



Militant Accelerationism Origins and Developments in Germany



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Monitoring
Terrorism

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④ Executive Summary

Background

- Far-right extremist militant accelerationism aims to bring about the collapse of liberal, democratic, capitalist societies. In order to accomplish this, they seek to accelerate existing conflicts or perceived processes of societal decay. They attempt to do this through attempts to manipulate public discourse or through terrorist acts.
- The current wave of militant accelerationism emerged in 2011 on the online forum **Iron March** out of internal disputes and discussions among far-right extremists regarding strategies to achieve their goals. Within this forum, the foundations for networks of far-right extremist accelerationist groups emerged, including groups such as the Atomwaffen Division and numerous successors.
- In the second half of the 2010s, far-right extremist accelerationist groups shifted their communications to the online platform Telegram, as the platform did not regularly remove their content. The network itself as well as outside observers refer to this cluster as **Terrorgram**.
- The newsletter collection **Siege** by US Neo-Nazi James Mason, in which Mason calls for the elimination of liberal democracies by means of terrorist attacks, plays a central role for Terrorgram. On social media and especially after the “Unite the Right” demonstration in Charlottesville, USA, in 2017, the hashtag #ReadSiege spread widely, including in Germany.
- Far-right militant accelerationism has spread not only on Telegram, but also on far-right “chan” imageboards, on which the March 2019 Christchurch, New Zealand shooter posted his own ideas about accelerationism. On the “chan” boards, far-right extremists gather in looser alliances than in the Division groups on Telegram.

Developments in Germany

- Since 2018, there have been, and in some cases continue to be, at least five groupings and numerous individuals who were prepared to carry out attacks in Germany attributable to militant accelerationism.
- The 2019 far-right extremist terrorist attack in Halle, which

left two dead and two injured, is attributable to militant accelerationism.

- Authorities are investigating three defendants for “planning a serious act of violence endangering the state”. One person has already been sentenced to two years of imprisonment.

Outlook

- **Underaged perpetrators** are responsible for an increasing proportion of (prevented) attacks. There is a lack of research on the onset and course of radicalization on online platforms with respect to young people.
- The technology surrounding **3D-printed weapons** has come a long way since the 2019 Halle attack, and the far-right extremist accelerationist scene is increasingly discussing 3D-printed weapons as an alternative to conventional weapons.
- **Hostility against LGBTQI+ people** has increasingly come into focus. There must be increased investment in the protection of LGBTQI+ people.
- Telegram is increasingly intervening with moderation (albeit still in an unsystematic and inconsistent manner). Consequently, members of the Terrorgram scene are attempting to switch to alternative, decentralized messenger services.

CeMAS is following these developments with concern and will place additional emphasis on the topic of far-right terrorism in the future. The project “Digital Seismograph: Monitoring Terrorism” was founded with Senior Researcher Miro Dittrich as the project leader. The project analyzes current developments in far-right extremist terrorism with a focus on digital spaces and generates policy recommendations based on these findings. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research as well as OSINT analysis allows for a better understanding of the current expressions of far-right extremist terrorism.





⑦ Militant Accelerationist Terrorism

The start of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 saw a decline in activity among far-right militant accelerationists. Since the summer of 2021, digital efforts in pursuit of terrorist actions have increased, and since the spring of 2022, the number of (prevented) attacks has also increased. The following section describes how the first transnational wave of militant accelerationist terrorism began and why it ended in early 2020.

The Start of the First Transnational Wave of Terror

At the end of 2018, the mood on far-right extremist imageboards began to change. The attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, USA, at the time was for the most part not accompanied by (tactical) distancing from the violence; rather, the perpetrator received praise and recognition from the imageboard users. This was also the case for the March 2019 terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand. The brutal professionalism with which the perpetrator shared his attack (with an extensive manifesto and a livestream of the attack) set a new bar for the far-right scene and spawned a wave of copycat offenders in the US (Poway, El Paso), Norway (Oslo), and Germany (Halle), who all positively referenced the Christchurch attack. Although a broad far-right terrorist subculture had already established itself on Telegram by 2019 (*Terrorgram*), the imageboard *8chan* remained the digital home of these perpetrators.

The fact that three far-right extremist terrorists had used the imageboard *8chan* to spread their propaganda within such a short period of time created public pressure which led to the website losing its digital infrastructure and being forced to go offline in August 2019. This decisively reduced the spread of far-right terrorist propaganda. Although the imageboard came back online in November 2019 under the new name *8kun*, only a small number of its original users returned. Many who were deeply rooted in the subculture had already made the jump over to Telegram. The resulting fragmentation reduced the overall size of the far-right terrorist milieu. Adherents of militant accelerationism on Telegram saw themselves as strategic leaders or “Generals” of the movement – but according to their own accounts, they lacked the masses (“foot soldiers”) needed to implement their plans. Those masses had been available to them on the imageboards. Although several thwarted terrorist attacks can be attributed to members

8 Militant Accelerationist Terrorism

of Terrorgram – a member of the Feuerkrieg Division in Bavaria in 2020 and a member of Totenwaffen in Brandenburg in 2022 – the overwhelming majority of those in the subculture who had actually attempted to commit terrorist attacks had their digital home on the imageboards.

9 Definitions and History

Definitions

Far-right Extremism and Far-right Terrorism

To define far-right extremist terrorism, two basic definitions must come first: that of the political right and that of far-right extremism. A common distinction still used in far-right extremism and terrorism research comes from Italian jurist and legal philosopher Norberto Bobbio (cf. Ravndal & Bjørge, 2018; Salzborn, 2020). Bobbio (2006) distinguished the political left and the political right using the equality-inequality axis. While the left strives to minimize forms of inequality, the right sees inequality as inevitable and natural, or at least immutable. On this basis, far-right extremism can be separated from the moderate right in terms of the strategies used to achieve its goals. Accordingly, far-right extremism begins with the assumption of the inequality of people and seeks to (re)establish a corresponding social and political order. Following the common definition by Hans-Gerd Jaschke, far-right extremism is understood to be:

[...] the totality of attitudes, behaviors, and actions, organized or not, that start from the racial or ethnic social inequality of people, demand ethnic homogeneity of peoples, reject the equality requirement of human rights declarations, emphasize the primacy of the community over the individual, start from the subordination of the citizen to the reason of the state, and reject the value pluralism of a liberal democracy and want to undo democratization. (Jaschke, 2001, p. 30)¹

1

This definition of far-right extremism should be distinguished from the normative research on extremism in Germany, which relies on an understanding of far-right extremism that is primarily based on the rejection of the free democratic "Basic Order" of the Federal Republic.

