

A Threat from Within? Exploring the Link between the Extreme Right and the Military

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Right-wing violence and terrorism have slowly gained more academic and public attention in recent years, with an increase in anti-immigration and anti-government organised violence from the extreme right in most Western countries. Some evidence exists that right-wing extremists have attempted to infiltrate the military in their home countries to gain access to tactical training, weapons, and to recruit highly skilled new members. Research about the extent and impact of extreme right-wing links to the military is, however, scarce. In addition to the lack of insight into potential right-wing (or other forms of) extremism problems in the military, most armed forces have not developed effective countering violent extremism (CVE) tools. In this way, the incorporation of CVE in the military lags far behind the use of CVE in other aspects of counter-terrorism in the West. As the military, next to the police and intelligence, is a critical part of a country's security infrastructure, it must also include specially designed mechanisms to protect it from infiltration and abuse from violent extremists and those planning terrorist activities. This Policy Brief will discuss available knowledge about extreme right-wing links to the military in Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. It will conclude by formulating concrete recommendations for handling this potential threat.

Introduction

Recently, headlines in the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom have sparked a public fear of a potential right-wing extremist threat against democratic forms of government originating in the armed forces established to protect them. In the U.S., Coast Guard Lieutenant Christopher Hasson was arrested in February 2019 for allegedly plotting extreme right-wing terror attacks on a scale rarely seen before, including the potential use of biological and chemical weapons.¹ In Germany, army First Lieutenant Franco A.² was arrested in April 2017 and charged with plotting a false flag terror attack together with another officer and a civilian.³ In preparation for the plot he had led a double life for about two years, posing as a Syrian refugee and even receiving financial assistance. In the United Kingdom, Lance Corporal Mikko Vehvilainen, a veteran of the Afghan war and soldier of the Royal Anglian Regiment, was sentenced to eight years in jail in November 2018 for his membership in the right-wing terrorist organisation National Action and for attempts to recruit fellow soldiers.⁴ Other countries have experienced incidents of right-wing extremism in the military as well. In the Netherlands, 21 investigations led to four soldiers being dismissed from active duty between 2014 and 2019 for their extreme right-wing activities.⁵

In addition to cases of active duty military personnel involved in extreme right-wing activities, examples of veterans conducting right-wing terror attacks can easily be found. One of the most prominent cases would be Timothy McVeigh, a Gulf War veteran, who killed 168 victims on April 19, 1995 in the attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.⁶ In Germany, the most lethal terror attack in post Second World War history, the Oktoberfest bombing from September 26, 1980, caused 13 casualties and more than 200 injured. The main perpetrator, Gundolf Köhler, had received military training and voluntarily extended his mandatory service.⁷

Naturally, when discussing the potential threat of extreme right-wing infiltration of the military or violent extremist radicalisation of soldiers, one must be careful to consider a number of contextual factors. Militaries are vast organisations, both in terms of personnel and logistical complexities. The U.S. military, for example, has a total of 1,358,193 active personnel and 811,000 reservists.⁸ The German military currently

¹ Dave Philipps, "Christopher Hasson, Coast Guard Officer, Plotted Attacks at His Desk, Filings Say," The New York Times, 21 February 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/us/coast-guard-christopher-hasson-terrorist-attack.html>.

² In accordance with German privacy regulations and common practice, suspects are not identified in public unless they have done so themselves or are already widely known.

³ Tagesschau, "Generalbundesanwalt klagt Franco A. an [Prosecutor General charges Franco A.]," tagesschau.de, 27 March 2019, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/francoa-101.html>.

⁴ ITV News, "'Outstanding' soldier who wanted to recruit from within armed forces convicted of National Action membership," 12 November 2018, <https://www.itv.com/news/2018-11-12/outstanding-soldier-at-heart-of-neo-nazi-terrorist-cell/>.

⁵ Jeroen van Raalte, "Extremisme in het leger: 21 onderzoeken leiden tot vertrek vier rechts-extremistische militairen [Extremism in the army: 21 investigations lead to the departure of four right-wing extremist soldiers]," de Volkskrant, 2 July 2019, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/extremisme-in-het-leger-21-onderzoeken-leiden-tot-vertrek-vier-rechts-extremistische-militairen-b6544f39/>.

⁶ Sally Jacobs, "The Radicalization of Timothy McVeigh," Tulsa World, 10 June 1995, http://www.tulsaworld.com/archives/the-radicalization-of-timothy-mcveigh/article_49b91161-74c7-538f-8183-e5f957f45aa1.html.

⁷ Daniel Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century. The National Socialist Underground and the History of Terror from the Far-Right in Germany* (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2016) pp. 210-211.

⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, "Number of Military and DoD Appropriated Fund (APF) Civilian Personnel Permanently Assigned," 31 December 2017,

employs 181,463 active soldiers.⁹ Some 153,000 men and women are actively serving in the British military (with 32,550 reserve personnel)¹⁰ and 68,000 in the Canadian Armed Forces (27,000 reserve).¹¹ Some countries, at least partially, base their militaries on mandatory service or conscription. In Germany, mandatory service for all male citizens turning 18 lasted until 2011. In the United States, conscription was the norm until 1973. The sheer number of military personnel, and to a lesser degree the partial reliance on mandatory service, automatically means that people from various different social, economic, and political backgrounds are brought into service. This includes the risk of bringing recruits in with extremist views and/or links to extremist groups. Hence, the question is not whether or not right-wing extremists are able to enter the military but rather if they are identified in time and if the military reacts adequately to the case (e.g. disciplinary action or removal from service).

Military leaders and policy makers in all countries discussed here also regularly (and correctly) point out that relative to the overall number of serving personnel, incidents of right-wing extremist soldiers are extraordinarily marginal. Warning against the threat of right-wing extremist infiltration can easily be silenced by misstating this warning as a general criticism of the military's valour, sacrifices, and moral values. On the contrary however, discussing potential threats of a violent extremist infiltration and adequate counter measures by the armed forces does not automatically mean criticising the military as an institution and should be seen in the light of other discourses aimed at helping the military to improve its efficiency to fulfil the duty of protecting democratic forms of government, such as for example adequate handling of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues. In the end, violent extremists coming from the ranks of the military do extensive damage to the societies they attack and the reputation of the military. The special skills trained for in the armed forces that go far beyond the simple handling of weapons (e.g. close combat, tactical formations, use of surveillance techniques, handling explosives, counter-intelligence) and the extraordinary trust placed into this institution create a responsibility to establish effective protective measures against anyone attempting to abuse these trust and skills.

In any case, one must recognise that even though just a tiny minority of military personnel might be drawn to violent extremism, their special training or combat experience can make them significantly more dangerous and deadlier in carrying out potential terror attacks than an average member of the public. Of course, all forms of violent extremist ideologies can theoretically attempt to penetrate the ranks of the military. The case of the November 5, 2009 Fort Hood shooting by then Major Nidal Hasan, which claimed 13 victims, is a prime example. Hasan had become a Jihadist

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https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/rest/download?fileName=DMDC_Website_Location_Report_1712.xlsx&groupName=milRegionCountry.

⁹ Bundeswehr, "Stärke: Militärisches Personal der Bundeswehr [Strenght: Military Personnel of the Bundeswehr]," 24 June 2019,

https://www.bundeswehr.de/portal/a/bwde/start/streitkraefte/grundlagen/staerke!/ut/p/z1/hY7NCslwEISfXUOV2Zj7y1VEKVCxaJtLhJrTctpUtLY-vhGPAmKc9vZb4YBBhkwbztKclCzZzZW_czY-RdM4jcmMkDRZLpF6GobRcEfl6jCE4z-A-Tf-IYphfxGQ-47Jr4505yFgwG684w_UGOuUclgXr4WQl1xfiEhMQd_GBphU5vyeTvU5nEpgVlyFFRbdrbdL55p2HuAA932PpDFSCVSYOsDflqVpHWSfJDR11uNwplqYDp6gokpt/dz/d5/L2dBISEvZoFBIS9nQSEh/#Z7_B8LTL2922TPCDoIM3BB1Q22TQo.

¹⁰ Noel Dempsey, UK Defence Personnel Statistics (London: House of Commons Library, 2019), <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7930/CBP-7930.pdf>.

¹¹ Government of Canada, National Defence, "Frequently Asked Questions," 29 October 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/contact-us/frequently-asked-questions.html>.

extremist during his active service.¹² Cases of far-left violent radicalisation within the military or infiltration attempts from this form of violent extremism, however, are not known to the author. Perhaps due to an ideology that fundamentally opposes strict hierarchies and the military in particular, attracting members of the far left to the military is unlikely. This policy brief will focus specifically on the threat posed by extreme right-wing (i.e. far-right, white nationalist, neo-Nazi, racist ideologies) infiltration of armed forces in four countries (Germany, Canada, United States, United Kingdom) and discuss lessons learned, as well as countering violent extremism (CVE) and counter-terrorism recommendations for military leaders and policy makers. The four sample countries have been selected because of the availability of information about right-wing extremism in the military both through governmental and non-governmental sources and the well-documented prevalence of incidents in these countries. From these four sample countries, Germany has by far the most detailed publicly available data on this issue as the military intelligence (Militärischer Abschirmdienst - MAD) and the German government regularly publish statistics in this regard. Therefore, the German case study will appear to be overrepresented.

