

Florian Hartleb



**LONE
WOLVES**

*The New Terrorism of
Right-Wing Single Actors*

 Springer

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The New Terrorism of Right-Wing Single
Actors

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ISBN 978-3-030-36152-5 ISBN 978-3-030-36153-2 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36153-2>

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This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Acknowledgements

The 21st century has now already become the century of individual, of so-called ‘lone wolf’ terrorism. The modern type of politically motivated brutality is “home-made” (*homegrown*) and cannot be attributed to Islamic fundamentalism as such. Individuals with far-right tendencies kill in order to establish a society according to their own standards, without requiring a great deal of organisation in the background, but autonomously and apparently unpredictably. The following book intends to take an in-depth view of this phenomenon, a new dimension of virtual and international far right-terrorism, a recent dynamics including mutual inspiration.

I would like to extend my warm thanks to the publishers Springer Verlag, who put their trust in me and granted me the opportunity to write a non-fiction book at an academic level. The subject of “far-right extremist motivated lone wolves” has in the meantime adopted global relevance, attaining a new degree of networking and also of mutual inspiration. Accordingly, the author also hopes to reach an international audience. This is precisely the reason why I am very grateful that a leading think tank on security matters, the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore granted me financial assistance towards publication, by providing the funding costs for the translation. Mr. Charles Rose from Scotland realised this. He approached the project in a meticulous manner, which is the reason I am likewise very grateful to him. This topic has a certain dynamic. Originally, I had written a non-fiction book on lone wolf terrorism in German, published by the Hamburg-based trade publisher “Hoffmann und Campe”. This was published in October 2018. New murderous assaults since then, for instance the

attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand and in El Paso, New Mexico, gave me grounds to heavily update my book and, also to internationalise it.

The idea for the book had originated from what my work in the case of the murderous assault of 22 July 2016 uncovered—by no coincidence exactly five years to the day after the attacks by Anders Behring Breivik in Norway. Once I had been permitted to look over approximately 4000 pages of investigators’ casework files, I reached the clear conclusion that we were certainly not dealing with an apolitical act here—as the official account believed, but with far-right terrorism in the form of a “lone wolf” attack. Later, I even found out about virtual US media links between Munich and New Mexico, via a gaming platform which apparently aroused no suspicion, which official security services had completely overlooked and were not aware of. Other cases from different countries highlight the new challenges we face. This is why the author, in order that his objective meets with resonance, differentiates this complex phenomenon as far as possible, clarifying it during my examination and in this way initiating a discussion on possible counterstrategies. Politicians and political machinations, security services and officials, but also society are confronted by this challenge to an equal extent. In the case of Munich, it took the authorities more than three years to acknowledge that the attacks there were politically motivated (*and the nature of these motivations*).

And this topic continues to be highly relevant. On 9th October 2019, Germany was shaken by a lone wolf attack carried out by Stephan Balliet in broad daylight. The 27 year-old German carried out a copy-cat assault to Christchurch but failed with his attempted attack on a Jewish synagogue full of people in Halle/Saxony Anhalt. The loner addressed “his fans” via livestream on this date but got more and more nervous whilst carrying out his murderous deed. He killed two people at random and shouted repeatedly about how he was “a loser”. His actions were clearly politically motivated. Balliet justified his action with anti-Semitism, with a fight against the “Zionist Occupation Government” (ZOG), but also through his hatred of feminism and Islam. Linked deeply to expressions used in gaming, a new debate on the “gamification of right-wing terrorism” has commenced. The dilettantism or lack of commitment during implementation also highlighted on the other hand, what the actions in Norway and Christchurch had achieved.