Far-right extremist violence can be theoretically distinguished from terrorism. Jacob Aasland Ravndal and Tore Bjørge list the following characteristics of far-right extremist terrorism (2018, p. 7):

- Selection of the target is based on far-right extremist ideas
- The attack is premeditated
- The violence is intended to trigger psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target

Far-right extremist violence differs from terrorism in that it does not have to be premeditated. This report focuses on the phenomenon of current far-right extremist militant accelerationism and, against this background, focuses primarily on their far-right terrorist ambitions, although acts of violence also play an important role within the milieu.

Far-right Extremist Online Subcultures

Far-right extremists in the US have been on the internet since the 1980s (Dietzsch & Maegerle, 1997). They understood early on that this new medium of communication presented an opportunity to reach a wider audience with their propaganda, as it came with fewer restrictions than analog spaces. For example, David Duke, a leading US far-right extremist and former “Grand Wizard” of the Ku Klux Klan, saw the internet as a vehicle for a “white” revolution. In Germany, the first professional structures were established around far-right extremist mailbox networks (Bulletin Board System, BBS) in the early 1990s, such as *Widerstand BBS* (Resistance BBS) and the *Thule-Netz* (Thule Network), which were comparable in their mode of operation to the forums that emerged later. The networks emerged out of the circle surrounding the traditionally-organized far-right extremist National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD). However, the operators of the Thule-Netz claimed to provide an organization-independent communication network for far-right extremist underground cells to avoid investigation and repression by the state (Dietzsch & Maegerle, 1997). Other far-right extremist internet presences like the *Störtebeker-Netz* (Störtebeker Network) and *Altermedia* later followed suit.

The tendencies established in internet communities during the 1980s and 1990s can still be found in current manifestations of far-right extremist online communication. In this context, it is significant that in the following decades, online spaces began to develop without any ties to formal or traditional far-right extremist organizations. These provided a venue for far-right extremist networks that operated as platform-independent online subcul-



Wake up, wake up, you German land! / Goodbye, visitor! / You spent 08 minutes in the resistance / This was your 01st time in this mailbox

Screenshot from the Thule-Netz BBS. Source: Own (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thulenetz.jpg>), „Thulenetz“, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>

tures defined by their own cultural codes (“memes”) and/or their presence on specific platforms (notably imageboards). Their origins lie in the realms of gaming, internet troll culture, and the “manosphere”, which consists of frustrated young men, male incels², and people searching for “the truth” or “the Red Pill”³ (Dittrich & Rathje, 2019). These subcultures also latched onto pre-existing digital hate cultures that had already been established on various platforms (Fielitz & Marcks, 2020, pp. 160-196).

One can find examples of digital spaces for these far-right extremist subcultures on imageboards like 4chan, 8chan/8kun, and similar boards. In contrast to their BBS predecessors from the 1980s and 1990s, today’s imageboards are characterized by the anonymity of their users and technically anchored conditions of the attention economy. Posts that attract too little attention disappear from the first page of the board on which the post is made, which rewards particularly attention-grabbing posts. Particularly on the respective /pol/ boards (short for “politically incorrect”), a transnational subculture developed around both ironic and serious far-right extremist, misogynistic, antisemitic, and misanthropic content, within which the perpetrators of the far-right extremist terrorist attacks in Poway and Buffalo had been radicalized, according to their own statements.

Far-right Extremist Militant Accelerationism

Since the 2010s at the latest, international analyses have identified phenomena within certain far-right extremist online subcultures and networks that have been described in extremist research as far-right, neo-fascist, or militant accelerationism. As a concept of political action, accelerationism aims to bring about the collapse of the social systems of liberal and capitalist societies. Central to this is the acceleration of contradictory and/or problematic social processes through discursive means, such as by propagating hardened positions on both sides of polarizing debates, or through violent means, such as terrorism, which is ultimately intended to generate system-destroying crises.

The concept of accelerationism entered the militant far-right extremist milieu via two routes. In the 1990s, British philosopher Nick Land developed a right-libertarian concept of accelerationism after reading (previously discarded) reflections on left-wing accelerationism by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari from 1972 (2019) and

2

Incel stands for “involuntary celibate”. The term was used in the 1990s by those who self-identified as such in the context of online self-help forums. In the following decades, groups of men split from these communities and used the term to develop identitarian ideas around “beta” masculinity and misogyny, cf. Dittrich and Rathje (2019).

3

The “Red Pill” is a term originating from the 1999 cyber-action film “The Matrix”, in which “taking the Red Pill” was synonymous with “choosing to see the truth”; the term has since been co-opted by certain communities in the manosphere (particularly on Reddit) to refer to the adoption of a particular misogynistic viewpoint.

incorporating his own interpretation of Marx's analysis of capitalism. In the early 2010s, Land drew attention among the nascent milieu of the far-right subculture termed the "alt-right", who developed an interest in his interpretations of the anti-egalitarian and anti-democratic concept of "neo-reaction" ("NRx") (Beauchamp, 2019; Beckett, 2017). However, his theories would ultimately achieve less significance within far-right extremism compared to an alternative conception of accelerationism.

