of selective prevention
- knowledge and capacity for dealing with corresponding indicators in a stigmatisation-sensitive way (see 'Indicators') as well as awareness of and sensitivity to one's own preconceptions
- skills and sensitivity with regard to one's own pedagogical attitudes and the possibilities and limits of action in the case of a need for selective prevention
- knowledge of legal and, if applicable, profession-specific regulations
- knowledge of existing support services in the field of 'selective prevention'.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Rieker 2014; Glaser/Figlesthler 2016.

## Actors

Many actors are involved in selective prevention work, more recently in the field of anti-democratic Islamism/Islamist extremism, for longer in the case of right-wing extremism. The offerings of these actors include general services provided within everyday social systems as well as the projects and services of specialised bodies.

**Everyday youth welfare systems**, including the work of public youth welfare offices and their civil society partners as well as child and youth welfare services that are open to all who wish to use them (offene Kinder- und Jugendarbeit), carry out selective extremism prevention work more than public and specialist discourses might suggest. This is due to the fact that most of the preventive elements involved lie within their range of responsibilities and service offerings. Much selective extremism prevention is thus performed incidentally, without specialised services being either available or applied. Against this background, it would appear worthwhile to pursue empirical studies on the occasions, the significance and the results of such 'prevention measures that are not prevention measures' as carried out by everyday systems and structures. Specialists work in the field every day, supporting young people in coping with their problems – and in this way, they contribute to addressing the potential causes of their attraction to extremism. For this reason, a reduction of everyday programmes in favour of specialised services also harbours a risk with regard to preventive goals: such services cannot provide the necessary 'all-round' early intervention when young people are facing personal challenges, during which time they may become receptive to ideological overtures.

For example, intensive one-on-one education work may be provided by a **development support service** ('Erziehungsbeistandschaft') initiated by youth welfare offices as a support measure for young people under the age of 18 and typically provided by education specialists from independent child and youth welfare services. Measures of this kind may not fall under the heading of 'extremism prevention', but – sometimes with specialised support – this is precisely what they do, and without the young person in question having to experience the stigma of being 'at risk'.

Youth centres and other **open community structures providing child and youth welfare services** may be considered further examples of selective prevention (provided independently of or in cooperation with specialised services). This becomes the case when they tailor their pedagogical programmes to the needs of their young visitors once the latter begin to show an interest in political ideologies. Specialised knowledge is not always needed to react appropriately, as is often assumed. Rather, socio-pedagogical specialists are (or should be) already qualified on the basis of their training to offer suitable pedagogical formats, e.g. in the form of excursions, interactions, discussions and dialogues. What is important here is their ability to assess whether and when they should seek support from specialists from the areas of civic education or specialist, family or exit-assistance counselling – which also includes knowing which providers and services are available locally and nationally.

Selective prevention also happens 'in passing' in **schools**: school social workers work specifically with young people who, for example, draw attention to themselves via ideological provocation or by making misanthropic comments. Similar to professional

youth work outside of school, a certain amount of preventive action should ideally be included in the standard range of services offered by specialists, but they should also know their limits and when to take advantage of support systems afforded by specialised services. Referral routines, feedback loops and clearing procedures can help focus and support the work of school-based actors (see 'Round table'). One challenge in this area, however, lies in the fact that school administrators and higher-level authorities must show a willingness and an ability to tackle issues head-on that are frequently regarded as damaging to the school's reputation.

Everyday **systems of psychological and psychotherapeutic care** and services such as victim counselling, child and youth welfare hotlines, emergency and crisis hotlines and other forms of emergency assistance also represent a part of selective prevention that should not be underestimated: they provide services tailored to a large variety of target groups and also mitigate crises that pose the risk of radicalisation, without being specialised in this respect.

Whereas **police work** used to focus primarily on the prevention of addiction and violence, property offences and road traffic accidents, in Germany it is now also becoming increasingly commonly associated with the prevention of religiously based or political extremism. This is achieved above all by creating links and cooperating with municipal institutions, everyday systems of social provision and prevention organisations, but sometimes also by directly addressing persons or groups considered to be particularly at risk.

Because they are usually not part of the system of state institutions and everyday systems of state provision, **mosques and services offered by migrant organisations**, for example, assume a special role in the prevention of Islamism. They offer young people, including those who are already at risk, a sense of belonging, a place where their family backgrounds are accepted as normal, opportunities to acquaint themselves with alternative understandings of Islam or – e.g. in the context of protest campaigns – a chance to experience self-efficacy and participation. The work of such institutions is already making an important contribution to selective extremism prevention, especially in light of the various experiences of non-belonging and discrimination that, as we have seen, often set processes of turning to Islam and ideologisation (Islamism, nationalism) in motion.<sup>23</sup>

### Specialist agencies and counselling units

Specialist **youth welfare services** devoted to selective prevention were initially established in the 1980s as a pedagogical response to the rise of right-wing extremism and violent racism among adolescents at that time. These services, which often had an outreach approach, specialised in teenage groups who spent a lot of time in public spaces, had begun to demonstrate an incipient interest in extreme right-wing ideological elements and subcultures, and were already beyond the reach of regular pedagogical programmes. After some early disasters (including garnering the newspaper headline: 'nurturing skinheads at the state's expense'), they fell into disrepute and were starved of funds. For some years now – partly as a result of the uncovering of the NSU murders – such services have again received more targeted financial support. Similar projects

have since been established that work in a similar vein with young people endangered by Islamism. Specialist outreach services of this kind are either integrated into the everyday structures of street social work, which have existing relationships with the target groups, or they build up such contacts themselves by establishing a strong local presence in the community, developing a range of aid and support services.<sup>24</sup>

Youth services have also emerged in recent years that choose **alternative methods of access** – a response to the fact that their adolescent target groups are less likely to be found as homogeneous groups in public spaces today due to changes in leisure and communication habits. These services rely more on cooperation with other institutions, especially with schools, in order to identify young people who might be at risk and to encourage them to engage. One variation of this is for teachers and school social workers to act as mediators who establish contact between young people and specialist services when there are indications of possible dangers. Ideally, this approach is combined with teacher training which, in addition to information on potential 'indicators', also offers assistance on how to approach young people and to encourage them to take advantage of the services. Another version is for skilled professionals trained in areas such as school social work to be placed directly in schools. In the area of 'Islamist extremism', individual programmes also collaborate with mosque communities. Such specialised youth welfare services have proven to be suitable as a means to counter extremist tendencies among adolescents, particularly in the area of selective prevention. However, they still have a comparatively limited share in the overall range of special pedagogical projects – the majority of services, including those of youth welfare, are oriented towards universal prevention.

In contrast, recent years have seen the successful establishment of a virtually Germany-wide network of **specialist and advisory bodies** on both right-wing extremism and religious extremism.<sup>25</sup> In addition to exit assistance (see Chapter 5.3, 'Indicated prevention'), the counselling units on right-wing extremism address enquiries from professionals, educational institutions, public authorities, as well as local institutions that work in relevant communities, schools and relatives. Although the counselling units working in the area of religiously based extremism primarily focus on meeting the high demand for counselling on the part of relatives, in isolated cases they are also consulted by schools, specialists from child and youth welfare services and refugee aid agencies, and in connection with preventive measures for individual cases. In both phenomenal areas, the work of the counselling units is directed at selective and indicated prevention and the interfaces between the two, depending on the individual case. Most counselling units in Germany are run by independent organisations, some of which specialise in the field of extremism prevention. Occasionally, counselling units are situated within state institutions.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Glaser/Figlesthler 2016.

<sup>25</sup> For example, a broad range of services exists within the field of right-wing extremism, including specialist services for various fields of work and specific problem groups (see also footnote 45). An overview of organisations and projects that offer services for practitioners in the field of extremist Islamism can be found on the bpb website; see also Taubert/Hantel in Kargel 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Charchira 2018.



### SELECTIVE PREVENTION AT THE 'ROUND TABLE'

*Pedagogical staff in schools and youth work generally have to deal with 'problematic', conflictual – e.g. devaluing – or aggressive positions and forms of behaviour among young people that do not point to or are not based on an extremist ideology. In all such cases, their pedagogical expertise allows them to act in order to find solutions and, in this way, also prevent possible conversion and radicalisation processes. However, the transitions can be fluid. If professionals working with young people observe serious changes that could potentially indicate Islamist extremist or right-wing extremist ideologisation, the first step should be to seek discussions among colleagues in order to gain additional perspectives on the young person's behaviour, thereby obtaining a more complete picture. Reporting routines, clearing processes or emergency folders established in the respective institutions may also be of assistance. This provides a framework within which initial measures can be discussed and implemented. If these measures ultimately fail to bring about changes in behaviour, instead further strengthening the suspicion of an incipient process of turning towards extremism, the next advisable course of action is to 'step outside'. This could warrant the involvement of counselling services, the responsible youth welfare office or specialised police personnel with whom the counselling services are in contact for selective prevention purposes, provided that data protection regulations and, if necessary, confidentiality obligations (Section 208 StGB) are complied with accordingly. For minors, youth welfare offices can convene a 'round table' organised wherever possible on the basis of protocols and routines prepared in advance. Besides representatives from schools or youth clubs, counselling services and police specialists, other parties, e.g. sports coaches, religious communities or other persons from the young person's immediate social circle, should also participate and deliberate on measures and ways to support the young person. This way, everyone (along with the information, resources and skills they have to offer) is on board – including, for example, when there is a need to discuss possible direct police involvement or the initiation of an exit process. A 'round table' also thereby contributes to relieving the burden placed on pedagogical institutions, which often fear being left alone with difficult and stressful situations. Issues discussed may also include conflicts in the evaluation and choice of resources. To exploit the possibilities afforded by round tables, it is advisable for schools and youth facilities, for example, to seek trust-building contact with the various counselling services, youth welfare offices and the relevant police agencies in advance and 'irrespective of the occasion'.*

## Preventive pedagogical 'measures'

### (Basic attitudes, means of access, methods, formats)

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, selective extremism prevention encompasses a large field covering a correspondingly broad spectrum of different measures. In the following, we will first describe measures that are targeted directly at individuals (especially young people) who are assessed as being at risk. This will be followed by measures that address the immediate social milieu of these individuals as well as professionals who are potentially confronted with this group of people in their work. Finally, we will provide recommendations for prevention at the 'meso-level' of society.

### Direct work with those deemed to be 'at risk'

The following will outline selective prevention measures that take account of available knowledge on the – at times widely varying – processes in which individuals turn to extremism and have proven their worth in pedagogical practice with young people. The outline is subdivided according to the two action goals described above: 1. Strengthening resilience and 2. Promoting distancing. The focus of selective prevention

is on measures directed at individuals. It also includes measures that can be applied to groups (such as exclusive groups/gangs or prison inmates).

### 1. Strengthening democratic resilience

As in universal prevention programmes, this goal can be approached by means of civic education, intercultural and interreligious learning, diversity education, or media and theatre pedagogy.

These provide opportunities for discussion and conversation in a 'safe space' that allows individuals to articulate their own perspectives and experiences. Such 'safe spaces' and the opportunities they afford for discussion and relationship-building make it possible to question ideological positions, to demand justifications for points of view and to present alternative views in ways that develop the ability to make judgements on questions of politics and worldviews. The topics should be proposed by the target groups themselves. In work with young people at risk of right-wing extremism, for example, the topic of 'homeland'<sup>26</sup> or right-wing extremist song lyrics have proven to be suitable starting points for discussions.<sup>27</sup> In Islamism prevention, the topic of 'religion' and family histories can play a role. Questions about justice and experiences of marginalisation and discrimination may be relevant in both areas.<sup>28</sup>

Democratic awareness and the capacity to act in a democratic way can be trained in simulation games or participatory community projects.<sup>29</sup> Role-playing and discussions of biographies allow for a change of perspective and for the participants to practice toleration of different points of view. Encounters with people from other countries or other religions may also contribute to strengthening these skills, as well as promote empathy and a sense of solidarity for people in other life situations – provided that the encounters take place 'on an equal footing'. Activities with target groups in the field of 'right-wing extremism' include visits and 'work and study camps' at former concentration camps.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike universal prevention, which is usually geared towards groups, such aspects of selective prevention should be more strongly integrated into socio-pedagogical programmes designed for the long term and oriented towards individual cases or meshed with suitable programmes in order to better account for individual experiences and motives that may underlie an incipient interest in extremist content.<sup>31</sup> The decisive factors here are the setting of the individual measure in question and a basic attitude of acceptance. In contrast, short-term educational formats are generally less suitable in the field of work of 'selective prevention'. This applies, for example, to the wish frequently expressed by schools for one-off workshops to be held in schools for students considered to be vulnerable to right-wing extremism or Islamism.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Kohlstruck/Steil 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Elverich/Glaser/Schlimbach 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Panke/Sötje/Steil 2010; Nordbruch 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Möller 2002; Rieker 2009.

<sup>30</sup> The suitability of such activities for work with these target groups is hotly debated among experts. They should certainly only be carried out by qualified experts (cf. Mischok 2010; Glaser 2014).

<sup>31</sup> On a critical note, however, it should be pointed out that conceptually sound creative elements of this work – as has been at least shown in a survey conducted for the field of 'right-wing extremism' – often still play a very limited role in such socio-pedagogical settings or run the risk of receding into the background when carrying out practical work (cf. Hohnstein/Greuel 2015). A need for further development remains with regard to the integration of both approaches into this field of work.

## 2. Promoting ideological and social distancing

Unlike for universal prevention, it is particularly important for selective prevention to counteract specific conditions that potentially encourage engagement with extremist currents. Above all, pedagogical work can address potential points of contact in the biographies of the individuals concerned and their current living situations.<sup>32</sup> Such measures can best be realised in socio-pedagogical settings, such as school-based youth social work or outreach work. Given the complex factors that can lead to young people being at risk, these measures must be implemented at different levels and individually tailored to each specific case. The following practices have proven to be helpful in this regard:

### – Enabling alternative interpretations and processing mechanisms

It is not only stressful experiences and crises that are ‘responsible’ for young people feeling attracted to extremism. Rather, the way in which these experiences are (or can be) interpreted and processed and the resources that can be drawn on while doing so are decisive in determining whether such experiences may lead to difficult and unstable developments. The acquisition of skills in interpreting and dealing with difficult and challenging situations and experiences can help young people endangered by extremism to pursue alternative paths of development that are less damaging to themselves and others.

For this purpose, *dialogue skills* are indispensable. To acquire these, young people need to gain a sense of achievement in dialogue situations – that means promoting spaces, experiences and situations in which they can experience dialogue on an equal footing with others and contribute their own perspectives while achieving their personal goals along the way.

*Biographical work* should also be mentioned, i.e. discussing and reflecting upon difficult experiences in the life histories of affected young people together with them in order to recognise the connections they bear to current beliefs and patterns of behaviour that are harmful to themselves and others. In some cases, it may be appropriate to draw on therapeutic expertise.

In this context, selective prevention can also contribute to the extent that educators *question one-sided self-perceptions* that impede constructive ways of coming to terms with biographical experiences (e.g. the perception of ‘always’ being a victim of disadvantages). To support this, participants can be encouraged to critically reflect on how their own actions contributed to problematic situations and dynamics.

In the case of young people with violent tendencies, training in the *constructive, non-violent negotiation of conflicts* may contribute to this.

In order to encourage the processing of experiences of marginalisation, exclusion or racism in an ‘alternative’ manner, the promotion of a ‘*resistance to discrimination*’ – in the sense of resilience and a capacity to act in the face of experiences of institutional and individual discrimination – could also form part of selective prevention measures.

<sup>32</sup> Educators have only very limited influence on the social conditions that encourage young people to turn to extremism. This is also one of the key difficulties with the high preventive expectations that are often placed on pedagogical work. However, this does not relieve education practice of the task of reflecting on these conditions wherever possible and critically addressing them in dialogue with other prevention actors.

To this end, it is important to show realistic alternative options for dealing with institutional and individual discrimination and to promote and enable the articulation of protest against such experiences.

### – Questioning positions, pointing out alternatives

One of the reasons for the attractiveness of extremist political ideologies is that they offer an interpretation of the world and of one’s own existence that reduces complexity and promises guidance and meaning. It is therefore advisable to counteract the attraction of extremist currents for the target groups of selective prevention at the level of content.

Once young people have already started to demonstrate an interest in extremist positions and narratives and have potentially adopted individual ideological fragments and patterns of interpretation, the aim of preventive work is to ‘shake’ them on a cognitive as well as an emotional level, to sow doubts and to help them to distance themselves from this content. In the field of right-wing extremism, for example, this may involve offering alternative interpretations of historical events. In the case of Islamism, one could offer different interpretations of religious values and norms.

In this regard, the critical examination of problematic narratives, visions and ideas of happiness that are perceived as attractive by young people must be preceded by the development of attractive and realistic visions, perspectives that foster a sense of meaning and alternative ideas of happiness. For this purpose, it can be helpful – depending on the interests of the young person(s) concerned – to point out options for changing their individual situation. In other cases, it may be more appropriate to bring young people at risk into contact with alternative, realistic and democratically ‘compatible’ interpretations of faith (especially in the field of extremist Islamism), or – e.g. via workshop programmes – to arouse their interest in democratic, alternative youth cultures.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, one factor applies to any strategy of questioning and destabilising ideological convictions: since ideologies, negative stereotypes and black-and-white views of the world also have the function of providing a sense of security and orientation in situations of great insecurity and confusion, furnishing ‘better’ arguments cannot be the main way to succeed in challenging them. To achieve this, it is rather necessary to offer a sense of orientation, relationships that provide meaning and support and can take the place of ideological dogmas and group affiliations. Furthermore, it is important to create or provide opportunities in which young people can have positive experiences of self-efficacy (e.g. in the context of an art project, an internship, civic engagement or volunteer work).

### – Integration and reintegration as a means of preventing individuals from becoming involved with extremist scenes

Another important task of selective-preventive practice is to develop **alternatives for social and societal integration** that are sustainable in the long term, i.e. extending beyond pedagogical support. As ‘functional equivalents’,<sup>34</sup> these should give people

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Toprak/Weitzel 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Böhnisch 2012.

alternative options to the sense of belonging offered by extremist groups that are less damaging to both themselves and others. This approach is based on a recognition that people often turn to extremism as a means of social or societal integration.<sup>35</sup> Depending on the individual case, the function of involvement may be primarily social or societal integration, or may encompass both.

To accelerate processes of social integration for people at risk, specialists may, for example, seek to **stabilise family relationships** or encourage and support the reactivation of friendships outside of 'problematic' social connections. Likewise, persons at risk can be supported in making new social relations – for example, by joining sports clubs or taking part in projects that take them out of their 'comfort zones', making new friends and experiencing a diversity of worldviews. Depending on the specific circumstances of each case, such approaches should be included among the standard repertoire of selective prevention, as should assistance with integration in the education system, vocational training systems and, where necessary, the labour market. The latter may include, for example, support in overcoming problems at school, in training and vocational orientation, as well as in the search for internship and apprenticeship positions and, if necessary, jobs.<sup>36</sup>

In some cases, **stabilising the affected individual** in terms of their emotional and physical well-being, educational situation and possibly even economic needs may be appropriate before preventive work steps can be implemented at other levels. This has been shown to be the case in practice, especially in the prevention of right-wing extremism.<sup>37</sup> The problems to be dealt with may range from acute family conflicts and the threat of expulsion from school to psychological stress, alcohol and drug issues, and may even include debt or the threat of homelessness in the case of older teens. Depending on the specific situation, support can be provided in areas such as contacting educational institutions and authorities, seeking out counselling services for specific issues or acquiring referrals for therapy.

## Working with the immediate social milieu

Systemic counselling approaches play a key role in working with the social milieu of (allegedly or actually) at-risk young people. The basic assumption of such approaches is that the views and actions of individuals are always embedded in social contexts or systems, which must therefore also be included in work with young people at risk.<sup>38</sup> This can be seen in the fact that even minor changes in the immediate social surroundings can sometimes trigger major processes of change in the individual.

For example, cases in which individuals turn away from family<sup>39</sup> or friends and towards new 'friends' show how overwhelming social problems or systemic stresses can encourage a turn towards problematic social milieus. Against this background, working through situations of social conflict and crisis and stressful social contexts

(which are often familial) in a professional setting can play an important role in supporting selective prevention. It is therefore advisable to bring in external counselling services to de-escalate religious or political conflicts within the family, peer group or school at an early stage.<sup>40</sup>

Counselling helps, for example, to end endless debates about political or theological 'truths' and instead to reflect and focus on the personal meaning and purpose underlying the debates – e.g. the often symbolic negotiation of requirements for detachment and individualisation that arise in the process of becoming an adult. Young people can namely be easily enticed by 'problematic' content over the course of such processes of seeking – e.g. in social networks, where actors appear to be argumentatively 'strong' because they present chains of argumentation in closed spaces ('filter bubbles'). This lends particular emphasis to how important it can be for young people to remain in communication with people from outside these spaces (see Chapter 3.4).

Those seeking counsel from within the immediate social milieu of the young people affected may also act as 'intermediaries' who – with the involvement of appropriate cooperation partners – can thereby aid them in finding viable alternatives (leisure time activities, help in seeking out educational and vocational opportunities, etc.). When looking for intermediaries within the social environment, it is important that the individuals concerned are not seen as 'culprits' who should now behave 'better'; this would not be very helpful when faced with multi-causal radicalisation processes.<sup>41</sup> Rather, the identification of key persons represents an important step in building relationships and (re-)establishing dialogue.

Parents in particular, but also friends and professionals, can seek support from counselling services in order to use and/or not lose their important role as key persons – but also to find assistance in situations that they find challenging and stressful.<sup>42</sup> By means of such counselling, they can learn how the processes by which people turn towards extremism develop while developing a basic attitude of acceptance towards the young person as a means of facilitating dialogue (see Chapter 5.3, 'Indicated prevention'). The first goal is to establish a stable social bond. To achieve this, for example, counsellors may explain to parents just how important they are for young people at risk, but also that their heated, emotional arguments run the risk of pushing a possibly 'harmless' process of adolescent detachment in the direction of 'radicalisation'. Alternatively, counsellors may try to point out the inherent risks of giving young people the feeling that they are not allowed to be 'like that' at home. They may perceive such prohibitions as a challenge to the frequently invoked value of individual freedom, and this personal experience can then be seen to provide evidence that one of the main arguments of many extremists – the supposed hypocrisy of democratic freedoms – is true. In some cases, at-risk youth are themselves included in counselling measures for their relatives if they agree to take part.

In addition, people from the immediate social milieu receive concrete advice on how to behave, e.g. how to restore or maintain communication with the affected young

35 Cf. e.g. Frindte et al. 2001 and Inowlocki 2000 for the area of right-wing extremism; Frank/Glaser 2018 and Ceylan/Kiefer 2018 for the area of Islamist extremism.

36 Cf. on the Islamist field of phenomena Baaken et al. 2018.

37 Cf. Rüllicke-Luzar 2013; Glaser 2013.

38 Cf. on key approaches of systemic counselling in the area of 'right-wing extremism' Becker/Schmitt 2019 and in the area of 'Islamist extremism' Taubert 2017a and Glaser/Figlestahtler 2016.

39 At the same time, processes of family rejection are, to a certain extent, normal developmental processes that occur in adolescence.

40 Cf. Nestmann/Sickendieck 2011.

41 Von Schlippe/Schweitzer 2013, 149.

42 Here, there is an evident difference in the way counselling practitioners in the fields of Islamist and right-wing extremism understand their own work: while the former often view the young people themselves as the 'ultimate targets' of their measures, some in the area of right-wing extremism explicitly place the interests of the relatives who are receiving counselling at the centre (cf. Niebling 2013).

person and what content is appropriate to discuss. This may also mean, for example, working with relatives or teachers to explore ways of dealing with the devout (but not extremist) religious mindsets and practices of young people, and thereby finding constructive modes of coexistence for the family or school class.

Whether work with key persons from the immediate social circle of the individuals concerned succeeds often depends on how 'worried' and thus how 'motivated' they are. However, there is a significant difference between right-wing and Islamist extremism in this regard: in practice, it often proves difficult to get relatives of (potentially) right-wing extremist youth involved. Ignorance of the problem and a lack of interest on the part of family members can both play a role here. More often, however, relatives prove to be unsuitable for cooperation either because their own attitudes make them 'part of the problem' or because the young people concerned do not have (or no longer have) strong relationships with their relatives. A comparatively higher willingness to cooperate has been registered thus far in relation to 'Islamist extremism' – which may partly be a result of the greater danger (they perceive) this ideology poses to their children. The parents of converts are often particularly keen to seek cooperation. This does not apply to the same extent to families with a 'Muslim' background<sup>43</sup> – here, mistrust of institutions and state agencies, fear of criminalisation or stigmatisation and a lack of awareness in the early stages of the turn to religiously based extremism all play a role.<sup>44</sup> Against this background, providers of selective prevention are also concerned with reducing existing inhibition thresholds as far as possible and promoting their activities by means of advertising and awareness-raising in ways that reach the target group.

## Vocational training

Vocational training programmes for multipliers are often designed for the target groups of all kinds of prevention activities and not specifically for use in selective prevention. In the following, we will name some key elements in the field of 'selective prevention' that we believe should be part of vocational training programmes:

- information on the relevant phenomenon, its youth- and gender-specific dimensions, as well as key causes, developments and explanatory approaches
- indicators of potential risk and how to handle them professionally while maintaining a sensitivity to potential stigmatisation (see above)
- awareness-raising of the participants' own views and their options for action with respect to the relevant professional field (e.g. school, youth work, family support, youth detention)
- reflection on the participants' own social status and any relevant privileges, prejudices and fears that result in relation to the target groups
- information on the (professional) legal framework of participants' actions, reporting routines and local support services.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Glaser/Figlesthler 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Taubert/Hantel 2018.

Measures that have proven important in the field of 'right-wing extremism' include counteracting the cliché of the violent male skinhead as the prototype of youth right-wing extremism and raising awareness of current manifestations and less conspicuous forms of extremism, especially among girls and young women.

Specific requirements for professionals in relation to 'Islamist extremism' would include, for example, examining the role of anti-Muslim racism and experiences of discrimination by Muslim women and men, as well as reflecting on any prejudices and stereotypes they might have, which would inevitably influence their perceptions and actions. This is indispensable for ensuring the effectiveness of both universal and selective prevention practice as carried out by multipliers.<sup>45</sup>

## Selective prevention at the meso- and macro-levels<sup>46</sup>

The measures of selective prevention mentioned so far are situated at the *micro-level*, i.e. they primarily address individuals and aim at changes at the individual level. They are selective insofar as they only target certain individuals (or small groups, etc.) who, based on concrete behavioural indicators (see above), are said to be at increased risk of developing extremist tendencies, behaviours and affiliations.

However, selective prevention activities or prevention decisions directed against extremism are also conceivable at the meso-level of society: for example, if a study shows young people in a certain region to exhibit above-average approval of racist, anti-Semitic or authoritarian views – attitudes that are not only problematic in themselves and thus relevant to prevention (i.e. of racism, anti-Semitism, authoritarianism), but which also form key elements of right-wing extremism as a social syndrome. Another example is if a mayor, the head of a youth welfare office or a school principal perceives that there is a 'problem' with Islamist or right-wing extremist tendencies (or both) in a certain neighbourhood, in certain youth clubs or in a specific school class and concludes from this that a situation of increased risk is at hand that requires targeted preventive action in this neighbourhood, these specific clubs or this specific class.<sup>47</sup> On the basis of a study<sup>48</sup> or problem analysis of this kind conducted by local actors, the decision could be made to specifically implement measures of extremism prevention with young people in this specific region, neighbourhood or club. This would be an example of a selective prevention *decision* at the meso-level of society.

The next question concerns what *measures* are appropriate to address the members of the selected social groups and how they should be implemented. To answer this question, it is first necessary to clarify the exact nature of the problem: how is a target

<sup>45</sup> For the field of right-wing extremism, vocational training is offered by Democracy Centres in the states, state youth welfare offices and via mobile advice centres against right-wing extremism (Mobile Beratung gegen Rechtsextremismus). This also includes specialised programmes, such as training for specialists on how to deal with right-wing extremist parents (e.g. in day-care centres or for family counselling services). Similar offerings are also now being established in the field of extremist Islamism. A nationwide overview of organisations that offer vocational training related to Islamism prevention can be found on the website of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (BpB).

<sup>46</sup> We wish to thank Frank König for helpful thoughts and discussions on this section.

<sup>47</sup> In fact, this is very often the case in practice, e.g. when prevention services are invited to a certain school class because the teachers there have taken notice of certain statements or behaviours that they consider problematic.

<sup>48</sup> However, it is important to note that studies in this field should always be examined very carefully with respect to the scope of their findings and the criteria they apply before they are used as the basis for such far-reaching decisions.

group as a whole defined on the basis of the problematic phenomenon? In other words, are the young people in this region, this youth club or this school class as a whole more racist, anti-democratic, etc. than others? Or is it only particular individuals within the group who exhibit these attitudes in a particularly pronounced manner, while others are indifferent to such phenomena? There may even be some who are firmly opposed to the problematic attitudes, who should therefore be supported. The answers to these questions dictate whether measures of universal, selective or indicated prevention are appropriate or required at the level of concrete action; in many cases, a combination of measures is appropriate.

The notion of prevention underlying this chapter thus does not entirely exclude the selective targeting of groups; however, the selection of groups for the implementation of preventive measures is not based on assumptions of vulnerability derived in an abstract way from factors such as the social conditions in which people live or grow up. Instead, it is our opinion that preventive targeting or preventive measures must be the result of the identification of specific behaviour manifested by people within these groups. The subsequent decision to take preventive action is only ever the first step and must always be followed by a more precise situation and needs analysis, ideally with extensive involvement of actors who are familiar with the target group and the location and aware of suitable possibilities for action.

Once groups are targeted for selective prevention at the macro-level of society (i.e. in relation to fundamental economic, political or legal structures), however, the possibilities afforded by pedagogical preventive work are no longer available.

## Conclusion

The selective prevention of extremism, as the term is used here, is first and foremost a matter of pedagogical prevention. As such, it considers rebellion, political radicalism and deviation from norms as initially normal aspects of processes of adolescent identity formation in a society that is increasingly characterised by polarisation and ideologisation. In this context, 'extremism' is not reduced to delinquency and a willingness to use violence; rather, the term describes anti-pluralistic attitudes, tendencies and worldviews in the broadest sense, which are also widespread in 'mainstream society'. Selective prevention should guard against such views and interpretative frameworks forming and taking root, prevent people from turning to extremist ideologies and groups, and encourage those already in the process of turning towards extremism to distance themselves from such currents.

In our view, broad assumptions about 'vulnerability' (based on statistics or theory) cannot be used deterministically to deduce an increased extremist risk posed by specific persons or groups, nor can they legitimise the classifications and categorisations associated with this, which invariably have a labelling effect on people. We are therefore of the opinion that selective prevention can only respond to specific, observable forms of behaviour and belief, above all in the case of individuals, but also for groups. It is not an appropriate way to address 'risk factors' derived from an individual's social milieu, biographical characteristics, group affiliations, and the like. Such group-based profiling contributes little to prevention practice, but it does foster the stigmatisation of the individuals and groups it seeks to describe.

In the light of this problem, we refer to observable signals, such as the articulation of notions that denigrate others or stereotype them as enemies, which *potentially* indicate that processes leading to extremism have been initiated among individuals and groups. These should initially be understood as indicating that a closer look should be taken at the circumstances of each specific case in order to clarify whether measures of selective prevention should be applied. Such a course of action prevents stigmatisation and makes it easier for pedagogical practice to recognise 'problematic' phenomena, to differentiate them and to select suitable approaches.

The range of measures available to the field of selective prevention is as broad as the variety of target groups. Key elements include offering 'functional equivalents', biographical work, helping bring about experiences of self-efficacy, the challenging of interpretations and worldviews, integration into social systems and work with the immediate social milieu of individuals and with multipliers. The key factors in assuring the success of pedagogical processes include the use of approaches built around acceptance and sensitivity to discrimination as well as the application of methodologies derived from social systems theory.

The current landscape of measures and organisations of selective prevention is marked by the diversity of its actors, the disciplines involved and the concepts that underlie it. This diversity harbours great potential. Germany's extremely diverse, (mostly) civil society-based prevention landscape thus has a lot of potential for innovation, as well as the ability to address local peculiarities in all phenomenal fields and to exploit local resources effectively instead of betting the house on a single horse, so to speak. At the same time, challenges still arise. For example, there is a certain degree of indeterminacy: what appears to be a democracy promotion effort from one point of view may already be part of selective prevention from another; a measure that would already be classified as indicated prevention in one case may 'still' be considered selective in another case. The diversity of actors and their approaches also complicates the development of and adherence to standards. And one more point: just as checklists and lists of indicators are at best signals that require the attention of pedagogical preventive practice (but are not themselves assessment criteria), so is it only possible to 'measure' the effect of selective prevention in rare cases.

Against this background, it should also be pointed out that it is not only specialised organisations that are active in selective prevention and in need of funding. Everyday social structures and systems such as schools, youth work or family support, as well as Muslim and migrant organisations, are often more important. They perform selective prevention tasks 'in passing'. They should therefore be endowed and equipped so that they can contribute to identifying and stopping anti-democratic attitudes and people can be encouraged to distance themselves from such attitudes, ideologies and organisations.

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## CHAPTER 5.3

### Indicated extremism prevention

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Indicated extremism prevention should focus on interventions in consolidated processes of radicalisation and the prevention of (recurring) extremist crimes. It is therefore primarily aimed at people who are seeking to leave extremist subcultures as well as individuals who already exhibit clear patterns of extremist attitudes and behaviour and those around them. Accordingly, it encompasses both de-radicalisation and distancing from a radicalised group and/or the renunciation of criminal acts based on extremism (disengagement). To ensure genuine opportunities and conditions for exiting an extremist group or subculture, the measures implemented should always involve not only the person concerned, but also their social environment.

The basic prevention work carried out with the clients is based on general principles of counselling, including the establishment of a relationship of trust, the clarification of the task at hand, the acceptance of the person and the development of realistic prospects of social integration. Interdisciplinary cooperation, e.g. between security authorities and civil society actors, also serves this purpose. Paying attention to these factors while upholding professional and organisational standards can contribute significantly to the success of counselling. In the field of indicated prevention, there is an urgent need for evaluation, expansion and greater standardisation of existing counselling services, which would facilitate impact evaluation. Greater attention also needs to be paid to security concerns and the risks and dangers of counselling practice.

## A definition of indicated prevention

For a prevention measure to be successful, it is crucially important for the goals, the target group and the focus of the measure to be clearly defined. Unlike universal prevention, which addresses the general population or population groups, and selective prevention, which focuses on specific risk groups, indicated prevention is primarily aimed at people who have already begun to manifest an identifiable problem that has not yet reached the stage that requires intervention in the narrow sense. However, in the literature, the term 'indicated prevention' is not always clearly distinguished from (or is sometimes used synonymously with) 'tertiary prevention'.<sup>1</sup> Unlike indicated prevention, whose aim is to influence the onset of problematic courses of development, the purpose of tertiary prevention is to prevent subsequent harm and the recurrence of an undesirable event. There is thus a significant overlap between the concept of tertiary prevention and that of intervention (see also Chapter 5.1 'Universal prevention').

For the field of extremism prevention, problems arise (depending on the defined goal of the preventive measure) in distinguishing indicated prevention from selective prevention and intervention.

If the primary goal is to influence a radicalisation process regardless of whether extremist crimes have been committed, then indicated prevention measures must be applied at the onset of a radicalisation process. Here it is often hard to demarcate indicated prevention from selective prevention. By definition, selective prevention targets risk groups with no established tendency towards radicalisation, but since these risk groups are not clearly defined, and in order to avoid stigmatisation, it must

ultimately resort to indicators of incipient radicalisation (see also Chapter 5.2 'Selective prevention'). According to the logic of individual-based prevention (universal, selective, indicated), consolidated radicalisation processes leading to extremism (defined as a fundamental rejection of the prevailing social order on ideological grounds) would ultimately have to fall under the rubric of intervention.

However, there is one problem about this approach that must be borne in mind: although radicalisation processes can indeed represent a risk factor for the emergence of extremist violence, the majority ultimately do not result in violent acts, but are rather primarily an expression of social conflicts and developments (see also Chapters 1 and 3.1). Nevertheless, radicalisation processes should only be considered suitable 'candidates for prevention' when they present an increased risk of extremist crimes. In other cases, there is a danger that the attitudes of those in the process of radicalisation could become criminalised or, under certain circumstances, even pathologised.

(Indicated) prevention should therefore have the primary goal of preventing extremist crimes and should begin with those who are undergoing radicalisation processes that suggest an increased risk of extremist offences or who already show indications of having planned offences (Figure 1). Here, the demarcation from intervention in the narrow sense is not always clear, as intervention can also

ultimately exert a preventive effect on people who have already committed a crime (indicated crime prevention in the narrow sense).<sup>2</sup> In addition, in the case of indicated prevention (see Figure 1), it is often necessary for security authorities and civil society counselling units to work in a coordinated fashion to effectively fulfil requirements of crime prevention, criminal risk assessment, social integration and de-radicalisation. Especially when the security authorities intervene in the case of planned criminal offences, the term 'intervention' is certainly also more appropriate than 'indicated prevention' (see 'Practical example of indicated prevention' below).

We therefore define indicated extremism prevention as interventions in the case of manifest radicalisation processes and the prevention of (recurring) extremist crimes and will focus on these aspects in this chapter. The target group of indicated prevention according to our definition includes both so-called 'defectors' and individuals who already clearly demonstrate extremist attitudes and behaviour and who may have

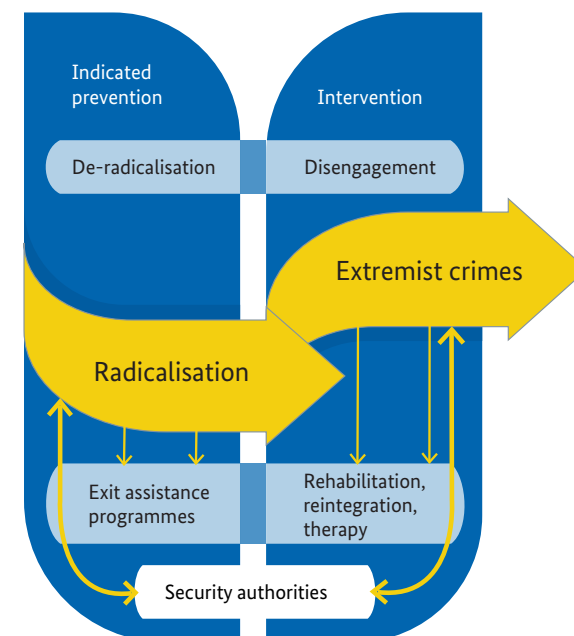


Fig. 1: Starting points for indicated prevention

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Ceylan/Kiefer 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Eilers/Gruber/Kemmesies 2015.

attracted attention to themselves through criminal or delinquent acts rooted in extremism. This also includes work with relatives and the social environment of the relevant persons. Indicated prevention as it is defined here certainly has the strongest crime prevention effect in comparison to universal and selective prevention.

## Goals of indicated prevention

Even with this narrow interpretation of the term, work with extremist individuals within the scope of indicated extremism prevention pursues two closely related goals: de-radicalisation and disengagement. **De-radicalisation** concerns the process of dispelling hateful ideologies and attitudes as a lasting means of preventing criminal acts.<sup>3</sup> De-radicalisation thus goes beyond **disengagement (demobilisation)**, in which the sole aim is to dissuade individuals from violent or criminal acts without addressing radicalisation processes at the cognitive level.<sup>4</sup> Thus while a demobilised person does not commit any (more) criminal offences and has withdrawn from the scene, they may continue to entertain extremist attitudes.<sup>5</sup> De-radicalisation thus refers to a comprehensive shift in attitude and behaviour, whereas disengagement (only) implies changes in behaviour.<sup>6</sup>

If the focus is placed exclusively on security-related issues (crime prevention), as is often the case with state institutions and programmes, disengagement can initially be extremely useful and adequate.<sup>7</sup> In addition, a process of de-radicalisation can also take place as part of a disengagement process, especially if the individual breaks off ties with a radical group during this process.

However, a question that must be critically addressed is whether a sole focus on disengagement is sufficient, as there is a danger that individuals, upon renouncing violent acts, will assume other tasks within an organisation (recruitment, logistical tasks, support activities, attempts to increase acceptance, etc.) if their extremist attitudes remain unchanged. In this case, disengagement in the sense of refraining from violent acts could also, especially in the case of young adults, merely be the consequence of a (neurobiological) process of maturation or a change in psychosocial contextual factors (starting a new job, a stable partnership), and not only the immediate success of an indicated preventive measure. Moreover, it is generally assumed that radicalisation is a potential risk factor for later acts of violence. However, as long as it remains unclear which factors determine the transition from a merely radical attitude to acts of extremist violence, a failure to de-radicalise must be considered evidence of an insufficient prevention strategy (see also the section 'Risk assessment').

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mücke 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Altier/Thoroughgood/Horgan 2014; Biene/Junk 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ceylan/Kiefer 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Hofinger/Schmidinger 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. El-Mafaalani/Fathi/Mansour/Müller/Nordbruch/Waleciak 2016.

## Focus and target groups of indicated prevention

Alongside its goals, it is also necessary to clearly define each measure's target group and focus. Target groups may be radicalised individuals themselves as well as their relatives and other individuals in their radius.

In principle, one can make the distinction between two basic approaches to preventive measures for working with extremist individuals: individual-focused approaches aim to change an individual's behaviour or attitudes, while environmentally focused approaches look specifically at the person's social environment (family, school, workplace, leisure time). *Approaches based on social systems theory* that combine these two approaches are optimal and form a key component of many exit programmes. This is based on the underlying assumption that general support in stabilising the lives of those affected, e.g. by establishing new friendships, making plans for their new lives and for the future or joining the workforce, can make a significant contribution to de-radicalisation. In relation to public security and the prevention of violence and acts of terrorism, this approach often employs the term 'distancing'. While ideological disengagement is not the primary goal of this approach, it is assumed that an examination of the subject's worldview in the context of counselling can also bring about a complete distancing from extremist ideas.<sup>8</sup> The social systems approach thus includes both pragmatic aspects, which are concerned with specific alternative courses of action for persons affected, and emotional/social support for those individuals and their relatives. This also makes it clear to those affected that it is their extremist attitude that is viewed as problematic, not they themselves as people.<sup>9</sup>

Among measures that deal with the social environment of affected persons, this direct approach, whose essential purpose is to create real opportunities for distancing, must be distinguished from indirect measures, which serve to increase people's ability to identify radicalisation processes and to impart knowledge and practical skills to teachers, social workers, youth welfare workers and law enforcement employees. Such indirect measures should rather be seen as an aspect of selective prevention measures or the early identification of radicalisation processes, even though people close to affected individuals do of course play a significant role in the process of distancing within indicated prevention. Yet other measures that address an affected individual's social environment do belong to indicated prevention, including teaching how to identify potentially dangerous situations and what to do when they arise.

Other measures that address the social milieu naturally also include counselling for relatives who require expert support in dealing with radicalised individuals within the family environment.

These measures can be supplemented by others that focus primarily on ideological aspects.<sup>10</sup> However, due to the fact that the underlying ideology is often of little significance for the emergence of either a radicalisation process or extremist violence, these approaches must certainly be viewed with a critical eye in terms of their effectiveness for indicated prevention and should be regarded more as a supplement

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Mücke 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gruber/Lützing/Kemmesies 2016.

to a social systems approach.<sup>11</sup> There is little chance of ideological distancing working if no robust social network outside of a radical group has been established.

The choice of focus for the prevention measure essentially depends on the target group. In the field of indicated prevention, there are two main direct target groups that principally benefit from measures with a combined individual and environmental focus. One group consists of (potential) defectors from radical scenes who have not yet committed any (significant/criminal) offences, while the other comprises persons who have already come to the attention of the authorities due to criminal activities or have been convicted of crimes. The great variety of paths to radicalisation make it necessary to carefully select methods appropriate to each individual case. It is thus vital to ask, for instance, whether a given instance of radicalisation has occurred as part of a broader criminal career or whether criminal acts have been carried out as a consequence of an ideologically based radicalisation process.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the possibility of mental disorders must be taken into account in order for affected parties to benefit sufficiently from the prevention measures, regardless of whether they are causally (co-)responsible for the radicalisation process.

## General principles of indicated prevention

For an overview of existing prevention projects in Germany, we refer our readers to the work of Florian Gruber and his colleagues<sup>13</sup> and to Chapter 7 ‘Mapping the landscape of extremism prevention’ of the present volume. Although previous studies have tended to emphasise differences in radicalisation processes and acts of violence based on left-wing, right-wing and Islamist extremism, the commonalities in the development processes across the various phenomena seem to predominate. For example, radicalised individuals often have a history of experiences of social disintegration and crisis. Integration into groups that provide apparently simple explanations for complex problems and a sense of belonging is also a common element. All three groups of phenomena also frequently occur among adolescents and young adults. For this reason, cross-phenomenal prevention strategies seem to be more meaningful than specific approaches. This especially applies to indicated prevention work with individuals seeking to exit extremist scenes, even if phenomenon-specific prevention projects are still often carried out in practice.<sup>14</sup>

While a phenomenon-specific differentiation is thus carried out in practice, prevention goals are frequently poorly defined, making it often virtually impossible to distinguish between universal, selective and indicated prevention. Overall, moreover, few prevention projects seem to focus primarily on indicated extremism prevention.<sup>15</sup>

In principle, indicated extremism prevention can build on existing crime prevention strategies, using the approach established at the local and state level, which is based

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Eilers/Gruber/Kemmesies 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Baier 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Gruber/Lützingler/Kemmesies 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. van den Berg/van Hemert/van Vliet 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Kober 2017.

on networked, interdisciplinary, inter-departmental and cross-institutional work.<sup>16</sup> In addition, some practical experiences from distancing work on right-wing extremism can be transferred to other types of extremism.<sup>17</sup> The key principles of indicated prevention include the following:

- a) Build relationships of trust with recognition and respect for the individuals concerned, even while rejecting their delinquent and antisocial behaviour.
- b) Consider the (individual) causes of delinquent behaviour.
- c) Consider and address factors that help or hamper dissociation from a problematic group or a criminal environment.
- d) Develop realistic prospects for the future and create opportunities for social integration (e.g. school, career).
- e) Recognise the necessity of interdisciplinary cooperation (police, youth welfare, counselling units and psychiatry / child and adolescent psychiatry).

### Excursus

#### A practical example of indicated prevention

*The most promising approaches are not based on any single theory and involve a variety of civil society organisations and ordinary local authority structures (e.g. youth and social welfare offices) cooperating under the overall control of state coordination units.*

*For example, to counteract the radicalisation of young people in Bavaria, especially in the area of Salafism, inter-departmental cooperation has been intensified since 2015 by the creation of the state-managed ‘Bayerisches Netzwerk für Prävention und Deradikalisierung gegen Salafismus’ (Bavarian Network for Prevention and De-Radicalisation against Salafism). This network has two central pillars: general prevention and de-radicalisation (indicated prevention). The Bavarian State Ministry of Family, Employment and Social Affairs is responsible for managing general prevention. State-wide responsibility and competence for the area of de-radicalisation lies with the Competence Centre for De-Radicalisation of the Bavarian State Criminal Police Office. Accordingly, the Competence Centre for De-Radicalisation is the first point of contact in Bavaria every time an event or individual raises security concerns (a concrete threat to public security and order) and where radicalisation or the risk of radicalisation can already be identified.*

*The fundamental goal of this coordination unit is to avert dangers posed by radicalised individuals to others or to themselves. A cornerstone of the Bavarian model is cooperation between the Competence Centre of the Bavarian State Criminal Police Office and actors in civil society. For this reason, the Competence Centre works on a contractual basis with a civil society organisation, currently the counselling unit for Bavaria of the Violence Prevention Network e. V. (VPN). In cases*

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Steffen 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Glaser 2018.

with relevance for public security, assistance and counselling services are devised in cooperation with this civil society organisation for affected individuals and the people around them, e.g. parents, relatives and others. The aim of the assistance and counselling services is to trigger processes of distancing from extremism. In cases with no specific relevance for public security, responsibility always remains with the civil society organisation. Key building blocks for this kind of cooperation include a clear definition of roles and complementary working methods in which everyone contributes their individual skills and knowledge.

In view of the geography of the large and highly rural state of Bavaria and based on the experience of the first two years of existence of the coordination unit, what was initially a centralised approach was transformed into a combined centralised/decentralised strategy. This combined approach was behind the installation of an additional 'decentralised case worker for de-radicalisation' at each of the ten headquarters of the Bavarian police. This is to assist the security authorities in identifying potential cases of de-radicalisation at an early stage and to provide a more comprehensive range of assistance services more quickly. The police coordination unit is supported in this endeavour by an interdisciplinary team consisting of scholars of Islam, psychologists, law enforcement officers with experience in police security intelligence and personnel trained in social education. Case-based assessments and analyses with specific recommendations for action are prepared for each reported situation.

In cases of de-radicalisation with a relevance for public security, the Competence Centre also assumes a coordinating function and is responsible for ensuring coordinated action among state actors, e.g. youth welfare and immigration offices, Bavarian domestic intelligence services, correctional facilities and the civil society partner. The actual counselling work as well as any necessary support for the respective individual's social environment is mainly carried out by the civil society partner and the team that this organisation assembles geared towards the various specific phenomena and target groups (e.g. young girls, people returning from war zones, refugees). The multi-professional and interdisciplinary organisation of the state coordination unit and the civil society partner enables the development of de-radicalisation strategies and support offerings specifically tailored to each individual case.

This example shows clearly how state and civil society services in Germany complement each other. Moreover, they also account for local conditions and regional specificities. For example, mobile services are more frequent in less populated, rural areas, and the density of services is higher in certain regions with structural problems.

## Success factors and limits of indicated prevention

Although the security authorities and counselling units are gaining ever more experience in developing individual exit plans and strategies, there are few reliable findings on the effectiveness of indicated prevention measures for de-radicalisation.<sup>18</sup> In addition to the difficulty of detecting and measuring de-radicalisation,<sup>19</sup> Horgan<sup>20</sup> points out that the state usually loses its interest in terrorists as soon as they are no longer considered to be a threat. From that point on, their cases are generally no longer followed or studied. As a result, the individual 'degrees of de-radicalisation' and biographies have so far been poorly recorded. Furthermore, the results of prevention work from many practical projects are often not systematically recorded or published, making it impossible to review the projects and the measures applied.

In order to verify the success of a prevention measure, it is necessary to operationalise the target criteria. While this is possible in the case of disengagement prevention, e.g. by verifying whether criminal acts have been committed, it is much more difficult to perform in the case of de-radicalisation measures. There are no objective criteria for determining when de-radicalisation, i.e. a change in attitudes and convictions, has been successful.<sup>21</sup>

Although few scientific evaluations of de-radicalisation programmes have been undertaken in Germany,<sup>22</sup> and the studies that do exist vary considerably in quality,<sup>23</sup> the experiences that have been made nevertheless offer opportunities to identify initial successes or failures of prevention work and the factors that underlie them.<sup>24</sup> Important conclusions can also be drawn from evaluations made in other European countries concerning options for optimising programmes and the challenges that remain.<sup>25</sup>

A study by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue<sup>26</sup> evaluated nine civil society programmes (in the fields of right-wing extremism and Islamism). All of these programmes emphasised the work carried out with members of the social environment of affected individuals and the role of civil society.

According to this study, de-radicalisation programmes seem particularly promising when they address three levels, which also correspond to the principles of indicated prevention mentioned above: the **affective, pragmatic and ideological** levels. Specifically, these levels suggest that (1) the emotional connection to the radical group must be severed, (2) the practical needs of the individual that have an impact on whether they leave or remain in the group must be taken into account, and (3) they should be encouraged to question their ideological beliefs.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Kober 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Rabasa/Pettyjohn/Ghez/Boucek 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Horgan 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. El-Mafaalani/Fathi/Mansour/Müller/Nordbruch/Waleciak 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Kober 2017; El-Mafaalani/Fathi/Mansour/Müller/Nordbruch/Waleciak 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Ceylan/Kiefer 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. El-Mafaalani/Fathi/Mansour/Müller/Nordbruch/Waleciak 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Institute for Strategic Dialogue 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Rabasa/Pettyjohn/Ghez/Boucek 2010.



*In summarising past experience, one can identify a number of possible key success factors for fruitful prevention:*

#### **RELATIONSHIP LEVEL**

- *Personal relationship of trust between the counsellor and the client, consideration of the individual development paths of the client.*

#### **PROFESSIONAL LEVEL**

- *Adherence to uniform methodological standards in prevention work with clearly defined goals, target groups and procedures.*
- *High level of professionalism of the actors (e.g. in the assessment of risk situations).*
- *If necessary, involvement of / cooperation with people who are familiar with the relevant milieu (defectors, imams).*
- *Analysis of the motivation of factors that inhibit and facilitate exiting.*

#### **ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL**

- *Clearly defined case management.*
- *Ongoing assessment/evaluation of measures and the counselling process.*
- *Long-term orientation of projects.*
- *Cooperation with various actors (security authorities, counselling units, youth welfare services, psychiatrists).*
- *Policies for data protection and confidentiality.*

Considering that radicalisation as a cognitive process can remain hidden from the environment for a long time before significant changes in behaviour take place, as well as the ease with which contacts to extremists and extremist content can be made via social media, the identification of radicalisation processes in its early stages becomes even more difficult. Unless there is a particularly high level of awareness among an individual's social milieu (parents, siblings, friends, care-givers, teachers), a radicalisation process may remain undetected for a long time. When this is the case, prevention services proper only reach an individual once they have already attracted attention to themselves through criminal acts or conspicuous behaviour.

However, this also means that prevention measures (especially selective prevention) must succeed in raising awareness to allow radicalisation to be detected at an early stage. This is not only a matter for the police and the prison system, but also applies to counselling units, youth welfare services and (child and adolescent) psychiatrists, i.e. ultimately to everyone who has close and trusting relations with adolescents and young adults.

It also needs to be borne in mind that even when affected families notice changes in the home environment, they may shy away

from contacting the security authorities because they fear negative consequences for their relatives. This once again highlights the necessity of the services provided by civil society organisations. Under certain circumstances, the interests of the security authorities may come into conflict with those of the counselling units; furthermore, the involvement of the security authorities may also accelerate radicalisation processes. At the same time, however, information received by the security authorities that is unrelated to potentially criminal behaviour and does not suggest any immanent threats may be what leads to the involvement of counselling units in the first place. This can be the only way of identifying cases in which the individual concerned manifests signs of possible radicalisation without anyone from their immediate social circle taking the initiative and seeking suitable help.

Especially in relation to the phenomena of religiously based extremism, there are very few cases in which people directly contact suitable organisations or state authorities in order to leave an extremist scene. Where this nevertheless happens, the individuals in

question can be seen to have already undergone ideological distancing from extremism and have started to sever their ties to the subculture.

After information about a relevant case is received, the first key step is to consider how to gain access to the individual concerned and how initial contact should be made. In view of the limited options for establishing contact, identifying a means of access represents a particular challenge. This is why, when information about a potential case of radicalisation is received, it is so important to assess the individual case as thoroughly as possible before making initial contact. In cases where there is a heightened security risk, the competent authorities, such as the police and the domestic intelligence services, as well as the correctional institutions in the case of imprisoned individuals, will possess extremely helpful information on the individual and their environment. This is because many of the individuals involved in extremist phenomena are already under criminal investigation or observation by the intelligence services. Particular caution must be observed in preparing and planning to make contact with imprisoned religious extremists. Cooperation with civil society organisations can be especially useful here.

Consequently, the responsible parties must identify the best means of approach in each specific case to ensure that the initial contact establishes the basis for ongoing contacts in a way that is satisfactory for all involved. To ensure this, it is vitally important that all relevant agencies cooperate closely in managing the case right from the start.

An essential aspect of de-radicalisation and disengagement is establishing the motivation to leave. Individuals who actively approach a counselling unit with the definite wish to get out are the easiest to reach. However, even in such cases, it is imperative to develop strategies to deal with threats that an individual may become subject to after breaking social ties with an extremist group as well as with any crimes they may have committed in the past. For those who are still very uncertain and where, for instance, initial contacts were made by relatives or the security authorities and not motivated by the affected individual's own desire, techniques of 'motivational interviewing' are particularly helpful. Here, affected individuals are given the chance to reflect on the positive and negative outcomes of the current situation and of a potential exit in an open, non-judgemental process and to compare these outcomes in the form of a 'cost-benefit analysis'. It is also helpful to determine how each client fits into the extremist group and to identify factors that could help them to exit (e.g. conflicts within the group, disappointments, external pressure).<sup>28</sup>

While de-radicalisation processes often demonstrate clear parallels, a closer look reveals that each is unique with regard to the respective biographical background and manner in which radicalisation takes place. Just as important as choosing the right method of initial contact is selecting the right de-radicalisation approach for the individuals concerned and their social environment. As in the procedure described above for establishing contact, when selecting the de-radicalisation measure, special attention should also be paid to the reason an individual became radicalised and the effect that this is likely to have – on both risk and protective factors. In practice, this kind of analysis requires a multidisciplinary assessment involving experts in the specific phenomenon (e.g. Islamic studies), psychiatry/psychotherapy, social pedagogy and even sociology, as well as specialists from the security authorities.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Harris/Gingart/Drake 2017.

This process is particularly important in relation to refugees and asylum seekers. In view of the special circumstances around these two groups, particularly the need to overcome language barriers and the lack of social anchor points, conventional pedagogical models employed in de-radicalisation work thus far can only help to a certain extent. The need to tailor solutions to individual cases becomes particularly apparent here.

A bespoke approach is also required in the case of psychological disorders, as those affected are frequently unable to make use of regular services due to mental health difficulties.

However, the practical work undertaken by public authorities should be based on a clear definition of responsibilities and effective coordination. When dealing with cases of radicalisation, it is becoming ever more common to discover that multiple authorities, in some cases even across several states, have already worked with or examined the individuals in question and their milieus. At the same time, however, it is often unclear in practice who is in charge of the specific case and who is responsible for coordinating the respective measures. In particular, coordinating the cooperation of social services and the immigration, judicial and security authorities requires a high level of trust and coordination. Uncertainty regarding who is in charge and how responsibilities are distributed render cooperation difficult, especially considering the frequent time pressure under which measures have to be initiated. If other actors, e.g. employees of civil society organisations, also become involved, the exchange of information, especially personal details, becomes even more complex.

As experience has shown, especially in dealing with counselling cases where a great deal of time and human resources are needed and those that involve a security risk, a coordination unit with strong ties to law enforcement is vital as a central point of contact throughout the entire exit process. The organisation to which this coordination unit is attached is of secondary importance. What is important is that the coordination unit has adequate human and material resources and is able to assume responsibility in counselling cases involving public security. A central coordination unit makes it possible to organise and coordinate case monitoring, quality assurance, the initiation of supplementary measures and the involvement of other necessary agencies in a targeted and, above all, timely manner. A lack of coordination among measures and discussions resulting in duplications and multiple contact persons are neither conducive to building trust among the individuals concerned and those around them nor a sign of professionalism on the part of government agencies. Measures that overlap with the work of youth welfare offices, independent youth welfare organisations, probationary services and other agencies in this field must be coordinated from the start of the de-radicalisation process. Clearly allocated roles and a clear definition of each actor's boundaries are factors that can definitely promote the success of this process.

## Intervention in the case of extremist criminals

Working with imprisoned persons with extremist attitudes poses a particular challenge. Firstly, there is the risk that the closed system of prison may foster close contact with other extremist prisoners and reinforce radicalisation processes both through the lack of opportunity to reflect on alternative attitudes as well as the need to

join a group to ensure one's safety. Secondly, irrespective of the presence of extremist attitudes, the rehabilitation and social reintegration of violent criminals also poses a particular challenge.