Tallinn, Estonia
October 2019

Florian Hartleb

Contents

1	Right-Wing Terrorism. Still an Underestimated Threat	1
1.1	The Current Threat of Terrorist Attacks by Single Actors	1
1.2	Emotionally Charged—The Question of “Why”	6
1.3	Right-Wing Terrorism Is Neglected in Public Perception	7
1.4	The National Socialist Underground (NSU) as an Early Warning	10
1.5	Why We Must Stand up to Lone Wolves	13
1.6	The Current Situation: Errors of Judgement by Politicians and Officials	15
1.7	Hypotheses	24
	References	26
2	What Is a “Lone Wolf”?	29
2.1	A Phantom?	29
2.2	Forms of Terror	32
2.3	A Look Back in History	34
2.4	Assassination Attempts on Representatives of Democratic States	37
2.5	Theory and Origins of Lone Wolf Terrorism	41
2.6	Profile and Nature of the Lone Wolf	44
2.7	Political Motives and Personal Ideology of Grievances	47
2.8	Killing Sprees, Running Amok and Terror—The Difference Is Important	49

2.9	Lone Wolves and Islamic Terrorists	52
2.10	“Battle Mode” as a Principle	55
	References	59
3	Offenders and Terrorism. Ideology, Motives, Objectives	63
3.1	Isolated and Disappointed: Frank Steffen, Thomas Mair, Luca Traini	66
3.2	Failures, Megalomaniacs and Dangerous: Franz Fuchs, John Ausonius, Anders Breivik, Brenton Tarrant	73
3.3	Uprooted and Radical: Peter Mangs, Pavlo Lapshyn, David Sonboly	92
3.4	Young and Fascist: David Copeland, Pekko Auvinen and Anton Petterson	106
3.5	Significance of Observing Individuals for the Overall Picture	110
	References	120
4	Radicalisation in Our Midst and in Virtual Rooms and Spaces	123
4.1	Terror as a Portrayal of Developments in Society	123
4.2	Internationalisation of the Radical Right	127
4.3	Virtual Worlds	131
4.4	Boom Time for Conspiracy Theories	136
4.5	Reich Citizens [Reichsbürger]—Merely “Paper Terrorists?”	138
4.6	Identitarians and the Christchurch Terrorist	141
4.7	Consequences	146
	References	147
5	Counter-Strategies and Prevention	149
5.1	Rethinking Required by Security Officials	151
5.2	Virtual Platform as a Source of Danger	155
5.3	Searching for a Trail in the Social Environment	165
	References	171
6	Conclusions	173
	References	179
	Index	181



1

Right-Wing Terrorism. Still an Underestimated Threat

1.1 The Current Threat of Terrorist Attacks by Single Actors

A famous old Chinese proverb, attributed to the war theorist Sun Tzu, states: “Kill one, terrify 10,000.”¹ A modern terrorist would even say in the global age and following 11 September 2001: “Kill one, terrify 10 or even 100 million.” And also: We no longer need an organised group to generate this terror, more or less the DNA of terrorism. One lone individual suffices nowadays. Global media discovered this on 22 July 2011: After many years of planning, the Norwegian far-right extremist Anders Behring Breivik murdered 77 people according to a diabolical choreography, with many young people numbered amongst the victims. Initial “knee-jerk”, reflex-like and premature assessments pondered whether the work of al-Qaeda could be observed in this cold-bloodedness. In the meantime, the question has arisen of whether we should not use two different scales of measurement, as the threat of right-wing terrorism was underestimated for a long time and attention remained fixed entirely on Islamic terrorism.²

However, it quickly transpired that a single actor was at work here. Breivik was not known to the police before this, had neither any relevant registrations nor any previous convictions. Before staging his attacks, Breivik tweeted a single message revealing the destructive power lone wolves possess: “One person

¹Quoted in Paul Wilkinson: *Terrorism and the Liberal State*, London 1977, p. 48.

