

EXPERT PAPER

Stefan Goertz

Our European Democracy(ies)

Current Threats and Attackers

November 2022



E·I·C·T·P

IMPRINT

The European Institute for Counter Terrorism and Conflict Prevention (EICTP) is a research association operating worldwide and with its headquarters in Vienna, Austria. As a non-profit institution the focus of EICTP is on key topics around security policy-related issues. It carries out projects with renowned partners in Austria and abroad, maintains close relationships with high-level research organizations and a network of prominent experts and scholars, offers profound sets of actions, consultations and strategies related to counter-terrorism, hybrid conflicts, and de-radicalization measures and aims at creating policy-related recommendations based on research and expert assessments for decision-makers.

Address:

European Institute for Counter Terrorism and Conflict Prevention (EICTP)

Esslinggasse 17/5, AT-1010 Vienna

www.eictp.eu

Media owner, editor, producer: EICTP

Place of publication: Esslinggasse 17/5, 1010 Wien

Proof-reading and formal editing: EICTP

Graphic Design: Citypress GmbH

Print: Citypress GmbH

Disclaimer of liability: The contents of this publication have been researched and created with utmost diligence and care. EICTP provides no guarantee for the correctness, completeness and topicality of the information given. Neither EICTP nor other parties involved in the creation of this publication shall be held liable for damages of any kind arising from the use, application or circulation of the provided information. Should this publication contain references to other media of third parties and over which no influence can be exerted by EICTP, no liability whatsoever of such contents shall be assumed. The relevant media owner shall be responsible for the correctness of the contents of the information provided. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of EICTP and is solely the option of the respective author(s).

Copyright: All of the content published in this summarized research report is copyrighted. Without prior written consent of EICTP any type of duplication, distribution, modification, or reproduction is not permitted, both against payments and for free.

Table of Content

1	INTRODUCTION	4
2	OUR EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY(IES) IS/ARE THREATENED AND ATTACKED	5
2.1	DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE – RECOGNIZING AND FENDING OFF THREATS AND ATTACKERS	5
3	CURRENT ISSUES, NARRATIVES AND CONSPIRACY NARRATIVES OF RADICALS AND EXTREMISTS	8
3.1	DELEGITIMIZATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC STATE - DELEGITIMIZERS AND STATE DENIERS	8
3.2	ANTI-ASYLUM, XENOPHOBIA, RACISM, ISLAMOPHOBIA AND MUSLIMOPHOBIA	13
3.3	ANTI-SEMITIC CONSPIRACY NARRATIVE: QANON	17
3.4	“CONSPIRACY OF THE ELITES”: “DEEP STATE”, “NEW WORLD ORDER”, “THE GREAT RESET”, THE “GREAT EXCHANGE”, “THE SIEGE”, “S.H.A.E.F.” IDEOLOGY	19
3.5	INTERIM CONCLUSION	25
4	CURRENT ACTORS, STRATEGIES AND TRENDS IN THE FIELD OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM, DELEGITIMIZERS AS WELL AS ISLAMISM	25
4.1	OLD AND NEW RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS – STRATEGIES AND TRENDS	25
4.2	“REICHSBÜRGER” AND “SELBSTVERWALTER”	30
4.3	ISLAMISTS, SALAFISTS AND ISLAMIST TERRORISTS	33
4.3.1	<i>“Milli-Görüs”</i>	35
4.3.2	<i>Muslim Brotherhood</i>	36
4.3.3	<i>Furkan community</i>	38
5	PROPAGANDA, FAKE NEWS AND DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS OF THE PUTIN SYSTEM - DELEGITIMIZATION OF OUR DEMOCRACY(IES)	39
5.1	EFFECTIVENESS OF COUNTERMEASURES, THE CURRENT THREAT SITUATION, CRITICISM OF COUNTERMEASURES	40
5.2	PROPOSALS - NEW COUNTERMEASURES, ACTORS AND MEANS	43
6	ENERGY CRISIS AND INFLATION IN GERMANY: ARE MASS PROTESTS THREATENED BY A NEW ACTOR CONSTELLATION OF POPULISTS, RADICALS AS WELL AS EXTREMISTS ON THE ONE HAND AND PEOPLE FROM THE POLITICAL CENTER ON THE OTHER?	45
7	COUNTERING CURRENT AND FUTURE THREATS AND ATTACKERS - THE “STRATEGIC COMPASS” OF THE EUROPEAN UNION	49
7.1	THE “STRATEGIC COMPASS” AND THE EU THREAT ANALYSIS – “THE WORLD WE LIVE IN”	50
7.2	THE “STRATEGIC COMPASS” – NEW EU MEASURES AND MEANS	52
8	CONCLUSION	53

1 Introduction

Until the start of the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine, the idea of war in Europe in the 21st century was unimaginable for the vast majority of people. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Cold War, the East-West conflict, seemed to have ended. Due to the massive expansion of trade relations with Russia, most European politicians, especially the German ones, believed that wars were no longer part of the toolkit of state leaders. Therefore, February 24, 2022, represents a caesura in security policy, both for external and internal security.

The new East-West conflict started on 24.2.2022 at the latest, actually already with the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 in violation of international law. This new East-West conflict has threatening consequences for Europe and the world. On the level of external security, the focus is on the potential threat of further EU/NATO states on the border with Russia. On the internal security level, various security agencies and scholars have already noted since the beginning of the Corona pandemic in the spring of 2020 that radicals and extremists in Europe, especially in Germany, are disparaging and delegitimizing democracy, its governments, authorities and principles. Already at the beginning of this pandemic in 2020, disinformation campaigns were evident in the social networks, which obviously had their origin in the Putin system.

Our European democracy(s) is/are under threat, at a post-World War II historical level. This paper examines the current threats facing our European democracies, primarily at the level of analysis of homeland security. These threats and their actors are analyzed here in the thematic areas of democratic resilience, narratives and conspiracy narratives of radicals and extremists, delegitimization of the democratic state, current actors, strategies and trends in right-wing extremism and delegitimizers as well as Islamism, propaganda, fake news and disinformation campaigns of the Putin system – delegitimization of our democracy(ies) as well as energy crisis and inflation in Germany. On the one hand, new measures, means and actors in the fight against propaganda and disinformation campaigns are proposed and on the other hand, the

“Strategic Compass” of the EU, current and future threats and attackers on the levels of internal and external security are presented from the perspective of the EU.

2 Our European democracy(ies) is/are threatened and attacked

Not only since the beginning of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the Russian disinformation campaigns against Western states, especially against states in Europe, it is clear that democracies in Europe are threatened and attacked, on different levels, by different actors, from outside (external security) and from inside (internal security). One level of threats and attacks is the cyber and information space. There, actors from within (radicals and extremists) and from outside (authoritarian regimes such as Russia, China and Iran) are trying to influence the public opinion-forming process in their favor and weaken democratic institutions with targeted disinformation campaigns, online political advertising and cyberattacks in order to cause lasting damage to democracy in Europe. There are numerous current examples of this, starting with the Putin system’s influence on the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign, to the now proven influence on the Brexit referendum through targeted disinformation, to the Corona pandemic and delegitimization of state measures by radicals and extremists (“infodemie”), and the largest and best-coordinated disinformation campaigns to date against European states, with a focus on Germany, in the wake of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and European Ukraine-Russia policy.

2.1 Democratic resilience – recognizing and fending off threats and attackers

Democratic resilience is understood to be the ability of a population, of a community, to repeatedly achieve acceptance of democracy as a form of society, state and life, supported by the majority of the population, in social and political crisis situations and in transformation processes, and to do so in a sense that defends the fundamental values of a pluralistic society.¹ In principle, democracy offers all citizens opportunities for co-decision-making, participation and co-determination and depends on citizens’ identification with democracy. Resilience here means the ability to fend off attacks on democracy, from within and from without, to withstand major crises and to remain

stable even in these major crises (currently the Corona pandemic as well as the Ukraine war with massive economic consequences for European democracies). Resilience as the ability to survive crisis situations and stress. The prerequisites for resilience in democracies include stable rule-of-law institutions as well as the political opinion-forming and information process, combined with democratic elections. Echo chambers in social media endanger the opinion-forming and information processes of our democracies, pluralism and social cohesion.

According to Dr. Christian Calliess, Professor of Public Law at Freie Universität Berlin, three aspects are of particular importance with regard to democratic resilience and propaganda and disinformation campaigns: first, the process of shaping public opinion; second, the immediate run-up to elections and the integrity of the electoral process as such; and third, the functioning of democratic institutions.² According to Calliess, disinformation poses a danger to democracy in that it distorts the opinion-forming process and deprives it of its foundation. In order to filter out the content relevant to users from the enormous amount of information available on the platforms, companies and their websites or social media use so-called recommendation algorithms. As a result, the algorithms give preference to content that triggers feelings of sensationalism, fear or anger in the user. Here, disinformation, fake news and hate speech, which can spread unhindered on the platforms, play a threatening role because the personalized selection of information brought about by the algorithms can lead to users finding themselves in “filter bubbles” or “echo chambers” in which they are only confronted with content that corresponds to their pre-existing views. According to Calliess, this deprives democratic discourse of a common basis for discussion.³

In response to the failure of the Weimar Republic (1919 to 1933), Germany’s first democracy, and in reaction to the National Socialist dictatorship (1933 to 1945), the founders of the Federal Republic of Germany developed the Free Democratic Basic Order (fdGO). FdGO means that a democracy must be defensible, willing and able to defend itself against attacks by its opponents, its enemies.

According to the case law of the German Federal Constitutional Court, the free democratic basic order (fdGO) includes:

- The right of the people to exercise the power of the state in elections and votes and through special legislative, executive and judicial bodies, and to elect their representatives by universal, direct, free, equal and secret suffrage,
- The binding of legislation to the constitutional order and the binding of executive power and jurisdiction to law and justice,
- The right to form and exercise a parliamentary opposition,
- The detachability of the government and its accountability to the representative body of the people,
- The independence of the courts,
- The exclusion of any rule of force and arbitrariness and
- the human rights concretized in the Basic Law.⁴

These components of the fdGO must be defended, against attacks from outside (authoritarian regimes) and inside, radical and extremist parties, organizations, movements and individuals who agitate against democracy, attack it aggressively militant.

In resilient democracies, plurality and tolerance must go hand in hand with a refusal to compromise against anti-human and anti-democratic tendencies: The social prerequisites of a democratic polity include the protection of human and fundamental rights and the affirmation of democracy as a form of society.⁵

Democratic resilience very much involves identifying and fending off threats and attackers. On the one hand, this is the task of our security authorities, but dealing with populism, radicalism and extremism is a matter for civil society as a whole.

This paper presents current threats to our European democracy(ies) and their actors, the attackers. These come from within and from without. The means of these attackers are narratives and conspiracy narratives, both in the real world and in the context of digital disinformation campaigns in social media.

3 Current issues, narratives and conspiracy narratives of radicals and extremists

3.1 Delegitimization of the Democratic State - Delegitimizers and State Deniers

Until April 2021, the German constitutional protection authorities divided extremism into the following phenomena: Right-wing extremism, “Reichsbürger” and “self-governors”, Islamism, left-wing extremism, and foreign extremism (more recently foreign-related extremism). In response to an observed influence and instrumentalization of the protests and demonstrations against the state’s Corona measures, the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz established the new phenomenon area: “Delegitimization of the State Relevant to the Protection of the Constitution” at the end of April 2021. Within this new phenomenon area, a nationwide collective observation object “Delegitimization of the state that is hostile to democracy and/or endangers security” was established.⁶

The German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz states in the current report on the protection of the constitution from June 2022 with regard to this new area of phenomena: “the actors in this area of phenomena thereby aim to suspend essential constitutional principles or to significantly impair the functioning of the state or its institutions. They disparage democratic decision-making processes and institutions of the legislative, executive and judicial branches, publicly deny their legitimacy and call for official or judicial orders and decisions to be ignored. This form of delegitimization usually does not take the form of a direct questioning of democracy as such, but rather of constant agitation against and disparagement of democratically legitimized representatives and institutions of the state and their decisions. This can shake confidence in the state system as a whole and impair its ability to function. Such agitation is contrary to elementary constitutional principles such as the principle of democracy or the rule of law.”⁷

In the course of monitoring the organizational structures of “Querdenken 711” in the second half of 2020, the Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz of Baden-Württemberg was the first constitutional protection authority in the German federal states to identify initial indications of extremist aspirations and therefore elevated “Querdenken 711” and

its regional offshoots in Baden-Württemberg to the status of an extremism observation object.