Not all prisons have yet developed programmes and guidelines for dealing with extremist prisoners.<sup>29</sup> There is certainly a need for further action in the training of staff and the development of programmes in order to address this issue. At the same time, however, it has been shown that certain interventions, especially those aimed at improving personal skills, actively shaping the social support structures for the prisoners following their release and creating opportunities for their social integration, can reduce the likelihood of reoffending.<sup>30</sup> Finally, this group would benefit particularly if initiatives for rehabilitating criminals were combined with elements of de-radicalisation work proper that focus on extremist attitudes.

## Risk assessment

Intimately related to the work of indicated prevention is the assessment of the potential risk of violent acts perpetrated by radicalised individuals. A number of instruments are now available that can assist in assessing the risk of violent incidents.

Two basic approaches to risk assessment can be distinguished.

Statistical risk assessment instruments are based on applying general risk factors for a given behaviour – in this case violence – to an individual case. The advantages of these instruments are the high transparency of assessments, a high degree of objectivity on the part of the assessor and economy of application. The disadvantages, however, are that they are primarily based on static risk factors that cannot be influenced and pay little heed to dynamic factors and protective factors, and that results are based on statistical averages without adequate consideration of individual aspects, thereby ultimately overestimating rare events.

Structured clinical interviews, on the other hand, take dynamic factors into account to a greater extent, but place higher demands on the investigator as a consequence and may exhibit a lower degree of assessor objectivity. Predictive instruments for violent crimes generally show high overall sensitivity and negative predictivity, but low specificity and low positive predictivity. What this means is that individuals posing a low risk of violence can be identified in a reliable way, but there is also a danger of making false-positive predictions of violent crimes in the presence of risk factors, i.e. dangerousness is wrongly assumed.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the presence of mental disorders can have a considerable negative influence on the forecasting power of predictive instruments.<sup>32</sup> It is also of crucial importance that sufficient information is available that can be taken into account in the assessment.

Risk assessment instruments that have been developed in recent years for the assessment of acts of violent extremism certainly meet the requirements placed on

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Leuschner 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Dugas/Kuglanski 2014; Lukas 2012; Kober 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Fazel/Singh/Doll/Grann 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Coid/Ullrich/Kallis 2013.



modern predictive instruments in that they are based on known risk factors while accounting for dynamic aspects in the assessment of danger potential. However, many instruments do not meet methodological standards or have been insufficiently tested.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, such predictive instruments show their limitations in their practical application by security authorities. The standardisation on which these instruments are based only takes limited account of individual protective and risk factors. As a result, the predictions based on them, which potentially also serve as the basis for far-reaching measures in practice, appear to be too imprecise and of little informative value. Such predictive instruments can therefore only give an initial indication of the need for more intensive work directed towards the individual concerned.

Notable examples of risk assessment instruments include VERA 2<sup>34</sup> (for more on VERA, see also Chapter 3.3), IVP,<sup>35</sup> the German Federal Criminal Police Office's RADAR-iTE and the DyRiAS Screener for Islamism.<sup>36</sup> All of these predictive instruments are based on the principle of taking as many sources of information into account as possible in order to assess the presence of certain attitudes (e.g. justification of violence, intolerance against non-members of a group, preoccupation with acts of violence), psychological stressors (e.g. suicidality, symptoms of depression, lack of empathy) and especially factors at the behavioural level (previous violent incidents, departure for combat zones, isolation, sudden change in religious practice). A risk score is subsequently formed and evaluated as an indicator of potential danger. Another important factor in the assessment is the question of whether the individual has the capabilities and opportunities to commit a serious act of violence.<sup>37</sup> The RADAR-iTE and DyRiAS Screener for Islamism instruments, which were both developed in Germany and have been implemented there in particular, are based on measurable criteria and take dynamic aspects sufficiently into account. This makes them promising instruments, even if they are sometimes inadequate in their consideration of protective factors. It is nonetheless vital to subject the predictive power of the instruments to constant review, especially since there is still a considerable need for research on the identification of factors associated with a transition from purely cognitive radicalisation to violent incidents. In this regard, making the instruments freely available would also be useful from the point of view of researchers, as it would enable independent assessment.

Another problematic issue with these instruments, although understandable in view of the objective they pursue, is that they reveal a high level of sensitivity coupled with rather low specificity. This makes sense from the point of view of the security authorities, as it reduces the risk of false negatives. This can, however, be a problem for cooperation with counselling units, as false predictions of potential danger can result in increased activity on the part of the security authorities and, in the worst case, interrupt or terminate the counselling and de-radicalisation process. Therefore, it must always be taken into consideration that screening instruments can only ever provide evidence of a potential risk of violence and that further action must be coordinated in a measured way with all those involved in the process.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Scarcella/Page/Furtado 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Pressman/Flockton 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Egan/Cole/Cole/Alison/Alison/Waring/Eltib 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Böckler/Allwinn/Hoffmann/Zick 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Borum 2015; Lloyd/Dean 2015.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Sarma 2017.

When applied in practice, an individual case-based procedure first requires a rigorous analysis of the individual facts of the case and/or the individual concerned. Especially in cases with a (high) degree of relevance for public security, this also forms an important basis for further action on the part of the security authorities at the interface between investigation or prosecution and tertiary prevention. The basis of such individual analyses in cases of politically motivated radicalisation is the search for the 'inner logic' of a radicalisation process. In this context, key guiding questions include: what were the triggers of the radicalisation process? What function do radical ideas and/or an extremist milieu fulfil for the individual in question? And what factors contribute to maintaining this situation? An additional goal of the analysis is to arrive at a detailed appraisal of existing protective and risk factors, to identify opportunities for intervention and to make a predictive assessment, including potential development scenarios.

For work carried out directly with clients in counselling practice, it would also be helpful to develop instruments that not only aid in risk assessment, but also take greater account of protective factors and factors that can influence the process of de-radicalisation and counselling without the need for there to be an increased risk of violence.

## Conclusion and outlook

Especially in the area of religiously motivated extremism, current strategies of indicated prevention are based primarily on practical experience; there have been almost no scientific studies to examine the effectiveness of individual measures. A further point of criticism is the fact that the strategies developed for indicated prevention are largely based on models of the emergence of extremism that have received little scientific validation and therefore possibly target factors that only play a minor role in the actual radicalisation process. Nonetheless, some important indications of the effectiveness of indicated extremism prevention can be derived from past experience. This form of prevention focuses on de-radicalisation in the sense of cognitive restructuring and affective distancing and at disengagement from acts of violence and crime, with indicated prevention beginning when there is already at least a risk of extremist crimes.

Due to the heterogeneity of the target group, both objectives demand highly individual approaches. However, at the individual level, interaction and creating a relationship of trust with the person concerned seem to be pivotal to the success of indicated prevention work, as these are preconditions for gaining access to the person in the first place to examine how the radicalisation process developed.

Even if indicated prevention is very much focused on the individual, it is essential to include important people in their social environment if the individual is to be provided with opportunities (school, education, social contacts) to lead a self-determined life outside of an ideological group within an existing social network – or at least one that existed before radicalisation.

In terms of the structure of prevention programmes, the effectiveness of indicated prevention seems to be tied to a close exchange and coordination between the various state and non-state actors and professionals with a range of specialisations. Which

institution takes the lead in case management is currently regulated differently by the various German states. Particularly in the case of persons who may pose a concrete threat, however, it is always necessary for coordination to ensure a balance between security measures and, for example, developing a personal relationship or to enable both to be applied in a complementary manner to reduce overall risk. This is made possible by comprehensive evaluation carried out using reliable instruments for risk assessment and the early identification of radicalisation processes, and these require constant further development and validation. In addition to the scientific investigation of the conditions of the emergence of radicalisation processes, of the transition of a cognitive radicalisation process into extremist acts and the validity of risk factors, it is vital that a systematic evaluation of existing practices (and especially the experiences of the practitioners) in indicated prevention is carried out.<sup>39</sup> For this purpose, standardised procedures must also be applied, not only for needs assessment, but also to evaluate the counselling process. As indicated prevention measures evolve, it will also be necessary to develop structures and concepts for specific groups of people, such as people with mental disorders and people returning from war zones, including their families.<sup>40</sup> This will require even closer cooperation between counsellors, (child and adolescent) psychiatrists, psychotherapists and youth welfare services.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Pansot/Autixier/Madriaza 2018.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Lützing/Gruber 2017.

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# CHAPTER 6



The coordination and implementation  
of extremism prevention

## CONTENTS

- Overall structure
- Municipal level
- State level
- Federal level

## On the overall structure of extremism prevention in Germany

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Government prevention programmes in Germany are developed and implemented on three levels: federal, state and municipal. In this chapter, the municipal level is presented first, taking the city of Wolfsburg as an example. The examples of Schleswig-Holstein and Hesse then illustrate the state level, followed by the federal level, in which the focus is on two funding programmes. The findings of this chapter can be summed up as follows:

- 1 The field of extremism prevention is characterised by diverse institutional stakeholders including various ministries in each of the 16 German states, local authorities and independent civil society agencies. This diversity creates the need for central points of contact, especially in the municipalities and states. They are charged with coordinating, managing, planning and assuming key communication tasks.
- 2 The field also involves a wide variety of experts and professionals, and educational, social and police work all need to be interlinked, as do the various state and non-state agencies. To successfully manage this complexity, one obvious step would be to expand and enhance the prevention networks and centres that are used for knowledge-transfer by practitioners, researchers and volunteers.
- 3 Needs and funding priorities should be reviewed and adjusted on an ongoing basis to take account of new developments, avoid unnecessary redundancies and, last but not least, to establish what actually works! The agencies involved are themselves responsible for this, above all the Coordination Units in the German states and at the federal level, and can draw upon support in the form of programme evaluations and research work, including reviews of efficacy and performance and questions of consolidation.

When considering the coordination and implementation of measures for the prevention of extremism, various classificatory schemas can be used. For example, Trautmann and Zick propose classifying according to the various categories of addressee. This offers the advantage of analytical and strategic flexibility in approaching different target groups. These might be right-wing or left-wing extremist groups, for example, or the first signs of a local Salafist scene centred on a mosque. The key instruments that can be used here are educational work, network building and counselling.<sup>1</sup> Rieker takes a slightly different approach, this time with respect to the example of the prevention of violent right-wing extremism. He differentiates between early-childhood approaches, political education, intercultural training and assistance in exiting the right-wing extremist scene.<sup>2</sup>

Another way of classifying measures for the prevention of extremism is to subdivide them according to the three levels of Germany's federal system: municipal, state and federal. This schema has long been standard in the debate on the prevention of violence in Germany. In this view, the state and federal levels act 'frequently as service providers for the municipal level': systematically processing information, generating scientific analyses, encouraging networking and cooperation among the levels and establishing funding programmes.<sup>3</sup> The same applies, as we will see in this chapter, to the prevention of extremism. Here, too, federal and state initiatives can be considered as providing a service to the municipal level, particularly in the form of project funding, which is provided to municipal-level agencies from the federal government via the states.

Alongside financial support, federal and state institutions also provide, above all, information and scientific analyses to support the municipal authorities. A good example of this are empirical analyses concerning Islamist returnees from Syria.<sup>4</sup> These provide information on their motivation and social backgrounds, for example, and thus facilitate target-group-oriented prevention measures at the municipal level. The German states have also excelled in various efforts for de-radicalisation in the area of violent right-wing extremism and Salafism.

It stands to reason that Germany's extremism prevention efforts – which are institutionally diverse, incorporate federal aspects and involve diverse policy fields – should be examined using a governance approach. The prevention of violent extremism is a classic multi-level case: the same problem (political extremism) is worked through on very different levels. These include the federal government, the states and the municipalities, as well as a variety of policy fields including domestic, judicial, social, youth and family policy. Civil society is also part of the mix: alongside all the public sector efforts, there are a large number of civic initiatives, especially in the area of right-wing extremism. Many of these receive funding from governmental funding structures. A governance approach considers the interactions of government agencies, decision-making processes, and open and veiled conflicts in cooperation.

The expositions that make up the remainder of this chapter avoid such theoretical considerations in favour of a focus on practical matters: the authors are themselves 'practitioners' in the federal government (BMFSFJ and DJI), German states (Schleswig-Holstein and Hesse) and municipality (Wolfsburg) and provide systematic and self-critical 'lab reports' on the means that are available to them and their own experiences. However, there is a second aspect to the practical focus of this chapter. The authors and examples have been selected for pragmatic reasons using criteria of quality, long-term relevance and transparency. The primary goal is to provide actors involved in the prevention of violent extremism with information, knowledge gained from real-world experience and strategic considerations that can facilitate or improve their funding applications and assist them in planning for the future.

This chapter is also structured in terms of practical experiences: it is the direct experiences and pressure to act on the ground in local areas that sets the ball rolling in the prevention of violent extremism. For this reason, the chapter starts with the section on the municipal level, illustrated with reference to the city of Wolfsburg. We then rise through the levels

<sup>1</sup> Trautmann/Zick 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Rieker 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Herrmann 2016, 259.

<sup>4</sup> Federal Criminal Police Office / Federal domestic intelligence services / Hessian Information and Competence Centre against Extremism 2016.

of Germany's federal system – first the German states and then the federal government – each of which addresses the needs and problems faced by the municipalities in its specific way.

The section by Bothe et al. arrestingly documents the dense set of problems faced by one local area during a process of radicalisation. The social integration of youths with Tunisian backgrounds fails because the city's grand narrative of 'employment at Volkswagen' doesn't work out, leading to long-term experiences of discrimination, marginalisation and neglect. This leads them via Salafist radicalisation to participation in IS military operations in Syria. The city of Wolfsburg reacts by developing a comprehensive municipal prevention strategy. Informational events, in-depth dialogue with the Muslim communities, the establishment of a city coordination centre and a dialogue centre for youth welfare are the first steps in developing a local prevention infrastructure and the expansion of the programme work.

Bothe et al. also illustrate the development of management structures in the Criminal Prevention Steering Group. They advocate using municipal structures as the basis for implementing projects and only later taking into account state-level institutions, as required. They justify this with reference to the municipalities' proximity to local circumstances and the special local knowledge and experiences that this gives rise to. Bothe et al. highlight the importance of links with the federal level particularly with reference to the 'Live Democracy!' funding project of the BMFSFJ and the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb).

In their article, Dietz and Gansewig point out a peculiarity of extremism prevention at state level. This is the diverse set of state-level agencies that share responsibilities: several ministries are involved in developing and funding prevention work (Departments of Culture, Social Affairs, Justice, and the Interior). As a result, the authors argue, coordination is crucial. The same applies to the collaboration with civil society organisations and NGOs. Dietz and Gansewig's article expressly underlines the need for centralised management and coordination of the prevention of violent extremism at state level. The duties of these Coordination Units include information transfer and needs assessment, consulting, network-building and quality assurance. This also applies to collaboration between governmental and non-governmental bodies. Using the examples of Hesse and Schleswig-Holstein, the German states are shown to be in the process of forming prevention networks and centres, with a focus on efficacy and achieving sustainable results.

Gess, Lüders, Milbradt and Mewes follow on from this in their report on the federal level. The aim of the federal government's extremism prevention programmes is thus to complement the programmes at municipal and state levels by focusing on educational, counselling and training activities. Taking two programmes as examples, they demonstrate which strategic approaches are being pursued. The 'Live Democracy!' programme, which comes under the responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, promotes 'Partnerships for Democracy', 'Democracy Centres', pilot projects and more. 302 pilot projects were being funded across Germany in spring 2018. The 'Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe' project, which is under the aegis of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, focuses on eastern Germany and rural or structurally weak areas. Between 2017 and 2019, 75 projects were funded, particularly existing initiatives for democratic development. They were carried out by civil society

organisations and local associations and clubs. The article by Gess, Lüders, Milbradt and Mewes concludes by describing how the programmes are managed, evaluated and how researchers are involved.

Considering all three sections on the coordination and implementation of the prevention of extremism in the federal government, German states and municipalities together provides important insights. The section on the municipal level shows particularly clearly how much the emergence of local extremist structures requires effective, long-term preventive responses. All three levels refer to a portfolio of programmes, many of which have already existed for a long time. The interconnections between the three levels stand out, as do the various forms of cooperation between state and civil society initiatives. The biggest challenges for the future lie in questions of long-term implementation, the monitoring of efficacy and cooperation between the various approaches.

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## CHAPTER 6.1

### The municipal level – the example of Wolfsburg

Iris Bothe  
(with the assistance of Marion Herrfurth, Harry Guta)

#### Iris Bothe

Social pedagogue, head of the Youth, Education and Integration Section for the City of Wolfsburg since 2012. Iris Bothe was formerly a youth welfare worker and has been head of both the Child Day-Care Department and the Schools Division for the City of Wolfsburg.

#### Marion Herrfurth

Social worker/social pedagogue, head of the Prevention Department and deputy head of division. Ms Herrfurth has been with the Youth Division of the City of Wolfsburg since 1985.

#### Harry Guta

Team leader since 2019 of the 'berRATen e. V.' advisory body in Lower Saxony for the prevention of neo-Salafist radicalisation. Harry Guta has been active in crime prevention for the city of Wolfsburg in various fields for more than 30 years. He was responsible for developing and launching Wolfsburg's 'Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre' advisory body and established the youth outreach advisory service 'Life-Line'.



Since 11 September 2001, Germany has also seen isolated incidents of violence inspired by radical Islamist ideas. There was a connection between Wolfsburg and the Sauerland Group (a teenager smuggled detonators for the German terror cell in 2007). We began to take an interest in the topic then, but did not perceive any particular problem in Wolfsburg. The families involved were probably well aware of the local scene long before us. But no one reported anything to the local municipal authorities. The reasons for this are likely myriad, ranging from shame and a lack of trust in institutions to uncertainty as to whom they could turn to. It may be assumed that there had been contact with the police, the State Security department of the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) and the domestic intelligence services, but at the time there was no point of contact for those affected or their relatives, neither in the state of Lower Saxony nor in Wolfsburg. The situation in Wolfsburg subsequently came to the attention of the local authorities through a chain of coincidences before being reported locally.

As representatives of the local authority, we approached the police, State Security department of the BKA and the intelligence services, both to share information to the extent allowed by law, and to develop initial proposals for a prevention strategy and, above all, a network strategy.

Not long afterwards, it was reported that around 20 people from Wolfsburg had left for Syria in 2013/2014.

We now know that a tight-knit group of young people that had known each other since childhood and whose close bonds made them receptive to these ideas had been infiltrated by radicalisation through a recruiter. This shows the major significance of peer groups. It is likely that the recruiter and his followers, some of whom had already travelled to Syria, offered simplistic answers to counter feelings of powerlessness and rejection with recognition, a sense of belonging, power and wealth. Events in neighbouring local authority areas organised by 'idols' such as Denis Cuspert and others probably lead to the strengthening and consolidation of the groups. We can only guess at the role the internet might have played in addition. It was certainly used for communication and to portray a 'world' that promised it all; films promised the young men that their current financial circumstances could be changed and that they would have importance and prestige. They developed the feeling that they were needed in Syria, were fighting for a holy purpose – that they were good and everyone else was an infidel, and evil.

In dialogue with the religious communities, we discovered a sense of uncertainty and hesitancy about how to deal with these groups, of which the communities were aware. There was a roughly equal split between those who wanted to exclude them out of fear of becoming a target for German law enforcement agencies and those who were (just) willing to tolerate them. The group had been noticed because of its radical views and had been banned from one mosque, only to begin to meet regularly at another one, where there was no attempt at intervention. A spotlight was thrown on the mosques in Wolfsburg in the press and they publicly distanced themselves from all forms of radicalisation.

By means of the public debate on the topic of radicalisation, it became clear that the issue had also reached our own social welfare institutions. Parents, teachers, friends, colleagues and social workers lacked knowledge about the signs of radicalisation and the tools necessary to counteract it. In many cases, there was a great sense of helplessness and uncertainty.

## Establishing structures

There has been much work in recent years on various levels to set up robust internal and external structures or to integrate existing structures into the work of prevention.

### Internal

#### *Prevention Working Group*

A Prevention Working Group was established for the development, management and ongoing improvement of the Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre. This working group comprises staff from the Dialogue Centre, the head of the Prevention department, the head of the Youth Development department, the head of the Youth and Schools divisions and the head of the Youth, Education and Integration section. The working group pooled information from the various levels and actors; refined the ideas underlying the idea of the Dialogue Centre; planned dialogue with institutions, civil society and representatives of politics; reviewed measures and programmes; discussed current cases and debated further steps.

#### *Criminal Prevention Steering Group*

For many years already, the city of Wolfsburg has had a Criminal Prevention Steering Group in which the police, judiciary and schools have been represented alongside the city's department of Youth and Public Order. This group of experts has now added the topic of 'neo-Salafist violence and radicalisation' to the integrated prevention work it carries out. The Steering Group also brings together law enforcement agencies and actors involved in prevention projects across the city. Additional experts are invited to contribute to the group when the situation or topic requires it, including, for example, organisations representing religious communities. This is to ensure the exact fit of measures and projects and to assist in their subsequent evaluation. Also involved is Streetlife, the specialist municipal service for crime prevention which was founded in 2004 and comprises members of the police service, public order office and youth welfare office. Streetlife identifies places where young people gather. Staff then go there to engage in dialogue with the young people to help recognise their needs early on and prevent the development of flashpoints. Streetlife also seeks out dialogue with residents of these 'teenage hangout spots' to encourage them and the young people who favour these locations to work together to solve problems and to bring about mutual understanding.

#### *Central point of contact*

The Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre is the central municipal contact point in Wolfsburg for members of the public, institutions, clubs and associations as well as internal and external departments for the prevention of extremism and promotion of democracy.

#### *Clearing body/case management*

The Dialogue Centre is the first clearing body for systematic case management. It offers support to members and sympathisers of radical subcultures, followers and activists, and young people new to the scene in close cooperation with beRATen e. V. and Aktion

Neustart in Hanover. This work builds on one staff member's many years of experience in the area of outreach work with offenders. The Dialogue Centre is a point of contact for internal and external institutions, clubs and associations that notice potential problems or changes in young people or families and facilitates transfer to an appropriate case management situation or, where necessary, the initiation of other measures such as training, information events or other interventions.

### *Advice/support*

The Dialogue Centre supports educational institutions in particular in dealing with the topic of Islamism and radicalisation. It organises customised study days and workshops tailored to the specific institutions and provides advice in cooperation with its partners in the pedagogical aspects of dealing with radicalised youths and families.

## External

### *Cross-institutional and cross-authority network and case management*

Creating strong links with local law enforcement authorities and state-level prevention bodies and services is vital. Given the diversity of actors involved, the development of successful communication structures is decisive for successful prevention on the ground.

In view of Wolfsburg's experiences, but also drawing on findings from other municipalities and states, the necessity of establishing a cross-institutional and cross-authority network and case management structure with clear communication and responsibility structures has become clear. This involves not only prevention and case management of radicalised individuals, families and children, but also dealing with those who return from abroad.

### *Creating community networks*

Another component of the work of the Dialogue Centre is the establishment of intensive networks of contacts in Wolfsburg's various ethnic and religious communities. These include the mosques as well as various associations in the Tunisian, Lebanese Shiite, Kurdish and Arab communities. The aim is to establish regular contacts and build trust, develop joint projects and discuss various themes and topics together. Representatives of migrant organisations and mosques should be actively included in the existing networks and encouraged to assume responsibility. 'We want to talk with each other, not about each other!' An important aspect of this is also to come to understand each other and to allow this to flow into the cooperative work.

Cultural associations are actively provided with support and included in networks. As part of civil society, they should be consulted more often and financially supported. Wolfsburg seeks to support the communities in their own youth work activities undertaken in line with the city's defined quality standards for open-access youth work. Greater attention should be paid in the future to migrants with children, who should receive more support in fulfilling their parental tasks. This includes the work of the city's existing contact point for fathers – the Interkulturelle Väterbüro (intercultural office for fathers) – which was established in 2014. The Väterbüro aims to support Wolfsburg fathers from all cultural backgrounds in the raising and education of their children and to urge them to take more responsibility for this. Since 2009, the city has also been

training 'district mothers' (Stadtteilmütter) from diverse communities to be cultural bridge-builders, facilitating their integration in Wolfsburg by means of intensive education. They should also be involved.

### *Professional development programmes / conferences and events*

#### *Raising awareness amongst specialists and providing them with opportunities for dialogue*

We know too little about radicalisation, Islamism and other such phenomena. Being informed and understanding is a pre-requisite for implementing suitable prevention strategies.

In the context of secondary prevention, educational specialists should be kept informed and aware. The phenomenon of Islamism/Salafism is the subject of many specialist conferences and information events. Youth workers, social workers in general, volunteers and school staff should be able to recognise the signs of radicalisation and know whom to contact in a suspected case.

They should also make use of the opportunities that national and international conferences and events provide. These facilitate the exchange of knowledge, mutual learning and dialogue with experts from science and research. Such events also provide an opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of state and federal programmes and to receive feedback from the local level.

### *Strengthening intercultural exchange / social responsibility*

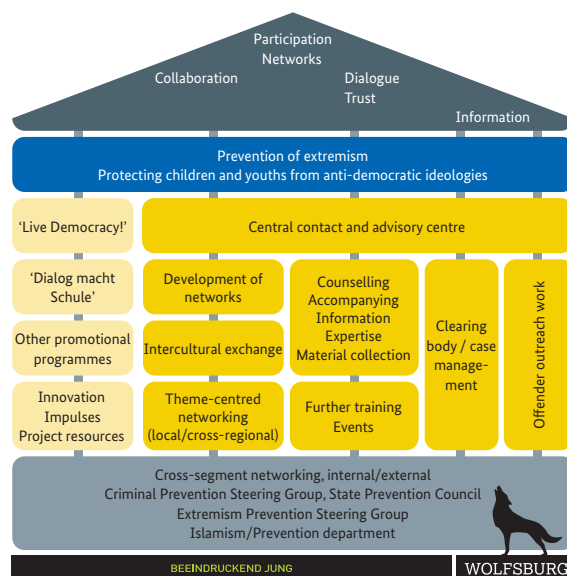
Here, the focus is on strengthening dialogue within the city, developing democracy-promoting information and prevention measures and developing primary prevention initiatives for all children and young people.

This involves enhancing security and public safety by strengthening democratic participation and education in and outside of schools, and especially political education; countering extremist tendencies and ensuring that xenophobia, hatred directed at specific groups, racism and terrorist tendencies do not gain support. To achieve this it is necessary to establish and expand locations and organisational formats for cultural, inter-religious and spiritual exchange and to find partners to work with in providing information on culture and religion in schools and extracurricular and political education that will counteract distorted images and prejudices. Here it is also important to promote the examination of topics such as culture, religion and extremism and to support schools and other educational institutions in dealing with these themes. From the outset, the Dialogue Centre developed materials for public relations work to raise the profile of its work.

## Programmes

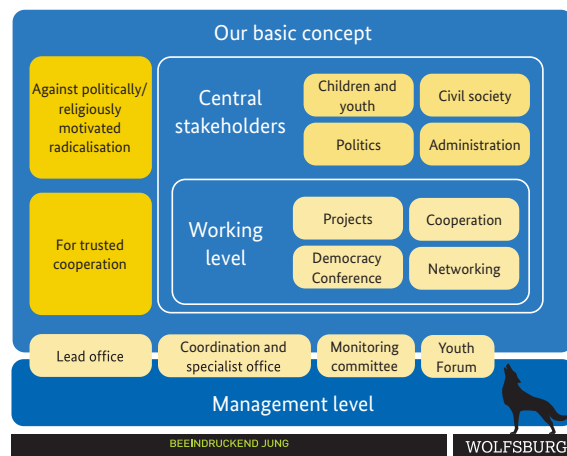
In pursuit of the goals of **creating community networks and strengthening intercultural exchange / social responsibility**, two programmes were integrated into the work of the Jugendschutz (Youth Protection) Dialogue Centre in 2015/2016.

## YOUTH PROTECTION DIALOGUE CENTRE



Wolfsburg has actively set out to strengthen engagement and social participation on the basis of democratic values, together with local politicians, government workers and civil society representatives. In this context, relevant actors from the city of Wolfsburg can apply for funding for measures, projects and campaigns.

## PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEMOCRACY IN WOLFSBURG



from youth organisations, refugee organisations, the Jewish community and various administrative departments. Other interested organisations are welcome at any time. The work of the monitoring committee is supported by coaches from the federal programme. The federal funding that is made available to the monitoring committee is intended, in the first instance, to encourage and motivate migrant organisations in particular to initiate their own projects for the promotion of democracy and thus involve

## Live Democracy!

*‘Live Democracy! – active against right-wing extremism, violence and misanthropy’*

The federal programme ‘Live Democracy!’ was launched in the city of Wolfsburg in June 2015. Sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the programme provides comprehensive local support for the proactive dialogue of the Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre and funds various measures and projects that serve the promotion of democracy and prevention of extremism. Within the framework of local ‘Partnerships for Democracy’, the city of

themselves intensively in the process. But all other groups and associations are also invited and called upon to initiate ideas and projects related to democracy promotion / democratic education and to apply for the funds required to this end. The project is advertised every six months in the Wolfsburg press via a public call for applications. The intention is to develop a broad palette of initiatives that will influence civil society in Wolfsburg, demonstrating and strengthening the principles of democracy.

A particular emphasis on the participation of children and young people in democracy promotion is part of the action plan that has been running in the city of Wolfsburg since the granting of the ‘Child-Friendly Municipality’ seal on 25 November 2014.

## Dialog macht Schule

Wolfsburg first took part in the ‘Dialog macht Schule’ educational programme in 2016. Dialog macht Schule GmbH was founded in 2013 by Siamak Ahmadi and Hassan Asfour on the basis of a pilot project. This pilot project was launched in 2009 by the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) and the Robert Bosch Stiftung under the name ‘Jugend, Religion, Demokratie: Politische Bildung mit Jugendlichen in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft’ (Youth, religion, democracy: Political education in a society of immigrants). The two founders participated in the initial design of the programme and continued to develop the project’s content and methodology until it reached its current form.

The two-year programme trains students to be dialogue moderators and ultimately to work together with pupils from socially challenging circumstances. Dialogue and active learning methods are used to introduce the topics of personality development, democratic decision-making and social participation.

The goal is for young people to recognise their multicultural identity as a source of strength and to perceive themselves as active participants in shaping their lives in society. In the basic training, the dialogue moderators learn how to create spaces of trust as well as the latest active learning methods to strengthen the children’s personal, social, moral and democratic skills.

After completion of the two-year training as a dialogue moderator, the students receive a certificate which can then be used in the ‘Dialog macht Schule’ alumni network. ‘Dialog macht Schule’ also provides an opportunity to gain practical experience in working with young people in groups even for those who do not complete the course.

Successful completion of the course to become a dialogue moderator also provides a recognised qualification, boosting the participant’s CV.

Following the conclusion of the two-year pilot phase, in which two groups at a Wolfsburg secondary school (Hauptschule) participated, the ‘Dialog macht Schule’ project has now finished. For the pupils at the school selected for the pilot project, the programme represented a successful boost in social and intercultural competencies. It has, however, proven a challenge for a city with a university that is not particularly oriented towards social/educational subjects to source sufficient student moderators in the long term to cover the whole of the Wolfsburg school landscape.

## Integrating the prevention of violent extremism in Wolfsburg's strategic target fields of education and integration

Providing educational opportunities is an important aspect of prevention, so all measures initiated in this field are also an integral part of a successful overall strategy.

Since 2009, the city of Wolfsburg has gradually developed a strategic education management concept. Under the auspices of the Education Office, and drawing on a model of education developed together with civil society and adopted by the Council of the city of Wolfsburg as well as on the findings of a report on the state of education in Wolfsburg ('Education Report'), fields of action were defined and measures developed. The Education Report considered educational offerings at every life stage – from early childhood to adult education – and provided us with findings for state and federal comparison. Wolfsburg was thus not just one of the early adopters in Germany of systematic educational reporting, but also continues to perform analysis, gather data and make recommendations on an ongoing basis. The city of Wolfsburg and the state of Lower Saxony have signed a cooperation agreement titled 'Bildungslandschaft Wolfsburg' (Wolfsburg Educational Landscape). The state funds a part-time (50%) teaching position in the Education Office. In this area of shared responsibility, municipal and state authorities jointly develop measures at all stages of the education system to remove differences stemming from immigration.

Partly financed by means of external funding programmes, two members of staff work in the Education Office with the educational coordinator for new immigrants (BMBF) and language support (state of Lower Saxony) in Wolfsburg. The development of structures within and in partnership with educational institutions requires sensitivity from all parties when considering the various fields of action.

At the same time, the city of Wolfsburg is working to strengthen cooperation between the bodies responsible for early childhood education, supporting those raising children, schools, child and youth welfare, culture, the economy and civil society, and on developing a municipal community of responsibility. The various ways in which those involved in education can contribute to shaping the landscape allow for various approaches and points of entry, which may not always be coordinated with each other due to a lack of transparency. On the other hand, this diversity also creates opportunities. It is necessary to develop a common understanding of how these various components interact and to support the setting of priorities for developments in education.

## Management structures

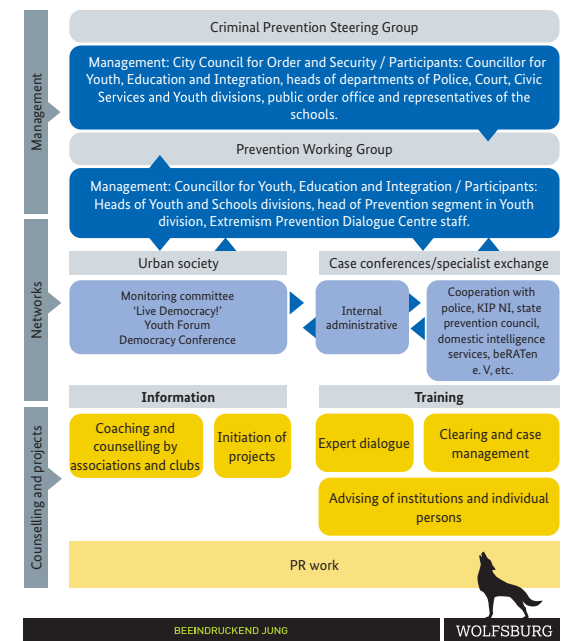
The municipal management and communication structures developed in 2014/15 have proved effective and are coordinated with both the internal administration and external network partners.

The Criminal Prevention Steering Group continues to coordinate the ongoing development of the Dialogue Centre's preventive work in line with policy. This linkage has proven invaluable, since close coordination of security and prevention is essential for the success of the Dialogue Centre's work. The development of the Dialogue Centre's specific activities continues to be supervised by the Prevention Working Group. The efficacy of the Dialogue Centre's work is dependent on a good communications structure, both horizontally and vertically, within the administration. The structure described here forms the framework and ensures that information is pooled on all levels. A degree of agility is also required, however. To exchange information on all levels, the Dialogue Centre has to be able to move freely, have a high profile and continually form new temporary working groups on certain topics.

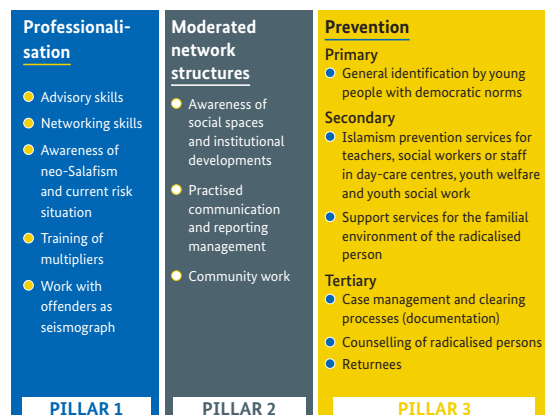
The Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre is facing various challenges in this relatively young field of activity. For one, the effects of preventive measures have not yet been validated by empirical study, and a wealth of programmes and projects have sprung up in the meantime, from which a cautious selection must be made for each municipality. For another, the efficacy of preventive measures depends, in our opinion, on several factors:

- Specialist staff in the Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre
- Development of goals – regular evaluation
- Anchoring the Dialogue Centre in the city administration, civil society, creating linkages between public institutions and state prevention and advisory bodies
- Structured communication and case management
- Transparent, security-relevant dialogue with the security authorities
- Access points and integration with educational institutes, day-care facilities and schools
- Training of educators as well as partners in the network

On this basis, we have developed three essential pillars for the municipal prevention work of the Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre:



The municipal management and communication structures of the city of Wolfsburg



The three pillars of municipal work for the prevention of extremism

## Pillar 1 Professionalisation

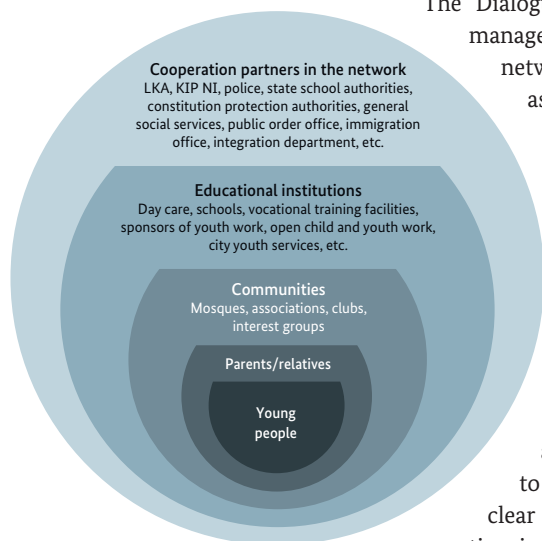
### Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre

In terms of skills and qualifications, we have ensured that the personnel employed have had solid training in pedagogical methods and appropriate counselling skills, as well as experience in case management and familiarity with the phenomena of religious extremism. It was also important to us to put teams together comprised of both men and women and to employ

staff with the same ethnic background as our service users or similar migration and socialisation experiences as well as relevant language skills.

The multi-professional team currently comprises two men and one woman. As well as gaining additional qualifications by training in Gestalt therapy or violence counselling and offender therapy and qualification as a specialist for crime prevention licensed by the state of Lower Saxony, the team has many years of experience in the fields of youth outreach work, work with various youth subcultures (the far-right, football hooligans/ultras, drug users, offenders), violence counselling, men’s counselling, youth counselling, work with (unaccompanied minor) refugees, intercultural youth work, experience in general social work and cooperating with various partners in the field. Staff members have also qualified as ‘Dialog macht Schule’ coaches and taken courses in ‘Neo-Salafism Prevention’ offered by the Federal Agency for Civic Education. The Dialogue Centre also pursues excellence in coaching (via a process monitoring approach) and supervision.

The Dialogue Centre’s task portfolio requires the management of the various internal and external networks and the associated tasks and projects, as well as the ability to participate in various changing advisory settings. These range from advising institutions on handling emerging Salafist phenomena via counselling parents and other relatives to counselling young at-risk adults. Professionalisation also involves focusing the Dialogue Centre’s portfolio. While at first, alongside its work in creating/managing networks and in counselling, it was itself also active in all areas of prevention (primary to tertiary), and it was later necessary to set clear priorities. The Dialogue Centre is now active in the context of primary prevention in



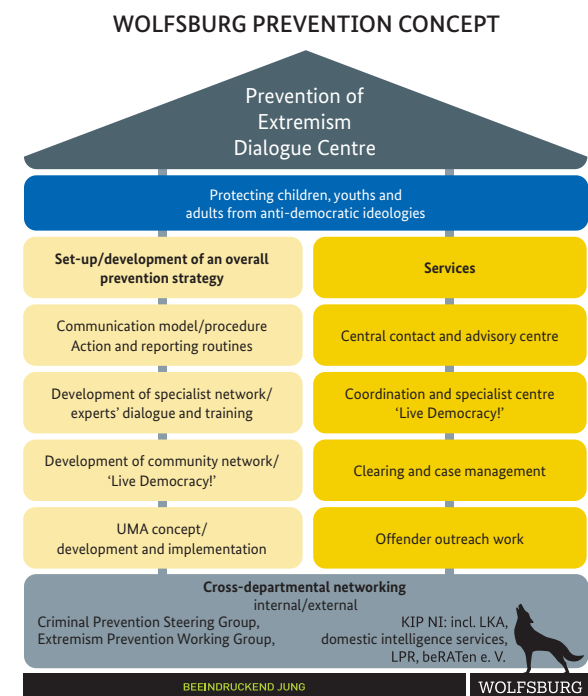
a proactive and advisory capacity, but no longer carries out projects itself. Consequently, the Youth Protection Dialogue Centre was renamed the Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre, since it had become apparent that the phenomena are complex and cannot be considered only in terms of the target groups of youths and young adults. The phenomenon of extremist Salafism has now spread throughout the full range of society’s institutions. We come across it in all school formats, child day-care centres, in youth work, in vocational preparation measures, in companies, in clubs, etc.

### Training of multipliers

The Dialogue Centre is now the central point of contact and advisory body within and outside the city administration in relation to the prevention of extremism. It is recognised as a source of expertise and called upon by many institutions in relevant situations. This allows information to be pooled. Initially, many awareness-raising events were held for various target groups from youth welfare, schools and day-care centres. Then there were vocational training events for entire day-care teams or school faculties. These measures were intensified, particularly during the influx of refugees in 2015/2016, for staff in refugee centres, volunteers and the institutions that were tasked with looking after unaccompanied minors. This has proven its worth in the selection of volunteers for work with refugees and the monitoring of their admission. Moreover, a UMA (unaccompanied foreign minors) network was formed, and it continues to cooperate in intensive case conferences today with a constant exchange of information.

### Offender work as a seismograph in the lives of young men and women

An agreement has been in place for more than ten years with the Youth Crime working group and the district juvenile court in Wolfsburg that young offenders are ordered to attend counselling. This approach to dealing with convicted violent offenders, most of whom are male, has proven its worth in Wolfsburg as a preventive measure. From experience we know that men are generally unwilling to attend counselling of their own volition. The offender work follows a phenomenological, emotion-focused, social systems theory-based and gender-specific approach. Following introductions and a discussion of motivations, a long-term, stabilising counselling plan is arranged with the young men, including an agreement on goals. Because this counselling plan accompanies the offender throughout his/her entire ‘career’, it affords us valuable insights into the rapidly changing world of youth interests and subcultures.



The goal of this work with violent offenders is for them to accept responsibility for the act they committed and to make a conscious decision to renounce violence in future. The end result should be for the young men to take responsibility for their lives and lead them in a 'healthy manner'. Offender counselling is thus a vital instrument in the early detection (of risk potential) as an aspect of radicalisation prevention under the Wolfsburg prevention concept (Wolfsburger Präventionsweg). The possibility has been raised as to whether offender counselling could be extended to include girls and young women as a condition set by the courts. Currently, staff with the specialist competencies necessary for this field of work are not available.

## Pillar 2 Moderated network structures

### Knowledge of socio-spatial and institutional developments

Knowledge of socio-spatial and institutional developments in a city is helpful for the development of network structures in the municipality. In Wolfsburg, we have used various sources to analyse socio-spatial developments in particular. Alongside the Social Report and the Education Report, there are various surveys of target groups, such as youth, family, etc. School development reports and day-care development plans can also allow conclusions to be drawn about relevant developments in individual city districts. This information is collected and distributed using a variety of communication structures and routines developed over the last years within and between institutions – both within and outside the city administration. The Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre has exploited every opportunity in recent years to raise its profile in these networks and structures and to determine where prevention and intervention are most needed.

### The communication model – interdisciplinary and cross-regional

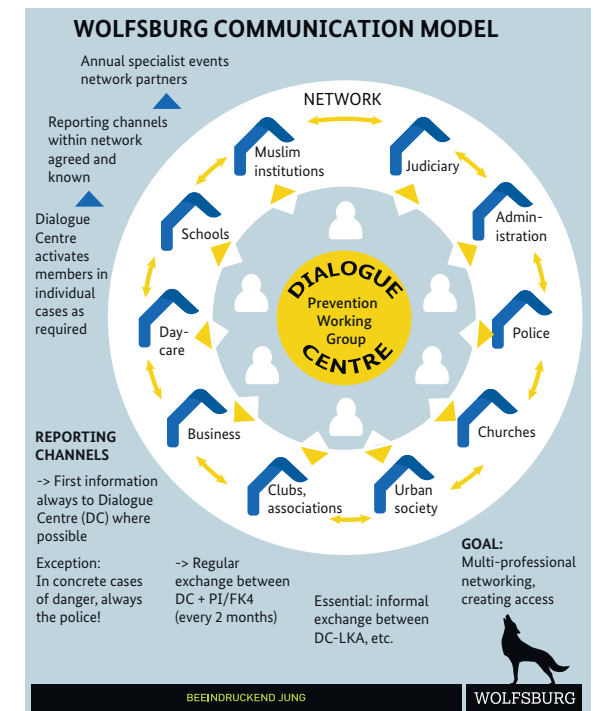
One of the significant challenges at the beginning of the Dialogue Centre's work was the lack of cooperation and communication between the security authorities and the actors doing prevention work on the ground. Differences in jurisdiction and legal requirements hinder both communication between the police, the State Security department of the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) and the domestic intelligence services and communication and collaboration with educators engaged in local prevention outreach. However, law enforcement agencies working on the ground became aware that there existed a pool of information and findings generated by social work in the communities, schools, youth clubs, etc. that could be very useful indeed for their investigation work. But unless they have direct knowledge of criminal acts, prevention workers are not considered informal members of law enforcement bodies such as the domestic intelligence services or the police. Moreover, for successful collaboration, communication cannot be a one-way street, but must rather enable the pooling of information by all parties to support targeted case management as part of a good prevention strategy.

To find constructive solutions in this difficult situation, a working group was set up on the basis of a joint initiative of the city of Wolfsburg and the Prevention department of the Lower Saxony domestic intelligence service. This working group was given the task of developing a coordinated communication model in the form of a local network for

all the partners at the municipal and state level. These partners include personnel from the Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre, the Wolfsburg/Helmstadt police inspectorate, the State Security department of the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), the Präventionsstelle Politisch Motivierte Kriminalität (Office for the prevention of politically motivated criminality – PPMK) of the State Criminal Police Office (LKA), the specialist Prevention department of the Lower Saxony Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the State Prevention Office, be-RATen e. V., the Kompetenzstelle Islamismus Prävention Niedersachsen (Competence centre for the prevention of Islamism in Lower Saxony – KIP NI) and the Education Authority of Lower Saxony.

Law enforcement and prevention must cooperate closely and in a concerted manner within the framework of the law and agree strategies for both fields of activity. One result of the collaboration that the city of Wolfsburg has built up with its partners in recent years is the set of guidelines produced jointly by the working group mentioned above: the 'Communication model for the Prevention of Islamism in Wolfsburg'. At the heart of the communication model is a network comprising the various partners listed above and a range of local institutions, associations and clubs. The Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre receives reports from the various contexts via a specially devised reporting and action routine. This information is used as the basis for calling case conferences, determining the lead agency on each case and discussing joint strategies and approaches.

The main focus of this work lies on joint dialogue between all institutions involved with the goal of preparing tailored preventive measures for active child and youth protection and naturally also for the protection of civil society from radical influences in public institutions and the social sphere. The pooled crime prevention and socio-educational approach of the Dialogue Centre's work is respected and welcomed by all those involved.



## Pillar 3 Preventive measures

### *Universal prevention*

We want to anticipate potential radicalisation before it happens, addressing our measures at target groups in the population that are not marked by any specific risk factors. Our educational offerings aim at disseminating knowledge, promoting democratic processes and projects, breaking down prejudices and initiating intercultural learning processes. Via this focus on education, we seek to enhance awareness, encourage dialogue, promote learning and mobilise civil society. To deliver these services, we primarily use the wide-ranging structure of the municipalities.

### *Youth work and youth social work in the Youth Development department*

The wide range of open-access services provided for children and teenagers throughout the city (e.g. adventure playgrounds and youth clubs) provides a good basis for political education to counter the increasing attractiveness of anti-pluralistic offerings (Salafism, right-wing extremism, Islamophobia). This offering is accompanied by outreach work carried out at places where young people tend to gather, sometimes combined with sporting, cultural and outdoor education offered by Wolfsburg's mobile open-access child and youth work services. The child and youth welfare services office identifies the interests of children and young people and initiates and supports participation processes. Youth forums in the city districts give young people a voice and allow them to participate in decision-making (co-determination).

Another focus of the mobile work is the interdisciplinary 'Streetlife' team, comprising personnel from the police, the public order office and the youth welfare office. The centre of Streetlife's work is outreach at locations in the city heavily frequented by young people. The interdisciplinary team follows a community approach that allows the combination of multiple viewpoints to generate a shared situational overview as an ideal tool for prevention. Transparent and functional communication, carefully delineated responsibilities and clear coordination between the various institutions involved when situations requiring action arise lead to the formation of consensus. Collaboration with other departments of local government, civil society organisations and clubs and societies is essential to this end. The team regularly makes arrangements with other actors in the network on a range of issues, cross-cutting tasks and strategies with the aim of pooling resources, coordinating planning and developing 'support chains'. Streetlife is based in the youth services section of the Wolfsburg Police (Fachkommissariat für Jugendsachen), works closely with the judiciary and the probationary services, general social services and youth welfare providers, and establishes links to the relevant departments of the city administration, Wolfsburg schools and school social work, local security patrols and youth and leisure facilities as required.

### *Social work in schools*

Unlike many schools in Germany, all general education schools in Wolfsburg are also open in the afternoon. In the primary schools, in particular, the all-day programme is organised in cooperation with youth welfare services, five days a week until 4 pm. In cooperation with the state of Lower Saxony, state and municipal social workers provide school social work services at every school. The Prevention department, to which the

Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre belongs, is responsible for social work in schools. This provides support to children and young people who have problems at school, at home and in their friendship groups. School social workers may contact a child's family and also provide assistance on request with questions related to child development and child welfare. The role of school social work is to provide counselling and support to children, parents and teachers, to assist in individual cases and perform crisis intervention, to develop and execute preventive/intervention concepts together with teachers and external partners (also as part of school projects) and to undertake social-pedagogical group work. The municipal social workers at secondary schools, in particular, work closely with other services in the municipal, social counselling and educational assistance landscape.

An additional service offered by the school social workers at all schools is crisis counselling. Crisis counselling services are located centrally and support teachers and families at all primary schools. Where needed, crisis counselling will initiate youth welfare measures and coordinate with general social services and other partners.

### *Family centres and family education centres*

Other important locations for primary prevention include Wolfsburg's ten family centres and the comprehensive network of child day-care centres. They provide a means of reaching all children from the age of three and their families, as well as many nursery-age children. Family centres have been established in Wolfsburg in the city districts where the proportion of families with a migration background and of families relying on state benefits are particularly high. This makes them the ideal sites to offer the social-pedagogical prevention project 'Gemeinsam wachsen' (Grow together). The project aims at supporting people who find accessing education difficult because of language, economic or personal barriers. The family education centre in Wolfsburg also plays an important role. With its decentralised offerings in the city's districts, it reaches a high percentage of families from a range of social and cultural backgrounds, engaging them in self-help activities with a low barrier to entry. The family centres engage with parents and children in culturally sensitive ways and encourage participation in planning.

The services offered at primary schools, day-care centres, family centres and family education centres are linked with the long-standing programme of training for mothers from the city's diverse communities. This 'Stadtteilmütter' ('district mothers') programme has been running in Wolfsburg since June 2009. In these ten years, 171 mothers with immigration backgrounds from 36 countries of origin and with 16 different native languages have taken part in the ten-month programme. The 'district mothers' have proven great value as bridge-builders over the years. Many of them are active in various municipal and social institutions and they form valuable links to the various communities, and particularly to other mothers. These institutions and services are the foundations for building small, interdisciplinary networks in the institutions and districts, the basis for the training of multipliers, and the anchor points for low-threshold and targeted preventive measures.

## Selective prevention

Wolfsburg's selective prevention services are primarily aimed at professionals such as staff working in youth welfare, schools, the police, clubs and societies, and municipal government (see: Training of multipliers). Alongside the training programme for multipliers, the focus is on supporting teams in schools and day-care centres in developing guidelines and strategies and raising awareness by means of targeted training measures when specific cases emerge.

## Indicated prevention

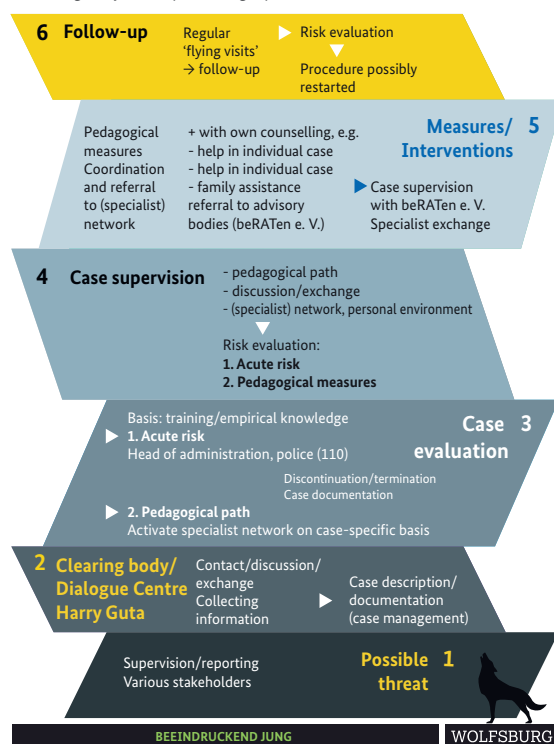
### Case management and the clearing process

At the municipal level, the Dialogue Centre is at the heart of Wolfsburg's coordinated communication model and responsible for the clearing process and case management. Potentially dangerous situations or unusual behaviour on the part of young people

undergoing radicalisation may be reported to the social services or youth welfare offices, for instance, by family members, via clubs or societies or by educators from day-care, schools or youth facilities. All relevant information is first gathered before a picture is formed of the situation. A case description is then written up and the facts are documented. This is the basis for risk assessment. For the development of a pedagogical intervention and strategy, a network of specialists is activated and all the experts required to process the case are invited to a case discussion. While the case is being processed, there is a constant process of consultation and attunement within the network to ensure that all the measures taken are properly coordinated. Additional, external assistance may also be activated as required; where necessary, referral is made to other counselling services such as beRATen e. V. or Aktion Neustart. On this basis, the Dialogue Centre has developed a model for case management in Wolfsburg.

### PREVENTION OF EXTREMISM DIALOGUE CENTRE CITY OF WOLFSBURG

Clearing body – case processing – procedural flow



## Future preventive challenges at the municipal level

### The prevention of radicalisation as a municipal strategy

Although the city of Wolfsburg has been able to gain experience since 2014 in the prevention of religiously influenced radicalisation, we still have much to learn in many regards.

The war in Syria, the various conflicts within and involving Turkey, the situation of the Kurds, the Israel/Palestine conflict, the rise of right-wing populism in Europe and in Germany, the growth of Islamophobia, Muslim anti-Semitism and the public debates over immigration policy reaching all the way to the question of whether Islam belongs in Germany: all these developments have had an impact on the coexistence of the many varied groups and people that live in Wolfsburg. These issues have influenced the discussions in families, at schools and other educational institutions and in the workplace. And ultimately they have influenced the radicalisation of young people, who increasingly react to the world around them. It is important that the city grasps this, talks about it, and offers alternatives to extremist interpretations and discourses in the form of exhibitions, events, media, etc.

But the situation for individuals and families who live in the city also plays a major role. Discrimination, the negative influence of peer groups, the differences in lifestyle generated up by individualism, the growth of flexibility in the world of work, mobility, digitalisation and the formation of parallel societies all present challenges for local democracy. The loss of confidence that many citizens clearly have in public institutions is also a problem for municipalities, including in Wolfsburg. Attempts are being made to counteract this by means of participatory and collaborative methods of working with citizens. In doing this, a vital task is to develop new communication methods and find new points of access to reach groups that are isolated socially or in terms of participation – for example, groups in precarious living situations, migrant groups or disaffected and ‘apolitical’ youth. As a consequence of the increase in immigration in recent years, integrating so many women and men, teenagers, unaccompanied minors and children from diverse nations and cultures, with varying residency statuses and levels of education has created manifold challenges at the municipal level. Linking integration and prevention is absolutely essential.

Radicalised young people and their families live in our city, so it is our task to look at their motives and interests in depth. Returnees from the Islamic State are also arriving in our municipalities, and, together with law enforcement authorities, we must prepare ourselves and take the necessary measures. Their presence and the knowledge that radicalised groups live in our city may have an impact on our ability to coexist and our city's reputation, and may even discourage companies from settling here.

Because of their proximity to the citizens, the direct contact they have, their knowledge of local problems and the public services that they provide in areas like youth work, education, health, sport, policing and many more, the local municipal authorities are well placed to coordinate measures for the prevention of radicalisation.

*Generally speaking, whenever questions relating to the radicalisation of young people by extreme right-wing, religiously inspired or hateful ideologies of any kind arise in any part of the complex educational landscape, the local municipal structures should*



***be the first port of call and – where necessary – contact should be established through these to institutions at the state level.***

The election of the far-right AfD to many local councils, state parliaments and the Bundestag has made it clear in recent years that radicalisation prevention must give equal consideration to right-wing populist and extreme right-wing tendencies as it does to extremist Islamism. Since these two phenomena can be mutually dependent and because a one-sided focus on one form of extremism tends to contribute to stigmatisation, the key is to systematically develop and interconnect activities and prevention services that are already in place and to anchor them in a holistic strategy. A good basis for this, which also avoids unnecessary redundancies, is to anchor extremism prevention in municipal crime prevention.

All of this is rooted in the city's basic approach of pursuing peaceful, democratic and tolerant coexistence.

**The role of the local municipal authorities is thus to coordinate the crime prevention network and the municipal system of education and integration management to ensure the best results. Besides the deployment of resources and their management across the various systems involved, this also includes the development of a joint position or common understanding of 'political education and a basic democratic attitude' (similar to the Wolfsburg model of education), which should be shared by as many relevant actors in the municipality as possible.**

If they are to function, networks need a common goal as well as tangible benefits. This joint position can be an engine for the development and orientation of the actors participating in the networks. This facilitates the long-term management of the networks. The joint position should be presented to the City Council as a proposed resolution. The policy discussions among members of the committees on youth, schools, the Bildungshaus, social issues, integration, civic services and the Council provides a good basis for a broad consensus. Representatives of local initiatives (Live Democracy!, events, lectures, debates, etc.) must also be involved. A network centre (Dialogue Centre), links to the municipal executive level and the support of the city mayor are also vital. The strategy of the local municipal authorities should be further developed on this basis.

## Experts

### Training

In order to enable the spread of specialist knowledge and increase awareness of extremism prevention, the Dialogue Centre initiated and launched a 'living skills matrix' for specialists from all disciplines in 2018. Its task is to develop and run effective prevention services with local partners, to be the first point of contact in the event of problematic behaviour and to forward information to the Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre according to an agreed communication/case-monitoring protocol. To this end, an 'expert dialogue' model in which specialists train municipal experts in skills related to extremism prevention was developed as part of the 'Wolfsburger Präventionsweg' (Wolfsburg prevention concept). In the years to come, additional networks of this kind are to be established and coordinated by the Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre. As well as imparting knowledge on the phenomenon of radicalisation and examining the participants' attitudes on topics such as Islam,

intercultural differences, and the perspectives of perpetrators and victims, the intensive training also takes account of the information needs of the various participants, and its contents adjust and evolve with each new cycle. This approach is the same as that used when training multipliers. The goal is for each local system to develop its own permanent network.