²Cf. Trevor Aaronson: *Terrorism’s double standard. Violent far-right extremists are rarely prosecuted as terrorists*, in: *The Intercept* dated 23 March 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/03/23/domestic-terrorism-fbi-prosecutions/>.

with a belief is equal to the force of 100,000 with merely interests.” Former US President Barack Obama demonstrated that he was downright far-sighted in this regard following Breivik’s assaults. In August 2011, he stated that the threat of “lone wolves”, terrorist single actors, is greater than that of organised groups, such as those who carried out the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 for example. Obama stated: “The risk we are presently confronted with, is that of the lone wolf terrorist, someone with a single weapon, who is in a position to carry out a massacre on a large scale, as we witnessed in Norway a short time ago.”³

A single actor extinguished 51 human lives in Christchurch, New Zealand on 15 March 2019 and seriously injured dozens more. A large number of these were praying Muslims, as the assailant targeted Islamic locations in the city, and two mosques in particular. The perpetrator, the 29-year-old Australian Brenton Tarrant achieved his goals just as he had imagined he would: With an emphasis on global notoriety. 17 unbearable minutes were broadcast live on Facebook. Tarrant underpinned the live broadcast of the assault with a song from war-time Bosnian Serbs, who had fought against the Muslim-dominated army in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the 1990s in the wars in Yugoslavia. The song “Karadžić, lead your Serbs” glorified the Serbian leader during those times, Radovan Karadžić, who was sentenced by the UN Tribunal for his part in the massacre of Srebrenica amongst other things; and in this context is considered to be a martyr. An inhabitant of New Zealand was sentenced to 21 months in prison in June 2019, for broadcasting his terrorist video on the Internet. The court considered that a “hate crime” had been committed. The offender, a 44-year-old businessman even inserted crosshairs and numbered the victims.⁴

It is, therefore, easy to see a correlation between the “lone wolves” Breivik and Tarrant, as the German magazine „Der Spiegel“ stated in a story on its front page following the event in Christchurch. This applies in particular to issuing and broadcasting a “manifesto” on the Internet to accompany the assaults: “Both fabricated an amalgam of theorems scorning human beings in order to justify their murders. Compiling these into so-called manifestos,

³Barack Obama: “Obama says “lone wolf terrorist” biggest US threat”, in: *Reuters.com* of 17 August 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-obama-security/obama-says-lone-wolf-terrorist-biggest-us-threat-idUSTRE77F6XI20110816>.

⁴BBC news, 21 June 2019, New Zealand man jailed for 21 months for sharing Christchurch shooting video, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48671837>.

which now permeate digital channels and are becoming the Bible for potential new assassins. Tarrant refers to Breivik in his declarations and uses a similar form of expression and layout to the latter.”⁵ Tarrant regrets his deeds equally as little. Similar to his role model, he professes he is not guilty. The courts should be misused as propaganda media and for self-portrayal.

A *prima facie* paradox: Tarrant not only travelled extensively around Europe. Like his Norwegian predecessor, he bound himself to existing currents in Europe, likewise considering himself to be a “white supremacist”, as a self-appointed freedom fighter against supposed Muslim infiltration. Norway and New Zealand are particularly peace-loving regions of the world free from conflict, both free from the threat of terrorism up until now. Accordingly, people there were basically not prepared for such types of attack. Uncomfortable questions were asked in New Zealand as once they were in Norway, along the lines of whether society had missed warning signals.⁶ But in Norway, the public was shaken again on 10 August 2019 by an attack on a mosque in Oslo. The 21-year-old Norwegian shooter, identified as Philip Manshaus, acted as a white supremacist. One person was injured, and the gunman’s stepsister was later found dead in their family home.

Therefore, we may also argue these were postnational terrorists, considering the West to be threatened by decadence and Islamisation. In other words: invaders from foreign cultures were plundering Europe. This narrative also exists in other regions of the world: An assailant referred to Christchurch in El Paso on the Mexican border in the USA. On 3 August 2019, he murdered 20 people in a shopping centre there, predominantly Hispanics with seven of them Mexican. The 21-year-old Patrick Crusius considered his assault a response to the “Hispanic invasion of Texas.” Travelling there specifically for the attacks, residing in Allen, ca. 660 miles away. Justifying his attacks with the following statement: “I am simply defending my country from cultural and ethnic replacement brought on by an invasion.” Like Tarrant, he also presented his manifesto on the platform “8chan”.