The data for this policy brief was gathered through open source research using press databases (e.g. NEXIS and Factiva) and relevant governmental databases (e.g. the German parliamentary inquiry database). Furthermore, available academic literature and terrorism/extremism databases (e.g. the “Database on Terrorism in Germany – Right-wing Extremism” [DTG-rwx], the Extremist Crime Database [ECDB]) regarding right-wing terrorism were searched for relevant cases of incidents involving the military. Publicly available information was then processed to gather the most relevant incidents and current approach to counter (right-wing) extremism in the sample countries’ militaries.

The findings and lessons learned presented in the following policy paper have, however, broad relevance for other countries and their militaries as well, since dealing with violent extremist infiltration or armed services and radicalisation during active duty is a potential threat to many if not all militaries.

Canada

The wider interest in the Canadian military’s links to extreme right-wing groups and the fear of potential infiltration spiked in May 2019, when a 2018 report by the Military Police Criminal Intelligence Section entitled “White Supremacy, Hate Groups, and Racism in The Canadian Armed Forces” became public.¹³ In it, the Canadian military police outlined that since 2013, 53 Canadian Armed Forces members were either connected to hate groups or hate incidents, involving notorious extreme right-wing groups such as “Atomwaffen Division”, “Hammerskin Nation”, “Proud Boys”, “La Meute”, “III%”, or the “Soldiers of Odin”. Even though the report concludes that these groups do not pose a significant threat to national security (pointing out that only 0.1% of the Canadian Armed Forces personnel were identified with related activities), it is still conceded that military training and skills help to gain leadership positions within such groups.¹⁴ Of the 53 identified soldiers, 16 were found to have direct links to the named extreme right-wing

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¹² Katharine Poppe, “Nidal Hasan: A Case Study in Lone Actor Terrorism,” George Washington University Program on Extremism, October 2018, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Nidal%20Hasan.pdf>.

¹³ Report No. 2000-1040 (MPCIS).

¹⁴ Ibid.

groups and the rest to have made statements or conducted behaviour considered to be discriminatory in nature.¹⁵

In addition, an investigative media report from 2018 claimed to have found evidence in online communication between right-wing extremists discussing the strategic value of infiltrating the armed forces to acquire weapons training and tactical skills.¹⁶ The potential threat of this infiltration debate was further heightened through secrecy and covertness as recommended among the discussants.

As with other countries in this Policy Brief's sample, Canada has had to deal with highly publicised extreme right-wing incidents involving military personnel in the past. For example, in July 2017 a group of five off-duty Canadian Armed Forces personnel disrupted an indigenous ceremony and openly showed their allegiance to the Proud Boys. Designated as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center,¹⁷ the Proud Boys were founded in 2016 by VICE Media co-founder Gavin McInnes and have been recognised regularly for their white nationalist and anti-Muslim rhetoric and actions, including violence. After the subsequent public debate and initial outcry, however, four of the five returned to active duty, albeit on probation and monitoring. The fifth had left the military on his own accord.¹⁸

Without a doubt, the most significant and momentous incident with links to racism and right-wing extremism in the history of the Canadian military happened in March 1993, when two soldiers of the elite Airborne Regiment tortured and killed a 16-year-old Somali teenager during a peacekeeping operation as the peak of a series of events that in the end left dead a total of four Somalis in Canadian custody.¹⁹ Public outcry followed in November 1994, when pictures taken by the torturers became public. In the subsequent string of reporting and parliamentary investigations, numerous links between the Airborne Regiment and various extreme right-wing groups surfaced. One soldier, for example, who was also involved in the Somalia affair, had taken pre-deployment photographs showing him wearing a Hitler shirt in front of a swastika. The same soldier was also a member of the Ku Klux Klan.²⁰ Further incidents involved airborne soldiers wearing white supremacist tattoos and providing training to the neo-Nazi organisation Heritage Front.²¹ As a result of the affair, the Airborne Regiment was disbanded.²²

¹⁵ Mack Lamoureux, Ben Makuch, "Canadian Military Confirms Neo-Nazi Group Atomwaffen Was Within Its Ranks," Vice, 28 May 2019, https://www.vice.com/amp/en_ca/article/a3xndb/canadian-military-confirms-neo-nazi-group-atomwaffen-was-within-its-ranks#click=https://t.co/DMW4MXyyqb.

¹⁶ Ben Makuch, Mack Lamoureux, "Neo-Nazis Want Canadian Military Training," 22 October 2018, https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/a3pppz/neo-nazis-want-canadian-military-training.

¹⁷ Southern Poverty Law Center, "Proud Boys," no date, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/proud-boys>.

¹⁸ Elizabeth McMillan, "Military personnel in Proud Boys incident return to regular duty," CBC, 31 August 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/military-personnel-proud-boy-s-incident-jobs-1.4269952>.

¹⁹ Richard Foot, "Somalia Affair," The Canadian Encyclopedia, 18 October 2018, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/somalia-affair>.

²⁰ Clyde Farnsworth, "Canada Investigates Reported Ties of Rightist Militants and Military," The New York Times, 17 May 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/05/17/world/canada-investigates-reported-ties-of-rightist-militants-and-military.html>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Richard Foot, "Somalia Affair," The Canadian Encyclopedia, 18 October 2018, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/somalia-affair>.

The United States

The United States military has a long history of links with extreme right-wing groups and individuals going back to the end of the Civil War, when the Ku Klux Klan was founded by former officers of the Confederate army. Nevertheless, the U.S. military has, according to retired U.S. Army colonel and former member of the National Security Council Jeff McCausland, “failed to establish a comprehensive way to screen” out extremists, especially right-wing oriented ones.²³ The result of this missing screening mechanism is a long list of incidents showing a potentially significant risk of extremist infiltration of the U.S. military, for example:

- After the 1968 murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Ku Klux Klan members paraded on an American base in Vietnam.²⁴ Marines held regular Klan meetings in Camp Pendleton in 1976.²⁵ In the mid-1980s pictures of uniformed soldiers holding Klan signs with clearly racist and anti-Semitic slurs surfaced.²⁶
- In 1995, members of the elite 82nd Airborne Division formed a clandestine neo-Nazi cell and in December that year two soldiers involved in that group murdered an African-American couple.²⁷ The perpetrators received life imprisonment and 19 additional soldiers were dishonourably discharged.²⁸
- In 2010, a Marine Corps sniper team in Afghanistan posed for pictures in front of a Nazi SS flag.²⁹
- In 2012, a member of the Missouri National Guard was arrested for providing weapons for and running a neo-Nazi paramilitary training camp in Florida.³⁰ In the same year, two soldiers were arrested after murdering a former soldier and his girlfriend in an attempt to cover up their assassination plot against then-President Barack Obama.³¹

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²³ Jeff McCausland, “Inside the U.S. military’s battle with white supremacy and far-right extremism,” NBC, 25 May 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/amp/ncna1010221#click=https://t.co/8HJmNRBSoY>.

²⁴ James E. Westheider, “African Americans and the Vietnam War,” in *A Companion to the Vietnam War*, eds. Marilyn B. Young and Robert Buzzanco (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), pp. 333-47.

²⁵ Everett R. Holles, “Marines in Klan Openly Abused Blacks at Pendleton, Panel Hears,” *The New York Times*, 9 January 1977, <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/01/09/archives/marines-in-klan-openly-abused-blacks-at-pendleton-panel-hears.html>.

²⁶ Dave Philipps, “White Supremacism in the U.S. Military, Explained,” *The New York Times*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/27/us/military-white-nationalists-extremists.html>.

²⁷ David Lewis, “Army investigating skinheads,” *CNN*, 9 February 1996 http://edition.cnn.com/US/9602/ft_bragg/index.html.

²⁸ David Holthouse, “Several High Profile Racist Extremist Serve in the U.S. Military,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, 11 August 2006, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2006/several-high-profile-racist-extremists-serve-us-military>.

²⁹ Associated Press, “US marines in fresh controversy over sniper team photo with Nazi SS flag,” *The Guardian*, 9 February 2012. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/09/us-military-marines-nazi-ss-flag-photo>.

³⁰ Christopher Jones, “The American military’s extremist problem,” *The Week*, 12 May 2019, <https://theweek.com/articles/833960/american-militarys-extremist-problem>.

³¹ John Hudson, “Prosecutors: U.S. Soldiers Plotted to Kill President Obama,” *The Atlantic*, 27 August 2012, <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/08/prosecutors-us-soldiers-plotted-kill-president-obama/324243/>.