### Key features of the 'expert dialogue':

- Enabling specialists within the administration and other Wolfsburg institutions to appropriately deal with extremism and radicalisation
- Developing a consistent joint prevention strategy for Wolfsburg
- Phased model including pilot phase with selected institutions
- Inclusion of experience from the various working areas (interdisciplinary selection of participants)
- Networking of staff in the course of the modules / network-building
- Development of clear routines for staff in line with the action strategy as defined in the 'Wolfsburg prevention concept'

### Goals:

- Developing a consistent prevention concept
- Promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, entering into dialogue and becoming familiar with different ways of working and perspectives
- The contents of the modules are aligned with the participants' roles and requirements
- Developing a common position on topics such as 'municipal values', our municipal duty; speaking the same 'technical language'
- Developing practicable strategies for action
- Establishing a municipal prevention network

### Possible modules:

- Defining values and developing positions on complex issues: 'Our canon of values'
- Our 'municipal duty' – between acculturation and intercultural openness
- A phenomenological consideration of democracy, Islam, Islamism and Islamophobia
- Psychodynamic and social aspects of radicalisation
- How do we experience (young) people and systems that become radicalised? Do we know their biographies and backgrounds?
- The rudiments of constructive prevention work and 'de-radicalisation' in religiously motivated radicalisation/extremism
- Social media and radicalisation: What do we know? What are we aware of?

The term ‘expert dialogue’ has been consciously selected here, since we assume that the various professions will already have been made aware of the subject matter via diverse information events and can contribute a range of expert knowledge from their various fields due to their professional backgrounds. In addition to intensive training, the aim is also to promote inter-institutional exchange. It is hoped that this expert dialogue is merely the starting point and will lead to an ongoing series.

At the same time, connections should be made to the social environments of children, adolescents and families. We consider it important that prevention is understood to be interdisciplinary and that a common definition of prevention as well as common prevention goals and pedagogical and professional standards are agreed. These must then flow into corresponding guidelines. Both the school and day-care landscapes already have sessions (conferences of the school and day-care centre management) that have been tried and tested over many years and have already intensively developed overarching concepts and positions on various themes. These must now be utilised to anchor prevention in school programmes and day-care concepts in the long term. The Dialogue Centre is responsible for monitoring and managing this.

### *Key priorities*

#### *Day-care staff – balancing diversity and participation*

The latest evaluations of all Wolfsburg’s day-care centres (conducted by Institut Educert, Prof. Tietze, Berlin, known as PädQUIS since July 2019) concluded that initial progress had been made in implementing models of social and intercultural learning and participation, but that there is potential for further development. This will be a major theme in efforts to improve the quality of Wolfsburg’s child day-care centres in the coming years. Given that the proportion of children and adolescents in Wolfsburg with a family history of migration has reached 50 per cent, there is a need for action here. Specific measures designed to take account of diversity and encourage participation need to be agreed with the bodies responsible for running Wolfsburg’s day-care centres. Implementation will be supported via the skills development programme run by the Bildungshaus for child day-care centres and family centres, which offers training for multipliers as well as modular training for entire teams. Under the integration plan adopted by the City Council, Wolfsburg has established a trainer pool for the enhancement of intercultural skills among city employees. Day-care centres may now take advantage of this. Some centres have already developed and begun to implement their own plans, and others can learn from their experiences.

The city of Wolfsburg has also been granted the ‘Child-Friendly Municipality’ seal (Siegel der kinderfreundlichen Kommunen). This entails obligations in certain areas, such as the creation of opportunities for participation for children and teenagers in the city’s facilities, institutions, political bodies and administration. A network of trained participation coaches is available to support the facilities. It is at early care, day-care and family centres that the first changes in the families are reflected. There, we increasingly observe children who are impacted by neo-Salafist patterns of childrearing. Children refuse to sit beside other children, to take part in certain activities or express certain attitudes. At the same time, challenges arise in the cooperation with parents who reject the concepts of diversity and heterogeneity in favour of segregation and prejudice. This leads to discussions of the rules and policies that apply within the centres, and

educators are in increasing need of advice and support in dealing with such situations. In the interplay between the rights of the parents and the welfare of the child, training measures and close coordination via the networks with youth welfare and the Dialogue Centre are required. The day-care centres are conceived as places of mutual respect, positive values, open communication and diversity.

However, an intercultural child care institution must also empower parents – both those with and those without a family history of migration – in their parental skills, taking a skills-centric view and considering the various cultural and linguistic skills as benefits. Suitable measures, developed jointly by both staff and parents and discussed at regular learning days and parent events, provide a good starting point for promoting coexistence and appropriate behaviour at the facilities.

The Dialogue Centre makes every effort to ensure that the staff in day-care and family centres are not left to deal with this macro-social problem alone. By means of both training programmes and the provision of information, people are encouraged to overcome their inhibitions and take advantage of the available support networks. At the same time, training and skills enhancement measures should also help ensure that both children and parents feel secure in establishing relationships with staff and that the latter do not in fact make some situations worse by means of hasty misjudgements or their own prejudices and attitudes. The actual challenge here is in fact radicalisation itself, which has no place in a child-centred, child-oriented environment and places demands on the educational personnel for which their training never prepared them. For this reason, the curricula used to train educational personnel need to include modules on both intercultural and political education and on the prevention of radicalisation. The Ministry of Science and Culture and the Education Authority of Lower Saxony (Landesschulbehörde) should include these topics in the curricula for specialist schools, vocational colleges and universities.

The educational partnership with parents places many demands on child day-care centres. The pluralisation and individualisation of the various forms of family, cultural and linguistic diversity, and disparate opportunities for participation and access to education have multiplied both the tasks day care is expected to perform and the expectations placed upon it. Day care is where education and integration begin. The opportunities it creates should be available to everyone and should not depend on the local finances of each municipality. The federal government, state and municipality should share the burdens of good primary prevention.

#### *Social pedagogues in general social services – balancing parental rights and child welfare*

The number of cases where either judges or law enforcement authorities ask the Wolfsburg youth welfare office (Jugendamt) to consider removing children from returnee parents because their welfare is critically endangered is growing. Discussions of the following questions are ongoing: ‘When is the welfare of a child endangered? Is it enough for a child to be growing up in a family with extremist parents? Does leaving Germany for an IS territory amount to child endangerment?’ Removing children from their family is a serious intervention and must only be done after careful consideration and based on sufficient evidence. Are the parents’ views enough or are there other factors to be taken into consideration, such as the trauma experienced by the children after a

stay in Syria, observations made by day-care centre staff and their assessment of the developmental level of the children and their behaviour in day care, the observations and evaluations made by general social services personnel in contact with the mother? It is also necessary to assess whether or not the child is enabled to grow up participating in education, health and culture. We also ask ourselves how we act towards families with other extremist tendencies. Are there forms of behaviour that endanger children's welfare that are nonetheless accepted? What about families who join cults, for example, or those that are involved in far-right or extreme left subcultures? Which youth welfare institutions are best suited to work with these children and families in a way that best serves the children's welfare? Are suitable foster families and youth welfare facilities available that can work appropriately with the children that are removed from their families, ensuring among other things successful identity development? Together with the state of Bavaria, Lower Saxony is currently establishing a working group to consider what the youth welfare offices can do in such cases. We also consider it vital that the Commission of Youth Welfare Offices in Lower Saxony and Bremen, the German Association for Public and Private Welfare and other experts in youth welfare, as well as the relevant committees of the Lower Saxon and German Associations of Cities (Städtetage), deal with the issues intensively and in a balanced manner. Liaising with law enforcement authorities is also significant to ensure that the focus is on the welfare of the child and not on prospective, prophylactic security concerns. Finally, the demands made on the intercultural competences of the personnel are changing, which means they have to enhance their repertoire of strategies to deal with diverse child-raising styles and familial constellations. A multilingual and multicultural team would be ideal.

## Target groups

### *Girls, women and mothers*

When the Dialogue Centre was first established, the prevention of radicalisation was focused without exception on young men. In the meantime it has become apparent in Wolfsburg, as elsewhere, that the security authorities are correct in their estimation that women are increasingly active in Salafist circles. Though they first came to the attention of authorities as 'girlfriends', women were later observed to have left Germany for Syria – both with and without accompanying children. Female returnees are now a significant focus of our work, and we find women to be playing an ever-greater role in the development of networks. This tendency has been confirmed in discussions with our network partners.

Among the various target groups for the secondary and tertiary prevention of radicalisation, our work has so far concentrated on multipliers and 'affected individuals'. However, we now consider it necessary to also take families, and especially mothers, into consideration in the development and provision of preventive measures.

### *Support services for the familial environment of radicalised individuals*

One target group that has received attention in recent months is the mothers of young people affected by radicalisation. It continues to be difficult for them to seek support. Their families often blame them for the radicalisation of their children – they are even accused by their own husbands of failing as mothers or raising the children 'the wrong way'. Shame and uncertainty often hold them back from accepting offers of help and

support. The Prevention of Extremism Dialogue Centre was able to build trust through a female member of staff who also has a family background of migration and speaks Tunisian, French and Arabic. Mothers now turn to this member of staff when they have questions, fears or problems raising their children. This network must be expanded in the future and professional counselling and support services should be developed.

In this context, the project from 'Women Without Borders' is interesting. It has been running since 2012 in countries ranging from Nigeria to Pakistan, and most recently also in Austria and Belgium. Mothers should be trained to recognise the first signs of radicalisation and, above all, enabled to react accordingly. The 'district mother' model currently in place in Wolfsburg should be enhanced with other services and further developed along the lines of 'Women Without Borders'. At the core of both offerings is the development of relationships and the building of self-confidence. The services available can be advertised in day-care centres and schools for all 'concerned' mothers and should be independent of nationality, religion and origin. They support mothers who try to proactively engage in dialogue with their sons and daughters and those who need help and support to counteract radicalisation. The mothers get to know the support services and above all the faces behind them, allowing the establishment of personal relationships.

It is also conceivable that a comparable service for fathers could be offered by the Wolfsburg Väterbüro. This could lead to both groups subsequently functioning as multipliers for other mothers and fathers. From our experience with affected mothers, we have seen that their children's radicalisation or departure from Germany for Syria is regarded as a stigma, with families therefore often reacting with silence and the apportioning of blame. We recognise these mothers are frequently overburdened, yet they refrain from accepting help and support, let alone any psychological counselling. By means of multipliers and the establishment of personal relationships, these fears can be abated and the counsellors' obligation to confidentiality explained.

The range of services available to girls and young women is not yet very broad. The establishment of a youth club at the Islamic Culture Centre is still in its initial phases but is sure to become an interesting venue and one that will be acceptable to the parents. It will be led by young men and women from the community who have trained in youth leadership at the Stadtjugendring youth organisation. In addition, the local municipal authorities are funding the 'Rote Zora' – a girls' café and place for young women where boys and men are not allowed. The Rote Zora has undertaken outreach educational services in refugee housing facilities with the goal of 'offering space and opportunities for girls and young women'. Efforts by women educators to involve mosques and Muslim communities in their work with women and girls have so far proven fruitless. It is nevertheless possible that cooperation is established here in the future and facilitates access to the target group. The provision of open-access child and youth services specifically geared towards girls in girl-only spaces should also be expanded more rapidly.

### *Fathers*

Fathers whose sons left Germany for Syria tried in various ways to stop them from leaving. They locked them in, took away their passports, tried to get the city authorities to confiscate their passports, cooperated with law enforcement agencies or even flew to Turkey to fetch their sons back. They contacted the city mayor or me as a city councillor, but they did not seek help from a counselling unit.

While the establishment of the intercultural Väterbüro made it far easier to reach fathers in immigrant communities, the affected fathers did not perceive this as an offer of help. By working with the fathers in the Väterbüro, it has nonetheless been possible to break down ingrained stereotypes and prejudices on both sides and to enter into dialogue on the challenges of raising children. It is also only fair to acknowledge here that family education service providers and charitable organisations have themselves only begun to develop services aimed at reaching this target group in recent years. We assume that fathers have a fundamental interest in the positive, successful development and education of their children and that they can also participate in this. Their role in childrearing is caught between two worlds: the culture they experienced and the one their children are growing up in. We are currently considering whether it is necessary to establish a forum just for fathers from immigrant communities that would provide them with information, allow them to enter into dialogue, discuss their experiences with each other on topics including the development phases of adolescent radicalisation. This would enable the development of relationships of trust that could strengthen the fathers' child-raising skills and ability to support their children. Suitable venues for this could be the Väterbüro, family education centres, child day-care centres or family centres.

### *Adolescents and young adults*

#### *Prevention programmes in schools*

Schools are a focus for the development of programmes for the prevention of radicalisation. Funding programmes have been established at both the federal and state level for a range of providers, who then approach the schools. Ideally, the local municipal authorities, who are already active in this field, would be involved at both the development stage and in the implementation of the programmes. They should be capable of being integrated into the local prevention strategy. Moreover, it is more effective to forge multi-professional teams that can strengthen existing structures such as school social work by integrating external providers into the existing networks of the schools. Resources are more often wasted here than effectively anchored in school structures. To effectively anchor prevention strategies in schools, it is essential that headteachers get behind them and recognise the need for school management to play a leading role on this topic. This includes establishing the prevention of radicalisation, political education and the teaching of democracy as part of the school's mission statement. This raises the chance of long-term implementation, both in the education of the pupils and in the training of the teachers. Other than this, it depends on the commitment of individual teachers. Whether a school seeks certification as a 'prevention school' is a major decision on par with the question of whether to seek certification as a STEM school or a Europaschule.

It is also strongly advisable to analyse the school landscape together with the local municipal authorities and the Education Authority of Lower Saxony within the framework of the public/municipal community of responsibility and to concentrate measures rather than spreading them too thinly. The analysis should also clarify where supplementary primary preventive services dealing generally with the different types of radicalisation, manipulation in the media, participation and democracy are required and where it is essential to deal intensively with specific target groups.

One significant topic will be establishing inter-religious dialogue in schools as part of an adapted 'values and norms' curriculum. In addition, the teaching of Arabic in primary

schools began in summer 2018/2019 on the initiative of the city of Wolfsburg together with the Ministry of Culture and the Education Authority of Lower Saxony. This provides parents with an alternative to Arabic lessons in the mosques. Expansion to secondary schools is planned.

#### *Media competence and online prevention*

Media competence is an increasingly important aspect of discussions on digitalisation. Although it is not yet established as a school subject, there are a number of multidisciplinary avenues for young people to be taught media skills thanks to cooperation between schools and the municipal media centre, the city youth development office, libraries and learning centres. The focus of this is not only on research skills or the 'footprints' social media users leave online, but increasingly also on promoting media skills when dealing with online content. This concerns fake news, the manipulation of opinion and much more. Something that we consider to have been neglected by social workers (including those that work in the youth centres and public youth work services), teachers as well as in the portfolio of the Dialogue Centre is online prevention. There is often a lack of both skills and resources in this area. While experts know in theory that radicalisation often occurs online or partly online, they are frequently ignorant of the details. Though it is not possible to have relevant experts in every institution, it is important that the prevention of radicalisation incorporates methods and services that also teach young people the media skills necessary for dealing with religious and/or extremist content. This task falls equally to local and state-level authorities under the concept of the state/municipal 'partnership of responsibility' (Verantwortungsgemeinschaft). One aspect of this is to include appropriate content in the curricula for skills development; the other is to establish cooperation between schools and youth services to ensure that they supplement and support each other's strengths. This is not a project or a temporary service offering but rather an elementary educational and preventive task.

#### *Open-access youth work with teenage boys*

From working with offenders, we see clearly that boys seek role models, especially during puberty. They are searching for direction and identity. We recognise a very clear need to provide services that focus on relevant issues while also being tailored to individual needs and the building of trust. Only approaches that build trust around openness make it possible to work on changing values and attitudes.

#### *Unaccompanied minor refugees*

Over the last three years, Wolfsburg has taken in around 120 unaccompanied minors. The majority of these young people are male. Around half of them come from Afghanistan. They may have joined various groups on their travels, taken temporary jobs to earn money or experienced war or abuse along the way. At the same time, they have acquired a range of skills needed to survive. The experience of safety and the educational opportunities they were offered on arrival at youth welfare facilities was therefore very important for them. At first, many were tremendously motivated by this. In the meantime, they have realised that it takes a while to learn the language they need for education, that they need to train for a career, and they find the time everything takes frustrating. Twice, when applications for asylum were rejected, this has led to dramatic scenes, including one suicide attempt. From the outset, we have tried to offer supportive relationships that will

bring stability into the lives of these young people. Alongside the youth welfare facilities, Wolfsburg's 'Step by Step' programme has been an important point of contact for them. Some young refugees are also receptive to offerings with a religious component, especially when provided by people who speak the same language. In this way, many of them were spoken to by 'itinerant preachers', who invited them to visit Hannover. The close contacts among the partners within Wolfsburg's prevention network meant the Islamic Cultural Centre was able to encourage these preachers to refrain from speaking to and inviting minors without involving the youth welfare facilities. Another challenge these young refugees face is the transition to independent living. We seek to support them in applying for supervised accommodation and eventually renting their own apartments. In our professional opinion, it is vital that we seek to develop a system of transition management capable of supporting all unaccompanied minor foreigners in making the transition from supervised accommodation to independence. The job centre and other institutions within the communication model need to be involved in this and integrated into existing processes. A programme of follow-up care for young adult immigrants would also be useful.

### *Young adult immigrants*

The refugees who arrived in Wolfsburg were relatively quickly found homes distributed around the various city districts. Voluntary networks were formed throughout these districts and took on sponsorships, organised activities, accompanied the refugees to official appointments, set up swimming courses and bicycle workshops, and much more. Not only the length of the courses on offer but also the differing levels of education among the participants means that the route through the integration and language courses to integration in the working world is generally quite long. When they are not enrolled in some sort of programme, the young men often have nothing to do all day. Their uncertain prospects, the economic situation, being separated from their families, their experiences of war and violence – these can all lead to growing demoralisation as time drags on, especially since some of these men have still not had their asylum cases heard. In the long term, this can cause problems related to their own images of what being a man means, their masculinity and gender role. Such conditions can be fertile ground for depression, addiction, violence, criminality and radicalisation.

In addition to language and education services, internships, work shadowing opportunities, integration offerings from sports clubs, voluntary organisations, etc., it is our experience that there is a lack of places for these young people aged between 20 and 35 to meet up. It would have to be a place in which counselling is offered alongside leisure activities, a venue for events, somewhere where social 'dos and don'ts' could be explained and the young men could interact with Germans to practice the language and demonstrate their own skills. At the same time, they must be asked what they can contribute to ensuring their own successful integration and how they can cooperate with us to this end.

## Networking

### *Cooperation with religious communities and mosques*

Through the work of the Dialogue Centre and other Wolfsburg actors, the door has been opened in the last few years. However, aside from the 'Live Democracy!' project, there is

still a long way to go in collaboration on the basis of common principles. For cooperation with the mosques, it would be easier if the imams spoke German well. A lack of language skills is a hurdle, particularly for meaningful cooperation in the context of educational work. Collaboration within the civil-social network mentioned above offers more opportunities for the future.

### *Cooperation with the Education Authority of Lower Saxony in the context of the public/municipal partnership of responsibility*

In the context of municipal education management, the city of Wolfsburg can look back on almost ten years of cooperation with the Education Authority of Lower Saxony in the form of the public/municipal partnership of responsibility in various fields. Goals have been agreed on the basis of the Education Report and are being jointly pursued. As well as the staff of the Education Office, the agreed contract is supported by delegated teaching staff. Since the responsible department head of primary, Hauptschule/Realschule secondary schools and special schools is also the appointee of the Education Authority of Lower Saxony for the prevention of radicalisation, a member of the advisory board of the Competence centre for the prevention of Islamism in Lower Saxony (KIP NI) and participates in our Wolfsburg prevention network, conditions are ideal for shaping the further development of prevention services in this field on the basis of jointly agreed goals.

### *The role of law enforcement in the network/security clearance*

Collaboration between education and law enforcement in the area of secondary and tertiary prevention of radicalisation must be defined with complete transparency. Thanks to the Streetlife programme, Wolfsburg has many years of experience in collaboration between the public order and youth welfare offices and the police. We and our partners consider this cooperation to have been extremely successful, but it often leads to criticism and incomprehension in the youth welfare divisions of other regional authorities. They have claimed that social pedagogues and social workers have taken the side of the police and been too accepting of the law enforcement perspective, and that they should adopt a more critical stance in this area in particular. Social work, according to this criticism, stands for building relationships and trust, the police for repressive and controlling measures. In the ten years of collaboration in municipal security management, our experience has been very different. The police, public order office and youth welfare office were able to resolve issues through joint outreach work in the public sphere, in schools and youth centres and thus forestall conflicts and criminal acts. By undergoing training together in violence counselling, youth welfare and the police were able to take new approaches towards offender groups and achieve the lasting reintegration of those who perform criminal acts.

These experiences have already flowed into a cooperation agreement between the police, the local sports club VfL Wolfsburg, the public order office and youth welfare office, with a focus on football fan culture. These forms of cooperation should be carried over into every area of radicalisation prevention. A start has been made in the communication model that is currently being drawn up and the case conferences, which already involve youth welfare, the Dialogue Centre, the police, the State Security department of the Federal Criminal Police Office, the domestic intelligence services and KIP NI. However, challenges remain in taking this forward, especially in terms of the exchange of

information, due to the different legal stipulations that apply. This does not apply only to the exchange of information between youth welfare and law enforcement authorities but also to the exchange of information among law enforcement agencies themselves.

However, it must be borne in mind that youth welfare personnel or the staff of the Dialogue Centre do not simply disclose information to the State Security department of the Federal Criminal Police Office and the domestic intelligence services in a one-way process, particularly when there is no possibility of this resulting in feedback that could help to improve their own efforts. The case conferences rather serve the purpose of collective responsibility for the prevention of radicalisation. They should be enhanced with additional coordinated preventive measures and approaches and new working formats that can develop into practical joint projects. The planned joint training modules provide an excellent opportunity for future developments in this regard. One concern for law enforcement authorities in this context is the security clearance of the Dialogue Centre's staff. If security checks were carried out, a different level of information exchange would be possible. The city still needs to adopt a formal position in this regard.

## Sustainability/evaluation

A distinction has to be made between universal, primary prevention measures and specific, secondary and tertiary prevention services. In future, target groups, particularly for secondary and tertiary prevention, need to be defined more precisely, goals set more clearly and evaluation taken into consideration right from the start to ensure, above all, that the measures developed are effective. For the evaluation of individual measures and projects that will be implemented within the framework of the Beccaria programme of the Crime Prevention Council of Lower Saxony (CPC), the city of Wolfsburg employs a crime prevention specialist; two of our cooperation partners also possess in-house specialists. The Beccaria standards can also serve here as benchmarks for monitoring project planning and implementation. This would enable self-evaluation and a stronger focus on quality in projects for the prevention of radicalisation, even without external supervision.

The issue of sustainability must also be taken into consideration from the outset when introducing new programmes. In our experience, all programmes that are set up for the long term and, above all, provided with a firm structural basis have a greater chance of having long-lasting effects. For this reason, it is the responsibility of the local municipal authorities in particular to examine funding programmes with regard to the following:

- the extent to which financing is time-limited,
- whether they only function by means of additional resources that will no longer be available once the project ends,
- or whether they target training, multipliers, permanent networks, change and adaptation of structures.

It would nevertheless be desirable to cooperate with researchers on the evaluation of the strategy and individual measures and projects in terms of their efficacy.

Any such evaluation should focus on the following questions:

- Are the structure and the measures appropriate for the actual challenges?

- Are we here in Wolfsburg taking account of research findings and practical experiences from other municipalities, and even from other European countries?
- Are the skills taught by the Dialogue Centre appropriate to meet our challenges and requirements, and could they be used to derive transferable quality standards?
- Is the prevention of radicalisation successfully linked with other strategies by the city of Wolfsburg, for example in integration, in education, etc.?
- Are the target groups of the various preventive measures effectively involved in planning and further development processes? What influence does this have on the efficacy of the measures?
- Are the measures efficient and above all effective? Are the structures sustainable?
- Are sufficient communication measures implemented in order to reach the target groups, participants and stakeholders?

Constant exchange between the local municipal authorities, state and federal government and academia is another factor that is essential for the development of sustainable approaches. Exchange with other European countries should also be promoted, as some of these have more experience. We can learn from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Norway, all of which have developed very interesting programmes in recent years, particularly in the area of mentoring and relationship work with vulnerable groups. Lower Saxony has initiated various events based on this approach of international exchange in Brussels that proved helpful, interesting and important (Radikalisierung – RATlos? – Prävention in der Kommune 2015) and which should be continued by those responsible in the municipalities and in the field.

## Sustainability in the Dialogue Centre

The implementation of a prevention strategy takes time. The expectations placed on the Dialogue Centre by the network partners, clients, communities and, not least, the media have grown substantially. It is vital that the Dialogue Centre's ability to carry out the tasks assigned to it with the resources it has at its disposal is regularly examined. Similar to the counselling units at state level, enquiries about counselling from individuals, family members and education specialists are growing, as is the complexity of the cases.

## Communication and public relations work

Communication is a very central aspect of implementing a local prevention strategy.

It serves the transparent provision of information to the network and the participating partners. There are regular meetings, protocols and written agreements as well as discussions of the current status of the measures and projects.

External communication has been far more challenging and complex. It has been necessary to inform the public regularly and proactively on the current status of the prevention programmes, even if the permanent demand for visible results could not and cannot be met. We avoid ever giving reports or interviews on preventive measures that pertain to individual or specific groups, since this would endanger the trust in the Dialogue Centre's work. In the interviews we have given in the past, the focus was on

communicating the general strategy. It's not always possible to satisfy the press with this. We also avoid the use of certain terms, attributions, references to places and polarising topics in our communications and concentrate on the importance of social cohesion and democratic education. Since enquiries in the past were always in connection with current events, arrests, judicial proceedings or returnees, future challenges will include the development of a communication strategy that can keep the public informed about the efforts made by the local municipal authorities regardless of such 'headline-grabbing' stories.

## CHAPTER 6.2

### The state level\* – the examples of Schleswig-Holstein and Hesse

Gregor Dietz, Antje Gansewig

#### Gregor Dietz

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#### Antje Gansewig

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\* This article was written in June 2018 and amended slightly in June 2021.



First and foremost, the prevention of extremism can be understood as the promotion of democratic processes and values. Implicit in this is the task of continually raising awareness in society as a whole that the democratic form of government is by no means static and guaranteed to last indefinitely; only the constant maintenance and safeguarding of democratic values and culture can protect in the long term against anti-democratic ambitions. In light of this, numerous state and civil structures and services have been established at the state level in recent years in the field of extremism prevention. These include general measures for the dissemination of democratic values among the entire population, specific counselling services for victims, parents, schools and extra-curricular institutions and local authorities, and specific work with those who are seeking to leave extremist movements.<sup>1</sup>

The prevention of extremism must address the reasons for the emergence of extremism in the broadest terms. Every case of extremism is preceded by a briefer or longer phase of radicalisation. For prevention, this means that action can be taken at various points, either to prevent potential radicalisation in advance by means of immunisation, to halt incipient radicalisation via distancing interventions or to undo already consolidated radicalisation by means of de-radicalisation measures. As a rule, the earlier incipient radicalisation is detected and countermeasures are initiated, the better the chances are for successful prevention.<sup>2</sup>

‘We must thus be vigilant and attentive so as to recognise the first signs of radicalisation in young men and women. The earlier these can be addressed, the earlier further dangers can be prevented.’<sup>3</sup>

In this vein, therefore, preventative measures include interventions of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. This means that we must consider measures for the prevention of extremism in a wide variety of circumstances. There is a need for action wherever: 1) it is possible to influence children, teenagers and young adults – be it online or in ‘the real world’, 2) radicalisation can be recognised, 3) political education in the broadest sense takes place, 4) youth pedagogy or social work is carried out, and 5) de-radicalisation and reintegration into society are undertaken.

This analysis of the situation shows how varied the field of extremism prevention is, how different the individual needs and the measures required to meet them are, and how great the challenge of accomplishing this task is.

In this context, we have to develop and implement measures to prevent all kinds of extremism.

Consequently, a vast number of authorities, ministries, governmental and non-governmental organisations, institutions, sponsors, associations, schools, etc. are involved.

This diverse spectrum of needs creates tremendous requirements in terms of coordination, and corresponding efforts are necessary if the measures are to be effective, properly targeted and mutually reinforcing.

<sup>1</sup> Gruber/Lützing 2017; Trautmann/Zick 2016; Hoffmann et al. 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mansour 2014; Mücke 2016a, 2016b; El-Mafaalani et al. 2016; Ceylan/Kiefer 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Mücke 2016a, 222.

Thus, it is necessary for each state in the Federal Republic of Germany to possess an organisation which – either directly or by funding civil society actors – provides appropriate assistance and initiates suitable measures.

Ideally, this organisational unit should be established at the ministerial level and mandated with the task of centrally coordinating the prevention of extremism by an executive decree of the state government. By this means, the will of the state government for a coordinated approach can be expressed without interfering with the existing jurisdictions of the various departments.

Locating the coordination body within a ministry has a range of advantages in terms of its ability to perform its role. For example, it can collaborate and negotiate with other departments on an even playing field. The following departments (at a minimum) have their own competences in the prevention of extremism:

The Department of Education is responsible for schools in each federal state – these are places of fundamental importance for the prevention of radicalisation. In schools, the conditions are ideal for prevention work, since children and young people from different social classes, cultures, religions and ethnicities continuously come together for a relatively long period of time. Young people are a key target group for extremists, who specifically address issues that are important for that age group, such as the search for identity or the meaning of life, and promise guidance.<sup>4</sup> The priority of educational measures in schools should be to strengthen desirable attitudes that already exist. The focus is on mediating openness and tolerance with regard to different religious, ideological and political beliefs and values. Besides formal education in the subject of politics, schools’ educational mandate also includes strengthening democratic values and attitudes so as to prevent radicalisation processes from occurring in the first place. Schools are also an important location for refugee education and integration work. Islamic religious education classes could also play a significant role in relation to religiously based extremism. Even if the prevention of radicalisation is not the main goal of such classes, they could provide an opportunity for students to learn about the foundations of Islam together with the means to critically reflect upon religious texts and sources.

The responsibilities of the Social Affairs Department include the protection of children and adolescents, youth welfare institutions, refugees and their integration and the integration of foreigners in general into society. Similar to schools, youth welfare services could offer ideal conditions for recognising and countering radicalisation tendencies as early as possible: because they work continuously with children and teenagers for many years, youth welfare institutions build strong relationships and provide support on the ground. Ideally, the staff is sensitive to any changes in the young people they look after – including changes that could indicate incipient radicalisation, such as withdrawal from the family and (existing) friendship groups, changes in the way they dress or the expression of politically or ideologically extreme attitudes.

The responsibilities of the Department of Justice include the penal system, i.e. the correctional facilities in which convicted criminals, including extremist criminals, are detained. One task and challenge for the penal system is to prevent prisoners from radicalising others or being radicalised while in detention. Another is to guarantee that

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Herding/Langner 2015, 14 et seq.; Glaser 2016.

all possible interventions for de-radicalisation are taken to ensure effective protection of the public after release.

The on-demand provision of spiritual counselling to Muslim prisoners is becoming increasingly important in the correctional system, especially since counselling for Muslim prisoners by imams that goes beyond basic religious requirements not only serves to adequately ensure religious freedom, but also makes an important contribution to the prevention of extremism.

The Justice Department is also responsible for probation and parole, during which time convicted offenders should be re-socialised.

The responsibilities of the Department of the Interior include the police and the domestic intelligence services. The latter are responsible for the surveillance of extremist activities. The domestic intelligence services in the state of Hesse, for example, also offers preventive measures in the form of information events and counselling. The police service is responsible for law enforcement in the event that a crime is suspected and hence investigates criminal acts committed by extremists. It also has the task of ensuring public safety. With regard to identified extremists, this means evaluating the risk they pose and initiating and/or executing appropriate security measures. This includes, in the broadest sense, the initiating of distancing or de-radicalisation measures with the goal of reintegration.

Establishing the coordination unit within a ministry makes it possible to suggest certain indicated measures to the head of the ministry, which may also be accompanied by the provision of budgetary funds. Since the prevention of religiously motivated extremism, in particular, is largely uncharted territory, there has been little experience to date on which those responsible for prevention could base their work. This is a field of experimentation in which pioneering work has to be carried out. The proximity to the heads of the ministries and to the budgetary unit could ensure that good ideas are implemented quickly and effectively. Moreover, proximity to ministerial press and public relations offices is also advantageous, as it enables the coordination unit to promptly publicise important topics and developments. Furthermore, contact with representatives of the media provides opportunities to raise public awareness of certain issues beyond the issuing of press releases.

One can say that horizontal integration or cooperation among the ministries mentioned above is the basis for the effective coordination of extremism prevention measures in any German state.

In addition, a coordination unit is tasked with vertical coordination: generally speaking, the recipients of preventative measures are, alongside the teenagers/adolescents/young adults themselves, those professional groups that come into contact with them. This concerns, first and foremost, teachers, social workers and youth workers, employees in job centres, but also kindergarten teachers, members of mosque communities and employees of municipalities with an interest in the topic.

Adolescents usually come into contact with extremist movements because they are searching for guidance, meaning and community in ways that is typical of that age group. Successful prevention for this group consists in providing alternative answers to their questions, for example, with regard to the meaning of life or identity. Referring to religiously motivated extremism, Götz Nordbruch notes:

‘The goal of preventative work is the deconstruction of the narrative and supposedly easy answers offered by Salafists. Preventive work should both create alternative pathways that counter the attractiveness of the Salafist message and demonstrate real prospects within society. Participation in society has to be more attractive than withdrawal into the *Ummah*, the community of Muslims, as propagated by Salafists.’<sup>5</sup>

Professional groups working with children and teenagers at risk of radicalisation particularly require specialist information about (the process of) radicalisation and extremism as well as about the availability of support services, such as counselling units for relatives. It is also important to strengthen the ability to react appropriately in cases of conflict.<sup>6</sup>

- 1 For these needs, the coordination unit is intended to be the point of contact for all state-level departments and agencies. Additionally, it needs to be able to provide appropriate support measures and systems that enable it to effectively fulfil all the requirements made of it. To this end, the state government should establish a state programme administered by the coordination unit and provided with sufficient funds. These can be used to support various projects for the prevention, early identification and reversal of radicalisation processes, including counselling units for victims and relatives, de-radicalisation work and projects dedicated to the training of multipliers. Beyond the state programme, the coordination unit should also be the point of contact for other departments and agencies that request training interventions.
- 2 At the same time, the coordination unit should function as the State Coordination Unit (Landeskoordinierungsstelle, LKS) responsible for accessing and distributing the various sources of funding made available by the federal government. Noteworthy current offerings include the funding made available within the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs’ ‘Live Democracy!’ programme as well as funding from the Federal Ministry of the Interior’s ‘Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe’ (Social Cohesion through Participation) programme, as well as funding provided by the European Union.
- 3 Since the LKS has an overview of the funding opportunities, it can call on suitable service-providing agencies to apply for the various funds and can initiate joint application processes. By pledging the required co-financing, projects can be supported that would otherwise fail due to a lack of funds on the part of civil society organisations or local authorities.  
  
By means of these various funding opportunities, a variety of projects/measures can be initiated and tried out, acting as a kind of toolbox for the various service providers. In this respect, the coordination unit serves as a central switching point between the funding made available by the German state and the EU, the resources made available via state programmes and the needs formulated by civil society and/or municipal service providers.
- 4 The coordination unit also supports research. This is fundamental because few studies have examined the impacts of extremism prevention interventions.

<sup>5</sup> Nordbruch 2017, 276.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. also Borrmann 2015.

Especially in this field, the maxim ‘quality over quantity’ should certainly apply. The establishment of a sound evaluation culture for counselling and project measures would be desirable.<sup>7</sup> Empirical evaluations can be used to ensure quality and the more effective deployment of resources. Projects whose preventive effects are proven should then be rolled out generally as part of the standard service offering and used as examples of good practice. Finally, the coordination unit can act as a contact point for practitioners, arranging contacts with researchers.

- 5 The coordination unit can serve as a contact point for enquiries of all kinds: from teachers, teenagers, mayors, private citizens or civil society stakeholders, etc. It can also advise on opportunities for project funding and on application processes, as well as on how to deal with (acute) problems. Depending on the type and content of the enquiry, the coordination unit would contact the appropriate experts, institutions and existing service structures. The goal is to involve, liaise with, coordinate and interconnect existing structures and competencies in order to achieve synergy effects.

As we can see, the state level has a central management and coordination function in the prevention of extremism. Furthermore, it assumes fundamental information transfer, advisory, networking and quality assurance tasks. It forms the interface between the federal, municipal and local levels (Fig. 1).

To be able to fulfil this very challenging task, the coordination body must have sufficient expert staff.

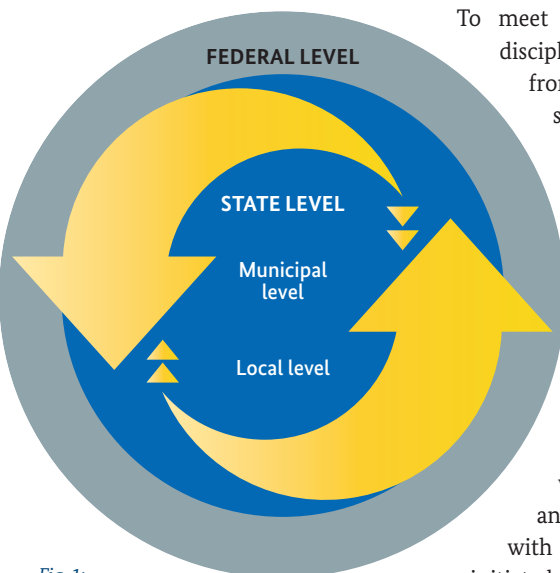


Fig. 1:  
Position of the state level  
interfacing between the federal  
and municipal/local levels  
(illustration: A. Gansewig)

To meet these complex challenges, an interdisciplinary approach is essential. Experts from law enforcement should be joined by specialists from the fields of political and social science, as well as specialists in public administration who can ensure that the state programme is managed in compliance with the requirements of the state budgetary regulations and the administrative regulations.

Particularly in the area of religiously motivated extremism, the possible risks require establishing an interface between civil society agencies working with those who have been radicalised and the law enforcement agencies charged with protecting safety. This interface can be initiated, designed and provided with ongoing expert support by the coordination body. If it is located within the Department of the Interior, the coordination unit will also have the contacts to the police and domestic intelligence services necessary for the management of dangerous situations.

Prevention work will only be successful in the long term if the goals and work of governmental and non-governmental agents are closely aligned. In this vein, work should be undertaken at the state level to establish and strengthen links and collaborative practices involving all relevant agencies. Fundamental to this is a negotiation process between the various actors built on respect for their different competencies and roles, awareness of their mutual dependency and the development of joint tasks and goals. Each of the partners has a specific set of experiences and skills and a specific approach to the promotion of democracy and the prevention of extremism. Thus, the networking method has several advantages:

- Determination of needs specific to the target groups
- Avoidance of double structures
- Pooling of services and resources
- Synergies through joint PR work
- Coordinated case management, quality improvement
- Promotion of new projects (opportunities for faster realisation)
- Exchange of experience, information and knowledge
- Pooling of skills and ideas
- etc.

In this context, the strengthening of civil society and voluntary activities is fundamental. Given the limited availability of resources, voluntary engagement needs to take place in a suitable framework if it is to have lasting and long-term effects. Volunteers can only operate effectively if they have access to expert advice and support. This can not only reduce the risk of volunteers being overwhelmed by the demands of their work and the challenges they face, which can otherwise lead to demotivation, but it also increase their confidence that they are acting in the right way and thus enhance their competences. Since democracy thrives on the active participation of its citizens, everyone who is already involved in its promotion should be supported and as many people as possible encouraged to join them in democratic development processes.

To effectively leverage synergies and avoid the duplication of structures, coordination processes will play an even more central role in the future. This requires trust and effective collaboration among those involved in prevention.



#### BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS:

- cooperative, equitable and on equal terms
- participatory, efficient, binding, non-bureaucratic, discreet and geared to the long term
- open, honest and mutually supportive

*Respectful communication and interaction as equals not only breaks down barriers and prejudices on both sides, but is also a critical prerequisite for the ability to trigger processes of change and transform them into specific activity.*

*Clear two-way communication regarding the specific roles and tasks of the various network partners means that any misunderstandings and expectations can be prevented or worked out in advance, ultimately leading to better mutual understanding.*

<sup>7</sup> Gansewig 2018, 480.

## Case study: the prevention of extremism in Hesse

How Hesse has reacted to the challenges of radicalisation and extremism is outlined below.

The Hessian Information and Competence Centre Against Extremism (HKE) was established in 2013 by executive decree within the state police headquarters (Landespolizeipräsidium), a department of the Hessian Ministry of the Interior and Sports (HMdIS). One central task was and remains the cross-phenomenal coordination of all Hessian programmes and projects for the prevention of extremism. State-wide initiatives for prevention and intervention against anti-constitutional activities from the fields of right-wing, left-wing and Islamist extremism are centrally registered, coordinated and optimised in the HKE.

The HKE is provided with a steering committee which comprises one representative each from the Justice, Social and Culture ministries as well as from the Hessian State Criminal Police Office and the Hessian domestic intelligence service. The committee may be expanded where required, and a representative of the Hessian State Agency for Civic Education (HLZ) has since also become a permanent member. The steering committee supervises the strategic orientation of the HKE and supports its networking activities.

Numerous projects and measures relating to the prevention of extremism are funded in Hesse from EU, federal and state programmes – for example from the Internal Security Fund (EU), the federal programmes ‘Live Democracy!’ and ‘Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe’ and the state programme ‘Hessen – aktiv für Demokratie und gegen Extremismus’ (Hesse – active for democracy and against extremism), which is administered by the HKE. Some of these projects and measures are state-wide, while others are limited to particular regions; some are co-financed, while others are funded exclusively by the state programme. In 2018, just under five million euro was made available from state funds alone for measures for the prevention, early detection and reversal of radicalisation processes in Hesse. This funded, for example, the Hessisches Präventionsnetzwerk gegen Salafismus (Hessian Prevention Network against Salafism) and the Demokratiezentrum Hessen (Hesse Democracy Centre) which coordinates the ‘beratungsNetzwerk hessen – gemeinsam für Demokratie und gegen Rechtsextremismus’ (Advisory Network Hesse – together for democracy and against right-wing extremism) (more on this below).

The state programme makes co-financing available for all Hessian ‘Partnerschaften für Demokratie’ (Partnerships for Democracy – PfD). The main provider of financing is the ‘Live Democracy!’ programme of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. Within the PfD framework, associations, projects and initiatives are supported at the municipal, regional and cross-regional levels that are dedicated to the promotion of democracy and diversity and, in particular, work against right-wing extremism (and Salafism) and forms of hatred focused on specific groups, such as racism and anti-Semitism. Funding has been utilised, for example, in prevention work in schools and to provide information and counselling services to teachers and social workers. This has led to a considerable increase in the number of PfDs in recent years (currently 29).

The HKE has also taken on the task of decentralising the coordination and optimisation of state-wide measures and projects for the prevention of extremism, centrally from

the Ministry of the Interior and Sport. Instead, the prevention of politically motivated crime will be organised by political and social scientists recruited at each of the state’s police headquarters. This is in line with the needs increasingly expressed lately by the local populations and service providers, for example in youth work, schools and local municipal authorities, for information, clarification and regional networking in relation to all kinds of extremist phenomena. Increasing awareness of available sources of funding in local areas can help to ensure that local prevention, intervention and de-radicalisation work is also supported financially. This can also lead to improvements in communication between the security authorities and civil society.

### *Hessian Prevention Network against Salafism*

Part and parcel of an effective and long-term approach is a wide range of offerings for prevention and intervention. In order to put together a viable concept, the specialists at the HKE have, for example, undertaken intensive exchanges with Islam specialists, experts in prevention and de-radicalisation work and representatives of religious communities. Furthermore, the German law enforcement agencies, working closely with the HKE, have analysed information on the radicalisation biographies and processes of individuals who left Germany for Syria out of motives related to Islamism. On the basis of these discussions and findings, the first state-wide Prevention Network against Salafism in Germany was launched in July 2014.

The concept of the Hessian Prevention Network against Salafism gives a central role to the ‘Zentrale Beratungsstelle Hessen – Religiöse Toleranz statt Extremismus’ (Advice Centre for Hesse – Religious Tolerance instead of Extremism). The Advice Centre was set up in close collaboration with the Advice Centre on Radicalisation at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) in Frankfurt am Main and integrated into the Violence Prevention Network (VPN), a civil society organisation. There are now two satellite offices in Kassel and Offenbach am Main. For 2018, the Hessian Ministry of the Interior funded the Advice Centre with a grant of 1,200,000 euro. The core tasks of the centre, which can be reached via the hotline +49 (0)69 272 999 97, include measures for prevention, intervention and assistance for those seeking to leave extremist groups. By these means, the state of Hesse has created a centre whose primary task is to work directly with radicalised Islamist individuals. The centre also advises and supports individuals affected by radicalisation processes, such as the family, friends, schoolmates or teachers. The services provided by the Advice Centre are free of charge to all persons in Hesse who are in need of advice and support in dealing with religiously motivated extremism. The staff at the VPN have cast the net very wide and offer those seeking help, relatives or those in the social environment of a radicalised person a broad spectrum of counselling and support services under one roof. These include:

- organising information and awareness-raising events,
- holding inter-religious workshops, and
- implementing projects to strengthen tolerance and democratic capacities.

Going far beyond these prevention measures, the experts at the VPN also seek out direct conversation with radicalised persons and those wanting to get out. The focus here is the triggering of a distancing process from the extremist scene. To this end, the VPN has put together a competent team of young educational specialists who have

the necessary experience and skills in pedagogical youth work. The specialists at the VPN also have a solid understanding of religion as well as experience in a wide variety of de-radicalisation work.

How important the Advice Centre is and, above all, how great the need is for a central counselling unit is reflected in the VPN's record so far. Since 2014, numerous information events have been held with influential members of the Muslim community, PTAs, school heads and teachers, with the primary goal of offering assistance, suggesting solutions to problems and teaching practical skills. In the area of de-radicalisation too, a number of – vulnerable and already radicalised – teenagers and young adults – have already received intensive support once the hardest step – making contact – had been taken.

### *Hesse Democracy Centre and the 'Advisory Network Hesse – together for democracy and against right-wing extremism'*

Right-wing extremists in schools, racist stereotypes, anti-Semitic slurs, neo-Nazis in the youth club – these and similar cases are part of everyday life in many German municipalities. In many places, people feel helpless to respond. To help people deal with such conflicts effectively, the 'Advisory Network Hesse – together for democracy and against right-wing extremism' offers professional support services. It provides confidential counselling, state-wide and free of charge, to schools, parents and family members, local municipal authorities, clubs and societies and others seeking help when faced with right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism, racism or Salafism. Since the summer of 2014, the 'Advisory Network Hesse' has also supported local municipal authorities in Hesse in accepting refugees. Before the refugees arrive or when dealing with xenophobic incidents, local authorities can be provided with a tailored advisory service that can contribute to the avoidance of conflicts and to de-escalation in connection with the accommodation of refugees.

In addition to the advisory network, the Democracy Centre in Marburg also coordinates further measures for the prevention of right-wing extremism. The services offered by the 'Rote Linie – Hilfen zum Ausstieg vor dem Einstieg' (Red Line – Help getting out before getting in) programme comprises two pillars: counselling and support, and information and training events. The programme attempts to prevent young people whose right-wing leanings are still only vague from crossing the 'red line' into organised right-wing extremism. The work can be undertaken jointly with parents, teachers or trainers, for example. Approaching affected individuals carefully and sensitively, setting boundaries and establishing relationships can contribute to interrupting the process of becoming involved in far-right scenes. The 'Rote Linie' is financed with funds from the federal 'Live Democracy!' programme and the state programme 'Hesse – active for democracy and against extremism'.

Since January 2015, the Bildungsstätte Anne Frank (Anne Frank Education Centre) in Frankfurt am Main has offered counselling services to victims and other people affected by right-wing extremist, racist and anti-Semitic violence. This is the first facility in Hesse to offer counselling specifically for these groups. Just like the 'Rote Linie' programme, this counselling service is co-financed by the state programme 'Hesse – active for democracy and against extremism'.

## Case study: the prevention of extremism in Schleswig-Holstein

From the beginning, the state of Schleswig-Holstein has pursued a strategy for preventing extremism that is both centralised and flexible. The central point of contact and coordination, responsible for the implementation of all state-wide initiatives, is a permanent office within the Landespräventionsrat (State Prevention Council – LPR) in the Ministry of the Interior. There is no duplication of structures. Needs are met flexibly as they arise.

The origins of extremism prevention in Schleswig-Holstein concerned right-wing extremism. Through the programme of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, a state coordination office for the prevention of right-wing extremism, the advisory network – to which both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders belong – and a mobile counselling team were established in 2009. To enhance the work of this phenomenon-focused advisory and support structure, to strengthen the work of civil society and to support education for democracy and tolerance, the state's own 'Landesprogramm zur Demokratieförderung und Rechtsextremismusbekämpfung' (State Programme for the Promotion of Democracy and Countering Right-Wing Extremism) was implemented in summer 2013. With the establishment of three more regional advisory bodies run by NGOs, an advisory service was created that could cover the entire state. The availability of a good advisory structure in the region is essential to ensure that incidents can be reacted to quickly and purposefully when they occur. A state-wide office for democracy education was also established at an NGO. And through the funding programme established in 2015 by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, it was possible to set up permanent structures to provide support to victims and exit counselling. These two counselling services are also run by NGOs. Bearing in mind the benefits of empirical research for practical activities, state-wide regional analyses were commissioned on right-wing extremism which took the form of surveys of school students and experts.<sup>8</sup> To keep this data current and to use it to optimise practical activities, the regional analyses were updated by the Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen (Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony – KFN) in 2017–18.

As a reaction to the rise of religiously motivated extremism, the 'Landesprogramm zur Vorbeugung und Bekämpfung von religiös motiviertem Extremismus' (State Programme for Preventing and Combatting Religiously Motivated Extremism) was established in 2015. A state coordination unit was set up within the State Prevention Council as part of this. In addition to administrative duties, this office coordinates the various agencies that carry out projects, performs needs analysis and holds informational events, answers enquiries and maintains a network of contacts. An additional NGO-run prevention and counselling body was also established, which is responsible for counselling, training and education and holds workshops for various target groups. The state programme is supervised by a programme advisory committee consisting of relevant stakeholders such as the Departments of the Interior, Social Affairs, Justice and Education.

<sup>8</sup> Maresch et al. 2013; Bliesener/Maresch 2016.

With the launch of the federal ‘Live Democracy!’ programme and in view of developments in the field of preventing religiously motivated extremism, the state coordination office for the prevention of right-wing extremism in Schleswig-Holstein was transformed into the Landesdemokratiezentrum (State Democracy Centre – LDZ). Since mid-2017, this centre has been keeping an eye on all forms of hateful and extremist phenomena, pooling resources and measures from the federal initiatives (‘Live Democracy!’, ‘Social Cohesion through Participation’, ‘National Prevention Programme Against Islamist Extremism’) and the two state programmes. It functions as a state-wide point of contact and is responsible for establishing a permanent advisory, information and network structure throughout the state. The creation of the network, in particular, is carried out in close coordination with the various state and non-state agencies that are involved. The meetings of the advisory network and the Landesdemokratiekonferenzen (State Democracy Conferences) enable the exchange of information and ideas by all the various agencies active throughout the state. Moreover, various working groups have been established at the State Democracy Centres, in which representatives of civil society and the cooperating service providers deal with relevant issues and topics of acute concern. Since the prevention of extremism is a task for the whole of society and would not be possible without civil society and the extensive work of dedicated local volunteers, the State Democracy Centre of Schleswig-Holstein aims in particular to support these structures with a view to sustainability and the long term.

Schleswig-Holstein also recognises a general need for research into the quality and efficacy of projects and measures for the prevention of extremism.<sup>9</sup> In light of this, the State Prevention Council cooperated with the National Centre for Crime Prevention to carry out a process and impact evaluation of a school-based primary prevention seminar by a former right-wing extremist.<sup>10</sup> Former extremists have been active in school-based and extra-curricular prevention and educational work in Germany for many years. So far, however, there has been little sound empirical knowledge about the effects of these interventions.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

To ensure lasting success, a strategy for the promotion of democracy and the prevention of extremism established on a state level should be needs-oriented and directed towards society as a whole. Extremism prevention at the state level is primarily a matter of coordination, to guarantee, on the one hand, that certain overarching standards are upheld, and, on the other hand, to enable knowledge transfer from the federal and state levels to the municipal level and to civil society organisations. A further key function is the pooling of resources at the state level between the various ministries and state agencies, which both helps avoid the duplication of efforts and also ensures that the overall balance of measures is aligned with strategic priorities. A central point of contact with responsibility for the entire state is necessary for the fulfilment of these tasks.

The state should establish and maintain close and trusting collaborative relationships with all relevant actors (ministries, municipal authorities, law enforcement agencies,

civil society, etc.). Cooperation based on mutual respect between governmental and civil society stakeholders should be a priority. A further central pillar is to strengthen and appreciate voluntary engagement. The prevention of extremism can only succeed if volunteers and those acting in a professional capacity stand shoulder to shoulder.

It is also vital that specific preventive measures, for example work with radicalised persons and those seeking to exit extremist groups, are made available state-wide to those who need them. However, due to the high degree of specialisation, these services cannot be made available in every municipality.

Nevertheless, the signs of radicalisation are usually first noticed in the local social environment. The first line in the prevention of radicalisation must therefore be achieved through existing prevention structures in cities, municipalities and rural districts. From the state’s point of view, therefore, the highest priority must be given to training those who work in existing local and regional everyday structures on topics relevant to preventing extremism, promoting democratic processes and intensifying the work of political education. To this end, it appears expedient to establish and fund coordination units as points of contact at the municipal level to fulfil these tasks, deal with specific enquiries and develop local networks. The state should complement this by making specialists for intervention available, i.e. for work throughout the state with radicalised individuals and those who wish to exit extremist structures, as well as funding specific prevention programmes and communicating these services to the respective recipients via the local/regional contact points.

The experiences gained in Hesse and Schleswig-Holstein have shown the division of responsibility between the state and the municipal level to be expedient and promising.

The agencies funded by the state to perform interventions and specific prevention need to ensure that the staff they employ meet defined quality standards. Evaluations of the various measures are absolutely imperative.

Since preventing extremism is not a static undertaking, needs must be surveyed regularly and new developments identified. Suitable preventive measures should be initiated based on well-founded situational and problem analysis, and implemented interventions reviewed with regard to their quality and impact. Generally, experts from research and practice should be involved in this. Working together, both groups can make a profitable contribution to evidence-based extremism prevention. Finally, comprehensive extremism prevention requires the consideration of all existing forms of extremism. Because of intrinsic interdependencies, the trivialisation or even denial of specific forms of extremism is short-sighted.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The Federal Government 2016, 31.

<sup>10</sup> Walsh/Gansewig 2019/20; Gansewig/Walsh 2021a.

<sup>11</sup> Gansewig/Walsh 2020, 2021b.

<sup>12</sup> Gansewig 2018, 484.

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## CHAPTER 6.3

### The federal level – federal programmes for the promotion of democracy and the prevention of extremism

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## Introduction: What challenges are we facing?

The prevention of extremism and the promotion of democracy are tasks for society as a whole and involve a variety of actors and institutions. These include political parties, the media, schools, political educators, experts in child and youth work, trade unions, religious communities, migrant organisations, the police, the judiciary and the domestic intelligence services. In Germany's federal structure, different tasks are performed by the federal government, the states and at the municipal level. Whereas the federal government, for example, is responsible for legislation and key areas of internal security, responsibility for education lies with the states, and child and youth welfare services – and thus, for instance, youth work – come under the jurisdiction of the municipal authorities.

In discussing the two federal programmes 'Live Democracy!' and 'Social Cohesion through Participation' (Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe) below, we are focussing on a specific form of the prevention of extremism and the promotion of democracy at the federal level:

- In terms of the distinct areas of responsibility of the federal government, the states and municipal authorities, as mentioned above, these are programmes that are implemented under the sole responsibility of the federal government. A very specific set of conditions therefore apply to these programmes (see the next section).
- The federal programmes discussed in this chapter focus strongly on educational, promotional, advisory and training activities. At the federal level, they complement both governmental measures for internal security and the services of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb).
- Currently, the federal government is not permitted to develop or fund any permanent infrastructures in the area of pedagogical extremism prevention and promotion of democracy. However, projects are funded in which the federal government has – as expressed in Section 23 of the Federal Budget Code – 'significant interests that cannot be satisfied or will not be sufficiently satisfied without these grants'. Particularly in the non-school sector, this primarily means projects that may provide stimuli and impetus for later use in practical settings, i.e. trying out new concepts, testing practical approaches and further developing existing strategies. They mostly serve the enhancement of practices in the various fields at the various levels within Germany's federal system.

Both programmes pursue vital issues within the framework of the federal division of tasks. They are thus integral components of the 'Federal Government Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Promote Democracy'.<sup>1</sup> Its goals are

- 'to contribute to a democratic, secure society through the prevention of radicalisation and violence;
- to strengthen the protection of and respect for human dignity and social cohesion in a society characterised by diversity;
- to provide comprehensive services to support those who advocate for democracy in their local area, those who need help for themselves or their relatives and those who wish to escape from extremist structures;

<sup>1</sup> The Federal Government 2016.

- to strengthen living democracy and democratic values by promoting participation, bravery, civil courage and the ability to deal with conflicts.<sup>2</sup>

Against this background, the policies and structures of the two programmes (Section 2), their management and supervision (Section 3) and selected challenges and prospects (Section 4) are presented below.

## The programmes

### Live Democracy!

The current programme of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) – 'Live Democracy!' – may be part of a long tradition of federal programmes for the prevention of extremism, but is also powerfully innovative.<sup>3</sup> 'Live Democracy!' builds on the programmes that preceded it, particularly in the area of extremism prevention and in some areas of the promotion of democracy and diversity, and adopts funding priorities (e.g. from the Democracy Centres of the 16 German states or local Partnerships for Democracy) while also establishing new priorities. The preceding programmes were

- the 'Aktionsprogramm gegen Aggression und Gewalt' (Action programme against aggression and violence, AgAG) (1992–1997),
- the 'Xenos', 'Civitas' and 'Entimon' initiatives that were part of the action programme 'Jugend für Vielfalt, Toleranz und Demokratie – gegen Rechtsextremismus, Fremdenfeindlichkeit und Antisemitismus' (Youth for diversity, tolerance and democracy – against right-wing extremism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism) (2001–2006),
- the federal programmes 'Vielfalt tut gut' (Diversity feels good) and 'kompetent. für Demokratie' (competent. for democracy) (2007–2010),
- the federal programme 'Toleranz fördern – Kompetenz stärken' (Promote tolerance – strengthen competence) (2011–2014), and
- the 'Demokratie stärken' (Strengthen democracy) initiative (2011–2014).

At the same time, 'Live Democracy!' sets a number of new priorities, not to mention that it is by far the best funded federal programme in this field to date.

Key new priorities include placing an equal emphasis on the promotion of democracy, diversity and the prevention of extremism; adopting a cross-phenomenal view – i.e. not focussing solely on right-wing, left-wing or Islamist extremism – as well as an unprecedented diversity of topics, which in addition to the key issues of racism and anti-Semitism in earlier programmes now also include anti-GRT racism, homophobia and transphobia, as well as contemporary forms of Islamophobia.

For budgetary reasons, as in previous programmes, the funding priority continues to be on young people, on the institutions and specialists that work with them, and, in some projects, also on their parents or guardians as well as on gatekeepers that are important for young people.

<sup>2</sup> The Federal Government 2016, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. also Live Democracy! (a).

The ‘Live Democracy!’ programme comprises four broad action areas, some of which are further subdivided into specific fields of activity.