Enemies of a democratic system of values and social order have for a long time concerned themselves not just with words, for example with exchanges in virtual rooms, but with deeds. In order for concrete, perfidiously planned events to be carried out by singular, so-called lone wolves. These events also

⁵Jörg Diehl amongst others: Ego-Shooter, in: *Der Spiegel* (cover), No. 13, 23 March 2019, pp. 12–19, here p. 13.

⁶See Eleanor Ainge Roy/Michael McGowan: New Zealand asks: how was the threat from the far right missed, in: *The Guardian* of 20 March 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/21/new-zealand-asks-how-was-the-threat-from-the-far-right-missed>.

occurred in isolated cases even before the virtual era. As the case of the Austrian letter bomber Franz Fuchs attested for example, who created fear and terror with his letter bombs during the 1990s. But the case of the “home-grown” terrorist with all its severity was scarcely handled systematically and slipped into oblivion again.⁷ This initially received comprehensive scientific treatment in English⁸ in 2018 and is also covered in this book.

The new dimension of terrorism was ignored by political decision-makers, investigators and secret service authorities as well as experts on terrorism for a long time and was filed away as attacks by crazy individual assailants. This tendency still persists today. Right-wing extremist and/or xenophobic acts of violence directed against foreigners, curiously enough are still considered by security officials and other observers to be emotional and hate-filled, with little planning and organisation. Politically motivated multiple offenders, with an extreme right-wing view of the world, cropping up in scientific and journalistic treatises as “also-rans”.⁹ The findings of the terrorism expert Jeffrey D. Simon were in contrast to this, that “Lone Wolf Terrorists can be more creative and innovative than terrorist groups:” “Lone Wolves tend to think outside the box, since that is how they live, as loners and outsiders not constrained or obligated to follow what might be considered socially accepted norms of behaviour.”¹⁰

Terrorism through lone assailants, without an organisation pulling the strings in the background—up until now we had thought we were only aware of this phenomenon from other regions of the world, described using the metaphor Lone Wolf, from Afghanistan, Iraq or from the conflict in Israel, where radical Palestinians unleash targeted knife attacks. Yet whether we wish to accept the fact or not: in the meantime, acts of terrorism have also occurred in Europe, even using buses and trucks. And the background for these need not always be political. Yet the destructive force of the individual is evident for all these terrible acts.

It is high time we recognise and acknowledge these excesses of force from single actors as an acute threat. The insight is appropriate, that this threat

⁷Fuchs was not included in the renowned standard reference work by Law, Randall D. (ed.): *The Routledge History of Terrorism*, Oxon/New York 2015.

⁸See Paul Schlieffsteiner: *Austria's Homegrown Lone Actor Terrorist: Franz Fuchs and the Letter Bomb Campaign of the 1990s*, in: *Journal for Intelligence, Propaganda and Security Studies*, 12 (2018) 1, pp. 67–92.

⁹Cf. Uwe Backes: *Rechtsextremistische Gewalt in Europa*, in: Gerhard Hirscher/Eckhard Jesse (ed.): *Extremismus in Deutschland*, Baden-Baden 2013, p. 43.

¹⁰Jeffrey D. Simon: *The Alphabet Bomber. A Lone Wolf Terrorist ahead of his time*, Nebraska 2019, p. 172. This book covers the lone-wolf Muharem Kurbegovic, forgotten today, the so-called “Alphabet Bomber”. This native Yugoslav, possessing specialist training as an engineer, exploded a bomb at Los Angeles airport on 6 August 1974. Three died. And further attacks followed.

was simply not characterised sufficiently up until now, that right-wing acts of terrorism are almost always stripped of any political demands.¹¹ We were not ready for this type of risk up until now, still connecting terrorism with rigid networks and structures as well as with careful planning, requiring a high degree of operational intelligence. We apparently do not believe one single person acting alone can radicalise himself to such an extent without joining a group directly; and can then set off down the road of destruction under the pretext of being a political fanatic under his own direction—as *ultima ratio* [*as a last resort*]. It often appears incomprehensible for officials, that such a perpetrator has no prior criminal convictions, that he may be a so-called “Clean-Face perpetrator,”¹² that is someone who is supposedly integrated into society and who does not have any prior criminal record with the police.