The German authorities for the protection of the constitution emphasize that the scene of the Corona protests against the state measures to combat the pandemic is “ideologically and organizationally heterogeneous” the “unifying element of the various groups and individuals is the categorical rejection of the measures taken by the federal and state governments to combat the pandemic”.⁸ Likewise, the so-called Querdenken movement with its local initiatives organized throughout Germany “cannot be understood as a homogeneous grouping, despite unifying symbolism and naming”, but the central leaders and organizationally responsible persons of Querdenken succeeded in distinguishing themselves as “key figures of the demonstration events from the beginning of the pandemic until mid-2021, before the protest events became decentralized”.⁹

The Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz stated in April 2021 that applicants and organizers of corona demonstrations – first and foremost protagonists of the “Querdenken” movement – clearly showed “that their agenda goes beyond the mere mobilization for protests against the state corona protection measures. Connections to “Reichsbürger” and “self-governing” organizations as well as right-wing extremists are accepted or sought, ignoring official orders is propagated, and ultimately the state’s monopoly on the use of force is negated. Such action is altogether suitable and aims to permanently shake confidence in state institutions and its representatives.”¹⁰

According to the above definition of extremism, the following examples of rhetoric, agitation, and actions in the phenomenon area of delegitimization of the state are extremist:

- Individual protagonists of the lateral thinking movement have indirectly called for the overthrow of the existing political order in our country in the context of Corona protests as well as via social media

- Analogies to dictatorships, including National Socialism, are deliberately made again and again in order to deny the legitimacy of the federal government, the state governments, and the executive branch
- Nazi crimes are relativized by equating the state's Corona vaccination campaign with the persecution of Jews¹¹
- German national sovereignty is agitationally disparaged and doubted
- The Federal Republic of Germany is specifically denied the characteristic of being a constitutional state (principle of the binding of the law)
- Rhetorically and physically aggressive interactions with media representatives, police officers, and other administrative personnel
- The spreading of anti-Semitic conspiracy narratives
- Calls for violence against dissenters
- Relations and personal contacts with organizations and actors in the fields of right-wing extremism, "Reichsbürger" and "Selbstverwalter".¹²

Because in many cases it was not possible for the German constitutional protection authorities to assign the relevant groups of people and individuals in the area of delegitimization of the state to either an existing object of observation of extremism or to one of the phenomenon areas of extremism without restrictions, the establishment of the new phenomenon area: "Delegitimization of the state relevant to constitutional protection" can be assessed as logical.

So-called delegitimizers ("delegitimization of the state relevant for constitutional protection"), self-proclaimed "Querdenker" with their local initiatives present throughout Germany are "not understood as a homogeneous grouping" by the German constitutional protection authorities, but "their central leaders and organizationally responsible persons have succeeded since the beginning of the corona pandemic in distinguishing themselves as key figures of the demonstration events until mid-2021, before the protest events decentralized."¹³

"Delegitimizers" ("Querdenker" as a self-designation), "Reichsbürger" and "self-governors" as well as right-wing extremists have been trying to influence the Corona

protests in Germany since they began in spring 2020 and to use them strategically and ideologically. The focus of these groups of actors is agitation against state Corona protection measures and, according to the German constitutional protection authorities and federal and state interior ministries, a delegitimization of the measures and the state as well as its representatives. A distinction must be made with regard to these actors. A distinction must be made, for example, between “Querdenker” and their organizational structures, “Querdenker” with ties to right-wing extremist groups and/or individuals, as well as “Querdenker” with ties to “Reich citizens” and “self-governors”, and participants in Corona demonstrations as well as walks who – to varying degrees – distance themselves from them.

Important in the context of the classification of “Querdenken 711” as an extremism observation object is the finding of the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz from June 2022 that “individual protagonists of the Querdenken movement” have called “indirectly for the overthrow of the existing political order” in connection with protest actions against Corona protection measures as well as via social media.¹⁴

In December 2020, the Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz of Baden-Württemberg stated that it had identified initial indications of extremist aspirations in the case of “Querdenken 711”.¹⁵ The substantive justification provided by the Baden-Württemberg Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz for this classification of “Querdenken 711” was followed by the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz in its explanation of the newly established phenomenon area “Delegitimization of the State Relevant to the Protection of the Constitution” in April 2021.¹⁶

Individuals and groups from the phenomenon area of “delegitimization of the state relevant to constitutional protection”, including “Querdenker”, do not represent an ideologically uniform worldview that can be clearly distinguished from those of other extremist areas. The German intelligence services note that they engage in constant anti-constitutional agitation against democratically legitimized representatives and bearers of responsibility in the state; politicians and their decisions are held in contempt, thereby shaking confidence in the democratically legitimized representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany. Agitation with these ideological elements is

compounded by the fact that some actors in the “delegitimization of the state relevant to constitutional protection”, including “Querdenker”, at least advocate the removal, imprisonment or even killing of politicians not sought through democratic means.¹⁷

State deniers, also called state rejecters, reject the existence of the Republic of Austria, “refer to the state as a company and do not recognize its institutions”.¹⁸ At the end of December 2020, the former Austrian Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and Counterterrorism (BVT) assumed that there were 3693 state deniers in Austria known by name.¹⁹

The Austrian Ministry of the Interior estimated as early as 2014 that 20,000 to 22,000 people in Austria sympathize with these “state-denying” ideas. In mid-April 2017, the first sentences against state deniers were handed down in Austria. Among them was the first publicly known case from the summer of 2014. A small group of state deniers had wanted to hold a “people’s tribunal” on a farm in Lower Austria, before the fictitious “International Common Law Court of Justice Vienna” (ICCJV). A court sentenced six of the eight participants to fines and imprisonment.²⁰

The “State Union of Austria” had about 3,000 members, which is not a small number considering that this “State Union” had only been founded in 2015 and its leadership was arrested in 2017. This leadership group had been on trial in Graz since September 2020. The members “were immensely radicalized”, the Graz prosecutor admonished the jury as he read out the indictment against 13 statist: “This was the largest anti-state association that has ever existed in Austria.” “They wanted to take vigilante action against judges and politicians”, the prosecutor elaborated in 2018. “This cannot be tolerated.”²¹

A leading member of the “State Union of Austria” was sentenced to two years’ conditional imprisonment in October 2021. The young man, who had completed his studies, made a full confession. The prosecution had accused the defendant, as a leading member of the “State of Vienna of the Hearts”, a sub-organization of the confederation of states, of wanting to “shake up” the Republic of Austria as well as its

institutions by abolishing them and replacing them with their own institutions. Instead of the constitution, the members had in mind a “set of rules”, instead of the courts a so-called “court of nations”, and instead of the government a “council of wise men”.²²

According to Dr. Nicolas Stockhammer, Scientific Director and Coordinator of the Research Cluster “Counter-Terrorism, Countering Violent Extremism and Intelligence” in the Department of Law and International Relations at Austria’s Danube University Krems, “the milieu of corona deniers, ‘conspiracy mythologists’ and state deniers has been targeted by the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz since 2020.” In the medium term, Stockhammer also does not rule out a “terrorist potential among corona deniers.”²³

3.2 Anti-asylum, xenophobia, racism, Islamophobia and Muslimophobia

The German right-wing extremist scene used the rise in refugee numbers in Germany in 2014 and 2015 to launch an extensive anti-asylum agitation. German right-wing extremists have since used the anti-asylum debate to propagate a fundamental rejection of the existing social and political order. Supporters of government policy are called “traitors to the people” by right-wing extremists and the media are called the “lying press”, according to constitutional protection authorities, terminology that distinguishes only between “good” and “evil” and deprives democratic discourse of space. In recent years, Germany’s constitutional protection authorities observed that many organizers of anti-asylum demonstrations were known to German security authorities as right-wing extremists. The motto of the event or the appearing speakers and their statements were also relevant for the classification of anti-asylum demonstrations. In 2015 alone, a total of 95,200 people took part in right-wing extremist demonstrations or demonstrations significantly controlled by right-wing extremists against refugees, compared to 20,610 the year before.²⁴

The NPD youth organization “Junge Nationaldemokraten” (JN), for example, made a sweeping racist categorization of Muslims: “Even if we do not see Islam as the main problem, the threat of a hostile takeover by Stone Age people is more acute than ever. We must stop them before they banish our culture altogether and catapult Europe into

the Middle Ages” (Facebook page JN, 3.9.2015). A far-right website called for violence in the context of anti-asylum: “The war is coming to us, to our towns and villages. It is time to expel Negroes and Musels from Europe again, otherwise our continued existence and our culture is doomed. Of all precious metals, LEAD is the most valuable at the moment: as flying lead in .45 caliber” (Homepage “Globalecho”, 23.10.2015).²⁵

The right-wing extremist party “Der III. Weg” saw the rising numbers of refugees in 2014 and 2015 as an existential emergency and called for “resistance”: “The rest of the German people, who still want to be German and leave their children a homeland worth living in, should finally take their clenched fist out of their pockets and defend themselves with all vehemence against this identity-destroying and basically deadly policy for all Germans” (Homepage “Der III. Weg”, 20.8.2015).²⁶

On the right-wing extremist Internet platform “Altermedia Deutschland”, a “hate list” was depicted showing, among others, politicians and people who advocate for refugees in crosshairs. These people were “cleared for shooting”. As early as 2015 – before the right-wing terrorist attack on CDU politician Walter Lübcke and before the two right-wing terrorist attacks in Halle and Hanau – the German constitutional protection authorities analyzed that the anonymity of the Internet was leading to a brutalization of language. Civilizational barriers that still existed in the real world dissolved completely on the Internet, and refugees were dehumanized and threatened in a completely disinhibited manner, as were politicians and refugee aid workers. The Internet offers right-wing extremists a high potential of publicity for propaganda and recruitment purposes.

Islamophobic agitation is not limited to the realm of right-wing extremism. Even beyond right-wing extremist Islamophobia, which is primarily based on racism, there are groups and individuals who do not want to grant Muslims the freedom of religion enshrined in the Basic Law. These groups and individuals equate “Islam” as a world religion with Islamism and Islamist terrorism and portray the religion of Islam as a “fascist ideology” that poses a considerable danger to our society.²⁷

According to the authorities for the protection of the constitution, extremist efforts in connection with Islamophobic statements are directed against human rights (Article 1 of the Basic Law), the prohibition of discrimination (Article 3 of the Basic Law) and freedom of religion (Article 4 of the Basic Law), as specified in the Basic Law. Certain goal- and purpose-oriented behavior that seeks to suspend or eliminate the validity of the aforementioned principles for Muslims and Islam and its religious communities must be judged extremist.²⁸

The German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz analyzes Islamophobia or Muslimophobia as a field of action of right-wing extremists that has increased sharply since the “refugee crisis”. According to the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, Islamophobia among right-wing extremists “cannot be traced back to mere resentment and the adoption of right-wing populist theories, but rather is rooted in pronounced ideological convictions, especially in the ideal of an ethnically homogeneous ‘ethnic community’ constructed by right-wing extremists. Right-wing extremists try to create fears of foreign infiltration or prejudices against the religion of Islam or Muslims themselves or to stir up corresponding reservations in order to influence public opinion in their favor. They spread the thesis of a supposedly ‘threatening Islamization’ of Europe. The transitions between extremist and populist Islamophobia are often fluid”.

29

There were more attacks on Muslims and Muslim institutions in Germany in 2020 than in 2019, with at least 901 Islamophobic and anti-Muslim crimes recorded by authorities nationwide. In 2019, 884 such acts had been recorded. The perpetrators are predominantly right-wing extremists. In 2018, there were still 824 acts.³⁰

The German right-wing extremist scene used the rise in refugee numbers in Germany in 2014 and 2015 to launch an extensive anti-asylum agitation. German right-wing extremists have since used the anti-asylum debate to propagate a fundamental rejection of the existing social and political order. Supporters of government policy are called “traitors to the people” by right-wing extremists, and the media are called the “lying press”, terminology that distinguishes only between “good” and “evil” and

deprives democratic discourse of space.³¹ In recent years, German constitutional protection authorities have observed that many organizers of anti-asylum demonstrations are known to German security authorities as right-wing extremists. The motto of the event or the appearing speakers and their statements are also relevant for the classification of anti-asylum demonstrations. In 2015 alone, a total of 95,200 people took part in right-wing extremist demonstrations or demonstrations significantly controlled by right-wing extremists against refugees, compared to 20,610 the year before.³²

Alongside anti-asylum agitation, Islamophobia is a major field of agitation for right-wing extremists. According to the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, right-wing extremists try to fuel fantasies of resistance and subversion and to instrumentalize events that they associate with the religion of Islam.³³ A special element of German right-wing extremists in this context is anti-Islam agitation, in which a stereotypical opposition to and incompatibility of German and Muslim culture is claimed. Thus, right-wing extremists sweepingly accuse Muslims of waging a cultural “campaign of conquest” against the West and of behaving in a “violent and belligerent” manner. Thus, German right-wing extremism equates “Islam” and “Muslims” with a “war against the German way and culture”. This ideological pattern aims to stir up fears, insecurities and prejudices against Muslims and is thus ultimately also capable of preparing the ground for violence against this population group. This is exemplified by the song lyrics of a right-wing extremist music group: “The muezzin proclaims from his minaret: The Occident must fall, infiltration. (...) This is a call to all freedom fighters. Our Occident is in danger. The war with Islam, it has begun, be ready my people. (...) It is escalating.” (Music group “Youth of Tomorrow”, CD “Let the black flags fly”, song “It escalates”)³⁴.

The field of action “Islamophobia” as a novel form of xenophobia has gained importance in German right-wing extremism in recent years. Since the end of 2011, Islamophobic and Muslimophobic reactions in the form of reader comments have been identified on relevant websites.³⁵ In the opinion of the Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz of Baden-Württemberg, the necessary distinction between (democratically) permissible criticism of the religion Islam – within the framework of

freedom of expression – and Islamophobia, i.e. anti-constitutional defamation, is not always easy. Islamophobia goes beyond mere criticism of a religion. It is also directed against essential elements of the free democratic basic order. Specifically mentioned here are the human rights concretized in the Basic Law, above all human dignity pursuant to Article 1 (1) of the Basic Law. The right-wing extremist statements identified deny those affected the right to live as equal personalities in the community. Violations of the principle of equal treatment (Article 3 GG) and freedom of religion (Article 4 GG) indicate a possible violation of Article 1 GG.³⁶

The most important political propagandists and carriers of Islamophobia are currently the right-wing extremist and right-wing populist parties in Europe. Since agitation with enemy images has long been known among such parties, xenophobia disguised as Islamophobia can be well documented as the actual view. Similar propaganda in connection with negative images about Islam can be found on Internet sites with apparently high numbers of visitors, such as “Die grüne Pest”, “Islamkritik.at”, “Politically Incorrect”, “Stop Islam”, or “Akte Islam. For Europe – against Eurabia”.³⁷

3.3 Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Narrative: QAnon

Conspiracy narratives are intended to stir up emotions, reinforce assumptions and normatively charge certain developments. Opinions are presented as facts, information is used selectively and only to confirm one’s own worldview.