- **Partnerships for Democracy:** in ‘Partnerships for Democracy’, regional authorities such as cities, districts (Kreise/Landkreise) or municipal associations are supported in developing cooperative, democracy-strengthening structures. The goal is to bring together municipal stakeholders from politics, local government and civil society (e.g. associations and clubs, churches) and support democratic engagement in proximity to situations and local conditions that were identified as problematic. In organisational terms, this is supported by the provision of ‘action funds’ and ‘initiative funds’ that enable the implementation of small-scale individual measures on the ground (e.g. professional development training, lectures, a democracy festival, procurement of working materials) with relatively little red tape, and by the establishment of a monitoring committee and a coordination and competence centre. In addition, youth forums were established in most of the ‘Partnerships for Democracy’, which involve young people in the governance of the partnerships and give them the opportunity to contribute their perspectives to the political decision-making process and to design their own projects. At the end of 2021, 330 municipalities across Germany were receiving funding in this area.<sup>4</sup>
- **State Democracy Centres:** as early as 2007, state-wide advisory networks were being funded within the framework of the federal programmes. Their main tasks lay in the counselling of victims of right-wing violence (victim support), in mobile support for local actors, and in exit counselling for individuals seeking to leave extremist scenes. The state coordination units pooled information on the skills and specialities of experts to enable the development of customised solutions for local problems. Within the federal ‘Live Democracy!’ programme, these networks and structures were further developed into State Democracy Centres and expanded to include new fields of activity that would strengthen democratic culture at the state level and establish a permanent advisory, information and networking structure. There are State Democracy Centres in all 16 German states.<sup>5</sup>
- **Competence Centres and Competence Networks:** developments in German society in the last decade (e.g. in the form of the NSU, the success of right-wing extremist and xenophobic groups, the resurgence of anti-Semitism, the heightened presence of Islamist groups and the increasing propensity for ideologically and religiously motivated violence) have shown that there is a need for new concepts, strategies and structures in the areas of the promotion of democracy, diversity and extremism prevention. Against this background, the federal programme ‘Live Democracy!’ funds a number of Competence Centres and Competence Networks. The Competence Centres and Competence Networks are tasked with contributing to the ongoing development of their specialist fields, promoting an exchange of expertise in and beyond ‘Live Democracy!’, disseminating successful educational approaches, and networking and training organisations and specialists. By the end of 2021, one Competence Centre and 13 Competence Networks with a total of 46 participating organisations in this area were receiving funding. Their work can be divided into three fields of action (promotion of

democracy, diversity and extremism prevention).<sup>6</sup> A Competence Network has also been established for the cross-cutting area of ‘online hate’.

- **Pilot projects:** the ‘pilot projects’ segment is the most extensive part of the federal programme ‘Live Democracy!’ in terms of the number of organisations receiving funding. Pilot projects serve to test and develop new concepts, approaches and pedagogical methods. They chiefly use original or under-researched approaches and are designed to respond to new challenges (such as anti-Semitism among segments of the youth, the promotion of democracy outside school and orientation and radicalisation processes among adolescents in an Islamist context) and aim to devise or try out innovative pedagogical approaches. Ultimately, the pilot projects serve to expand existing approaches, provide impetus to specialists in practice and encourage wider adoption of the strategies that prove themselves. Innovative pilot projects of limited duration are the main means used by the federal government to fulfil its task of supporting the development of child and youth welfare services. As of late 2020, more than 160 pilot projects were being funded, which – like the Competence Centres and Competence Networks – can be subdivided into three fields of action:<sup>7</sup>
  - In the field of ‘promotion of democracy’, the goal is to increasingly focus on the places and institutions in which children and young people spend their everyday lives. The field is subdivided into two sub-areas by age group: the promotion of democracy in childhood, i.e. in child day-care centres and primary schools, and school-based and extracurricular promotion of democracy in adolescence and young adulthood. Above all, the pilot projects are designed to test intersectional approaches towards the promotion of democracy, social work and counselling in civic education in a way that is age-appropriate and adapted to the children’s level of development. Projects focused on children aim to practise participatory family education, train specialists or set up co-determination processes. The pilot projects for adolescents seek to generate enthusiasm for democracy, try out new methods of conflict management in the social environment and introduce measures to promote democracy in educational and training structures as well as in the transition system between school and vocational training. This field of action, which is the smallest with 35 pilot projects, thus addresses the entire spectrum of educational facilities for children and adolescents.
  - In the ‘diversity’ field of action, projects are funded that promote the understanding of plurality and respect as well as the recognition of diversity. Under the umbrella term ‘group-related human hostility’, various phenomena, including, in particular, the disparaging of groups and anti-democratic attitudes, are addressed in reference to the empirical surveys carried out by the Bielefeld Institute for Interdisciplinary Conflict and Violence Research (IKG).<sup>8</sup> Pedagogical models related to racism and racist discrimination, anti-Semitism, anti-GRT racism, Islamophobia, homophobia and transphobia are (further) developed and tested. A particular focus here is on multiple discrimination and on how different types of group-related human hostility are interlinked. Additional projects in this area consider the opportunities and challenges of a ‘society of immigrants’ – as Germany has only recently begun

<sup>4</sup> For an overview, cf. Live Democracy! (b).

<sup>5</sup> For an overview, cf. Live Democracy! (c).

<sup>6</sup> For an overview of the funded organisations, cf. Live Democracy! (d).

<sup>7</sup> For an overview, cf. Live Democracy! (e).

<sup>8</sup> Heitmeyer 2012.

to see itself – and anti-discrimination work. The social conflicts that emerged when the number of refugees and people seeking asylum in Germany rose in the years from 2015 were the reason for addressing the topic of coexistence in a ‘society of immigrants’. Pilot projects in this area look at how the polarisation around this situation intensified existing conflicts, as manifest, for instance, in an increasing number of verbal and physical attacks against refugees and those working with them. They develop and test approaches for overcoming this sort of conflict in peaceful and democratic negotiation processes. By the end of 2021, a total of 71 pilot projects in this area of activity were receiving funding.

- The ‘extremism prevention’ field of action focuses on radicalisation and pre-radicalisation processes in relation to right-wing, Islamist and left-wing extremism. In the current funding period, which began in 2020, the focus is on the targeted secondary and tertiary prevention of radicalisation among adolescents. The pilot projects work with young people who already follow anti-democratic ideologies or move within social spaces in which they come into contact with extremists or extremist organisations. The pilot projects have a particular focus on testing out new and innovative ways of approaching target groups. This is where there is most need for innovation in terms of practical activities, since young people with affinities for anti-democratic ideologies are difficult to reach, as experience from the first funding period has shown.<sup>9</sup> For the first time, pilot projects dealing with the parallels and interdependencies in the various fields of phenomena (e.g. cross-phenomenal conspiracy theories) are also being funded. 51 pilot projects will receive funding in this field of activity by the end of 2021. As a response to Islamism attacks, the number of projects centring on the prevention of Islamism was increased considerably for a while, but since 2020 the focus has once again been on right-wing extremism. Among the 51 pilot projects, there are 15 that deal explicitly with the context of prevention and de-radicalisation in the penal system and probation services and are implemented in cooperation with the state ministries of justice and the State Democracy Centres. These represent a response to the growing number of ideologically radicalised young people in the penal system. These pilot projects are trying out preventive-educational programmes and training the staff in the prisons.

### Social Cohesion through Participation (Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe)

The ‘Social Cohesion through Participation’ programme of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI) promotes projects in rural and structurally weak regions that advocate a self-aware, lively and democratic community culture.<sup>10</sup> The projects aim to act preventively, especially pre-empting any possible extremist threats, and to create the basic conditions for equitable and violence-free coexistence.

The aim of the programme is to support clubs and associations in rural and structurally weak areas that seek to establish democratic organisational structures and mechanisms to manage discriminatory and anti-democratic incidents. The focus is on the training

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Figlesthler et al. 2019, 208 et seq.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe (a).

of ‘democracy consultants’, who can identify and work through conflicts rooted in group-based hostility. Since the programme began in 2010, more than 2000 volunteer consultants have been trained.<sup>11</sup> They raise awareness within their organisations on how to identify anti-democratic attitudes, supervise the development of preventive strategies and provide advice in the case of conflict. Above all, these projects draw upon the potential of sports clubs, volunteer fire brigades, the volunteer section of the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW) and charities and other civil society organisations. It is worth stressing that many of these clubs and associations only began to develop and implement training and counselling services when funding was made available. The development of offerings with low barriers to access and geared towards specific target groups have made it possible to enlist many people in educational programmes whom conventional channels had so far failed to reach. These projects also seek to impact the local community and to develop regional networks to deal with anti-democratic incidents together with other actors. A further pillar of the federal programme is the implementation of pilot projects for the participatory development and testing of digital measures designed to foster democracy and encourage participation. These projects aim to enable clubs and associations to develop innovative concepts, methods and instruments which can be used to anchor the new skills in organisational structures, for both full-time and volunteer staff.

The fundamental concept of the programme is that democracy should be promoted where it arises: at ground level. Collaboration in the ‘Social Cohesion through Participation’ projects aims to give the participants the experience of being able to actively shape their own lives. In this respect, the programme works against extremist and anti-constitutional currents.

The programme was launched in 2010 and was initially limited to the states of the former East Germany. It was extended to cover the whole country in 2016.

The three current funding areas of the programme are:

- Programme area 1: strengthening democratic practices in clubs and associations;
- Programme area 2: shaping social cohesion locally;
- Programme area 3: pilot projects for strengthening participation and engagement – with a focus on ‘digitalisation’ and the ‘Ideas fund for strengthening engagement in rural areas’.

For the current programme phase from 2020 to 2024, an initial 82 associations were selected for funding at the start of 2020. Twelve million euro in funding is available annually. The programme is managed by the ‘Civic Education in Rural Areas’ branch of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe (b).

## Management/governance

### Live Democracy!

The sheer size of the federal programme ‘Live Democracy!’ necessitates extensive structures for management and support. A very large number of people and organisations are therefore involved in these tasks.

**Responsibility for management** of the programme (both strategic and thematic) lies with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and is at present shared among five units. In addition to a unit for basic issues relating to the federal programme and one for the cross-cutting issues of research, evaluation, international affairs and online hate, three units are responsible for the three thematic fields of action: the promotion of democracy, diversity, and the prevention of extremism. The thematic priorities of the programme are established within and between these units. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth also communicates closely with the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community. The ministries are jointly responsible for several political initiatives in the areas of the promotion of democracy and the prevention of extremism, such as the ‘Nationaler Aktionsplan gegen Rassismus’ (National Action Plan Against Racism)<sup>12</sup> and the ‘Nationales Präventionsprogramm gegen islamistischen Extremismus’ (National Prevention Programme against Islamist Extremism).<sup>13</sup>

For the management of the programme, the BMFSFJ can rely on the support of several programme partners. The **administrative implementation of the federal programme** is the responsibility of the Federal Office for Family and Civil Society Tasks (BAFZA), which operates the **coordinating office** in the federal programme.<sup>14</sup> This coordinating office is the first and most important point of contact for all funded projects and people interested in the programme. It manages, for instance, the extensive expression-of-interest procedures, reviews project applications, result and expert reports and the documentation of the utilisation of funds. Specialists at the coordination office are also available for consultation. Since each specialist works on several projects, they can contribute to the transfer of knowledge within the programme. One project’s good approaches can be shared with other projects and thus help to further develop practices throughout the programme.

The exchange of expertise among the projects in the federal programme is supported by specialist forums, which facilitate communication among professionals beyond their specific areas of expertise. The specialist forums are organised by the coordinating office. There is already an intense exchange of expertise within the thematic fields via joint events and meetings between the Competence Centres, Competence Networks and the pilot projects. The coordinating office is also responsible for the federal programme’s public relations work as well as for the website [www.demokratie-leben.de](http://www.demokratie-leben.de), which provides extensive information about the programme, funded projects and funding conditions.

12 Cf. Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

13 Cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community.

14 Cf. Federal Office for Family and Civil Society Tasks (BAFZA).

Finally, important aspects of managing this kind of programme naturally include **evaluation** and **scientific monitoring**. The German Youth Institute (DJI) in Halle/Saale is responsible for the overall evaluation of the federal programme.<sup>15</sup> The main focus is on any questions related to the general architecture of the national programme. The general evaluation also pursues a range of questions relating primarily to synergy effects, cooperation, the relationship with standard practice and sustainability. This is based primarily on the findings and empirical data of the scientific monitoring of the individual programme areas.

The scientific monitoring of the Partnerships for Democracy is currently carried out by the Institut für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik Frankfurt e. V. (ISS).<sup>16</sup> The ISS also monitors the pilot projects in the ‘extremism prevention’ field. The State Democracy Centres, the Competence Centres and Competence Networks and the pilot projects in the ‘promotion of democracy’ field and in the ‘prevention and de-radicalisation in the penal system and probation services’ field are monitored by the DJI. The pilot projects in the field of ‘diversity’, on the other hand, are monitored by the Deutsches Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung (German Centre for Integration and Migration Research, DeZIM). The innovation fund set up in 2020 is monitored by Camino gGmbH. These four institutes together form the ‘Live Democracy!’ evaluation association.

The evaluations employ various methods, comprising, for example, both standardised monitoring and various partly standardised and non-standardised methods for collecting data, such as surveying addressees, participatory observations and interviews with project practitioners. The goal is to trace the development of the projects, their structures, forms of collaboration, methods and didactic approaches and make recommendations for further development. Since ‘Live Democracy!’ is a programme with a particular focus on developing and testing new approaches and strategies while providing stimuli and giving impetus to specialist practitioners, the scientific monitoring focuses on whether and to what extent the various funded bodies undertake these tasks and how they implement them. Additional important elements relating to the development of practical activities are the regular feedback of the results to the projects in the form of workshops, conferences and reports.

### Social Cohesion through Participation

The programme ‘Social Cohesion through Participation’ is funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI). The BMI permanently transferred responsibility for the implementation of the programme to the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) in November 2018. The programme is organised by a coordinating office located within the ‘Civic Education in Rural Areas’ department. The coordinating office is responsible for the strategic and conceptual development of the programme as well as, for example, setting funding priorities, the expediency of which is supervised by the bpb within the BMI. The staff of the coordinating office are also the first point of contact for the recipients of programme funds and anyone with an interest in the programme. The specialists providing support and monitoring/supervising the projects can draw on several years’ experience. The coordinating office is also responsible for planning and implementing application procedures, developing and realising measures to assure

15 Cf. German Youth Institute.

16 Cf. Institut für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik e. V.

programme quality (specialist conferences, professional development/vocational training and coaching/supervision services, knowledge transfer), and public relations work for the programme.

‘Social Cohesion through Participation’ considers itself to be a programme that is capable of learning. For instance, development and product workshops are held at which specialists and representatives of the projects receiving funding come together and reflect upon how the programme can be improved in the future.<sup>17</sup>

The project organisers are highly networked with one another, and networking forums are held at both the regional (state) level and in the various sectors (sports, fire brigade, THW, charities, etc.). In addition to the classic exchange of experience, these events are also used for the joint development of strategies for applying the findings of projects within the various clubs and associations.

Programme evaluation was undertaken in previous funding periods by ‘proVal – Gesellschaft für sozialwissenschaftliche Analyse – Beratung – Evaluation’.<sup>18</sup> The key questions here concern the factors that condition success, the prerequisites for efficacy and the benefits. ‘Thus, questions concerning the prerequisites for the efficacy of the implemented measures are clarified, the theoretical assumptions about interdependencies on which the projects are based are identified and checked for plausibility (theory of efficacy), and the impact of project strategies on the level of relevant target groups (changes) is analysed. In addition, factors are identified that influence the uptake of counselling services and explore the role of the democracy consultants with regard to the successful establishment of counselling services in the association.’<sup>19</sup> The results of the evaluation also serve the management and further development of the programme.

An important instrument in respect of the management of the programme is the implementation and operationalisation of efficacy targets at the programme level that the projects receiving funding are supposed to achieve. In terms of control theory, the programme is oriented towards the paradigm of outcome control. Through the establishment of specific *programme* goals as efficacy targets and expectations, towards which all funded projects are aligned, the relationship between individual funded projects and the overall programme can be assured. This also makes it possible to deal with questions of programme efficacy as well as, ultimately, to develop and assure the quality of practical projects. Specifically, target tables are developed for both the overall programme and the individual programme areas, which then govern programme evaluation and project implementation.

The final programme evaluation reports are available on the federal programme’s website at [www.zusammenhalt-durch-teilhabe.de](http://www.zusammenhalt-durch-teilhabe.de).

## Challenges and prospects

The federal programmes ‘Live Democracy!’ and ‘Social Cohesion through Participation’ are – as variously indicated above – building blocks in the federal government’s

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe (c)*.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *proVal*.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe (d)*.

overall strategy for the promotion of democracy and the prevention of extremism. They supplement other structures and services on the federal level as well as programmes, structures and measures at the state and local level. This complementarity of the federal programmes has proven its worth.

All forms of extremism are examined in the federal programmes, and both the cross-phenomenal commonalities and the peculiarities of the respective phenomena are taken into consideration in the process. The recognition and the broad expansion of projects in the area of the promotion of democracy must be acknowledged as progress. The interplay of democracy promotion and extremism prevention can be understood as the core of the two current federal programmes.

However, despite the successes enjoyed thus far, the programmes also face several challenges:

### Continuation and transfer of tried-and-tested approaches

Both programmes enable the funding of projects for limited periods. The question is therefore how tried-and-tested approaches and projects can be funded in the longer term or transferred into existing structures, as well as how to promote shifts in focus and innovation within the federal programmes.

The question of how proven approaches and project structures can be made permanent and rolled out more widely will remain a challenge for the federal programmes in the future. Thus, the question arises as to how projects, working methods and strategies that prove themselves can be adopted as part of the permanent offerings of states and local authorities or clubs and associations or, alternatively, how they can be financed by other means.

Experience shows that many projects are very well positioned to generate empirical knowledge about new concepts and working formats and to find answers to new challenges. This is being used to develop a number of specialised standards (e.g. quality criteria for successful counselling in ‘Social Cohesion through Participation’), and lessons are being derived from experiences that can be transferred into other contexts and to other institutions (e.g. in the form of practicable guidelines and handbooks). The practical transfer of approaches and knowledge from specific project and pilot contexts to other situations is, however, both a technical challenge and contingent upon the available resources. In cases where pilot projects are organised by large organisations, e.g. by charities, it is to be expected that the results will be prepared and disseminated within the organisation and, where appropriate, externally. However, smaller bodies and projects often still lack the resources required for this. The emergence, in the first funding period, of the federal programme ‘Live Democracy!’ as a national service provider, joined in the second funding period by the Competence Centres and Competence Networks and the networks within the ‘Social Cohesion through Participation’ programme, are the first steps towards exploring new avenues in this regard.

### Reaching new target groups

In the conception of projects for strengthening democracy and preventing extremism, the focus ought to be increasingly on new and sometimes hard-to-reach target groups.

Methods of approaching and addressing target groups must be designed, where required, to be decentralised, low-threshold and longer-term, and liberated from conventional interdependencies. This was reinforced in the current funding phases. The results of evaluations and scientific monitoring will show whether difficult-to-reach target groups were successfully accessed and by which means.

## Efficacy and performance monitoring

Both federal programmes are subject to scientific monitoring. The federal government publishes the evaluation results and other findings of scientific monitoring in a report on the work and efficacy of the federal programmes once per legislative period.<sup>20</sup> The federal government is currently focussing more strongly on ensuring and boosting the long-term quality and efficacy of the preventive measures in the areas of the promotion of democracy and prevention of extremism.<sup>21</sup>

The federal programmes must be increasingly able to face up to the resulting requirements in the future and – always in line with the relevant subject matter and framework conditions – further develop, implement and assess approaches for quality assurance and evaluation. There are a variety of views in research and practice on the question of how this can best be achieved, some of which are the subject of heated debate.<sup>22</sup>

Federal programmes cannot be judged predominantly on the basis of their Germany-wide or regional efficacy, e.g. measured on the basis of indicators for the reduction in group-based hatred. Rather, federal programmes in the area of the promotion of democracy, diversity and the prevention of extremism should be judged in terms of whether they are successful in providing stimuli and impetus, in testing and further developing pedagogical approaches and strategies in pilot projects, and in serving to innovate in standard practices. Against this background, the evaluation of the federal programmes is set up to take this sort of testing and development processes into consideration and to assess on an empirical basis whether the various projects have been successful in fulfilling these functions and taking effect in the ways illustrated. This is based on concrete impact expectations that are specific to each programme area, the formulation of which is preceded on both the programme and the project level by communication processes relating to the intended effects.

The federal programmes thus serve as important, specialist contributions and components for combating political and ideological extremism and for the promotion of democracy. However, it is impossible for them to provide their stimuli and impetus across the board without external support. They are reliant on partners within society taking up the impetus that they provide. It is therefore expedient to regard federal programmes from the outset as elements of an overall strategy and not as isolated programmes.

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20 Cf. Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth 2017.

21 Cf. The Federal Government 2019.

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# CHAPTER 7

## Mapping the landscape of extremism prevention

### A review of prevention measures in Germany and selected prevention strategies from other countries in Europe

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The significance of extremism prevention has increased steadily in recent years and decades. Key reasons for this include the emergence of new manifestations of extremism as well as various incidents that have occurred in Europe. A wide variety of prevention measures have been developed in Germany as a response, and it can be hard to achieve an overview. The goal of this chapter is to sketch out the prevention landscape in Germany on the basis of 1,642 prevention measures in force as of 2018 and to interpret this landscape in the context of politically motivated crime. We will also take a look at the national prevention strategies of three neighbouring countries – the United Kingdom, France and Denmark – and outline pan-European cooperation measures. It will become clear that the implementation of preventive intentions in the individual countries is realised in different ways and according to different priorities. However, we observe that all four countries are essentially pursuing the same objectives and following the integrated approach that is prevalent in Europe. Various communication platforms ensure that the different bodies can communicate with one another and learn from one another, but there is still room for improvement in carrying out quality assurance of individual measures in the form of accompanying academic research (evaluation).

## Extremism prevention in Germany

Extremist scenes are extremely heterogeneous structures that represent a wide variety of tendencies and camps, which are often at odds and sometimes even in direct conflict with one another. Therefore, lumping all the members of a scene together would be fatal, as the question of where an individual belongs to a scene is just as important as understanding the path that ultimately took them there. Even though the developmental pathways towards extremism – ultimately irrespective of the ideological environment in which someone is socialised – show certain similarities at their core, they are also characterised by a high degree of individuality.<sup>1</sup>

To find the means to consider complexity and individuality in the context of societal developments is the particular challenge that prevention has to continually face. There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy that always works equally well for all people, all the time. Firstly, because scenes with different orientations are still characterised by their distinctive features, in spite of everything that they have in common. Secondly, because established strategies must be regularly examined and, where applicable, flexibly adapted to secure the success of prevention measures. Target-group orientation, flexibility, a willingness to innovate and a well-thought-out approach suited to current needs are the major prerequisites for this. Entirely in line with these challenges, the prevention landscape in Germany is not only subject to constant change, but is also heavily fragmented. This is evident in the large number of pilot projects whose objective is to develop and try out innovative approaches.

One particular feature of Germany is that there is no strict division between state and civil society stakeholders in the area of prevention. Instead, they cooperate with one another, working hand in hand. This cooperation is based on what is now the prevailing view in Germany, that prevention can only succeed if it is implemented by as many active participants as possible, in the spirit of a responsibility borne by

society as a whole. This guiding principle is therefore also a core element of the National Prevention Strategy pursued by the Federal Government.<sup>2</sup>

The significance of prevention measures to guard against extremist developments and politically motivated crime already increased greatly in the 1990s (for right-wing extremism) and the 2000s (for Islamism) (see Chapter 6). Due to the large number of offences, the prevention of crimes motivated by left-wing ideologies has recently come to the fore once more (a prominent example being the riots in 2017 during the G20 summit in Hamburg). This is evident, amongst other things, in an increase in prevention measures aimed at left-wing radicals and the establishment of a ‘Bundesfachstelle Linke Militanz’ (Federal Centre of Expertise on Left-Wing Militancy).<sup>3</sup>

The increasing significance of prevention is also visible in the changes in federal funding programmes: between 2015 and 2018 alone, funding of prevention measures gradually increased to around 132.5 million euro<sup>4</sup> per year, more than trebling overall. Similar developments are also being seen at the state level.

In turn, the increase in projects and initiatives that these developments inevitably bring with them makes it increasingly difficult to retain an overview.

Within the framework of the modular research project ‘Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten einer phänomenübergreifenden Prävention politisch motivierter Gewaltkriminalität (PüG)’ (Possibilities for developing cross-phenomenal prevention of politically motivated violent crime), which was conducted by the Federal Criminal Police Office between 2014 and 2017, an attempt was made for the first time to research the extremism prevention landscape in Germany systematically for the years 2014/2015.<sup>5</sup> This programme rapidly revealed that, in addition to projects funded by the federal government and the various German states, there are also many initiatives that are self-funded (municipal funds, donations, etc.) and/or function on a purely voluntary basis. Obtaining a complete record of such small projects is not only difficult, but effectively impossible. This particularly applies to one-off and short-term campaigns.

Building on the insights gained through the PüG project and after revising the survey criteria developed for it, a follow-up survey was conducted in 2018 under the title ‘Extremism Prevention Atlas (EPA)’; this survey serves as a basis for this chapter. In contrast to the temporary PüG project, the Prevention Atlas was set up as an ongoing project. The result is a living database to which new measures are constantly added and from which measures are removed once completed. In view of this approach, this chapter represents merely a snapshot, but this is compensated for by the longer terms of many prevention projects, which generally run for many years. There is therefore no risk of extremism prevention already looking completely different today from how it looked when this text was composed. Rather, we can assume a process of fluid change.

<sup>2</sup> The Federal Government 2016, 17.

<sup>3</sup> The department at the Institute of Democracy Research at the University of Göttingen, which was established in 2017 and funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, researches the backgrounds of radicalised individuals and the structures of the left-wing militant scene in order to develop preventive approaches.

<sup>4</sup> Refers to the federal funding programmes ‘Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe’ (Social Cohesion through Participation) and ‘Live Democracy!’ (see also Chapter 6).

<sup>5</sup> All the module final reports of the PüG project can be downloaded from the Federal Criminal Police Office website. These include comprehensive literature research, a depiction of the prevention landscape in 2014/2015 and a survey of experts, in which the prevention practitioners were asked questions about the potential for optimisation in the prevention of extremism.

<sup>1</sup> Lützing 2010, 67 et seq.

On our website ([www.extremismuspraeventionsatlas.de](http://www.extremismuspraeventionsatlas.de)), you will find a continually updated map of Germany with the prevention measures offered in the various cities and regions.

Although the *EPA* is currently the most comprehensive database of measures for the prevention of extremism at the national and state level, the proliferation and fragmentation of measures in recent years (see also the concept of ‘projectitis’ cited by Gess et al., Chapter 6 in this Handbook) mean we can certainly not assume that this is a complete inventory of all the measures. In particular, community-directed projects and projects financed privately and on a voluntary basis cannot be fully documented. However, the *Extremism Prevention Atlas* provides a very comprehensive overview of the projects that are currently being funded by the Federal Government and the federal states under the label of the prevention of extremism.

Taking these limitations into consideration, the goal of this article is to draw as detailed a picture as possible of the distinctive features of extremism prevention in Germany and what this looks like in concrete terms: what are the current priorities? What specifically is offered? Which target groups are served and how? And: where can things be improved?

## Dataset

At the time of this analysis, the *Extremism Prevention Atlas* contained 1,642 measures in Germany (31 December 2018). These were primarily collated via the national and state funding programmes, as well as with the help of government agencies and on the basis of individual references. From the mass of measures available, the Prevention Atlas ultimately only included those

- (a) that were actually being implemented in 2018 and
- (b) that can be assigned to the field of prevention according to the IOM classification,<sup>6</sup> i.e. measures that specifically have the objective of preventing extremist thinking and actions, radicalisation or politically motivated crimes. Non-specific funding initiatives were therefore not included.

The measures were analysed on the basis of predetermined criteria. In addition to geographical information, the phenomenon targeted, the type of prevention, the intended target group(s), the approach used and any publication of accompanying academic research (evaluation) were of particular interest. Current topics of interest (trends) were also identified from the material and recorded.

## Distribution and reach of prevention measures

In comparison with 2014/2015 (75 per cent), most of the recorded measures in 2018 were also dedicated to right-wing extremism (64 per cent), either exclusively or in addition to other phenomena.<sup>7</sup> The proportion of measures focused on the prevention

of Islamism rose from 14 per cent to 32 per cent, and the proportion related to the prevention of left-wing extremism from four per cent to seven per cent (for additional phenomenon-specific details, see below).

The projects are distributed between eastern and western Germany in almost equal shares (51 per cent east, 49 per cent west).<sup>8</sup> As a result, eastern Germany, which accounts for just under 20 per cent of the total population, appears at first glance to be overrepresented. However, this is not a purely natural distribution, but the result of a financial distribution, as measures in eastern Germany are currently receiving targeted funding and greater financial support from the federal government (e.g. via the federal programme ‘Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe’).<sup>9</sup>

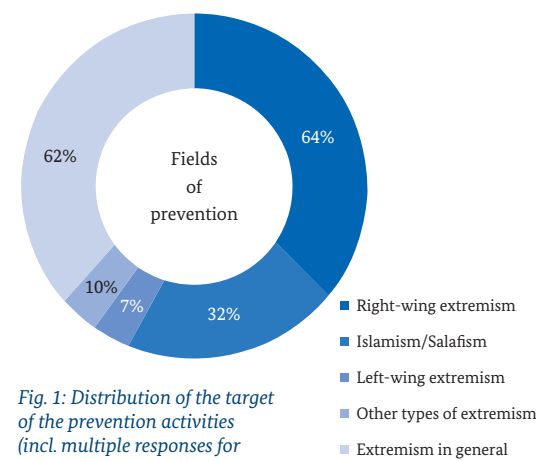


Fig. 1: Distribution of the target of the prevention activities (incl. multiple responses for each measure)

The overwhelming majority (80 per cent) of preventive projects are limited to a given state or a specific community. Approximately one in five measures follows a nationwide approach. Interestingly, there are more municipal measures (27 per cent) in western Germany than in eastern Germany (19 per cent), where there are significantly more state-wide measures (east: 31 per cent, west: 22 per cent). This circumstance is offset by the fact that the concept of ‘mobile measures’, which seek individual solutions locally in order to take local characteristics into account, is more common in eastern Germany.

Another common model is the formation of networks (44 per cent), consisting of local measures from the areas of child and youth welfare services, sports clubs, religious communities, local government and others, which work together to address the particular requirements of a given community for the prevention of extremism. Typical examples of this are the counselling networks ‘Partnerships for Democracy’ and ‘Democracy Centres’.

Informal networking among people with similar jobs or between projects of a similar nature, which is an important element of prevention work, is unaffected by this.



### NATIONWIDE MEASURES

are accessible to anyone irrespective of their place of residence. These generally take the form of information materials/brochures. However, online services, e.g. webinars, training sessions or advice, are being offered more and more frequently. Many institutions also offer advice by telephone (hotline).

<sup>6</sup> For the classification according to the IOM – Institute of Medicine/National Research Council – see Chapter 5.1 in this Handbook.

<sup>7</sup> Gruber/Lützing 2017, 12.

<sup>8</sup> The calculation ignored nationwide measures and measures that are not nationwide, but operate in at least one federal state in the east and one in the west (n=340). According to our current understanding, these also include online services, provided that they are not only accessible to a specific target group (e.g. young people from a given city who log in with a password). The state of Berlin was assigned to eastern Germany for these purposes.

<sup>9</sup> Federal programme ‘Live Democracy!’ 2019; for federal funding programmes see also Chapter 6.

However, it is still necessary to bear in mind that local phenomena, such as anti-asylum demonstrations (e.g. in Kandel or Chemnitz),<sup>10, 11</sup> large music events (e.g. in Themar),<sup>12</sup> martial arts tournaments (e.g. ‘Kampf der Nibelungen’),<sup>13</sup> assemblies in connection with NATO or G7/G20 summits, and rallies at Nazi pilgrimage sites (e.g. on the German Remembrance Day, 17 November) always also have a supraregional component due to nationwide mobilisation. Examples such as these illustrate that local measures may be able to have a certain influence and a preventive effect (e.g. round tables, counter-demonstrations, citizens’ initiatives), but their limited reach means that prevention can only work as ‘supraregional cooperation’.

## Hand in hand – state and civil society

Outside the EU, the focus in the containment of extremist endeavours in many countries still rests on law enforcement, i.e. on a combative approach. Preventive programmes, which have also emerged in these countries to some extent since the 1990s, are primarily limited to the most promising prevention measures (exit programmes).<sup>14</sup> However, most of these are state-run programmes, as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are not generally granted access to prisons and/or the relationship between the state and NGOs is frequently characterised by mistrust.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, de-radicalisation programmes funded by the EU or its member states have recently been launched in the prisons of some of these countries, implemented with the assistance of NGOs (e.g. in Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia).

The close cooperation between state and civil society institutions in the prevention of extremism that is pursued within the EU and so successfully practised in

Germany can therefore definitely be regarded as a distinctive characteristic of these countries.<sup>16</sup> Within Germany, the collaboration is so close-knit that it is almost impossible to draw clear boundaries. Associations and government agencies frequently cooperate via round tables on specific cases, for example. In addition, measures offered by state institutions, e.g. fire brigades or the Technisches

Hilfswerk (Federal Agency for Technical Relief), are frequently implemented through funding agencies, whose funds make it possible for projects to be realised.

### DID YOU KNOW?

60 per cent of all municipal and state-wide measures are implemented by civil society institutions. In eastern Germany, this figure is even higher (69 per cent). Civil society involvement is an indispensable part of the prevention of extremism in Germany.

10 In response to the murder of a young German national by an Afghan national on 27 December 2017.

11 In response to a Syrian national and an Iraqi national being suspected of jointly murdering a German-Cuban on 26 August 2018.

12 Regular right-wing extremist concerts and rallies with thousands of participants.

13 The largest cross-organisational martial arts tournament of the right-wing extremist scene in Europe.

14 For example: Egypt, Algeria, Indonesia, Yemen, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia.

15 This is caused by the tense geo- and socio-political situation in the Middle East and in North Africa and the associated social tensions, which trigger unrest and cause lasting damage to political stability. Actors from civil society, academia and international organisations are fundamentally sceptical about the state-run prevention of extremism in non-EU states (e.g. in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, etc.), as law-enforcement measures and the use of violence against civil society groups such as human rights activists or environmental conservationists have been legitimised by the ‘war on terror’ since 11 September 2001.

16 The prevention of extremism is a topic throughout the EU, but it currently plays a minor role in some countries. However, in Belgium, Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Greece and Italy, for example, there are preventive programmes involving civil society organisations, which are run with different degrees of intensity. The UK, Denmark and France can be regarded as pioneers of the prevention of extremism within the EU (see below).

Measures organised in the form of networks, such as ‘Partnerships for Democracy’, on the other hand, are generally financed and coordinated by the state. They achieve their full potential primarily through the affiliated civil society initiatives that ultimately put prevention into practice in ways that take local characteristics into account. Although there is still potential for improvement with regard to the concrete implementation of this collaboration, both state and civil society stakeholders believe that it provides a sustainable and efficient way forward.<sup>17</sup>

However, even in places where civil society and state institutions work largely independently, their measures generally complement one another and thus contribute to an abundance of initiatives that target different groups. Over the years, a highly diversified portfolio of measures has emerged throughout Germany, ranging from brochures raising general awareness among the population, via local or mobile information centres aimed at supporting institutions or relatives, to online services for affected individuals or people working in the area (for example on the issue of ‘Reichsbürger/Selbstverwalter’ (‘Reich Citizens/sovereign citizens’) or the ‘Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK’ and the ‘Grey Wolves’).<sup>18</sup> One advantage of this comprehensive range of measures provided by so many different agencies is obvious: the same measures cannot speak to everyone. Thus, people who are seeking support generally have the choice of whether they would prefer to contact a public authority such as the police or the domestic intelligence services – or rather a civil society institution.

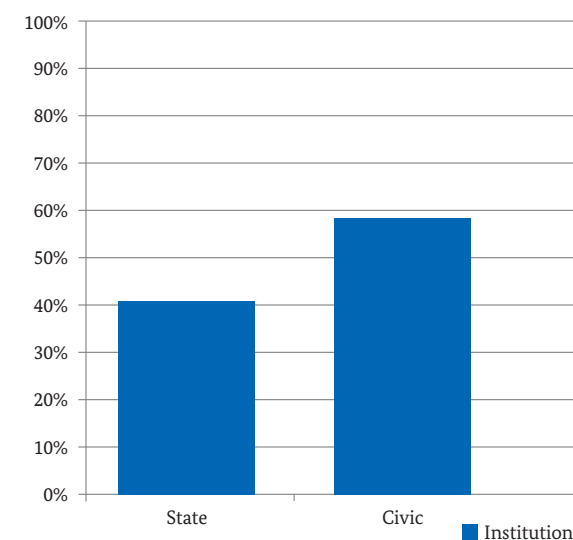


Fig. 2: Distribution by organising institution

In conclusion, civil society institutions are an indispensable mainstay of the prevention of extremism in Germany. They contribute significantly towards prevention being understood as a task for the whole of society – in accordance with the understanding of the federal government – and being tackled via an integrated approach.<sup>19</sup>

## Prevention for everyone? – target groups and focus

As described in more detail in Chapter 5, one can distinguish between two main target groups of prevention measures: those who are themselves (potentially) affected

17 Cf. Lützing/Gruber 2017, 9.

18 With regard to forms of extremism whose origin is abroad and which therefore have a transnational component, see Chapter 2.4 in this Handbook.

19 The Federal Government 2016, 32.

(direct prevention) and the people around them (family, teachers, prison staff, etc.), by means of whom people who (could potentially) become radicalised may be reached indirectly.

Seventy-seven per cent of all prevention measures are aimed *directly* at (potentially)

### EXTREMISM & SOCIAL MILIEU

Experience has shown that the social milieu of people who (potentially) become radicalised is very important when it comes to recognising radicalisation tendencies (indicator function). Firstly, the social milieu generally seeks advice and support (e.g. from advisory bodies or hotlines) before the affected person themselves; secondly, radicalised people cannot always be approached directly. The social milieu provides a good means of access here (e.g. via family, peer group or institutions such as schools or associations).

Against this backdrop, educational and awareness-raising work play just as important a role as the targeted creation of points of contact to which family members, friends, close relatives and professionals from the education/training sector, religious communities or the public administration can turn.

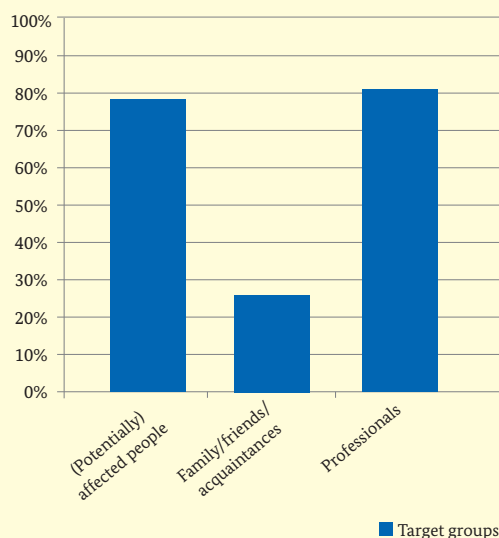


Fig. 3: Distribution by target group (incl. multiple responses for each measure)

is also an extensive range of *indirect* measures that target the social environment (see Fig. 3). While this may, on the one hand, lend support to the common criticism that the problem is being passed on to non-specialists, it is also becoming increasingly clear that the significance of the social environment also needs to be taken into account in prevention.

affected teenagers and/or (young) adults. These age groups present many a priori risk factors for reasons related to developmental psychology and are most strongly associated with radicalisation. Children of nursery and primary school age, on the other hand, are only targeted by approximately one in five measures (19 per cent). It is necessary to bear in mind that this only represents some of the prevention measures for this age group, for which a wide range of interventions is available for the prevention of general criminal behaviour. These generally start far in advance of any critical developments and primarily reinforce basic protective factors that broadly contribute to the avoidance of behaviour that harms oneself or others, e.g. the development of addiction, aggressive or criminal behaviour. These prevention projects therefore do not usually establish a concrete link to a specific field of action and so cannot be categorised under the label 'prevention of extremism', even though they do of course contribute to this. According to the IOM model, which is comprehensively discussed in Chapter 5.1, these projects can be assigned to the category of general promotion.

On the other hand, however, there

Gender-specific measures, i.e. measures that are directed specifically at male or female affected individuals, play only a secondary role in the prevention of extremism, even though radicalisation definitely has special characteristics depending on a person's gender. These can, first and foremost, be attributed to the different roles and functions that are assigned to men and women within the various extremist subcultures.

Although these circumstances have long been taken into consideration in prevention practice, the prevention of extremism primarily manifests itself externally as cross-gender and age- and process-oriented prevention. Only 0.5 per cent of all measures are aimed exclusively at boys and men and two per cent at girls and women. This demonstrates that the target groups are principally based on specific age groups, rather than gender. Irrespective of this, gender-specific aspects are generally taken into consideration in practical prevention work.

In addition to target group and the form of activities, the prevention of extremism can also be categorised with respect to the phase of a possible radicalisation process that it aims to address. If it addresses a phase far in advance of any radical endeavours, we speak of *universal or primary prevention* (see Chapter 5.1). If the prevention primarily targets people who are at particular risk due to certain factors (e.g. socialisation in a critical peer group) – or their social milieu – we refer to *selective or secondary prevention* (see Chapter 5.2). Finally, if the prevention is specifically aimed at a group of people who are manifestly already involved in an extremist milieu or if other measures are taken to prevent people from re-offending, becoming victims or remaining in extremist structures, this is termed *indicated or tertiary prevention* ('The child has already fallen in the well', see Chapter 5.3). The coordinated combination of measures that take effect both in advance of and then at various points throughout the course of a (possible) radicalisation process is a central aspect of the broadest possible kind of integrated prevention. As the process of developing into an extremist does not take place in stages, but is fluid, concrete prevention measures can often address several of these fields of action at once. Such 'threshold projects' typically come into effect right on the border between universal and selective or between selective and indicated prevention. With regard to the difficulty of drawing lines between different preventive approaches, see Chapters 5.1 to 5.3 in this Handbook.

The largest share of prevention measures (85 per cent)<sup>20</sup> is aimed at people who have not yet come into contact with extremism and individuals with tendencies towards radicalisation (universal prevention). These include the majority of the population and, for example, professionals from the field of education and extracurricular youth education. Approximately half of all measures (47 per cent) target 'at-risk' individuals who have an increased susceptibility to becoming socialised in extremist milieus due to their specific life situations (selective prevention). Reasons for this may be, for example, growing up in an extremist family, contact with radicalised peers or a susceptibility to authoritarian patterns of thought. There are also projects in the field of selective prevention that specifically attempt to empower the social milieus of 'at-risk' individuals to work effectively with the people in question and, if applicable, initiate appropriate countermeasures. Slightly more than one third (35 per cent) of measures offer classic forms of assistance directly to people who are firmly embedded in an extremist structure, provide training courses for professionals or involve the immediate social environment, such as the family, in order

<sup>20</sup> These categories are not exclusive. A given measure may be included in several categories.

to be able to offer the affected people a way out (indicated prevention). These measures generally take the form of exit programmes or distancing counselling.

## Prevention in concrete terms – how the prevention of extremism works

In order to ensure that prevention is focused on the right target groups, it is necessary to coordinate many factors. The phase of the radicalisation process is important, for instance, as is the selected format of the prevention work. Probably the best-known approaches are classic counselling services and brochures. Counselling services, whether in the form of local counselling units or a mobile service, are a key component of almost half of all programmes (46 per cent). These include exit programmes – including exit or distancing support measures – (offered within six per cent of programmes) and, increasingly, counselling aimed at the victims of extremist violence (seven per cent).

And while 27 per cent of providers offer information services – both online and offline, such as brochures, handbooks or websites – a growing number offer purely online interactive services (e.g. counselling, training or online social work). Even though the share of this is still quite low at four per cent, an upward trend is emerging here (Chapter 3.4 considers how these should be designed).

The approach that is still most heavily relied upon can be described as ‘Education and Training’: around a half (48 per cent) of all measures include services of this kind.

In concrete terms, these are primarily measures relating to capacity building, e.g. lectures, multiplier training courses or workshops for specialists, and staff training courses for organisations or associations on how to handle susceptible colleagues and/or difficult clientele. Almost all education and

training measures are aimed at professionals, who then take responsibility for applying the knowledge gained in the field, e.g. in their work with teenagers. By contrast, educational prevention work undertaken directly with teenagers principally takes the form of workshops and project weeks/days. One exception here is training for peer counselling (which focuses on mutual self-help within a given age group, e.g. by training conflict mediators at schools), which is aimed at teenagers. This approach aims initially at generating a direct preventive effect amongst the teenage participants, which they can then pass on to their peers.

In working with children (in Germany generally defined as those under the age of 14), there is no targeting of problem cases for education and awareness-raising. At this age, we primarily use traditional universal prevention approaches and strengthen protective factors. Alongside other common protective factors that prevent criminality in general, these include the promotion of tolerance, democracy and political participation.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**<sup>21</sup>

*Researchers still disagree about whether religious education constitutes a risk factor or a protective factor in the context of Islamist radicalisation.*

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Eilers/Gruber/Kemmesies 2017, 37 et seq.

As education and training measures are usually developed with a focus on a specific issue (for example: dealing with teenagers who are becoming radicalised; the difference between Islam and Islamism), they are generally also aimed at several target groups. The most frequently targeted group is the broad category of professional or volunteer specialists, which primarily means people working in education, training and extracurricular youth work (73 per cent). Within the group of specialists, education and training measures are provided to employees from local government (32 per cent), charities (31 per cent), religious communities (27 per cent), sports associations and clubs (24 per cent) and law enforcement and judicial authorities (19 per cent). Such measures have the goal of teaching participants to identify critical developments at an early stage and to be able to respond to them. This enables them, for example, to more quickly identify people who are becoming radicalised and to help them to find appropriate assistance. Many initiatives also seek to generate multiplier effects, with key actors passing on the knowledge they acquire. It is currently difficult to assess the efficiency and efficacy of individual training measures, because it is still unclear how participants ultimately use their newly gained knowledge in their day-to-day work. The actual preventive potential of training measures is therefore not very transparent at the end of the day. As already called for in 2017, an intensification of research in this area is urgently recommended, as this will enable us to better assess, optimise and reinforce this important pillar of extremism prevention.<sup>22</sup>

## Prevention in a comparative perspective – profiles of different fields of action

The **prevention of right-wing extremism** can look back on a long tradition in Germany. Sparked into action by xenophobic riots, such as those in 1991 in Hoyerswerda,<sup>23</sup> solid structures, networks and measures have been developed since the 1990s that are primarily aimed at teenagers and (young) adults. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion are also directed towards children of primary school age (21 per cent). There are targeted measures for everyone, regardless of whether they are affected themselves; are seeking advice for a member of their family or their community; are employees of public administrations, members of an association or active in the fields of education and training; work in law enforcement or the prison system; or have themselves become victims of right-wing extremist crimes. And when the nearest counselling unit is too far away, mobile and online services are generally available. The very clear delineation of the various measures can be regarded as a characteristic of the prevention of right-wing extremism.

More than half of measures in this field (56 per cent) can be relatively unambiguously assigned to universal, selective or indicated prevention. Just under one fifth of the measures are ‘threshold measures’,<sup>24</sup> i.e. measures that work on the border between universal and selective or selective and indicated prevention. Conversely, only approximately one in four measures (24 per cent) cover all fields of prevention.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Gruber/Lützing 2017, 36.

<sup>23</sup> In September 1991, there were attacks on a hostel for contract workers and refugees in the town of Hoyerswerda in Saxony, which escalated to such an extent that the police largely lost control of the situation. There are accounts of several hundred attackers throwing incendiary devices, to the acclamation of and with the encouragement of spectators. Hoyerswerda is regarded as the prelude to a series of xenophobic attacks.

<sup>24</sup> A clear assignment to just one field is, generally speaking, difficult (see also Chapter 5 of this Handbook).

These are primarily institutional networks, such as advisory networks, that coordinate measures in different fields of prevention in order to ensure a broad range of measures on a given issue or adapted to the needs of a given area. The key priorities within the prevention of right-wing extremism can be summarised as counselling, networking and training. A lot of energy is invested into universal prevention, which proves that prevention measures not only address critical situations, but also the roots of the problem.

Exit and distancing counselling units are an indispensable mainstay of the prevention of right-wing extremism. They exist nationwide and almost every federal state now has its own. Under the XENOS<sup>25</sup> special support programme 'Ausstieg zum Einstieg' (Exit for Entry) (2009–2014), these have become even more closely networked and have organised themselves as a working group at the federal level. The federal working group 'Ausstieg zum Einstieg' has existed as a registered association since 2014 and has, over time, evolved into a major umbrella organisation and an important partner within the field of prevention. The goals of the federal working group are setting and refining quality standards, as well as the general exchange of ideas.

However, it is not only (potential) right-wing extremists who are the focus of prevention measures. The victims of right-wing crimes or discrimination have also received increased attention in recent years – nowadays, seven per cent of measures are concerned with the needs of victims of right-wing violence, seeking to advise, support and empower them.

Overall, the prevention of right-wing extremism can be described as a thriving and professional area within the prevention of extremism, whose efficacy can ultimately only be assessed by fundamental, wide-ranging academic evaluation. In this context, it is important to remember that it is inherently difficult to gauge what would have happened if no measures attempting to exert a preventive or other influence had taken place. If we consider, for example, the migration waves of 2015 and 2016, which were the consequence of major armed conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as humanitarian supply crises in the neighbouring regions and states of North and East Africa (the refugee crisis), and which presented Germany with major challenges, the question is whether the right-wing populist and right-wing extremist ways of thinking and acting that flared up at that time may have been even more pronounced without the prevention efforts that were then made.

The wealth of experience in the prevention of right-wing extremism that has grown over the years undoubtedly serves as a solid basis to fall back upon when it comes to pre-emptively countering newer forms of extremism.

For example, on the basis of the ever-growing significance of **religiously motivated extremism (Islamism/Salafism)** since the attacks of 11 September 2001 in the USA,<sup>26</sup> various prevention measures have emerged that parallel measures for the prevention of right-wing extremism. Especially when the number of people leaving Germany for the crisis regions in Syria and Iraq began to grow, it proved possible to respond to this

<sup>25</sup> By means of the XENOS special programme 'Ausstieg zum Einstieg', the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs helped young people to exit the right-wing extremist scene. The programme has funded initiatives, projects and associations that develop new ideas connecting leaving far-right milieus to finding employment.

<sup>26</sup> More than 3,000 people were killed by four commercial airliners that were hijacked by members of Al-Qaeda and steered into the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington and a field in Pennsylvania.

new challenge by drawing on these established structures and to develop a remarkably clearly defined, extensive and varied range of measures that – although still growing – already has a remarkably good structure and breadth today. Many pioneers within the field of prevention who are currently concerned with Islamism were active in the prevention of right-wing extremism in the past and have accumulated experiences there.

One distinctive feature of prevention related to Islamism is that the social milieu of the people affected – especially the family and the religious communities – is targeted more frequently than is the case for other forms of extremism. The tremendous significance of close attachment figures in prevention work became clear in a survey of experts representing various prevention projects conducted in 2016 by the Terrorism/Extremism Research Unit.<sup>27</sup> The social milieu is primarily assigned the role of an efficient 'alarm system', which seeks advice and help much earlier due to personal fears (a child leaving Germany, a 'martyrdom' or similar) and is thus an important link between the prevention provider and the (potentially) radicalised person.

Unlike the prevention of right-wing extremism, where only around five per cent of measures involve providing help with exiting the scene, exit and distancing measures currently have a much higher significance (11 per cent) in the prevention of Islamism.

Differences between the prevention of right-wing extremism and the prevention of Islamism also relate to geographical distribution and organisation. While the prevention of Islamism is more heavily focused on 'hot spots' of Islamist radicalisation, measures for the prevention of right-wing extremism are more evenly distributed on the whole. In addition, a slightly greater proportion of measures in the area of the prevention of Islamism are run by the state.

The social significance of religiously motivated extremism, which is still growing and whose relevance is further magnified in the media, is also reflected in the prevention landscape: while only around one in seven projects (15 per cent) were dedicated to this field of action in 2014/2015, one third of all measures (32 per cent) – and rising – concerned this issue in 2018. This is particularly remarkable because it does not correspond to the actual volume of politically motivated crime (politisch motivierter Kriminalität, PMK). Religiously motivated crime played a minor role in 2017 at three per cent of all PMK, though this was a slightly rise compared to previous years (see below).

Another apparent contradiction between crime data and prevention measures can be seen in the area of the **prevention of left-wing extremism**. The case numbers for politically motivated violent offences are dominated by crimes motivated by left-wing ideologies (52 per cent), but the prevention of left-wing extremism only plays a minor role in the field of prevention (seven per cent). However, the actual number of measures for the prevention of left-wing extremism, which has almost quadrupled in the past three years, demonstrates that the significance of this issue has increased – especially after the escalations of violence at the G20 summit in 2017, which saw several police operations, property damage, assaults, looting and injuries.

<sup>27</sup> Lützing/Gruber 2017, 13.

An important way in which the prevention of left-wing extremism differs from the other phenomena is that it has the largest proportion of nationwide projects (36 per cent) and consists overwhelmingly of state measures (87 per cent). This makes up for the distinct shortage of local and regional measures. A closer inspection of the prevention measures in the area of left-wing extremism makes it clear that most concern the distribution of information materials (34 per cent), which means that less case-specific work is done here than for the other phenomena.

In addition to the prevention of Islamism, left-wing extremism and right-wing extremism, there are also measures that generally target attitudes and behaviours that do not conform to Germany's free democratic basic order (62 per cent), without a specific ideological focus (**general extremism prevention measures**). Such measures consist largely of universal prevention and are directed almost exclusively at specialists and the general population. Exit counselling is virtually non-existent in this area. This can be attributed to the fact that leaving an extremist scene requires long-term work tailored to individual situations that cannot be completely detached from the distinctive features of the various ideological environments.

Measures that involve general extremism prevention are primarily implemented at the local or state level and are more commonly run by civil society institutions (58 per cent) than is the case for prevention of the specific phenomena. Approximately one third (30 per cent) of general extremism prevention measures serve primarily to promote democracy. The majority (70 per cent) also set themselves a concrete phenomenological priority – mainly targeting right-wing extremism (64 per cent), followed by Islamist extremism (28 per cent).

Finally, there are also measures that look at concrete phenomena, but cannot be assigned to the fields of right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism or Islamism (**other types of extremism**). These projects account for ten per cent of the total and include issues such as, for example, Turkish nationalism and left-wing extremism, the PKK and the Reichsbürger/Selbstverwalter, i.e. people who reject the existence and the legal system of the Federal Republic of Germany, and who often have much in common with right-wing extremists.

#### Excursus

### Politically motivated crime

The German police records crimes that are committed from an apparently political motivation collectively as politically motivated crime. On the basis of the motivation and the facts of the case, politically motivated crimes are assigned to appropriate categories and subcategories and the ideological background to and reasons for the commission of the crime are recorded where possible. Crimes are classed as extremist if there is evidence that the aim is to abolish or undermine certain constitutional principles that shape our free democratic basic order (according to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, 2018). This section looks specifically at three kinds of politically motivated crime: right-wing politically motivated crime, left-wing politically motivated crime, and politically motivated crime rooted in religious ideology.

In Germany, politically motivated crime is recorded via the 'Criminal Investigation Registration Service – Politically Motivated Crime' (KPM-D-PMK). Because of the political interest in these crimes, they are – unlike general Police Crime Statistics (PCS) – recorded as soon as it is suspected that a crime has been committed, and thus in the same year in which an incident took place, and are updated when the investigation reveals new information. Naturally, these statistics account only for known cases and cannot be used to draw any conclusions about radical or extremist attitudes among the population that exist independently of crimes of which the authorities are aware.

The consideration of prevention measures together with case numbers in the area of politically motivated crimes is not to be understood as a matter of 'supply-and-demand analysis'. Firstly, the number of existing prevention measures alone is not evidence of their quality and their effectiveness in meeting the requirements of prevention. Secondly, no consideration is made of the extent to which preventive actions respond to measurable changes in the target of the prevention (here: politically motivated crime) or any delay in responding, or the extent to which prevention may lead to a reduction in case numbers and hence to lower demand. Nevertheless, the case figures in the area of politically motivated crime can be used as a guide. The following section provides an initial overview of possible connections between the number of cases and the volume of prevention measures.

With a share of 52 per cent of cases, right-wing politically motivated crime has a far higher significance than crimes motivated by left-wing (25 per cent) or religious ideologies (three per cent, see Fig. 4).

Specifically among politically motivated violent crimes, 52 per cent are attributed to left-wing ideologies, 30 per cent to the right-wing and two per cent to religious ideologies (see Fig. 5).

The majority (65 per cent) of preventive efforts are devoted to the prevention of right-wing extremism (approximately half by the state and half by civil society).

This means that the relative proportion of measures for the prevention of right-wing extremism is higher than the proportion of right-wing motivated crimes among all politically motivated crimes for 2017 (52 per cent) and the number of politically motivated violent crimes (30 per cent), which is dominated by left-wing motivated crimes (52 per cent).

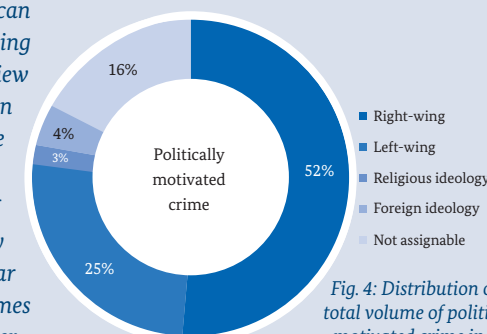


Fig. 4: Distribution of the total volume of politically motivated crime in 2017

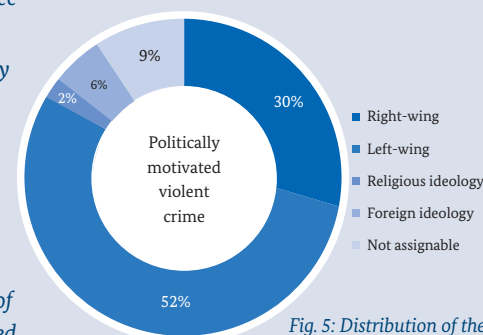


Fig. 5: Distribution of the total volume of politically motivated violent crime in 2017

Though Islamism only accounted for three per cent of crimes in 2017, 32 per cent of measures surveyed here target the prevention of Islamism. This phenomenon is thus accorded far greater significance than measures for the prevention of left-wing extremism, which only make up seven per cent of prevention measures.

This is particularly noticeable in view of the fact that left-wing politically motivated crime makes up a far higher proportion of politically motivated crime overall (25 per cent) than does politically motivated crime rooted in a religious ideology (just three per cent), and, above all, with a 52 per cent share, accounts for by far the largest proportion of politically motivated violent crime, well ahead of right-wing politically motivated violent crime (30 per cent).

Comparing these figures for cases of politically motivated crime and statistics on prevention measures raises a number of questions. Is there a shortage of measures for the prevention of left-wing extremism? Data collected for the EPA indicates that existing prevention measures are extremely unlikely to reach everyone who potentially holds left-wing views, a finding that the comparatively high volume of left-wing motivated violent crimes, for example, tends to support.

The latter statistic may also reflect the fact that most of the small number of measures for the prevention of left-wing extremism that exist can be assigned to the category of counselling, networking, information materials and training. There are very few projects in this area that explicitly provide for direct counselling with affected individuals. The information collected in the EPA does not allow a more detailed assessment – further research is required in order to better be able to classify and, where appropriate, understand relevant causal factors.

The situation is similar in the area of politically motivated crime rooted in a foreign ideology (four per cent), for which there is an extremely small range of prevention measures available, even though the actual case volume is greater than in the area of Islamism, where there is a comparatively large range of measures.