This book provides evidence to the contrary and for the first time gives a well-founded and detailed insight into the characteristics, motivations and radicalisation processes of so-called right-wing extremist, lone wolf perpetrators. The classification “single actor” in these cases merely represents planning the concrete event. It does not negate the fact, that the respective fixation with violence and ideology of offenders has causes, that their acts may be a consequence of communicating and interacting with kindred spirits, and that the actors feel they are motivated, in view of the growing hostility towards foreigners in society and the accompanying discourse associated with it. Their deeds are by no means spontaneous actions: but at first glance, a lot just does not seem to fit into place.

Approaching the subject matter can only take place via mosaic-like tesserae, and we are left with a diffuse sense of discomfort. Public safety is at risk in Western democracies, where up until now the principle applied, that by and large people had a good quality of life and enjoyed living here. The politically motivated commitment of the perpetrator feeds off of hackneyed, outdated racist ideas, feelings of superiority and a wish to eliminate people. We observe that we are confronted by people who wish to kill for the white race, who correlate their view of the world with Adolf Hitler’s and see a route for overcoming their personal grievances through terrorism, and for expressing their hatred with force. Their basic motive is a militant hatred of foreigners: in the first instance, they wish to hurt an ethnic minority in their

¹¹ See as an exception Daniel Koehler: *Right-Wing Terrorism in the twenty-first Century. The ‘National Socialist Underground’ and the history of terror from the Far-Right in Germany*, London/New York 2017.

¹² Musharbash, Yassin: *Die neue al-Qaida. Innenansichten eines lernenden Netzwerkes*, Cologne 2006, p. 211.

own country to the core and by proxy society as a whole. It is precisely their choice of victims which differentiates right-wing terrorists from other forms of terrorism—from left-wing terrorism, which is directed against symbols of capitalism and the “big-wig state” and from Islamic fundamentalism, which sets its sights on the West and “followers of other religions.”

1.2 Emotionally Charged—The Question of “Why”

The researcher of risk, Nassim Nicholas Taleb cuts straight to the chase with my own motivation to write this book in his global bestseller: “We wish to not merely just survive uncertainty, not merely just escape again. We wish to survive uncertainty completely unharmed and what is more – like a certain class of belligerent Roman stoic – to have the last word. The question is: How will we succeed not only to comprehend what we cannot see, cannot explain, taming it, dominating it, perhaps even subduing it?”¹³ A strategic and international competency will be required if we wish to succeed with this—and in good time. After all, terrorism finalises a meticulously prepared act. Its apparent unpredictability stirs up our enlightened system of values.

People who can no longer be reasoned within a civil and harmonious manner, wish to do the Western society they live in one last disservice. Whenever people kill for lust or revenge, simply randomly, we call them murderers or say they are running amok (*in a killing frenzy* or *a killing spree*). Murderers killing people according to a plan, based on political convictions, connected to heroic self-aggrandisement, are called terrorists. We ask ourselves instinctively: How could this happen, that an obviously sick idea has been realised? What subtext are such deeds based upon? Are we dealing with a destructive or a revolutionary impulse? Can any traces be found in the social setting? Generally: What could society have done in order to prevent it? Why did the mechanisms of an early-warning system not take hold in the social context? Why did security officials not intervene in good time? At the same time the camera, often craving the sensational, shows the extent of despair and destruction.¹⁴ This corresponds to the mentality of gaping onlookers in society, based on curiosity for the sensational. We already speak cynically of “Terrortainment” in the media. Reporting on terrorism has traits of media hysteria, with strong

¹³Nassim Nicholas Taleb: *Anti-Fragilität. Anleitung für eine Welt, die wir nicht verstehen*, Munich 2014, p. 21.