Conspiracy narratives reduce complexity and thus want to “help” to “understand and explain world events”. They create and reinforce group identities and serve to determine opponents, enemies and culprits and to hold them responsible for political, economic, social, but also for very personal experiences. This creates friend-foe patterns, “us versus the opponents, the enemies, the elite, those responsible”, which in turn have potential for violence.

Butter explains that conspiracy believers divide the world into victims and perpetrators of a conspiracy and promote the idea “that history can be planned and controlled, and that people can direct the course of history according to their intentions. Events, they argue, are always the result of intentional action. Coincidence, unintended

consequences, and structural effects would be ruled out by conspiracy believers, the actions of conspirators would have to be uncovered, and with sufficiently “deep analysis” hidden connections between people and institutions could be found.³⁸

Followers of conspiracy narratives regard themselves as “enlightened” and the belief that they have understood the true connections behind political and social developments and have recognized those supposedly responsible for them strengthens cohesion among themselves.

“QAnon” is a conspiracy narrative that originated in the USA and has quite a following there. The originator of the “QAnon” conspiracy narrative first published allegedly exclusive information on the image board “4chan” in October 2017, according to which the then US President Donald Trump was waging a battle against the “Deep State”, i.e. “hidden elites in high and highest government offices and social positions”.³⁹ The “Q” designation comes from the reference to the “Q Clearance”, the highest level of clearance for classified information from U.S. authorities that the anonymous creator of the postings allegedly possesses. “Anon”, in turn, is short for Anonymous.

In mid-February 2022, two teams of researchers, one from Switzerland, one from France, reportedly used artificial intelligence to determine that “the” creator of QAnon was two people. Paul Furber, a South African software developer and conspiracy believer, and Ron Watkins, a website operator for conspiracy narratives.⁴⁰

According to the “QAnon” conspiracy narrative, children would be kidnapped, tortured and murdered in underground camps in order to extract an elixir of life from them – the so-called “adrenochrome”.⁴¹ The publications of “Q” are usually cryptic messages with abbreviations not in common use, leaving wide room for interpretation. According to the German government in 2020 in an answer to a small question in the Bundestag, this conspiracy narrative is also spreading in German-speaking countries, especially through a large number of homepages, blogs and YouTube channels, but their reach can hardly be quantified. With its infanticide claim, the Adrenochrome infant blood conspiracy narrative adopts elements of medieval anti-Semitism (“Christian blood” as a cure).⁴²

This conspiracy narrative is spreading not only in the U.S. but also in Europe, and strongly in German-speaking countries, especially through a large number of homepages, blogs and YouTube channels, whose reach, however, can neither be quantified nor qualified according to the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. The elements of a supposed blood cult often interwoven with the QAnon theory in connection with a global secret society, whose depiction serves any anti-Semitic clichés, offer points of contact for extremist ideologues.⁴³

3.4 “Conspiracy of the Elites”: “Deep State”, “New World Order”, “The Great Reset”, The “Great Exchange”, “The Siege”, “S.H.A.E.F.” Ideology

These conspiracy narratives are closely linked to political anti-Semitism and thus to old, powerful, and enduring narratives: The minority of “the Jews”, imagined as powerful, conspires against “the majority” to harm and dominate them. This is represented by the image of “the Jews” as wire-pullers and string-pullers who instigated economic crises, revolutions or wars on this basis.

The idea of a Jewish conspiracy ultimately aiming at world domination is one of the most powerful anti-Semitic stereotypes, exemplified by the “Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion” published at the beginning of the 20th century and distributed from Russia. The fact that this writing – a supposed Jewish secret plan – was exposed as a perfidious forgery shortly after its publication did not diminish its lasting resonance.⁴⁴ To this day, the “Protocols” are shared among conspiracy believers worldwide. Written in the style of a transcript of Jewish leaders, it purports to document the decisions of a secret conference, according to which Jews had been striving for centuries to fraudulently and violently achieve world domination.⁴⁵ Judaism is also defined in this writing as a “conspiratorial elite”, which has unchangeable characteristics – for example “hunger for power” and “greed for money”. It is not possible for Jewish people, quasi by natural law, to abandon their “plans for world domination”.⁴⁶

The conspiracy narrative of a “Deep State”, a “secret elite behind the government”, which developed in the USA in the context of the QAnon narrative described above, sounds strikingly similar. Thus, this “Deep State” was said to be composed of hidden elites in high government offices and social positions. The narrative has also found

supporters in Germany. The magazine “COMPACT”, classified by Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz as a “suspected case of right-wing extremism” until December 2021 and since then as “secured right-wing extremist”, made a particular contribution to its spread.⁴⁷ In 2019, this magazine published a special issue on the alleged “deep state”. In a YouTube video, editor-in-chief Jürgen Elsässer explained what it was all about: “This is understood to be a network of secret services, business bosses, stock market gurus, left-wing media.”⁴⁸ The “Deep State” conspiracy narrative is also spread in right-wing populist and right-wing extremist forums.

The anti-Semitic “New World Order” (NWO) conspiracy narrative, which propagates the idea that global elites want to create an authoritarian, supranational world government, is also spreading in Germany. According to the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, for example, the “Reichsbürger” and “self-governing” group “Constitutional Assembly” linked the Corona pandemic to the anti-Semitic conspiracy narrative.

The term “New World Order” was coined after the collapse of communism in the early 1990s in the United States, where it initially stood for a global system of collective security. Later, the term was reinterpreted by right-wing extremists. Today, it usually refers to a conspiracy narrative in which a global, mostly Jewish elite pursues a secret plan to abolish “autochthonous” peoples and nation-state borders and install an authoritarian world government.

In most variants of this conspiracy narrative, Jewish actors, such as the U.S. investor George Soros or the Rothschild banking house, and supposed secret societies, such as the Illuminati or the Freemasons, as well as international organizations, are seen as the main culprits or helpers of the secret elites. Often the terms “East Coast” or “high finance” are used as synonyms with anti-Semitic connotations for the Jewish elite.⁴⁹

From the accusations of alleged well poisoning by Jews in the plague epidemic of the Middle Ages to the invented “Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion” to the crude constructs of the “QAnon” and NWO conspiracy narratives, anti-Semitism runs like a thread

through conspiracy narratives. The assertion of an alleged existence of “string pullers”, “Jewish financiers”, “East Coast Jewish elite” (“high finance”), “New World Order”, “Zionist Occupied Government” (“ZOG”), “machinations”, “Jewish clique”, “beneficiaries” is a structural feature of conspiracy narratives.

The conspiracy narrative “Great Exchange”/“Der große Austausch” is a central narrative of the right-wing extremist “Identitarian Movement” as well as other actors of the New Right. According to the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, the core of this narrative, or conspiracy narrative, is that an unspecified elite aims to “exchange” the native population for migrants. In addition, the “Identitarian Movement Germany” warns sweepingly of an “Islamization” of Germany.⁵⁰ The “COMPACT-Magazin GmbH” as an actor of the New Right observed by the German authorities for the protection of the constitution spreads the narrative of the “Great Exchange”. In these and numerous other contexts, “COMPACT” disseminates conspiracy ideological views directed against a so-called “deep state” or a certain “power elite”.⁵¹

The right-wing terrorist and assassin of Christchurch, Brenton Tarrant, had published a manifesto before his attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, in which he killed 51 people and injured 50, some of them seriously. This manifesto is called “The Great Replacement”, the translation of the far-right conspiracy theory “the great replacement” spread in German-speaking countries by various actors of the New Right. In 2001, French author Renaud Camus called his book “Le grand remplacement”, in which he painted a picture of a French society in which a “takeover by Muslims is approaching”. Among other things, Camus called for a ban on family reunification and a tightening of citizenship laws.⁵²

In France, the conspiracy narrative of the “Great Exchange”, i.e., the supposed “Great Population Exchange”, has been considered influential since the beginning of the 21st century, once again reinforced by the “refugee crisis” in 2015. In September 2015, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung called “Le Pen’s secret mastermind“ (Wiegel 2015). In Germany, “Le grand remplacement“ is published as „Die Revolte gegen den großen Austausch“ by Götz Kubitschek at Antaios-Verlag. Publisher Götz Kubitschek was

described by the New York Times in December 2018 as the “godfather of the new right-wing movement in Germany”.⁵³

Renaud Camus, however, is not the inventor of this “great exchange” conspiracy narrative. Its roots go back to the period shortly after the Second World War. Historian Nicolas Lebourg explains that at that time, former members of the Waffen SS “conjured up a domination of Europe by black and Asian soldiers”, referring to parts of the victorious armies of the United States and the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ Historian Lebourg emphasizes that the conspiracy theory of “the great exchange” since the beginning of the 21st century attacks a “multi-culti ideology” whose goal is to replace the “white and Christian” populations of Europe with Muslims.⁵⁵ Michaela Wiegel writes in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung about Renaud Camus: “The French governments are in the process of ‘dissolving’ the French people and replacing them with another, or at least supplementing them, he says. This is not a plot, he says, it is the consequence of globalization, which has declared everything – goods, production sites and people – interchangeable. Our demography is weakening, no problem, we’ll just get future pensioners from elsewhere”, says Camus. This ideology of ‘remplacisme’, of interchangeability, is deeply inhuman. And it leads to France, like other immigration countries, losing its identity.⁵⁶

The “Siege” ideology goes back to the eponymous title of a collection of texts by U.S. right-wing extremist James Nolan Mason from the 1980s. In addition to Mason’s ideological foundations, such as racism, anti-Semitism and the theory of the supposed superiority of the “white race” (“white supremacy”), it also contains detailed descriptions of possible attack targets and explanations of operational preparations. The main focus of the ideology is in the U.S., but individuals and groups spreading the “Siege” ideology are also repeatedly identified in Germany and other European countries. Offshoots of international groups such as the “Atomwaffen Division Deutschland” and the “Feuerkrieg Division Deutschland” should be mentioned here.⁵⁷

Although the “Siege” ideology is centered in the U.S., it is increasingly gaining mostly young radicalized followers in Germany as well, who can be recruited by groups such

as the Atomic Weapons Division (AWD). Thus, according to the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, individuals and groups spreading the Siege ideology are repeatedly identified in Germany as well. Offshoots of international groups such as the “AWD Deutschland” (AWDD) and the “Feuerkrieg Division Deutschland” (FKDD) should be mentioned here, for example.⁵⁸ The initially verbal radicalization on the Internet also poses a real threat. In Germany, at least one follower of the FKDD has already taken concrete preparatory actions for an attack: In December 2020, the man was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment without probation with subsequent supervision of his conduct before the Nuremberg-Fürth Regional Court for preparing a serious act of violence that endangers the state pursuant to Section 89a of the German Criminal Code. The sentence is final. In an FKDD forum, he had posted plans for an attack, presumably on a synagogue or a mosque. In its verdict, the court considered it proven that the man had already concretely planned an attack. On the one hand, the case of the FKDD supporter shows the radicalizing dimensions that a continuous exchange about right-wing extremist violent fantasies on the Internet can take on. On the other hand, it highlights how important it is for security agencies to continue to intensively monitor the dynamic activities of right-wing extremist actors in the virtual space in order to be able to counter them. Furthermore, the spread of Siege ideology across national borders and language areas is exemplary of the dynamic internationalization of right-wing terrorist content and emphasizes the need for international cooperation among security authorities.⁵⁹

S.H.A.E.F., according to the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, is a conspiracy narrative espoused by some “Reichsbürger” and “self-governors”. The adherents and sympathizers of this conspiracy narrative refer to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (S.H.A.E.F.), which exercised supreme command over Allied forces in Europe during World War II and was disbanded after the war ended. They assume that the S.H.A.E.F. is still active and that the corresponding “S.H.A.E.F. laws” are still valid. In essence, it is claimed that the Federal Republic of Germany is still an occupied state. Accordingly, the valid legal system is not recognized. The adherents of this ideology regard state officials and politicians as

agents of an illegitimate government. They see themselves as official representatives of the Allies with the authority to issue orders and directives to the German population.⁶⁰

According to Moghadam's stage model, most radicalization processes do not lead to extremist or even terrorist violence; the vast majority of radicalized persons remain at stages below violence and terrorism.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the danger is visibly present: as shown, for example, by the right-wing terrorist murders in Halle an der Saale and Hanau, as well as murders and attempted murders of police officers by "Reichsbürger" and "self-administrators", and numerous cases of violence by "Querdenker" against police officers and journalists.

Various theses, narratives and ideological elements of right-wing extremist actors, "Reichsbürger" and "self-governors" as well as "Querdenker" can entrap people in a closed conspiracy-ideological worldview, in which disenchantment with the state can turn into hatred of the state. This worldview can be the basis for radicalization processes that can even lead to violence. Approaches can be seen in developments since the start of the Corona measures in spring 2020 in Europe, very pronounced in Germany. Members of this scene deliberately obstruct the courts, police and other authorities in their work and threaten their employees. According to German security authorities, any state intervention – especially a revocation of gun permits in the case of "Reichsbürger" and "self-administrators" – can trigger considerable aggression and dangerous situations. Conspiracy narratives can thus be the breeding ground for acts of violence, for example, when there is a call for resistance to perceived injustice (resistance to corona hygiene measures).

Conspiracy narratives pose major challenges to security agencies, but especially to societies worldwide. Accordingly, further and more intensive research efforts are needed to better assess the threat potential, spread and impact and to develop effective measures to make democratic societies more resilient against conspiracies.