Comparing the situation in eastern and western Germany, slightly more than half of the prevention measures recorded operate exclusively in the east (51 per cent). As eastern Germany has just under 20 per cent of Germany's total population, the distribution of measures indicates that preventive efforts are far more intensive there.

On a per capita basis, this can be observed to be generally consistent with the verifiably higher volume of politically motivated crime in general and of politically motivated violent crime in particular. In 2017, there were three times as many cases of politically motivated crime per 100,000 inhabitants in eastern Germany compared to western Germany. An examination of the distribution of prevention measures per 100,000 inhabitants shows a ratio in favour of eastern Germany, where more than four times as many measures are carried out as in western Germany.

Even though the rough distribution pattern of the prevention landscape can be viewed in a positive light, it does not allow any conclusions to be drawn about the extent to which the actual (especially regional) demand for prevention measures is being met. Due to the predominance of left-wing motivated violent crime and the relatively small proportion of crimes in the area of Islamism, a more detailed examination of politically motivated crime raises the question of whether prevention measures need to be optimised or strengthened in general.

Although support for the prevention of left-wing extremism needs to be bolstered in politics and society as a whole, a shift in favour or at the expense of another phenomenon would not be advisable. An expansion of prevention efforts aiming to reduce violent behaviour more generally would be better. This also promises the greatest success as far as reaching the left-wing target group is concerned. In general, 'left-wing issues' such as environmentalism, anti-globalisation activism and anti-fascism have far more support outside the extremist spectrum than, for example, the issues that are of concern to nationalists and right-wing extremists.

Accordingly, it is far harder to carry out ideologically oriented prevention work in this area than it is to focus on specific behaviours (commission of crimes, use of violence) that are broadly condemned. A positive side effect of this approach is that, since it is not specific to a single form of extremism, it can also have benefits in relation to the other phenomena.

As far as the goal of preventing extremist phenomena generally is concerned, the extent to which these figures may indicate errors in the distribution of resources cannot be said with any certainty, as there is always a risk of certain areas being prioritised or neglected as a result of too much or too little attention on the part of the media or political decision-makers (e.g. in the allocation of funds). For example, consideration of reinforcing prevention measures is often only made after an incident takes place. However, if the emphasis of prevention is independent of specific events and focused on the long term, this creates a fundamental dilemma by making it harder to measure the success of prevention in averting radicalisation or preventing crimes in advance.

## Current developments – trends and priorities

To move with the times, prevention has to respond to developments and trends in society, which leads to the establishment of new priorities. In 2018, the issues of migration and media literacy enjoyed particular attention.



### DID YOU KNOW?

*It is unclear whether specifically targeting migrants in prevention activities is sensible or risky. Critics maintain that the presupposition that this population group requires specific approaches fosters – in line with the labelling approach – radicalisation processes as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. They claim it is preferable to improve the personal situation of those affected (e.g. reason for seeking refuge abroad, cultural/language barriers, accommodation situation, length of the asylum procedure) by means of targeted funding and support measures in order to achieve a broad stabilisation of their living conditions and thus to prevent increased susceptibility to extremist propaganda or people.*

The number of measures that address the issue of **migration** (40 per cent) increased significantly in comparison with the previous years in all phenomenal fields, i.e. with regard to religiously motivated and right-wing and left-wing extremism. The decisive factor here was the large influxes of refugees in 2015/2016, which has been the dominant topic within far-right discourse in Germany ever since. As a response, left-wing activists have carried out sustained campaigns against right-wing opponents, police units deployed against them, and politicians and businesses who are held responsible for the current asylum policy.<sup>28</sup> To a degree, this mutual

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Federal Criminal Police Office 2019, 57.



antagonism has become self-sustaining. In the area of the prevention of Islamism, various measures have been developed to prevent refugees and asylum seekers from becoming radicalised within Germany.

Overall, there is a broad range of prevention measures, which are not directed exclusively at migrants. Examples of relevant projects include the simulation game 'Flüchtlingsheim in unserer Stadt' ('Refugee Hostel in our City') and flyers warning people about right-wing extremist attacks, Islamist propaganda and attempts at recruitment targeting refugees and asylum seekers. Various educational and awareness-raising measures have also been developed for volunteers working with refugees.

Nor are new technologies immune from the influence of extremist movements. In fact, they provide new ways of conveying ideological messages and/or influencing radicalisation processes (see also Chapter 3.4). While extremist music was still being distributed on CDs in school playgrounds in the early 2000s, the internet now plays a key role in the spreading of extremist ideas – especially in terms of the distribution of propaganda and targeted recruitment. Measures that promote the **media literacy** of (young) people (14 per cent) are also clearly on the rise. Such initiatives encourage a cautious and critical approach to the media. The primary goal is to raise awareness of the special features of the Web 2.0 era, of social media and real-time communication, while also providing some technical information that enables young people not just to be passive users of modern information technology, but allows them to better understand complex background processes (e.g. echo chambers and filter bubbles; for details, see Chapter 3.4). Most media literacy measures relate to the prevention of right-wing extremism (59 per cent), followed by extremism in general (57 per cent), Islamism (33 per cent) and left-wing extremism (nine per cent).

It is currently apparent that new media are increasingly being used in prevention work. For example, just under four per cent of projects are **internet-based, interactive** measures, i.e. measures that no longer require people to be present in order to participate. These include, for example, online training courses, counselling measures or online social work. Even though their proportion (currently 60 measures) of the total does not appear especially high, clear growth is emerging in this area that we have not seen before.

### Is there evidence of the efficacy of the projects?

The question of the efficacy of prevention is difficult to answer as yet: how can it be proven that someone would have developed differently without their involvement or active participation in a prevention project? Particularly in view of the complexity and unpredictability of social processes and developments, it is hardly possible to understand how great the influence of a preventive intervention ultimately is/was for the individual.

Nevertheless, it makes sense to critically monitor the measures and to check whether they are systematically and verifiably carried out as planned and whether the original objective is achieved. Only in this way can measures be optimised, and negative, unintended side effects identified and avoided. Accompanying academic research, i.e. the thorough evaluation of projects by experts, helps to reveal what has succeeded and what has failed and to take this into consideration in future activities.

While selected projects were evaluated in the past, the findings were hardly ever made public and therefore had little influence on prevention. In this context, a survey of experts conducted by the Federal Criminal Police Office's Terrorism/Extremism Research Unit in 2016 showed that many projects want good process monitoring and support for optimisation. On the other hand, however, there are also many uncertainties with regard to evaluation measures – for example the fear that they are an instrument for control or a form of accountability report.<sup>29</sup>

As the measures recorded in the *EPA* are ongoing projects, no evaluation results are available as yet. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether the accessibility has changed for 2019/2020.

It is encouraging to observe that more and more institutions are publishing plans and documentation for their projects and training measures online and thus making them available to others. This is increasing the transparency of prevention and providing models to give orientation to those who are entering the field. However, the fact that it is ultimately left to each individual to judge for themselves whether existing approaches are appropriate or effective still has a detrimental effect. Greater transparency here could set a trend towards not continuing potentially ineffective approaches in the long term or unintentionally reinforcing them.

## Prevention without borders – extremism prevention in a European context

The first programmes to combat extremism and radicalisation in the EU were set up in the 2000s. The 9/11 attacks and the resulting fear of 'home-grown terrorism', i.e. terror cells originating in their own countries, forced European governments to act. Academics and practitioners shared the opinion that national and pan-European measures were necessary to curtail new cross-border threats. With the military involvement of a number of European states in Afghanistan and Iraq, the probability of becoming a target of Islamist-motivated 'acts of reprisal' also increased. The attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005) confirmed these fears and resulted in the broad expansion of national extremism prevention programmes in several European states.

The following section will describe the extremism prevention strategies of European states via case studies of **the United Kingdom, Denmark and France**, which were selected on the basis of their relevance to the general discussion. This is followed by a discussion of a number of pan-European measures for prevention and de-radicalisation. To begin with, however, the presentation of Europe-wide measures in the field of counter-extremism requires a brief discussion of the terminologies used in this context, so that their use can be placed within the national frameworks of the states considered here.

<sup>29</sup> Lützing/Gruber 2017, 18.

The German-speaking region uses many different terms to define the prevention of extremism and radicalisation – for example Extremismusprävention (extremism prevention), Radikalisierungsprävention (radicalisation prevention) or Deradikalisierungsmaßnahmen (de-radicalisation measures). However, comparable precision in the terminology or demarcation of individual areas of prevention is only possible to a limited extent in a European context. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) uses the terminology ‘Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that leads to Terrorism’. In the USA, the preferred terminology is ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ (CVE) and the United Nations uses the term ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ (PVE).<sup>30</sup> In the wider international context, prevention and de-radicalisation are also dealt with separately. In the national action plans of the countries outlined here, both concepts are integrated into the programmes for combating extremism and radicalisation.

## United Kingdom

The UK responded to the new security situation following 11 September 2001 and the attacks of 7 July 2005 in London in the form of **CONTEST**, one of the most comprehensive action plans in Europe. Part of this action plan is the **Prevent** programme, comprising four components (Prevent, Pursue, Protect, Prepare).<sup>31</sup> These aim to identify people at risk of radicalisation, assess the risk level of potential threats and develop support measures for them. The development of Prevent can be divided into two phases.<sup>32</sup>

The first phase was marked by the prevention of religiously motivated extremism (Islamism/Salafism) through intensive communication with Muslim communities. The ostensible objective of **Prevent 1** was to strengthen ‘moderate’ Muslim groups on a national, local and municipal level. Accordingly, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government was put in charge of Prevent. Pilot projects focusing, for instance, on women and young people were implemented from 2007 to 2011 and these were expanded starting in 2008. At the same time, under the leadership of the Home Office’s Office for Security and Counter Terrorism, the number of police units for deployment in prevention work was increased.

From the start, Prevent has been the subject of controversy both within the UK and in Europe. The increasing ‘securitisation’ of Prevent and the accompanying increased role of the public order authorities, as well as the thematic focus on immigration, security, religion and terrorism, led to the loudly voiced suspicion that it was a ‘spying programme’ that pursued no other goal than that of placing predominantly Muslim communities under general suspicion.<sup>33</sup> The first version of the programme was replaced by a revised version – **Prevent 2** – in 2011. The responsibility for this was transferred to the Home Office. This change of leadership also indicated a shift in priorities within the programme. Prevent 2 was initiated with the goal of pursuing an

<sup>30</sup> Armbrorst et al. 2018, 5.

<sup>31</sup> CONTEST was initiated by the Home Office in 2003 and updated for the first time in 2006. This updated version of the action plan was published in 2018. CONTEST is based on four ‘P’ strategies: Prevent, Pursue, Protect, Prepare. This section will exclusively highlight the first pillar, ‘Prevent’, and summarise the main features of Great Britain’s strategy for the prevention of extremism. The other three pillars will not be considered further due to their scope and the focus here.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas 2017, 143.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 144.

integrated and cross-phenomenon counter-extremism. However, the focus is still on the phenomenon of religiously motivated extremism (Islamism/Salafism).

Since 2015, the ‘**Prevent duty**’ (a statutory duty of prevention), also known as the counter-terrorism measure ‘**Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (CSTA)**’, has legally required schools, universities, the NGO sector, public bodies such as those in the healthcare sector,<sup>34</sup> and Muslim communities participate in training courses to raise awareness about extremist tendencies. Any suspected cases of radicalisation are to be reported to the security authorities.<sup>35</sup>

The increasing debate around extremism, migration and the danger of terrorism has also made collaboration between civil society organisations and government agencies more difficult. In the first phase of Prevent, Muslim communities found themselves in a dilemma. They could reject the funds in order to protect themselves from criticism about their lack of integrity and independence from the state. Alternatively, they could accept them in order to have sufficient financial resources to design and implement their projects during a period of public funding cuts in Great Britain. The current development of extremism prevention in Great Britain is indicative of a new beginning for national and local collaboration. The government apparently acknowledges that effective measures in the fight against extremism rely on the knowledge of local experts.

## Denmark

**Denmark’s** welfare state and comprehensive measures for participation in the education/training and employment sector were regarded for many years as the most effective defence strategy against crime and violent extremism by both researchers and practitioners. At the beginning of the 2000s, however, alarming intelligence from the social services gained national attention. These reports warned of a ‘ghettoisation’ of particular city districts, such as Brabrand on the outskirts of the city of Aarhus, and Nørrebro in Copenhagen. They claimed that the rise in crime and social tensions were fostering a breeding ground for disintegration and radicalisation. Until this time, violent right-wing extremists in Aarhus had been the security authorities’ top priority. The publication of the Mohammed cartoons<sup>36</sup> in the Jylland Posten newspaper (2005) and the subsequent death threats against the cartoonist Kurt Westergaard, however, revealed the social and integration policy challenges that the state and civil society were facing. The attacks in Madrid and London led to increased calls for effective measures for the prevention of extremism and the radicalisation of individuals, and shifted attention to the phenomenon of religiously motivated extremism (Islamism/Salafism).

The administration of the city of Aarhus and the police department of Østjylland<sup>37</sup> decided in 2005 to collaborate closely to take early measures against radicalisation processes.<sup>38</sup> In 2009, an interministerial working group, with the help of representatives from security authorities, academia, civil society, local authorities and

<sup>34</sup> Medact 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Dresser 2018, 134.

<sup>36</sup> Berlingske Tidende.

<sup>37</sup> East Jutland.

<sup>38</sup> Bertelsen 2017, 173.

Muslim communities, developed an action plan containing 22 measures for ‘combating extremism and radicalisation’.<sup>39</sup> Going beyond prevention measures, this action plan included a series of targeted intervention measures and early warning systems to raise awareness amongst education professionals and alert them to signs of radicalisation and extremist worldviews.<sup>40</sup> The Danish model, known as the ‘Aarhus Model’, is based on the principle of the full rehabilitation of people who have come to the attention of the police and their right to participate as full members of Danish society. It also establishes a unique statutory basis for collaboration between schools, social services and the police, known as **SSP collaboration**.<sup>41</sup> Particularly worth highlighting is the system of mentors that has been used since 2009. These mentors, frequently former or active police officers and social workers, provide affected people with individual support in order to prevent or mitigate radicalisation processes. This model was initially tested in Aarhus, Copenhagen and Odense and then introduced nationwide. In 2014, the exit programme for radicalised adherents to religiously motivated extremism (Islamism/Salafism) was established. This coincided with the journeys of approximately 35 teenagers from Aarhus to the war zones of Iraq and Syria between 2013 and 2014.<sup>42</sup>

The central contact point for the SSP collaboration between the police, the city and the municipality is the information centre ‘**Infohuset**’, which opened in Aarhus in 2010. Here, social workers and youth protection teams meet to first exchange information about the persons affected and then make contact with them directly.<sup>43</sup> The police supplies the teams with the necessary background information about the person and is the point of contact for questions relating to risk assessment.

While observers from civil society and the security authorities expected Infohuset and other initiated extremism prevention programmes to be discontinued after the election victory of the right-wing populist People’s Party in 2015, these fears have so far proved unfounded. Nevertheless, the Danish approach is still the subject of controversy. As in the case of the UK, the model divided civil society and politics over questions of security and liberty. According to critics, the measures have not been subject to sufficient scrutiny, place minorities under general suspicion and extend the powers of the security authorities. Denmark is, however, regarded throughout Europe as a model of successful collaboration between civil society and state actors at the local and municipal level. The Danish approach is based on models from the UK and the Netherlands, whose experiences the Danes drew from and which were successfully integrated into the Danish model.<sup>44</sup>

## France

In February 2018, the **French government** presented its new national plan for the prevention of radicalisation, which bears the title ‘**Prévenir pour Protéger**’ (Prevent to Protect).<sup>45</sup> The list of measures includes the collaboration of the ministries

<sup>39</sup> Hemmingsen 2015, 12.

<sup>40</sup> Nordbruch 2013, 9.

<sup>41</sup> The Danish government 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Since 2013, at least 125 people have left Denmark for Syria and Iraq. Vestergaard 2018, 258.

<sup>43</sup> Hemmingsen 2015, 28.

<sup>44</sup> Tammikko 2018, 105.

<sup>45</sup> Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Crime and Radicalisation 2018.

of Justice, Education and Social Affairs under the leadership of the French government’s interministerial committee (**CIPD**). This underlines France’s political will to establish a long-term prevention and de-radicalisation strategy, but also illustrates the unwillingness of French security policy to hand state powers over wholesale to local and municipal stakeholders. The government assumes that state-coordinated prevention is easier to supervise and achieves greater efficacy. In view of the significant increase in individuals becoming radicalised and others leaving for the war zones of Iraq and Syria, France’s centralised approach is not uncontroversial. In recent history, the French penal system has been subject to increasing levels of criticism. Overcrowding and funding shortfalls, resulting in a lack of supervision of inmates, are often suspected as a cause of radicalisation processes. The focus is clearly on prosecution and the expansion of prison capacity. The new national plan creates 1,500 new prison places to guarantee that radicalised inmates, inmates who are at risk and non-radicalised inmates are kept separate. The implementation of this measure is being closely monitored. More than 512 inmates are currently being detained in connection with terrorism alone. Intensive and individual support according to the ‘Danish model’ is planned. These measures apply to both prevention and intervention.<sup>46</sup> The example of the attacker Amedy Coulibaly has frequently been cited in public debate. He was apparently radicalised in prison before his attack on the Hyper Cacher Jewish supermarket (2015). France also has plans to implement training and awareness-raising measures against extremist worldviews in schools, sports clubs and within companies.

Within Europe, France stands out for many reasons. The centralised approach and the commitment to guaranteeing the equality of all the citizens of the republic are proving to be potential stumbling blocks to an effective prevention of extremism.<sup>47</sup> Statutory prohibitions, such as the ban on wearing Islamic female dress for schoolchildren and public service employees in 2003 and the ban on wearing the burqa in public in 2010 were praised by parts of society, while others are of the opinion that this fostered the radicalisation of a section of the Muslim youth in the banlieues.<sup>48</sup>

The lack of civil society structures and permanent links among state and civil society institutions has become evident. Critics complain about the lack of autonomy of civil society institutions and the lack of an understanding of how prevention work requires the support and counselling of individuals. According to them, prevention is still understood as ‘preventive law enforcement’ against radicalised opponents of French society. France’s efforts to put state measures into practice quickly and productively will continue to be watched with great interest in the future.

All three of the national prevention strategies against extremism presented here illustrate the need for objective accompanying research (evaluation). To date, however, the results of evaluations, where available, take the form of insufficiently documented final reports. This makes it extremely hard to carry out evaluation transparently and in the interest of ongoing process improvements. With the aim of understanding extremism prevention as a task for society as a whole and countering it with an integrated approach, the United Kingdom, Denmark and France have initiated national prevention strategies that resemble the strategy of the German federal government

<sup>46</sup> It is worth mentioning here that there are currently some 323 returnees from Syria and Iraq in France.

<sup>47</sup> Khosrokhavar 2017, 156 et seq.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

for the prevention of extremism and the promotion of democracy. In contrast to the German prevention landscape, the other national prevention programmes presented here are currently focusing on religiously motivated extremism (Islamism/Salafism). The prevention of left-wing and right-wing extremism is not completely neglected, but is largely sidelined. One exception is the UK, which has been tackling manifestations of right-wing extremism, especially in the context of football,<sup>49,50</sup> and the conflict in Northern Ireland for decades. In the national action plan CONTEST, law enforcement measures are used in the fight against right-wing extremism alongside preventive ‘trust-building’ measures such as ‘community policing’.

## Transnational prevention networks in Europe

Influenced by various terror attacks in Europe, the EU is funding a number of measures in the areas of **law enforcement, counter-terrorism and the prevention of extremism**. The European Council and the Justice and Home Affairs Council have taken measures to improve the exchange of information in this context. Since 2016, the **European Centre for Counter-Terrorism** at Europol (ECTC),<sup>51</sup> among others, has gathered information connected with counter-terrorism and supported the member states with its operational and strategic expertise. One focus is transnational cooperation in combating extremist and terrorist propaganda on the internet. The **EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU)** is based at the ECTC. It is an analysis centre for terrorist propaganda on the internet which supplies analyses and reports terrorist content to internet service providers (flagging). Its goal is the rapid and permanent removal of violent and extremist content from the internet.<sup>52</sup> The **EU Internet Forum** brings together telecommunication service providers and representatives of the member states.

The European Commission’s idea of a Europe-wide network of primarily ‘frontline’ or ‘grassroots practitioners’ got off the ground in September 2011 in the form of the **Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)**.<sup>53</sup> The network of practitioners includes both state and civil society actors. Since 2013, the Dutch advisory agency Radar Advies has been in charge of coordinating RAN. Radar Advies was established in 1989 and originally advised cities and municipalities on issues relating to social and health policy. RAN’s tasks come under the prevention pillar of the European Commission’s ‘EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism’ and is funded by the European Commission’s Internal Security Fund – Police.

These tasks include disseminating tried-and-tested approaches in the area of prevention and de-radicalisation work within the member states. RAN’s goal is to create links with prevention institutions, to pool information and to forward this information to the EU, its member states and to third countries in the Maghreb. The work of the network is coordinated by the Amsterdam-based RAN ‘Centre of Excellence’ (CoE).<sup>54</sup> RAN holds regular conferences on selected topics to enable this. Their minutes

are published and disseminated as working papers. The topics cover all phenomena, including left-wing and right-wing extremism and religiously motivated extremism (Islamism/Salafism). RAN’s work is organised around a network of national contacts in each of the member states. These are generally requested to suggest potential experts for the events. There are currently nine working groups, focusing on the key issues of communication, education, de-radicalisation and exiting extremist scenes, as well as police and law enforcement.<sup>55</sup> National authorities, and representatives of civil society, politics and public administration can access the support and advice of the RAN free of charge when necessary. A collection of insights, experiences, initiatives and prevention measures are freely available to interested practitioners on the internet.<sup>56</sup>

In 2016, the European Commission established the ‘European Strategic Communications Network (ESCN)’ to improve communication between government agencies.<sup>57</sup> It aims to provide member states with the necessary capacities for the development of effective communication strategies to combat extremist online propaganda. Experts from academia, the media and communication sector, and security authorities assess the latest developments and develop recommendations for the member states in the form of working papers. The ESCN builds upon the previous project ‘Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team’. In addition, in the form of the ‘Network of Prevent Policy Makers (NPPM)’, the European Commission administers a network in which representatives of the member states regularly exchange experiences in the prevention of radicalisation.

Further European prevention networks include the ‘**European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS)**’,<sup>58</sup> whose German branch is DEFUS, and the ‘**Strong Cities Network**’<sup>59</sup> of the ‘Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD)’. The ‘European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues (EENeT)’<sup>60</sup> has provided security authorities and university researchers from Europe with a cooperation platform since 2007. EFUS, the Strong Cities Network and EENeT all provide opportunities to discuss prevention practice and questions arising from the latest research as well as to engage in joint fundraising.

Only tentative predictions can be made at present as to future developments at the EU level. The European Commission published a call for tenders for the implementation of its measures in May 2019. In contrast to previous practice, this call for tenders has two parts, including exchange formats for **academia and policy makers**, on the one hand, and a **network of practitioners** – along the lines of the RAN – on the other. While the first network aims to institutionalise communication between decision-makers and academic consultants, the tasks of the second network are to develop and reinforce the skills of prevention practitioners, to provide a network structure and to develop materials relating to ‘good practices’, from which recommendations for action can be derived.<sup>61</sup> The focus is on enhancing the skills of EU member states and relevant third countries with regard to the containment of radicalisation by providing platforms for exchange

49 Glaser 2011, 150.

50 For example the right-wing extremist ‘English Defence League’ and smaller groups from the hooligan scene.

51 Europol.

52 The average success rate of reported and successfully removed internet content was approximately 80 per cent according to the IRU (as of December 2017); Europol.

53 European Commission, *Radicalisation Awareness Network 2018*.

54 Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb).

55 The full list of all the working groups and their contact details can be obtained from the European Commission – Migration and Home Affairs/RAN Working Groups 2019.

56 European Commission – Migration and Home Affairs/RAN best practices 2019.

57 European Strategic Communications Network 2019.

58 European Forum for Urban Security 2019.

59 Institute for Strategic Dialogue, presentation of the project Strong Cities Network 2019.

60 European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues 2019.

61 Ted eTendering.

and via practice- and needs-oriented research. The work involved is to be tendered out to a range of service providers. In the meantime, the European Commission's tender for 'Technical Support to Prevent and Counter Radicalisation' has been assigned to two independent consortia and all the radicalisation prevention activities have been brought together under the established label 'Radicalisation Awareness Network' (RAN). Responsibility for the activities that are primarily aimed at the target group of practitioners has been assumed by a consortium headed by RADAR Advies under the name of 'RAN Practitioners'.<sup>62</sup> 'RAN Policy Support' which targets 'Policy Makers and Researchers' was transferred to a consortium headed by CIVIPOL after a re-tendering process at the end of 2020. The two consortium leaders, Radar Advies and CIVIPOL,<sup>63</sup> are to work together in a coordinated manner during the four-year term of the project and gear their activities towards the EU's strategic guidelines, especially the EU Agenda on Counter Terrorism of 9 December 2020. The starting point for these developments was the establishment of a High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation – (HLCEG-R) by the European Commission in the summer of 2017. Its task was to draw up proposals to improve collaboration in the prevention of radicalisation at the EU level. On the basis of the HLCEG-R's final report in May 2018, the European Commission has adapted its structures: reinforced by delegated experts from the member states, the Commission stepped up its coordination activities with respect to the activities of the networks described above and, in autumn 2019, set up its own unit that is responsible solely for the prevention of radicalisation. Strategic and thematic priorities are determined by a 'steering committee' consisting of representatives of the member states. Furthermore, representatives of the member states have the option, via a 'project-based approach', of working on issues that are relevant to them for a limited period of time and generating potential outputs (such as tool kits, guidelines and recommendations).

With regard to 'prevention and de-radicalisation' (prevention and combating of radicalisation leading to violent extremism), the European Parliament's **Special Committee on Terrorism (TERR)** proposed the creation of an **EU Centre for the Prevention of Radicalisation** in its final report in December 2018. This Centre will be coordinating and promoting collaboration and communication between the member states, representatives from politics, practice, academia and technology, as well as religious leaders and communities. The tasks of the EU Centre also include training various groups of professionals, including judges and prosecutors, and specifying scientific methods to assess and measure the efficacy of programmes and projects. Last but not least, criteria are to be developed for coordinating the prevention measures, which will be financed by the programmes of the Internal Security Fund. With the help of identified indicators, programmes are to be better tailored to local and regional requirements. To date, it is unknown what steps have been taken towards the implementation of this recommendation.

Although pan-European communication can inspire and generate momentum, the extent to which prevention concepts can be transferred from one context to another remains in doubt. The Danish Aarhus Model may be extremely effective and innovative, but it cannot readily be transferred to other areas of Europe. The different understandings of key terms such as radicalisation and extremism and of relevant population groups underline the need for a uniform European prevention strategy.

<sup>62</sup> European Commission.

<sup>63</sup> CIVIPOL.

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# PART 3

## Complementary social fields of action

- Introduction
- Possibilities of conflict transformation
- Journalism and terrorism
- Prevention through criminal law
- Mobile counselling in the context of right-wing extremism
- Prevention work with football fans
- The role of civic education
- Role of Islamic associations
- Victims' points of view
- The ethical dimension of extremism prevention



## Extremism prevention: a whole-society approach – Introductory comments and uncomfortable questions

Uwe Kemmesies

Calls for extremism prevention to follow a 'whole-society approach' have been growing at least since the establishment of the federal/state expert group 'Prevention of Islamist Extremism/Terrorism' (PisET, see also the introduction to Part 2 of this volume) by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in 2005. Today, this can be viewed as a (security) political consensus, even if this is not always obvious and not always applied in everyday practice. But what exactly is a whole-society approach to extremism prevention supposed to mean? What does the term signify?

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Chapters 1 to 7 attempted, on the basis of some theoretical considerations (Chapter 1), to describe the phenomenon of extremism in all its diversity (Chapter 2) and – at least to some extent – to explain the micro- and macro-social conditions of its emergence (Chapter 3). Above all, this Handbook has endeavoured to give a detailed account of extremism prevention as a field of activity (Chapters 5 and 6), using specific examples and paying particular attention to the question of evaluation (Chapter 4), and concluding with an 'initial survey' of the prevention landscape (Chapter 7) to be continued in the future. But does this adequately cover the field of extremism prevention? No.

So far, we have focused on the diverse efforts involving multiple agencies initiated and financed at the municipal, regional and national levels that are expressly conceived (at least in part) as measures in the field of extremism prevention. To leave it at that, however, would be insufficient and ultimately superficial in two respects. Firstly, there would be a danger of diverting attention away from the underlying social causes, to which we will return later. Secondly, with regard to the social causes of extremism and the conflicts that often underlie it, all areas of society ultimately have an influence on the development dynamics of extremist terrorist movements. At times, this influence is likely to be greater than that of the bulk of programmes that explicitly aim at extremism prevention. This concluding, yet open-ended chapter is intended to raise awareness of this by spotlighting specific areas of society and types of activity which aim to illustrate how extremism prevention needs to be conceived in very broad terms. This is because it ultimately rests upon the key issue of social harmony, which must be ultimately understood to be limitless and all-pervasive: in order to ensure social harmony, it is necessary to coordinate the diverse interests, wishes and hopes of all members of society in such a way that the inalienable human rights and

the rules of social coexistence derived from them and enshrined in constitutional law are not violated, but rather respected at a fundamental level.

This is the final chapter of this Handbook, but it does not claim to provide a conclusive description of the field of extremism prevention. That is why the chapter is open-ended – open to suggestions and additions: we invite you to expand it, first on the website of this Handbook ([www.handbuch-extremismuspraevention.de](http://www.handbuch-extremismuspraevention.de)) and then in the future in a new edition of the Handbook.

In the following, we would like to stress once again (see also Chapter 3) that it would be short-sighted to attempt to understand extremism merely in terms of the ideological foundations of the different forms of extremism and the attitudes and actions of extremist actors. We would also like to draw attention to the fact that we all have some degree of influence on radicalisation processes and on the different manifestations of extremism in our society through our various relationships, be they professional (e.g. as teachers, journalists, judges and police officers) or private (e.g. as acquaintances of terrorist group sympathisers, as football fans, as regulars at the local pub, as users of social media). But let's take it one step at a time.

The following remarks will pose some critical questions and reflect on some difficult issues in order to encourage curiosity about the contributions to this chapter. All this is done with the awareness that we have at best only begun to understand extremism, and thus also its prevention, let alone to really understand it in terms of the manifold social and individual interactions it involves.

Nevertheless, and for this very reason, we would like to use this chapter to highlight a number of specific areas and types of action in a whole-society approach to extremism prevention. Again, we want to make it clear that, above and beyond initiatives that are explicitly understood to contribute to extremism prevention, all areas of society inevitably exert an influence on processes of radicalisation towards extremism and terrorism. This is due to the fact that the different areas of life and social structures are closely intermeshed (see Chapter 1 – structural setting ...).

We must not ignore the influence, for example, of how terrorist attacks and other manifestations of extremism, all of which are ultimately connected directly or indirectly, are reported in the media and discussed in the pub. We must not ignore the influence of how we respond to online hate – even if our response is merely that we, as supposedly uninvolved observers, provide such content with page views. We must not ignore the influence we have by not taking a stand in our communities and cities when political officials, elected representatives and their families are threatened in such a way that they feel forced to give up. We must not ignore the influence we have when we fail to respond to extremist statements made by fellow citizens in the various micro-social environments in which we are involved – be it at school, at work, in the neighbourhood or within our own families.

Certainly, we cannot even hope to fully survey the landscape of extremism prevention, nor to describe in detail how it is to be understood in terms of the whole of society. In concrete terms, this also includes everyday activities in all areas of life, including education, professional life and leisure time. Of course, sports clubs and educational programmes do not literally constitute extremism prevention activities. Nevertheless, these offerings indirectly contribute to extremism prevention understood as

a whole-society affair in that the functioning of regular social structures has a conflict-regulating effect, thereby moderating the risk of potentially violent radicalisation occurring within society.

Still, there are a variety of reasons why such everyday activities should not be understood as explicit means of extremism prevention, nor should they be 'framed' or presented that way to the public. This has to do with the risks of 'labelling':<sup>1</sup> members of a sports club or participants in an educational programme or a youth leisure activity are, of course, not extremists, and one must refrain from giving the impression that these people face an especially high risk of falling prey to extremism. From a social constructivist viewpoint,<sup>2</sup> if such ordinary activities were to be framed or represented as extremism prevention services, this could conceivably create the very problem or situation that it was intended to prevent. However, it is also indisputable that inadequate provision in these areas, which are important for coexistence and social harmony, increases the risk of social problems and conflicts. This can make certain groups more susceptible to extremist interpretations down the road by negatively impacting on their future expectations and concrete prospects – something that, according to recent findings in social psychology, renders people more prone to radicalisation.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the inverse must also be true: good, standard social programmes and services contribute to successful social coexistence and make society more resilient to the interpretations – and above all the activities – of terrorist extremists.

In any case, we hope that the contributions to this chapter together with our introductory notes and questions will at least give an impression of the shape and scope of extremism prevention as necessarily conceived and enacted at the level of society as a whole. As shown in Chapter 3.1, radicalisation in general and extremism and terrorism in particular are indeed expressions of societal conflicts that typically impact all areas of society.

Acts of violence carried out by terrorists and extremists are not focused around an individual 'perpetrator-victim relationship', as is usually the case for everyday acts of violence. The perpetrators and their acts stand for extremist movements and the goals they pursue, which are usually oriented towards systemic social change. News coverage of acts of violence perpetrated by terrorist extremists tends to focus on individuals. A great deal of attention is paid to the perpetrators and their biographies, as if this were enough to explain the terrorist act. The circumstances of the perpetrator's life are certainly not immaterial and are especially important when it comes to prosecution.

However, two things need to be considered: firstly, there is a real risk of encouraging 'copycats'. By giving perpetrators our full attention, we inevitably risk helping them to become martyrs or heroes in the terrorist extremist circles whose views they adhere to or among groups of sympathisers. Our treatment of the perpetrators in the media creates, as it were, illustrative models that motivate similar crimes. Secondly,

1 For an overview of labelling theory, see Bernburg 2019 and the classic work by Becker 1973.

2 For an overview of social constructivism, see Pfadenhauer and Knoblauch 2019 and the classic work 'The Social Construction of Reality' by Berger and Luckmann (1967).

3 For more detailed information, see the research of Ernst-Dieter Lantermann, as summarised in his 2016 book 'Die Radikalisierte Gesellschaft' (The Radicalized Society): radicalisation is a response to a perception of increasing social complexity and insecurity, while 'radicalism and fanaticism [...] are not an inevitable response to the impositions and demands that a modern society places on its members, although they are an option that [...] is chosen with ever greater frequency in modern societies' (ibid., 18).

the perpetrator-fixated approach to dealing with the challenges of terrorist extremists also ultimately obscures the social background, the societal conflicts underlying the terrorist acts. This may represent an unconscious social reflex to extremist terrorist violence. By this means, the social system being confronted and its political leaders and members are no longer forced to address uncomfortable questions such as the possibility that they may share some responsibility. As a type of reflex response, highly-publicised vows are made to do everything possible to solve the crime, to increase security and to do whatever needs to be done to prevent such acts in the future. In particular, representatives of society use the language of repression, emphasising that society will not yield one inch to the provocations of extremists and that there will be no negotiating with terrorists. This is certainly *one* correct response. However: is it not just as important, in the name of prevention, to also strive for an honest and inclusive dialogue on the conflicts that drive extremism and terrorism – one that also extends to include radicalised extremist groups? It is no coincidence that there are certain times and certain social milieus and groups in which right-wing, left-wing and/or religiously motivated forms of extremism appear to be more effective in attracting adherents and inspiring protest and criminal acts.

### Remember the victims ...

It was no coincidence that Edith Kletzhändler visited a Zurich shopping mall on 19 November 1979 and was fatally shot in an exchange of fire between RAF members and the police.<sup>4</sup> It was no coincidence that Robert Höckmayr, a 12-year-old on his way home after visiting Munich's Oktoberfest on 26 September 1980, lost his two younger siblings – Ignaz and Ilona – in a bomb attack apparently carried out by a right-wing extremist and in which Robert and his parents were also seriously injured.<sup>5</sup> It was no coincidence that Gürsün Ince died trying to save her four-year-old daughter Saime from a house fire set by right-wing extremists in Solingen on 29 May 1993 – as did her daughter.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, it was no coincidence that Habil Kılıç was murdered by right-wing terrorists with two gunshots to the head in his wife's delicatessen on 29 August 2001,<sup>7</sup> just as it was no coincidence that art critic Fabian Stech was shot dead by Salafist terrorists at the Bataclan concert hall in Paris on 13 November 2015.<sup>8</sup> Nor was the death of Dalia Elyakim, a tourist from Israel, who was killed, while waiting to meet her husband, by a terrorist who drove a truck into a crowd on Berlin's Breitscheidplatz on 19 December 2016.<sup>9</sup>

These people stand as examples of a multitude of victims of terrorism worldwide. The fact that they were murdered was no coincidence, because in each case, in each social environment, a terrorist ideology was effective in motivating the perpetrators to commit the murders. And even if not all of the perpetrators were true believers in their respective ideologies, their terrorist cause gave them reason to give in to their violent impulses in ways that legitimised their actions, absolving them of guilt –

they committed their acts under the conviction that they were pursuing what they considered a higher good, a higher goal – one set and framed by extremist terrorist propaganda.

### Forget the perpetrators ...

The motivation for this appeal is twofold. Firstly, it is important to stop clumsy reporting from helping the perpetrators to attain heroic status among those sympathetic to their extremist views or from appearing as models to be imitated in the way that social learning theory explains. Secondly, it is important to forget the perpetrators in the everyday sense of the phrase 'forget it': the biography of the perpetrators up to the time of the crime only partially explains the circumstances of the act and fails entirely to explain the broader phenomenon of extremism laid bare by the crime. After each attack, news reports and experts who are consulted to provide their opinions seek an explanation for the events within the life and immediate social circumstances of the perpetrator. However, in doing so, they fail to recognise that the perpetrators and their actions are first and foremost an expression of a certain time, a certain set of social circumstances and certain fault lines within society: it is namely no coincidence that Germany is home to a significantly higher rate of right-wing extremist terrorist acts than many other countries, or that social revolutionary terrorism was obviously far more respectable in certain circles and motivated more crimes in the 1970s and 1980s than it did in the 2000s – a decade which, for its part and certainly not coincidentally, generated a breed of religious terrorism motivated by Islamism that most experts initially considered could not prosper in 'enlightened' Western societies. Highlighting these cases make it clear that individual- and perpetrator-based thinking falls short of reality and is ill-suited as a theoretical framework for extremism prevention. That is because it is conflicts within society that underlie extremist phenomena: addressing these is ultimately the general preventive key to solving extremism-related problems – not the processing of individuals by social workers and psychologists, which is not to say that perpetrator-focused approaches are not also required (e.g. in the context of exit programmes). However, it is important to avoid treating the phenomenon as a matter of abnormal individual psychology. It is not the sudden appearance of individuals exhibiting psychopathological abnormalities that explains waves of terror, but rather the social conflicts that terrorist acts address. A psychopathologising, perpetrator-fixated anti-terror policy runs the risk of distracting from the actual causes and impeding an open-ended discourse that seeks causes in society as a whole. The fixation on perpetrators deceptively nourishes the conviction – often echoed in news reports and expert discourse – that a repressive approach, cracking down on the perpetrators, will solve the problem. This leads to a self-perpetuating cycle in which the sole focus is on upgrading security measures. This ties up resources and capacities that could otherwise be invested in a multi-pronged approach to confront the actual underlying conflicts. By projecting responsibility and causal efficacy primarily onto the perpetrators of terrorist acts, society and its decision makers are relieved of the burden of critically reflecting on their own failings and contributions to the underlying causes. Extremism and terrorism have an impact on all areas of society and their subsystems: from the victims and their families via all kinds of social institutions (schools, churches, trade unions, associations, police, etc.) to the macro-system level of laws and values. And equally, all such systems affect the various extremist phenomena in turn.

4 Federal Agency for Civic Education 2007.

5 Bayerischer Rundfunk 2019.

6 Westdeutscher Rundfunk 2018.

7 Bayerischer Rundfunk 2019.

8 taz 2015.

9 Deutschlandfunk 2017.

## Take social conflicts (more) seriously and assume responsibility

Normally, a murder is understood as a 'victim-perpetrator' relationship between individuals. However, this does not apply to politically and/or religiously motivated murder. Here, society effectively assumes two roles at the same time: victim and perpetrator. Preventing such acts requires the responsible management of societal conflicts in a way that acknowledges that everyone in society is a victim and a perpetrator to some degree. At first, this may appear confusing or even incomprehensible. However, this confusion can be remedied in the form of a thought experiment based on questions raised by two very recent right-wing terrorist attacks, one in Halle in October 2019 and the other in Hanau in February 2020: what part do we play in the anti-Semitism and xenophobia that continue to smoulder in Germany, and what have we done to counter these phenomena so far? What responsibility do we bear for the circumstances that have produced perpetrators with such life stories? What have we done to prevent extremist hatred towards certain population groups (Jews, women, Muslims, foreigners, homosexuals, etc.) from spreading, both in the real world and in the virtual world of the internet? And in view of this, what do such attacks mean? At a very abstract level, all of us who view ourselves as members of a free and open society are victims, since such attacks are violence aimed at a social system that is conceived and constituted as free and open. And in concrete terms, these attacks cause investors to worry whether an investment should be made in these locations, while potential tourists wonder whether visits to these regions and cities are advisable. Equally, people who are considering relocating ask themselves whether they will be welcome in these German cities and regions. If these groups of people were to nonetheless answer these questions in the affirmative, this could encourage and initiate developments that could make a positive impact on one or more of the factors that directly or indirectly underlie such attacks.

This thought experiment makes it clear that the prevention of extremism in society as a whole requires all members of society to take responsibility in their professional and private lives. From an ethical perspective, it must always be borne in mind that one's own positions, one's own actions and failures to act in social conflicts have an impact on social radicalisation and on the development of various forms of extremism within a society. Even if we look away, ignoring extremist developments, this influences the risk that fault lines within society will lead to destructive radicalisation in the form of extremist or even terrorist acts. This is quite obvious and is currently a subject of very heated debate with regard to right-wing extremism. Has our society, with its preoccupation with religiously motivated Islamist terrorism, paid due attention to right-wing extremism? Did Islamist terrorism's claim to so much of our attention make the most recent wave of right-wing terrorism, starting with the 'National Socialist Underground' (NSU), possible in the first place?

## Have the courage to engage in dialogue ...

### Refusing dialogue is not an option ...

There can be no negotiation or dialogue with terrorists or with extremists. And there can be no discussion with extremist parties at the far left or far right of the political spectrum – or at least no cooperation and certainly no coalitions. The same also

applies, at least in part, to societal groups associated with extreme, radical positions. Necla Kelek, an award-winning journalist, sociologist and human rights activist, recently argued in a German daily newspaper that the German government should not work with Islamic associations that are supported by the Turkish state and that they 'cannot be integrated' and that dialogue is the 'wrong course'.<sup>10</sup> But is it not possible to distinguish different levels here and to make nuanced evaluations? Blackmail, threats or even concrete terrorist violence are certainly not an acceptable starting point for dialogue. However, at the very least, we should seek dialogue and constructive debate with the societal groups and actors who are affected by conflicts that are conducive to radicalisation and/or who raise these issues – legitimately via democratic means – in parliaments and/or in protests on the streets. After all, dialogue does not mean acceptance. But it does mean tolerating dissenting positions, as long as they are not punishable by law. No doubt, this is a strenuous task ...

Refusing dialogue is risky for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the refusal to engage in dialogue indirectly confirms the basic narrative of extremist terrorist movements and groups of actors who, for their part, claim that any dialogue or further communication is futile and that they should, therefore, continue with a violent course of action. The refusal of the system under attack to engage in dialogue is also inconsistent with the rule of law. At the latest when extremists or terrorists have or are suspected of having committed a crime, dialogue is necessary in criminal proceedings. This dialogue is conducted by and with organs of the court system (public prosecutors, lawyers, judges, probation officers, etc.). In pursuing dialogue generally, we must, among other things, take into account the very specific ways in which extremist groups use language. We also need broad, authentic dialogues between all the participants of all the 'conflict parties' and social groups across the whole of society, so that the dialogue of the criminal trial that follows the commission of a crime is no longer necessary.

The contributions to this chapter contain valuable, concrete suggestions on how, where and with whom such dialogues can be organised. They shed light on a number of exemplary fields of activity and types of action within extremism prevention conceived of as a whole-society endeavour, and they sensitise us to the fact that, while we can ignore radical extremist phenomena, we should ultimately never be indifferent to them. For if we face extremism, whatever its motivation, with 'indifference', a lack of interest and apathy, we inevitably place extremist worldviews on the same level as a worldview oriented towards freedom and which invokes inalienable human rights – or at least that is how it will appear in the eyes of others. Such indifference must be avoided at all costs – not least out of respect for the victims of extremist terrorist violence.

<sup>10</sup> Wiesbadener Kurier.

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## Excursus 1

# Possibilities of conflict transformation

Andreas Schädel, Hans-Joachim Giessmann

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At its core, radicalisation has two primary meanings: the fundamental deviation from socially accepted norms and the increasing willingness to assert deviant patterns of thought and behaviour, even in the face of resistance. Radicalisation does not necessarily mean the use of violence, but it may increase the willingness of individuals to act in an extremist manner, depending on how much resistance they encounter. The motives that lead individuals to become radicalised and then to turn to extremist scenes are, however, just as complex as the forms of communication and action they use. Consequently, prevention in the sense of moderation or the avoidance of further radicalisation requires a broad spectrum of appropriate measures. While law enforcement and pursuit through the courts still enjoy a higher level of public trust than preventive measures due to their promise of offering an immediate remedy, a broad consensus currently prevails among political and societal decision-makers that extremism and radicalisation cannot be countered via enforcement alone.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, such measures are usually only considered once a relatively high degree of radicalisation has already been reached, i.e. in the assessment of a potentially criminal behaviour, and secondly, law enforcement aims at suppressing certain types of behaviour, not at eliminating the motives behind them. Prevention seeks to do both: to permanently prevent progressive radicalisation, and particularly extremist acts, while also impacting the motives that mould perceptions and behaviour in the social environment of susceptible actors or the groups to which they belong.

For this reason, counter-extremism strategies employed by the military and the police based on traditional concepts of security have long been accompanied by a preventive dimension, which has developed into an important field of action in recent years, especially in the wake of a growing, violence-prone Salafism and other expressions of religious extremism. Civil society actors have a special role to play here. For example, the German federal government currently cooperates with almost 700 civil society organisations in the field of prevention.<sup>2</sup> Such broad cooperation between state and civil society actors is unique within Europe.<sup>3</sup>

However, the existing multitude of programmes and measures is not viewed entirely favourably. A particular point of criticism is the broad diversification of actors and

<sup>1</sup> The German federal government has been supporting extremism prevention programmes since 1992. In 2001, this funding was supplemented by measures for the promotion of democracy (see 'Strategie der Bundesregierung zur Extremismusprävention und Demokratieförderung' 2016).

<sup>2</sup> As of July 2016.

<sup>3</sup> See 'Strategie der Bundesregierung zur Extremismusprävention und Demokratieförderung' 2016.

strategies. Critics emphasise the existence of a civil society prevention landscape that is excessively heterogeneous and lacks a unifying concept, a problem which is exacerbated by Germany's federal structure. One result of this criticism is the call to strengthen the links between civil society prevention and de-radicalisation work and the authorities.<sup>4</sup> However, a look at France<sup>5</sup> shows that successful prevention work requires a broad spectrum of institutional actors to cope with the heterogeneity of target groups and motivating factors. For instance, centralised and purely governmental prevention work geared solely towards security concerns often faces difficulties in even gaining access to those at risk of radicalisation or in being perceived as credible by the individuals in question. In contrast, independent civil society organisations funded by the state are capable of 'building bridges and intervening because they are not directly linked to state interests and security considerations'.<sup>6</sup> In fact, networking and cooperation must be established between all institutions and their various approaches in order to link the professional, social and individual fields of action that are the prerequisites for the development of a comprehensible and effective de-radicalisation strategy required to effectively reach at-risk youth and young adults from different extremist milieus.

## Practical examples of civil society de-radicalisation and prevention work

In order to illustrate the importance of civil society as a component of the prevention of extremism and radicalisation and to provide an insight into its underlying approaches and strategies, the following will give a somewhat detailed account of two specific projects from extremism prevention practice.

### *Streitkultur 3.0: Learning spaces and learning media for young people for dealing with online hatred and violence*

*Streitkultur 3.0* (Culture of Conflict 3.0), a project organised by the Berghof Foundation which was funded under the 'Live Democracy!' programme from September 2017 to December 2019, aims to enable school pupils in Baden-Württemberg and Berlin between the ages of 13 and 20 to develop critical media literacy skills in a participatory, dialogue-oriented process and by means of innovative methods. To achieve this, the project trains them in dealing with hate speech, agitation and extremist ideologies on the internet. It thereby addresses the fact that the internet and social media have a particularly strong influence on the identity formation of children and adolescents today. While this technology has many benefits, enabling young people, for instance, to form virtual networks with other young people, thereby gaining insights into other worlds, acquiring new knowledge and preparing for professional life, the internet and social media can also have very problematic effects on value and identity formation. Both have an equal potential to be educational and enlightening as well as manipulative and seductive. Young people in particular often find it difficult to distinguish between opinions and news reporting, or between rumours and facts. The increasingly high production values of videos and other messages of hatred put out by extremists gives them an effective

tool not only to stir up fears, but also to influence and mobilise adolescents and young adults. This is especially the case when the latter trust the internet and social media to guide their development, while social ties in the family and to friendship groups at school simultaneously lose influence. Radicalisation begins with the virtual offer of answers to supposedly open life questions for which the traditional social environment – parents, teachers, friends – does not have (or no longer has) any convincing answers.

The project *Streitkultur 3.0* meets these challenges by means of a two-stage process. In the first phase, teenagers were offered opportunities to critically examine information and opinion-forming content on the internet as well as concrete practical examples to discuss the potential dangers of manipulating opinion. For this purpose, they worked in small groups, familiarising themselves with various issues and critically discussing the influences of specific online phenomena. Workshops were also organised to work through the following topics and to jointly generate key content for discussion as well as suitable didactic methods for dialogue labs:

- Fake or fact: On the critical use of information and opinion-forming content
- Hate and incitement: Programmes against contempt for humanity, exclusion and violence
- Bots and algorithms: Guidelines for multiperspectivity instead of propaganda
- Critical media literacy: Contributions to a digital ethics
- Online activism: Strengthening non-violence and democracy

The participatory process pursued by the project has already led to the development of a number of learning media, including an app, animations and explanatory films, learning modules and guidelines. The active involvement and participation of the young people not only allowed the initiated learning processes to focus on the needs of the target group, but also increased acceptance among the participants. The project therefore represents a conscious reversal of the patronising top-down approach that is all too often favoured. Instead, it empowers young people and, by extension, civil society as a whole, to engage with others who are searching for answers to important life questions and may be vulnerable to extremist radicalisation and recruitment.

Even after the completion of the pilot project, the formats for dialogue labs and the learning media will remain available via the internet platform <https://www.frieden-fragen.de/> and in training events. This way, they can be used by qualified young people and teachers in school lessons and extracurricular youth work to help strengthen the critical and reflective use of media by young people beyond the scope of the pilot project, thereby enabling them to become involved and stay involved and to make contributions to an open, democratic culture of discussion in social media.

Another project that we would like to introduce here aims at prevention in a different context. For prevention work to have an effect in Germany, it cannot be limited to Germany or even Europe. Just as terrorism has become a global phenomenon, prevention must also be understood and pursued as a global task.

<sup>4</sup> Drachenfels/Offermann/Wunderlich 2018, 94.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 95; they summarise prevention work in France up to the attack on Charlie Hebdo in January 2015 under the heading 'preventive criminal neutralisation' in the form of early enforcement measures (see also Ragazzi 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Drachenfels/Offermann/Wunderlich 2018, 99.

### Sunni dialogue in Lebanon

In Germany, the first initiatives to deal with various expressions of religious extremism were launched back in the early 2000s.<sup>7</sup> Given the growth in numbers of violent Salafists and attacks made by radicalised Islamists in Europe, projects for the prevention of Islamist radicalisation have developed into an important field of action in the German prevention landscape. However, due to the influence of secularism and the assumption that radicalisation processes are primarily psychopathological in nature and have their origins in processes of social deprivation and structural violence, religion and religious actors have long been neglected in prevention practice or even excluded from it entirely. Consequently, prevention and de-radicalisation programmes have focused on psychological or socio-educational approaches, to the detriment of those that draw on theology.<sup>8</sup>

However, experience has shown that religious authorities and associations can make a positive contribution to the prevention of extremism, especially at the local level, justifying their inclusion in a holistic prevention concept. The project *Sunni dialogue in Lebanon*, which is funded by the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Union's *Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)* and implemented by the Berghof Foundation, should be viewed in this context. Even though it is carried out in a remote geographical and cultural setting, the project provides important insights into the contribution preventive approaches within a Muslim context can have for prevention work in Germany. It provides a concrete example of the role that religious organisations and actors can play in the prevention of radicalisation and extremism.

The three-year project aims to strengthen openness to dialogue and religious tolerance in a multicultural and religiously diverse environment, to provide a long-term remedy for the causes of violent extremism and ultimately to prevent the further polarisation of Lebanese society. To make this possible, the project creates informal spaces for regular exchanges between politically and socially influential figures from Sunni communities. It thereby responds to the increasing tensions between Lebanese religious communities, which is due in large part to the war in Syria, but also to the structural deficiencies of Lebanese institutions, which many members of the Sunni religious community feel fail to represent them. These tensions have created spaces for the mobilisation and recruitment efforts of ultra-radical groups and have not only deepened the division between the Shiite and Sunni communities, but also fostered radicalisation tendencies among parts of the Sunni population. The project brings together religious and socially active figures within the Sunni community by offering them inclusive and informal platforms for dialogue (e.g. round tables and workshops) as a means to identify the varied causes of radicalisation and to develop a common understanding of effective preventive and counteractive measures. As well as discussing the causes of radicalisation, the dialogue platforms also address how to actively encourage tolerance in religious media and consider workable approaches to promoting pluralism and tolerance in religious education. Regular exchanges of views help to promote Sunni dialogue and to strengthen moderate views and religious tolerance, thereby ultimately countering violent extremism by means of alternative

messages. The platforms for dialogue are accompanied by capacity-building measures in the field of dialogue design, mediation, communication and media relations.

In the dialogues, the project team works with a diverse core group of influential Sunni figures, including imams, religious scholars, teachers and community representatives. The involvement of such a wide spectrum of actors allows the broadest possible segment of the Sunni Lebanese community to be reached – especially those groups who often view themselves as marginalised owing to political, social and economic disadvantages. To further extend the reach of the project and account for challenges in different regions of Lebanon, meetings are held not only in Beirut, but also in other cities across the country, where the core group shares ideas with local government representatives and influential community figures.

Unlike many projects devoted to the prevention of Islamist radicalisation, the current initiative goes beyond the usual formal, often merely symbolic involvement of religious actors and acknowledges religion, its representatives, its institutions and symbols, as well as approaches based on theology and religious studies, as an integral part of de-radicalisation work. This approach is based on the realisation that efforts to strengthen openness to dialogue and religious tolerance can only be effective and garner acceptance among the people they address if they are anchored in society and initiated by and supported from within the community to which these people belong.

This project not only provides important insights into the role of religious actors in prevention work in Lebanon: in view of the fact that many members of the Muslim community in Germany are – like the Sunni community in Lebanon – excluded from political decision-making processes and socially marginalised, the project can also contribute to improving prevention work in Germany in the field of Islamist radicalisation. Without overestimating the importance of religious actors (bearing in mind the very diverse causes of violent extremism), the project has shown that they can make a valuable contribution to overcoming some of these causes – a contribution that cannot be made in this form by any other institution.

### Understanding and controlling unintended consequences: conflict-sensitive prevention work

Political interventions and support measures – whether in the fields of development, peace-building or de-radicalisation – never take place in a vacuum. Together with the actors who carry them out, they always form part of the overall social, political and economic context and can therefore, in addition to the goals they set out to achieve, also have unintended effects on the respective conflict dynamics, which may even be contrary to the goal of the respective project. For this reason, successful prevention work always requires a thorough analysis of local conditions and the structural causes of extremism and, building upon this, conflict-sensitive project planning, implementation and monitoring. The basic guideline here is the 'Do No Harm' principle,<sup>9</sup> which accounts for potential short- and long-term effects of project activities in all phases of the project cycle, thereby allowing organisations to achieve the best possible results while largely excluding adverse effects on society. To achieve this, holistic intervention strategies

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Gopin 2000; Appleby 2000; Abu-Nimer 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Collaborative Learning Projects 2016.

in line with the 3C approach ('coordinated, complementary and coherent action') are required, i.e. coherent and coordinated strategies that take the diverse approaches and activities of relevant international, national and local actors into account. They do not address radicalisation as an isolated phenomenon, but rather also counteract the invisible structural, social and economic inequalities involved. This is the only effective and sustainable way to strengthen societal structures, challenge extremist ideologies by means of a pluralistic, inclusive and socially just democratic model and ultimately combat the root causes of violent extremism.<sup>10</sup>

## Challenges of effective prevention work

Prevention work – especially in religious contexts – faces a number of obstacles at the conceptual, practical and societal levels. To conclude this excursus, we will summarise a few of these obstacles:

- ① In most cases, a systematic, standardised **evaluation** of the conception, organisation, implementation and effectiveness of prevention programmes is difficult. How can one make a reliable assessment of what can be avoided if the critical case has not yet occurred? How can one arrive at reliable conclusions about the factors driving radicalisation if these factors are not only inherently diverse but also produce different effects in comparable contexts? Any evaluation of prevention programmes is and remains context-specific, comprising a wide range of indicators, such as rates of recidivism among programme participants, levels of extremist activity and effective recruitment, demand for and availability of counselling services, etc. Regardless of the circumstances, it remains more difficult to assess the success of prevention than its failure. Prevention requires that the actors involved anticipate the consequences of the measures they take and continuously learn from their actions. Of course, prevention cannot rule out the occurrence of an extremist act. But it can influence the context in which radicalisation takes place and has the potential to spread. It can reduce the acceptance of extremism and pave the way for tolerant patterns of behaviour. Interest and participation in dialogue and education programmes are suitable indicators for this. In practice, however, it is rarely possible to measure qualitative indicators in particular, so the effectiveness of a prevention programme can rarely be accurately quantified, especially since the lack of financial resources, an occasionally deliberate lack of transparency due to the sensitivity of the actors involved, as well as the long timescales required for prevention programmes to take effect make monitoring and data collection difficult.<sup>11</sup>
- ② Prevention work can be perceived by the public not only in a positive way, but also as an **instrument of state surveillance** and a **restriction of civil rights**, thereby stirring mistrust in relevant communities. Examples of this include discussions around the 'Aarhus model' in Denmark, the British 'Prevent' programme and the French family counselling centre, all projects that are organised by or very closely associated with police authorities. Many de-radicalisation programmes have indeed also been deliberately used for surveillance and data collection purposes, especially in the Middle East and South-East Asia, but also increasingly in Western countries.<sup>12</sup>

- ③ By focusing strongly on members of minority communities, prevention work risks running counter to the cause of **social and societal cohesion** and straining the relationship between state institutions and these communities. For example, the focus on radicalisation within the Muslim community may result in perceived discrimination on the part of its members. In a political context, this manifests itself, for example, in criticism of a lower degree of attention being paid to the activities of right-wing extremist groups. Prevention that is viewed as stigmatising one group in comparison to others runs the risk of bringing about the opposite of the intended effect: radicalisation as a defensive reflex. Conversely, however, paying excessive attention to a particular group as an expression of preventive measures can also lead to critical objections from other groups who believe the group in question is being unjustly privileged. A radicalisation of attitudes, e.g. between different ethno-religious communities, cannot be ruled out in this case, either (Thomas 2010).

