

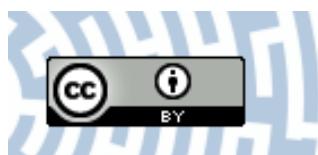


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UTØYA – CHRISTCHURCH – HALLE. RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS’ TERRORISM

KAROLINA WOJTASIK¹

ABSTRACT

The article deals with three terrorist attacks of right-wing extremists: in Norway (2011), New Zealand (2019) and Germany (2019). First, the modus operandi of perpetrators was shown and the course of each attack was analyzed. It was indicated what tactics the attackers used and why it was or was not effective. Secondly, the ideological background and motivations of the perpetrators were shown. It was possible to analyze the manifestos that the perpetrators left, and thus their way of thinking, their ideologies, and the purposes of organizing the attacks. Thirdly, issues related to the publicizing of the attacks by the perpetrators were shown. The goal of the article is to show that radical ideology of right-wing extremists (expressed in manifestos) leads to tragedies. In analyzed cases radical appointment of the perpetrators caused three deadly attacks. The article shows that the radical actions are preceded by radical speech, expressions, manifestos. The

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second goal is to pay attention to hate speech (also expressed in manifestos), which is just as dangerous as bullets or improvised explosive devices. The third goal is to show how the attackers used acts of terror to spread the ideologies to which they were devoted.

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INTRODUCTION

The 32-year-old Norwegian, Anders Breivik, constructed the improvised explosive device (IED), which was detonated in the center of Oslo, Norway (8 people were killed), and then carried out a mass execution of young people on the island of Utøya, killed 69 people there, then called the emergency number, informed about the situation, and surrendered to the anti-terrorists who came to the island. He organized the attacks for ideological reasons. The 29-year-old Australian, Brenton Tarrant, opened fire on the participants of the Friday prayers at the Al Noor Mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, killed 43 people, and then attacked at Linwood Mosque, where he killed 7 people. The same day he was arrested by the police. He also organized the attacks for ideological reasons. A 27-year-old armed German, Stephan Balliet, tried to enter the synagogue in Halle, where 50 people prayed. When it turned out that he was unable to get into the building, he started shooting at random people: 2 people were killed and 2 were injured. The attacker drove away, but after a pursuit he was caught by the police. His motivations were connected with far-right ideology.

These are descriptions of three terrorist attacks related to right-wing extremism. They are characterized by the ruthlessness of the perpetrators and a relatively large number of victims. Although (only) two people were killed in the last attack, if the armed and determined attacker had managed to enter the synagogue, the number of victims would have been much higher. The perpetrators were ideologically motivated. Importantly, every

attacker understood the importance of publicity and the media, which is why they planned their activities so that information about them and their crimes would not leave the forefront of news programs for a long time, and would be permanently recorded in human memory. Although they are not the only terrorist attacks of an extremist nature, they were chosen to show how the attackers used the act of terror to spread the ideology they profess.

European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2019 in the section devoted to contemporary trends says: “The number of arrests linked to right-wing terrorism remained relatively low but increased for the third year in a row. Right-wing extremists prey on fears of perceived attempts to Islamicise society and loss of national identity. The violent right-wing extremist scene is very heterogeneous across EU Member States”.² The chapter on right-wing extremism noted: “While the vast majority of right-wing extremist groups across the EU have not resorted to violence, they nevertheless help entrench a climate of fear and animosity against minority groups. Such a climate, built on xenophobia, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic and anti-immigration sentiments, may lower the threshold for some radicalised individuals to use violence against persons and property of minority groups”.³ Unfortunately, the path from radicalization to violence turns out to be short, as demonstrated by examples of terrorist attacks prepared by right-wing extremists. Moreover, in a globalized world, sending information and making views public is very easy. Technological progress and the development of the Internet, as well as the fact that access to modern technologies is associated with a smaller and smaller financial outlay, have caused that transferring information and propaganda has never been so easy and so cheap before. After all, terrorism is “exerting political influence through the unlawful use of force – coercion or violence … based on willful intimidation and manipulation; achieving political goals by creating acts of violence with a threat atmosphere, and obstructing the functioning of a hostile social system, and forcing decisions as well as opponent’s actions through the drastic tactics of accomplished facts or blackmail”.⁴ The danger

² Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2019*, 2019, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2019-te-sat>, p. 6 (accessed: 10.02.2020).

³ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

⁴ T. Białek, *Terroryzm: manipulacja strachem*, Warszawa 2005, p. 151.

from right-wing extremists is rising and there are new forms of radicalization. Even the crimes differ from past attacks, livestreams giving them the feel of a macabre reality TV show.

THE ATTACK IN NORWAY IN 2011

Anders Behring Breivik⁵ (in 2017 he changed the name to Fjotolf Hansen) was a member of the Progress Party; he came from a well-off family and lived in the capital of Norway. In his youth he had minor disputes with the law, he was not admitted to military service, and after 21 he worked in a large corporation. At the age of 23, he began planning an attack. He considered various assassination options, planned details, checked various scenarios and collected resources and weapons. Breivik planned an explosion in the center of Oslo and a shootout on Utøya Island, 40 kilometers away. The bombing was planned in the district where government buildings were situated. The attacker left and then detonated a car bomb about 200 meters from the building (Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Justice and the Police). The strength of the explosion did not cause the building to collapse (which was Breivik's goal), but fourteen surrounding buildings were damaged, and all glass panes fell out of the building of the prime minister's headquarters and out of the headquarters of Ministries of Petroleum and Energy as well as Trade and Industry situated opposite. The streets were covered with glass and debris, and the explosion was heard at a distance of 7 kilometers. As a result of the explosion of the IED, 8 people lost their lives, 209 were injured, including 12 injured seriously. Government administration buildings are a hard target; however, the attacker acted quickly and thoughtfully, and above all, he was wearing a police-like uniform, which lulled the vigilance of security services, and, moreover, he did not drive the car directly in front of the building. The second stage of the attack was a shooting on the island of Utøya, where the ruling party's (Labor Party) youth camp took place, with about 600 people on the island. Breivik arrived there in a costume reminiscent of a policeman's uniform, and immediately after disembarking he began shooting. He circled the island, carrying out further executions, and then surrendered to the anti-terrorists without a fight. He did not differentiate between the victims, everyone who was within the shot automatically became the target. The attacker mainly

⁵ He is also known by his pseudonym, Andrew Berwick.

shot in the head, usually twice, making sure that the victim was dead. 69 people were killed on the island, 110 were injured, including 55 injured seriously; the youngest victim was 14 years old. The location chosen was a soft target – unarmed and carefree youth spending their free time; there was no professional security on the island, and the place was known as calm and safe, even idyllic. In addition, the attacker wore a uniform resembling police clothes, so young people thought that he was someone who came to help. The attacks were aimed at the political decision-making center and the state's elite. There were children of politicians, collaborators, and members of the ruling party at the camp. The massacre organized at the camp of the ruling party's youth also had a clear symbolic dimension. Dozens of young and innocent people died during the shooting. Breivik was declared criminally sane and legally responsible for the killing of 77 people on 22 July 2011. He was sentenced to 21 years in prison, but with a "preventive detention" clause that can extend his time in jail as long as he is deemed a threat to society. It is unlikely he will ever be released.

THE ATTACK IN NEW ZEALAND IN 2019

Brenton Tarrant, a 28-year-old man from Grafton, New South Wales, Australia killed 51 people and injured 49. The attacks began at the Al Noor Mosque in Riccarton, a suburb of Christchurch, New Zealand and continued at Linwood Islamic Centre. The gunman live-streamed the first attack on Facebook Live. The gunman chose Friday to attack and began shooting worshippers during the Friday Prayer, which is one of the most exalted Islamic rituals and one of Islam's confirmed obligatory acts. That is why the Al Noor Mosque was very crowded; between 300 and 500 people were inside the mosque at the time of the shooting. Tarrant arrived at the Al Noor Mosque and began shooting worshippers at around 1:40 p.m.; he spent there about six minutes. He approached the front entrance to the mosque, and then he probably was greeted by one of the worshippers, who said "Hello, brother" and was the first victim to be killed in the attacks. Then he entered and started shooting worshipers indiscriminately for several minutes inside the mosque. He killed three people near the entrance and much more inside a prayer hall. He used a strobe-light attached to his weapon to disorient victims. During the attack one of the worshippers, Naeem Rashid, tried to stop him, but unsuccessfully; he was shot and later