3.5 Interim conclusion

The corona pandemic and the countermeasures taken by the federal government and the governments of the German states were seized upon and instrumentalized in large numbers by right-wing extremists, “Reichsbürgern” and “self-governors” as well as “Querdenker”. These tried and still try to stir up fears and unrest in the middle of the population by spreading, according to the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “various ‘conspiracy-theory’ narratives”⁶². In addition to claims by right-wing extremist actors that a “Jewish elite” had artificially created the virus and deliberately caused the pandemic, according to the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, there were numerous voices “claiming that the federal government was exploiting the crisis to install mechanisms for monitoring the population. As the goal of this bundled propagandistic agitation, right-wing extremists want to achieve an accelerated bringing about of the so-called Day X. It is supposed to lead to the downfall of the democratic system they hate through overthrow and ultimately to a political reordering in the sense of the right-wing extremists.”⁶³

With regard to the potential for violence of conspiracy-believing extremists, it should be noted that conspiracy narratives can trigger violence because the “enemies”, the “opponents”, the supposedly responsible or “guilty” parties are all those to whom power is attributed, for example, scientists, politicians, and Jewish people.⁶⁴

4 Current actors, strategies and trends in the field of right-wing extremism, delegitimizers as well as Islamism

4.1 Old and new right-wing extremists – strategies and trends

The German authorities for the protection of the constitution put the potential number of right-wing extremists for 2021 – in the current report on the protection of the constitution from June 2022 - at 33,900. 13,500 of these are classified as violence-oriented. Of these 33,900 right-wing extremists, 11,800 are organized in parties, according to the constitution protection authorities, including 3,150 in the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD), 500 in the right-wing party Die RECHTE and 650 in the party “Der III. Weg” party. According to the German Bundesamt für

Verfassungsschutz, there are currently 7,500 members in the category “other right-wing extremist potential in parties”, which, according to the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, includes members of the “Junge Alternative” (JA) and the “Der Flügel” association.⁶⁵ The German constitutional protection authorities currently count 8,500 right-wing extremists in “party-independent or party-unaffiliated structures,” and 15,000 right-wing extremists in the category of “largely unstructured right-wing extremist potential.”

According to the German constitutional protection authorities, the corona pandemic and its consequences have attracted and continue to attract a great deal of attention in the right-wing extremist scene and have been widely taken up since the spring of 2020. Since then, right-wing extremists have been trying to use this pandemic of historic proportions for themselves in order to stir up fears and unrest within the population. In connection with the corona pandemic, right-wing extremists spread various “conspiracy theory” narratives. In addition to claims that a “Jewish elite” artificially created the virus and deliberately caused the pandemic, there were voices claiming that the federal government was exploiting the crisis to “install mechanisms for monitoring the population.”⁶⁶

How right-wing extremists tried and continue to try to use corona demonstrations and spontaneous gatherings against the governmental restriction measures in connection with the corona pandemic for their own purposes was first shown visibly to the large public by the events on August 29, 2020 in Berlin with up to 38,000 - according to the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz mainly non-extremist - participants. In the run-up to the event, “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” groups as well as right-wing extremist organizations, parties and individuals had intensively called for participation in the various demonstrations that had been registered in the Berlin administrative district. Parts of the heterogeneous field of participants - “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” right-wing extremists and “Querdenker” succeeded in staging themselves in a media-effective manner with flags and banners as well as aggressive and violent disruptive actions - for example, in the occupation of the stairway to the Reichstag building (medially called “storming the Reichstag”).⁶⁷

“The Corona deniers’ regularly recurring claim that we live in a de facto dictatorship and an emergency regime that must be eliminated and against which public resistance is legitimate must be understood as evidence of a progressive radicalization of this movement,” says Saxony’s President of the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, Christian Ende November 2021.⁶⁸

At the level of analysis of extremism and radicalization research, the concept of right-wing extremists and “Querdenker” in the Corona pandemic of “resisting a dictatorship” is potentially dangerous, since resistance is presented as a legitimate act of self-defense against the state and its supporters, and is justifiably connoted with violence. From the perspective of research into extremism and terrorism, it should be noted that in the various phenomena, potential and actual terrorists present their lethal violence as “necessary”, as “legitimate”. When there is a call for revolutionary “resistance against supposed injustice,” there is a potentially great threat to the rule of law.

Right-wing extremists use the Internet to disseminate information, form opinions and network. In the view of the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, this also includes a large number of “influencers” and “trolls” vying for opinion sovereignty on the Internet. These contribute to the brutalization of language and a shift in consensus in public discourse. In addition, the fact that the Internet is by far the medium most frequently used by young people, and that it is an ideal medium for right-wing extremist content due to its dissemination possibilities and a partial lack of control, has a particular potential for danger, which can encourage entry into the right-wing extremist scene. According to the German constitutional protection authorities, right-wing extremists create an “alternative” media public sphere with “alternative” news sites and blogs in the battle for discourse sovereignty on the one hand, and on the other hand, they attempt to draw attention to their own narratives and manipulate democratic discourse through provocation placed and coordinated by “haters” and “troll armies” via social media.⁶⁹

According to the German government, media hate speech, insults, disinhibited language, hate postings and other types of disparagement of people can be found

primarily on the Internet and there on all known social platforms, image boards and messenger services. The postings are published both openly, i.e. sometimes also under clear personal details of the acting persons, and anonymously. Due to the stricter action guidelines of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram and their deletion behavior, a migration to platforms and messenger services with less pronounced or no deletion behavior is discernible. These include, for example, Telegram, Bitchute and VKontakte, as well as image boards such as Kohlchan and 4chan. The spectrum of extremist statements found on the Internet with the aim of defaming and disparaging specific individuals or groups is very complex. Invective and propaganda with elements glorifying violence are part of the standard repertoire of various extremist actors on the Internet. In the federal government's analysis, the authors of such statements in the phenomenon area of right-wing extremism can be attributed to the entire right-wing extremist spectrum that is present on the Internet. This includes, for example, individuals, members of the neo-Nazi scene, members and officials of right-wing extremist parties, representatives of (online) publishers, and operators of text or video blogs.⁷⁰

To this end, in recent years the German security authorities have also repeatedly become aware of collections of information of various kinds on political opponents of right-wing extremists, referred to in media reports as “enemy lists” or “death lists”. The persons listed on these lists are usually public officials, public figures or private individuals. Among other things, these lists serve to build up a threatening backdrop intended to intimidate the individuals concerned.⁷¹

Right-wing extremism and right-wing terrorism currently pose a significant threat to the internal security of the Federal Republic of Germany and thus also to the EU. A trend away from the “old right-wing extremism” toward the “new right-wing extremism” can be observed. In the area of right-wing extremist parties, important events can currently be noted, in this case the role of the new right-wing extremist party “Free Saxons” in the Corona demonstrations. As a result of the recent ruling by the Cologne Administrative Court, the AfD as a whole party is now a suspected case of right-wing

extremism, meaning that the constitutional protection authorities can now use intelligence resources throughout Germany.

With regard to the war in Ukraine, it should be noted that the Putin system has made it clear that it sees itself in a new East-West conflict with Western democracies. The Putin system and German and European right-wing extremists have the same enemy image, liberal, pluralistic Western democracy. It can therefore be assumed that in the future there will be cooperation between German and European right-wing extremists and the Putin system.⁷²

The German constitutional protection authorities use the term “New Right” to refer to an “informal network of groups, individuals and organizations in which national conservative to right-wing extremist forces work together to implement partly anti-liberal and anti-democratic positions in society and politics on the basis of various strategies”. To this end, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary movements, meta-political theory-building and practice - i.e., the exertion of influence on the pre-political sphere, which is intended to prepare the ground for the successful political realization of these anti-democratic positions - are closely intertwined with protest and demonstration initiatives. According to the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, the actors in this network fill different and in part complementary functions and roles that are intended to serve the common goal of a “cultural revolution from the right” and are each directed at different target groups. Right-wing extremist references result from violations of human dignity, the rule of law and/or the principle of democracy in various forms. Various groups within the New Right are classified as suspected right-wing extremists or as having secured right-wing extremist efforts against the free democratic basic order.⁷³

The German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz assesses the “Identitarian Movement Germany” (IBD) as well as the three suspected right-wing extremists “COMPACT-Magazin GmbH,” “Ein Prozent e.V.,” and the “Institute for State Policy” (IfS) as right-wing extremist actors in the area of the New Right.⁷⁴

According to the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, the “COMPACT Magazine” published by “COMPACT-Magazin GmbH” (suspected case of right-wing extremism), as well as the associated extensive Internet presence and online video channel, “additionally supported by events, popularize neo-right-wing content as well as content defaming the democratic system and its institutions, and in particular conspiracy ideological positions.”⁷⁵

The association “Ein Prozent e.V.” (suspected case of right-wing extremism) is described by the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz as a project promotion and networking agency, as an association that additionally “also goes public with its own campaigns” in which “migrants are sweepingly disparaged. The association pursues the primary goal of providing material and non-material support to projects of right-wing organizations, groups and individuals, as well as networking actors and thereby supporting them in their respective political objectives.”⁷⁶

According to the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, the “Institute for State Policy” (suspected case of right-wing extremism) has an “impact on broad circles of the New Right” and “plays a discourse-determining role within this spectrum. This is particularly evident in the high popularity of the “Institute for State Policy's” events as well as its broad networking, which is evident, for example, in the range of speakers.”⁷⁷

4.2 “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter”

The German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz describes “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” as “groups and individuals who reject the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany and its legal system for a variety of motives and on a variety of grounds - including invoking the historical German Reich, conspiracy-theory patterns of argumentation, or a self-defined natural law - deny legitimacy to democratically elected representatives, or even define themselves in their entirety as standing outside the legal system, and who are therefore concerned about committing violations of the legal system.”⁷⁸ According to the German constitutional protection authorities, the distinction between “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” is sometimes difficult: “Reichsbürger” invoke a “German Reich” of some kind with regard to the territory of the state and the legal status, and therefore reject the Federal Republic of Germany.

“Selbstverwalter” do not feel they belong to the state and its legal system. They sometimes declare their “withdrawal” from it and entry into a “self-administration”.⁷⁹

“Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” are not a new phenomenon, but have been active in various forms for decades. They can hardly be distinguished from each other, because they mostly use almost identical argumentation patterns: The “Reichsbürger” focus on the continued existence of a “German Reich” of whatever kind and therefore reject the Federal Republic of Germany. The “Selbstverwalter” on the other hand, feel that they do not belong to the German state and declare themselves independent or expressly declare their “withdrawal” from the Federal Republic of Germany.⁸⁰

“Selbstverwalter” often invoke a UN resolution that supposedly allows them to declare themselves “self-governed”. Occasionally, they mark their residences with “demarcations,” “signs,” “coats of arms,” or other marks from which “self-government” is supposed to emerge. In some cases, this created “administrative space” is also violently defended. Some of the “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” are openly right-wing extremists. Anti-Semitic ideological elements and argumentation patterns can be observed. Particularly in connection with conspiracy theories - when it comes to the alleged background of established politics - “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” sometimes agitate in an openly anti-Semitic manner. They range from blaming individuals who hold “the Jews” as a whole responsible for their unemployment to openly anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, such as that the First World War was planned by “the Jews” as a whole, to denying the Holocaust. The German security authorities classify the “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” scene as hostile to the state.⁸¹

The German constitutional protection authorities analyze that the scene of the currently approx. 21,000 “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” is largely unstructured and consists of numerous individual actors. Larger groupings include:

The largest of the 30 or so transnationally active groups include: “Bismarck's Heirs” or “Fatherland Service,” “Kingdom of Germany,” “Constituent Assembly,” and “Confederation of the German Reich.”

The “Kingdom of Germany” (KRD) grouping was founded in Lutherstadt Wittenberg (Saxony-Anhalt) in September 2012, according to its “founding charter”. The KRD sees itself as a “new German state that conforms to international law. The self-proclaimed “King of Germany” who heads the grouping promotes the KRD to the effect that one does not have to pay taxes in his “kingdom”. According to the BfV, this claim is misleading because joining the KRD does not exempt one from paying taxes in the Federal Republic of Germany. Among other things, the KRD operates so-called “Gemeinwohlfassen” (GK). According to its website, the GK stands for a “new, permanently stable, independent and interest-free money and finance system for the benefit of the people”. With the help of a “yield bringing participation” investors would promote projects of the KRD in the sense of the “public welfare”. However, the depositing “bank customers” are not granted a repayment claim, which is why financial disadvantages are to be feared for those affected. In 2021, the German Federal Financial Supervisory Authority (BaFin) prohibited the operators of the “Gemeinwohlfassen” from initiating, concluding and handling banking and insurance transactions.⁸²

One example of the scene's strategic orientation and potential threat is the grouping “Geeinte deutsche Völker und Stämme” (GdVuSt - United German Peoples and Tribes), which, together with its sub-organization “Osnabrücker Landmark”, was the first association from the spectrum of “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” to be banned and dissolved at federal level on March 19, 2020 by the then Federal Minister of the Interior, for Construction and Homeland Affairs. The ban, which became final, was justified on the grounds of serious violations of the free democratic basic order as well as racism, anti-Semitism and historical revisionism. In the years prior to this, the GdVuSt had attracted attention through numerous letters addressed to authorities and offices, among others, with aggressive language and sometimes drastic threats. These included, for example, the “imprisonment” of the addressees or the levying of high “penalty fees”. Despite the ban, the GdVuSt continued its activities. The association's authoritative functionary continues to offer seminars and lecture events for which a fee is charged. In May 2022, executive measures were taken in several German states in

connection with various preliminary proceedings for violations of the ban on associations.⁸³

4.3 Islamists, Salafists and Islamist terrorists

By the fall of 2020, the threat of Islamist terrorists in Europe had become quiet in the European media and in the politics of most European states. Yet the high number of Islamist threats and jihadist returnees, as well as the number of Islamist attacks prevented by police and constitutional protection authorities in many European states in Germany, had for years demonstrated a concrete and high threat to Europe's internal security from Islamist terrorists. A further indication of the constantly high threat potential posed by Islamist terrorism in Europe is the fact that at least 95 attacks have been carried out or prevented by the security authorities . More than 810 people have been killed and more than 3800 injured by these attacks.⁸⁴ After little audible reporting by European politicians and media about the threat of Islamist terrorism in Europe, a homophobic attack was carried out by an Islamist threat to two tourists from North Rhine-Westphalia in Dresden on October 4, 2020, in which one man was murdered and another was seriously injured. A few days later, on October 16, 2020, French teacher Samuel Paty, who had been discussing Muhammad cartoons in class, was beheaded in a Paris suburb. On October 29, 2020, three people were murdered in an Islamist attack with knives at the Notre Dame church in Nice. Then, on November 2, 2020, the first Islamist attack in Austria was carried out in Vienna. An Austrian-North Macedonian Islamist threat killed four people and injured over 20, including a police officer, in a Vienna nightlife district (shortly before the start of Corona lockdown measures).⁸⁵ The Austrian-Northern Macedonian dangerous person had been sentenced to 22 months in prison for attempting to leave for IS in Syria, but had been released early and had participated in a deradicalization program. These four Islamist attacks in the fall of 2020 killed nine people and injured more than 30 others, some seriously.