- The 22-year-old Brandon Russell, member of the notorious Atomwaffen Division, was arrested in 2018 and found in possession of weapons and a “dirty bomb” including radiological material. Russell had been serving in the 53rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion of Florida’s Army National Guard at the time of the arrest.³²
- The 18-year-old Vasillios Pistolis, a Lance Corporal of the Marine Corps and a member of Atomwaffen Division, was involved in physical assaults during the infamous Charleston “Unite the Right” rally and bragged about it online. He had already been involved in neo-Nazism before he joined the military.³³
- Coast Guard Lieutenant Christopher Hasson spent five years in the Marine Corps and two years in the Army National Guard and his radicalisation process can be traced at least over a two-year period.³⁴
- In September 2019, 24-year-old active service Army Spc. Jarrett William Smith, stationed at Fort Riley, was charged with distributing bomb-making information over social media. Smith had given bomb making lectures via Facebook to right-wing extremists. His own involvement in the militant extreme right movement predated his enlistment and Smith also was trying to join the neo-Nazi paramilitary Azov battalion and fight on their side in the Ukrainian conflict.³⁵

Furthermore, investigative press reports have also uncovered several service members with ties to right-wing extremist groups. For example, the American Identity Movement, formerly known as Identity Evropa, was found to have at least 11 members in the ranks of the U.S. military.³⁶ The white nationalist network itself was even founded by an ex-Marine. Reactions of the military varied from person to person. While one Marine and high-ranking member of Identity Evropa were removed from the ranks, another was permitted to continue serving with the Minnesota National Guard after receiving counselling and publicly disavowing the group’s ideology.³⁷ Another investigative press report presented the case of 22-year-old private first class in the 1st Armored Division

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³² Howard Altman, “How did Florida National Guard miss soldier’s neo-Nazi leanings?” The Tampa Bay Times, 24 May 2017, <https://www.tampabay.com/news/military/how-did-florida-national-guard-miss-soldiers-neo-nazi-leanings/2324930>.

³³ A.C. Thompson, Ali Winston, Jake Hanrahan, “Ranks of Notorious Hate Group Include Active-Duty Military,” PBS Frontline, 3 May 2018, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/ranks-of-notorious-hate-group-include-active-duty-military/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=share_button.

³⁴ Lynh Bui, “‘I am dreaming of a way to kill almost every last person on earth’: A self-proclaimed white nationalist planned a mass terrorist attack, the government says,” The Washington Post, 20 February 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/self-proclaimed-white-nationalist-planned-mass-terror-attack-government-says-i-am-dreaming-of-a-way-to-kill-almost-every-last-person-on-earth/2019/02/20/61daf6b8-3544-11e9-af5b-b51b7ff322e9_story.html?utm_term=.abf74f3e002b.

³⁵ Hannah Allam, “U.S. Soldier Charged With Teaching Bomb-Making To Far-Right Extremists”, National Public Radio, 23 September 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/23/763544037/kansas-soldier-charged-with-teaching-bomb-making-to-far-right-extremists>

³⁶ Christopher Mathias, “Exposed: Military Investigating 4 More Servicemen For Ties To White Nationalist Group,” The Huffington Post, 27 April 2019, https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/us_5cc1a87ee4b0764d31dd839c/amp#click=https://t.co/SN6lBsOppb.

³⁷ Christopher Wilson, “Military grapples with white nationalists in ranks,” Yahoo News, 19 June 2019, <https://news.yahoo.com/military-grapples-with-white-nationalists-in-ranks-203207506.html>.

Corwyn Storm Carver, an alleged member of Atomwaffen Division.³⁸ Carver, who allegedly took over a leadership role in Atomwaffen, is currently under investigation for violating the Army's regulations regarding extremist activities. His reported social media postings included idolisation of Charleston shooter Dylann Roof and death threats to superiors.³⁹

Intelligence reports by governmental and non-governmental organisations have also underlined the threat posed by right-wing extremists in the U.S. military. A summer 2006 report by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), for example, showed how the increased pressure to recruit enough personnel to make up for the demands of the troop surge in Iraq and Afghanistan led to lowering the standards for entering the military.⁴⁰ The report cited a Department of Defence (DoD) investigator, who had gathered evidence on 320 extremists in the U.S. military between 2005 and 2006, of which only two were discharged. Other DoD investigators, according to the report, also uncovered an online network of 57 neo-Nazis who were active duty Army and Marines personnel spread across five military installations in five states. Furthermore, a 2008 FBI intelligence assessment titled "White Supremacist Recruitment of Military Personnel since 9/11" found that white supremacist leaders were making a concerted effort to recruit active-duty soldiers and recent combat veterans.⁴¹ The report, based on analysis of FBI case files from October 2001 to May 2008, identified 203 military personnel or veterans who were active members in white supremacist organisations during that period and lists a number of significant cases. In 2018, the United States Department of Defence stated that there have been 27 reports of extremist activity by service members since 2012. All but two of those 27 service members had been formally investigated and 18 service members were disciplined or separated from the military, according to press coverage citing the DoD statement.⁴²

Like the Canadian intelligence report on the same issue, the FBI also found that right-wing extremists with "military experience often hold positions of authority within the groups to which they belong".⁴³ A year later, in 2009, a report by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) pointed to a number of factors thought to raise the risk of military personnel radicalising into right-wing extremist groups.⁴⁴ These included the election of Barack Obama, a downturn in the economy and large numbers of unemployed veterans returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. The report's publication led to public outcry from Republican politicians, conservative commentators,

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³⁸ Christopher Mathias, "Exclusive: Army Investigating Soldier's Alleged Leadership In Neo-Nazi Terror Group," Huffington Post, 5 March 2019,

https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/us_5ccb5350e4boe4d7572fde38/amp.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ David Holthouse, "Several High Profile Racist Extremist Serve in the U.S. Military," Southern Poverty Law Center, 11 August 2006, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2006/several-high-profile-racist-extremists-serve-us-military>.

⁴¹ Southern Poverty Law Center, "FBI reports on extremists in the Military," 29 August 2008, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2008/fbi-reports-extremists-military>. For the full unclassified report, see: Federal Bureau of Investigation, "White Supremacist Recruitment of Military Personnel since 9/11," 7 July 2008, <https://documents.law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/White%20Supremacist%20Recruitment%20of%20Military%20Personnel%20Since%209-11-ocr.pdf>.

⁴² Shawn Snow, "27 reports of extremist activity by US service members over the past 5 years, DoD says", The Marine Corps Times, 13 September 2019, <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2019/09/13/27-reports-of-extremist-activity-by-us-service-members-over-the-past-5-years-dod-says/>

⁴³ Ibid., p.5.

⁴⁴ Department of Homeland Security, "Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment," 7 April 2009, <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/rightwing.pdf>.

and veteran associations that ultimately led to its rescindment and the dismantling of the unit responsible for the assessment.⁴⁵ Squashing inopportune reports does little to change the reality they reflect, however. A 2019 poll by the Military Times showed that 22 percent of the surveyed military personnel had seen signs of white nationalism or racist ideology within the armed forces.⁴⁶

The United Kingdom

The British military's potential problem with extreme right-wing personnel quickly became a public concern with the arrest, charge and conviction of Lance Corporal Mikko Vehvilainen, a veteran of the Afghan war and soldier of the Royal Anglian Regiment, in November 2018. Finally sentenced to eight years in jail for membership in the extreme right-wing terrorist organisation "National Action" (NA), which was proscribed in December 2016, Vehvilainen had reportedly attempted to form a NA cell within the British Armed Forces and was connected to three other soldiers.⁴⁷ Another case from July 2019, when two black paratroopers were suing the British Army for racial abuse from other soldiers who decorated their barracks with Nazi flags and pictures of Adolf Hitler, also raised public concern.⁴⁸

These, however, were not the first such incidents involving military personnel in extreme right-wing milieus. Other examples that produced notable public outcry include the emergence of a video depicting soldiers using a poster of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn for target practice in April 2019,⁴⁹ or pictures showing British soldiers amicably posing with right-wing extremist Tommy Robinson in October 2018.⁵⁰ Even though these events are of very recent nature, some experts such as Daniel Jones have pointed out the far-right's "history of infiltrating the British army".⁵¹ According to Jones, the British far-right mainly uses three approaches towards the military: a) by copying its styles and hierarchies; b) by adopting military heroes; and c) as recruitment ground for new members with military skills and access to weaponry. Jones also lists a number of historical links between the British extreme right and the armed forces dating back to the 1960s. Of those the (arguably) most significant were:

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⁴⁵ Spencer Ackerman, "DHS Crushed this Analyst for Warning about Far-Right Terror," Wired, 7 August 2012, <https://www.wired.com/2012/08/dhs/>.

⁴⁶ Leo Shane III, "White nationalism remains a problem for the military, poll suggests," Military Times, 28 February 2019, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2019/02/28/white-nationalism-remains-a-problem-for-the-military-poll-shows/>.

⁴⁷ ITV News, "'Outstanding' soldier who wanted to recruit from within armed forces convicted of National Action membership," 12 November 2018, <https://www.itv.com/news/2018-11-12/outstanding-soldier-at-heart-of-neo-nazi-terrorist-cell/>.