died from his injuries. The gunman fired indiscriminately at worshippers from close range, shooting many of his victims multiple times. He then left the mosque and fired on people outside. He returned to his vehicle and retrieved another weapon, then came back to the mosque and opened the fire again on those who were wounded or unable to escape. The gunman left the mosque once again and killed a woman lying wounded on the footpath. He then returned to his car and fled the scene to the music of "Fire" by The Crazy World of Arthur Brown, in which the singer proclaims: "I am the god of hellfire!", heading for Linwood Islamic Centre, which is situated 5 kilometers from Al Noor Mosque.

The second attack began at about 1:55 p.m., but Tarrant was not able to find the entrance to the mosque and started shooting people outside and through a window; in this way, he alerted worshippers inside. Abdul Aziz Wahabzada was sent by the imam to stop the attacker, but he did not succeed: the gunman entered the mosque and continued firing. The scenario was similar – he did not choose the victims, everyone who was inside the mosque was a target. After several minutes Tarrant drove away. The gunman was arrested 21 minutes after the first emergency call. Police stopped the suspect on his way to a third location, which was probably the mosque in Ashburton or the An-Nur Child Care Centre in Hornby, Christchurch.

THE ATTACK IN GERMANY IN 2019

The Halle synagogue shooting took place on 9 October 2019 in Halle, Germany. The attacker was a 27-year-old German, Stephan Balliet. The attack started around noon. He tried to enter the synagogue in Halle during the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur (also known as the Day of Atonement), which is the holiest day of the year in Judaism. Jews often spend most of that day in synagogue services. The attacker live-streamed himself trying to enter the synagogue, he shot at the door's lock many times and set off an IED, but was not able to destroy the lock and enter. Then the gunman tried to enter the synagogue yard, firing shots and trying to ignite IEDs. He did not succeed and resigned. There were about fifty people in the synagogue that time. Near the entrance to the Jewish cemetery, next to the synagogue, the attacker killed a woman who told him off for making noise. He also tried to kill a man who stopped his vehicle to help the shot woman but his weapon failed to fire. Next the attacker drove to a nearby kebab shop

and opened fire through the front window; his homemade guns repeatedly jammed and failed to fire. He killed one person and fled. The attacker was arrested the same day in Zeitz, about 50 kilometers from Halle. The gunman admitted to a far-right, anti-Semitic motive. The country barely avoided a massacre of Jews at a house of worship. The attacker chose the symbolic target very carefully. “It would not be hysterical to describe this as a dangerous escalation – and an unacceptable situation: Jews in Germany must fear for their lives once again”.⁶

MEDIA, MANIFESTOS AND PUBLICITY

Breivik described his motivations for organizing the assassination in a manifesto entitled “2083 – A European Declaration of Independence”. The terrorist attack was to draw attention to the problem of Islamization of Europe and give adequate media coverage. The document has over 1,500 pages; Breivik described in detail the preparations for the attack and presented his vision of the most serious threats to Europe: the expansion of Islam, cultural Marxism (this is the name that he used to describe a political system based on tolerance and political correctness), multiculturalism, and feminism. The document, which the terrorist posted online on the day of the attack, has still been available on the Internet in 2020. The document was sent by email to 1,003 people about 90 minutes before the bomb explosion in Oslo. The document describes years of preparation to attacks. The author described planning and actions he undertook to make his attack, the problems he faced, and how he resolved them. For example, he rented a Volkswagen Crafter van, which was small enough and driving it did not require a truck driving license, but at the same time was big enough to be loaded with 1,160 kilograms of ammonium nitrate/fuel oil explosive (ANFO). He also explained that he found a farm which he used as a cover-up for a fake farming company buying fertilizer (he bought 3 tons of it to produce explosives, and 3 tons of a harmless substance to avoid suspicion). He also copied fragments from the Unabomber Manifesto, but replaced the words “leftists” with his own term “cultural Marxists”, and

⁶ DER SPIEGEL Staff, *Deadly attack exposes lapses in German security apparatus*, “Spiegel International”, 11 October 2019, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/far-right-terrorism-in-germany-shooting-exposes-lapses-in-security-apparatus-a-1291075.html> (accessed: 10.02.2020).