¹⁴Cf. Michael König: *Poetik des Terrors. Politisch motivierte Gewalt in der Gegenwartsliteratur*, Bielefeld 2015, p. 9.

commercial traits. In other words: “Terrorism is an emotionally-charged and fashionable subject.”¹⁵

Why does terrorism appal us so greatly? After all, the probability of falling victim to an act of terrorism is still small. There are a number of approaches to explain this:

- We divide people up into either “entirely normal” or “emotionally disturbed”. Extremes fascinate us in particular.
- We enjoy puzzling over implications in the social environment, sensing decadence and moral degeneration.
- Discussing political motivation captivates us, generally concerning the sub-text, clearly hidden behind deeds planned well in advance.
- We scrutinise the emphasis on personal grievance and excessive political radicalisation in the perpetrator.
- We mourn the victims, whose lives were arbitrarily and abruptly cut short.
- We think of an appropriate commemoration, reflect on the question of an appropriate culture of remembrance.
- It becomes clear, that the State and Society are not perfect, and that they must recognise the warning signals earlier in order to prevent such acts in future.
- We discuss whether the public reactions as a first step were appropriate for the severity of the occasion, and whether preventative measures have been applied in the longer term, as our next step.

The degree and type of terrorism say something about the current state of our society. Perhaps the special attraction is based precisely on decoding the message behind it and developing a counter-strategy.

1.3 Right-Wing Terrorism Is Neglected in Public Perception

In the eyes of the public, Islamic Fundamentalists play the central role as a threat today and dominate reporting as regards terrorism. Al-Qaeda and IS appeal explicitly to perpetrating Lone Wolf Terrorist acts and acknowledge corresponding assaults—irrespective of whether connections really existed. Much has been written regarding the motive, radicalisation processes and the

¹⁵Peter Waldmann: *Terrorismus, Provokation der Macht*, Munich 1998, p. 9.

danger for our liberal society emanating from Islamic terrorists, and at great length, which is also entirely justified.

Right-wing terrorists, such as the National Socialist Underground (NSU) in Germany, on the other hand, appear to be a footnote. A public, sustained, debate has not been carried out by the same means. There are studies on hand, according to which single actors with right-wing extremist leanings have killed more people than those with Islamic motives. Yet Islamic Fundamentalism is the centre of attention, as it represents a larger threat context.¹⁶

A new dimension was presented to the global public on 22 July 2011, as peaceful Norway received a blow to its very core. Exactly 5 years later, on 22 July 2016, a similar pattern of right-wing terrorism recurred in Munich: the meticulous planning, expedited in the virtual sphere, the targeted choice of victims, the same assault weapon of a Glock 17 and the racist reference. The Indian intellectual Pankaj Mishra was not alone in realising the clear parallels here. He considers “Heirs of Nihilism” and “related spirits” to be at work. Breivik was “the first mass murderer spawned by the Internet [...]”. For his part, he inspired the German-Iranian teenager.¹⁷ The teenager concerned here was 18-year-old David Sonboly, called Ali Sonboly Hamedani at birth in Munich and whilst growing up there. This act of violence turned everything in Germany on its head. Everything about him seemed to be so unusual, that he apparently evaded any classification. The officials were simply not prepared for this type of terrorism and did not consider the decisive details during their investigations.

In order to look into the case of “Sonboly” more closely and its significance, we must also observe what terrorism in general contributes in this day and age. There are overlaps between the groups of assailants, but also large differences, which cannot be disregarded. Terrorist attacks are calculated to attract maximum attention in real time—including rash judgements and hysterical reactions. These components unleash a special effect in the era of Facebook, Twitter etc. This includes the possibility of subsequent representation in literature or in film, and a media narrative is produced. A judgement made as far back as 40 years ago is equally as valid today: “Communication

¹⁶The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) based in London, a think tank for security questions, reached such a result for the period from 2000 to the end of 2014 on the basis of a Global Terrorism Database. Cf. RUSI: *Final Report Lone Actor Terrorism*, London 2016, https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201604_clat_final_report.pdf.