- ④ **Interreligious prevention work** requires greater conceptual clarity. Much of the literature does not base its theorising on verifiable systematic research, but rather on anecdotal or abstract concepts, or on concepts from secular prevention work, which do not do justice to the uniqueness of interreligious prevention work. This impairs the effectiveness of instruments used to integrate religious actors and religious dimensions more strongly into prevention work (Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series 2018).

- ⑤ Finally, **legal restrictions** can also make civil society prevention work more difficult or even impossible. In many countries, the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), whose aim is to prevent the financing of terrorists, have resulted in the undesired side effect – though in some places this is unfortunately strongly desired – of legal and operational restrictions on the activities of civil society and non-governmental organisations. By referring to the potential misuse of non-governmental organisations by organisations suspected of terrorism or even of only supporting terrorism, the FATF recommendations also allow sanctions to be imposed on non-governmental organisations that maintain contacts with such organisations. Since some states already define certain associations as terrorist groups merely because they are part of the political opposition, there is a threat of imposing restrictions on civil rights and freedoms under the guise of prevention. Likewise, banks may face elevated risk management requirements that turn NGOs into unwelcome customers, thereby making it more difficult for the latter to gain access to necessary financial services. While political instrumentalisation of the FATF recommendations is not a danger in Germany, a regulatory focus on Muslim organisations can be expected at the very least, which could considerably limit civil society prevention work for the prevention of Muslim radicalisation (Financial Action Task Force 2014; Brot für die Welt 2017).

<sup>10</sup> See also Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Koehler 2017, 164, 183.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 95; Kundnani 2009, 8.



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## Excursus 2

# How terrorists make use of us journalists

Bastian Berbner

With every new attack, journalists fall into line with the attackers' plans once more. Why? And what can we do about this?

Shock is finite. After the attack on French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, almost 20,000 people gathered for a vigil in front of the Brandenburg Gate. In solidarity with the victims, they sang the *Marseillaise* and wore T-shirts printed with the slogan 'Je suis Charlie'.

Ten months later, when terrorists struck again in Paris, not even 2,000 people came to the Brandenburg Gate. However, almost ten million watched the *Brennpunkt* special news programme on Germany's Channel One (ARD).

Several months later, terrorists attacked in Brussels, then in London. Only six million turned on the television in each case and hardly anyone came to the Brandenburg Gate.

After the attack in Barcelona, ARD recorded only slightly more than four million viewers. There were no vigils.

There have been so many attacks in recent years. Hanover, Essen, Würzburg, Ansbach, Berlin, Hamburg, Copenhagen, London, Nice, Brussels, St. Petersburg, Stockholm, Manchester, London, several in Paris, several in Istanbul, and this is not an exhaustive list. I bet that you had to think for a moment to remember what actually happened in some of the cities that I have just mentioned. Maybe you can't remember at all. It was just the same for me when I started to write this piece.

Somewhere along the way, our compassion has waned.

We see the latest images of terror on the television, but now look at them in the same way as we would an accident on the motorway. A brief look, a moment of shock. Then we turn back to our emotional comfort zone.

It's terrible how we are becoming desensitised, isn't it?

No, on the contrary. I believe that this is the best thing that can happen to us.

When it comes to the question of how the attacks can be prevented, people generally talk of tighter laws, of additional police officers, of new face recognition technologies. Even though everyone knows that these measures cannot stop every terrorist. They are sure to find some other way to strike.

### Bastian Berbner

Editor of the weekly newspaper *DIE ZEIT*. His book *'180 Grad - Geschichten gegen den Hass' (180 Degrees - Stories against Hate)* was published in 2019.

In truth, there is a much more effective way of fighting terrorism. One that hits terrorism as a whole and not the individual terrorists. The heart of the hydra and not its many heads.

It can be called desensitisation. I would phrase it in a more positive way: targeted disinterest.

This might sound cynical at first, especially to the victims of terror attacks and their families. But we must bear in mind how terrorism works – and remember December 2016.

Anis Amri drove a truck into the Christmas market at Breitscheidplatz in Berlin. He crushed stalls and ran people over and then managed to evade the security authorities. However, they knew precisely who they were seeking. Amri waved at a surveillance camera as he escaped. He kindly left his ID in the truck.

The Nice attacker, who ran 86 people over, also placed his driving licence in his truck.

The police also found ID in the Charlie Hebdo attackers' getaway vehicle.

Terrorists escape and, instead of making it difficult to identify them, they show their ID?

Of course, this is not carelessness or a mistake. The terrorists do that for people like me, for us journalists. Just like they upload video messages to the internet or post pictures of their acts on Facebook. They want us to write articles about them, to print their names on the front page using the largest possible font alongside a photo of them. They want the whole country to find out about them, ideally the whole world.

Because it is only public attention that turns a criminal act into an act of terrorism. A conventional murder and one that aims to spread terror are very similar to one another in essence: one person kills another. The difference is the motive. Murders driven by greed or jealousy, for example, target quite specific people; otherwise, they don't make sense. The perpetrator hopes that as few people as possible find out about their crime, ideally no one. The more secret, the better.

In the case of a murder that is supposed to become a terror attack, precisely the opposite is true. The victims are symbolic, often selected at random. They can be anyone – partygoers, football fans, teenagers at a pop concert. And the aim is for as many people as possible to hear about the act and the person who committed it. The more public, the better.

In 2016, there was an attack that was almost lost amidst the noise of the major incidents in Brussels, Paris and Berlin, but which makes it possible to study the entire nature of terrorism as if under a magnifying glass. The scene of the attack was the village of Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray near the city of Rouen in northern France.

I went there last year. I entered the small church with thick stone walls a few minutes before the beginning of the service. At the front left-hand side sat a stooped man with grey hair and a grey jacket. I recognised him from the television, had seen photos of him on the internet and had read about him in French newspapers – Guy Coponet, 88 years old at the time of the incident. After the service, I spoke to him and he told me what happened here.

On 26 July 2016, almost no one came to the service: just Coponet, his wife and three nuns. But Coponet was happy because it was his best friend, the priest Jacques Hamel, standing

at the altar. At 85 years old, Hamel had long since retired, but he sometimes still helped out. Shortly before the end of the service, the door of the vestry flew open and two men dressed in black burst in. They had knives in their hands and screamed 'Allahu Akbar'. One of them lunged at the priest, who was still shouting: 'Be gone, Satan!' Then the knife struck. Hamel collapsed, dying, on the altar.

The assassins had killed one person, but it had so far only been witnessed by five people: the Coponets and the three nuns. To turn the crime into a terrorist attack, it had to stand out from the 13 other murders that are committed every day in Europe on average, which we hardly ever find out about.

Five people had to become millions. The two men in black had already taken the first step towards this when they turned towards the congregation. They had charged the murder with symbolism: they had killed a priest in a church, his corpse was lying at their feet and the altar was speckled with his blood. But that was not enough.

One of the assassins went to Guy Coponet and pressed a smartphone into his hand, with the camera function already activated. He said: 'Grandpa, you film it!' So Guy Coponet, afraid and out of his depth, held the lens towards the altar and recorded the assassin posing over the corpse of his best friend.

A jihadist with a bloody knife standing over a dead priest on the altar of a Christian church in Europe – the Islamists were aware of the power of these images. Coponet also recognises this. 'I thought that they would put it on the internet. I filmed it anyway. What should I have done?'

After a few seconds, the assassin came back and checked the quality of the images. He said: 'Grandpa, you're hardly even trembling!' Then he stabbed him. Three times: in the arm, in the back, in the neck. Coponet fell, bleeding, to the floor. He feigned death and prayed.

The assassins then turned to the women, who were standing in shock between the pews. 'We thought that it would now be our turn', remembers Sister Huguette, one of the nuns, a fragile-looking woman of 80. Instead, the assassins began to talk. Huguette remembers that one of them instructed them: 'When you appear on television later, say "For every attack in Syria, there will be one in France".' 'That was when we knew that we would survive.'

Terrorism is a form of communication. Terrorists want to send a message. Not so much to their immediate victims, the three nuns or Guy Coponet and his wife, not so much to the people at Breitscheidplatz and the people attending the concert at the Bataclan. Rather, their message is for everyone else. Or, in the jargon of the terrorism researchers: the 'interested third party'.

For most of us, let's say 99 per cent, this interest shows itself in the form of fear, horror and sometimes even a thirst for revenge. When we see Sister Huguette weeping on the television, when we hear her tell of the martyrdom of the priest, we shake our heads in horror, perhaps we even raise our hands to our mouths in shock, perhaps we catch ourselves thinking: 'We must pay these monsters back for this!'

This is the moment when a crime becomes an act of terrorism.

The next morning, sitting on the bus or the train, we might ask ourselves: 'Is that bearded man over there planning something?' Maybe we won't go to church for a while. Barcelona is supposed to be beautiful, but wouldn't another destination be safer? Do we really have to go to the Christmas market every year?

The thought is enough. We were not present for the attacks, did not see Jacques Hamel collapse, did not hear the wood of the Christmas market stalls at Breitscheidplatz crack. Yet the fear has nevertheless been instilled in us. We are terrorised.

And it is my fault.

Not only mine, of course; it is the fault of the journalists, i.e. my colleagues and myself, who report on terrorism.

Most people find out about an attack through a notification on their phone, an item on the television news, a voice from the car radio or a glance in a newspaper. And when politicians make statements, for example when Angela Merkel 'strongly condemns' an attack or the Minister of Foreign Affairs expresses his regret, it is journalists who carry these voices into people's living rooms with their cameras and microphones.

It is painful to admit it, but we journalists are the messengers of terror – it is we who turn five frightened people in a provincial French church into millions of frightened, furious people crying for revenge throughout the world. German news programme Tagesschau reported on Hamel, as did CNN. Of course, we can repeat the saying: 'Don't shoot the messenger', which basically means that the messenger can do nothing about the message that he or she is conveying. Except it isn't true in this case.

All of the activities of terrorists are aimed at being spread by the media. They want to make us journalists report the incidents as much as possible, for as long as possible and as sensationally as possible. That is why they choose symbolic targets. That is why they forced Guy Coponet to film them. That is why they let the women live. What is more shocking than weeping nuns on the television? One death was worth more to the Rouen assassins than six deaths.

As early as the 1950s, an Algerian revolutionary considered which was better: killing ten enemies in a remote area with no one finding out about it – or killing one single person in Algiers so that people in faraway countries and important politicians would find out about it the next day. He was expressing the guiding principle of present-day terrorism.

Terrorists make use of us journalists. And we allow ourselves to be used, again and again.

There has always been terrorist violence, but it only became a powerful phenomenon in the modern era. As the Braunschweig-based historian Carola Dietze writes: over the course of the 19th century, it initially spread 'where transport and communication technologies were particularly advanced and the politically interested public was particularly pronounced'. That means primarily in Europe.

In 1858, the revolutionary Felice Orsini hurled a bomb at the carriage of the French emperor Napoleon III, in the hope of triggering a popular uprising.

In 1881, anarchists assassinated the Russian tsar Alexander II as he travelled through St. Petersburg in his carriage.

In 1914, a Serbian nationalist shot and killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian throne, and thus indirectly triggered the First World War.

All three acts were political assassinations of the kind that there had already been for centuries, but something was new. The assassinations did not take place in secret, but in public, in the heart of major European cities. There were hundreds of witnesses, and newspapers and telegraphs caused the terrible news to spread throughout the continent within just a few days.

Suddenly, small terrorist groups, even individuals, had found a way of influencing world events without much effort. Publicity had become a weapon. And depending on the historical context, it could be used by fascist, anti-colonial, nationalist or communist activists.

Terrorists became propagandists of the deed, but also of the word. Ulrike Meinhof, one of the leaders of the Red Army Faction (RAF), was a journalist. In June 1970, even before the group's first terrorist attacks, Der Spiegel printed verbatim excerpts from an RAF pamphlet that Meinhof had drafted. Years later, in September 1977, when they turned on the television, the German people saw the exhausted President of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, Hanns-Martin Schleyer, reading aloud from the Stuttgarter Zeitung newspaper, in fear of his life. The RAF had kidnapped him. Now, it was making the German public witness its perfidious performance and thereby putting pressure on the German government.

The history of the media and the history of terrorism are inextricably linked. Every breakthrough in media technology is followed by a new manifestation of terrorism.

When the Olympic Games were broadcast live on television for the first time, in Munich in 1972, Palestinians attacked the Israeli team. The cameras sent the pictures around the world. No one was talking about sport anymore – it was all about the Middle East.

When the television broadcaster Al Jazeera was founded, Osama bin Laden sent his couriers with messages to its editorial department. And just as Der Spiegel had printed Meinhof's words, the broadcaster transmitted bin Laden's thoughts.

At some point, Al Jazeera's interest in the texts declined and bin Laden changed his strategy. He had his fighters organise spectacular attacks, bombing the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, attacking an American warship – and finally, in September 2001, carrying out the most successful terrorist attack in history, which was staged so perfectly that no editorial department in the world had a choice. To this day, the pictures are shown on television somewhere almost every day and it still works to the benefit of the Islamists every single time that someone sees the aeroplane hit the tower.

The Islamist manifestation of terrorism is the most totalitarian to date. The Red Army Faction attacked representatives of the political and economic elite, but bin Laden targeted anyone who did not follow his radical understanding of Islam. The aim was for no one to feel safe and for everyone to be afraid.

Then something significant happened. For more than a hundred years, the terrorists had to get through the journalistic filters to reach the public. They were reliant upon newspapers and broadcast media reporting about them. The internet changed this.

The first terrorist group to exploit this systematically was the Iraqi branch of Al-Qaeda. When its leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, beheaded American businessman Nicholas Berg in May 2004, the video was downloaded half a million times within 24 hours. The terrorists had found a direct way of planting the most brutal images in the heads of people throughout the world.

A little later, cameras no larger than matchboxes came onto the market. They were initially used by extreme sport athletes to film their spectacular ski runs or skateboard jumps, but then the petty criminal Mohammed Merah attached one around his chest in March 2012 in the city of Toulouse in southern France. He shot and killed a rabbi and three children in a Jewish school and captured the whole thing on film. When a police tactical unit surrounded his home three days later, he was in the process of editing a 24-minute film on his laptop.

Shortly after midnight, Merah somehow managed to sneak through the police lines. He could have taken this opportunity to escape. Instead, he went to a postbox and sent a thumb drive with the film to the Paris office of Al Jazeera. Then he returned to his flat. A little later, he was shot dead.

A few years later, the Islamic State was no longer content with simply recording its marches, attacks and executions. Its propagandists filmed from multiple camera angles, edited the images to make a Hollywood-style montage, set them to a background of dramatic music and put them on the internet.

And we journalists distributed them further. My colleagues in television editorial departments were not able to simply go to the caliphate and film. So they used the films that IS had produced itself. They do write 'propaganda video' in small print in a corner, but that doesn't change anything: the viewers still see the images that IS has produced of itself. Images of beheadings, which were pixelated, but the viewers' imagination filled the gaps. Videos of militants laughing into the camera and saying how much they enjoyed slitting the throats of the infidel with blunt swords.

In this way, IS became the incarnation of evil in our minds. After the attack in Barcelona, the Times of London used the headline 'Evil Strikes Again'. Not just a few crazy individuals, no, evil plain and simple, no less than that! There was rejoicing amongst the terrorists. Mission accomplished! Everyone is afraid.

The effect of such coverage has been very well documented. In an Israeli study, researchers found that people who saw the terrible details of attacks on the television developed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

In another study, also from Israel, a psychologist divided more than two hundred people into two groups. She showed the first group news items about terrorism. The second group was shown other political news. The members of the first group demonstrated far higher levels of fear.

According to surveys, Americans are now more afraid of terrorism than of heatwaves and car accidents, although these are both responsible for several times as many deaths.

But what does IS get out of people in Europe or America being afraid?

Frightened societies act like a cornered dog that bites everyone around it in panic. Tragically, this particularly applies to democracies. There, the people's fear soon turns into demands addressed to politicians. And the politicians have to do something to avoid appearing weak; often they do too much.

The best example is provided by 9/11. In a poll conducted in the first few days of October 2001, 92 per cent of Americans demanded a military response to the terrorist attack. The result was war in Afghanistan, war in Iraq. A few terrorists had provoked the USA; the response was to attack whole nations, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths, including many people who were not involved, whose families consequently became enemies of America. Then came Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, the betrayal of human rights.

The USA could not have made it much easier for the recruiters for terrorist organisations; it gave them a lot of valid arguments.

Terrorists feed on escalation. They provoke, strike, attack until they get a reaction. The aim of the Red Army Faction's attacks was to force the German state to show its alleged Nazi face. The Islamists want to provoke the entire Western world into a major battle. Even those terrorist individuals who were never in Syria or Iraq and became radicalised in their bedrooms at home or a backyard mosque see themselves as brave soldiers in a heroic war.

This war does not exist. The war on terror is, in truth, a conflict with a few radical criminals. When we use military vocabulary, as the then French president François Hollande did after the attacks in Paris when he spoke of an 'act of war', or as the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung did when it wrote of a 'war against the West' after the attack in Barcelona, we are doing them a huge favour. We elevate them to something that they are not.

The five steps of the escalation of terrorism are therefore as follows: one, there is an attack. Two, it receives a lot of coverage. Three, this leads to fear. This in turn leads, four, to an overreaction and finally, five, to fresh terrorist attacks.

As journalists, we could object that step two, media coverage, does not necessarily have to be followed by step three, fear. That it depends on *how* we report the attack. I too have often used this argument in discussions, but if I am honest, I now consider it to be an excuse that merely sounds plausible. It soothes our conscience, but is not really true. How am I supposed to report on terrorist attacks without producing fear?

If I write about the perpetrators, I make them famous and frighten the 99 per cent ('What if there are more like him?').

If I report on the victims, for example dead children, I also feed people's fear ('What if that were my child?') and their thirst for revenge.

Even with an article like this one, I am ultimately falling into line with the terrorists' plans. For just the words Amri, Breitscheidplatz and Christmas market trigger specific pictures in people's minds, which then lead once more to fear.

There is only one way out: we must prevent the mechanism from gaining momentum. We must stop reporting on terrorist attacks.

Let us imagine it, just for a moment: no more notifications on mobile phones, no report on the evening news, no in-depth analysis to follow, no politicians posing arm in arm for photographers and making statements of regret. If this were the case, there would no longer be a microphone for the terrorists to speak into. The Brandenburg Gate would no longer be lit up in the colours of the country where the attack took place, the attackers would no longer have a reason to feel like heroes. They would be reduced to what they really are – criminals. And we would all simply continue to live as if nothing had happened. We would continue to travel on the underground without being afraid, we would continue to fly to Barcelona and to visit the Christmas market.

An attack would then have direct consequences only for the families of the victims, the eye-witnesses, medical personnel and a few therapists – just like a car accident. This might still be hundreds of people, but no longer millions. After a motorway pile-up, no one lights up the Brandenburg Gate. Fear would be contained. Our society would be healthier.

This thought experiment is beneficial and agonising at the same time, especially for me as a journalist because, of course, it contradicts my understanding of my profession. It is my job to report on events. Systematically remaining silent would be a form of self-imposed censorship. We immediately start arguing with ourselves about freedom of the press.

What we forget here is that there is a case in which we journalists have been practising this kind of self-censorship for a long time – but without calling it that.

In 1974, an American sociologist worked out that an extraordinary number of people killed themselves in the USA whenever articles about suicide had recently appeared in the New York Times. He called the phenomenon the 'Werther effect' after the events surrounding Goethe's famous 18th-century novel, probably the most dangerous bestseller in the history of literature. At that time, a lot of readers emulated the desperate main character Werther and shot themselves in the head.

The finding was confirmed in a number of studies: the more coverage a suicide was given, the greater the number of imitators. That is why journalists in many countries agreed to severely restrict the reporting of suicides.

For example, when the number of suicides rose in Vienna in the mid-1980s, an Austrian advisory body published a brochure. This stated that journalists should not report suicides in a 'sensational' manner and should on no account provide details or publish photos. The article should also be accompanied by a telephone number that readers could call to get help. Austrian journalists adhered to this; the number of suicides fell by a third and subsequently stayed low.

Not reporting saves lives – when it comes to suicide, we journalists see this as sufficient reason to remain silent.

Last year, an interesting article was published in the renowned Journal of Public Economics. In it, Michael Jetter, a German economist at the University of Western Australia, writes about his own research. Jetter studied 61,132 attacks worldwide between 1970 and 2012 and asked whether the terrorists were inspired by media reports of other acts. He found that whenever an attack was reported in particular detail, there were more attacks in the next seven days, in which an average of three people died.

Jetter thus proved that there is also a kind of Werther effect in the case of terrorist attacks. Media coverage gives birth to new acts of terrorism. In other words, people die because of our coverage. 99 per cent of interested third parties might respond with fear and horror when they see Sister Huguette weeping on the evening news. However, there are also people who feel the opposite in the same situation – zeal. When these people hear about terrorists stabbing a priest or the Paris attackers putting on explosive vests and blowing themselves up at the football stadium, they consider it a suggestion. These people turn off the television and go and commit murder.

There would be fewer attacks if we journalists made less noise.

On the morning after the attack in Barcelona, I browsed the online news services. Spiegel Online devoted its first six articles to the attack, as did the online editions of the Süddeutsche Zeitung and the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. In the case of DIE ZEIT, it was the first four, likewise Bild, which also had a video and a series of photos entitled 'Die Bilder des Terrors' (The images of terror). I had to scroll quite a long way down to find an article about taxes, the ongoing election campaign or the Bundesliga, which began that same evening.

A few hours later, a man stabbed nine passers-by in the market square of the Finnish city of Turku, two of whom died.

If our reports contribute towards inciting terrorists, why do we not leave them alone? Why do we treat the acts committed by suicide attackers as attacks and not as suicides?

We could argue that a person committing suicide kills themselves, while a suicide attacker kills many other people as well. The attacker strikes in the public sphere, he or she is attacking our society and people have a right to know about that. In a nutshell: terrorism is too important to be kept quiet.

I always considered this argument to be correct until summer 2016, when I was one of hundreds of journalists who travelled to Munich shortly after a young man had shot nine people dead in the Olympia shopping centre. Each of us, including myself, thought: this is it, the first major terror attack in Germany. The city was in panic. It was clear to us journalists that this subject would occupy us for days, probably weeks; many editorial departments even sent reinforcements the next day.

Then something strange happened. It transpired that the murders were not a terrorist attack but a killing spree – and everything was immediately different: people breathed again and heaved a sigh of relief. The subject had suddenly become smaller to us journalists – the editorial departments planned less space for it and many journalists departed.

The number of victims had not decreased, nor had the grief of their families. It was still unclear whether the perpetrator had accomplices or confidants; there were a lot of open questions. But somehow, it had all gone flat.

We consider terrorists to be much more dangerous than spree killers. At the same time, the risk of dying in a killing spree is actually much higher.

In our perception, we have made something of relatively little danger into something dangerous. That is a huge success for the terrorists. Thanks to their propaganda, this misrepresentation has been firmly instilled in us. However, if the importance that we ascribe to an attack has been constructed, we should also be able to deconstruct it so that next time we react to a terror attack with the same state of mind that we had after breathing that sigh of relief in Munich.

If we had managed this then, many murders may have been prevented. Michael Jetter's study on the terrorist Werther effect had not yet been published then. But when I read it later, I had to think back to the days before and after Munich, as the killing spree was not the first and not the only violent incident at that time.

First, an Islamist committed an axe attack in a train in Würzburg. This was followed by a huge wave of media attention.

Four days later came the killing spree. Everyone reported on it.

Two days later, an attacker blew himself up in Ansbach.

It seems as though the Werther effect effortlessly leaps ideological divides. Anyone who is inclined towards violence imitates an attack that they have just seen: a spree killer copying an Islamist and vice versa.

Of course, I do not have any illusions. We will not achieve a media blackout with regard to terrorism. It would not be enough if, for example DIE ZEIT stopped reporting. Der Spiegel, Stern, the Süddeutsche Zeitung, Bild: in short, all of the German media would have to be involved. And even that would not be sufficient. Many Germans get their news from the BBC, the New York Times or the Swiss Neue Zürcher Zeitung.

And then, of course, there are the social media platforms that exist outside the journalistic filter. We would not be able to prevent someone from tweeting 'Je suis Charlie' and everyone else from copying them. Or prevent an eye-witness from posting a wobbly video of dead people, as happened after Barcelona. People would see blood or hear an attacker shouting 'Allahu Akbar' – I don't even want to imagine how the conspiracy theorists that call the mainstream media the 'lying press' (Lügenpresse) would revel in it if there were then no articles about an incident in the newspaper. The media would be abused of being a cartel that suppresses information – and rightly so.

The terrorists know that we can do nothing else – and they take advantage of this.

However, we can choose the best of many poor solutions. This means as little coverage as possible. Only when there is new information. And then not in a continuous loop. Stories should be brief, if possible not as a lead story, but further back in the programme or the newspaper. Not sensational, but matter-of-fact. We should not be using any images of weeping nuns, even though we know that this would be powerful television.

Just as important as the scale of the coverage is its focus. Ideally there should be no coverage of the perpetrator at all. No videos of them, no photos, least of all on the front page, no biographical details, if possible not even their name. If their name is mentioned, an abbreviated form should be used. Anything that glorifies the perpetrator, that gives them fame and publicity must be prevented. Instead, the focus should be placed on the victims, but here too journalists should resist their impulse and report as unemotionally as possible.

What language should we use in our coverage of the subject? Certainly not the terminology used by the perpetrators. We should not talk of 'war', of 'warriors' and definitely not of 'holy warriors'. We should not mention 'soldiers' or 'battles'. We should avoid the word 'holy' as well as any other words that exalt the perpetrator, that could make them into a hero. More appropriate are terms that diminish them and have clear negative connotations: 'criminal', 'murderer'.

And there is something else that we could consider. It may sound crazy, but it would be worth a try. We could print the telephone number of a de-radicalisation centre, accompanied by a notice, at the bottom of articles about terrorism, just as we do when we report on a suicide.

There are so many examples of society's losers who become radicalised when looking for meaning in their lives that I do not consider it to be impossible to reach one or more of them with an offer of help. The de-radicalisation centres are doing successful work. They have many examples of young people who have found their way back to life, who recognise that their radicalisation was misguided. We should make the road to this recognition as easy and accessible as possible for those affected.

All of this could perhaps ease the problem of terrorism a little. If we want to solve it completely, we would have to stop reporting on it altogether and there is only one way of achieving this: interest in the attacks must decline. We must be desensitised.

That is why every attack that leaves us indifferent, every attack that we quickly forget again, every day on which the Brandenburg Gate is not enveloped in a flag of light as a sign of solidarity is a step in the right direction. If, after the next attack, we change channels away from the news with its images of terror and choose to watch football instead, we should not do it with a guilty conscience, but with a feeling of positivity.

## Excursus 3

Prevention through criminal law in Germany<sup>1</sup>

Peter Frank, Stefan Freuding

The assumption, which is deemed to be secure, that criminal law has a preventive effect and can therefore stop crimes from being committed can be viewed from two different perspectives. The first looks at the effect of criminal convictions on the individual and the community, and thus at the application of the law by the criminal courts. The second perspective focuses on the development of criminal legislation, which is characterised, especially in the field of criminal law relating to terrorism, by continuously bringing forward the point of criminal liability with the goal of prevention.

**Dr Peter Frank**  
Federal Public Prosecutor  
General

**Dr Stefan Freuding**  
Senior Public Prosecutor

## Prevention as an object of sentencing

The first step in considering how far preventive considerations may be taken into account in sentencing following a specific conviction is the jurisprudential discussion of theories of criminal justice.

## Theories of criminal justice

Theories of criminal justice<sup>2</sup> concern the purpose of criminal penalties. There has been jurisprudential disagreement over this since the Enlightenment, when absolute and relative theories emerged. Combination theories, which are almost universally accepted today, attempt to merge these different approaches – balancing them somewhat differently in each case.

The absolute theory of criminal justice considers the object of punishment to be a response to the specific crime, detached from any pursuit of societal goals. A criminal penalty is retribution for a culpable act, makes amends for the damage to the legal order and serves to restore justice through expiation and atonement, but does not serve any utilitarian purpose.<sup>3</sup> The principle of retribution ('an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'), which was already represented in antiquity and in early Christian ethics, was strongly influenced in the German legal tradition by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). For Kant, the penal code is a categorical imperative, i.e. a precept of justice that is detached from all considerations of purpose.<sup>4</sup> According to *Hegel's* approach, crime is a negation of the law and the criminal penalty imposed for it is a negation of this negation.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The object of prevention is also implemented in numerous substantive statutory offences.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview, see Momsen/Rackow, JA 2004, 336.

<sup>3</sup> Theune 2007, margin number 24.

<sup>4</sup> Joecks 2017, margin number 55.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, margin number 57.

In contrast, relative criminal justice theories relate the criminal penalty that is to be imposed on the individual perpetrator to the goals of society. According to these theories, the criminal penalty has the purpose of preventing new crimes. According to the model of specific prevention, this is supposed to be achieved through the impact on the perpetrator him- or herself. The idea of general prevention, on the other hand, is to deter other potential perpetrators from committing crimes by exerting an impact on the general public.

The specific prevention approach, which was primarily developed by Franz von Liszt (1851–1919), makes a further distinction between the object of deterring the perpetrator from other crimes and ‘neutralising’ him or her through detention (negative specific prevention) and the object of reforming the perpetrator with a view to re-socialisation (positive specific prevention). General prevention also comes in two basic forms. Negative general prevention aims at deterring others from also committing crimes by punishing the perpetrator harshly.<sup>6</sup> Its principle proponent is Paul Johann Anselm von Feuerbach (1775–1833) and it is based on the notion that the potential perpetrator is following an urge to commit the crime and that the threat of the criminal penalty gives him or her such a sense of disapprobation that the reasons not to commit the crime prevail and are thus able to induce him or her not to commit the crime.<sup>7</sup> In positive general prevention, the goal of the criminal penalty is to strengthen the population’s compliance with the law and to demonstrate the unassailability of the legal order.<sup>8</sup> According to this most recent theory, which draws on the socio-psychological findings of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and has been decisively influenced by Günther Jakobs (born 1937), prevention is primarily achieved not through deterrence, but through the practice of compliance with the law. This theory rests fundamentally on the assumption that members of the public have confidence in the law when they see that it is enforced; punishing the perpetrator serves to satisfy and stabilise expectations of norms.<sup>9</sup>

The combination theories that are prevalent today acknowledge, albeit with varying emphases, all the objects specified in the absolute and relative theories and attempt to combine these in a balanced relationship. When it comes to the prevention of crimes, specific and general prevention are equally important.<sup>10</sup> The German Penal Code (StGB) is not committed to a single theory of criminal justice, but is itself based on a combination theory.<sup>11</sup> While Section 46 paragraph 1 sentence 1 StGB states that guilt is the basic factor for assessing the criminal penalty, which corresponds to the idea of retribution, Section 46 paragraph 1 sentence 2 StGB contains specific preventive criteria, as the effects of the penalty for the future life of the perpetrator must also be taken into consideration in the sentencing. The goal of positive specific prevention is evident in the notion of re-socialisation that lies behind suspended sentences (Section 56 StGB). Conversely, an unfavourable social prognosis can prevent the suspension of a sentence, revealing the object of negative specific prevention. The goal of general prevention is taken up in the expression ‘to defend the legal order’ as a condition for imposing short custodial sentences (Section 47 paragraph 1 StGB) or for not suspending the sentence

<sup>6</sup> Theune 2007, margin number 25.

<sup>7</sup> Joecks 2017, margin number 70.

<sup>8</sup> Theune 2007, margin number 25.

<sup>9</sup> Joecks 2017, margin number 73.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, margin number 76.

<sup>11</sup> Wessels/Beulke/Satzger 2017.

(Section 56 paragraph 3 StGB). The object of prevention is also implemented in numerous substantive statutory offences.

## High-court jurisprudence in Germany

The position taken by Germany’s highest courts on matters of jurisprudence are decisive for legal practice; in effect, these courts follow combination theories.

The Federal Constitutional Court has repeatedly concerned itself with the purpose and object of punishment by the state. Constitutionally, however, it has seen no reason to rule on the dispute between theories. However, the combination theory that underlies the German Penal Code acknowledges that criminal justice may have a variety of objects, which may be weighed up against each other and reconciled.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, the Constitutional Court has always emphasised the idea of atonement, in line with the absolute theory. Accordingly, the purpose of a custodial sentence consists primarily in the enforcement of punishment as a response to culpable behaviour, which – above and beyond other possible additional purposes of a criminal penalty not ruled out by the constitution – serves the purpose of expiation.<sup>13</sup> In this view, a criminal penalty is an expression of retributive justice and thus a response to non-compliant behaviour.<sup>14</sup> This assessment reflects the Hegelian approach. At the same time, however, the Constitutional Court has also highlighted special and general preventive objects of punishment. A criminal penalty serves to protect legal interests and the primary objective of punishment is to protect society from behaviour that is detrimental to it and to protect the elementary values of community life, whereby the value of the injured legal interest and the level of harm to society caused by the act must be taken into consideration.<sup>15</sup> One of the functions of punishment is to uphold the law in the face of the wrong committed by a perpetrator in order to demonstrate the unassailability of the legal order to the community of law and thus to strengthen the population’s compliance with the law.<sup>16</sup> This draws upon the reasoning behind the theory of positive general prevention. In summary, the Federal Constitutional Court acknowledges the following purposes of criminal penalties as aspects of an appropriate punitive sanction: expiation, prevention, the re-socialisation of the perpetrator, atonement and retribution for the wrong that has been committed.<sup>17</sup>

Like the Federal Constitutional Court, the Federal Court of Justice sees the protection of legal interests as the task of criminal justice. Attacks on legal interests disrupt law and order.<sup>18</sup> This is in line with the basic considerations of the theory of positive general prevention. The Federal Court of Justice also consistently follows a combination theory in its jurisprudence, in which it sees fair expiation – similar to the earlier concept of atonement – as the primary purpose of criminal penalties.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, a specific imposed criminal penalty may not be detached, either upwards or downwards, from its

<sup>12</sup> For basic and comprehensive information, cf: Federal Constitutional Court Decision (BVerfGE) 45, 187, 253 et seq.

<sup>13</sup> BVerfGE 128, 326, 377; BVerfGE 109, 133, 173.

<sup>14</sup> BVerfGE 109, 133, 168.

<sup>15</sup> BVerfGE 45, 187, 254.

<sup>16</sup> BVerfGE 187, 256.

<sup>17</sup> BVerfGE 187, 253.

<sup>18</sup> Decisions of the Federal Court of Justice in Criminal Matters (BGHSt) 20, 203, 204; BGHSt 39, 128, 138.

<sup>19</sup> Federal Court of Justice Case Law (BGHR) Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB Specific prevention No. 6 = Neue Zeitschrift für Wirtschafts-, Steuer- und Unternehmensstrafrecht (NZWiSt) 2016, 323.



intention of being a fair expiation, and should also not infringe (other) legally accepted purposes of the penalty.<sup>20</sup> These also include considerations of general prevention and specific prevention.<sup>21</sup>

The Federal Court of Justice attempts to resolve the relationship between the various accepted purposes of criminal penalties by means of the so-called 'leeway theory', according to which the goals of general and specific prevention may only be taken into consideration within the scope of a penalty that is proportionate to the degree of the perpetrator's guilt.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, however, the Federal Court of Justice takes the view that it is not the job of the criminal penalty to practise expiation as an end in itself; rather, the penalty is only justified if it also proves to be a necessary means for fulfilling the preventive protection function of criminal law.<sup>23</sup> The precedence of expiation must be protected to prevent a criminal penalty that is no longer proportionate to the degree of the perpetrator's guilt from being imposed for reasons of prevention.<sup>24</sup> Within the margin in which a criminal penalty is still proportionate to the degree of the perpetrator's guilt, the court can give space to the preventive purposes of general prevention and specific prevention and mitigate or increase the criminal penalty.<sup>25</sup> This reflects the fact that, on account of the mandatory requirement to respect human dignity (Article 1 paragraph 1 Basic Law [GG]), the individual perpetrator must never be degraded by the criminal penalty beyond fair expiation to a mere object of societal objectives in order to 'make an example' of them.

**Example:** An incorrigible perpetrator repeatedly steals items of low value. Even though reasons of specific prevention (taking the perpetrator 'out of circulation') and general prevention (detering imitators and shocking people into compliance with the law) speak in favour of a long custodial sentence, the length of the sentence is limited by the specific degree of guilt. This generally prevents the imposition of a long custodial sentence, whilst taking full advantage of the range of sentences (custodial sentence of up to five years, see Sections 242, 248a StGB).

On the other hand, a criminal penalty arising from preventive considerations should not be lower than the minimum necessary for fair expiation.<sup>26</sup>

**Example:** The perpetrator of an armed robbery is only caught and convicted many years later. He has not committed any other crimes in the intervening period. From the point of view of specific prevention, there are no grounds for a severe criminal penalty, as an impact on the perpetrator is not necessary and he is not expected to commit any new crimes. General prevention factors do not necessarily suggest a high criminal penalty either, as there is no longer a sustained disruption of the peace after such a long period of compliance. Nevertheless, fair expiation demands the imposition of an appropriate

criminal penalty within the range of penalties available (custodial sentence no shorter than five years, see Section 250 paragraph 2 No. 1 StGB; in a less serious case, a custodial sentence of between one and ten years, see Section 250 paragraph 3 StGB).

Therefore, fair expiation places an upper and lower limit on the specific sentencing.<sup>27</sup> It is necessary to bear in mind that general prevention, both in its positive form (strengthening compliance) and its negative form (providing a deterrent), can only lead to a more severe penalty.<sup>28</sup> Considerations of specific prevention, on the other hand, can lead to an increase<sup>29</sup> or reduction<sup>30</sup> in the penalty. However, increasing the penalty on the basis of considerations of general prevention for the purpose of providing a deterrent, in particular, is considered by the Federal Court of Justice to be permissible only in exceptional cases, where there is a need for this in accordance with criminal policy.<sup>31</sup> The trial judge may only set the criminal penalty higher than it would otherwise have been in order to deter other perpetrators if an increase in crimes such as or similar to those under trial at a rate that is dangerous to the community has been identified.

## Summary

In summary, it can be concluded that, even in accordance with the prevailing combination theory, preventive objectives can only be taken into consideration to a limited extent during sentencing. Preventive considerations going beyond the level of individual guilt are secondary and must on no account lead to the fair criminal penalty being exceeded.<sup>32</sup> The legitimate objective, from society's perspective, of taking a particularly dangerous perpetrator into safe custody cannot be achieved by an increase in the criminal penalty. Such legal consequences prompted by considerations of specific prevention may be based solely on the culpability-independent measures listed in Section 61 Nos. 1 to 3 for reforming and securing the defendant (accommodation in a psychiatric hospital, in an addiction treatment facility or in preventive detention) and are therefore not a criminal penalty.

## Prevention as an objective in criminal legislation

Unlike the criminal court in the sentencing of specific perpetrators, the legislator has ample scope to create penal codes with the primary objective of preventing crimes. In line with the combination theories, according to which criminal law serves to both punish crimes

20 BGHSt 29, 319, 320; BGHSt 34, 345.

21 BGHSt 24, 40, 42-46; BGHSt 28, 318, 326 – especially with regard to negative general prevention through deterrence; BGHSt 34, 150, 151-152 – especially with regard to positive general prevention through strengthening compliance and with regard to positive specific prevention through re-socialisation; BGHR Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB General prevention No. 6 and No. 9 – each with regard to negative general prevention.

22 BGHSt 20 / BGHR Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB General prevention No. 8 / Theune, margin No. 40 / Fischer 2018.

23 BGHSt 24, 40, 42.

24 BGHR Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB Specific prevention No. 2 and No. 6.

25 BGHSt 20, 264, 267; BGHR Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB Specific prevention No. 2.

26 BGHR Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB Expiation No. 29. In the case of a convicted tax evader, the Federal Court of Justice considered the imposition of a two-year suspended sentence and an additional fine to avoid a non-suspendable custodial sentence to still be reasonable as long as the total sanction was still capable of 'making an impression on the defendant and the community of law' (Federal Court of Justice Case Law (BGHR) Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB Expiation No. 34).

27 BGHR Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB Expiation No. 21.

28 In one case of intelligence agency activities, the Federal Court of Justice held that an increased criminal penalty in order to deter potential perpetrators was appropriate, especially as considerations of specific prevention do not play a role in this area of crime (BGHSt 28, 318, 326).

29 In a manslaughter case, the Federal Court of Justice upheld the trial judge's reasoning of an increase in the penalty (within the range of criminal penalties that are proportionate to the degree of the perpetrator's guilt) for reasons of specific prevention, on account of the 'lack of restraint and emotion' of the defendant; the reasoning called for a longer sentence for its educational impact (BGHR Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB Special prevention No. 2).

30 In the case of a defendant convicted for the sexual assault of his wife, the Federal Court of Justice repealed the imposition of a non-suspendable custodial sentence because the trial court did not sufficiently take into account the specific preventive considerations that spoke in the defendant's favour (e.g. no previous convictions, crime more than ten years ago, no subsequent crime) (BGHR Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB Specific prevention No. 5).

31 Federal Court of Justice *Neue Zeitschrift für Strafrecht (NSz)* 1992, 275, 275. In a case of a extortionary robbery ('räuberische Erpressung') by a member of a mafia-style organisation, the Federal Court of Justice upheld the trial judge's sentencing, according to which such crimes must be punished severely for reasons of general prevention in the expanding category of organised crime (see BGHR Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB General prevention No. 6). Conversely, the Federal Court of Justice challenged an increase in the criminal penalty, justified on the grounds of general prevention, in a case of sexual abuse on the basis that it erred in law, as it was not possible to establish an increase in such crimes to a degree that was dangerous to the community (BGHR Section 46 paragraph 1 StGB General prevention No. 7).

32 BGHSt 20, 264, 267.

and prevent further crimes, the German legislator has always used a combination of retributive and preventive considerations as a basis for the creation of criminal offences.<sup>33</sup>

### Shifting the moment of criminal liability forward as an exception

The preventive goals of the legislature conflict with the principles of act-based criminal law, with which a purely attitude-based or thought-based criminal law would be incompatible.<sup>34</sup> The German Penal Code is based on the traditional idea, which can still be regarded as a principle, that the planning of a crime and even its concrete preparation go unpunished as long as the threshold to an attempted crime is not crossed. To clarify: the planning of a murder by an individual perpetrator and even the procurement of the murder weapon are not punishable. Criminal liability only begins when the perpetrator actually begins to commit the deed, figuratively speaking when the perpetrator strikes out with the axe. On the other hand, the German Penal Code is no stranger to offences that occur even before individual legal interests are violated. This becomes clear when we look at concrete and abstract endangerment offences. Concrete endangerment offences require at least the onset of a concrete danger (example: a near-accident in the case of Section 315c paragraph 1 StGB). Abstract endangerment offences are even further removed from an actual violation of legal interests. In these cases, an act such as that of driving a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs is penalised even without there having been concrete endangerment or an actual violation of the legal interests of other people. This penalisation serves – in line with both specific and general prevention – to prevent violations of legal interests that would arise if the perpetrator were to cause an accident whilst unfit to drive.

In addition, further norms of the German Penal Code involve the shifting of criminal liability forward to the stage of preparation for the offence, for example the procurement of items for forging official IDs (Section 275 paragraph 1 StGB) or for manufacturing explosives (Section 310 paragraph 1 StGB). The mere production of a counterfeit document is punishable if this is later to be used for deception in legal transactions (Section 267 paragraph 1 alt. 1 StGB). Here too, penalisation serves to prevent an actual deed that is still only an intention at this point. Section 30 paragraph 2 StGB (agreement or declaration of willingness to commit a crime) also shifts criminal liability to the preparation stage. The legitimacy of such criminal offences, which, whatever else they do, certainly also serve preventive purposes, is not questioned by anyone. In this context, it seems just as unobjectionable as it is necessary that, in modern societies with their multiple risks, the state has the right to create criminal offences that do not wait for attempted violations of legal interests to succeed, but seek to prevent them in the preparation stage.<sup>35</sup> A far more difficult question to answer is that of which constitutional limits the legislator is subject to when creating preventive criminal offences.

### Standard of the Federal Constitutional Court

The Federal Constitutional Court primarily checks the constitutionality of penal codes against the fundamental rights pertaining to the general freedom of action (Art. 2

<sup>33</sup> Griesbaum/Wallenta 2013a.

<sup>34</sup> BGHSt 62, 102, 114.

<sup>35</sup> Griesbaum/Wallenta loc. cit.

paragraph 1 GG) and – in the event of a threatened deprivation of liberty – the freedom of the person (Art. 2 paragraph 2 sentence 2 GG).<sup>36</sup> These freedoms may only be restricted by a penal code if the protection of legal interests<sup>37</sup> requires this, taking the principle of proportionality into consideration. According to this principle, a penal code restricting a fundamental right must be appropriate and necessary for achieving the desired purpose. Proportionality in a narrower sense (prohibition of excessiveness) demands that, in weighing up the severity of the intervention against the significance and urgency of the factors justifying it, the limits of what is reasonable to impose on the subject of the prohibition be respected. When the state inflicts punitive measures, the guilt principle and the principle of proportionality mean that the criminal penalty must be appropriate to the severity of a crime and the guilt of the perpetrator. Within this framework, the legislator has a lot of room for manoeuvre when fixing the scope of criminal liability.

The previous jurisprudence of the Federal Constitutional Court contains no clear standards for the assessment of the proportionality of criminal law norms that preventively penalise acts far in advance of actual violations of legal interests.<sup>38</sup> However, the Federal Constitutional Court has expressly permitted the legislator, within the wide margin of discretion that the latter has been granted, to bring forward the point of criminal liability, for reasons of general prevention, from concrete endangerment or the violation of important legal interests of the community to acts with only abstract endangerment, in order to protect these legal interests.<sup>39</sup>

### The development of criminal law relating to terrorism

The increasing significance of preventive criminal law can be demonstrated in a particularly impressive fashion in terms of the development of criminal law relating to terrorism. In view of the ongoing threat of terrorist attacks, there is a legitimate need to prevent such crimes as effectively as possible, including by means of criminal law. This need is particularly high in the case of newer forms of terrorist crimes, such as attacks by radicalised individual perpetrators or terrorist ‘sleepers’ on crowds of people, which have become the main type of action favoured by Islamist terrorists. After all, such acts not only target the lives of a large number of people and thus the highest legal interest. By unsettling the population and thus undermining people’s trust in the state and its institutions, they also attack our free and democratic society founded on the rule of law. In addition to this need, preventive criminal law is also a necessity because the conventional definition of the crimes that are to be prevented (in particular crimes against life and explosives offences) largely achieve nothing in terms of both general and specific prevention.<sup>40</sup> This is partly because fanatical perpetrators, who have often planned for their own death as a consequence of their act, are unlikely to be deterred by the threat of long custodial sentences. Moreover, the actions corresponding to the definition of the offence are generally only fulfilled when it is too late, specifically when the threshold to the attempted crime has been crossed by the perpetrator actually beginning to commit the deed. If the legislature does not want to resort to a constitutionally problematic

<sup>36</sup> BVerfGE 90, 145, 171 et seq.

<sup>37</sup> With regard to the protection of legal interests as the primary objective of criminal penalties, cf. footnote 14.

<sup>38</sup> Also BGHSt 62, 102, 111.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. BVerfGE 90, 145, 184.

<sup>40</sup> Frisch 2018, 315, 318.

preventive deprivation of liberty in the interest of public safety, practically the only remaining possibility is that of preventive criminal law. The creation of new offences defined as occurring before the actual attacks take place aims to make it possible to prosecute the potential perpetrators of terrorist attacks for the preparation of the act, to detain them and thus to deprive them of the basis for the execution of their ‘main offence’.<sup>41</sup> This allows the state to fulfil its task of guaranteeing the safety of its citizens and preventing serious and mass violations of key legal interests, such as life and limb, by terrorist attacks in good time where possible.<sup>42</sup> According to Schünemann, one of the main tasks of criminal law in this high-risk area is to function as ‘an indispensable instrument for the preventive protection of legal interests and hence certainly also an instrument for averting danger’.<sup>43</sup>

### The road from Section 129a StGB to Sections 89a to c, 91 StGB

Section 129a StGB, the key norm of material criminal law relating to terrorism, was inserted into the German Penal Code by the German Anti-Terrorist Act of 18 August 1976 as a consequence of the Red Army Faction (RAF)’s terror campaign of the early 1970s,<sup>44</sup> with effect from 20 September 1976. This norm was already aimed at prevention, as it clearly establishes criminal liability at an earlier point. From then on, anyone who founded an organisation whose purpose or activities were aimed at committing any of a list of serious offences (especially murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, hostage-taking and certain other offences constituting a danger to the public), or anyone who participated in such an organisation as a member, or who promoted or supported such an organisation, could face a custodial sentence of between six months and five years.

Characteristic of this ‘organisation-based’ approach is the idea that even joining a group of at least three people is punishable, even without one of the enumerated criminal acts having to be attempted or committed. This moves criminal liability forward in a significant way, which makes it possible in practice – in the event of an appropriate suspicion – to initiate criminal proceedings. It also allowed the police to arrest potential perpetrators of terrorist attacks even before attacks have been committed, in the spirit of negative specific prevention.

As a response to further attacks by the RAF, Section 129a StGB was tightened by the German Act on Combating Terrorism of 19 December 1986,<sup>45</sup> with effect from 1 January 1987. Firstly, an attempt to participate as a member in such an organisation became punishable due to its elevation to the level of a criminal offence (‘Verbrechen’) with a minimum sentence of one year. Secondly, a further instance of shifting criminal liability forwards was introduced, as even attempting to incite others and declaring one’s willingness to become a member of such an organisation were now punishable under Section 30 StGB.

If merely the conception of Section 129a StGB reveals an ongoing expansion of criminal law relating to terrorism and a shifting forward of criminal liability, this becomes even more apparent when we consider the relatively new criminal offences defined in Section 89a, 89b and 91 StGB.

These offences, which were created by the German Act on the Prosecution of the Preparation of Serious Acts of Violence that Endanger the State of 30 July 2009,<sup>46</sup> with effect from 4 August 2009, have significantly shifted criminal liability forward in the context of terrorism to the area of previously unpunished preparatory acts. The background to this was the legislature’s realisation that it was not possible to effectively tackle the threat of international terrorism solely using the organisation-based offences of Sections 129a, 129b StGB. The expectation that acts of terrorism would increasingly be committed by radicalised individual perpetrators without a concrete connection to a terrorist organisation has been painfully fulfilled. According to the law that was applicable until 2009, preparatory acts for serious violent incidents, especially murderous attacks that have not yet crossed the threshold to an attempted crime, were only punishable if the perpetrator or the perpetrators were acting as members or supporters of a terrorist organisation or if a collaboration of several people and concrete details of the intended act could be established under the requirements of Section 30 StGB.<sup>47</sup>

With the advent of Section 89a StGB, the preparation of a serious act of violence endangering the state, in particular a crime against life, may be punished, provided that the crime is, under the circumstances, intended and suitable for undermining the continued existence or the security of a state or of an international organisation or for abolishing the constitutional principles of the Federal Republic of Germany, robbing them of their legal effect, or subverting them. In addition, the preparation must take place in the form of one of the preparatory acts featured in the exhaustive list in Section 89a paragraph 2 StGB:

- receiving instruction in the production or use of firearms, explosives or similar dangerous weapons (e.g. training at a terrorist training camp),
- producing or obtaining firearms, explosives or similar dangerous weapons or
- obtaining objects or substances that are necessary for the production of such dangerous weapons (e.g. purchasing chemicals, detonators, pipes, nails or other objects that can be used to construct an explosive device).

Section 89b StGB (establishment of relations for the purpose of committing a serious act of violence endangering the state) makes establishing contact with a terrorist organisation punishable.<sup>48</sup> Section 91 StGB (instructions for committing a serious act of violence endangering the state) penalises, in particular, the online distribution of instructions, for example for producing explosives, that may lead to the commission of a serious act of violence endangering the state.<sup>49</sup>

On 20 June 2015, the offence of financing terrorism (Section 89c StGB) was updated according to the Act of 12 June 2015,<sup>50</sup> replacing the previous provision in Section 89a paragraph 2 No. 4 StGB. According to the new law, anyone who collects, accepts or provides assets with the intention or merely the knowledge that these are to be used by another person for the purpose of committing a crime endangering the state is liable to prosecution.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 315, 319.

<sup>42</sup> Griesbaum/Wallenta 2013.

<sup>43</sup> Schünemann 2014.

<sup>44</sup> *Federal Law Gazette I* 1976, 2181.

<sup>45</sup> *Federal Law Gazette I* 1986, 2566.

<sup>46</sup> *Federal Law Gazette I* 2009, 2347.

<sup>47</sup> Schäfer 2017, margin No. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Bundestag document No. 16/12428, 16.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>50</sup> *Federal Law Gazette I* 2015, 926.

Paragraph 2a was inserted into Section 89a StGB by the same Act as an additional punishable preparatory act. According to this provision, anyone who undertakes to travel from Germany to another state to commit a serious act of violence endangering the state there or to be given training in the production or use of firearms, explosives or similar dangerous weapons is liable to prosecution. This new penal provision is aimed at the considerable number of people in recent years who have travelled to the conflict regions in the Middle East in order to participate in armed conflicts there or to visit terrorist training camps. The interpretation as criminal enterprise (see Section 11 No. 6 StGB) means that even a (failed) attempt to leave Germany fulfils the objective elements of the offence. The law enforcement issues that led to this can be seen above all in the fact that it was previously impossible to impose sanctions under criminal law in cases of a thwarted departure for a terrorist training camp, particularly – as especially relevant in the case of ‘lone wolf’ attackers – when it was impossible to prove participation in a foreign terrorist organisation (punishable under Sections 129a, 129b StGB) or a concrete establishment of contact with representatives of the latter (punishable under Section 89b StGB).<sup>51</sup>

Thus, in criminal law relating to the protection of the state, the legislature has shifted the threshold for criminal liability very far in advance of concrete violations of legal interests. This means, at the same time, that criminal law has unambiguously become an instrument for averting danger.

For this reason and due to the issue of sufficient legal certainty, the provisions of Section 89a et seq. StGB were fiercely criticised right from the start – especially with regard to the further expansion in Section 89a paragraph 2a StGB.<sup>52</sup> The reservations carry a lot of weight when we realise that acts such as saving money, purchasing metal pipes or nails or travelling out of Germany are objectively neutral and legal and that the criminal liability is therefore essentially grounded in the perpetrator’s intentions and, where applicable, other subjective aspects. According to the prevailing and correct view, Section 89a StGB does not penalise people just for their convictions, but for translating them into action, i.e. for committing a concrete act. Even in the particularly controversial case of Section 89a paragraph 2a StGB, the crime is only committed when the perpetrator translates his or her ‘malicious intent’ into action and prepares to leave Germany.<sup>53</sup>

In its fundamental ruling of 8 May 2014,<sup>54</sup> the Federal Court of Justice decided that the provision of Section 89a StGB was compatible with the Basic Law, albeit only in the event of a constitutional, restrictive interpretation of the subjective side of the offence. To establish criminal liability, it is, according to this ruling, not sufficient for the perpetrator to merely envisage the act he or she has prepared in general terms. The perpetrator’s preparatory actions must be geared towards the commission of a serious act of violence endangering the state in terms of Section 89a paragraph 1 sentence 2 StGB. Therefore, from a systematic perspective, it is imperative that the planned act is given concrete form to such an extent that it is possible to verify whether the conditions of the state security clause are met. To protect the principles of act-based criminal law and the guilt principle and thus elementary guarantees of the Basic Law, it is also essential that the perpetrator is already absolutely determined to commit the serious act of violence endangering

the state when he or she undertakes the preparatory actions as defined in Section 89a paragraph 2 StGB. According to this ruling, a conditional intention is not sufficient to answer the question of liability concerning the commission of a serious act of violence endangering the state.

In a decision of 6 April 2017,<sup>55</sup> the Federal Court of Justice reconfirmed this assessment, also stating its view that the offence consisting of leaving or attempting to leave Germany in accordance with Section 89a paragraph 2a StGB is compatible with the Basic Law, and consequently refraining from initiating judicial review proceedings (Art. 100 paragraph 1 sentence 1 GG) before the Federal Constitutional Court. At the same time, the court emphasised the legitimisation of preventive criminal provisions. It attached great weight to the protection of democracy and liberty through effective counter-terrorism measures.<sup>56</sup> The court stated that it is necessary to keep potential perpetrators of serious acts of violence endangering the state away from the countries in which they can receive training in the skills that they need to commit such acts.<sup>57</sup> It also confirmed that it is important to consider that the (attempted) departure from Germany was, in many cases, the final opportunity to reach the potential perpetrator of an act of violence before he or she becomes even more radicalised and becomes involved in a terrorist organisation. Reservations about shifting criminal liability particularly far forward, according to the court, had been dispelled by the special requirements regarding the intent of the perpetrator. This ensured that only journeys with a terrorist intent would be penalised.<sup>58</sup> As the perpetrator’s inner vision of committing an offence must also manifest itself in an external act, namely at least an attempt at leaving Germany, according to the court, this is not a matter of impermissible attitude-based criminal law. However, the Federal Court of Justice indicated that Section 89a paragraph 2a StGB is ‘on the borderline of what is permitted by the constitution’.<sup>59</sup> This suggests that offences geared towards prevention that were shifted any further forward in advance of a violation of legal interests could infringe the constitutional prohibition on excessiveness.

## Summary

In the field of criminal law relating to terrorism, the legislature’s freedom is broad in view of the paramount importance of the protected legal interests, but it is not unlimited. On the basis of preventive considerations, the legislator may create criminal offences that shift the start of criminal liability far in advance of a planned attack. However, it must always be guaranteed that the criminal liability is associated with the fulfilment of a concrete objective act that, in connection with the subjective elements of wrongdoing, already contains a core of wrongdoing that endangers legal interests.

<sup>51</sup> Brodowski/Jahn/Schmitt-Leonardy 2018.

<sup>52</sup> For comprehensive information: Schäfer 2017, margin number 4.

<sup>53</sup> Biehl, JR 2015.

<sup>54</sup> BGHSt 59, 218.

<sup>55</sup> BGHSt 62, 102.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 113. Also BVerfGE 133, 277, 333.

<sup>57</sup> BGHSt 62, 102, 111.

<sup>58</sup> Paul, GSZ 2018, 43, 43.

<sup>59</sup> BGHSt 62, 102, 113.

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## Excursus 4

# At the heart of society – counselling after incidents of right-wing extremism

Reiner Becker

Right-wing extremists announce a torchlight march. They distribute hate-filled flyers and specifically target young people. The local authority would like to take action against this.

In a small town, verbal attacks and violence against refugees, homeless people, disabled people or LGBT individuals are on the rise. Local politicians ask themselves what the correct response is.

A mayor who stands up for refugees is threatened and seeks help.

In a cemetery, graves are defiled by being daubed with right-wing extremist, anti-Semitic slogans. The church community would like to do something about it.

A schoolgirl expresses anti-Semitic conspiracy theories in her homework. The school leadership team asks for advice.

CDs featuring music by neo-Nazi bands are distributed outside a school; a school newspaper includes right-wing extremist content. The teachers do not know how they should handle this.

At a football club, right-wing slogans are chanted and racially motivated incidents occur again and again. Representatives of the club want to prevent this.

A teenager becomes known for making anti-refugee statements and is increasingly in contact with right-wing extremist groups. His parents seek advice; they want to prevent their son from drifting in this direction.