“black people” with “Muslims”. Breivik’s manifesto also expressed support for far-right groups (e.g. English Defence League) and paramilitaries (e.g. the Scorpions).

If the manifesto had simply been posted online, it would not have gained publicity or readers, and, very likely, no one but the author would have read it. Decorated with the cross of St. George, the document is a collection of texts in which Breivik lays out his version of history and condemns multiculturalism and tolerance, which he calls cultural Marxism. In addition, the document calculates the number of “traitors” and stigmatizes government policies favorable to migration. Breivik expressed his dreams of a homogeneous society, closed to outsiders, and prophesied that in 2083 Europe will free itself from Muslims.

This peculiar work can hardly be considered fascinating to read, the author masks the gaps in his knowledge with a word-of-mouth, and bends historical facts to his own vision of the world. There are many similar documents on the web, nobody reads them, but a loud and bloody attack changed the situation completely. The name Breivik has become inscribed in the consciousness of public opinion, and has become synonymous with right-wing extremism and senseless violence.

The bomber struck a symbolic goal – the government district and the seat of the prime minister – but the attack on the island of Utøya caused much more excitement. Nine years after the attacks in Norway, Breivik’s manifesto is still available. Moreover, Breivik used his trial to propagate the ideas he supports. “Breivik did not relate his strategy to the classical goals of a criminal trial at all, but intended to manipulate the trial for his own, idiosyncratic purposes.

Before carrying out his attacks, Breivik was aware that a trial could provide him with a stage to the world. He wrote in his manifesto: “If you for some reason survive the operation, you will be apprehended and arrested. This is the point where most heroic Knights would call it a day. However, this is not the case for a Justiciar Knight. Your arrest will mark the initiation of the propaganda phase. Your trial offers you a stage to the world”.⁷

⁷ B. de Graaf, L. van der Heide, S. Wanmaker, D. Weggemans, *The Anders Behring Breivik Trial: Performing Justice, Defending Democracy*, ICCT, <https://web.archive.org/web/20141022103333/http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-De-Graaf-et-al-The-Anders-Behring-Breivik-Trial-August-2013.pdf>, p.16 (accessed: 12.02.2020).

Breivik did not try to “win” the trial in terms of avoiding imprisonment, but used the trial to win over more sympathizers for his mission. He wanted to generate a “maximum amount of sympathizers and supporters”.⁸ Brenton Tarrant reports in his manifesto, titled *The Great Replacement*, that he was in particular inspired by Anders Behring Breivik. He also suggested that he had “brief contact” with Breivik, who was, however, in prison at that time, so it is unclear how it was possible or if it was true.

Brenton Tarrant live-streamed the first 17 minutes of this attack on Facebook Live. The recording is not available now in 2020, but just after the attack the film was even available on YouTube. Moments before the shooting Tarrant played several songs: “The British Grenadiers”, a military marching song, and “Remove Kebab”, a Serb nationalist song praising Radovan Karadžić, who was found guilty of genocide against Bosnian Muslims. As mentioned above, Tarrant also wrote a manifesto. Minutes before the attacks began, the manifesto was emailed to more than thirty recipients, including New Zealand’s Prime Minister’s office and several media outlets, and links were shared on Twitter and 8chan.⁹

Tarrant’s 74-page manifesto’s title, *The Great Replacement*, is a reference to the “Great Replacement” and the “White Genocide” conspiracy theories. These theories “focus on the premise that white people are at risk of being wiped out through migration, miscegenation, or violence. This sort of thinking is not new, and concepts which amplify ethnic and cultural differences between whites and non-whites have long been leveraged to justify conflict in supremacist circles. However, recently these concepts have come to dominate the ideology of extreme-right groups, providing the ideological glue which ties together an increasingly cohesive, networked and transnational extreme-right”.¹⁰ Moreover, extreme-right groups use a

⁸ A. Breivik, 2083 – *A European Declaration of Independence*, University of St Andrews – University Library, 2011, <https://sta.rl.talis.com/items/0F43820E-7D25-0BBF-2CA4-5E3A16D5CD46.html>, p 1104 (accessed: 12.02.2020).