Indeed, as experts verify, the statistics on Lone Wolf terrorism must be enjoyed with care. Cf. Mark S. Hamm/Ramón Spaaij: “Key Issues and Research Agendas in Lone Wolf Terrorism”, in: *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38(2015) 3, p. 173.

¹⁷Pankaj Mishra: *Das Zeitalter des Zorns. Eine Geschichte der Gegenwart*, Frankfurt on Main 2017, p. 319.

is an essential constituent part of the terrorist's act of violence: The terrorist achieves nothing alone, publicity on the other hand everything."¹⁸ Said differently: publicity is the oxygen of terrorists.

There is no doubt: The phenomenon of terror is en vogue and reached a global scale a long time ago. If an assault takes place, political decision-makers express solidarity with and empathy for one another, promising to stand shoulder to shoulder in a "fight against terrorism". Whoever speaks of terrorism today, has the global event of 11 September 2001 in mind, thinks of the most terrifying events for example in Brussels or Paris, where terrorist networks made brutal strikes. Or of the "annus horribilis" (*year of horror*) in 2016, when attacks using a truck on the most magnificent boulevard in Nice and at a Christmas market in Berlin, abruptly and without warning despatched innocent people to their death. In the meantime, these events have contributed towards an Islamic background being assumed to be behind every attack, virtually as a reflex reaction. One can assume that immediately after every strike populists crops up, assuming an assault on the West by "Islam", in order to capitalise on the simplified rhetoric of indignation.

All of this takes place in a context, wherewith reference to a quote from William Shakespeare's "Hamlet" the statement is heard everywhere, that time is out of joint. The hero of the drama the Prince of Denmark, slips ever increasingly into self-pity, until he finally seals his own fate. Are we likewise now on this same path? The sociologist Ulrich Beck coined the phrase "World Risk Society" in his global bestseller, in which the search for a lost security sets the tone. Accordingly, risks are not just real and present, but are stage-managed and exploited for political ends. With the result that anxiety and fear become the dominant emotions in life.¹⁹ This is especially true for terrorists: "They succeed in landing a double blow, firstly through physical force and then via our brains. The first blow initially attracts all the attention, the second one on the other hand often remains undetected."²⁰

An important aspect in today's emotionally charged debate on the new dimension of terror has almost come to an end: Contrary to the current excitement, terrorism in Western Europe is nothing new. In the twentieth century, waves of terrorism descended on Europe again and again from the 1970s until the middle of the 1990s. Global databases show that terrorism is on the increase worldwide, however, not in Europe. Researchers at the University of Maryland in the USA have attempted to record global terrorist

¹⁸Sepp Binder: *Terrorismus. Herausforderung und Antwort*, Bonn 1978, p. 55.

¹⁹Cf. Ulrich Beck: *Weltrisikogesellschaft. Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Sicherheit*, Frankfurt/Main 2007.

²⁰Cf. Gerd Gigerenzer: *Risiko. Wie man die richtigen Entscheidungen trifft*, Munich 2013, p. 22f.

attacks since 1970. Terrorist attacks are included in their “Global Terrorism Database” with one precondition: A non-governmental organisation as the protagonist must intentionally exercise force against people or objects, or at least threaten to do so, in order to achieve political, religious or social goals.²¹

There is or there were a multitude of terrorist or separatist organisations: the IRA (*Irish Republican Army*) in Northern Ireland, proclaiming to be Catholic, the Basque separatist Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA—Basque language for the Basque Homeland and Liberty), the left-wing extremist Red Army Faction (RAF) in the Federal Republic of Germany, the communist Red Brigades, the neo-fascist Ordine Nuovo in Italy as well as many other non-European terrorist cells. These groups questioned the structures of their respective countries and were in part actively or secretly supported by the populace. A look at the 1970s and 1980s shows that there were even more victims being mourned at that time than nowadays.²² Terrorist attacks by the IRA alone amassed at least 3,500 human victims over 30 years. Right-wing terrorism plays a comparatively modest role in the consideration of terrorism during the post war years of the twentieth century. This has now suddenly changed, particularly as the “success” of terrorism is not measured by the number of victims killed, maimed or injured. The attention which a terrorist attack receives is one important and valid criterion.