⁴⁸ Telegraph Reporters, "Black paratroopers suing Army claim soldiers put up Nazi flags and pictures of Hitler in their barracks," The Telegraph, 2 July 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/07/02/former-paras-sue-army-racist-abuse-including-decorating-block/amp/>.

⁴⁹ Lizzie Dearden, "British soldiers shown shooting Jeremy Corbyn target prompts army investigation," The Independent, 3 April 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/soldiers-corbyn-shoot-target-practice-army-mod-kabul-a8852156.html>.

⁵⁰ Jamie Grierson, "Counter-extremism chief attacks Tommy Robinson soldier photo," The Guardian, 10 October 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/oct/09/uk-army-investigates-tommy-robinson-poses-with-soldiers>.

⁵¹ Daniel Jones, "The Far Right Has a History of Infiltrating the British Army," Fair Observer, 21 March 2019, <https://www.fairobserver.com/region/europe/uk-far-right-british-army-extremism-europe-news-17712/>.

- In the early 1960s Colin Jordan of the National Socialist Movement actively recruited at the Royal Marine Commando depot in Plymouth.⁵²
- In 1976 the officer commanding a small training cadre of Territorial Army members and a unit of Army Cadets was revealed to be member of a far-right paramilitary group called Column 88, the armed wing of the National Socialist Movement. He also had arranged for his cadets to train alongside units of Column 88.⁵³
- In the 1970s at least eight soldiers in uniform helped with fundraising for National Front.⁵⁴

As a result of increasing public pressure and scrutiny, especially after the NA trial, the British Army seems to have implemented new strategies dealing with the potential threat of extreme right-wing infiltration. It has been reported that the army started to refer soldiers to the PREVENT/Channel counter-radicalisation programmes in 2017. By May 2017, five military personnel had been referred to the programmes, according to media citing the Ministry of Defence.⁵⁵ This number pales in comparison to 1312 general referrals outside the military made for right-wing extremism in 2017/18 (out of 7318 total referrals) but is nevertheless one of the only publicly known collaborations between a western military and a formal counter-radicalisation or de-radicalisation programme outside of the armed forces. According to a spokesperson for the Ministry of Defence, the remarkable policy allows for the continuation of active service if the soldier in question had not entered the criminal space and complies with the necessary intervention to be “re-educated”.⁵⁶

In addition to standard vetting of newly recruited soldiers, it was also reported in the media that the British military had produced an internal guide and training module for officers to recognise a potential extreme right-wing radicalisation process in late 2017 after the highly publicised Vehvilainen arrest. This was further amended by a new Prevent policy issued by the MoD in March 2019 encouraging military personnel to complete online awareness training courses aimed at highlighting the signs and symptoms of potential radicalisation.⁵⁷

Compared to the situation in the United States, the threat of extreme-right infiltration appears to be less in the United Kingdom if one merely looks at the number and severity of publicly known cases. In addition, the British Armed Forces have begun to introduce unique prevention measures (e.g. mandatory training, cooperation with counter-radicalisation programs, guides for the detection of extremist ideology) that fit into the general logic of most CVE work, i.e. awareness of signs of concern, cooperation with specialised service providers and differentialisation of intervention measures according to some form of risk ranking. With taking these first steps towards including CVE in the military, the United Kingdom certainly as a significant advantage for reducing the threat of future infiltration attempts by extremists.

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⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Billy Briggs, “Five military personnel referred to counter-terrorism programme,” *The Ferret*, 24 May 2019, <https://theferret.scot/military-counter-terrorism-prevent-far-right/>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Mark Di Stefano, “The British Army’s Guide For Spotting “Extreme Right Wing” Soldiers Has Leaked Online,” *BuzzFeed News*, 29 May 2019, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/amphml/markdistefano/the-british-armys-guide-for-spotting-extreme-right-wing#click=https://t.co/63KWU1oljQ>.

Germany

Ten years after the end of the Second World War, Western Germany created a new army called the *Bundeswehr*. Perhaps inevitably given that it was raised in 1955, this new force also included former members of Nazi Germany's *Wehrmacht*, *Waffen-SS*, as well as the NSDAP itself. Combat veterans and experienced (non-commissioned) officers were in especially high demand; their skills were necessary to rebuild the German military and train new recruits. The fact that the Cold War had begun, and that the border between West and East Germany was increasingly likely to be one of its frontlines, led to a quick rethinking regarding the opposition against former Nazi soldiers and officers in the newly formed military.⁵⁸ Hence, it is not surprising, that Germany's armed forces have a long history of extreme right-wing terrorism and violent incidents involving active duty and former soldiers.

The most significant examples are:

- The *Nationalsozialistische Kampfgruppe Großdeutschland* (National Socialist Combat Group Great Germany - NSKG), which was founded in April 1972, included 25 members from Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia and was directly influenced by the American neo-Nazi Gary Lauck. The NSKG saw itself as the executor of Adolf Hitler's last will. At least three active-service Bundeswehr soldiers (two master sergeants and one staff sergeant) were part of the NSKG. According to the group's own testimonies, the NSKG had active ties to American and Palestinian (PLO) terrorists and the group's ultimate goal was the armed struggle against the government. This it aimed to accomplish in part by conducting bomb attacks and kidnappings against government installations, Communists, and Jews. Quickly discovered (seven months after its formation) by the authorities, the NSKG was found in possession of three heavy machine guns, five submachine guns, rifles, explosives, rocket-propelled grenades, hand grenades, and manuals for hostage tacking. Six members were convicted of forming a criminal organisation and sentenced to several years in prison.⁵⁹
- In 1973, another small group of six neo-Nazis, the so-called *Gruppe Neumann* (Group Neumann), executed an arson attack against a left-wing book store and plotted to take hostages. One member of the group was an active duty sergeant of the Bundeswehr.⁶⁰
- In May 1976, 19-year-old active duty private Dieter Epplen attempted to execute a bomb attack against the radio station of the Allied Forces

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⁵⁸ Frank Pauli, *Wehrmachtsoffiziere in der Bundeswehr – Das kriegsgediente Offizierskorps der Bundeswehr und die Innere Führung 1955 bis 1970 [Officers of the Wehrmacht in the Bundeswehr – The War Experienced Officers Corps of the Bundeswehr and the Internal Leadership 1955 till 1970]* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010).

⁵⁹ Daniel Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century. The National Socialist Underground and the History of Terror from the Far-Right in Germany* (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 77.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Network (AFN) in Munich. The bomb detonated prematurely, leaving Epplen severely injured.⁶¹

- The first right-wing extremist group in post Second World War Germany to be legally classified as a terrorist organisation (the *Wehrsportgruppe Rohwer* - Military Sports Group Rohwer) executed seven armed robberies and various attacks against German and Dutch army personnel between 1977 and 1978. Its members, among them one active-service Bundeswehr corporal who provided the group with indispensable and detailed knowledge for example about guard shifts and security measures at the targeted military installations, were sentenced to prison on terrorism charges in 1979.⁶²
- In 1995 convicted right-wing terrorist and outspoken neo-Nazi Manfred Roeder was allowed to give a lecture at the Leadership Academy (*Führungsakademie*) of the Bundeswehr and received material support from Bundeswehr depots for his right-wing extremist organisation, which only became public in 1997 and created a nationwide scandal.⁶³ Bundeswehr officials later claimed not to have known about Roeder's background.⁶⁴
- A wave of right-wing incidents involving the army happened in the late 1990s.⁶⁵ For example, in 1997 German authorities detected a group of right-wing extremist Bundeswehr soldiers who possessed bomb-manufacturing manuals, chemicals, weapons, detonators and a Milan anti-tank rocket launch pad.⁶⁶ In the same year, a group of nine soldiers violently attacked three immigrants in Detmold.⁶⁷
- In 2000, 22-year-old André Chladek resigned his position as a sergeant in the elite special commando unit (*Kommando Spezialkräfte* - KSK) and immediately went on to raid a German army unit of conscripts training with weapons and live ammunition. He stole six pistols and 1,550 rounds of ammunition. Afterwards, he went underground and plotted to assassinate leading politicians, army officers, media and civil society representatives. He turned himself in to the authorities after six weeks when he realised that his plotted assassinations would not yield the political change he hoped for.⁶⁸ He was sentenced to seven years in prison in 2001.⁶⁹

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⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 195-6.

⁶² Ibid., p. 81.

⁶³ Ilka Brecht, Volker Steinhoff, "Minister unter Druck - Neue Enthüllungen zum Bundeswehrskandal [Minister Under Pressure: New Details of the Bundeswehr Scandal]", Panorama, 12 December 1997. <https://daserste.ndr.de/panorama/archiv/1997/Minister-unter-Druck-Neue-Enthuellungen-zum-Bundeswehrskandal,erste6882.html>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Shlomo Shpiro, "Barking or biting? Media and parliamentary investigation of right-wing extremism in the Bundeswehr," *German Politics* 9, no. 4 (2000): pp. 217-40.