⁹ 8kun, previously called 8chan, Infinitechan or Infinitychan, is an imageboard website composed of user-created message boards. An owner moderates each board, with minimal interaction from site administration.

¹⁰ J. Davey, J. Ebner, ‘*The Great Replacement’: the violent consequences of mainstreamed extremism*, London 2019, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Great-Replacement-The-Violent-Consequences-of-Mainstreamed-Extremism-by-ISD.pdf>, p. 4 (accessed: 10.02.2020).

range of methods to broadcast the Great Replacement theory, including publishing dehumanizing racist memes, distorting and misrepresenting demographic data, and using debunked science.

Tarrant wrote: "If there is one thing I want you to remember from these writings, it's that the birthrates must change. Even if we were to deport all Non-Europeans from our lands tomorrow, the European people would still be spiraling into decay and eventual death. Every day we become fewer in number, we grow older, we grow weaker. In the end we must return to replacement fertility levels, or it will kill us. We are experiencing an invasion on a level never seen before in history. Millions of people pouring across our borders, legally. Invited by the state and corporate entities to replace the White people who have failed to reproduce, failed to create the cheap labour, new consumers and tax base that the corporations and states need to thrive. This crisis of mass immigration and sub-replacement fertility is an assault on the European people that, if not combated, will ultimately result in the complete racial and cultural replacement of the European people".¹¹

In the manifesto there are expressed several anti-immigrant issues, hate speech against migrants, and white supremacist rhetoric. In chapter entitled "Europe for Europeans", Tarrant calls for all non-European immigrants in Europe who are claimed to be "invading his land" to be removed; "the invaders must be removed from European soil, regardless from where they came or when they came. Roma, African, Indian, Turkish, Semitic or other. If they are not of our people, but live in our lands, they must be removed".¹² The manifesto displays neo-Nazi symbols such as the Black Sun and Odin's Cross. Tarrant denies being a Nazi, describing himself as an "ethno-nationalist", "eco-fascist", and a "kebab removalist".¹³ As Taylor Lorenz reports in "The Atlantic", "[s]ignificant portions of the manifesto appear to be an elaborate troll, written to prey on the mainstream media's worst tendencies. As the journalist Robert Evans noted, »This manifesto is a trap ... laid for journalists searching for the meaning behind this horrific crime. There is truth in there, and valuable clues to the shooter's radicalization, but

¹¹ B. Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, n.d., https://www.ilfoglio.it/userUpload/The_Great_Replacementconvertito.pdf, pp. 4–5 (accessed: 10.02.2020).

¹² B. Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹³ It is a reference to a meme exalting the genocide of Bosnian Muslims that occurred during the Bosnian War.

it is buried beneath a great deal of, for lack of a better word, ‘shitposting’¹⁴. *Shitposting* is a slang term used to describe the act of posting trollish and usually ironic content designed to derail a conversation or elicit a strong reaction from people who aren’t in on the joke.”¹⁴ Tarrant also claimed to have read the manifesto by Dylann Roof.¹⁵

Stephan Balliet streamed the Halle attack online; he used the action camera on his helmet. The footage was 35 minutes long and it was streamed to the gaming website Twitch. Five users watched the livestream as it unfolded and 2,200 others viewed the video shortly thereafter. At least initially, no one seems to have reported the video to the police.

The footage shows the attacker showing his weapons and speaking anti-Semitic phrases in, which is significant, poor English. He comments on his fails, saying to the viewers: “At least I’ve proven how worthless improvised weapons are”. As he was not able to enter to the synagogue, he remarked: “One hundred percent fail”, and when his IED malfunctioned, he called himself “a loser”. He also shot his own tire by accident, and was not able to fire his gun. The attacker probably planned the attack differently. Subsequent defeats intensified his anger and frustration. Instead of a film similar to Tarrant’s, his video was a record of ineptitude and poor preparation. Therefore, he attacked a random woman who told him off and, for lack of another purpose, started shooting at the kebab shop. Balliet also left a 17-page manifesto. According to it, Balliet’s main aims were: “1. Prove the viability of improvised weapons. 2. Increase the morale of other suppressed

¹⁴ T. Lorenz, *The Shooter’s Manifesto Was Designed to Troll. The violent rhetoric was written for an audience*, “TheAtlantic.com”, 15 March 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2019/03/the-shooters-manifesto-was-designed-to-troll/585058/> (accessed: 1.02.2020).