In addition to Nick Land's work, another influence emerged in the 2010s that proved to be more formative for current forms of far-right extremist militant accelerationism: a collection of the newsletter *Siege*, written by US Neo-Nazi James Mason, in book form. Mason has been active in various neo-Nazi organizations in the US since the late 1960s and had connections with leaders like American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell and with William Pierce, author of the novel *The Turner Diaries*, which inspired the perpetrator of the 1995 far-right extremist terrorist attack in Oklahoma City. The conflicts and decisions within US far-right extremism of the 1970s also shaped Mason's views. He used his newsletter *Siege*, published between 1980 and 1986, to criticize the dominant currents of US far-right extremism and forms of action pursued at the time (Southern Poverty Law Center n.d.).

Mason used antisemitic and racist conspiracy myths concerning a "Jewish world conspiracy" that sought to carry out a "white genocide" (a concept now referred to as the "Great Replacement") using a "Zionist Occupied Government" ("ZOG"). In *Siege*, Mason painted an apocalyptic picture: the social order had become so corrupted and the condition of the "white race" so disastrous that organizational forms like the American Nazi Party and forms of action like demonstrations had become pointless to achieve their goals. In his own words, "the Jewish adversary... [had] won completely" (Mason, 1993/2015, p. 52). Progress was only possible through revolutionary means carried out by individuals ("one-man armies") and not through a mass movement. The system had to be completely destroyed in order to establish a National Socialist "New Order" (Mason, 1993/2015). In this context, Mason also advocated for violent acts from other ideological groups that would help to further the collapse of society (Southern Poverty Law Center n.d.; Sunshine, 2018). *Siege*, however, was not solely based on Mason's original ideas. Mason positively referenced the actions of Joseph Tommasi,



Cover of the fourth edition of James Mason's *Siege*, published by militant accelerationists

leader of the National Socialist Liberation Front, a group inspired by leftist groups and urban guerillas, and his efforts to manufacture chaos through terrorism in order to destabilize the US political order. In *Siege*, Mason also glorified Charles Manson, who had committed several murders in 1969 with the “Manson Family” to provoke a “race war” (Southern Poverty Law Center n.d.). The newsletter was first published as a collection in book form in 1993 and achieved cult status within certain circles of the US far-right extremist milieu.

In conclusion, militant accelerationism, when compared with other the revolutionary far-right extremist action strategies, stands in contrast to vanguard parties and coup d'états (Parker, 2020), but also in contrast to the “new right” cultural revolutions as has been propagated in Germany under the term *Metapolitik* or “metapolitics” (Brumlik, 2020). The latter is understood to mean influencing politics in the medium to long term by changing the underlying culture, for example by pushing the boundaries of accepted political speech. The Accelerationism Research Consortium, which specializes in researching far-right extremist militant accelerationism, defines the accelerationist phenomenon broadly as “a set of tactics and strategies designed to put pressure on and exacerbate latent social divisions, often through violence, thus hastening societal collapse” (Kriner, 2022).

Unlike left-wing accelerationism, far-right militant accelerationism does not concern the inherent contradictions of modern capitalist societies, but rather addresses the tendency inherent in liberalism toward the legal equality of individuals (non-white people, non-Christian people, non-heterosexual people, non-male people), which is perceived by far-right extremists as a threat and viewed as an example of social decay or even a “denigration” of a social order built on inequality, which is understood to be “natural” (Albrecht & Fielitz, 2019). To bring this “natural” order back about, the tactics of far-right militant extremism aim for the downfall of the existing (liberal and democratic) system, for example through a “race war” or civil war. This form of apocalyptic terrorism is based heavily on the far-right racist and antisemitic myths of the past few decades, i.e. “white genocide”, “*Volkstod*”, or the “Great Replacement”, as well as that of a “Jewish world conspiracy”, in order to describe who they feel is responsible for the current ills of society, and why (Berlet, 2003; Davey & Ebner, 2019; Flannery, 2016; Quent, 2019; Quent & Rathje, 2019). Rather than addressing structural constraints and societal processes as the source of the problem, as is the case in

many leftist critiques of capitalism, adherents of far-right extremist accelerationism personify these abstract features of modern society in their “anti-modern defensive struggle” (Hermann, 2020). With antisemitism and anti-feminism, they use what they view as traditional knowledge and cultural codes to justify their anti-modern attitudes and to call out those supposedly at fault (Hermann, 2020; Johannes Kiess, 2021).

Terrorgram

The brothers Pavel and Nikolai Durov founded the messenger service *Telegram* in 2013 to make it more difficult for authoritarian states, in their case Russia, to monitor online communications. Within the decade, however, the company developed additional features which enabled the platform to operate as a social media platform. For example, users on Telegram can chat not only in private conversations, but also in large public groups. Since 2015, Telegram has also enabled individuals or groups to send messages (text posts, pictures, videos, etc.) via public and private one-way channels without limits on the number of participants. These features, as well as the ability to encrypt messages in one-to-one communication, made the platform popular with far-right and jihadist groups for the dissemination of propaganda and the recruitment of new members. In addition to these functional advantages, Telegram also offered content advantages. Telegram only removed content from the platform hesitantly and unsystematically (Guhl & Davey, 2020; Manemann, 2020; Rogers, 2020).⁴ For far-right individuals and groups whose accounts were blocked or deleted on more mainstream social media platforms, Telegram offered a safe new platform that – unlike milieu-specific platforms like Gab, Gettr, VK, and Bitchute – allowed them to reach a wider audience (Rogers, 2020). The undisturbed operation of terrorist groups and the glorifications of terrorists and their acts on the platform earned these corners of Telegram the nickname *Terrorgram* (Lawrence, 2020).

4

Jihadist content has been increasingly removed since the Paris attacks in 2016, cf. Manemann (2020).