1.4 The National Socialist Underground (NSU) as an Early Warning

The undetected actions of the National Socialist Underground (NSU) may serve as the start of a new dimension of right-wing terrorism in Germany. Murders by the small NSU cell were however dismissed for years as apolitical criminality, and the surviving dependents of victims were even suspected. Three far-right extremists Uwe Mundlos, Uwe Böhnhardt and Beate Zschäpe lived in the shadows for at least 13 years, from 1998 to 2011, and murdered at least ten people during this period—nine migrants and a female police officer. The only surviving person, Beate Zschäpe, was sentenced to lifelong imprisonment in July 2018 after a trial lasting more than 5 years. Her far-right extremist views were proven, likewise her significant contribution to the assaults. Apparently the trio primarily foresaw the face-to-face murder

²¹Cf. University of Maryland: *Global Terrorism Index 2017*. Institute for Economics & Peace, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Global%20Terrorism%20Index%202017%20%284%29.pdf>.

²²Cf. *ibid.*

of foreigners, according to the motto “actions not words”. Over and above this, numerous bank robberies and attacks using explosives were able to be attributed to the terrorists. There were no letters claiming responsibility. In a film which was unearthed later, the criminals make fun of their crimes in a scornful and cynical manner, and also spoke of a “network of comrades”.²³ The German security agencies and secret services looked on, albeit watching carefully, without acting. There were no early-warning indications of right-wing terrorism, although this was maintained by politicians. The Home Secretary of the Federal Republic of Germany at that time, Hans-Peter Friedrich praised the intelligence services only a few months before the NSU became public knowledge as an “indispensable early-warning system,” “performing good and valuable work.”²⁴

The intelligence service’s report stated: “In 2010 we were not able to determine any far-right terrorist structures either.”²⁵ Whilst the murderous trio had a large support network throughout the whole of Germany, numbering up to 200 people, who provided weapons and apartments, for example, helping them out logistically and financially. The murders were carried out throughout the whole of Germany, from Rostock via Dortmund down to Munich. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to speak of an isolated terrorist trio. The domestic intelligence services painted an extremely unhappy picture. A massive loss of trust in the establishment arose after it became public knowledge that files had been destroyed, computer files had been manipulated by officials, especially in some of the Intelligence Service’s regional state offices.²⁶

The NSU terrorists were apparently influenced by the single actor John Ausonius, who had to take the stand in a trial in 2018 for a murder in Frankfurt 26 years earlier. The Swede born as Wolfgang Alexander John Zaugg with German-Swiss roots had attracted attention at the start of the 1990s because of a series of murders of immigrants in Sweden. The Swedish media called him “Laserman”, as he used a laser aiming device installed on a sawn-off rifle

²³The 15 min long video consists of sequences from the cartoon series “The Pink Panther”, in which original exposures of victims and sites of attacks as well as television extracts and newspaper cuttings were pasted over the series of attacks. By using the Pink Panther cartoon figure, the assailants are celebrated, victims and investigative authorities are ridiculed. There is a threat at the end, announcing further attacks. This is carried out with a promise typical for the closing credits of the series “Today is not just any day, I will return, no question”. The DVDs were clearly stored for several years in the NSU activists’ apartment building and should have been sent at a specified time to certain institutions, media outlets and organisations (cf. Petra Bernhardt: “Terrorbilder”, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 66 (2016) 24–25, p. 8).

²⁴Cf. with Olaf Sundermeyer original documents: *Rechter Terror in Deutschland*, Munich 2012, p. 253.

²⁵German Federal Ministry of the Interior (ed.): *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2010*, Berlin 2011.

²⁶Cf. Olaf Sundermeyer: *Rechter Terror in Deutschland*, Munich 2012, p. 253.