⁶⁶ Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century. The National Socialist Underground and the History of Terror from the Far-Right in Germany*, p. 192.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 231

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 192

⁶⁹ Ibid.

- In 2006, KSK soldiers deployed in Afghanistan used a version of the Wehrmacht's Afrika Korps symbol on their vehicles.⁷⁰
- In April 2017, KSK soldiers played extreme right-wing music during a celebration and two officers, one of them a Lieutenant-Colonel, displayed the Sieg Heil salute, which is a criminal act in Germany. The Lieutenant-Colonel received a fine of 4.000 Euros.⁷¹
- In 2019, another KSK Lieutenant-Colonel was suspended for making extreme right-wing comments on social media, as well as displaying a sovereign citizen ideology. The officer had been monitored by the German military intelligence since 2007, when he wrote hate letters containing extreme right-wing ideology to some of his fellow soldiers.⁷²

One of the most consequential incidents, however, happened in April 2017, when a First Lieutenant was arrested on terrorism charges.⁷³ The officer, together with a fellow soldier and a civilian, allegedly had plotted to stage a false flag terror attack blaming refugees. For that purpose, the Federal Prosecutor General argues, he had already procured a gun and ammunition and was living a double life posing as a Syrian refugee, even receiving financial assistance from Germany's refugee agency.⁷⁴ The main suspect, Franco A., had already received some attention for potential extreme right-wing attitudes, when his Master thesis written at the French elite military college, *École spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr*, was flagged for espousing xenophobic and racist ideology. He received a reprimand by his German superior officers but the incident was not reported to the military intelligence unit responsible for counter-extremism within the armed forces.⁷⁵ The case is still pending (as of June 2019) in front of the German High Court since a district court had dismissed the terrorism charges, against which the Federal Prosecutor General appealed. Currently, all suspects in the case have been released from investigative custody.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Agence France Presse, "KSK-Soldaten sprühten Wehrmachtssymbol auf Wagen [KSK soldiers sprayed Wehrmacht symbol on vehicle]," SpiegelOnline, 1 November 2006, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/afghanistan-einsatz-ksk-soldaten-spruehten-wehrmachtssymbol-auf-wagen-a-445874.html>.

⁷¹ Deutsche Presseagentur, "Elitesoldat akzeptiert Strafbefehl nach Hitlergruß [elite soldier accepts sentence after Hitler salute]," Stuttgarter Nachrichten, 21 January 2019, <https://www.stuttgarter-nachrichten.de/inhalt.vorfall-bei-sindelfingen-elitesoldat-akzeptiert-strafbefehl-nach-hitlergruss.680a7fbc-6943-4577-9d61-daa89cd94ded.html>.

⁷² SZ, "Bundeswehr suspendiert Offizier wegen Reichsbürger-Verdachts [Bundeswehr suspends officer due to sovereign citizen suspicion]," Süddeutsche Zeitung, 8 February 2019, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/bundeswehr-reichsbuerger-ksk-1.4321858>.

⁷³ Tagesschau, "Generalbundesanwalt klagt Franco A. an [Prosecutor General charges Franco A.]," tagesschau.de, 27 March 2019, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/francoa-101.html>.

⁷⁴ Generalbundesanwalt, "Anklage wegen des Verdachts der Vorbereitung einer schweren staatsgefährdenden Gewalttat [Charge on Suspicion of Preparing a Severe Act of Violence Threatening the State]," 12 December 2017, <https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de/de/showpress.php?searchstring=franco&newsid=741>.

⁷⁵ Mathias Gebauer, "Die rassistische Gedankenwelt des Franco A. [The Racist Mindset of Franco A.]," SpiegelOnline, 3 May 2017, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundeswehr-die-rassistische-gedankenwelt-des-franco-a-a-1145824.html>.

⁷⁶ Deutsche Presseagentur, "Bundesanwaltschaft beharrt auf Terrorverdacht im Fall Franco A. [Federal Prosecutor General Insists on Terrorism Charges]," SpiegelOnline, 20 June 2018, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundesanwaltschaft-legt-beschwerde-im-fall-franco-a-ein-a-1214013.html>.

The main suspect Franco A. was also connected to a separate string of incidents that again raised the public fear of right-wing extremism in the German military. In August 2017, counter-terrorism police units searched homes of six persons on suspicions preparing an extreme right-wing terror attack. The group called *Nordkreuz* (Northern Cross) included several police and military reserve officers.⁷⁷ In June 2019, four former and active special forces (*Sondereinsatzkommando*, SEK) police officers from the Nordkreuz group were arrested after it was found that they had stolen over 10,000 rounds of ammunition. Several of the suspects, including the main administrator of Nordkreuz, had been serving in Bundeswehr elite units like paratroopers or forward reconnaissance (*Fernspäher*) before joining the police.⁷⁸ The founder and administrator of the group was also said to have been in touch with Franco A. via a private security company called “Uniter”. The company actively recruits among former and active special forces soldiers, such as the KSK. Uniter and Nordkreuz are alleged to have been preparing for a breakdown of political order in Germany (as part of the so called “prepper” scene), but also to create weapons depots, conduct combat drills and collect lists of left-wing politicians who could be executed in the case of a violent revolution.⁷⁹ Investigations are still ongoing (as of June 2016) but press reports about a possible “shadow army” of German elite soldiers plotting to overthrow the government have had a particular unsettling effect on the German public.⁸⁰

Even though the legal consequences are as of yet unclear, the political reactions to the Franco A. case were significant. As an immediate response, the German Minister of Defence, Ursula von der Leyen, ordered a systematic search of all military barracks to identify and remove potential extreme right-wing propaganda and memorabilia glorifying the German Wehrmacht.⁸¹ The second response to the incident was the revision of the German military’s so called “tradition decree” (*Traditionserlass*), outlining the rules and procedures regarding the army’s history, as well as its core values and ideals.⁸²

In contrast to the other countries discussed here, the German military does have a specialised internal unit tasked with countering extremism within the Bundeswehr. The Military Intelligence (*Militärischer Abschirmdienst* – MAD) is responsible for (among other tasks) identifying extremist soldiers and removing them from active duty if the suspicion is confirmed.⁸³ The German MAD works on the basis of a law that outlines its responsibilities and criteria for defining “extremism”. Countering extremist ideologies

77 Fabienne Hurst, Robert Bongen, Julian Feldmann, “Rechtsterror-Ermittlungen: Gründer der ‘Prepper’-Gruppe ist Polizist [right-wing terrorism investigations: founder of prepper group is police officer],” Panorama, 7 September 2017, <https://daserste.ndr.de/panorama/archiv/2017/Rechtsterror-Ermittlungen-Gruender-der-Prepper-Gruppe-ist-Polizist,prepper100.html>.

78 Uwe Reißerweber, “Ermittlungen führen in die Bundeswehr [investigations lead into the Bundeswehr],” Nordkurier, 25 June 2019, <https://www.nordkurier.de/mecklenburg-vorpommern/ermittlungen-fuehren-in-die-bundeswehr-2535906206.html>.

79 Südwest Rundfunk, “Plant Uniter den politischen Zusammenbruch Deutschlands? [is Uniter planing the collapse of Germany?],” swr aktuell, 7 February 2019, <https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/baden-wuerttemberg/Umstrittener-Verein-Ex-KSK-Soldaten-erheben-neue-Vorwuerfe-gegen-Uniter,uniter-vorwuerfe-schattenarmee-100.html>.

80 Martin Kaul, Christina Schmidt, “Hannibal’s Shadow Army,” taz. Die Tageszeitung, 13 December 2018, <https://taz.de/taz-Recherche-auf-Englisch/!5558072/>.

81 Zeit Online, “400 Militärdevotionalien in Kasernen gefunden [400 military devotionalia found in barracks],” Die Zeit, 30 May 2017, <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2017-05/bundeswehr-kasernen-durchsuchung-wehrmacht-andenken>.

82 Zeit Online, “Von der Leyen setzt neuen Traditionserlass um [Von der Leyen executes new tradition decree],” Die Zeit, 28 March 2018, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2018-03/bundeswehr-traditionserlass-ursula-von-der-leyen-rechtsextremismus>.

83 Militärischer Abschirmdienst, “Überblick: Wie der MAD gegen Extremisten vorgeht [overview: how the MAD counters extremism],” Bundeswehr, 19 March 2019, <https://mad.bundeswehr.de/portal/a/mad/start>.

and behaviour in the military is supported by the fact that certain elements of extremism (e.g. some acts of speech, codes, and symbols) are illegal and can constitute a crime. This, of course, makes it easier for the MAD to investigate and potentially remove soldiers suspected of harbouring extremist views. But, even without clearly illegal behaviour by soldiers, it is possible to remove personnel from active duty on the basis of an anti-constitutional ideology that goes contrary to every enlisted person's pledge of allegiance to protect the German political order.