A Brief History of Far-Right Extremist Accelerationism Iron March, Divisions, and Mason’s Siege

Disputes within political groups and milieus concerning successful strategies and tactics for achieving their political goals are

extremely common, and far-right extremist groups, milieus, and online subcultures are no exception. James Mason, for example, wrote his newsletter *Siege* as part of an internal debate regarding tactics within the US far-right extremist movement in the 1970s. His criticism of demonstrations and the desire to create a mass movement, as well as his description of the state of affairs and his claim that only chaos produced by acts of violence could bring down the system, were taken up by far-right extremists in the US in the 2010s who had expressed similar criticisms of the extreme right and its strategies. In contrast to the medium-to-long-term “metapolitical” strategies of traditionally-organized far-right extremism and other members of the internet-savvy “alt-right”, other members of the far-right pressed for accelerationism on the basis that “there is no political solution” (Miller, 2020).

Within the far-right militant accelerationism of the 2010s, one can identify two trajectories, both of which are intimately linked with digital spaces. A central site for far-right militant accelerationism was the English-language internet forum *Iron March* (2011-2017). The forum brought together various militant far-right extremists who did not feel “seen” by other far-right internet forums like Stormfront, founded in 1996, or who were disappointed by the youth offerings of other far-right organizations. On the *Iron March* forum, members formed their own subculture of far-right militant accelerationism with central texts and their own set of aesthetics, like logos based on *Waffen SS* symbols and black and white skull masks (Upchurch, 2021). The administrators of *Iron March* promoted not only transnational online communication, but also regional and local networking among members outside the digital realm. A far-right extremist terrorist network emerged among *Iron March* users that is still active today (Newhouse, 2021). *Iron March* was influential not only because it developed its own far-right extremist subculture, but also due to its emphasis on action. Out of this forum, accelerationist groups such as National Action (Great Britain, 2013), Feuerkrieg Division (USA, 2015), and Antipodean Resistance (Australia, 2016) were founded (Upchurch, 2021). In addition to far-right esoteric texts from the *Order of Nine Angles*,⁵ the operators also shared Mason’s *Siege*. Ever since the sudden end of *Iron March* in 2017 for reasons that have not been fully explained, its network has shifted its communication primarily to Telegram (Upchurch, 2021).

5

According to H.E. Upchurch, the esoteric material of the Order of Nine Angles (ONA), with its positive links to certain forms of Satanism, may have played an important role in radicalizing members of the far-right extremist accelerationist network toward the use of violence. At the same time, the sharing of ONA material created the potential for conflict within far-right extremist militant accelerationism, as ONA’s Satanist orientation was not generally accepted; cf. Upchurch (2021).

The current prominence of *Siege* arose in the mid-2010s amidst the rise of the “alt-right” and its action strategies, especially in the context of the “Unite the Right” demonstration in Charlottesville, USA in August 2017. The events surrounding the demonstration, such as its disruption by police prior to the speeches as well as the murder of counter-protestor Heather Heyer by one of the “Unite the Right” participants, generated intense discussions within the US far-right extremist milieu. Within these discussions, Mason’s critique of demonstrations and his views on militant accelerationism were widely shared. Following the Charlottesville demonstration, the hashtag #ReadSiege gained popularity within transnational far-right (online) discourses (Albrecht & Fielitz, 2019; Southern Poverty Law Center n.d.).

Individual Far-right Extremist Militant Accelerationism Influenced by Online Subcultures

In addition to the Iron March forum and the network of far-right extremist accelerationist groups that emerged from it, there is another socialization path for (accelerationist) far-right extremist terrorism that has existed since the 2010s. The perpetrators on this socialization path radicalized themselves primarily in other spaces influenced by online subcultures without a direct connection to traditional far-right extremist organizations, most notably on far-right extremist imageboards.

There are many examples that illustrate the link between far-right extremist terrorist attacks and the modern accelerationist far-right extremist milieu. Here, we focus first on the antisemitic and far-right perpetrator Robert Bowers, who shot 11 people dead and injured seven others at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh on October 27, 2018. Compared to previous far-right terrorist attacks in which the perpetrator had no overt ties to traditional far-right organizations and whose motivations were primarily attributable to online subcultures, Bower’s act marked a turning point in terms of the reception of his attack within far-right online subcultures on the chan boards (Miller, 2020).⁶ Bowers used the Twitter clone Gab, which is friendly to far-right content, among other sites, in the months leading up to his attack. There, he shared antisemitic conspiracy myths and other far-right content. While Bowers did not openly refer to *Siege* or accelerationism, he shared similar conspiracy-ideological,

6

Incel perpetrators, like Elliot Rodger, could also be mentioned here, along with earlier individuals radicalized via far-right online subcultures, like Anders Behring Breivik.

antisemitic, and racist beliefs in his posts. Bowers was convinced of the existence of a “Jewish world conspiracy” carrying out a “Great Replacement”. He also shared posts from other far-right accounts expressing frustration among the militant far right regarding then-President Donald Trump’s policies, such as his administration’s actions against members of far-right organizations. Bowers also used Gab to announce and justify his terror attack and to criticize other far-right extremist strategies: “I can’t sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw the optics, I’m going in.” He thus positioned himself against the “metapolitical” strategies of certain parts of the US “alt-right” (Miller, 2020), which aimed at anchoring their positions within the political mainstream by avoiding (too) explicit far-right extremist statements in the public sphere in order to e.g. achieve electoral success. In contrast to previous far-right extremist attacks, the sentiment on the chan boards was not dominated by a (tactical) distancing from the violence, but by a glorification of the deed and of the perpetrator, who was celebrated as a “saint” (Dittrich & Rathje, 2019).