Examples such as these are part of everyday life in many communities in both western and eastern Germany and leave many people at a loss.<sup>1</sup> What many of these cases have in common is that the right-wing extremist phenomena are not always linked to organisations such as parties or structures like those of the Freie Kräfte (lit. Free Forces). Instead, they indicate that aspects of extreme right-wing ideology are found beyond the hard organisational core on the far-right fringes, but also at the 'heart of society', and are reflected in a variety of behaviours. This is also demonstrated by the various attitude studies that have been carried out since the early 1980s: from the Sinus study '5 million Germans: We should have a Führer again ...',<sup>2</sup> to the various empirical

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Becker/Schmitt 2019, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sinus-Institut 1981.

studies into group-focused hatred<sup>3</sup> and the studies conducted by the Leipzig Research Group.<sup>4</sup> Acceptance of individual elements of a right-wing extremist ideology such as xenophobia, racism or anti-Semitism is widespread at the heart of German society, without this attitude potential (at least at a federal level) being tied to right-wing extremist parties. It is only through the rise and the establishment of the right-wing populist AfD that the widespread cultures of prejudice against marginalised groups have now gained a parliamentary voice.

The challenge of preventing National Socialist and later right-wing extremist ideas from taking root, especially among young people, has been the task of political education since the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany; however, offering assistance in the form of individual counselling to people who are affected by concrete incidents in various ways is relatively new.

## The history of mobile counselling

The first mobile counselling service was established in Germany by civil society institutions at the state level in Brandenburg in the 1990s as a response to a rise in right-wing extremist incidents. It later served as a blueprint for the measures taken by the federal government within various federal programmes: for example, mobile counselling became the key element of the federal programme ‘Civitas – initiativ gegen Rechtsextremismus in den neuen Bundesländern’ (Civitas – initiative against right-wing extremism in the states of the former East Germany) (2001–2006). This included a model of counselling specifically for victims of racist and right-wing extremist violence, as well as mobile counselling for people, institutions and bodies affected by incidents with a right-wing extremist background. The programme ‘kompetent. für Demokratie – Beratungsnetzwerke gegen Rechtsextremismus’ (competent for democracy – counselling networks against right-wing extremism) (2007–2010) was the first mobile counselling service active in the states of the former West Germany to receive funding.

The central idea of this federal programme was to create a broad pool of governmental and non-governmental resources, to consolidate these various competencies for joint action in ‘crisis situations’ and to guarantee tailored and professional counselling on the spot. The financing of the counselling networks that were set up by 2010, including the mobile counselling services, was continued by the federal programme ‘Toleranz fördern – Kompetenz stärken’ (Promoting tolerance – strengthening competence) (2011–2014). However, the funds and resources needed to ensure professionalism remained precarious to some extent, especially in the larger states in western Germany. The federal programme ‘Live Democracy! Active against Right-Wing Extremism, Violence and Hate’ (2015–) followed its predecessors in terms of funding mobile counselling and supporting the framework, and it has been possible to significantly expand the services offered in Germany in recent years.

In the past few years, the relatively new business of providing mobile counselling to those affected by right-wing extremism has become far more professional and has been systematically expanded, as the following examples show:

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. Heitmeyer 2002–2012.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. currently Decker/Brähler 2018.

- From 2011 to 2019, great emphasis was placed on the development of ‘quality-oriented procedures’ to further professionalise the counselling structures; some federal states had their counselling networks attested according to the ‘customer-oriented quality testing for counselling organisations’ (KQB) procedure.
- In 2014, the mobile counselling teams throughout Germany, which had been linked in a network since 2008, came together to form the Bundesverband Mobile Beratung e. V. (Federal Mobile Counselling Association), in order to work jointly on nationwide professional standards, promote networking within the profession and represent the interests of mobile counselling to specialists and the public.<sup>5</sup>
- Since 2012, the Demokratiezentrum Hessen, in collaboration with the Systemisches Institut Tübingen (Tübingen Systemic Institute) has offered a series of training modules entitled ‘Systemische Beratung im Kontext Rechtsextremismus’ (Systemic counselling in the context of right-wing extremism), which is attended by counsellors from throughout Germany.<sup>6</sup>

## The mobile counselling approach

Mobile counselling in the context of right-wing extremism does not function according to a standardised model or offer its recipients any magic formulas. Instead, its key objective could be expressed as follows: to offer appropriate counselling in line with local conflict situations rooted in xenophobia, anti-Semitism, hatred or right-wing extremism. Mobile counselling teams provide advice quickly on request, work discreetly and free of charge and, in the process of resolving acute conflict situations on site, develop tailored strategies for dealing with such situations in the future in collaboration with the various recipients. Despite the limitations highlighted by critics, most offerings apply methodologies based on systemic counselling. In particular, they are geared towards considering the recipients’ ways of looking at problems and their needs with the goal of ‘helping people to help themselves’. A further goal is to relieve the pressure under which many recipients suffer and to ensure that the burden of their responsibility is borne by many different shoulders. In accordance with these key objectives, a distinction can be made between three basic levels of mobile counselling:

- Information services, including: explaining right-wing extremist scenes, symbols, elements of (youth) culture such as music and clothing styles; research into regional or local scene activities; the production of specific socio-spatial analyses; the implementation of target group-specific training courses and workshops on various topics; or services such as training in arguing against slogans, etc.;
- Enhancement of individual options for action based on the concrete needs of counselling recipients: e.g. through additions to statutes and house rules, support with the creation of identity and position statements, systemic help with decision making and problem solving, provision of specialist and intensive support/advice (e.g. victim counselling);
- Networking: recipients of counselling often find no help and support in ‘their own systems’. A key element of the advice to schools is therefore to ensure that teachers

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g. Bundesverband Mobile Beratung

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Beratungsnetzwerk Hessen, Fortbildungsangebote 2019.

who have taken the step of availing themselves of external help are not alone in facing the problem in their own school or school system. Ways are sought to involve the staff or the school leadership team in solving the problem in order to relieve the strain the counselling recipients feel they are under. In cases of counselling at the local level, networking means motivating people locally to assume joint responsibility (e.g. as a citizens' alliance or other initiative) for tackling a local problem and, if applicable, to gain the support – in word and deed – of local political leaders by demonstrating commitment.

### Mobile counselling in action – an example from sport

Mobile counselling following right-wing extremist, racist or anti-Semitic incidents is in demand from a wide variety of groups; in Hesse, schools, local authorities, clubs and associations, and even the parents of teenagers with leanings towards right-wing extremism seek external support. In 2017, for example, advice was only sought for reasons closely associated with organised right-wing extremism ('brotherhoods', political parties, etc.) in 10.6 per cent of cases.<sup>7</sup> In the majority of cases, the incidents relating to right-wing extremism did not require the existence of an explicit extremist scene. The reason people often speak of 'right-wing extremism at the heart of society' in this context becomes clear when we look at specific cases of people seeking advice, as the following example illustrates.

*At a football club, right-wing slogans are chanted and racially motivated incidents occur again and again. Representatives of the club want to prevent this.*

Incidents in the context of amateur sport repeatedly give rise to and are typical of a demonstration of right-wing extremist attitudes in everyday life, without strictly organised right-wing extremist cadres having to be involved. In the pub, the club house or on the sidelines on Sunday afternoons, visitors and even players repeatedly chant slogans of a kind that allow us to speak of local cultures of prejudice when such incidents regularly occur.

When handling such enquiries in the context of sport, it is therefore important *firstly* to begin by establishing that the sports club must not be considered in isolation, but as part of a community. These kinds of prejudices may be expressed by the same people in other local contexts, too, and teenagers who grow up in such an environment are socialised in the views common in the local political culture.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, a fundamental aspect of mobile counselling is the process of describing the community and analysing socio-spatial problems and resources.<sup>9</sup>

*Secondly*, if, as in the present example, 'representatives of the club want to prevent this', counselling in the context of sport (as well as in other fields) must bear in mind that people often have complex networks of relationships, especially in rural areas. The postulate of commitment to action against the far right reaches its limits very quickly if people's fears of being perceived as local 'traitors' are ignored. On the other hand, relationships can be an important factor in solving the problem if, for example, a member of the club's board

of directors who has good connections to the local community actively demonstrates his willingness to do something against the slogans and prejudices. In such a case, the member of the board of directors may open the door to other people in the club or in the community taking the issue seriously.

*Thirdly*, a key objective in the next stage of counselling is for people in the club and in the community to position themselves against this culture of prejudice. Mobile counselling offers key assistance here, for example by helping this group to develop its own attitudes and positions, which can be used as the basis for devising appropriate, concrete measures. These may range from formal measures, such as amendments to the statutes and changes in the use of club houses, to public relations measures, e.g. in the form of press releases or similar in which the club states its official position, or measures that demonstrate that the club represents different values from the high-profile xenophobic and defensive attitudes of individual members or groups of fans (in the case of larger, spectator-oriented clubs). Such measures may include, for example, sports events under an anti-racist slogan or club projects specifically to help people affected by xenophobia – many clubs, for instance, are involved in the reception and integration of refugees. A combination of all these measures can also be found, for example, in the open and participatory development of a specific mission statement for the club. This does not replace formal statutes, but breaks down the canon of values into different levels of club life and provides normative parameters for active members.<sup>10</sup>

Mobile counselling in the context of right-wing extremism is not an interventionist 'fire-fighting operation'. Instead, in many cases, the resolution of acute conflicts allows a severe crisis to be transformed into great opportunities for those affected. After all, in many counselling processes with community involvement, the aim shifts over time from 'doing something against right-wing extremism' to a commitment with positive key objectives that is established on the basis of the organisation's own (newly) formulated positions and values.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Beratungsnetzwerk Hessen 2018*, 16.

<sup>8</sup> *With regard to the special features of rural areas in the context of right-wing extremism and the development of democracy, cf. e.g. the field study Borstel 2018, which was conducted in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.*

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Bringt/Klare 2019*, 43 et seq.

<sup>10</sup> *For a detailed example of the development process for such a mission statement, cf. Becker/Ribler 2019.*

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## Excursus 5

# Challenges related to (extremism) prevention work among football fans

Daniel Duben

Football is by far the most popular sport in Germany. Thousands of amateur footballers kick a ball around weekend after weekend. Millions of fans follow the professional games in the country's numerous stadiums and on television. It is therefore no surprise that researchers consider football highly relevant and frequently refer to it as a mirror of developments in society as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of the widely varying fan cultures, which have an effect far beyond the teams' stadiums, is not in dispute. For example, ultras from Munich's Schickeria fan club undertook a number of initiatives to highlight the merits of the first Jewish president of Bayern München, Kurt Landauer, and the German Football Association (DFB) awarded them the Julius Hirsch Prize for their commitment to the fight against anti-Semitism. On the other hand, the *Kaotic Chemnitz* fan group mobilised in summer 2018 after the death of a 35-year-old and organised xenophobic marches in Chemnitz, during which they persecuted foreign-looking people, made Nazi salutes and attacked Jewish businesses.

In Germany, each fan culture is unique. This can include the political convictions of the various fan groups at different clubs. For example, the hooligans associated with Lokomotive Leipzig can be assigned to the far right of the political spectrum, whilst their counterparts who support local rival BSG Chemie Leipzig are on the far left. Many clubs even have both right-wing and left-wing fan groups within their own ranks. In view of this complexity, it is surprising that groups as diverse as ultras, hooligans, hooltras, (right-wing) martial artists, neo-Nazis and critical fans are regularly lumped together by both politicians and the media and categorised as 'problem fans' or 'fake fans', in order to distinguish them from 'normal' or 'real' fans.

This simplification into 'good versus evil' is both inaccurate and dangerous, but is regrettably typical of the treatment of football fans, a treatment that was – and still is – often based on ignorance. The extreme heterogeneity of German football fan cultures is often misunderstood. Instead, a sweeping distinction is made between peaceful fans in the seated areas and problem fans on the terraces. However, the terraces do not only contain thugs with links to right-wing extremism, but also many fans who are actively opposed to sexism, discrimination and anti-Semitism. And the idea that the use of pyrotechnics should not automatically be equated with excessive violence or even extremist attitudes, but is rather an essential part of a (certainly debatable) fan culture, has apparently still not entered public discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf., e.g., Pilz 2008.



This complex situation presents all kinds of challenges for prevention work with fans, which are to be addressed in more detail below. After describing the basic problems (which have largely been overcome) by outlining the long road to the introduction of nationwide fan projects as a key element of the work to prevent extremism in fan cultures, this excursus will examine the successes and the current challenges of prevention work with football fans. Finally, it will present proposals for making the prevention work against extremism in football fan culture even more effective.

Today, distributed throughout Germany, there are '59 fan projects involving 66 fan communities, from the *Bundesliga* to amateur football'.<sup>2</sup> They are funded half by the federal state and the relevant local authority and half by the *Deutsche Fußball-Liga* (fan projects for first and second division clubs) or DFB (fan projects for clubs in the third division or lower). The fan projects are thus independent of the respective clubs. Since the 2011/2012 season, every team in the top two divisions has had to hire two full-time fan representatives and every third division club has had to appoint at least one on a voluntary basis; these representatives then work at the club.

Together, these two groups of actors do the bulk of the preventive fan work. 'However, the external social-pedagogical fan project work differs substantially from the internal fan support provided by the fan representatives. Because of their position within the clubs, the fan representatives are, on the one hand, the "voice of the fans" in the club. On the other hand, they have to reconcile complex fan interests with the many interests of the club, including those related to safety and those concerned with commerce. By contrast, the social-pedagogical work of the fan projects is geared towards the fans themselves and the world they live in; it also focuses on young people up to the age of 27. Fan representatives are responsible for all the members and fans of the respective club'.<sup>3</sup>

As early as 1988, Heitmeyer divided fans into the following three main categories, which still apply today: *consumption-oriented* (with a focus on sporting success), *football-centred* (with the football club as the focal point of their life) and *experience-oriented* (with a focus on the experience around the matches themselves). This distinction can be used to illustrate the target group of preventive fan work.<sup>4</sup> Whilst consumption-oriented fans show little interest in football beyond the actual game, a hybrid of football-centred and experience-oriented fans has developed – primarily in the form of the ultras, a group that gained hugely in significance in the 1990s – and has become the main target group of prevention work in many places. Channelling the experience-oriented potential that is intrinsic to these fans in a positive direction and guarding against radicalising tendencies are important aspects of preventive fan work.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of Heitmeyer's early categorisation, the subculture of the football fans was left to its own devices for a long time. When the first fan project was established in Bremen in 1981, it was mocked rather than taken seriously. Instead of promoting preventive approaches, politicians, clubs and associations pursued confrontation and heightened security measures. Camera surveillance, stadium bans, an increased police presence and

more stadium marshals did move the violent disputes to places far away from the public surveillance such as forests or fields, but growing extremist attitudes in football culture cannot be fought by banning extremist identifiers such as the shirt number 88.

All the relevant stakeholders have now recognised the huge potential of preventive fan work, but are yet to take full advantage of it. While the confrontational approaches mentioned above were applied nationwide many years ago, in spite of the huge costs associated with them,<sup>6</sup> prevention projects have had limited rollout at best.<sup>7</sup>

This is all the more astonishing when we take a closer look at the existing arsenal in the fight against right-wing extremism in football stadiums. While confrontational approaches primarily address people's actions, prevention measures go deeper and fight the emergence and consolidation of racist, sexist, anti-Semitic and other views linked with right-wing extremism at the level of attitudes.<sup>8</sup> Successfully combating the latter prevents extremist actions from even manifesting themselves in connection with football. Anyone who makes a Nazi salute in the stadium, for example, is identified with the help of cameras and is generally punished by being banned from the stadium. However, this person will continue to interact with fans outside the stadium, including other fans who are banned from the ground. In the worst case, they will become (further) radicalised in this environment or promote the radicalisation of other fans, who may have received a stadium ban for completely different reasons (for example the use of pyrotechnics). It is therefore clear that the confrontational approach at best shifts the problem elsewhere and at worst exacerbates it, but it certainly does not solve it. Preventive approaches are far more sustainable, as they not only prevent concrete actions, but also combat the roots of these actions at the level of attitudes.

Of course, confrontational approaches are still necessary and correct in the sphere of football. Extremist actions must always be subject to sanctions. Yet it is surprising to find that a qualitative and empirical review of all the existing strategies against extremism in stadiums shows that confrontational measures are rated worst by all the relevant stakeholders in the fight against extremism in football stadiums. Nevertheless, these are the measures that are implemented most widely. Preventive measures, on the other hand, are rated best, and yet have so far only been implemented in some areas.<sup>9</sup>

This discrepancy illustrates the greatest problem of prevention work with football fans: it takes a long time and requires a lot of human and financial resources, and the results are not immediately visible (if at all). When politicians, associations or clubs want to show quick results in tackling extremism in football stadiums, it is easier to do so by means of confrontational measures: for example, if a club bans the wearing of Thor Steinar clothes, these identifiers of the right-wing extremist scene disappear from the stadium immediately. However, the ban does not affect the attitudes of scene members.

2 Koordinationsstelle Fanprojekte (Coordination Office for Fan Projects) 2019.

3 Koordinationsstelle Fanprojekte 2015, 31.

4 The target groups and theoretical approaches of the fan projects are presented in much greater detail in the annual report of Koordinationsstelle Fanprojekte (KOS) (cf. KOS 2015, 22 et seq.).

5 Nevertheless, this is not the only goal of the work of fan projects. As this aspect is, however, the focus of this book, this article does not provide a detailed and differentiated description of all the work of fan projects and fan representatives. More information about this is provided by Gabriel 2008, for example.

6 According to the Rechnungshof Baden-Württemberg (Court of Audit of Baden-Württemberg), 'direct costs of significantly more than 119 million euro were incurred for the deployment of federal and state police at football matches in the top five divisions' in the 2012/2013 season (Rechnungshof Baden-Württemberg 2015). For comparison: even if all the fan projects in Germany were to achieve the desired minimum standard of an annual budget of 200,000 euro (which is not the case), their total budget would still be 13.2 million euro.

7 Cf. Duben 2015a.

8 Ibid., 131 et seq.

9 Ibid., 333 et seq.

Most clubs have now recognised that it is not possible to deal with the complex problem of extremism solely by means of bans. The prevention work carried out by fan projects and fan representatives is generally accepted today, and in fact, support for it is growing. This development can clearly be seen via the example of Borussia Dortmund. For many years, the club did not really concern itself with what was happening in the stands of what is the largest *Bundesliga* stadium. But then the right-wing extremist incidents became more frequent: in 2012, a placard on the famous south terrace demanded solidarity with the group *Nationaler Widerstand Dortmund* (National Resistance Dortmund), which was banned at the time. In 2013, an employee of the fan project and a fan representative were attacked at an away game in Donetsk, to the accompaniment of right-wing slogans. These incidents brought greater attention to the long-standing problem.

The club reacted late, but comprehensively. With the help of specialist advisors, a plan for fighting various manifestations of the phenomenon of right-wing extremism within the fan culture was developed and gradually implemented. The core element of this plan is the strengthening of fan work, which has three pillars: prevention, early recognition and intervention.<sup>10</sup> Preventive measures such as visits by fan groups to former concentration camps, with appropriate preparatory and follow-up activities, have proved to be successful. Workshops also bring together fans and club employees so that they can collaborate on developing joint approaches for shaping anti-discrimination campaigns. The fan department skilfully links PR campaigns to information services by, for example, distributing BVB beer mats with the slogan *Kein Bier für Rassisten* (No beer for racists) in the city. The beer mats not only convey a clear anti-racist message, but also refer people to a website that rebuts right-wing extremist propaganda. The campaign is accompanied by the workshop *Hömma, so läuft das nicht* (Hey, that's not on), which provides information about right-wing extremist symbols to fan clubs and other interested people and points out options for action in the event of conflicts. Internal training courses and the establishment of networks round off the club's comprehensive strategy.

Yet prevention work with football fans is not getting easier. In many locations, conflicts can be observed between fans of the same team with left-wing and right-wing leanings. On many terraces, the ultras, who have been dominant in the stadiums since the 1990s and are frequently university-educated left-wingers, are divided in their attitude to violence. For some ultras, it is no longer enough to merely cheer on their team; they actively seek violent altercations with other groups of fans. This experience-oriented potential is in turn highly attractive to right-wing cadres inside and outside the stadium. Groups such as *Hooligans gegen Salafisten* (Hooligans against Salafists) attempted to make use of this in 2014 (with temporary success) to agitate for right-wing extremist ideas outside the stadium.<sup>11</sup> This crossover was accomplished with greater success during the xenophobic marches held in Chemnitz in summer 2018.

Meanwhile, incidents at Alemannia Aachen serve as a blueprint for how right-wing extremist forces are seeking to exploit the current splintering of many fan scenes in the stadium. Under pressure from a group with at least far-right leanings and which had links to resurgent far-right (traditional) hooligans and neo-Nazi organisations, the avowedly anti-racist Aachen Ultras dissolved in 2013. An alliance of right-wing extremist groups

<sup>10</sup> Elements of Dortmund's overall strategy with detailed descriptions of each can be found in the very readable collection of ideas for diversity and anti-discrimination in fan work by Claus et al. 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Duben 2015b provides a comprehensive explanation of why the attempt ultimately failed and why more successful imitators are, however, expected at any time.

of hooligans called *Gnu Honnters* preaches a kind of reconquest of the terraces on the Aachen model and calls for groups of ultras with left-wing leanings to be driven out of the stadium. Consequently, a conflict – interpreted in political terms – is emerging on many terraces. On the left are the ultras, critical fans (who tend to be university educated) and supporters. On the right, (traditional) hooligans are forging links with younger 'hooltras'.

This is accompanied by the increasing split within many ultra subcultures into sections that actively seek violence (hooltras), sections that are conditionally ready for violence (ultras) and sections that tend to be non-violent (supporters).<sup>12</sup> The right has generally dominated in these violent struggles, thanks to their physical superiority in these conflicts, especially as overlaps have increasingly been observed between hooltras and right-wing MMA (mixed martial arts) subcultures in recent times.<sup>13</sup>

One of the key tasks of preventive fan work will be to respond to this challenge. To achieve this, it is necessary to strengthen the fundamental belief in democracy among the broad base of fans in such a way that they remain immune to the attraction of the far right. This is an extremely delicate task, as it is not possible to dictate how fan scenes should think and act from the outside. Preventive approaches should therefore seek to encourage processes that emerge organically within the scene. Publicly denouncing 'problem fans' and constantly tightening confrontational measures against active fans, especially ultras, are counter-productive. They encourage the fans to fundamentally distrust outsiders and to cut themselves off. This also makes prevention work, which requires a base of acceptance and trust, more difficult. A further problem is the frequent aggression of right-wing fans, who often intimidate supporters who think differently from them – both in the stadium and in their everyday lives. Here, it is necessary to find solutions that empower the victims and resolve the conflict.

Developments such as those seen at Borussia Dortmund, which, on the advice of experts, has adopted a range of tried-and-tested prevention measures linking them to an effective network for early recognition and intervention (going as far as a stadium ban for persons or groups who have expressed extremist views), provide grounds for optimism. However, many clubs lack the knowledge and/or the financial means to compile such strategies on their own. It would therefore be advisable to collate the (preventive) measures of clubs and fan projects, to subject them to rigorous review, categorise them and to make them available to all the clubs and fan projects as a kind of tool kit. This task could, for example, be performed by a central body at association level, which could provide advice to interested clubs or fan projects even during implementation of the project. After all, one thing is clear

Main interests of typical fan groups and common dividing lines – interpreted in political terms

Consumption-oriented fan	Football-centred fan		Experience-oriented fan
Success	Football		Experience
	Battle jacket fan	Critical fan	Hooligan
	Football: uncritical	Football: critical	Experience: violence
	Supporter	Ultra	Hooltra
	Football as an experience: active support of one's own team: critical and ...		
	... seldom prone to violence	... conditionally prone to violence	... very prone to violence

Key:

fan type: main interest when visiting the football stadium

Part of the fan scene that is particularly susceptible to phenomena such as 'HoGeSa'

in view of the heterogeneity of the German fan scene: there is not 'one single strategy' for successful prevention work with football fans, as there is not 'one single fan (sub)culture'. However, a tool kit of this kind could provide clubs, fan projects and fan representatives with the right instruments for creating the right strategy for their location on the ground.

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## Excursus 6

## Civic education and political extremism

Thomas Krüger

It would be bold to claim that civic education is the essence of extremism prevention. It is problematic because it trivialises the complexity of the causes and processes of individual cognitive radicalisation while also implying a rigid definitional narrowness. On the other hand, the hypothesis is correct in its intention of conceiving of civic education's mission to strengthen democratic awareness and promote political participation as a contribution to integrative prevention. Thus, by revealing this tension, the introductory statement can lead us to take a closer look at the context of socio-political transformation processes and to consider the role that civic education can play in the prevention of extremism. Accordingly, it is important to set out the logic and aspirations that are followed by the work of civic education.

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The Basic Law is the fundamental, essential framework of reference on which the mission and work of civic education are based and which clearly articulates the boundaries to the spectrum of diversities that our democracy must be able to accept. It draws together the non-negotiable values of our society and ensures peaceful and civil coexistence.

From the perspective of security and public safety, it may appear perfectly sensible and even vital to equate various dogmatic ideologies and the violence they motivate in order to enable equal treatment by the state under the rule of law. From the perspective of civic education, however, there are two key questions to consider: to what extent is there friction between the idea of prevention and the emancipatory ideal of civic education? And how are social contexts and transformation processes incorporated in the analytical understanding of extremist phenomena?

The concept of extremism combines various phenomena, remains largely descriptive and suggests – at least according to one common criticism – a kind of equivocation of diverse phenomena and radicalisation processes by means of comparison. The issues behind this are complex, but I would like to focus here on a perspective that gives us a closer understanding of the role of civic education in the prevention of extremism: if we understand different forms of extremism merely as political poles and categorise them as marginal phenomena, we conceive of extremism as permanently outside the mainstream of society. However, now that extremist attitudes and positions are increasingly represented in precisely this mainstream, the boundaries are blurring and the notion of marginality is being dispelled. We must see extremism as a (complex) phenomenon to which even the social mainstream is not immune.

This is the challenge that we have to face at the moment: populism of an authoritarian and nationalist flavour is gaining strength, not only in Germany but throughout Europe and the world, and it aims to shift the political and cultural discourse towards the right. Aspects of nationalist, racist, chauvinist and/or islamophobic attitudes can be found

deep in the social mainstream. Things that were once unutterable (or even unthinkable) may now be voiced. A respectful manner and tone in dialogue are disparaged as political correctness; the role of emotions is growing in debates conducted both online and 'in real life'. Wolfgang Schröder calls this development the repoliticisation on the basis of emotional states, on the one hand, and the depoliticisation on the basis of material problems, on the other hand. The importance of facts takes a back seat, 'perceived' truths are seen as certainties in their own echo chambers. A transformation process is underway that entails discursive paradigm shifts and is revealing the social, cultural and economic fractures in our society.

### Creating opportunities, strengthening participation: areas of activity of civic education

A rise in extremism has led to increased demands for civic education, and this has to be accompanied by reflection on the role and purpose of civic education itself. It therefore needs to be stressed that civic education is inherently an independent field of education and activity with its own functional logic. Prevention is a key concept in civic education and a major funding priority – a means, among other things, of strengthening democracy. Prevention work identifies 'needs' in the form of potential future developments that are to be counteracted or stopped. Nevertheless, the concept of prevention also carries a potential for stigmatisation, as certain sections of society suffer from labelling, which can be disempowering, closing doors rather than opening them. Therefore, those of us in the field of civic education must work to maintain a positive image of target groups and not see them as 'problems to be solved'. With regard to the various subcategories of extremism, the role of civic education is to analyse the processes and backgrounds and ask: 'why?' This is the only way to ensure that the targets of civic education programmes are addressed not as potential threats, but with the idea of generating political maturity, the ability to judge and the capacity to act.

The varied structure of civic education in Germany, in the form of governmental and non-governmental institutions, foundations and a support landscape with many different actors, contains tremendous potential, and the expectations are high – especially in times of rapid and major change. However, it cannot do everything that is expected of it and there is no quick fix. Civic education has never worked like that. Instead, it is long-term measures and formats and implementation geared to real situations, to the places where people live their everyday lives that can have a lasting effect. Here, civic education can help us all to understand and deal with controversial subjects, and the complex viewpoints and relations behind them.

The aim is to enable people of all ages and levels of education to find their way in a globalised and digitalised world and to develop a sense of why the tolerance of differences (ambiguity and diversity) is a precious value in our liberal and pluralist basic order. The fundamental tasks of civic education include addressing societal conflicts, setting out and analysing all the various points of view and, by this means, enabling people to develop their own opinions in an informed manner. Against a background of social inequality and declining interest in political processes and institutions, civic education focuses on the promotion of political and social participation. It cannot fulfil this task if teenagers and young adults, in particular, are addressed as 'threats to democracy' by

misguided extremism prevention efforts. Civic education can make fundamental values and human rights standards comprehensible and encourage a commitment to democracy among the population.

Disseminating knowledge with the goal of promoting the understanding of democratic processes and political contexts is, however, just one aspect of the work of civic education. It is equally important for it to create places where people can experience and practise democratic participation themselves, where they can be heard, find scope for active participation and feel represented. Democracy must be lived and experienced as something that is part of everyday life. Real-life (educational) spaces are increasingly relevant here: communicating face-to-face on an equal footing with people of all social backgrounds and political colours opens up the possibility of engaging in an open exchange with one another and triggering the dynamics of understanding and acceptance.

Civic education primarily aims to show people how they can become politically thinking, speaking and acting individuals. According to this subject-oriented approach, people must be empowered to form their own views and to speak up for their own interests. Learning processes must be organised that are geared towards the experiences and interests of the participants and invite them to articulate and reflect upon their life story and their views. Civic education triggers open-ended education processes, which means that the end result may not correspond to the intentions of the teacher. Consequently, civic education processes must also dare to lose control in favour of their addressees' own speaking positions, so that the latter can develop their self-understanding as active members of society and be provided with the scope to share their own views and opportunities to reflect. The focus on people's living environments, their experience of the power to shape policy and their involvement in political processes can generate effects that encourage integration and counteract feelings of disorientation and powerlessness. It can also promote ambiguity tolerance as a means of encouraging respectful coexistence and strengthening people's resilience against extremist rhetoric.

Nevertheless, improving opportunities for participation does not necessarily lead to greater consensus; instead, there are new negotiation processes, friction and conflict, though these too can create community and trust. Political debate and the struggle to achieve a compromise may be tedious and the results may not always be satisfactory, but they are the essence of democracy and an accomplishment that becomes tangible through personal experience.

Customised formats for different target groups and target audiences of civic education have a very important role to play. However, no one should entertain any illusions that it is possible to get through to those who move in dogmatic ideological circles or have already been radicalised. It is primarily the expertise of other specialist disciplines that is required in such cases, although civic education can and should dovetail and harmonise with the work of social educators and social workers to support certain processes. In practice, however, such dovetailing is still just a dream in many places. The agenda of civic education is to have a macro-social effect and to reach all the sections and age groups of a plural and diverse society, including those that have doubts, are uncertain and are potentially at risk of radicalisation.

Multipliers are both a special target group and important partners for civic education. Specific formats teach them behaviour-influencing skills and raise their awareness of the subject of the prevention and the causes of radicalisation. The latter has a place in all areas

all areas of civic education and follows on from the evaluation of social transformation processes: a mindful awareness must develop of the fact that individual experiences of social exclusion, marginalisation and stigmatisation sometimes play a significant role when people turn to absolutist views and radical positions.

Exclusion mechanisms are experienced along various lines: ethnic origin, poverty, sexual orientation, unemployment, psycho-social structures, etc. This is where civic education intervenes, firstly by focusing on this context in projects and materials and secondly by simultaneously offering alternative models of identification and participation. This strengthens people's sense of belonging to society by means of a narrative of solidarity and unity.

Directly confronting 'extremist' positions and views by analysing their social causes and intrinsic dynamics is at the heart of civic education and was, among other things, the main motive for the establishment of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpj) in 1952. Consequently, our task of interesting people in politics, setting out contexts and motivating them to develop a socio-political commitment carries a particular responsibility. In our dissemination of content and our project-based collaborations, we follow the three didactic principles of the 'Beutelsbach Consensus', especially in dealing with schoolchildren and young people: prohibition against overwhelming or indoctrination, the controversy requirement (controversial topics must be presented as controversial) and promoting the capacity of the individual to analyse a political situation and their own interests.

This consensus, which was formed in the 1970s, has nothing to do with the commitment to neutrality. On the contrary: civic education is bound by the norms and values of the Basic Law, which carry an imperative duty and a right to designate positions within political discourse that infringe or disregard the values of the constitution – irrespective of where in society they originate.

### Excursus 7

## The role of mosque communities in the prevention of the radicalisation of young Muslims in Germany

Mouhanad Khorchide

Mosques can reach a lot of Muslims in Germany thanks to the role they play in religious life. However, as Islam has no centralised teaching authority and no church, there are a wide range of religious interpretations of Islam, which are represented in the mosque communities in different ways. Therefore, the integrative role of mosques depends on what kinds of religious currents they represent. It is not possible to make a sweeping statement either affirming or denying that mosques contribute to the prevention of the radicalisation of young people. One specific problem in Germany, however, is that most of the large mosque communities have established political structures over time and follow agendas that are more political than religious. As a result, they are often unable to connect to their own grassroots membership. The results of empirical studies showing that mosque communities and religious practice are becoming increasingly unattractive to young Muslims should inspire precisely these communities to change their thinking, both for their own sake and for the sake of their religious beliefs. In a study of Muslims of Turkish origin in Germany from 2016, Detlef Pollack observes that members of the second and third generation attend mosque less frequently than members of the first generation (23 versus 32 per cent attend weekly or more often), and far fewer of them claim to perform their personal prayers several times a day (35 versus 55 per cent).<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the Salafist subculture is becoming increasingly attractive, especially to younger Muslims. It is not enough for us to distance ourselves from Salafism and extremism and to condemn them. What young people urgently need are alternatives to fundamentalism that are in tune with the reality of their lives and do not make them choose between being German and being Muslim, but instead provide them with the foundations of a harmonious multi-dimensional identity: both German and Muslim.

Before I address the question of what this sort of integrative religious offering should look like, we will take a brief look at the most important data related to Muslims and mosque communities in Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Münster 2016, 11.

## Muslims in Germany – data and facts

The total number of Muslims in Germany is difficult to determine, as religious affiliation is not generally recorded. According to the extrapolations of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), around 4.4 to 4.7 million Muslims were living in Germany at the end of 2015 (5.4 to 5.7 per cent of the total population).<sup>2</sup> According to the estimate of the Pew Research Center in Washington, approx. 4.95 million Muslims were living in Germany in 2016 (6.1 per cent of the total population).<sup>3</sup> More recent data is not yet available, but estimates based on the countries of origin of the refugees who have come to Germany and survey data obtained in the registration process allow us to deduce that the number of Muslims must be adjusted upwards by around 800,000. Here too, it is important to bear in mind that immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries are not always Muslims, but are a very heterogeneous group.

Around 45 per cent of the Muslims living in Germany are German citizens; around 55 per cent have a foreign nationality. An estimate by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees from 2016 shows that Muslims in Germany are a very heterogeneous section of the population. According to this estimate, around 2.3 million, i.e. around half (51 per cent), have their roots in Turkey. For comparison: in 2011, this proportion was around 67.5 per cent. Muslims from the Middle East form the second largest origin group (17 per cent) with an estimated 775,000 people. This figure has grown primarily because of the refugees who have come to Germany. In third place are around 520,000 Muslims from countries of origin in South-Eastern Europe (11 per cent), mainly from Bosnia, Bulgaria and Albania. Between 259,000 and 302,000 of the Muslims living in Germany come from North Africa, the majority of them from Morocco. The rest come from Central Asia/the CIS, Iran, South/South-East Asia and elsewhere in Africa.<sup>4</sup>

The majority of Muslims in Germany ascribe to a form of Sunni Islam. They make up 74 per cent. The second largest Muslim faith group is the Alevis at 13 per cent. Then come the Shiites with seven per cent. In addition to these faith groups, there are small Muslim groups such as members of the Ahmadiyya community, Sufis and mystics, and Ibadis and other non-specified Islamic denominations.<sup>5</sup>

In 2009, the comprehensive study 'Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland' (Muslim life in Germany) commissioned by the German Islam Conference revealed that the majority of Muslims are religious: 36 per cent consider themselves to be very religious, whilst another 50 per cent claim to be fairly religious. Religiousness is particularly pronounced in Muslims of Turkish or African origin. On the other hand, it is relatively low amongst Muslims of Iranian origin, who are almost exclusively Shiites: only ten per cent of these see themselves as very religious and around one third are not religious at all. Muslim women tend to be more religious than men for almost all groups of origin. Overall, approx. 20 per cent of Muslims are organised in religious associations or communities.

<sup>2</sup> Stichs 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Stichs 2016, 29–31.

<sup>5</sup> Haug et al. 2009, 97.

## Mosque communities in Germany

The original Islamic umbrella organisation in Germany was the Turkish Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren (Association of Islamic Cultural Centres – VIKZ). This was established in 1973. Later on, the Islamic Community Milli Görüş (IGMG), also Turkish, was established, followed by the Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion (Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs – DITIB) as a branch of the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs, the Diyanet. Later, the Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland (Central Council of Muslims in Germany – ZMD) was established as an alliance of several Arab, Turkish and Shiite associations. Alongside these four large umbrella organisations, a number of additional associations were established from the 1990s onwards: the Islamische Gemeinschaft der Bosniaken (Islamic Community of Bosniaks) (1994), the Islamische Gemeinschaft der schiitischen Gemeinden Deutschlands (Islamic Association of Germany's Shiite Communities – ISG) (2009) and the Bündnis Malikitische Gemeinde Deutschland (Alliance of Maliki Communities in Germany – BMG) (2018), which consists predominantly of communities of Moroccan origin.

In Germany, there are around 2,350 Islamic prayer rooms and mosques.<sup>6</sup> Many of these mosque communities do community work. Social welfare work is an important part of this. They also offer leisure activities, educational programmes and support services. Most communities rely on the dedication of volunteers for this.

Nevertheless, strong criticism has been directed at the large umbrella organisations; above all, they are repeatedly accused of prioritising political agendas and being less interested in a cosmopolitan Islam for Muslims in Germany and Europe. The dependence of some or all of these organisations on foreign countries is highly problematic. Ill-feeling was caused, for example, by the 2017 scandal involving the DITIB imams who are supposed to have gathered information about putative supporters of Gülen in their communities or regions and sent it to Ankara. The Office of the Federal Public Prosecutor dropped its investigations against the accused imams in December 2017.<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, the focus of criticism has often been directed at the contents of the Friday sermons at the mosques. Friday sermons of the DITIB in particular have been criticised for having nationalist undertones, especially after the attempted coup in Turkey in July 2016, or in January 2018, when many DITIB imams in Germany followed an invocation of the Turkish religious authority, the Diyanet, and prayed for the success of the Turkish troops who had just entered Syria.

Now and then, sermons discriminating against women and homosexuals, or even Jews, have attracted attention. However, the real challenge is still that the content of the Friday sermons is often far removed from the reality of life for Muslims in Germany, especially Muslim youth. And it is this gap that is often filled by fundamentalists. It is therefore important to emphasise here that mosque communities can make a contribution to peace not only by not teaching any fundamentalist or violence-charged content, but also by preaching a religion that foregrounds the love of humanity and is in touch with reality as a response to fundamentalism. In order to raise awareness in society as a whole that the fight against radicalisation and religious fundamentalism in our society is by no means

<sup>6</sup> Halm et al. 2012.

<sup>7</sup> The Federal Public Prosecutor General 2017.

just a matter of theology (for example, how to interpret the Quran or to critically consider alternative religious views), but a task for the whole of society, we have to answer the following question:

### Why is fundamentalism attractive to some Muslim teenagers?

In Germany, we are facing a phenomenon in many young Muslims that I call 'hollowed-out religious identity'. Understanding this phenomenon enables us to formulate appropriate religious offerings with which we can reach these young people in particular and help them to develop their own religious views. After all, extremist offerings particularly reach young people who are prepared to delegate their religion to third parties and have not learnt to take their religion into their own hands and to make their own decisions.

It is only when I know who I am and am confident of my identity that I am not afraid of opening myself up to others and appreciating what is new in them. Islam's encounter with Europe in the middle of the 20th century in the context of the labour migration, however, led to identity insecurities on both sides, which caused distance instead of closeness.

When we talk of Muslims in Germany today, we are mainly referring to the former 'guest workers' who came to Germany as workers in the 1960s and 1970s under the agreement between Germany and Turkey, their families who followed them in the 1980s in the context of family reunification and their descendants, who were born in Germany since then in the second and third generation. It is more a less a coincidence that many of the former 'guest workers' are Muslims. Consequently, there are various overlapping dimensions of otherness, of foreignness, exacerbating the problems of differentiation, adaptation and integration; ethnic dimensions overlap with national, religious and socio-economic aspects.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, people spoke of 'guest workers', but in the 1980s and 1990s, when the labour migration had become visible due to family reunifications, they began to refer to them as 'foreigners'. Since 11 September 2001, people have talked about 'Muslims', but still mean the former guest workers and their descendants. This shift of perception turned the typical social problems of guest workers into religious problems. The category 'Muslim' is increasingly coming to the fore as an explanatory paradigm for social problems amongst guest workers. Religion is regarded as the problem, the obstacle to integration. Accordingly, Muslims find themselves in a position of having to justify themselves. When we consider the debates surrounding the topic of Islam in recent years, these are either overshadowed by questions of security policy or are about mosque buildings, minarets and the hijab. And anyone who sees the arrival of Muslims in Europe as a security problem will probably sooner or later yield to their own fear and see Islam and Muslims only as a danger and a threat. Because Muslims find themselves in a position of having to justify themselves and resign themselves to some extent to the role of victims, they rarely manage to ask themselves the necessary question: how can Islam enrich European societies today?

<sup>8</sup> Casanova 2004, 86-101.

Members of the second and third generation of Muslims in particular feel a strong connection to the society here; their distance from the native culture of their grandparents is great. The more integrated they feel, the greater their expectations of the host country; this is particularly evident in their claim to equal treatment and equal opportunities in all social institutions (education and the labour and housing markets), but also in their expectation of being recognised and accepted generally.<sup>9</sup> This is an expression of their integration in society.

The first generation of guest workers from Muslim countries came primarily from Turkey and North Africa and therefore grew up in a Muslim country. The members of this generation were socialised in their home countries and internalised values and norms there. To them, religion was no more than part of their identity of origin. Only when their families joined them did they often begin to reflect on their own culture and religion.

The significance of religion in the second and third generation differs far more from case to case. This can be explained by the fact that these generations are more exposed to a tension between orientation towards the society of their families' origins and the host society in terms of socialisation, language and the development of their identity and use religion as a (possible) coping strategy. Teenagers place high expectations on European societies. Here, where they were born and grew up, they want a homeland that not only provides them with equal opportunities in education, in the labour and housing markets, but is also a homeland they feel they belong to and where they can develop as full, recognised members. If these expectations are not met and teenagers have the feeling that they are being discriminated against, this leads to various responses. Some cut themselves off; they distance themselves from both systems – from the culture of their parents and from the majority society. However, many young people also fall back upon religion in their search for a secure 'sense of belonging'. When asked what they feel themselves to be, they refer to themselves primarily as Muslims; Islam means a lot to them. I call this form of Islam a 'shell identity'.<sup>10</sup>

For the construction of a collective identity, these young people avail themselves of an Islam 'without content'; the Islam that they practise can be compared to an empty shell. The religion is used to construct a collective identity, which also provides protection from the 'Other'. Therefore, 'shell Muslims' rely on hollowed-out (shell) identities. These young people feel like unwelcome foreigners and disadvantaged outsiders. Through Islam, which is primarily regarded as a link to other young migrants of the same background or religion, they can build up a certain sense of security. They mainly adhere to collective practices of worship. These find their expression in the community, are performed in relation to the group and are more or less controlled by it. Accordingly, many young people fast in the month of Ramadan, many young men go to the communal Friday prayers in the mosque and girls wear the hijab. In this way, they meet the social expectations of their own community while also constructing a reactive collective identity that gives them the necessary sense of security and strength.

<sup>9</sup> Mehrländer 1983.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Khorchide 2017, 242; Khorchide 2010, 365-385.



This religious collective identity can therefore be seen as a reaction – firstly to the expectations of their parents and their own community and secondly to the feeling of not being accepted by the majority society – and thus as a process of self-discovery in ‘another’ secure collective, their membership of which is not constantly being called into question. Especially in terms of this final point, this identity is defined more by a description of the Other and less by a description of itself. This means: when young people describe the characteristics that they have as Muslims, they say less about what they are and more about what they are not. Their Islamic identity is often defined by demarcation and exclusion. Accordingly, they (over-)emphasise elements in the religion that raise them above others (non-believers). These include, in particular, the appropriation of God and his grace just for themselves and their own group.

Young people of the second generation experience a revaluation: having been born and grown up here, they expect to be provided with a homeland here, where they can feel at home. When these expectations are not met, teenagers begin to construct cultural contrasts and exaggerate existing ones. They over-emphasise differences. Similarities in attitudes and ideas, as well as religious similarities, are played down. An open-minded understanding of Islam that emphasises not only similarities with the other world religions, but also the principle, anchored in the Quran, of honouring all people as people – irrespective of their worldview – is less appealing to these young people, as they are looking for elements in the religion in order to emphasise their otherness. Concepts such as enlightenment or modernity are sweepingly rejected as ‘Western’, without consideration of their content. Here, there is a risk of the religion being instrumentalised by means of a reactive reaffirmation that focuses on external symbols to draw lines between collectives on the basis of religious differences.

An increasing identification with Islam combined with a largely unreflective engagement with it leads to a hollowing-out of the religion because this identification with Islam is not about spirituality, about experiencing God, about substance, but only about the external, identity-forming façade. And this is precisely where the Salafist/fundamentalist offering becomes attractive, as it divides the world into good and evil. God loves the good and damns the evil for eternity. Salafists are the only people who are loved by God; they are ultimately the victors, the chosen people. Belonging to this group gives people a feeling of strength and, above all, of superiority. The Salafists’ restrictive image of God is empowering, as standing at the side of a belligerent God whose message is a declaration of war gives people a feeling of power. A merciful, loving God whose mercy precedes his anger is, on the other hand, a weak God. That is why fundamentalist groups construct a patriarchal God who is constantly demonstrating his masculinity with anger and violence. Identifying with such fundamentalist ideas is ultimately an expression of an inner powerlessness, that many young people – and not only them – attempt to compensate for by identifying with a religion that appears powerful.

Such hollowed-out identities are highly susceptible to political instrumentalisation and thus to recruitment to fundamentalist milieus. Jürgen Oelkers gets to the heart of these ideas: ‘the political management of these problems is likely to become all the more difficult the less successful socio-economic integration is, the less the children achieve at school, the more various generations experience disintegration and the more their own culture is isolated. Looked at from the other side: the less the host culture is prepared to accept those who are willing to integrate, the more rapidly the

fundamentalist discussion develops; the fewer genuine opportunities the members of the foreign culture have, the more the problem is exacerbated. Religious convictions can be politically instrumentalised in the process, and this happens all the more the less contact there is with other cultures.’<sup>11</sup>

## Imams in Germany: it is not only the language of the sermon that is important, but above all its content

The necessity for imams to also preach in German has been the subject of ongoing public debate in Germany. There is no doubt that Muslim imams preaching their sermons in German or at least providing a summary of the sermon in German will provide greater transparency for the work of the imams, as well as, and this is more important in my eyes, making the sermons more accessible to Muslims, especially young Muslims, who speak and can understand the German language much better than the languages of their parents’ countries of origin. However, the language alone is neither the real problem nor the real solution, as the most important thing is basically the content communicated to the people in the mosque communities. Many Salafist preachers in Germany use German to express their ideas in their mosques and in publicly accessible media and thus reach a broad base of young Muslims. And this example of the Salafist preachers demonstrates where the real problem lies. It is the question of which Islam is taught at German mosques.

This question is key because most Muslims do not check things for themselves in the Quran or study Islamic literature. Rather, many of them rely on what they hear from what they consider to be religious authorities; for them, this is the true Islam. And since many Muslims consider imams to be such authorities, they bear a great responsibility for the kind of Islam that they preach. As the director of the largest centre of Islamic theology in Germany,<sup>12</sup> I am directly involved in the training of imams at German universities. I would therefore like to outline, in ten key points, the content that German imams should take responsibility for to achieve a cosmopolitan Islam and the theological obstacles that would have to be overcome:

### 1 Religious maturity as a principle and the need for a considered religious education

The religious education of young Muslims in Germany must take into account the emerging trend of hollowed-out religious identities, which I have already mentioned, and offer something that fills these shell identities with meaningful content. Modern religious education is considered to be about helping the individual to become a subject and aiding self-determination; it is therefore not seen as a process of religious transmission. In the outdated concept of transmission, the focus was on the content to be taught and people were regarded more as objects than subjects of religious education. Today, it is about processes of acquisition. Under an acquisition model, the process of religious education focuses on the person themselves as a subject, the reality of their life and their experiences, expectations, desires, needs, etc. Therefore, modern Islamic education is not about filling people with principles of faith and teaching definitive answers, but about enabling them

<sup>11</sup> Oelkers 2011, 120 et seq.

<sup>12</sup> Approximately 800 students are currently studying at the Centre for Islamic Theology at the University of Münster.

to develop and exercise their own sense of religion and to reflect individually upon the meaning of religious content so that they can take responsibility for their own religion. Central questions include: 'What does religion mean to me?' and 'What connection does religious content have to my everyday life and my life plan?'

Religious education should enable people to plan their own lives from a religious perspective and to take responsibility for this life plan themselves. They should be able to make a distinction between offerings that are life-sustaining and those that are toxic.

It is not the job of modern Islamic education to give young people a list of things that are allowed (halal) and things that are forbidden (haram) and to urge adolescents to uncritically follow religious 'laws', which only serves to promote the formation of hollowed-out identities. Instead, it should encourage young people to reflect critically on traditions that are not compatible with human values and enable them to develop their own free, individual self-determination as Muslims on the basis of an open-minded understanding of Islam in terms of a spiritual and ethical religion rather than a religion of laws. It should help them to discover the meaning of their religion for themselves and enable them to experience God.

This requires the subject to become involved themselves. However, if religious education is about a subjective experience of religion, this presupposes a dialogical theology that envisages the relationship between God and man not as one of obedience, but as a dialogical relationship, even a relationship of love, and believes in a God who is accessible, who can be experienced – a God who is not concerned with himself, with instructions, but with man himself.<sup>13</sup>

## ② The need to overcome religious exclusivism

The insistence that one's own convictions have the sole claim to truth leaves little space for other claims to truth. After all, religious exclusivism insists that no understanding of a transcendental reality or revelation can be found outside one's own religion that can lead to salvation. Other religions are thus considered incapable of leading to salvation. Exclusivism must not be confused with one's own claim to truth. This can, but does not have to, be advocated in an exclusivist manner. If I believe that my religion is the path to truth, this does not necessarily mean that there are no other paths to truth. This does not weaken my claim to truth in any way.

Religious exclusivism provides a basis for violence because it is a form of rejection of the 'Other'. And if this rejection takes place in the name of God, it assumes absolute characteristics, and we find ourselves close to what are known as religious wars. The three monotheistic religions know this all too well.

Religious exclusivism has been widespread for a long time in Islam, and not only amongst Salafists and Muslim fundamentalists. This attitude is still right at the heart of Islamic theology to this day. However, it is right to ask the following questions: how can this position be reconciled with talk of a God who reaches out to all people with unconditional love and mercy? Is a God who damns people to an eternity in hell just because of what they are (non-Muslims) and not for anything that they have done a just God? Surely not. That is why it is also important for the mosque communities to critically reflect on this question: which God do Muslims believe in?

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Khorchide 2012, 13 et seq.; Khorchide 2015.

## ③ The need to put the statements of the Quran, especially those that address violence, into their historical context

Violence is addressed in both the Bible and the Quran. The question that we face today is how to handle such elements of our sacred texts. If we read them out of their historical context, we run the risk of allowing them to be instrumentalised for political purposes. Even though Muslims regard the Quran as a message from God, this in no way prevents us from putting its statements into their historical context. The important thing is to understand the act of revelation as a dialogical communication in and across history instead of as a monological instruction from God.<sup>14</sup> In order to understand the Quran, which is considered both a means and a result of communication between Mohammed and the community around him on the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century, the situation behind this communication must be taken into consideration. A literal interpretation of the Quran ignores the fact that the Quran was proclaimed discursively in an act of communication and can therefore only be understood discursively. There is a great difference between interpreting the request in Quran 2:191 as a call to kill all non-Muslims at any time or as a descriptive statement in a particular historical military conflict.

A historical-critical approach to the Quran defuses the potential for violence within it, as it is no longer read with an ahistorical consciousness as a set of imperatives written in stone, but as a product of historical conflicts that also shows the involvement of God in the history of the Muslims.

## ④ Strengthening the ethos of love as a potential for peace

Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, has a religious ethos of moral universalism. By this, I do not mean a secular ethos that seeks to replace religion, but a religious ethos that covers all people, regardless of their faith or worldview.

The ethos of love of the three monotheistic religions goes beyond the ethos of justice. It is about loving one's neighbour. Love does not preclude justice, but goes beyond it. Muslims in particular should stand up for a coalition of the various religious and non-religious moral universals today. The Quran describes the relationship between God and man as one of love that can be witnessed in the actions of man: 'Allah will bring forth a people he will love and who will love him' (Quran 5:54). An alliance of universalists against particularists (religious exclusivists, nationalists, racists, etc.) is now needed more than ever. Today, religious people are challenged to think about how they can release the powers of love within themselves. The Islamic idea of man as a medium for the realisation of God's love and mercy is the epitome and, at the same time, the benchmark of religiousness and emphasises the believer's responsibility for the peaceful cohesion of their society.

## ⑤ The need to separate religious and political institutions to protect religion from instrumentalisation by politics and politics from instrumentalisation by religion

Secularism, as it is understood and practised in Western Europe, means that there can be no state religion. This form of secularism aims to protect the state from religious claims to power and religions from political instrumentalisation and must therefore be understood as a basis for the religious neutrality of the state. In a secular state, no one

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Korchide 2018.

is forced into a faith. At the same time, the religious community is protected from state interventions and the state renounces any favouritism of a specific religious or secular worldview.<sup>15</sup>

After 11 September 2001, Jürgen Habermas said, in his acceptance speech for the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, that even those who are not religious should not deny the power that can come from religious sources. Habermas would grant the religious communities a place in the public arena in the post-secular society because he believes that people need value commitments and he is afraid that a society without religion may be a moral vacuum.<sup>16</sup> Clemens Sedmak<sup>17</sup> stresses that ‘values do not fall from the sky’, and has referred to the powerful ability of religious views to create ties. Consequently, separating religion from politics and the state does not mean that religious values, such as loving one’s neighbour, justice, social solidarity, etc., can no longer play a role in public discourse, but that religions cannot claim power in their own right (Sharia as God’s law instead of the applicable laws of the constitutional state).

### 6 Standing up for freedom, equality and solidarity

Modern pluralist societies in particular require a high level of participation from their citizens if they are to work. Democratic states rely more heavily on their own political identity than do despotic or authoritarian societies,<sup>18</sup> which we encounter in many Islamic countries. But what holds our European society together? Are there European basic values that also apply to Muslims?

Three central values of the French Revolution are indispensable for a peaceful and constructive coexistence: liberty, equality and fraternity. Josef Freise interprets them for us today as unity, solidarity and ‘compassion’.<sup>19</sup> Even though these values are mostly understood as secular and ‘religion-free’, everyone must connect them to their own religious or secular traditions. Values must become lived everyday reality if they are not to remain empty slogans.

Freedom has many dimensions, including: freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, the freedom to organise and freedom of choice. ‘There is no compulsion to follow a specific way of life with specific norms. The Treaty of Amsterdam, for example, has prohibited discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Homosexual lifestyles are still largely rejected by official representatives of the monotheistic religions, but intensive discussions and realignments are taking place within the various religious communities. Here, we can see that religious people and groups have opened themselves up to dialogue with secular groups and are re-interpreting their own religious traditions.’<sup>20</sup> Another aspect of freedom is that values are not enforced from ‘above’, but acquired by the subjects themselves. This requires an appropriate raising of awareness among the subjects, who have to have their own experiences in order to freely internalise values by conviction.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Koenig 2012, 296.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Habermas 2001, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Sedmak 2007, 118.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Taylor 2010, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Freise 2014, 115 et seq.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 124.

Freedom of religion is another dimension of freedom, which is to be protected from any coercion in religious matters. This includes both active and passive freedom of religion. This means that everyone has the right to live and act according to their religious convictions as long as they do not come into conflict with the Basic Law or with basic democratic values. However, everyone also has the right not to belong to a religion. In Europe, there is a symmetrical recognition of religious minorities and majorities.<sup>21</sup>

Solidarity in a society assumes that all the citizens in this society meet one another as equals and that the otherness of the ‘Other’ is acknowledged.

Hans Joas emphasises that wherever people want to assert their own well-being or that of their group at the expense of others, wherever people discriminate against and exclude others in order to protect their own privileges, there is a loss of values and the values of equality and justice decline.<sup>22</sup>

### 7 Islam and the basic democratic values

Islam does not have a church or similar institution that sets out an interpretation that is binding for all Muslims. This means that there are different versions and interpretations of Islam. The version of Islam that Muslims put forth here in Europe and the prevailing understanding in the discourse are therefore important. Islam, as I understand it and teach it, sees itself not as a religion of laws that is supposed to constitute a legal schema ideally covering all areas of life, but as an ethical and spiritual religion. This requires placing the Quran in its historical context of the 7th century on the Arabian Peninsula and reading it accordingly. The Quran was proclaimed discursively and can therefore only be understood in the context of discourse. This means that, without the historical context of the proclamation of the Quran, the Quran can only be misunderstood. Islam, understood as a call to turn inwards, to purify oneself and open oneself up to a spiritual experience, does not give people any laws and therefore has no claims to power, but instead provides a basis for the derivation of ethical principles. Man is referred to as a representative of God who demonstrates God’s intention of love – ‘... who he will love and who will love him’ (Quran 5:54) – and mercy (Quran 7:156) through his actions and through his character and thus makes it a tangible reality here and now on the earth. Therein lies religiousness, and God’s service is realised here as service to his creation.

Only an inclusivist understanding of Islam, which sees non-Muslims as people with equal rights and an equal worth, provides a basis for an encounter in the spirit of respect for the Other. In exclusivism, according to which only one’s own religion makes possible a knowledge of the ultimate reality that can lead to salvation, there is even a basis for violence because it denies the ‘Other’ its spiritual and sometimes even physical right to exist – it must therefore be rejected. According to Islam, God is the truth. Consequently, the truth is absolute and not available to anyone. Therefore, believers cannot possess the truth because no one can possess God; instead, they are seekers of the truth. They can approach the truth, but never possess it. The idea that God is the truth is supposed to protect the truth from being appropriated by man and to call upon man to have the humility to remain a seeker who will strive for the truth with the knowledge that he will approach it, but never be able to possess it. Enforcing truths from above contradicts the spirit of a humanist Islam that makes man a free individual.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Koenig 2012, 312.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Joas 2012, 302.

In order to start a fruitful dialogue with different religions and worldviews, all sides must dispense with claims of totality.

### 8 An Islam beyond a religion of laws

Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence have endeavoured to draw up a legal schema that is ideally supposed to cover all areas of life. Islam has been made into a 'religion of laws' and the Quran into a law book. This has often taken place at the expense of spiritual and ethical aspects of Islam. Islam can be part of Europe if Muslims do not claim to follow a separate and parallel legal tradition. This requires the legal provisions of the Quran and the prophetic tradition (sunna) relating to the social order to be interpreted in historical terms. Today, therefore, the aim should not be to transpose individual legal regulations that emerged from the historical context of the 7th century on the Arabian Peninsula verbatim (e.g. in criminal law), but to endeavour to realise general Quranic principles such as justice, freedom, equality, the sanctity of human dignity and social responsibility, as well as spirituality and love for one's neighbour. These are in line with democratic principles of the kind that we are familiar with from the societies of Europe.