A significant improvement in responding to the threat of extremist infiltration of the Bundeswehr was started in late 2016, when the German parliament started the process of revising the legal basis for background checks of new recruits by military intelligence. Until that change, it was only possible for the intelligence service to screen out fully employed soldiers, not recruits. The new law became effective in July 2018.⁸⁴ It has resulted in the identification of right-wing extremist recruits and their subsequent rejection from the armed forces in 13 cases between 2017 and 2018.⁸⁵ Regarding right-wing extremist incidents involving active duty military personnel, the publicly reported MAD statistics indicate the need to maintain a specialised unit investigating potential extremist infiltration beyond vetting and background checks of new recruits, since the initially suspected cases are about 8x times as much as those confirmed in the end:

Year	# of Suspected Extreme Right-Wing Cases
2008	674
2009	736
2010	585
2011	378
2012	338
2013	309
2014	308
2015	265
2016	227
2017	379
2018	270

Table 1: Number of new cases of suspected right-wing extremism in the Bundeswehr handled by the MAD.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, "Bundestag beschließt Sicherheitsüberprüfung vor Dienstantritt [Bundestag decides to conduct security checks before entering active service]," 16 December 2016, <https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/bundestag-beschliesst-sicherheitsueberpruefung-vor-dienstantritt-11452>.

⁸⁵ Deutscher Bundestag, "Drucksache 19/10338. Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Ulla Jelpke, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. André Hahn, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/8674 – Rechtsextreme Vorfälle in der Bundeswehr [Report No. 19/10338. Reply of the Federal Government to the Small Inquiry of Members of Parliament Ulla Jelpke, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. André Hahn and other Members of Parliament of the Fraction DIE LINKE – Document No. 19/8674 – Right-Wing Extremist Incidents in the Bundeswehr]," 20 May 2019, <https://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btd/19/103/1910338.pdf>, p. 6.

⁸⁶ Deutscher Bundestag, "Drucksache 19/1568. Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Ulla Jelpke, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. André Hahn, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/732 – Rechtsextreme Vorfälle in der Bundeswehr im Jahr 2017 [Report No. 19/1568. Reply of the Federal Government to the Small Inquiry of Members of Parliament Ulla Jelpke, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. André Hahn and other Members of Parliament of the Fraction DIE LINKE – Document No. 19/732 – Right-Wing Extremist Incidents in the Bundeswehr in 2017]," 9 April 2018, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/015/1901568.pdf>, p. 3.

Year	# of Confirmed Right-Wing Extremism Cases
2008	42
2009	59
2010	47
2011	22
2012	7
2013	3
2014	4
2015	4
2016	3
2017	6
2018	4

Table 2: Number of confirmed cases of right-wing extremism in the Bundeswehr after MAD investigation.⁸⁷

In 2019, the MAD still had 428 open investigations into possible cases of right-wing extremism in the Bundeswehr partially dating back to 2011.⁸⁸ In September 2019, the MAD still had 478 open investigations into possible cases of right-wing extremism in the Bundeswehr partially dating back to 2011. 50 new cases were added between May and September 2019, signalling a substantial broadening of investigative activities. Most concerning is the fact, that about two dozen cases alone involve the special operations KSK unit.⁸⁹ Measures taken in response to confirmed cases do vary depending on the severity of the investigated incident. The MAD reported that the four confirmed cases of 2018 were all long-term members of right-wing extremist organisations and had been discharged from the military.⁹⁰ Of the six confirmed cases from 2017 for example, only five soldiers were discharged.⁹¹ In many cases, disciplinary action like reprimands were deemed sufficient and access to weapons was not restricted.⁹²

Extreme right-wing convictions within the German army were commonly explained as stemming from the use of conscription, which results in recruits whose worldviews span the spectrum of political orientations. However, the officer corps should not have been affected by this 'natural political turnover' since it was open for professional soldiers only. Available studies about political convictions of the officer corps are rare but have

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Deutscher Bundestag, "Drucksache 19/10338. Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Ulla Jelpke, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. André Hahn, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/8674 – Rechtsextreme Vorfälle in der Bundeswehr [Report No. 19/10338. Reply of the Federal Government to the Small Inquiry of Members of Parliament Ulla Jelpke, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. André Hahn and other Members of Parliament of the Fraction DIE LINKE – Document No. 19/8674 – Right-Wing Extremist Incidents in the Bundeswehr]," 20 May 2019, <https://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btd/19/103/1910338.pdf>, p. 4.

⁸⁹ Matthias Gebauer, "Zahl rechtsextremer Verdachtsfälle in der Bundeswehr steigt", Spiegel Online, September 18, 2019, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundeswehr-zahl-rechtsextremer-verdachtsfaelle-gestiegen-a-1287358.html>

⁹⁰ Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 19/10338, 2019

⁹¹ Deutscher Bundestag, "Drucksache 19/1568. Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Ulla Jelpke, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. André Hahn, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 19/732 – Rechtsextreme Vorfälle in der Bundeswehr im Jahr 2017 [Report No. 19/1568. Reply of the Federal Government to the Small Inquiry of Members of Parliament Ulla Jelpke, Tobias Pflüger, Dr. André Hahn and other Members of Parliament of the Fraction DIE LINKE – Document No. 19/732 – Right-Wing Extremist Incidents in the Bundeswehr in 2017]," 9 April 2018, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/015/1901568.pdf>, p. 5.

⁹² N-TV, "'Sieg Heil' bei der Bundeswehr [Sieg Heil in the Bundeswehr]," 20 June 2019, <https://www.n-tv.de/politik/Sieg-Heil-bei-der-Bundeswehr-article21098864.html>.

indicated that the conscription might not have had the main impact on right-wing extremist attitudes. A first major study⁹³ was conducted in the late 1970s and found that a total of 10 percent of all candidates (classes of 1973-1975 with a total of 638 officers) had extreme right-wing political opinions.⁹⁴ Another representative poll from 1993 looked at the question of how attractive the armed forces might be for potential recruits with extreme-right wing attitudes. It found that 77 percent of those interested in joining the military had significant extreme right-wing worldviews.⁹⁵ This relationship between right-wing opinions and favourable attitudes towards the military was largely confirmed by a subsequent study eight years later.⁹⁶ Although an inherent affinity towards military, weapons, uniforms, and strict hierarchies might be essential to the far-right, problematic traditions and continuities between the modern German army—the Bundeswehr—and the Wehrmacht of the Third Reich might be another reason for that attraction.⁹⁷ Interestingly, such affinities and attractions might also be found among terrorists in general and a potential overlap could be explored separately. A similar study to the one from 1978 looking at the political opinions of German army officers (conducted in 2007 with 2,300 participants, all students of both armed forces universities) still revealed a strong political affinity to the ‘New Right’ for 13 percent of all future officers and a closed right-wing extremist opinion for 4 percent.⁹⁸

After conscription was abolished in Germany in 2011, and the armed forces were transformed to a volunteer-based military, many experts expected more right-wing extremists to enlist because a career in the Bundeswehr would now become more attractive to those persons with few or no chances on the labour market.⁹⁹ On the contrary, however, as Table 2 regarding the confirmed cases of right-wing extremist soldiers shows, the extent of the threat at least by that specific metric has been declining steadily and significantly from 2010 onwards. Since no other academic study on political attitudes within the armed forces has been conducted after the end of conscription, it is difficult to assess the current threat of extremist infiltration beyond the cases presented

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⁹³ This study focused on right-wing extremist opinions in the German Army’s officer corps. The following studies looked more broadly at political and social attitudes of officers, including right-wing and extremist tendencies.

⁹⁴ Wolfgang Gessenharter and Helmut Fröchling, with Burkhard Krupp, *Rechtsextremismus als normativ-praktisches Forschungsproblem: eine empirische Analyse der Einstellungen von studierenden Offizieren der Hochschule der Bundeswehr Hamburg sowie von militärischen und zivilen Vergleichsgruppen* [Right-Wing Extremism as normative-practical research issue: an empirical analysis of attitudes of student officers of the Bundeswehr University Hamburg as well as military and civil comparison groups] (Weinheim; Basel: Beltz).

⁹⁵ Heinz-Ulrich Kohr, „Rechts zur Bundeswehr, Links zum Zivildienst? Orientierungsmuster von Heranwachsenden in den alten und neuen Bundesländern Ende 1992 [Right to the Bundeswehr, Left to the Civil Service? Attitudes of Adolescents in the Old and New States End of 1992],“ SOWI-Arbeitspapier Nr. 77, March, 1993,

<http://www.mgfa.de/html/einsatzunterstuetzung/downloads/ap077.pdf?PHPSESSID=>

⁹⁶ Sven Bernhard Gareis and Peter-Michael Kozielski, with Michael Kratschmar, „Rechtsextreme Orientierungen in Deutschland und ihre Folgen für die Bundeswehr [Right-Wing Extremist Attitudes in Germany and their Consequences for the Bundeswehr],“ SOWI-Arbeitspapier Nr.: 129, June, 2001, <http://www.mgfa.de/html/einsatzunterstuetzung/downloads/ap129.pdf?PHPSESSID=>

⁹⁷ Johannes Klotz and Christian Gerlach, *Vorbild Wehrmacht? Wehrmachtsverbrechen, Rechtsextremismus und Bundeswehr [Role Model Wehrmacht? Crimes of the Wehrmacht, Right-Wing Extremism and the Bundeswehr]* (Köln: PapyRossa, 1998).