The transnational series of far-right terrorist attacks that followed Bowers and his predecessors, especially leading up to the outbreak of the 2020 pandemic, highlighted the link between the far-right online subcultures of imageboards and accelerationism. With Bowers’ attack, a broader endorsement of far-right extremist terrorist violence began, and terrorists from these subcultures who came after him explicitly referenced accelerationism as an action strategy. Central to this context are the writings of Brenton Tarrant, who killed 51 people and injured 50 others at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, on March 15, 2019. He announced his attack on 8chan and the image he uploaded for the post bore a title that alluded to Bowers’s final Gab post on optics (Beard, 2020, p. 44). Tarrant also shared links to a livestream and his manifesto. In the document, Tarrant made central references to the myth of the “Great Replacement” and “white genocide”, but in contrast to Mason’s and Bowers’s explicit antisemitism, Tarrant emphasized his general racist convictions. Additionally, the Christchurch shooter devoted a short section to the topic of accelerationism, which he recommended as a revolutionary strategy aimed at destabilizing society. In doing so, Tarrant introduced a simplified version of accelerationism into far-right extremist online subcultures, which offered members the potential for radicalization independent of an

organization or group. Some of the perpetrators who followed him referred positively to this concept, such as the recent perpetrator of the mass shooting in Buffalo in May 2022. Within far-right extremist online subcultures in general, but also within the networks of militant accelerationist Terrorgram channels and groups in particular, the individually-radicalized far-right terrorists are revered as “saints”, even if they do not directly mention accelerationism.



20 Militant Accelerationism in Germany

Far-right extremist militant accelerationism is a transnational phenomenon. Germans have also been active within accelerationist online subcultures since their early days. Some examples of German-speaking groups and their networks are listed here.

Atomwaffendivision Deutschland (Atomwaffen Division Germany)

Militant accelerationist groups were also formed in Germany. On June 1, 2018, the official account of the US-based Atomwaffen Division (AWD) posted a video titled “AWD Deutschland: Die Messer werden schon gewetzt!” (“AWD Germany: The knives are being sharpened!”) on the “alternative” video platform Bitchute, a platform popular among far-right extremists. In this video, the creators announced the formation of a German cell of the terrorist group and called on “German freedom fighters” to follow the group. The creators claimed to be preparing for an imminent final battle. The video consisted of various clips of a person wearing a skull mask and a hoodie with the Atomwaffen Division logo posing in front of a swastika flag with a pistol, along with video clips of actions from other far-right groups in Germany. The final clip was a picture of a man in a skull mask holding an Atomwaffen Division flag in front of Wewelsburg Castle, which supposedly played a central role as a training site and sanctuary for the SS during Nazi Germany. According to *Der Spiegel*, the production of the video had been discussed in chats of the US Atomwaffen Division since early 2018 (Baumgärtner et al., 2019).

After the release of the founding video, *Atomwaffendivision Deutschland* (AWDD) initially focused on recruiting new members through a flyer campaign. At the beginning of November 2018, flyers advertising the group were found in a library of Berlin’s Humboldt University, recruiting German students to be part of a “white resistance” and using the racist and antisemitic myth of the “Volkstod” or “Great Replacement”. AWDD “warned” of an impending annihilation of the “white race” through an “invasion of Germany” by migrants. Students were told to prepare themselves for a resulting civil war. More flyers with similar content were found in May 2019 in a library belonging to the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. Unlike the propaganda material distributed in Berlin, these flyers included not just the racist “Volkstod” myth but also insinuated



A clip from the founding video of Atomwaffen Division Germany. Source: Bitchute.

that “the Jews and their henchman” would use the UN migration pact adopted in December 2018 to “continue [to] incessantly invade the white countries in order to destroy the white peoples”. In addition to calling for political engagement and the spreading of propaganda, these flyers also called for armed struggle. On other flyers, the group called for the killing of Jews and Muslims. The flyers included an email address to contact the group. According to police, AWDD propaganda was found in Frankfurt am Main as early as April 2019 (Steinhagen, 2019a). This coincides with the creation of an “Atomwaffendivision Deutschland” account in April 2019 on the Twitter clone Gab, a site popular with far-right extremists. On that account, the group claimed to have hidden 290 flyers within books in the university library as early as the end of March 2019.

More flyers were placed in unstamped envelopes at homes near Keupstraße in Cologne-Mühlheim at the end of May and beginning of June 2019. A street festival to commemorate and honor the victims on the 15th anniversary of the National Socialist Underground (NSU) attack in Cologne, in which 22 people were injured, some seriously, was scheduled to occur a week later. The content of the flyers, with their racist and antisemitic messaging, was no longer focused on recruitment but on threatening Muslims (Steinhagen, 2019b). Muslims were told to leave Germany because “targeted attacks on you will soon begin”. The AWDD Gab account claimed responsibility for the flyers. In early August, a flyer from the US AWD cell with antisemitic content was founded at a bus stop in Preetz, Schleswig-Holstein, but could not be linked directly to the German cell.

Atomwaffendivision Deutschland’s goal was not just recruitment, intimidation and the spreading of propaganda. On their Gab account, the group announced in April 2019 that their development and strategic orientation phase was over. The group was in the process of “finishing the initial propaganda campaign and [...] preparing the first armed action”. Current research has not revealed any evidence that the group has carried out such an action. No further offline activities under the group’s name have been identified after the flyer campaign.

No new increase in online activity came until the March 2020 announcement of the supposed dissolution of Atomwaffen Division in the USA. In response, a German cell of the group created a Telegram channel where it decried the dissolution and announced the continuation of its own activities. The channel continued to share

propaganda material, some homemade and some simply translated from English. Among the propaganda were images of flyers previously distributed in Berlin, Frankfurt, and Cologne-Mühlheim (International Institute for Research on Education, Social and Anti-Semitism, 2020). After this, however, the visible actions of the group came to a halt.

Finally, on April 6, 2022, German law enforcement conducted searches concerning 50 people at 61 properties in 11 German states due to suspicion of membership in a far-right extremist criminal organization or suspicion of membership in a far-right extremist terrorist organization, included 10 suspected members of Atomwaffendivision Deutschland. The Federal Prosecutor's office had begun investigating the cell in September 2019. The Neo-Nazi Leon R. from Eisenach is considered a member of Atomwaffendivision Deutschland (Generalbundesanwalt, 2022). The federal government currently classifies AWDD as belonging to the far-right extremist accelerationist spectrum (BT-Drucksache, 2022).