According to the German constitutional protection authorities, Islamism aims to abolish the free democratic basic order (fdGO) of the Federal Republic of Germany by invoking Islam. Thus, Islamism is based on the conviction that "Islam is not only a personal,

private matter, but also determines social life and the political order.”⁸⁶ The German constitutional protection authorities further state that Islamism postulates the existence of a God-ordained and therefore “true” and absolute order that stands above man-made orders. With their interpretation of Islam, Islamists thus contradict the principles of popular sovereignty, separation of state and religion, freedom of expression and general equality enshrined in the Basic Law. A key ideological element of Islamism is also anti-Semitism.

Salafism, in turn, is a fundamentalist Islamist ideology and, according to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, at the same time an extremist counterculture with an alternative lifestyle by means of distinctive unique selling points (clothing and language). This also attracts people who feel (supposedly) marginalized by the German majority society. Unstable individuals in particular, who are searching for a meaning to life, for orientation and security, are attracted by the comprehensive Salafist set of rules, which determines daily life down to the last detail. In Salafism, the individual becomes part of an elite, the champion of “true Islam,” distinguished by his moral superiority over a “world of corruption.”⁸⁷ Salafists see themselves as advocates of an original, unadulterated Islam. They claim to base their religious practice and lifestyle exclusively on the principles of the Koran, the example of the Prophet Muhammad and the first three Muslim generations, the so-called righteous ancients (Arabic: Al-Salaf al-Salih). As a consequence, Salafists are trying to establish a “state of God” according to their interpretation of the rules of the Sharia, in which the democratic constitutions and laws of the European states are no longer to have any validity.

The constitutional protection authorities of European states analyze that political and jihadist Salafists share the same ideological foundations. They differ primarily in the choice of means by which they seek to achieve their goals. Political Salafists seek to spread their Islamist ideology through intensive propaganda activities-which they refer to as “proselytizing” (dawa)-and to change society according to Salafist norms in a long-term process. It can be seen that political Salafists in Europe maintain an

ambivalent relationship to violence as a means of achieving their goals, because religiously legitimized violence is not ruled out in principle.

The “attractiveness of Salafism” that has persisted for several years makes it clear how important it is for society as a whole to confront it and for the police and constitutional protection authorities to investigate it. This is all the more true because the jihadist orientation of Salafism not only rejects “the West” - symbolized in Germany's free democratic basic order - but actively fights it: Whether by leaving for so-called jihadist regions such as Syria and Iraq or by carrying out attacks in Germany and Europe.

Various security authorities and political scientists throughout Europe emphasize the potential danger posed in Europe by Islamist organizations and actors, including “legalistic Islamists” who publicly distance themselves from Islamist violence. German constitutional protection authorities even assess the potential danger to European democracy posed by legalistic Islamist organizations and actors as follows: “In the long term, the threat to the free democratic basic order resulting from legalistic Islamism is greater than that posed by jihadism.”⁸⁸ According to the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, legalistic Islamist organizations in Europe seek to establish an Islamic state. Thus, various constitutional protection agencies assume that legalistic Islamism is even “more dangerous than violent Islamism because legalistic Islamists are trying to infiltrate European society and to take over and influence politics and society. Therefore, they could severely damage our democracy.”⁸⁹

4.3.1 “Milli-Görüs”

According to German security authorities, the “Milli Görüs” (“National View”) movement, which is classified as legalistic Islamist by the German constitutional protection authorities, wants to replace the Western “order of injustice” with an “Islamic just order.” According to the German security and constitutional protection authorities, about 10,000 people belong to it in Germany alone. The “Islamic Community Milli Görüs e.V.” (IGMG) in Germany is represented in the “European Council for Fatwa and Research” (ECFR), and its student organization belongs to the “Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations” (FEMYSO). This shows an affinity with the

Muslim Brotherhood. There are also contacts with the Turkish right-wing extremist Ülkücü movement (Gray Wolves).

The “Islamic Community Milli Görüs” (IGMG) describes itself as an Islamic religious community that aims to “comprehensively organize the religious life of Muslims”. According to the IGMG's own information, it is established in 12 different European countries, including Switzerland, Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and England, and has approximately 127,000 members throughout Europe. According to its own figures, about 350,000 people attend its Friday prayers. It describes itself as “the largest civil society organization in Europe” and maintains 2,330 branches with its women's, youth, students' and women's youth organizations.

The “İsmail Ağa Cemaati” (IAC), “SAADET Europa e.V.,” “Europavertretung der Erbakan-Stiftung,” and the “Millî Gazete” are associations associated with the “Millî Görüş” movement. The İsmail Ağa Cemaati (IAC) is considered one of the more radical branches of the Brotherhood. The spiritual leader is Sheikh Mahmud Ustaosmanoğlu, who lives in Turkey. The “Saadet Partisi” (SP), the political representation of the “Millî Görüş” movement in Turkey since 2001, began to build structures outside Turkey in 2013. The “Erbakan Stiftung” was established in Turkey in June 2013. As the mouthpiece of the “Millî Görüş” movement, the formally independent Turkish daily newspaper “Millî Gazete” forms an important link between the individual actors of the movement and contributes to the consolidation of Islamist positions, according to the assessment of the German constitutional protection authorities.⁹⁰

4.3.2 Muslim Brotherhood

“Islam will conquer Europe without a sword and without a fight.” Very clearly, the most influential contemporary thinker and agitator of the worldwide Muslim Brotherhood, Yusuf Al Qaradawi, deceased in Qatar on Sept. 26, 2022, explained on Qatari television what the goal of his movement is for Europe. This form of peaceful conquest through missionary work (“dawa”) and targeted influence will be crowned with success, he said. Europe, according to the sheikh, is in a “miserable state of immorality, materialism and promiscuity” and must be liberated from this misery by Islam. “Europe will find no lifesaver, no lifeboat except Islam.” Al Qaradawi represented political Islam,

Islamism, in this. The Muslim Brotherhood follows Sharia law, the “order of God”, and, according to Dr. Rita Breuer, an Islamic scholar at the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, is “profoundly undemocratic and representative of a political Islam” that is “incompatible” with the democratic constitutions of European states and human rights.⁹¹ In order to specifically influence Muslims living in Europe, the European Council for Fatwa and Research, ECFR was founded in Dublin in 1997 under the chairmanship of Yusuf Al Qaradawi (see his quote above). The ECFR is an association of Muslim clerics that produces legal opinions on the specific situation of Muslims in Europe. According to Dr. Rita Breuer, an Islamic scholar, for the ECFR “dialogue and democracy are only means to an end; the view of Western society is disparaging, sometimes downright contemptuous.”⁹² The German authorities for the protection of the constitution state that the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamist form of state it seeks are not compatible with basic democratic principles such as the right to free elections, the right to equal treatment, and freedom of opinion and religion.

The Muslim Brotherhood is the oldest and most influential Islamist movement in the world and has been present and active in Europe since the 1950s. Since its founding in Egypt in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood has had a decisive influence on political, religious and social developments in the Arab world. The Muslim Brotherhood forms a worldwide network of organizational, personal, and financial ties. Its founder, Hassan Al Banna, an Islamist from the very beginning, advocated the creation of a global movement instead of a uniformly structured organization. Complicating matters for the security authorities of European states is the fact that most actors in the West associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, aware of the observation by the security authorities that may result from a possible connection to the Muslim Brotherhood, go to great lengths to conceal such links. Therefore, a distinction must be made in Europe between core Muslim Brotherhood, offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Muslim Brotherhood-influenced actors. The core of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe consists of covertly operating networks with a pyramid-shaped structure. Offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood are visible, public organizations. However, the wide network of diverse organizations controlled by them in Europe cannot be directly linked to the

Muslim Brotherhood. Organizations that are under the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood are those that hold a worldview clearly influenced by the organization but have no clear operational ties to it. Muslim Brotherhood influences here include the composition of the board of directors, the organization's sources of funding, and ideological-programmatic influences. The exact number of Muslim Brotherhood members and numerous associated actors in Europe is non-public, but according to evaluations of various political science sources, it is in the range of several tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands.⁹³

4.3.3 Furkan community

The Furkan community is an Islamist group from Turkey that has numerous offshoots in Europe. According to various security agencies, it strives for a worldwide “Islamic civilization” that contradicts all other models of civilization and is based on Sharia law, which is “superior to all other civilizations and is to be realized in the form of a caliphate. Thus, the Furkan community views any form of democracy as contradictory to divine laws. The Furkan community is closely networked with the Salafist scene in Europe. According to the German government, the “Furkan Community” is an Islamist movement whose long-term goal is the “unification of all Muslims into a single community and the creation of a world according to God’s ‘wish’ and his laws.” Accordingly, the “state” is categorically rejected as a form of society “of the West”. Moreover, the Furkan community holds that the Quran and Sunnah contain laws applicable at all times and in all places, and that there should be no authority other than God in all spheres of life (i.e., no man-made laws, the basis of our democratic, European popular sovereignty). Thus, followers of the “Furkan Community” reject democracy as “a man-made doctrine of ideas”. To spread its ideas, the Turkey-based “Furkan Foundation” also operates numerous websites and profiles on social networks in Europe, with many dozens of thousands of followers. The Furkan community is represented in numerous major cities in Europe, including Switzerland, including Zurich and Basel.⁹⁴

5 Propaganda, fake news and disinformation campaigns of the Putin system - delegitimization of our democracy(ies)

The German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz defines disinformation and disinformation campaigns as follows:

“Disinformation is the deliberate dissemination of false or misleading information with the aim of influencing the public opinion of individuals or groups in order to support a particular cause. Information constitutes disinformation if its content is incorrect according to objective standards and the originator knows this. The same applies to the concealment of essential parts of information. In order to speak of a campaign beyond the dissemination of disinformation, various elements must be fulfilled. For example, broad impact, coordinated action and, if necessary, different actors can be used as possible criteria for distinguishing between a single disinformation and a disinformation campaign. Disinformation activities are intended to influence or change emotions, perceptions and attitudes in the long term.”⁹⁵

Russian disinformation campaigns against Germany and other European states are not a new phenomenon, but they have taken on a new quality and quantity since the start of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

The German government describes the Federal Foreign Office (AA), the Federal Press Office (BPA), and the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs (BMI) and its subordinate agencies (primarily the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) as the bodies responsible for combating Russian disinformation campaigns in Germany, which monitor the Internet for false or misleading information circulating there.⁹⁶ According to the German government, it is engaged in “proactive fact-based and target-group-oriented communication on the current situation and the measures taken.” In addition to “appropriate reactive measures, such as correcting misinformation”, the focus is on “prevention and building overall governmental and societal resilience”.⁹⁷ In this regard, the German Federal Minister of the Interior and Home Affairs, Nancy Faeser, stated in May 2022, during the first peak phase of Russian disinformation campaigns against Germany since the beginning of the

Russian war of aggression against Ukraine: “The fight against disinformation is a central challenge for the protection of our constitution – that is why we must not see this protection only as an official task of the BfV. Protection of the constitution is a comprehensive task of the state and society.”⁹⁸ German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser considered it a success that the EU imposed sanctions on the Russian media Russia Today and Sputnik a few days after the start of the war, thus limiting the reach of Russian state-related media. However, Faeser concedes here that since the EU sanctions against these Russian state-affiliated media, pro-Russian disinformation and propaganda has been increasingly disseminated via accounts in social media. In addition, she said, attempts are being made “to redirect users to alternative platforms such as Telegram.”⁹⁹ From Telegram, Russian propaganda can be easily spread by other actors, groups and individuals.¹⁰⁰

In conclusion, the German Federal Minister of the Interior Faeser emphasized that “the fight against disinformation is a central challenge for the protection of our constitution” and that this protection should be understood “not only as an official task of the Federal Office”, since disinformation “falls on fertile ground especially in those areas of our society where resentment and conspiracy myths are widespread anyway”.¹⁰¹