¹⁵ Dylann Roof – an American white supremacist and mass murderer convicted for perpetrating the Charleston church shooting on 17 June 2015 in South Carolina, USA. At the age of 21, Roof killed nine people, all African Americans, including a senior pastor and state senator Clementa C. Pinckney. He confessed that he prepared the shooting in hopes of igniting a race war. Three days after the shooting, a website titled “The Last Rhodesian” was discovered and later confirmed to be owned by Roof. On the website there were photos of Roof posing with symbols of white supremacy and neo-Nazism, and a manifesto in which he outlined his views regarding blacks.

Whites by spreading the combat footage. 3. Kill as many anti-Whites as possible, Jews preferred. Bonus: Don't die".¹⁶

There are already over two hundred definitions of terrorism. Walter Laqueur, when asked by a journalist why he avoided defining terrorism, replied as follows: "For fifty years people have been trying unsuccessfully to understand what terrorism is, because it is a phenomenon that took different forms depending on the place and era. What do Russian revolutionaries of the late nineteenth century, or nineteenth-century anarchists, have in common with Al-Qaeda? Terrorism is the use of violence or the threat of using violence to achieve certain political or ideological goals. Nothing more can be said. Terrorism is like pornography: it is impossible to define it exactly, but if you see the act of terrorism, you know what it is".¹⁷

Laqueur summarized thousands of dissertations on difficulties in defining terrorism, which is a multi-threaded issue, very diverse, sometimes contradictory in its various manifestations. For the purposes of the following considerations, the subsequent definition is cited as the most comprehensive, broad and adequate to the subject: "Terrorism is the exertion of political influence through the unlawful use of force – coercion or violence, which is associated with the violation of elementary social norms and rules of political struggle established in a given circle, on intentional intimidation and manipulation".¹⁸

After Balliet's attack, main German media said about *a new quality* of an attacker, "who draws his ideological inspiration from anti-Semitic, racist and misogynistic forums online and takes cues from mass murderers like Anders Breivik in Norway or Brenton Tarrant in New Zealand. This new type of terrorist may even feel like part of a larger global movement that has expectations of him".¹⁹ This is why when Balliet realized that his plan to commit mass murder was not going to work, he felt obliged to apologize to his virtual audience. He was one of these young adults who grew up with the Internet and became used to publicizing in social media; he felt obliged to share something special to become famous and earn a hero

¹⁶ S. Balliet, *Halle: Die Bekenner-PDFs vom Amokläufer Stephan Balliet*, 10 October 2019, <https://www.docdroid.net/oEfJ0a3/manifesto.pdf#page=14>, p. 13 (accessed: 30.01.2020).

¹⁷ T. Białek, *Terroryzm...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–145.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 151.

¹⁹ DER SPIEGEL Staff, *Deadly attack...*, *op. cit.* .

status among a group of people similar to him: radicalized and feeding on anger, disappointment, and conspiracy theories. "They were looking for »the light of the camera« and wanted to »appear in one process – like pop stars for the right-wing scene worldwide«".²⁰ That is a new quality.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Although modus operandi, skills and the final number of victims differ, the goal of terrorists was the same: to reach the largest and widest audience possible.
2. The perpetrators of all analyzed attacks wrote and published manifestos that on the one hand expressed their views, and on the other hand guaranteed that even if they died during the attack, their motivations would be clear to everyone.
3. The perpetrators of the attacks presented extreme views and proposed violent solutions. They did not go back by killing innocent people, just to manifest their disagreement with the current status quo.
4. Manifestos published by terrorists clearly show that radical ideology can lead to tragic events.

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²⁰ S. Peters, P. Gensing, *Neue Qualität und neue Tätertypen*, "Tagesschau.de", 30 September 2019, <https://www.tagesschau.de/investigativ/ndr/luebcke-rechtsterrorismus-101.html> (accessed: 1.02.2020).

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