Feuerkrieg Division

The *Feuerkrieg Division* (FKD), founded in 2018 by a minor from Estonia, based its organizational structure on the Atomwaffen Division. On June 13, 2019, the group announced via Gab the creation of a German cell of the group. The group again advertised the cell on their Telegram on August 21 of the same year with a collage depicting the murder by a far-right extremist of German politician Walter Lübcke. A day later, the group shared eight images of posters put up around Germany calling for the murder of Jews, among other things. In September and August, graffiti from members of the cell was shared online.

In February 2020, the German spokesperson of the group, Fabian D., was arrested in the district of Cham in Bavaria and several weapons were seized when his house was searched. He stood accused of planning a serious act of violence endangering the state. The same month, the group announced its official dissolution. The Nuremberg-Fürth Regional Court found D. guilty in December 2020 and sentenced him to two years imprisonment. His imprisonment ended at the latest in February 2022, and he is now, according to the verdict, under subsequent supervision. Authorities conducted house searches at the homes of four suspected members of the



FKD Logo

German FKD cell as part of a large-scale investigation of suspected members of AWDD in April 2022. The German government classifies FKD as belonging to the far-right extremist accelerationist spectrum (BT-Drucksache, 2022). Dekkit/Drekkitt (a member of the German FKD cell) took part in training sessions held by US terrorist group *The Base* in the US during the summer of 2019, according to *Die Zeit* (Geisler & Kamel, 2021).

Alias	Name	Place of Residence	Status
Heydrich	Fabian D.	Cham	Convicted
Teuton	Sebastian S.	Schwarzwald	Under investigation
Wolfskampf	Wladimir D.	Köln	Under investigation
Dekkit/Drekkitt	Lukas Karsten H.	Niedersachsen	Under investigation
Jus-ad-bellum	Chris Marvin C.	Münster	Under investigation
Napola88	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

Table 1
Convicted or suspected members of the German Feuerkrieg Division cell

A year after the group’s dissolution, a new group using the name Feuerkrieg Division appeared in the spring of 2021, sporting a new leader and a new online presence. That group split into US-led and European-led factions due to internal differences. In March 2022, the US-led faction announced its dissolution, and was followed shortly in this regard by the European-led faction.

Atomwaffen Division Europe

In early 2021, European far-right militant accelerationists formed a network using the name Atomwaffen Division Europe (AWDE). Under the leadership of a then-NPD functionary, the group shared far-right extremist terrorist propaganda, minors were invited to join the internal chats, and members discussed the procurement of



AWDE Logo

weapons (Mannemann, 2021). In April of the same year, the group disbanded following public reporting on their activities.

Totenwaffen

Although some militant accelerationist groups achieved relative longevity, the field is characterized by many short-lived start-ups. Supporters often belong to multiple groups simultaneously. The networks function more via common ideology rather than fixed group affiliations. Such is the case of a Potsdam resident who was active on Terrorgram under the pseudonym Forst. Forst was active not only in transnational groups like *Inject Division* and *Cult 88*, but also founded his own group as a 16-year-old in November 2020, which was later renamed *Totenwaffen*. On March 9, 2021, Forst shared five pictures and a video of a recruitment poster he put up in Potsdam to the internal chat. Two months later, he posted six more images of posters in Potsdam that displayed a swastika and called for the murders of five Jewish activists who were advocating for the rights of trans people. In May, he shared images of chemicals ordered for bomb-making. He followed up that post with videos of two tests of homemade explosives which were conducted in abandoned barracks in Krampnitz, Brandenburg. One of the charges ripped the concrete base of the bunker to shreds. In late July 2021, law enforcement searched Forst's home and confiscated his cell phone, a Nazi party flag, and chemicals left over from bomb construction (Nabert et al., 2022). By the end of November, Forst was again active in militant accelerationist group chats. His continued activity came with consequences, and in early June 2022, Forst was arrested in his parents' apartment and is currently being investigated for planning a serious act of violence endangering the state.



Totenwaffen Logo

Sonderkommando 1418

On April 6, 2022, law enforcement searched the houses of four accused members of the group chat *Sonderkommando 1418* (SKD 1418). Another accused member had already been searched concerning another matter. According to the Attorney General's Office, SKD 1418 was "a chat group operating on the Internet in Germany between fall 2019 and February 2020. Its goal was to

recruit supporters for terrorist attacks to lead to a 'race war' and the destruction of existing democratic systems by replacing them with a neo-fascist system" (Generalbundesanwalt, 2022). The five defendants are currently under investigation for membership in a terrorist organization. The federal government classifies SKD 1418 as belonging to the far-right extremist accelerationist spectrum (BT-Drucksache, 2022).

Militant Accelerationist "Lone Wolf" Perpetrators

As a far-right internet subculture established itself on Telegram around 2019, many Germans participated in the scene. Twitter and Instagram have also seen Germans express support for militant accelerationism. Militant accelerationism has also been discussed in positive terms on German far-right podcasts such as *NeoReaktiOnAir*. Unfortunately, it comes as no surprise that Germany, too, was part of the transnational wave of far-right extremist terrorist attacks (New Zealand, USA, Norway) by militant accelerationists in 2019.

Halle

On October 9, 2019, a far-right extremist terrorist attempted to storm the synagogue in Halle, Germany, on the highest Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur, and to kill as many people as possible using homemade weapons. After failing to gain entry to the synagogue, the man shot two people dead and injured two others in his subsequent rampage. The attacker had become radicalized online in right-wing terrorist forums and oriented his attack towards the online scene. Like the Christchurch terrorist, he streamed a video of his attack live over a video streaming platform. He had published a manifesto and detailed his preparations for the crime on imageboards beforehand. In addition to descriptions of his homemade weapons, he included so-called "achievements" for himself if he committed certain murders. Because his homemade weapons, which had been constructed using a 3D printer, did not work as well as expected, the online scene largely reacted with mockery – but also used the event as an opportunity to exchange ideas on "improved" methods for carrying out terrorist attacks. On December 21, 2020, the perpetrator was sentenced to life imprisonment and subsequent preventative detention on charges including two

counts of murder, multiple accounts of attempted murder, and incitement of the masses.