⁹⁸ Thomas Bulmahn and Rüdiger Fiebig, with Victoria Wieninger, Stefanie Greif, Max H. Flach, and Manon A. Priesch, „Ergebnisse der Studentenbefragung an den Universitäten der Bundeswehr Hamburg und München 2007 [Results of a student poll at the Universities of the Bundeswehr in Hamburg and Munich 2007],“ Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr, „Forschungsbericht 89“, March 2010, <https://www.fachportal-paedagogik.de/literatur/vollanzeige.html?Fid=903572#vollanzeige>.

⁹⁹ Michael Wolffsohn, „Verführbare Soldaten [Seducible Soldiers],“ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3 January 2013, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/rechtsextremismus-in-der-bundeswehr-verfuehrbare-soldaten-1.1563756>.

here and the official MAD statistics; however, it has been noted with concern that the German far right political party *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany) has been actively campaigning for support from military personnel and police officers with so far unknown effects on the political attitudes within the armed forces.¹⁰⁰

It would be valuable to compare the German situation with the Austrian counterpart, as both countries share a Nazi history and have comparably structured militaries. However, even though a small number of cases of the Austrian military's attraction to the far right has been reported in the press, the available information is so far too scarce to attempt such a comparison. No official reports like the German MAD statistics exist in Austria and court trials against right-wing extremist soldiers are widely shielded off from the public.¹⁰¹ A parliamentary inquiry regarding right-wing extremist incidents in the Austrian army from April 5, 2019, for example, was largely left unanswered with reference to national security and intelligence privilege.¹⁰² Hence, the lack of data access in the Austrian case prevents such a comparison.

The Veteran Question

A different, albeit connected, question is the role of military veterans (i.e. persons with military training of any sort) in extreme right-wing groups or terrorist cells. Even though technically and legally these individuals have left the military's responsibility, there are still certain factors that could make them—at least partially—the military's problem again. For example, if their extremist radicalisation started during their active service and was not spotted by the military, or if veterans retain close contacts with active service personnel or within reservist and veterans' associations. For instance, in order to radicalise other soldiers, recruit for their groups, or get access to weapons, training, and tactical information. Furthermore, depending on the time span between veterans leaving active service and showing publicly visible signs of violent radicalisation, the public (including policy makers) might see the military as responsible after all.

Law enforcement and intelligence agencies have occasionally warned against the threat of “disgruntled” or “disillusioned” veterans who could become prime targets of extreme right-wing recruitment efforts. The previously cited analysis by the American DHS states that:

“rightwing extremists will attempt to recruit and radicalize returning veterans in order to exploit their skills and knowledge derived from military training and combat. These skills and knowledge have the potential to boost the capabilities of extremists—including lone wolves or small terrorist cells—to carry out violence. The willingness of a small percentage of military personnel to join extremist groups during the

¹⁰⁰ Maria Fiedler, “Wie die AfD um Soldaten wirbt [How the AfD campaigns for soldiers],” *Der Tagesspiegel*, 29 March 2019, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/themen/agenda/unzufriedenheit-in-der-truppe-wie-die-afd-um-soldaten-wirbt/24142754.html>.

¹⁰¹ Catharina Felke, “Rechtsextremismus ist in Österreich nicht verboten,” *Zeit Online*, 12 May 2017, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2017-05/oesterreich-rechtsextremismus-heer-parallelen-deutschland-andreas-peham-interview>.

¹⁰² Johann Luif, “Anfragebeantwortung: “Unterwanderung des österreichischen Bundesheeres durch rechtsextreme Organisationen, insbesondere durch die Identitäre Bewegung Österreich” (3254/AB),” *Republik Österreich, Parlament*, 29 May 2019, https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXVI/AB/AB_03254/imfname_754891.pdf.

1990s because they were disgruntled, disillusioned, or suffering from the psychological effects of war is being replicated today.”¹⁰³

Cases of military veterans, sometimes with combat experience, who are responsible for significant far-right terror attacks can easily be found. In the United States, arguably the most infamous attack happened on April 19, 1995 with Timothy McVeigh’s attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 victims. McVeigh was a Gulf War veteran and honourably discharged from the army in 1991 after having received several service awards.¹⁰⁴

Other cases include Curtis Allen, a former Marine and Iraq War veteran who was sentenced to 25 years in federal prison in January 2019 for his part in a bomb plot targeting Muslims in Kansas. Allen belonged to an anti-Muslim militia group called “The Crusaders.”¹⁰⁵ Looking into the history of the extreme right in the U.S., several leading figures who created influential groups or strategic concepts had a military background. George Lincoln Rockwell, founder of the American Nazi Party, was discharged from the United States Navy as a pilot with the rank of Commander due to his political views¹⁰⁶ and Ku Klux Klan leader Louis Beam, who also championed the “leaderless resistance” concept, fought in the Vietnam war between 1967 and 1968 as a helicopter door-gunner of the United States Army and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.¹⁰⁷ The founder of the notorious Aryan Nations, Richard Butler, enlisted in the Army Air Corps where he served stateside for the duration of World War II.¹⁰⁸

In Germany, some of the most influential or violent figures of the extreme right after the Second World War came from the ranks of the military as well. One of the most prominent cases of military educated and later high-ranking neo-Nazis is Michael Kühnen (1955-1991), who became one of the leading thinkers of the militant extreme right in Germany in the late 1970s and 80s. Kühnen served in the Bundeswehr between 1974 and 1977, achieving the rank of Lieutenant. He studied at the University of the Armed Forces in Hamburg and was dishonourably discharged due to his extreme right-wing activities in 1977. He founded several militant extreme right-wing organisations, partially with direct support from U.S. neo-Nazi Gary Lauck. He was also implicated in the first terrorism trial against an extreme right-wing group in post Second World War Germany, the so called “Bückeburg Trial” in 1979. He was charged and found guilty of sedition; his active involvement in the terror group’s actions could not be proven.¹⁰⁹ Kühnen and his organisations at least influenced two additional right-wing terrorist groups active in 1977 and 1978.¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Department of Homeland Security, “Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment,” 7 April 2009, <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/rightwing.pdf>, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ Sally Jacobs, “The Radicalization of Timothy McVeigh,” Tulsa World, 10 June 1995, http://www.tulsaworld.com/archives/the-radicalization-of-timothy-mcveigh/article_49b91161-74c7-538f-8183-ef957f45aa1.html.

¹⁰⁵ Christopher Mathias, Ryan J. Reilly, “These Pro-Trump Extremists Had A Plan To Kill Muslims. How Were They Radicalized?,” The Huffington Post, 17 April 2018, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/domestic-terrorism-trial-kansas-trump-militia_n_5ad4e700e4boedca2c603.

¹⁰⁶ Frederick James Simonelli, *American Fuehrer: George Lincoln Rockwell and the American Nazi Party* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁷ Southern Poverty Law Center, “Louis Beam,” no date, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/louis-beam>.

¹⁰⁸ The Telegraph, “Richard Butler,” 10 September 2004, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1471383/Richard-Butler.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century. The National Socialist Underground and the History of Terror from the Far-Right in Germany*, pp. 81-2

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

One year after the Bückeberg Trial, in 1980, Germany experienced the (still) most lethal terror attack since the end of the Second World War: the Oktoberfest bombing on September 26, 1980, causing 13 casualties and injuring more than 200. The main perpetrator, Gundolf Köhler (born 1959, killed in the attack), was a committed right-wing extremist since at least age 14 and active member of far-right paramilitary militias since the age of 15 or 16. He served for two years in the Bundeswehr, voluntarily extending his mandatory service and tried to acquire training as an explosives expert. After the military denied him this career, he went on to study geology in Tübingen in 1979.¹¹¹

As one of the most significant extreme right-wing terror groups, the killing and bombing spree of the “National Socialist Underground” (NSU) between 2000 and 2007, which left 10 people murdered, has been called “our September 11” by Germany’s then Federal Prosecutor General Harald Range.¹¹² The core cell of three neo-Nazis went underground in the late 1990s and were not detected until 2011. In that time, the group was found responsible for at least 10 assassinations, three bomb attacks and 15 armed robberies. Uwe Mundlos (1973-2011) was one member of that cell and served in an armored infantry battalion of the Bundeswehr between April 1994 and March 1995. He had several conflicts with superiors due to his outspoken right-wing extremist convictions. Violating all standing regulations regarding extreme right-wing military personnel, Mundlos was promoted to private first class (Obergefreiter), received heavy-weapons training and a ‘satisfactory’ grade certificate for his military service.¹¹³

Recommendations

Based on the selected examples of incidents and individual cases presented here, it is possible to draw some lessons learned on countering the threat of right-wing extremist infiltration of the military for policy makers and military leaders. The first lesson is that the military has to deal with various different types of cases potentially involving violent extremist radicalisation and thereby needs to develop and establish adequate context-specific counter measures. There is no silver bullet solution. The potential cases the military might be confronted with can be:

- a) Extremist background/radicalisation before entering service

Already radicalised extremists might actively try to enter the armed forces for strategic or tactical purposes, to gain weapons training, access to ammunition and explosives or to recruit other soldiers for their cause. Cases of recruits who were already committed extremists at the time they entered service can be found in all four countries studied here. Furthermore, available information suggests that extreme right-wing leaders have advocated for the strategic infiltration of the military in various ways. This scenario is the typical threat of a hostile infiltration and one that should be countered in a most straightforward way by the military. Criminal background checks are standard procedure in most if not all military forces around the world.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 210-1.