### 9 Need for a de-sexualisation of Islam

In many Islamic societies, patriarchal structures still prevail. If you ask there why Muslim women wear hijab, why women and men sit separately in the mosques or even pray in different rooms, why some Muslim men and women do not shake hands, you will often be given the reason: protection from sexual attraction. A woman without hijab is said to be too attractive to men; women who pray next to men in the mosque or preach at the front would distract men from their prayers due to their attractiveness; and if men and women shake hands, this could lead to sexual arousal. Therefore, the two sexes should ideally be kept away from one another and thus be protected from this threat of sexual attraction. Behind these widespread arguments, however, is an image of women that reduces them to sexual objects and an image of men that portrays them as instinct-driven animals. Both sexes are under constant suspicion. As a result, men and women have to be brought up from birth to avoid, as far as possible, giving into temptation and thus falling into sin.

Does Islam really believe that God created men and women as sex objects and instinct-driven animals? Do they have to be protected from one another by restrictively separating them in society? My answer is: definitely not!

It is this distorted image of men and women, widespread in many Islamic societies, that reproduces patriarchal structures, in which women are reduced to their sexuality and are only objects of history, which is mainly written by men. Today, a European-style Islam requires a revolution of de-sexualisation, which ought to allow men and women to encounter one another as people in a spirit of dignity and respect, without constantly being suspected of wanting to seduce or be seduced by one another.

### 10 More spirituality for Europe?

If European Muslims represent an Islam that is primarily seen as a source of spirituality and ethics, they can make a contribution towards a greater interest in spirituality as a value that can enrich Europe today. Spirituality in Islam, understood as highlighting the divine (in the sense of what is perfect) in man, cannot be separated from the life lived, as it can only be revealed when it is confronted in everyday life. Promoting good

traits in people and controlling bad ones is not a purely cognitive task, but rather a way of taking a critical look at oneself in various life situations. The scholar and mystic Al-Gazālī (died 1111) speaks of 'adorning the heart with good characteristics' such as patience, thankfulness, love, hope and trust in God.

Spirituality in this sense is by no means specific to Islam, as Christianity and Judaism also strive to achieve spirituality and thus communion with God here on earth. The emphasis on the importance of spirituality in Islam can contribute towards Europe becoming more spiritual. This should not be misunderstood to mean that Europe is spiritually homogeneous, as every religious denomination has its own path to spirituality. This variety of ways of satisfying spiritual needs should be protected, as variety is God's will according to the Quran: 'Had Allah willed he could have made you one community. [...] So vie one with another in good works!' (Quran 5:48).

A European-style Islam, as I understand it, raises the question of man, his freedom, his self-determination, his welfare, his happiness and his responsibility for himself and the community. From an Islamic perspective, God is the absolute humanist who has absolute faith in man and his sovereignty. For the believers themselves, this means that faith in God contains faith in man as such, irrespective of his worldview.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Korchide 2015.

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## Excursus 8

**Digital violence and means of recourse for victims**

Simone Rafael

**Right-wing extremism online**

Since the early days of the internet, right-wing extremists have used means of online communication for their own purposes. At the beginning, this was primarily a case of networking and spreading their ideology within their own, right-wing extremist scene. Neo-Nazis celebrated their own lifestyle online, offered banned texts for download primarily via servers located outside the EU, earned money with right-wing rock music and mail-order businesses or arranged to meet to carry out violence. With the advent of forums and blogs in the 1990s, networking came to the fore – both among different sections of the right-wing extremist and right-wing populist scene within Germany, and across Europe and internationally. All of these developments were anti-democratic, but they had little effect on the general public. The only people who came across these kinds of online content were those who were actively looking for them.

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A crucial change came with the launch of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. These platforms began to take off in the mid-2000s, and the right-wing extremist scene in Germany began, in addition to networking within its own scene, to try out different strategies and to make an impact on the online public. Firstly, there was ‘civil mimicry’, i.e. right-wing extremists, for example those associated with the NPD, who attempted to conceal their Nazi identity at first in order to present racist, anti-Semitic or sexist slurs to people as apparently legitimate opinions. The idea was to lure young people into the movement and to influence the social discourse in an anti-democratic way. Secondly, right-wing extremists – and other enemies of humanity – discovered hate comments as a powerful online means of attacking people they consider enemies, intimidating them and ideally silencing them: migrants, democracy activists, Jews or Muslims, women, homosexuals and transgender people. The online community was initially completely unready to deal with this: people – and companies – who were enthusiastic about the internet envisaged the online world as a place of participation and cohesion, of increasing knowledge and of empowerment. The abuse of these structures by enemies of democracy had simply not been considered. People were correspondingly slow to develop measures to oppose this, such as the deletion by the operators of the social networks of at least illegal content, the use of counterspeech by civil society organisations to counter hate content that does not fall under criminal law, or prosecution by the police and judiciary.

## Dealing with hate speech and digital violence

In the 2010s, various concepts for dealing with hate speech<sup>1</sup> were tried and implemented. Civil society initiatives tried counterspeech concepts (e.g. the counterspeech group #ichbinhier<sup>2</sup>) and advised social media managers at organisations, media companies, political parties and associations (e.g. the Amadeu Antonio Foundation,<sup>3</sup> No Hate Speech Movement<sup>4</sup>). In addition, educational concepts such as Digital Streetwork emerged as part of efforts to prevent the radicalisation of young people (e.g. 'Debate//De:Hate',<sup>5</sup> streetwork@online<sup>6</sup>).

At the same time, online civil society activists in Germany demanded improvements in the way that the operators of social networks deal with hate speech. Their calls, some of which have been heard, included a demand for more detailed reporting systems, better trained community managers – with German language skills where possible – and more support for democratic counterspeech.

Politicians responded by introducing the German Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG),<sup>7</sup> which focuses solely on hate speech that falls under criminal law, i.e. sedition, Holocaust denial, the use of anti-constitutional or banned symbols, public incitements to commit acts of violence and crimes, as well as defamation, libel, slander, infringement of the right of personal portrayal, and stalking. The network operators are supposed to remove these from the internet within 24 hours, or within seven days in complicated cases. A point of contact has also been established to support those seeking to file civil suits, as has a facility to report breaches of NetzDG, and transparency reports are produced every six months, though these have not proved very informative to date because of a lack of consistency. Political pressure has been observed to lead to the faster deletion of contents that fall under criminal law. However, as it turned out, this made prosecution more difficult. An amendment to the Act is currently under discussion to the effect that the networks are to report contents that they believe to fall under criminal law directly to the law enforcement authorities. We will have to wait and see whether this leads to more successful prosecutions if the police and the judiciary do not also provide further resources in the form of staff and training. In any event, there are now specialised projects in public prosecutor's offices in individual federal states ('Verfolgen statt nur löschen' – Prosecution not deletion),<sup>8</sup> which are delivering results, and specialised police units are being formed in some states. The basic idea of (finally) making it clear to internet users that the internet is not a legal vacuum and that acts there have consequences is necessary and promising.

1 To date, the term 'hate speech' has not been satisfactorily defined. I understand it to mean direct verbal attacks on people on the basis of group-focused characteristics such as ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity, disability or illness, or immigration status. The concept of attacks encompasses violent and/or dehumanising language, denigration, calls to exclude or isolate people and calls for violence and vigilante justice.

2 #ichbinhier.

3 Amadeu Antonio Foundation (a), overview of digital advisory projects.

4 No Hate Speech Movement.

5 Debate//De:Hate.

6 streetwork@online.

7 For more about NetzDG, see Federal Ministry of Justice.

8 Verfolgen statt nur löschen, the original project in North Rhine-Westphalia.

## Digital violence

Nevertheless, there remains one problem for which no effective solution has yet been found. Unfortunately, it relates to the very people who use the internet as an opinion-forming space. Anyone who expresses an opinion about political subjects on social networks or stands up for a democratic culture of debate often quickly finds that this makes them the target of right-wing extremist and anti-democratic hate speech. Surveys show that 75 per cent of all hate posts on social networks are spread by right-wing extremists and racists<sup>9</sup> – this means that, although there is of course also hate speech and digital violence from other social spectrums, most online attacks based on hatred directed at groups are rooted in right-wing extremist ideology. Supporters of this ideology are not interested in a democratic exchange of opinions, but primarily want to attack and disparage their opponent and ideally muzzle them and force them out of the discourse ('silencing').

They use any means available: when we talk of digital violence, this does not merely mean the aggressive use of slurs based on group identity (e.g. towards women, Muslims, democrats, migrants or Jews). It also means data theft and subsequent doxing, i.e. the publication on the internet of personal data such as home addresses or the name of a child's nursery with a call for 'home visits' or a statement such as 'wait there to deliver your criticism in person'. This creates a massive threat for the affected people in their offline lives too. Their freedom of action is restricted and in the worst case they even have to move house. Digital violence also includes identity theft carried out by setting up fake social media profiles using the image and name of a real person, which is then used to discredit them – for example by posting racist content purporting to originate from a person who is actually committed to the fight against racism, leading to serious confusion amongst their friends and colleagues. Slanderous, bogus YouTube videos or posts in 'alt-right' 'media' can also produce this effect. Organised campaigns of slanderous hate posts targeting employers, funding bodies and business partners are also part of the repertoire: 'You employ aggressive left-wing extremists; is that the political position of your company?', 'The bookkeeping is dodgy here and donations are misappropriated' – all refutable, but the burden of proof lies with the accused and takes up a lot of energy. In the worst case, alt-right online lies even find their way into the mainstream media, further discrediting the people affected. Feminist and author Jasna Strick, one of the initiators of the #aufschrei (outcry) hashtag against sexualised violence, described this experience vividly in a talk: 'The aim was to blacken our names; "look what she is writing". The aim was for us to lose jobs, to lose friends, to no longer be able to speak in public.'<sup>10</sup>

## Consequences of digital violence

It is thus very rare for digital violence to remain in the digital arena, and it also leads to quite specific consequences and restrictions in the offline world. These consequences can be far-reaching for the affected people, even leading to personality changes, embitterment, addictive behaviour, social withdrawal, physical illnesses, mental problems, depression or thoughts of suicide.

9 German Bundestag 2018.

10 Strick on YouTube.

It is sensible to bear this heavy impact in mind when confronted with people affected by digital violence who are seeking help, including from the police. Hitherto, the only advice they have been given, which is rooted in powerlessness, is simply to ‘stop looking online’. Yet this does nothing to counter the discrediting; moreover it means that the attackers achieve their goal of removing the affected person from their digital environment and forcing their opinion out of the discourse. Our collective effort should aim precisely at preventing this.

## What concrete sources of assistance are available for people affected by digital violence?

When people affected by online hate report crimes to the police, it is a means of coping with what they have experienced and asserting their right as victims of crime. The prosecution of these crimes is important, but often takes a long time, as the procedures surrounding requests for information are still laborious and time-consuming. The key thing for the victims of digital violence is that the discrediting content is removed from the internet as quickly as possible. The bad news is: there is still no one to whom one may turn to accomplish this. The state cannot help, though it could tackle this from the point of view of consumer protection, nor can the operators of social networks themselves, which, though they are communication networks, do not offer their users the ability to contact them directly – despite many ways users can run into trouble on the platforms. This is all the more absurd given that every online shop is able to offer customers 24-hour chat support. On social networks, the only possibility is to use the report function, but this does not allow full details to be given and therefore often comes to nothing if, for example, incorrect information is provided in way that appears harmless.

Civil society does include advisory bodies for victims of right-wing extremist or homophobic or transphobic violence, anti-discrimination bureaus and equal opportunities officers – and if the aggrieved parties are lucky, they will come across an employee who has already dealt with digital violence in the past and has an idea of how to help. However, most cannot do this, as they are already operating at full capacity in advising on incidents of violence in the offline world. A number of models of an advisory body for victims of digital violence have been developed – in part by the Amadeu Antonio Foundation – but they have not yet found funding. As a result, whether victims of digital violence receive vital counselling is a lottery at best, and depends on chance encounters with the right people.

An advisory body for victims of digital violence would have to be in contact with all the relevant platforms in Germany, with federal and state police and specialists within public prosecutor’s offices, with support structures (offline victim advisory bodies, Weisser Ring, anti-discrimination bodies and similar), with legal and psychological advisory structures and with political decision-makers. It could offer advice and support with identifying potential courses of action, preserving evidence, reporting acts of digital violence to social network operators and/or complaints bodies, making reports to the police, research opportunities, procuring information, procuring information for decision-making processes, arbitration, as well as assistance with verifying accounts, procuring online support services (e.g. #ichbinhier or the No Hate Speech Movement) and referrals to specialised services (legal, IT security, psychology, if necessary useful local advisory bodies for support on the spot, arrangement of psychosocial support

and counselling). It could provide employees of existing local victim support structures (e.g. victim advisory bodies for victims of right-wing extremist, racist, anti-Semitic, anti-GRT, transphobic, homophobic or sexist violence, anti-discrimination bodies and women’s officers) with further training in dealing with digital violence and teach the specialist IT advisory bodies data security and digital self-defence. Unfortunately, it does not exist.

## First aid – what to do?

What specific advice can you give to people who come to the police as victims of digital violence? A couple of basic tips can make the situation more bearable. These include:

- A privacy check of the user’s profile – all sensitive information, photos and videos should urgently be set to private, at least temporarily! This should include work websites that include staff photos, or addresses published on the websites of clubs and associations in which individuals hold offices.
- Address online hate offline – communicating with colleagues, friends and family can help. Rant, ridicule the attackers in your conversation, laugh together, encourage one another. You do not have to get through it alone.
- If possible, take a step back and share the burden. You do not have to constantly read through the hate on your own social media channels yourself and document posts that fall under criminal law – people you trust can take this on until the worst is over.
- Solidarity helps you to survive a digital hate attack. Perhaps you have friends, colleagues and industry representatives who are active online and can speak up for you and your work or your online activism?
- Your police website will ideally explain what a screenshot must look like for prosecution to be possible – with URL, source, the username or handle of who made the post, the post itself, but also the context.
- Where possible, you should block attackers – this is not interfering with their freedom of opinion, but a legitimate safeguard. Your emotional and practical security is more important.
- Report posts or users who are harassing you to the social network operator. If nothing happens there, there are independent reporting bodies that can sometimes achieve more, for example [www.internetbeschwerdestelle.de](http://www.internetbeschwerdestelle.de), [www.hassmelden.de](http://www.hassmelden.de), [www.hateaid.org](http://www.hateaid.org), [www.jugendschutz.net](http://www.jugendschutz.net).
- Respond to defamation by giving your own viewpoint: do you have a website, a Facebook or Twitter profile? Use your own channels to present your view of things – as objectively and transparently as possible. If you refer to the text, then search machines will not send people only to the defaming content.
- Examine yourself: are you coping with the attack? Are you allowing yourself to be provoked into insults? Are you also withdrawing in your offline life; are you avoiding contact with other people? These are warning signs that you should leave the situation and possibly also seek professional psychological help.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For more detailed information on the subject, see Amadeu Antonio Foundation (b).



The basic rules of self-protection are as follows: acknowledge that dealing with slurs and hate affects people in different ways and always take it seriously when someone reports that they are finding a situation stressful. Check regularly what information about you is available online, e.g. by searching for your name, and whether you are happy with this (if not, ask for it to be deleted). Last but not least, people affected by digital violence – as well as the police who work with social media and deal with hate speech professionally – should make use of self-protection measures in the offline world: pay attention to which topics assault your emotions and which you are able to handle. Seek help with the topics that weigh you down. Spend enough quality time offline with your friends and family and/or a fulfilling hobby or interest to balance out the online hate.

With these tips, you can help affected people even where attempts to discredit them aren't liable for prosecution under criminal law. Create a list of local services supporting people dealing with right-wing extremism<sup>12</sup> and/or offering psychological support – these can help affected people deal with feelings of insecurity that online threats bring.

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<sup>12</sup> Belltower.News, list of all the victim advisory bodies and mobile counselling teams for right-wing extremism throughout Germany.

## Excursus 9

**Requirements for a needs-oriented victim support\***

Bianca Biwer

Individuals affected by extremist or terrorist attacks and their relatives and surviving dependants often have specific needs that should be taken into consideration when they are provided with care and support. Consequently, the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards for the rights, support and protection of victims of crime deals with this group separately in Recital 16: ‘Victims of terrorism have suffered attacks that are intended ultimately to harm society. They may therefore need special attention, support and protection due to the particular nature of the crime that has been committed against them. Victims of terrorism can be under significant public scrutiny and often need social recognition and respectful treatment by society.’\*\*

**Bianca Biwer**

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The victim support organisation WEISSER RING e. V. has looked after this group of victims throughout Germany for decades and agrees with the European Parliament’s assessment on the basis of this extensive experience. The prerequisite for the sustainable establishment of victim-oriented support in the event of an attack is an understanding of the divergent needs and problems that the individual victims face. This can be obtained through an intensive examination of the experiences of people who have been victims of attacks in the past. This article will look at the needs of victims of extremist and terrorist acts and will present the resulting challenges for politicians, public authorities and civil society stakeholders in dealing with them.

**From the acute situation to aftercare: support needs and dynamics**

In many cases, the kinds of crimes dealt with here have a high number of victims. The group of victims as a whole is generally heterogeneous and the tangible and intangible needs of individual victims vary as much as the people themselves. Even where victims have something in common, such as a shared religion, political views or background of migration, these do not necessarily allow us to draw conclusions about the situations of an individual’s life or needs in terms of support. Often the only thing that the victims have in common is that they were in a certain place at a certain time.

Above all, what victims need is immediate support in the form of psychosocial emergency care. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that people respond to serious incidents differently due to their subjective experience and the resources they possess. The victims’ needs range from talking through their experiences in order to get a better grasp on them

\* This article concludes with the testimony of one of the victims of the Breitscheidplatz attack, Egbert Schmidt.

\*\* Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council 2012/29.

to comprehensive psychological support and processing. In this context, the WEISSER RING has welcomed the services offered by the German Crime Victims Compensation Act (OEG) trauma clinics, which have expanded in recent years. These fill a need for more psychological care services, especially with regard to people who are not reached by services provided in the immediate aftermath of an incident. In many cases, the victims also desire comprehensive support on a personal and organisational front and in dealing with bureaucratic processes. Equally, they often develop a need for detailed information about service providers opportunities for compensation or support with legal aspects. These needs can be experienced equally by those who suffer serious injuries and have to live with physical impairments and by victims who are informed of the death of a close relative while at work, for example.

The serious impact of such a situation may only become evident after a while. It is therefore important not to lose sight of the mental health of people who have witnessed the situation while working as aid workers and emergency personnel. The same applies to victims who do not initially regard themselves as such. This may particularly be the case for emergency responders and eyewitnesses who remove themselves from the scene of the crime and perceive what has happened as an extreme experience, but do not develop any awareness of the fact that they are at risk of mental consequences.

When attacks are carried out in busy public places, the victims often include many non-locals. For those affected, this means, in many cases, that coping with the immediate effects of the exceptional situation is made more difficult by the absence of people they trust or their familiar environment. They can sometimes wait days for the arrival of a trusted person, insofar as a visit can be facilitated at all in the short term.

The relatives and surviving dependants, who often learn of an attack from the media, may spend hours or even days unsure of whether their family member has been injured or killed. In the case of the attack at the Christmas market at Breitscheidplatz in Berlin, some relatives were still desperately seeking information while the memorial service was already being held and had not yet been informed of the death of their relatives. There are also the logistical and financial challenges of travelling to the scene of the attack at short notice, especially if it is not clear how long one will have to stay.

Non-German-speaking victims and their relatives face additional challenges. First of all, they also have the difficulty of a language barrier and a consequent need to rely upon translators. They are also generally unfamiliar with German bureaucratic structures and organisations. When it comes to transnational support for those affected, the WEISSER RING is able to act quickly, in collaboration with its partners from Victim Support Europe, the umbrella organisation for European victim protection initiatives.

Following attacks and killing sprees, as well as disasters in general, bonds can form between the aggrieved parties. In some instances, this happens explicitly in the contexts of groups, primarily groups for 'injured people', 'relatives/surviving dependants', 'emergency responders' and 'eyewitnesses'. Bonds formed in the initial incident can continue to develop due to further shared experiences. Time and again, the need for joint and long-term processing of the consequences of the incident has been demonstrated within such communities of fate. The WEISSER RING has had good experiences with the creation of aftercare services, which provide scope for an exchange of experiences under professional guidance. These are important services and go beyond acute pastoral intervention and subsequent individual processing, with psychological support if applicable.

## Victims' interests in the public arena and politics

In the case of major incidents, becoming a victim, with all the physical and mental consequences this entails, is generally accompanied by particular interest from the public and the media. As described in the directive quoted at the beginning of this article, the special feature of terrorist crimes in comparison with other crimes is that the people affected by them become representatives of society as a whole. They are the aggrieved parties, but the attack is, generally speaking, aimed at a particular way of life and is therefore directly or indirectly targeted at a given kind of society as a whole. Society is aware of this and it is reflected in the elevated public impact of the crime. In addition to the social and security aspects, the public interest primarily relates to the background to the crime and the details of its execution. This goes hand in hand with interest, firstly, in the person of the attacker and their biography and secondly in as precise and comprehensive a description as possible of the consequences of the victims' injuries and the fear they experienced. Due to these forms of media attention, the victims process the incident in a broader context, which may sometimes involve confrontation. In publications about crimes, it is therefore crucial to establish consensus around victim-sensitive reporting.

The media interest in the crime often continues for long periods afterwards; anniversaries are particularly worth mentioning in this context. The consequent risk of a re-traumatisation of the victims can, however, be at least attenuated by taking precautions, for example if relevant bodies inform the victims in advance about press conferences and the accompanying media interest. For one thing, this prepares them to be increasingly confronted with the events on various media channels in the days that follow; for another, they can be informed of official statements in advance and involved in relevant processes. This enables them to mentally prepare for the incident being replayed in the media and means that the news does not take them by surprise at home, out and about or at work and leave them with questions and uncertainties, which they must then work hard to resolve.

In general, the victims' interests are often at risk of being overlooked, as the focus of the discussion shifts to the public interest, i.e. the processing of the incident by society and the guarantee of public safety. Personal avowals of shock made by politicians can convey to the victims that the suffering of the individual is perceived and acknowledged by society. The same applies to the involvement of the victims in the planning and carrying out of memorial events or in the design of memorials. These are, on the one hand, society's way of dealing with the incident and, on the other hand, relate to an extremely personal area of the victims' lives.

## Material assistance and the granting of benefits

In material terms, victims of an attack often need assistance in the short term in the form of cash, so that direct costs can be covered. In the medium term, an additional high level of expenditure is incurred in many cases, for example for restoring a shop, for ensuring the family's solvency in the event of the loss of the main breadwinner or for burials and the transportation of deceased victims. These are often only covered insufficiently or not in a timely manner by the public authorities. As a major civil society stakeholder, the WEISSER RING, with its many professionally trained, voluntary victim support personnel, can both satisfy people's individual needs and support them

financially without excessive red tape. However, compensation payments exceed the bounds of what is possible. Furthermore, victims have repeatedly stated that they consider it to be the state's job to provide such compensation.

It is particularly difficult for the victims to deal with uncertainties relating to payments for medical treatment and compensation that arise due to a lack of clarity regarding the division of responsibilities in the public administration. After the attack in Berlin, for example, it was unclear for a long time which service providers should be called upon to provide state compensation. In addition to the German Crime Victims Compensation Act (OEG), the wording of which initially gave rise to the assumption that it could not be used as a basis for a claim in the event of an attack executed with a vehicle, Verkehrsoferhilfe e. V., a compensation fund for motor liability insurers, and, via the provision of 'hardship benefits', the Federal Office of Justice came into consideration. This resulted in victims having to make three almost identical applications in order to cover all bases with respect to their claims. Ultimately, the OEG was applied, but the benefits had to be secured legally in many cases – some of the proceedings have not yet been concluded to date. A comparable problem from the victims' perspective emerged after the killing spree in Munich. Here, it took 20 months for the victims to receive hardship benefits for the victims of extremist attacks from the Federal Office of Justice. This was because the perpetrator had to be assigned to the extremist spectrum in a legally binding manner, which required a number of expert opinions.

Ultimately, many of the victims expressed the feeling that they did not have sufficient legal certainty with regard to the compensation to which they were entitled and that they were being forced into the role of 'supplicants'. Especially following the attack on Breitscheidplatz in Berlin, the overriding need for concentrated, readily accessible and easily comprehensible information and responsibilities was evident in the support for the victims. The victims also articulated this demand at an aftercare meeting: they consider there to be a need for a central body that can act in the name of the various authorities and is able to provide well-founded and binding information. They also want opportunities to communicate with experts who can keep them informed about potential sources of assistance.

There is an urgent need to create links among the various institutions and stakeholders to enable this. Internally, the WEISSER RING has implemented these requirements by appointing coordinators in its regional associations for major incidents to act as internal and external contacts. Their task is to create permanent links with relevant institutions and organisations. In the event of an attack, they know what local means of support are available and ensure that the capacity of the field office at the scene of the crime is, where applicable, expanded by calling in additional victim support personnel.

## Outlook

Victims of extremist and terrorist crimes need support services that are available immediately after a crime, as well as medium- and long-term aftercare services. The same applies with regard to financial support services, which are necessary in the short term in an acute situation as well as in the long term for coping with the consequences of the crime – with fast legal certainty with respect to the bases of claims being a particular priority.

The WEISSER RING regards the creation of links among all relevant stakeholders from the public administration and civil society organisations as an important component of a comprehensive support strategy. This is the only way to ensure that the victims receive access to the resources they require in good time in an acute situation by ensuring that all the involved parties are aware of which resources are available and of the division of responsibilities. The round tables that have already been set up can show the way forward in this context.

These have repeatedly indicated the need for a government agency that will bring together all the important information in a structured manner and will actively approach victims of attacks. Such a body can be the starting point for accumulating knowledge about the particular needs of this group of victims and for putting the insights gained from this into practice effectively. The victims still require advocates with respect to fast financial support without red tape, organised aftercare services and a simplification of the application procedure for medical treatment and compensation benefits.

## Testimony

Egbert Schmidt

*A survivor of the Breitscheidplatz attack*

In my job as a certified inpatient and outpatient nurse, I previously sometimes had to deal with seriously ill and deceased people.

The images in my mind of the dead and mutilated bodies after the attack are all the more unreal to me. As if I would never again be able to trust myself to put my knowledge as a nurse into practice professionally. I find this a severe constraint because I enjoyed my job before the attack. I need to find my bearings, just as I had to on that day because I lost my glasses when running away and was therefore even closer to the victims, sometimes just a few centimetres away. I can see all the incredulity, the confusion in the people's faces, like masks, I can see the shreds of skin, smell the truck diesel and the blood. My sense of self-worth suffered tremendously because I lost my security in my life, my basic confidence. I had not been worried beforehand; it was all a matter of course. My safe space has become smaller because of my lack of confidence.

Whenever I hear noises around me such as the blaring of a truck horn or loud altercations on the road, I flinch inwardly. When larger vans or trucks suddenly drive off, I sometimes expect a reaction and stare at the driver. When a bottle bank was emptied and dragged briefly over the ground, I was not able to turn my eyes away from it, as if hypnotised. I heard a similar noise on that day, when the truck accelerated.

It is as if I'm losing my bearings. I also get lost in situations when I'm a pedestrian because I can no longer remember my original direction. I have to sit down and consider what I was actually intending to do. Sometimes I see the attack from different perspectives and am suddenly woken up by a noise – real or imaginary.

When I was at the Federal Criminal Police Office in Treptow, I was shown an aerial image of the scene of the attack. It is as if every detail of it is burnt into my memory, e.g. a manhole cover. In my dreams, lifeless objects sometimes move. I see people who are in an unnatural posture as if they were sleeping, as if this were completely normal, and they are not bleeding. As I can only sleep very patchily because of this, I frequently feel completely exhausted. Whenever I see the barriers and concrete blocks that have now been set up, I ask myself why they were not able to block the access road at the time, although there had been indications of an attack, and why I had to be at Breitscheidplatz, out of all the places where I could have been at 20:02. I really should be happy, as my therapist says, that I did not die. But that has little value to me.

I have largely withdrawn from social life because I do not want to confront anyone with what has happened to me and because I do not want to embarrass anyone, making them feel worse. It takes a lot of effort for me to motivate myself to take part in anything. When I avoid something that would actually do me good, I feel safer, but also emptier. I stopped taking part in group activities such as football or cycling after I told people a little about the attack and realised that I do not want the attention or excessive sympathy. It seems

to me as if I am injuring myself and cannot work out why I am doing this, as if I am observing myself from the outside, almost indifferent to myself, numbed, emotionless, alienated from myself.

In the past, I could read longer passages, but my ability to concentrate does not allow this at the moment. Since the attack of 19 December 2016, I don't allow anyone to come close to me physically and my relationship with a woman at that time ended approximately half a year later. I was simply too wary that she would retell everything and that people would then expect me to tell them about it.

I talked to my therapist from the trauma clinic in Berlin about the problems with my former girlfriend and I also managed to make contact with her by telephone. Unfortunately, however, I wasn't able to reduce my avoidance behaviour and didn't meet up with my former partner.

I see this as a massive deterioration of my mental condition because I'm only able to take part in public or social life to a very limited extent. This is a kind of vicious cycle for me because my individual impairments influence one another, which makes the weight of my 'burden' greater. Between the appointments with my therapist and the neurologist, I basically only leave my flat when I have to buy food. I simply have no spontaneity in my actions anymore. I no longer pursue hobbies such as going to concerts, to the cinema, to a football match or to museums. I am now just an onlooker in social life. I would really love to be part of a group, almost regardless of its focus, but I cannot get over the threshold. I would like all this to stop and for me not to have to compulsively brood on why I absolutely had to lose my glasses at just that moment when I needed to confront the attacker and overcome him.

Valuable time was lost because I simply could not find my glasses. I would have dared to storm up to the truck immediately and tear open the door or to take up the pursuit. What a relief that would have been – and now I am getting in my own way, instead of having stopped the attacker in his tracks. Now I have to take medication because of this man and am weak. The most practical thing seems to me to face dangers so that this tension is less.

The pressure in myself and my anger about my life situation sometimes increase in a flash and my outlet is then outbursts of rage about things that are actually trivial, as if I have to compensate for something to feel alive, to feel at all. I have kicked my partner's bicycle and once threw a friend's rabbit against the wall. These are reactions that previously did not fit into my personality at all, these violent outbursts of rage, this irritability. I feel as if I am living beyond my means when I am jumpy and have a reduced awareness of danger. I sometimes feel as if I'm losing my mind when I look at items and class them as suspicious, as if I have lost my connection to reality, as if I am compulsively searching my surroundings for danger.

In early May, my mother visited Berlin and I ended up insulting her. Since then, we have had no contact, though we used to talk on the telephone every seven to ten days or so because she lives near Koblenz.

Even taking my prescribed medication is a problem because of my lack of motivation. In a few weeks, it will be Christmas and I am already dreading being alone. I don't want to smell mulled wine anymore, or I will once more see the puddles at the Christmas market, as if it could be blood.

Maybe I no longer like myself because I survived. I sometimes feel extremely overwhelmed, as when composing this letter, because films of the attack are playing inside my head and I can sense my helplessness. I then feel completely alone with myself and the sense of futility rises up in me.

### Excursus 10

## Ethical dilemmas in the prevention of extremism – co-terrorism, theoretical notes and practical approaches

Uwe Kemmesies, Michael Kowalski

### Introduction – outlining the problem

Nationally and internationally, the call for preventive approaches to counter-terrorism and counter-extremism is getting louder. There are essentially two reasons for this. First, it is becoming increasingly obvious that counter-terrorism strategies based primarily on law enforcement have only limited success. Second, calls for prevention can achieve a broad consensus across the political spectrum, irrespective, in most cases, of what the problem is that currently needs to be resolved. This consensus arises from the general conviction that prevention can do no harm.

However, while interest in prevention is growing, there are two major destabilising factors that not only risk undermining existing preventive measures, but – even worse – being counter-productive and, in the worst-case scenario, exacerbating the problem rather than solving it. First, in the area of evaluation, there is still a huge knowledge gap when it comes to measuring the reach, efficacy and impact of preventive measures. The ongoing evaluation shortfall, which continues in spite of every effort to address it, is a direct expression of a lack of awareness that prevention can also be harmful. This brings us to the second destabilising factor that threatens to undermine calls for more prevention. The prevention of extremism is an extremely complex societal field of action that indirectly involves numerous institutions. And preventive approaches partly stand in ‘competition’ with approaches based on law enforcement, without a clear understanding of how these measures (which sometimes appear to perform the same function) influence each another. At the same time, in view of the significant rise in crimes and violence motivated by extremism in the various categories (see Chapter 2), there is a major need for action – including and in particular preventive action: further extremist violence must be avoided. And we cannot simply postpone this until we have obtained completely verified knowledge that gives us one hundred per cent control over the potential risks of our preventive action.

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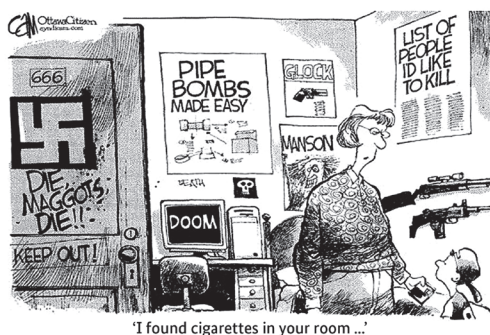
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This is the current situation, and it raises certain ethical questions with regard to the shaping of measures designed to prevent extremism, which we address in the following. According to a general definition of ethics,<sup>1</sup> it is a matter of always reflecting critically upon how we can – at least largely – ensure that we do not act ‘naively’ and that we align our practical actions as far as possible to our goals and intentions, as they underpin this Handbook: the aim is to prevent extremist/terrorist violence and to promote a social order based on a liberal constitutionalism that supports tolerance and a plurality of ways of life. These are the guide rails, the moral standards that need to be upheld if the prevention of extremism is to be undertaken in an ethically responsible way.

We want to explore the ethical questions and challenges relating to the prevention of extremism in two steps. The first, more theory-driven step will build upon the co-terrorism hypothesis<sup>2</sup> to create a greater awareness of the possible pitfalls of prevention by outlining a number of ethical dilemmas that are more or less obvious and that we will inevitably encounter in this field. Building upon this, the second, more practically oriented step will outline feasible means of ‘preventively’ countering the potential pitfalls.<sup>3</sup>



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Whenever our efforts to combat terrorism and extremism run the risk of undermining our self-imposed moral and normative standards, we are acting in a way that can be referred to as co-terrorism or co-extremism.

The cartoon on the left is one way of visualising the concept of co-terrorism/co-extremism. The key initial question when devising preventive measures is always whether they address the relevant causes and forms of the behaviour that the prevention seeks to address – the causes

and forms that we wish to prioritise. Our actions in this highly politicised field are frequently driven by pressure from the public and the media. This generally leaves us little time to plan our measures carefully. Especially in the case of new forms of extremism and of ideologically motivated violence, it is often not possible to fall back upon empirically verified knowledge. We are sometimes compelled to rely on assumptions of plausibility. If the action taken in such a situation is driven primarily by a broadly shared conviction that it is better to do anything than nothing at all, this opens the door to the risk that our actions may have counter-productive effects.<sup>4</sup> Against such a background, it is difficult to maintain critical distance when devising preventive measures: what has proven to be a suitable measure with respect to one specific area of society or social group may have precisely the opposite effect in other areas of application. This is the key idea behind the definition of co-terrorism/co-extremism.

## What is co-terrorism/co-extremism?

The term ‘co-terrorism/co-extremism’ refers to possible interdependencies between society and terrorists/extremists. This concerns far more than the desire on the part of terrorists (in line with their basic tactical logic) to provoke the society they attack into overreacting, which will then trigger sympathy and increased solidarity with the terrorist cause. The term ‘co-terrorism/co-extremism’ is used to describe all behaviours and/or courses of action that have the *unintended* side effect of promoting terrorism and/or extremism. These include all counter-terrorism measures (both enforcement and prevention) that – for whatever reason – have an unintended counter-productive effect. Below, we will, for simplicity’s sake, only talk of co-terrorism, as the fundamental psychosocial mechanisms underlying co-terrorism essentially apply equally to the entire phenomenological package of ‘radicalisation – extremism – terrorism’ (for more on the concepts of ‘terrorism’ and ‘extremism’, see Chapter 1).

The co-terrorism hypothesis relates expressly to the entire systemic social fabric: co-terrorism occurs both in dyadic relationships between partners and in the relationship between the state and the various forms of extremism and terrorism. According to the sociologist Vilfredo Pareto, ‘co-terrorism’ should be subsumed under what he calls nonlogical (in contrast to logical) actions,<sup>5</sup> specifically those nonlogical actions that demonstrate effects that were neither desired nor intended by the acting subject. Pareto makes a distinction between two subtypes of nonlogical action – alpha and beta – which is of great significance here. In the case of alpha-type nonlogical actions, the acting subject would accept the outcome if they had been aware of it before performing the action; in the case of beta-type actions, by contrast, the subject would have rejected the outcome if they had had advance knowledge of it and so would probably not have performed the action.

Co-terrorism corresponds to nonlogical action of this beta type. Actions that condone support for terrorist/extremist endeavours are not cases of co-terrorism, but rather constitute indirect or direct support for terrorists or extremists.<sup>6</sup>

In this interpretation, the co-terrorism hypothesis outlined here has practical benefits: when planning counter-terrorism measures, whether law enforcement or prevention, we should always reflect upon the possibility that our actions may have counter-productive side effects. This is difficult, however, and not only because of the complexity of the issue, the field of action and the interdependences among the various actors. The huge financial resources expended on counter-terrorism are also a factor here. This arouses and affects interests and inevitably enables certain groups to profit from terrorism: from security authorities to civil society institutions to which substantial financial resources are allocated through to political parties who aim to take up the issue with a view to winning votes. On questions of social policy of this kind, which are heavily influenced by vested interests and competition over resources, influence and power on the part of the various actors involved, it is difficult to be objective about the already elusive phenomena of extremism and terrorism. In spite of all the unfortunate suffering that terrorism causes, there are also people who benefit from it. The enormous costs involved create a risk that a form of action unconsciously emerges that the sociologist William Sumner would refer to as ‘antagonistic cooperation’: this is when, in spite

1 For details, cf. Düwell/Hübenthal/Werner 2006, 1 et seq. – especially in view of the understanding of the concept of applied ethics that is relevant here, *ibid.*, 21 et seq.

2 For details, cf. Kemmesies 2006, 2017.

3 Here we draw on, among other things, the first extensive publication on ethical issues in counter-terrorism. Cf. Kowalski 2017.

4 Here it is worth mentioning the work of Sebastian Scheerer (2002), which deals in a critical and constructive way with the option of not responding to terrorist threats. It is particularly relevant to our intense deliberations to always bear in mind ‘that the future of terrorism depends on those who respond to it.’ *Ibid.*, 16.

5 For an overview, cf. Boudon/Bourricaud 1992, 385 et seq.

6 The question of empirical evidence of co-terrorism will not be discussed in detail here (cf. Kemmesies 2006, 234 et seq.) – partly for reasons of space and partly because, for the line of argument presented here, theoretically substantiated evidence of co-terrorism is sufficient on pragmatic grounds alone: our concern is to eliminate the risk of preventive measures having counter-productive results, even though this risk has only so far been established in theoretical terms.

of the antagonism, there is (indirect) cooperation, as both parties are pursuing higher goals that can, to a certain extent, only be achieved through cooperation. And however paradoxical and ludicrous this may sound at first with respect to the phenomenon of terrorism, situations repeatedly arise in which – in spite of the competition and conflict between the society that is under attack and the terrorist groups – both sides benefit. There are various examples of this.

Obvious and complex forms of antagonistic cooperation can be observed in the area of media coverage (see Excursus 2): to satisfy their obligation to inform and to meet the public interest, the media give terrorist groups attention and thus help them to meet their strategic goal, which is to spread fear in order to destabilise the society they seek to attack. Public and media interest is a key resource for terrorist groups: ‘Attention is the lifeblood of its existence.’<sup>7</sup> Or as Ayman al-Zawahiri, the strategic head of Al-Qaeda, put it in 2005: ‘More than half of this battle is taking place on the battleground of the media.’<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the media benefit from the horror of terrorism and terrorist attacks because these make their news products ‘easier’ to sell – they generate attention and higher viewing figures, which can be converted into revenue. In such a situation of antagonistic cooperation, questionable reports of terrorist activities are frequently generated that correspond to the co-terrorism hypothesis. Perhaps we still recall – to give one example – the coverage of the beheading of 21 Coptic Christians in Libya in February 2015. The images of the victims, who were dressed in orange jumpsuits like Guantanamo Bay prisoners, were published worldwide. What does the clothing of the victims symbolise? How would you interpret the image if you were a teenager with a certain affinity for radical thinking and reservations about the West? Doesn’t such coverage have the potential to indirectly reinforce extremist propaganda – at least in milieus where the Guantanamo Bay detention camp stands as proof that the West is undermining its self-imposed moral, ethical and normative standards in the fight against terrorism.

Another example of possible antagonistic cooperation in the fight against terrorism can be seen in connection with the increase in staff at the security authorities that can typically be observed in connection with terrorist threats. In view of such threats, it is far easier to obtain resources in the competition for budgetary funds. And at the same time, the growth in the security sector stands in the public perception for an increased threat of terrorism and thus speaks to the population’s fear – once again inevitably playing into the hands of the key tactical concern of terror groups: the desire to spread fear.

This basic pattern of antagonistic cooperation can also be observed in the academic community. It is quite remarkable how many university institutions and chairs have built up expertise in the area of extremism/terrorism research in recent years. The same applies to practical prevention activities, which have stepped up significantly – especially in the form of a wide range of local, regional and, to some extent, even national civil society institutions: the prevention of extremism can be considered a field that is being worked with increasingly intensiveness (for details, see Chapter 7). Well-funded national and international (EU) security research programmes clearly make it far easier to obtain (third-party) funds for research activities and other projects. And current challenges certainly do call for an intensification in research and practice. However, it is always also necessary to critically reflect upon the fact that our efforts in this respect play a part in presenting terrorist threats to society as a whole: the deployment of sometimes vast resources must be justified to the public via suitable public relations work. Inevitably, such terrorist threat scenarios resonate in the public discourse. The various research

and project initiatives in the area of prevention practice, which are publicised by the funding bodies and applicants, reverberate in the public’s perception. An image of a ubiquitous threat emerges, a threat that appears to be far more strongly anchored in the public awareness than many other, much more relevant and higher-risk social problems and criminogenic threats for the individual. The probability of life risks such as unemployment or becoming a victim of a violent crime or of a fatal accident in the home is far higher than that of becoming a victim of a terrorist attack. In the current social situation, it appears to be difficult to achieve an objective, arm’s-length evaluation and risk assessment. And so it comes as no surprise that in R+V Versicherung’s fear index, which has been performing representative surveys for more than a quarter of a century, fear of terrorism took first place among all the private and public fears of the German population for the first time in 2016 and 2017.<sup>9</sup>

This complex social situation involving virtually inevitable antagonistic cooperation between the various terrorist and societal groups and the associated risk of co-terrorism creates concrete dangers for the prevention of extremism in practice. These call upon us to reflect ethically upon our actions: is it absolutely essential to give every aspect of terrorism a media platform – from detailed reporting of attacks via coverage of ongoing investigations and prosecutions, to the release of the perpetrators from prison?<sup>10</sup> It is surely right and fitting to make government actions transparent, but does that mean publicly communicating every step in the efforts to contain terrorism through law enforcement and preventive measures? There are clearly a number of unresolved questions relating to ethically responsible action in this field. Before considering some of these specifically, we want to begin by outlining the four most obvious pitfalls lurking in prevention practice according to the co-terrorism hypothesis, which are repeatedly mentioned – at least indirectly – in the literature:

## Pitfalls in the prevention of extremism

### First – the combatant trap

It is always necessary to examine the extent to which measures for the prevention of terrorism are also conducive to building up a certain background of fear in the general population. If this happens – as a result, for example, of uncritical, unreflective reporting – the effect can be, as described above, to unintentionally aid the terrorists, as the terror is reflected kaleidoscopically and multiplied in the public perception. It may sometimes be equally effective and less risky to initially do less or nothing and to demonstrate ‘heroic composure’, as the political scientist Herfried Münkler has repeatedly suggested.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The fear of terrorism, which ranked highest in the R+V long-term study in 2016 and 2017, was immediately followed in second place by the fear of political extremism. In the study, which has been conducted since 1992, the fear of terrorism appeared among the seven greatest fears of the German population in 2003 for the first time. Between 2005 and 2014, the fear of terrorism only once appeared amongst the most common fears (in seventh place) in 2007. In 2015 – the year in which the bloody terrorist attacks in Paris were effectively shown live (during the broadcast of a football friendly between France and Germany) similarly to the 9/11 attacks in the USA – the fear of terror moved to fourth place and then occupied first place for the first time in 2016 and 2017 (cf. R+V 2018).

<sup>10</sup> One example of this is the media coverage of the commemoration of the Breitscheidplatz attack on 19 December 2018. There is no doubt that commemoration of the victims should be a moral obligation – the media seem to be very aware of this and it is very much the focus of their coverage. But is it absolutely necessary to also repeatedly present the perpetrator’s modus operandi and mention his name, thereby nurturing his martyrdom in the extremist Salafist subculture (as can be seen to be the case generally for all terrorist milieus)? With such coverage, we inevitably increase the risk of copycat attacks. In a Google search just of the word ‘Breitscheidplatz’ on 20 December 2018, eight of the first ten hits related to the terrorist attack. In every case, the modus operandi was mentioned and some articles reported on it in detail. They all also – with one exception – mentioned the name of the perpetrator. Just one case referred to a ‘fanatical Muslim’ (see Philosophia Perennis 2018). The ninth result was an article from Cicero magazine – a guest contribution by Till Karmann. In it, the author, writing on the anniversary of the attack, recognises the relationships of co-terrorism and antagonistic cooperation addressed here by referring to the media as ‘unwilling accessories’ and talks of a ‘tragic symbiotic relationship with terrorism’ that ‘is easily created by the media’. However, even this article cannot forego naming the perpetrator and mentioning his modus operandi (see Cicero 2018).

<sup>11</sup> For example: Münkler 2006, more recently in an interview on 20 October 2016 with the Preussische Allgemeine Zeitung. Former Minister of the Interior Thomas de Maizière endorsed Münkler’s demand for greater ‘heroic composure’ in dealing with the terrorist threat in an interview with the taz newspaper on 21 January 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Weisband/Roguly 1978, 278.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from Antinori 2014, 32.



A historical example that illustrates the relationship discussed here really well is the response of the international community to the attack by the Palestinian terror group 'Black September' on the Israeli Olympic team on 5 September 1972 in Munich: 'The games must go on!' This slogan was proclaimed by Avery Brundage, who was President of the IOC at the time, just one day after the attack.

### Second – the stigmatisation trap

It is also essential to examine the extent to which particular preventive measures run the risk of stigmatising particular population groups by subjecting them to a kind of general suspicion. Very much in keeping with the allusion to the potential stigmatisation trap, Waldmann,<sup>12</sup> while discussing Islamist terrorism, warns against '[...placing] a population group of several million people under constant suspicion [...and surveillance]. Aside from constitutional reservations and the enormous effort that this entails, another argument against such an approach is that it could have a counter-productive effect, creating the very monster that we would like to contain and control.'<sup>13</sup>

### Third – the solidarity trap

As also already mentioned, a key strategic feature of terrorism is to provoke responses (from one's opponents/the states one attacks) that one can then ultimately exploit.<sup>14</sup> Above all, it is important to heed Waldmann's warning (above) by monitoring the extent to which certain kinds of preventive surveillance measures, in particular, are capable of triggering a sense of solidarity with active terrorist cells amongst certain subcultures and groups within the population. The critical effects of antagonistic cooperation that have already been mentioned are particularly important here. Even though the terrorist groups and the society that is under attack are working against one another, both parties benefit. Some of the goals of terrorism (a gain in sympathy based on solidarity as a consequence of extreme responses) are compatible with those of counter-terrorism (a retention and increase of power through increased security measures). If such precarious win-win situations arise in the context of antagonistic cooperation, it is a major challenge for the society that is under attack to raise awareness of the obvious dangers of the solidarity trap or to recognise this potential danger in the first place.

### Fourth – the desensitisation trap

In view of the information overload that characterises contemporary society, the extent to which preventive measures get a hearing is of vital importance. On the one hand, appeals to fear of the kind that are unavoidably associated with the prevention of terrorism have a high potential for generating attention. On the other hand, their potential to attract attention is waning in view of the glut of images of atrocities in the media: from general findings of the research into appeals to fear,<sup>15</sup> we are able to deduce that people are becoming less sensitive, and preventive campaigns are threatening to become lost in the flood of information and anti-terror messages.

<sup>12</sup> Waldmann 2005, 39.

<sup>13</sup> The causal relationship mentioned here between stigmatisation effects and radicalisation is empirically underpinned, for example, by the study 'Labelling the innocent: how government counter-terrorism advice creates labels that contribute to the problem' by Nicholas Appleby from 2010. A general overview of classic studies on labelling theory can be found in Lanier/Henry 1998, 175 et seq.

<sup>14</sup> See Paul Wilkinson 2011, 15: 'It is the intention of terrorist tactics in a deliberate effort to provoke the authorities into a counterinsurgent overreaction, thereby inducing an effect of domestic and international opinion favourable to the terrorist groups.'

<sup>15</sup> For example Barth/Bengel 2000.

## Ethics in the prevention of extremism – experiences and practical advice from the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the prevention of extremism is an integral part of counter-terrorism. What is the ethically 'correct' path in the prevention of extremism? The importance of this question can be seen in the fact that a 2016 expert report of the German Congress on Crime Prevention referred to the need for an ethical discourse on prevention and freedom.<sup>16</sup> At first glance, this appears to be a political matter best addressed via parliamentary debates on social and political issues, with the aim of developing a strategy that is supported by society as a whole and of producing relevant legislation.



### ABOUT PHRONESIS – PRACTICAL WISDOM

*In their anthology on this concept, Kinsella and Pitman<sup>18</sup> discussed phronesis as professional knowledge and the role of practical wisdom in the professions. Although their focus was primarily on the education and healthcare sectors, their deliberations and theoretical conclusions can also be utilised for the prevention of extremism. They define phronesis as 'practical wisdom or knowledge of the proper ends of life, [...] an intellectual virtue that implies ethics [and] involves deliberation that is based on values and is concerned with practical judgement and informed by reflection.'*<sup>19</sup>

*In the context of professional practice, this would encompass the traits: 'pragmatic, variable, context-dependent, and oriented towards action.'<sup>20</sup> In the area of public administration in the Netherlands, the ethical triangle was introduced in order to put ethics into practice. This ethical triangle implies that the professionals working in the public administration should strive for a balance between virtue, principle and good consequences.<sup>21</sup> How such an approach could be applied from a philosophical perspective is demonstrated by Martin Benjamin via his concept of compromise.<sup>22</sup> He does not see compromise as a result of negotiation, but as a weighing-up of values and goods: 'Successful navigation in life, as on the sea, requires knowing when and how to tack between viewpoints. [...] The capacity to view the world from these two standpoints is what underlies our capacity for critical self-reflection, freedom of the will, and self-direction.'*

The question of ethical guidelines and professional standards is of particular significance for those working in the field of extremism prevention on an everyday basis: what is reasonable, what is useful and what, perhaps, does more harm than good? Structural guidelines negotiated by politicians rarely provide a concrete basis for action for everyday ethical dilemmas, let alone a certainty of action, and even academia has only looked at this topic sporadically. The work of researchers thus also provides practitioners with little support in making prevention practice 'ethically' responsible.<sup>17</sup> This situation calls for a pragmatic approach, one in which the concept of 'phronesis' (an ancient Greek term sometimes translated as 'practical wisdom') contains promising points of reference. Below, we will discuss four potential approaches from applied ethics that account for the need for compromise and can contribute to overcoming the aforementioned pit-falls in the practice of the prevention of extremism.

<sup>16</sup> Quinn 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Kowalski/Meeder 2011; Kowalski 2017a; Reding et al. 2013; Taylor 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Kinsella/Pitman 2012.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Svava 2007, 67.

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin 1990.

### First – dialogue about ethical dilemmas

First of all, it is important to recognise that an open, transparent dialogue among professionals in the field of the prevention of extremism with regard to ethical dilemmas is indispensable. There are various possible ways of organising such a dialogue. In 2013, the Dutch Coordinator for Counterterrorism commissioned RAND Europe to investigate which ethical dilemmas counter-terrorism professionals experience and how they can best deal with them. To this end, experiences from other areas of society such as healthcare, defence and the police were analysed in terms of how they dealt with ethical dilemmas. The goal was to find out what lessons can be learnt from these fields for counter-terrorism and the prevention of extremism. Via a comprehensive review of methods and techniques,<sup>23</sup> an instrument was identified that places a particular emphasis on dialogue. It has the technical name of ‘moral case deliberation’. This method functions just as the name suggests: ‘On the basis of a specific real case, one reflects on one’s own (*moral*) competencies in retrospective (and/or prospective) terms in successive discussion steps (*deliberation*)’.<sup>24</sup>

Moral case deliberation has already proven itself as an instrument for handling ethical dilemmas. This was not only demonstrated in the aforementioned study on the handling of ethical dilemmas in other sectors.<sup>25</sup> The practical potential of the approach has also been made evident in many other empirical studies.<sup>26</sup> The following aspects, in particular, should be highlighted:

- finding answers to concrete ethical dilemmas,
- learning to look at a dilemma from various perspectives and thus to extend one’s own horizon,
- strengthening decision-making,
- promoting collective learning and improving mutual understanding between colleagues and among disciplines,
- improving cooperation and communication skills, and
- contributing to the development and realisation of strategies and guidelines.

In the Dutch civil service, moral case deliberation is an integral aspect of the prevention of extremism. Initial studies have shown that this approach makes a positive contribution to the ethically responsible prevention of extremism.<sup>27</sup>

### Second – development of an ethical impact assessment

The development of an *ethical impact assessment* (EIA) should be promoted as an extension of the existing international instrument, the privacy impact assessment.<sup>28</sup> The privacy impact assessment (PIA) was developed to illustrate the weighing-up of interests and values in the development of concrete measures, for example in security policy.

<sup>23</sup> In detail: Reding et al. 2013; Ministry of Justice and Security 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Porz/Widdershoven 2010, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Reding et al. 2013.

<sup>26</sup> For example: Stolper 2016; Svantesson 2014; Weidema/Molewijk 2017; Weidema 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Kowalski 2017b.

<sup>28</sup> Wright/de Hert 2012.

The PIA approach assumes that security and privacy are of equal value in principle and subjects concrete measures to a case-based and context-specific impact assessment. In 2012, the Dutch Coordinator for Counterterrorism, in collaboration with the Institute for Safety, Security and Crisis Management, developed a privacy impact assessment (PIA) for counter-terrorism and the prevention of extremism.<sup>29</sup> In view of the fact that weighing-up processes that are more complex than ‘just’ repeatedly re-balancing the relationship between security and freedom in counter-terrorism are increasingly gaining traction, expanding the PIA into the ethical impact assessment shows promise.

### Third – strengthening evaluation programmes and methods

We should also strive to learn structurally from the concrete experiences in the various fields of action related to the prevention of extremism. To this end, we should build on research findings to devise and refine evaluation programmes and, above all, should actually apply these in the area of the prevention of extremism. Here, shifts in the (security) risks faced by society and the associated changes in the prevention of extremism must always be taken into consideration.<sup>30</sup> In the Netherlands, there is a political agreement that the prevention of extremism should be integrated into the national counter-terrorism strategy, which is evaluated every five years. Even if more attention has been devoted to evaluating extremism prevention in recent years, the quality of such efforts is variable.<sup>31</sup> When refining the evaluation programmes and methods, it would be helpful to give closer consideration to ethical aspects. In this respect, transparency, in particular, should be significantly increased by making evaluation reports fully accessible – especially with regard to preventive approaches that prove less practicable and appropriate. The goal must be to support the open exchange of experiences in a way that enables innovation and learning. To this end, it is essential that the reports cover not only successful practical approaches, but also those that fail or prove less successful or appropriate.

### Fourth – enhancing regulation and oversight

State regulation and oversight of security policy have hitherto been primarily directed at the law enforcement functions of the state. In the area of law enforcement, actors are more or less automatically subject to oversight in accordance with constitutional principles – this is monitored by regulatory bodies and, not least, by lawyers when extremist or terrorist crimes come before the courts. In the prevention of extremism, by contrast, there is a wide range of actors who have so far been subjected to far less regulation and oversight. Professional extremism prevention should be placed under a regulatory and supervisory regime that parallels that under which law enforcement activities in the same area operate. In the Netherlands, the independent Inspectorate of Justice and Security made an initial contribution in this direction in 2017 when it comprehensively evaluated the national action package for combating jihadism, which covers both enforcement and prevention activities.<sup>32</sup> Considered from an ethical and constitutional perspective, a re-positioning of regulation and oversight that extends to prevention as well as law enforcement would be welcome and appropriate to the sensitivity of the field of activity.

<sup>29</sup> Kowalski 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Den Boer/Kolthoff 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Bellasio et al. 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Inspectorate of Justice and Security 2017.

## Summary and outlook

In summary, two consequences come to mind to counter the potential risks of unintended side effects of our preventive actions in this highly sensitive and politicised field: dialogue and evaluation.

As an initial step, an open, transparent dialogue among relevant actors is needed to address and raise awareness of the ethical dilemmas related to the prevention of extremism in practice. The moral case deliberation and ethical impact assessment approaches provide practical orientation and concrete points of reference for this.

Also in line with the requirement for transparency, a systematic evaluation practice or evaluation culture must be (further) developed in the field of the prevention of extremism. In this context, it is already possible to fall back upon a variety of experiences and methodological know-how (see also Chapter 4). However, with a few exceptions, we are still far from a comprehensive, transparent evaluation practice that even third parties can understand.

A professional dialogue on ethical dilemmas and a responsible and transparent evaluation of prevention practice in order to identify any counter-productive effects of our preventive efforts are prerequisites for further professionalisation in this complex, high-risk field, which is something that we must pursue. In this context, in line with approaches used in counter-terrorism/counter-extremism law enforcement, the establishment of a regulatory or oversight practice should be considered in order to rule out as many unintended side effects as possible.

The authors are aware that the explanations of co-terrorism and antagonistic cooperation and the associated pitfalls define the field of the prevention of extremism in a rather negative way, as they indicate possible sources of danger that threaten to thwart the success of preventive measures. Yet we hope the discussions of practical and pragmatic approaches to a prevention of extremism that follows ethical standards may yet lead to positive action: we call upon everyone involved in prevention to reflect upon possible unintended side effects of their own actions conscientiously and authentically in advance – including by reflecting upon their own interests critically and honestly.

## Literature

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Bundeskriminalamt

## The Handbook of Preventing Violent Extremism

brings together articles by experts from both research and practice. In seven consecutive chapters, the broad spectrum of the various working areas of prevention is examined in a way that is clear and comprehensive for a wide audience, drawing on the current state of knowledge and experience. This provides readers who are new to this subject area with a systematic and comprehensive introduction to this complex field of work. An extensive keyword index allows readers already familiar with the topics at hand to delve into the Handbook in a more targeted manner, allowing them even to seek out specific aspects that have thus far received little attention within the relevant literature and in public discussion. The structure of the book, the compilation of the texts and the thematic contents all follow one guiding principle: the prevention of extremism and politically and/or religiously motivated violence should be understood as a task for society as a whole. This task should be shaped as a joint effort by both governmental institutions and civil society.

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