5.1 Effectiveness of countermeasures, the current threat situation, criticism of countermeasures

According to Eleonora Heinze and Manuel Steudle, Germany is “relatively unprepared to face” Russian disinformation campaigns. One of the problems is the “lack of training of state institutions” and the “inadequate public communication on the part of politicians”, although “according to experts, politicians and security authorities know exactly who is behind these disinformation campaigns”.¹⁰² Here, Heinze and Steudle refer to the positive examples of the Czech Republic and Estonia, which have successfully stood up to Russian disinformation campaigns with an “interplay of state and civil society resources in a tried and tested manner”.¹⁰³

A data analysis by WDR, NDR and Süddeutsche Zeitung showed as early as April 2022 that Facebook was unable to combat Russian disinformation campaigns in Germany. A large number of fake news stories, for example about the massacres and

atrocities committed by Russian soldiers against Ukrainians in Butscha, spread rapidly on Facebook in April 2022. Videos with Fake News of Russian disinformation campaigns were viewed thousands of times in Germany. The evaluation of a sample of Facebook pages by WDR, NDR and Süddeutsche Zeitung showed, “Postings and pages that cast doubt on the atrocities record high growth rates and views – without being deleted or marked as false.”¹⁰⁴ The massacres and atrocities of Butscha were titled “the staged bloodbath of Butscha” or “the lie of Butscha” in those Russian fake news videos. Alleged “proofs” are mentioned, such as “no blood was found on Ukrainian cars”, the bodies of the partly bound people showed “no rigor mortis”, or “no bodies were found at all”, others claim.¹⁰⁵

The Facebook page of the Russian embassy in Germany, which has been able to spread disinformation, propaganda and fake news in Germany unchallenged since the beginning of the war, was joined by numerous small accounts from the conspiracy ideology milieu, for example the Facebook page “Anonline”. This was founded immediately after the start of the Russian war of aggression; after four weeks and 250 pro-System Putin posts, over ten thousand people followed it in Germany in April 2022. In total, analysis by WDR, NDR and Süddeutsche Zeitung shows, videos posted by “Anonline” were viewed more than two million times. Facebook pages like this are many, and their follower numbers increased tenfold in some cases within a week of the start of the war of aggression.¹⁰⁶ Here, the relevant German ministries and authorities do not yet seem to have found an effective antidote.¹⁰⁷

At the end of August 2022, the German Federal Ministry of the Interior expressed concern about fake and deceptively real-looking media websites with pro-Russian disinformation surrounding the Ukraine war. A spokesperson for the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Homeland Affairs stated, “we have noted with concern that deceptively genuine-looking, albeit fake, websites of established news sites are linked via fake accounts in certain social media. According to the report, fabricated news and fake videos – part of Russian disinformation campaigns – are being disseminated

there. “These pursue the goal of undermining trust in politics, society and state institutions”, explained the spokesman for the Federal Ministry of the Interior.¹⁰⁸

Among other things, pages of the large and highest-circulation daily newspaper “Bild” and the high-circulation weekly magazine “Spiegel” were reproduced. The “Spiegel” publishing group explained: “Unfortunately, our brands are repeatedly misused for similar actions. We regularly examine legal and technical options and also take action against this type of misuse in individual cases.”¹⁰⁹

At the end of August 2022, ZDF spoke of the largest disinformation campaign in Germany to date: copycat media sites as part of a large-scale Russian disinformation campaign, presumably orchestrated by the Putin system, are spreading propaganda, with hundreds of fake accounts sharing it en masse on social media. According to ZDF, the attempts to influence public opinion in Germany with pro-Russian propaganda have reached an unprecedented dimension. In this new, large-scale disinformation campaign by Russia, masses of websites of major media brands such as Bild, Welt, t-online and Spiegel have been deceptively recreated to put just such fake news and fake videos into the world. In a second step, an army of specially created fake accounts spreads this fake news on social media. The tenor of most of the videos and messages is: Germany’s and the EU’s sanctions against Russia must stop immediately, otherwise Germany will become impoverished, there is a threat of hunger, people could freeze to death in winter, and the economy could collapse. The strategic goal of this Russian disinformation campaign is to unsettle the population, to create a mood against the EU sanctions and against German arms deliveries to Ukraine.¹¹⁰

Although some of these fake pages have been deleted, many of these fake videos are still circulating on social media and their creators are constantly providing new content. An army of presumably hundreds of fake profiles on Facebook and Twitter spread the content thousands of times, and it is consumed hundreds of thousands of times. Fake profiles partly share the propaganda videos and articles in their own timelines, but also post them as comments under Facebook posts and tweets of other institutions to further increase their reach and bring them close to serious media and institutions.

Thus, especially at media like Deutsche Welle (which has a European and worldwide reach with English-language articles), Tagesspiegel or Bayerischer Rundfunk), at big brands (Mercedes, XXXLutz), also on the Facebook pages of the U.S. Embassy, the Berlin Charité or the AfD Berlin propaganda comments with the corresponding links to the propaganda content could be found. At the end of August 2022, Klein pointed out on ZDF that current Facebook pages not only spread this fake news, but even place advertisements for it on Facebook, which makes the disinformation spread even faster and Facebook even earns money with it.¹¹¹

Konstantin von Notz, deputy parliamentary group leader of the Green Party and chairman of the Parliamentary Control Panel in the German Bundestag, which gives him a very comprehensive and profound level of information regarding information from the German intelligence services on Russian disinformation campaigns, said at the end of August 2022 that the dimension of disinformation campaigns for the non-transparent manipulation of democratic discourse has reached “worrying proportions. In addition to security authorities and platform operators, policy makers are also called upon, von Notz said, “We need new and better structures to detect and defend against these hybrid threats.”¹¹² This is in line with the criticism expressed above of the measures taken so far by the relevant German ministries and their agencies against Russian disinformation campaigns.

As an interim conclusion, it remains to be said that, as of late summer 2022, the current measures taken by the German government and its authorities against Russian disinformation campaigns in Germany – outlined above – are not sufficient and that, according to Konstantin von Notz, deputy chairman of the Green Party in the Bundestag and chairman of the Parliamentary Control Panel, new “new and better structures are needed to detect and defend against these hybrid threats”¹¹³.

5.2 Proposals - New countermeasures, actors and means

Therefore, the following measures should be taken immediately by the German Federal Government, the relevant ministries and their authorities:

- A government center or officer for analyzing disinformation campaigns and fake news and publishing counter-narratives should be commissioned immediately, as a link between the media, social media and the authorities.
- Research on the topic of disinformation campaigns, fake news, narratives, strategies and actors as well as counter-narratives must be intensified urgently and as quickly as possible, and this requires a nationwide strategy and concept. The ministries involved, for example the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense, have their own colleges and universities. Research professorships should be created there immediately to initiate comprehensive research projects on the extensive aspects of this topic as quickly as possible. In order to coordinate this research effectively, the aforementioned state center or a commissioner for analyzing disinformation campaigns and fake news and publishing counter-narratives would be of utmost importance.
- The defense against disinformation campaigns and fake news must recognize that it is a phenomenon that affects society as a whole, and it is imperative that a government agency be established as quickly as possible to coordinate nationwide how to strengthen students' media literacy. Resilience against disinformation campaigns requires strong media competence. This must be initiated immediately, comprehensively, in a coordinated manner in schools, taught by experts, with a detailed hourly approach. This does not mean that civics/politics/German/informatics teachers "talk about it in class for a change". This must be carried out very comprehensively by experts at various levels (political scientists, extremism researchers, media scientists; prevention programs must be thoroughly trained and practical training must be provided, and the psychological level must also be included).
- Media literacy must be a major future focus in schools and then supplemented by lifelong learning opportunities for all age groups as part of political education. At this point, it is about lifelong resilience against disinformation campaigns, fake news and propaganda, about strengthening or building democratic resilience. This must be addressed in a whole-of-society approach.

- A Europe-wide networking of the above proposed governmental center or a commissioner for the analysis of disinformation campaigns and fake news as well as the publication of counter-narratives both with the EU itself and with the individual EU states would have to be initiated immediately, as there are best practice and lessons learned findings especially in the area of Northern European countries such as Finland and Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic and Poland, because these states have been exposed to Russian disinformation campaigns for many years.¹¹⁴

6 Energy Crisis and Inflation in Germany: Are Mass Protests Threatened by a New Actor Constellation of Populists, Radicals as well as Extremists on the One Hand and People from the Political Center on the Other?

In mid-August 2022, the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz warned that extremist groups and Russia could specifically use the current economic problems and energy crisis to mobilize. In this regard, the German state of Saxony could once again become a hotspot – as it did during the corona pandemic of 2020 to 2022.¹¹⁵ The German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz stated in late summer 2022 that extremist actors, as well as the Putin system, wanted to specifically exploit the current economic crises to divide society in Germany. One observes that a radicalized minority of right-wing extremists, so-called delegitimizers, “Reichsbürger” and conspiracy believers are positioning themselves, explained the president of the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, Thomas Haldenwang, in mid-August 2022.¹¹⁶

Extremist groups and actors in Germany, he said, some of which would overlap, are specifically trying to use issues such as the war in Ukraine, high inflation and the Corona pandemic to mobilize. “To make matters worse, Russia is using tools such as cyberattacks and disinformation as hybrid levers to divide society in Germany”, BfV President Haldenwang said. However, he said, it is still unclear how large the mobilization potential is. “So far, there are no signs of widespread anti-state protests or even violent mass riots”, Haldenwang led in late summer 2022.¹¹⁷

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz stated in August 2022 that he did not expect a “hot autumn” or unrest in Germany despite rising energy prices. However, there are warnings from various federal and state ministers that we could be facing a “hot autumn”, for example if the price increases for energy take full effect or there is a gas shortage. Thus, there were indications that there could again be increased protests such as the Monday demonstrations.¹¹⁸

With regard to a possible mass mobilization, the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz stated in mid-August 2022 that the situation was being monitored very closely and that it had seen, for example, among right-wing extremists that the discontent and problems in the everyday life of the population were being instrumentalized and fears were being deliberately fanned “in order to undermine trust in the state, government and democracy in the long term”. Inflation and the energy crisis would be presented as direct consequences of the current Western sanctions policy and not of the Russian attack on Ukraine. In addition to the Corona pandemic, which has already been driving the “Querdenker” movement since 2020, the Ukraine war, economic consequences, and inflation fears would now be instrumentalized by other groups and actors. The deliberate spread of conspiracy theories plays an important role here.¹¹⁹

Thuringia’s Prime Minister Bodo Ramelow, of the Left Party, warned his party in August 2022 not to make common cause with right-wing radicals, right-wing extremists, “Querdenker” in the planned protests against rising energy prices. He was referring to statements made by Sören Pellmann, the Bundestag faction’s representative for the East, who had called for “Monday demonstrations in the East like the ones against Hartz IV back then”.¹²⁰

“The Left Party is fighting for an effective protective umbrella across all options, in the Bundestag and Bundesrat”, Ramelow said.¹²¹ “In social protests, however, please observe the rule of distance from right-wing radical organizers. The right-wingers were rightly criticized when they appropriated the symbolism of the Monday demonstrations”.¹²²

The co-chairman of the Left Party, Martin Schirdewan, in turn defended his party's call for protests against the planned gas levy. He rejected concerns that this could divide society: "Those who are dividing society are the parties represented in the federal government, by implementing an antisocial policy that is above all at the expense of the majority of the population. It's only natural that the population should be displeased. As the Left Party, we are striving to organize a hot autumn against the social coldness of the federal government."¹²³

In a press release dated Aug. 24, 2022, the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV) stated that the Ukraine war and its possible effects on the economy and supply situation in Germany "fundamentally harbor a high instrumentalization potential for extremist spectrums and state influence actors". By linking the topics of inflation, energy, the Ukraine war and Corona, extremists in Germany have been trying for weeks to connect with the middle of society and mobilize for their agenda, according to the BfV.¹²⁴ The enemy images that had already emerged since the peak of the Corona pandemic could be adopted in the process, on the one hand, and transferred to other targets, on the other. The president of the BfV, Thomas Haldenwang, stated: "The BfV observes that a radicalized minority of right-wing extremists, delegitimizers, Reich citizens and conspiracy believers are taking up positions in order to occupy topics such as the war in Ukraine, rising prices, inflation and the corona pandemic and to misuse them for mobilization. To make matters worse, Russia is using tools such as cyberattacks and disinformation as hybrid levers to divide society in Germany. We are closely monitoring whether verbal agitation on the Internet translates into mobilization for activities relevant to constitutional protection in the real world."¹²⁵

The German BfV has been observing for weeks that German right-wing extremists from the party spectrum attributed the economic effects of the Russian war of aggression to a supposed inability on the part of the ruling parties and portrayed the war – and sanctions-related price increases, for example, as a consequence of globalization. The goal was to instrumentalize discontent and growing problems in the everyday lives of the population in order to undermine trust in the state, government and democracy in the long term.¹²⁶

The Saxon micro-party “Free Saxons” and the AfD party as a suspected case of right-wing extremism are cited as examples. The AfD is increasingly taking up the issue of inflation, as are actors of the New Right, for example the association “Ein Prozent” and the “COMPACT-Magazin GmbH”.