Spangenberg

In September 2021, Marvin E., then 20 years old and working as an apprentice carpenter, was arrested on suspicion of terrorist activity. A search of his home revealed 600 small explosive devices and six unconventional explosive and incendiary devices. Investigators found a manifesto in which E. described his far-right extremist motivations. According to research from the newspaper *Die Zeit*, E. had contacted American AWD members in 2020 and wanted to create an AWD cell in the German state of Hesse (Geisler & Steinhagen, 2021).

Essen

A 16-year-old student from Essen was arrested in May 2022. He had allegedly planned a far-right extremist attack on a school using explosives. During a search of his home, investigators found bomb-making materials and a text in which he explained his far-right extremist motivations for the attack. The student expressed his admiration in the text for other far-right extremists who had perpetrated attacks in Oslo/Utøya, Norway and Christchurch, New Zealand, as well as his fascination with school shootings. Over the course of the investigation, an 18-year-old suspected chat partner of the 16-year-old was also interrogated and firearms were found in his possession. Police had been tipped off by fellow students to whom the would-be far-right terrorist had hinted at his attack.



Lone Wolf

26 April 2017
Leon R. creates account on Iron March



AWDD

01 June 2018
First video announcement on the official AWDD Bitchute



AWDD

April 2019
Account created on Gab



FKD

13 June 2019
Announcement of German cell on Gab



FKD

21 August 2019
Telegram post encouraging Germans to join



FKD

February 2020
Dissolution announced on Telegram



AWDD

March 2020
Account created on Gab



AWDD

18 March 2020
Account created on Telegram



FKD

February 2020
Dissolution announced on Telegram



AWD

07 November 2019
Refused entry into Germany



AWDD

29 May to 3 June 2019
Flyers distributed in Cologne



FKD

22 August 2019
Eight posters put up



AWDD

May 2019
Flyers distributed in Frankfurt a. M.



FKD

10 August 2019
Flyers distributed in Preetz, Schleswig-Holstein



FKD

12 September 2019
"Read Siege" graffiti found in western Germany



FKD

Fall 2019
Founded



SKD 1418



SKD 1418



SKD 1418



SKD 1418



SKD 1418



SKD 1418



SKD 1418



SKD 1418



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SKD 1418



SKD 1418



SKD 1418



SKD 1418



SKD 1418



SKD 1418



FKD

28 October 2019
Vandalism



FKD

16 October 2019
Graffiti found in the Black Forest



Halle

09 October 2019
Perpetrator attempts to murder Jews in a synagogue on Yom Kippur, subsequently kills two people and injures two others



Halle

Fall 2019
Founded



FKD

12 September 2019
"Read Siege" graffiti found in western Germany



FKD

22 August 2019
Eight posters put up



FKD

10 August 2019
Flyers distributed in Preetz, Schleswig-Holstein



FKD

12 September 2019
"Read Siege" graffiti found in western Germany



FKD

22 August 2019
Eight posters put up



FKD

10 August 2019
Flyers distributed in Preetz, Schleswig-Holstein



FKD

22 August 2019
"Read Siege" graffiti found in western Germany



FKD

10 August 2019
Flyers distributed in Preetz, Schleswig-Holstein



FKD

22 August 2019
"Read Siege" graffiti found in western Germany



FKD

22 August 2019
"Read Siege" graffiti found in western Germany



Halle

21 December 2020
Halle perpetrator convicted in Naumburg of two murders, multiple attempted murders, and incitement, sentenced to life imprisonment with subsequent preventive detention



Halle

04 December 2020
Fabian D. convicted in Nuremberg of planning a serious act of violence endangering the state, sentenced to two years imprisonment



Halle

09 October 2019
Livestream on Twitch



Halle

09 October 2019
Post on Meguca



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09 October 2019
Post on Meguca



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Post on Meguca



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Militant accelerationists have been active in Germany since at least 2017. Their activities were not limited to the offline and digital spreading of propaganda; one terrorist attack resulted in two deaths and two injuries. So far, one person has been convicted of planning a serious act of violence endangering the state; investigations are ongoing against three other people for planned attacks. At least ten Germans are under investigation for founding or being members of a terrorist organization. The timeline shows the sequence of the most important developments of far-right extremist militant accelerationists in Germany.



In spring 2022, as the pandemic slowly faded from the main stage of public attention, the militant accelerationist scene once again became active. In mid-May 2022, an 18-year-old committed a terrorist attack at a supermarket in Buffalo, USA. He killed ten people and streamed his actions live on the Twitch platform. He shared a link to his livestream and manifesto via Discord, a platform developed for gamers, and via imageboards. In his manifesto, he made significant references to the Christchurch shootings. Large parts of his manifesto consisted of text taken from the manifestos of previous shooters. This first major attack by a militant accelerationist since the beginning of the pandemic resulted once again in the hero worship of the perpetrator and an increase in digital activity in the far-right extremist scene.

Younger Perpetrators

Strikingly, the average age of militant accelerationists perpetrating or planning attacks has been decreasing. Investigations and convictions of minors in the far-right scene have occurred in Germany, England, the USA, Lithuania, Estonia, Sweden, Denmark, and other countries. The increase in the number of radicalized minors in recent years also lays bare the consequences of a years-long lack of policy enforcement in digital spaces. This has allowed the far-right terrorist subculture to build a broad digital presence that is easily accessible to minors. With an increasingly earlier onset of radicalization, more young teenagers are ready to commit far-right extremist terrorist attacks. Little is known about the onset of these radicalization pathways for young perpetrators on e.g. platforms like Roblox, an online game developed for children. There remains a lack of research in this area.