¹¹² Eckart Lohse, Markus Wehner, “Die NSU-Morde sind unser 11. September,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 25 March 2012, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/generalbundesanwalt-harald-range-die-nsu-morde-sind-unser-11-september-11696086.html>.

¹¹³ Koehler, Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century. The National Socialist Underground and the History of Terror from the Far-Right in German, pp. 132-3.

However, such check will do little if right-wing extremist views are not specifically incorporated as a potential risk factor in such background evaluations. Especially in the United States, the lack of such checks was found to reduce the military's capability of protecting itself against right-wing extremist infiltration.¹¹⁴ In other cases, such as Canada, infiltrators might attempt to use sophisticated strategies to remain undetected in order to gain access to military training and equipment.¹¹⁵ Even in Germany, the only country from the sample to have established a dedicated counter-extremism unit within the military, the legal basis for screening out extremists before they enter service was made possible only in 2018. It is absolutely necessary to include background checks in military recruitment procedures that go beyond criminal activity and look at past involvement in violent extremism as well. This is a standard counter-intelligence mechanism and also forms the basis for assessing a recruit's moral and ethical fitness for serving in the military. If a recruit's past activities show an ideological conviction that explicitly sees democratic principles as hostile, how can person be expected to protect these principles?

b) Extremist radicalisation during active service

A more complicated type of case concerns the radicalisation of military personnel during active service. Here, the person's experiences in the military, personal networks, or outside influences (online and offline) facilitate a radicalisation process leading to the rejection of the military's fundamental principles, and leading even to violent actions (e.g. in the case of Nidal Hasan or Christopher Hasson). To detect such a radicalisation process and intervene adequately forms the core of all CVE activities and programs around the world and is certainly no easy task. Specially trained personnel,¹¹⁶ programs and procedures designed for different stages of radicalisation processes,¹¹⁷ effective monitoring and evaluation procedures,¹¹⁸ and a widely spread awareness/knowledge about signs of concern (e.g. codes and symbols, extremist ideologies and rhetoric, subcultural styles) and reporting mechanisms are just some of the more important components necessary to counter this potential threat.

The British Armed Forces have started to make the first steps into that direction with producing special educational material for all personnel and making CVE training mandatory. The German military does have the significant advantage of having its own dedicated intelligence service (the MAD) tasked and equipped specifically to identify and assess potential cases of extremist radicalisation. A counter-extremism force within the military means that necessary resources like investigators are permanently dedicated to countering this threat and is highly recommended for all other armed forces as well.

It also became apparent that not all cases of identified extremism in the military can be met with the same intervention. Reprimands, mandatory counselling, or removal from active duty and dishonourable discharge can be possible tools. If an intervention other

¹¹⁴ Jeff McCausland, "Inside the U.S. military's battle with white supremacy and far-right extremism," NBC, 25 May 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/amp/ncna1010221#click=https://t.co/8HJmNRBSOY>.

¹¹⁵ Ben Makuch, Mack Lamoureux, See "Neo-Nazis Want Canadian Military Training," 22 October 2018, https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/a3pppz/neo-nazis-want-canadian-military-training.

¹¹⁶ For a detailed analysis of CVE and deradicalization training see: Daniel Koehler, Verena Fiebig, "Knowing What to Do: Academic and Practitioner Understanding of How to Counter Violent Radicalization," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13, no. 3 (2019): pp. 44-62.

¹¹⁷ Koehler, *Understanding Deradicalization. Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism*.

¹¹⁸ Ben Baruch and Tom Ling, with Rich Warnes, and Joanna Hofman, "Evaluation in an emerging field: Developing a measurement framework for the field of counter-violent-extremism," *Evaluation* 24, no. 4 (2018): pp. 475-95.

than removal from active duty is determined to be the adequate reaction, then the consequence must be that the military establishes its own CVE or de-radicalisation program. Even in the case of discharging radicalised soldiers, a very important question remains: what happens to the person afterwards? Having identified a person already committed to violent extremism to an extent deemed dangerous for the military, and after the person has received military training, the shame of dishonourable discharge, and the removal of someone's source of income, could very well become major push factors in the radicalisation process. Releasing disgruntled and highly frustrated former soldiers with violent extremist views into civilian life without any kind of referral to counselling and/or de-radicalisation programs could therefore be a significant risk. So far, only the British military has started formal collaboration with civilian (albeit governmental) CVE programs.

c) Extremist radicalisation after discharge – veterans

Technically this type of cases is not the responsibility of the military. However, due to the nature of military training or significant events during active service (e.g. PTSD), civilian CVE and de-radicalisation programmes should have the opportunity to work together with the military in order to reduce risk for clients who are veterans and should maybe involve persons with military authority in the counselling. Ideally, this CVE collaboration can be based on a mutual understanding and shared responsibility for the person at risk.

d) Families and friends of military personnel

Another potential set of cases can involve family members and friends of military personnel who might become radicalised or active in violent extremist organisations. Providing special counselling and support for military personnel in this regard is a logical step to protect military information and prevent soldiers of being exploited for extremist goals. Especially career personnel with access to classified information who might become subjects of extortion in order to protect their rank and income could be included in such counselling programs.

In addition to these more specific pointers, the discussion above underlines the need for more research on radicalisation within the armed forces. There are a range of topics that in need of further attention, such as military-specific risk factors for radicalisation, effects of military life and combat experiences on vulnerabilities for violent radicalisation, and the role of military education on the careers of extremists and terrorists. Without a scientific evidence base on the extent of risks and threats, as well as the interplay of various external and internal factors, any CVE attempts by the military or directed at the armed forces have a much higher chance of failure and backfiring. Close cooperation between civilian (e.g. academic and practitioner) experts and the military to learn from each other and design a best-fit synthesis of CVE tools and knowledge for this complex area is therefore recommended.

Conclusion

Countering violent extremism mechanisms have become a cornerstone of counter-terrorism in many countries in recent years. Even though the field is still in its infancy, and plagued by the lack of key fundamentals (e.g. evidence base, effective evaluation,

quality standards and training),¹¹⁹ the military as one potential field of extremist activities has fallen far behind developments in this regard. This comes as somewhat of a surprise since highly publicised cases of military personnel with extremist ties create immense pressure on military officials and policy makers to make sure the armed forces are not abused by violent extremists and terrorists. Public scrutiny is therefore high.

Developing military-specific CVE programs should come as a logic step for policy makers and military leaders. Furthermore, it is fairly well-known that extremists of all background value skills trained in the military, as well as strategic and tactical information, weapons of military grade and the access to a vast recruitment pool. Since the military forms an essential part of any country's security infrastructure, it must develop adequate protective and countering measures against violent extremist infiltration attempts. The same holds true for police and intelligence agencies, which is the topic for another detailed assessment in the future.¹²⁰ This policy brief has started to document significant cases and incidents, as well as recommend specific measures based on lessons learned. Even though the CVE field has a long way to go before reaching maturity and a well-established evidence base, experts in the academic and practitioner field can already provide the military with essential insights, training and conceptual assistance to close the most important current gaps. The first step is therefore to begin an open exchange and debate about the role and form of CVE and de-radicalisation in the military.

¹¹⁹ Daniel Koehler, "How and why we should take deradicalization seriously," *Nature Human Behaviour* 1, no. 0095 (2017).

¹²⁰ For first overview, see: Adam Potočňák and Radka Vicenová, eds., *Radicals in Uniform: Case studies of Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and Slovakia* (Bratislava: Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs, 2015).

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Daniel Koehler studied comparative religion, political science and economics at Princeton University and Free University Berlin. After finishing the postgraduate 'Master of Peace and Security Studies' at the University of Hamburg he specialised on terrorism, radicalisation, and deradicalisation. Daniel is also the co-founder of the first peer reviewed open access journal on deradicalisation, which he created together with the "German Institute on Radicalization and De-Radicalization Studies" (GIRDS) in 2014. In June 2015 Daniel was named a Fellow of George Washington University's Program on Extremism at the Center for Cyber and Homeland Security. In 2016 he was appointed to be the first court expert on deradicalisation in the United States of America at the District Court in Minneapolis and started to work with the Ministry of the Interior in Baden-Württemberg, Germany to help coordinate a state-wide CVE network. In July 2017 Daniel became a member of the Editorial Board of the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague.

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September 2019

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