With regard to the new phenomenon area of “delegitimization of the state relevant to constitutional protection”, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) states that after the relaxation of the Corona protection measures, the core of the protest scene has set out in search of new topics with which the mobilization capacity of the spectrum can be maintained. As with any extremist group, topics that negatively affect a large part of society and can thus “generate great potential for outrage and a high degree of connectivity” are suitable for this. For example, the topic of the “energy crisis” is in the process of becoming more dominant in the discourse.¹²⁷ For example, actors from the phenomenon area of “delegitimization of the state relevant to constitutional protection” have been trying for weeks to occupy the topic area of “Ukraine war and its effects on the population and economy in Germany”. Just as in the Corona pandemic, this scene’s agitation against the free democratic basic order is embedded in conspiracy narratives.¹²⁸

German left-wing extremists are also trying to use the topic of the “Ukrainian war and its consequences for Germany” for their fields of action, currently in the area of “anti-militarism”. According to the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV), the left-wing extremists are focusing on defense companies in particular, but also on the German armed forces and political parties. There has already been initial damage to property, and blockades and sabotage actions must be expected.¹²⁹

Russia’s war against Ukraine has now been going on for more than eight months and, according to military experts, will continue for some time. Every day, the humanitarian catastrophe in Ukraine grows. On another level of analysis, the consequences of this war have quickly been felt in Europe as well, and could reach levels here that were thought impossible after World War II. Massive increases in gas and oil prices, inflation, and potentially greater unemployment in the medium term are directly affecting the

middle of the European population. The historical pandemic was followed by the Ukraine war and those actors who want to delegitimize the governments of the European states as well as their security agencies are partly the same as in the pandemic, but potentially new constellations of actors are also forming. In late summer, the leader of Germany's Die Linke party, Martin Schirdewan, announced a "hot autumn", mass protests against the German government's energy policy. There, a new constellation of actors could potentially emerge after the protests against the Corona hygiene measures of the German federal and state governments: Protesting citizens from the middle of the population could encounter populists, radicals, right-wing extremists, "Reichsbürger" and "self-governors", "Querdenker", delegitimizers, as well as left-wing extremists. Both in the real world and online, where social networks are also used to transport content that is part of Russian disinformation campaigns against German and other European democracies. In times of major social, economic crises, the risk for radicalization trajectories grows among more people. Fake news, "alternative facts", conspiracy narratives, and disinformation campaigns have played an important role in threatening Germany's homeland security since the onset of the Corona pandemic in the spring of 2020 and are now doing so on another issue, the delegitimization of the German government's Ukraine-Russia policy. In times of crisis, populists, radicals, and extremists have an easier time destabilizing, spreading propaganda, and recruiting. A significant deterioration of the economic situation in Germany and Europe would have a potentially significant impact on the stability of our democracy, on the internal security of Germany and other European states. The German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz is currently clearly alarmed about the potential to delegitimize our democracy.¹³⁰

7 Countering current and future threats and attackers - the "Strategic Compass" of the European Union

The Council of the European Union approved on 21.3.2022 the document "A Strategic Compass for Security and Defense – For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security."¹³¹ This

“Strategic Compass” is intended to be an action plan for strengthening the European Union's security and defense policy until 2030.

The Council of the EU stated on March 21, 2022 – barely a month after the start of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine – that the “more hostile security environment” required the EU to take a “quantum leap forward” and that the EU needed to “ – increase its capacity and – readiness to act,” strengthen its “resilience, and invest more and better” in its defense capabilities.¹³² Thus, he said, this “Strategic Compass” action plan should “strengthen the EU’s strategic autonomy and its ability to work with partners to uphold its values and interests”. “A stronger and more capable EU in the field of security and defense” should “make a constructive contribution to global and transatlantic security” and “complement NATO”, which “remains the foundation of collective defense” for its members.¹³³

This “Strategic Compass” as a guide for the EU’s security and defense policy is intended to help the EU “face up to its security responsibilities towards our citizens and the rest of the world”. The “Strategic Compass” includes an introductory assessment of the EU’s strategic environment, the threats and challenges it faces.

7.1 The “Strategic Compass” and the EU Threat Analysis – “The World We Live In”

The EU’s Strategic Compass was initiated by the German government at the time. The process of developing it was initiated in the second half of 2020 under the German EU Council Presidency and concluded on March 25, 2022 under the French Council Presidency.¹³⁴ The aim of the “Strategic Compass” is to bring more coherence to the EU’s security and defense policy initiatives (Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD); European Defence Fund (EDF) and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)) and to provide new impetus for European cooperation. The entire document is 64 pages long and presents the main actions in four areas: Crisis Management (ACT), Resilience (SECURE), Capabilities (INVEST) and Partnerships (PARTNER).¹³⁵

In preparation for the “Strategic Compass”, the EU, including the intelligence services of its member states, conducted a comprehensive threat analysis for the first time in order to develop a “common understanding within the EU of the threats and challenges

the EU will face in the near future”. This threat analysis is to be reviewed and updated every three years.¹³⁶ The current EU threat analysis states that the overall security landscape, i.e. Europe’s external and internal security, is “more volatile, complex and fragmented than ever before due to multi-layered threats.” In the subsection “The Return of Power Politics in a Contested Multipolar World”, the EU states, in reference to Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, that “the EU is firmly committed to effective multilateralism” and seeks the development of an open, rules-based international order founded on human rights and fundamental freedoms, universal values and international law”. The EU’s threat assessment states in Chapter 1 of the “Strategic Compass” that “faith in this vision is now severely shaken”, however, and that the current international reality is based on a combination of dynamics with an “increasing number of actors” seeking to “expand their political space and challenge the security order”.¹³⁷

The threat analysis identifies terrorism and violence-oriented extremism in all their forms, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems (including chemical weapons and the development and use of new advanced ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and hypersonic missiles) as newly emerging international threats and challenges that have a direct impact on the EU’s security. Here, the EU explicitly mentions Russia and China and mentions threats of the use of nuclear weapons by the Putin system. As further threats, the EU identifies that “state and non-state actors used hybrid strategies, cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns, direct influence on our elections and political processes, as well as economic pressure and the instrumentalization of irregular migration flows.” Hybrid disinformation campaigns in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and state countermeasures are particularly emphasized by the EU, as attackers spread narratives designed to delegitimize our European democracy.¹³⁸

In times of increasing dependence on digital technologies, cyberspace has become the arena of strategic competition in which the EU faces increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks, he said. It is therefore “imperative to maintain an open, free, stable and secure cyberspace”. Finally, the Threat Analysis chapter of the “Strategic Compass”

cites “maritime security in the Baltic, Black, Mediterranean and North Seas, as well as in Arctic waters and the Atlantic, as important to the EU’s security, its economic development, free trade, transport and energy security. Marine areas, critical sea lanes and several straits, as well as seabeds, from the Gulf of Aden to the Strait of Hormuz and beyond the Strait of Malacca are increasingly contested, he said.¹³⁹

7.2 The “Strategic Compass” – New EU Measures and Means

In terms of the measures to be taken, the EU refers to four areas: *action*, *security*, *investment* and *working with partners*. In the area of *action*, civilian and military CSDP missions and operations are to be strengthened, an EU rapid reaction capability is to be established, and military command structures are to be strengthened. In the topic area of *securing*, the EU states that it needs to anticipate future threats; to this end, intelligence capabilities are to be strengthened, for example, the EU’s Single Analysis Capability (SIAC) is to be promoted. In addition, a hybrid EU toolkit is to be created, bringing together different tools to detect and respond to a wide range of hybrid threats. Linked to this, the EU’s cyber defense policy is to be further developed in order to be better prepared for and able to respond to cyber attacks. In the *Investing* field of action, the EU talks about capabilities and innovative technologies in order to close strategic gaps and reduce technological and industrial dependencies on other countries.¹⁴⁰

More and more effective defense spending is to be undertaken, high-performance naval platforms, air combat systems of the future, space-based capabilities and main battle tanks are being sought. The Permanent Structured Cooperation and the European Defense Fund will be used extensively to jointly develop state-of-the-art military capabilities, invest in defense technological innovations and create a new defense innovation center within the European Defense Agency (EDA).

In the area of *Working with Partners*, strategic partnerships with NATO and the United Nations will be strengthened through more structured political dialogues and operational and thematic cooperation. In addition, an EU Forum for Security and Defense Partnerships will be established to work more closely and effectively with partners to address common challenges.¹⁴¹

8 Conclusion

The new East-West conflict, the East-West conflict of the 21st century, has begun at the latest with the 24.2.2022, will cost many more human lives and it will threaten the internal security of our European democracy(s). The Putin system will very likely seek intensive forms of cooperation with the enemies of liberal democracies, for example, with right-wing extremists, delegitimizers and other opponents of the state in European states. In times of economic and security crises, radicals and extremists have an easier time destabilizing, spreading propaganda, and recruiting. A potentially significant deterioration of the economic situation – inflation – can thus potentially have an impact on the internal security of our European democracies.

Hybrid warfare and hybrid actors are not a genuinely new phenomenon, i.e., not a 21st century phenomenon *sui generis*. However, Russian “de-bordered” warfare – regular and hybrid strategies, means and actors – has reached a qualitative and quantitative scale that has historically threatened our liberal democracies since World War II. At the level of analysis of security policy in the 21st century, the Putin system’s warfare since 2014 has diffused the boundaries of war and peace, external and internal security, military and civilian. Military offensives, paramilitary offensives, terror bombing of civilians and assassinations, ambushes and acts of sabotage are as much means of this warfare as cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns, exploitation of economic dependencies and diplomatic pressure. According to Gerasimov, Russia’s “de-limited” warfare uses the “entire spectrum” of strategies, tactics, and means, conventional and irregular, terrorist and criminal, political and economic. The Russian Gerasimov doctrine speaks of a “de-limited” nature of warfare, meaning *all* means, excluding nuclear warfare by Russia against NATO countries.

The war in Ukraine will prognostically continue for some time, the consequences for external and internal security will be felt by even more people in Europe. Populists, radicals, extremists and delegitimizers will develop and apply new strategies and tactics, new actors will emerge. These should be intensively studied in the near future by security authorities, by academia and also by the media. Moreover, the security

authorities and academia should cooperate more intensively and closely at this point than has been the case to date.

Plastically formulated, the “turn of the times” postulated by German Chancellor Scholz focuses on new battle tanks and combat aircraft for the Bundeswehr, but overlooks the fact that Russian hybrid warfare has started a new East-West conflict, which is being waged outside Ukraine, in the neighboring Western states of the EU, very much in social media, through Fake News and disinformation campaigns. Those Telegram groups that carried Russian narratives of criticism of the Corona sanctions of Western governments until 2/24/2022 are now spreading narratives and fake news such as “Russia had to defend itself from NATO aggression”, “NATO installed chemical weapons labs in Ukraine”, and “the European Union is spreading Russophobia”. In short, in the age of social media, battle tanks and combat aircraft have become important again since 2/24/2022, but Russian hybrid warfare against the EU will have to be stopped not with battle tanks on German or French territory, but with battle tanks and HIMARS on Ukrainian territory and at the same time with new actors, new centers, new means in the fight against Russian disinformation campaigns on the Internet.

German policymakers and the leadership of German security agencies should recognize that the German security architecture faces new challenges in light of this new East-West conflict with a war of aggression in Europe and should therefore establish a center or officer to identify and analyze disinformation campaigns, to develop concrete action derivatives, and to cooperate closely with civil society agencies.

Disinformation campaigns, fake news, endanger the internal security of democracies and should in future be dealt with in a concerted manner by the security authorities, academia and civil society actors in the areas of both internal and external security and responded to with proactive countermeasures. In the age of a “turning point in time”, innovative thinking is needed here.

Both the failure of the Western coalition in Afghanistan and the failure of various Western intelligence agencies, including Germany’s foreign intelligence service, the

Bundesnachrichtendienst, to predict when Russia's war of aggression would begin on Feb. 24, 2022, show that Western states have, to put it mildly, a significant vacuum of analysis in the area of security policy, hybrid warfare and hybrid actors. The institutional separation of external and internal security must be immediately challenged, as must the mindset and resilience of Western security agencies and Western armed forces. Both the "Islamic State" and the Taliban, as well as Russia's hybrid warfare, have shown Western democracies, their governments, ministers and politicians, as well as their security agencies and their armed forces – to varying degrees – their limitations. It is time to thoroughly review Western security architectures, the functioning of their security agencies and armed forces.

¹ Cf. Klie, T. (2022): Demokratische Resilienz. <https://www.eh-freiburg.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Demokratische-Resilienz-tk-29-06-20.pdf> (15.10.2022).

² Cf. Calliess, C. (2021): Demokratie unter Beschuss. Die EU muss Resilienz nach innen und außen. DGAP Policy Brief No. 5 August 2021, p. 2.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴ <https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/1952/bvg52-059.html> (10.15.2022).

⁵ Cf. Klie, T. (2022): Demokratische Resilienz.

⁶ Cf. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/kurzmeldungen/DE/2021/2021-04-29-querdenker.html> (15.10.2022).

⁷ Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat: Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021, Berlin, June 2022, p. 112.

⁸ Cf. Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat: Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021, Berlin, June 2022, p. 113.

⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰ <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/kurzmeldungen/DE/2021/2021-04-29-querdenker.html> (15.10.2022).

¹¹ Cf. Bundesministerium des Innern und Heimat: Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021, Berlin, June 2022, pp. 114-115.

¹² Cf. Ministerium des Innern des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen: Sonderbericht zu Verschwörungsmythen und „Corona-Leugnern“, Düsseldorf, May 2021, p. 69.

¹³ Cf. Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat: Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021, Berlin June 2022, p. 113.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Cf. <https://im.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/service/presse-und-oeffentlichkeitsarbeit/pressemitteilung/pid/querdenken-711-wird-beobachtet/> (15.10.2022).

¹⁶ Cf. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/kurzmeldungen/DE/2021/2021-04-29-querdenker.html> (16.10.2022).

¹⁷ Cf. Ministerium des Innern, für Digitalisierung und Kommunen Baden Württemberg: Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021, Stuttgart, July 2022, p. 68; Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat: Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021, Berlin, June 2022, p. 112; Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport Berlin: Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021, Berlin, August 2022, pp. 26, 31.

¹⁸ <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000130478849/was-fuer-ein-bloedsinn-ein-staatsverweigerer-und-sein-wieder/> (16.10.2022).