3D-Printed Weapons

In addition to the declining average age of perpetrators, there have been additional dangerous developments in the area of militant accelerationism. Since the 2019 Halle shooter attempted and failed to use 3D-printed weapons in his terrorist attack, the technology around 3D-printed weapons has evolved significantly. Potential perpetrators of mass shootings now have a variety of new, more reliable models at their disposal. 3D-printed weapons

have left the experimental stage and are now being used in actual military conflicts, e.g. by anti-Junta rebels in Myanmar (Eydoux, 2022). The far-right scene is actively following these developments. Files used to print weapons are commonly shared in chats. For militant accelerationists in European countries that strictly regulate firearms ownership, 3D-printed weapons are viewed as a realistic alternative.

LGBTQI+

Since early 2022, hostility against LGBTQI+ people, which has always been a part of the far right, has increasingly become the focus of far-right and conspiracy-ideological propaganda in the USA. Far-right extremist terrorists utilize the broader far-right scene's hostility concerning LGBTQI+ issues as a recruiting opportunity and radicalization pathway. It is also used as a legitimization for violent acts. Hate towards LGBTQI+ people is central to the online subculture and plays into their narratives of masculinity and the natural order of the world. Society's increasing acceptance of LGBTQI+ people is, for the far-right scene, another sign of a decadent, doomed society. A stronger focus on this topic has also emerged in the German scene.

Stricter Moderation on Telegram

Although Telegram remains the main platform for militant accelerationists, the company's current moderation policy is stricter than it was in 2019. After initial conversations with the German Federal Criminal Police Office and the German Interior Ministry, Telegram has become more responsive to deletion requests from the Federal Criminal Police Office. At least 64 channels have been deleted due to such requests (Balsler, 2022). These developments have become points of debate within the scene. Members have also expressed concern that Telegram can be easily archived by law enforcement or antifascist activists. Many members are therefore switching to alternative messengers, such as the decentralized messenger service Element.

Own Publications

The renewed interest in the scene since the summer of 2021 is evident in the Terrorgram community's publications, some of which have been elaborately produced and published under the name *Terrorgram Publication*. Since June 2021, there have been publications twice a year from anonymous authors promoting militant accelerationism and calling for terrorist attacks (and in some cases including specific instructions on how to do so). Each page of these publications is designed in the aesthetic style of the scene. A notable exception is *Do It For The 'Gram* (a play on the internet phrase "do it for the [Insta]gram", but referring instead to Terrorgram). Unlike in previous publications, the authors do not use the NATO alphabet for their pseudonyms, but rather 28 Telegram channels from the scene claimed their own chapters. Only six of these channels are currently accessible on Telegram. This publication also has no elaborate graphic design, but only text on a black background. Although as many as 100 people are claimed to have collaborated on these publications in some cases, most of the chapters are written only by two to four pseudonyms. These publications provide motivation and instructions for future attacks, increasing the danger of accelerationist terrorist attacks in the future.



The cover of the Terrorgram publication *Do It For The 'Gram*

Terrogram Publications

Name	Date published	Pages	Pseudonyms used	Proportion of chapters
Militant Accelerationism	16 June 2021	136	14	64% from 2 pseudonyms
Do It For The 'Gram	16 December 2021	268	28	52% from 3 pseudonyms
The Hard Reset	14 July 22	261	27	44% from 4 pseudonyms

Table 2
Analysis of the three previous publications of Terrogram Publications

38 Recommended Course of Action

Overall, digital spaces as a platform for radicalization are still not taken seriously enough by law enforcement and politicians. Law enforcement faces many challenges when dealing with far-right extremist online subcultures. Because groups like Feuerkrieg Division exist as loose chat groups with flexible hierarchies and membership, law enforcement is often unsure as to how to grapple with such a dynamic. Consequently, it is now easier than ever for minors to find these groups. It is far too rare for members of the subculture in Germany to be investigated or charged with forming or being a member of a terrorist organization. The membership of supposed “lone wolves” in these online groups is often overlooked. Networks are rarely the focus of investigators and the judicial system.

There is also a need to provide resources for families and friends. Parents need to know where they can turn if they suspect that their child is involved with far-right extremism. The role of the social environment here should not be underestimated. There is still a lack of research on the radicalization process of young offenders with a focus on digital spaces. However, this research would form the fundamental basis for effective prevention.

Social media platforms must take responsibility and recognize the attempts of the far right to claim digital spaces for their own. In addition to technical solutions, this requires stronger prerequisites and training for content moderators. “Deplatforming”, i.e. the deletion of accounts or content that contradicts the company’s use guidelines, is often the subject of controversial social discussions. However, studies on the subject paint a clear picture: deplatforming is effective because it results in far-right extremist accounts having less of an audience (Fielitz & Schwarz, 2020). Deplatforming does not solve the underlying problem of the spread of harmful content and disinformation, but can be seen as a sort of “first aid”. The question of deplatforming is not just a technical problem, but a societal one. For this reason, it is important that the policies that form the basis for decision-making are not only further developed, but are also structured in a transparent manner. As a society, we must better understand the role that social media plays in radicalization and the spread of disinformation. This requires in-depth and long-term research.

As a society, we face not just the problem of preventing terrorist attacks, but of preventing radicalization in the first place. Current responses to the problem are focused on reducing the supply of

far-right extremist terrorist content. However, a solution to this problem can only be found by grappling with the reasons behind the demand for this sort of content. This requires a fundamental examination of societal problems which cannot be answered solely by giving more powers to law enforcement or by further regulating the internet.



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The non-profit Center for Monitoring, Analysis and Strategy (CeMAS) aims to equip society to actively counter conspiracy ideologies, disinformation, anti-semitism and far-right extremism in context of current challenges and future crises. To this end, anti-democratic tendencies are detected and analyzed at an early stage. As a non-profit organization, CeMAS offers its analysis to various social actors to enable them to constructively meet the challenges facing society.

CeMAS uses an interdisciplinary approach combining psychological, and social science perspectives with modern data science and investigative journalistic methods. As a result, there is a continuous exchange of insights from various perspectives, which find practical expression in the areas of monitoring, analysis, and consulting. We are excited and grateful that CeMAS will be funded by the Alfred Landecker Foundation from 2021 to 2024.

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