¹⁹ Cf. <https://www.sn.at/panorama/oesterreich/3693-staatsleugner-sind-bisher-bekannt-97272769> (16.10.2022).

²⁰ Cf. <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2017-04/staatsverweigerer-oesterreich-staatsleugner-gesetz-verbot/komplettansicht> (16.10.2022).

²¹ Cf. <https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/staatsverweigerer-12-jahre-haft-fuer-praesidentin/401072787> (16.10.2022).

-
- ²² Cf. <https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/politik/oesterreich/2124610-Staatsverweigerer-gestand-staatsfeindliche-Verbindung.html> (16.10.2022).
- ²³ <https://www.vol.at/terror-bedrohungslage-in-oesterreich-unveraendert/7567564> (16.10. 2022).
- ²⁴ Cf. Goertz, S. (2022): Innere Sicherheit von A bis Z, pp. 23-24.
- ²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*
- ²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*
- ²⁷ Cf. https://www.verfassungsschutz.bayern.de/weitere_aufgaben/islamfeindlichkeit/definition/index.html (16.10.2022)
- ²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*
- ²⁹ Cf. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (2018): Kompendium des BfV. Darstellung ausgewählter Arbeitsbereiche und Beobachtungsobjekte. Dezember 2018, p. 20.
- ³⁰ Cf. Zeit Online: Islamfeindlichkeit: Zahl der Angriffe auf Muslime erneut gestiegen. 8.2.2021. https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2021-02/islamfeindlichkeit-uebergreifend-muslime-2020-bundesinnenministerium?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.de%2F (16.10.2022); Goertz, S. (2022): Innere Sicherheit von A bis Z, pp. 215-216.
- ³¹ Cf. Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (2016): Verfassungsschutzbericht 2015, p. 56.
- ³² Cf. Goertz, S. (2021): Rechtsextremismus und Rechtsterrorismus in Deutschland. Eine analytische Einführung für Polizei und Sicherheitsbehörden, pp. 87-88.
- ³³ Cf. Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (2017): Verfassungsschutzbericht 2016, p. 58.
- ³⁴ Quoted from: *ibid.*, p. 59; cf. Goertz, S. (2021): Rechtsextremismus und Rechtsterrorismus in Deutschland. Eine analytische Einführung für Polizei und Sicherheitsbehörden, pp. 88-89.
- ³⁵ Cf. Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz Baden-Württemberg (2020): Islamfeindlichkeit im Rechtsextremismus; <https://www.verfassungsschutz-bw.de/Lde/1917290> (16.10.2022).
- ³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*
- ³⁷ Cf. <https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/180774/islamfeindlichkeit-islamophobie-islamkritik-ein-wegweiser-durch-den-begriffsdschungel> (16.10.2022).
- ³⁸ Cf. Butter, M.: "Nichts ist wie es scheint." Über Verschwörungstheorien, Berlin, 2018, pp. 21-29.
- ³⁹ Cf. <https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/240/1924084.pdf>, p. 3 (16.10.2022).
- ⁴⁰ Cf. <https://www.rnd.de/politik/qanon-wer-oder-was-ist-das-computerwissenschaftler-identifizieren-zwei-maenner-A7YQ22U7RBG55ES7Z33A3NKRPY.html> (16.10.2022).
- ⁴¹ Cf. Goertz, S.: Corona Fake News, Verschwörungstheorien und die Querfront in Deutschland, in: Polizei Info Report 3/2021, p. 14.
- ⁴² Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁴³ Cf. https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/service/glossar/Functions/glossar.html?cms_lv2=678614 (22.10.2022).
- ⁴⁴ Cf. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz: Lagebild Antisemitismus, Berlin 2020, p. 13.
- ⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. Senatsverwaltung für Inneres, Digitalisierung und Sport Berlin: Verfassungsschutz Berlin Bericht 2020, Berlin 2021, p. 20.
- ⁴⁷ The president of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Thomas Haldenwang, said of this classification as a suspected case of right-wing extremism: "The magazine uses revisionist, conspiracy-theory and xenophobic motifs." <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/das-magazin-das-jetzt-auch-der-verfassungsschutz-liest-a-2dd9ac07-47bc-4461-9962-b9078274b925> (22.10.2022).
- ⁴⁸ Cited in: <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/das-magazin-das-jetzt-auch-der-verfassungsschutz-liest-a-2dd9ac07-47bc-4461-9962-b9078274b925> (22.10.2022).
- ⁴⁹ Cf. https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/service/glossar/Functions/glossar.html?cms_lv2=678608 (22.10.2022).
- ⁵⁰ Cf. Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (2021): Verfassungsschutzbericht 2020, pp. 75-77.
- ⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 81.
- ⁵² Cf. Goertz, S. (2022): Innere Sicherheit von A bis Z, pp. 186-187.
- ⁵³ Cf. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/27/world/europe/germany-far-right-generation-identity.html> (23.10.2022).
- ⁵⁴ Cf. <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/nachgefragt-der-attentaeter-und-die-verschwörungstheorie-100.html> (23.10.2022); Goertz, S. (2022): Innere Sicherheit von A bis Z, pp. 186-187.
- ⁵⁵ Cf. <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/nachgefragt-der-attentaeter-und-die-verschwörungstheorie-100.html> (5.11.2022).
- ⁵⁶ Cf. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/fluechtlingskrise/renaud-camus-thesen-sind-bei-front-national-salonfaehig-13809272.html> (23.10.2022).

-
- ⁵⁷ Cf. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/glosaareintraege/DE/S/siege-ideologie.html> (23.10.2022).
- ⁵⁸ Cf. Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat (2022): Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021, June 2022, p. 71.
- ⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 72.
- ⁶⁰ Cf. https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/service/glossar/Functions/glossar.html?cms_lv2=678618 (22.10.2022).
- ⁶¹ Moghadam, F.: The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration, in: *American Psychologist*, 60/ 2005, 2, pp. 161-169.
- ⁶² Cf. Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (2021): Verfassungsschutzbericht 2020, p. 60.
- ⁶³ Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ Imhoff, R./Bruder, M.: Speaking (un-) truth to power: Conspiracy mentality as a generalised political attitude. In: *European Journal of Personality*, 28, 1, 2014, pp. 25-43.
- ⁶⁵ Cf. Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat (2022): Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021, p. 53.
- ⁶⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 60.
- ⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 60-61; Goertz, S. (2022): Innere Sicherheit von A bis Z, pp. 363-364.
- ⁶⁸ <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article235365480/Sachsen-Corona-Kritiker-haben-eindeutig-rote-Linien-ueberschritten.html> (23.10.2022).
- ⁶⁹ Cf. Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (2020): Verfassungsschutzbericht 2019, p. 60.
- ⁷⁰ German Bundestag (2020): Drucksache 19/19408 19th Wahlperiode 25.5.2020 Response of the Federal Government to the Small Question of the Members of Parliament Konstantin Kuhle, Stephan Thomae, Grigorios Aggelidis, other Members of Parliament and the FDP Parliamentary Group - Drucksache 19/18801 - Stochastischer Terrorismus im Fokus der Sicherheitsbehörden, p. 6.
- ⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁷² Cf. Goertz, S. (2022): Innere Sicherheit von A bis Z, pp. 365-366.
- ⁷³ Cf. Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat (2022): Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021, pp. 72-73.
- ⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 74-75.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- ⁷⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 75-76.
- ⁷⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 86.
- ⁷⁸ Cf. https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/themen/reichsbuerger-und-selbstverwalter/reichsbuerger-und-selbstverwalter_node.html (23.10.2022).
- ⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁸⁰ Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁸¹ Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁸² Cf. https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/themen/reichsbuerger-und-selbstverwalter/begriff-und-erscheinungsformen/begriff-und-erscheinungsformen_node.html (23.10.2022).
- ⁸³ Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁸⁴ Cf. Goertz, S. (2022): Extremismus und Sicherheitspolitik. Studienkurs für die Polizei und die Verfassungsschutzbehörden. Wiesbaden, pp. 155-156.
- ⁸⁵ See the paper Goertz, S./Stockhammer, N. (2022): Taktische Erkenntnisse zum Wiener Terroranschlag vom 2. November 2020. March 2022. https://www.eictp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/FINAL_Expert-Paper_Taktischer-Erkenntnisse.pdf (5.11.2022).
- ⁸⁶ Cf. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af-islamismus-und-islamistischer-terrorismus/was-ist-islamismus/salafismus-in-deutschland> (5.11.2022).
- ⁸⁷ Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁸⁸ Verfassungsschutzbericht des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen: https://www.im.nrw/system/files/media/document/file/VS_Bericht_2018.pdf, 2018, p. 221
- ⁸⁹ Cf. Goertz, S. (2021): Islamistische Akteure in Europa – Strategien und Themen. In: *Schweizer Soldat* 5/2021, pp. 44-46.
- ⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁹¹ Cf. <https://www.bpb.de/themen/islamismus/dossier-islamismus/290422/die-muslimbruderschaft-in-deutschland/?rl=0.41351178978916564#rate5> (5.11.2022).
- ⁹² Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁹³ Cf. Goertz, S. (2021): Islamistische Akteure in Europa – Strategien und Themen. In: *Schweizer Soldat* 5/2021, pp. 44-46.
- ⁹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁹⁵ https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/service/glossar/Functions/glossar.html?cms_lv2=678582 (29.10.2022).

-
- ⁹⁶ Cf. <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/topthemen/DE/topthema-desinformation/massnahmen-der-bundesregierung.html> (29.10.2022).
- ⁹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*
- ⁹⁸ <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/reden/DE/2022/faeser-19052022-bfv-symposium.html> (29.10.2022).
- ⁹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁰ Goertz, S. (2022): Russische Desinformationskampagnen in Deutschland. Gegenmaßnahmen der Bundesregierung und Behörden – Kritik und Vorschläge. <https://www.veko-online.de/aktuelle-ausgabe/titel/titel-russische-desinformationskampagnen-in-deutschland.html> (29.10.2022).
- ¹⁰¹ <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/reden/DE/2022/faeser-19052022-bfv-symposium.html> (29.10.2022).
- ¹⁰² Cf. <https://www.hss.de/news/detail/russlands-einsatz-von-desinformationen-news8625> (29.10.2022).
- ¹⁰³ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁴ Cf. <https://www.tagesschau.de/investigativ/ndr-wdr/russland-desinformation-105.html> (29.10.2022).
- ¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁶ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁷ Cf. Goertz, S. (2022): Russische Desinformationskampagnen in Deutschland. Gegenmaßnahmen der Bundesregierung und Behörden – Kritik und Vorschläge.
- ¹⁰⁸ Cited in: <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/innenministerium-fake-webseiten-ukraine-krieg-russland-100.html> (29.10.2022).
- ¹⁰⁹ Cited in: <https://www.handelsblatt.com/dpa/wirtschaft-innenministerium-besorgt-wegen-pro-russischer-fake-medienwebseiten/28640186.html> (29.10.2022).
- ¹¹⁰ Cf. <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/desinformation-kampagne-facebook-ukraine-krieg-russland-100.html> (29.10.2022); Goertz, S. (2022): Russische Desinformationskampagnen in Deutschland. Gegenmaßnahmen der Bundesregierung und Behörden - Kritik und Vorschläge.
- ¹¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹¹² Cited in: <https://www.rnd.de/politik/russland-faelscht-deutsche-nachrichtenseiten-und-verbreitet-propaganda-AYHVPHB5TRGU5IHQFTIBP5Y4WE.html> (29.10.2022).
- ¹¹³ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹¹⁴ Cf. Goertz, S. (2022): Russische Desinformationskampagnen in Deutschland. Gegenmaßnahmen der Bundesregierung und Behörden - Kritik und Vorschläge.
- ¹¹⁵ Cf. <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article240525857/Verfassungsschutz-Heisser-Herbst-Rechtsextreme-schueren-Aengste.html?cid=socialmedia.email.sharebutton> (29.10.2022).
- ¹¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹¹⁷ Quoted from: *ibid.*; cf. Goertz, S. (2022): Der Krieg in der Ukraine. Folgen für Deutschland und Europa/ Part 4. In: *Kriminalistik* 10/2022, p. 568.
- ¹¹⁸ Cf. <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article240525857/Verfassungsschutz-Heisser-Herbst-Rechtsextreme-schueren-Aengste.html?cid=socialmedia.email.sharebutton> (29.10.2022)
- ¹¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹²⁰ Cf. <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2022-08/gasumlage-mittelstand-krisengipfel-linke-proteste> (29.10.2022).
- ¹²¹ Quoted from: *ibid.*
- ¹²² Quoted from: *ibid.*; cf. Goertz, S. (2022): Der Krieg in der Ukraine. Folgen für Deutschland und Europa/Part 4. In: *Kriminalistik* 10/2022, p. 568.
- ¹²³ Quoted from: *ibid.*
- ¹²⁴ Cf. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2022/pressemitteilung-2022-10-innere-sicherheit.html> (29.10.2022).
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, cf. Goertz, S. (2022): Der Krieg in der Ukraine. Folgen für Deutschland und Europa /Part 4. In: *Kriminalistik* 10/2022, pp. 568-569.
- ¹²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, S. 569-570.
- ¹³¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/de/press/press-releases/2022/03/21/a-strategic-compass-for-a-stronger-eu-security-and-defence-in-the-next-decade/> (29.10.2022).
- ¹³² Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹³³ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹³⁴ Cf. https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/arbeitspapier_sicherheitspolitik_2022_7.pdf, p. 2 (29.10.2020).
- ¹³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*
- ¹³⁶ Cf. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/de/pdf>, p. 7.
- ¹³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 11.

¹³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/de/press/press-releases/2022/03/21/a-strategic-compass-for-a-stronger-eu-security-and-defence-in-the-next-decade/>, pp. 3-4 (29.10.2022).

¹⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 4.