

RIGHT WING TERRORISM IN FRANCE AND EUROPE IN THE POST-CHRISTCHURCH ERA



GALLICE

The Christchurch mosque shooting took the world by surprise in March of 2019. Fifty-one people were killed, and forty-nine were injured during the shooting which lasted for less than an hour, making it the deadliest in New Zealand history. National security professionals and lawmakers now have the responsibility to examine the ideology behind the attack, as well as its evolution and the threat it represents, in order to act to preempt similar attacks in their own jurisdiction.

This type of attack—using a composite ideology and aiming at a global audience—was unprecedented in New Zealand. The last two mass shootings, in Aramoano (1990)¹, and Raunimu (1997)², were caused by a fight between two neighbors turned into a shooting spree, and a violent outburst by a schizophrenic patient, respectively. The planned attack in Christchurch,

perpetrated by a young man who spent six months designing a calculated, meticulous, massacre, supported by a global right wing ideology, had not been anticipated by the New Zealand national security apparatus, for which terrorism is not a priority³. An examination of the Christchurch massacre begs two questions of the French national security apparatus: (i) does a similar threat exist in France; and (ii) are the French security services fully able to respond to such a threat?

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1 13 deaths, including a police officer

2 6 deaths

3 The last terrorist events in New Zealand were the bombing of a computer center by an anarchist in 1982, and the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior in 1985

The Attack

In the morning of March 15th 2019, Brendon Tarrant, an Australian citizen living in New Zealand, sent a 74-page manifesto to several local media, as well as to the Prime Minister's Office. He then posted the text on social media, titled "The Great Replacement". A few moments later, Brendon Tarrant began a live broadcast as he drove to the Al Noor Mosque in the suburbs of Christchurch. When he reached the mosque, he grabbed his weapons, marched inside the building, and began shooting, causing multiple deaths and injuries before driving away. The live broadcast ended there, but the carnage did not. The shooter then pulled up to the Linwood mosque, where he similarly opened fire on the congregation. One of his victims was able to take his weapon from him, forcing him to flee. After ramming his car, New Zealand police officers were able to arrest him⁴.

This type of attack was unexpected by the New Zealand law enforcement community, as well as by the New Zealand government writ large. Prime Minister Jacinda Arden described March 15th as "*one of New Zealand's darkest days*"⁵. The attack reached an international audience due to the live broadcast, as well as through the ideology of its perpetrator. The level of violence and high number of casualties, relatively unheard of in a Western country, can be explained by two elements of the attack: its modus operandi and the ideology in furtherance of which it was committed.

Modus Operandi

The shooter planned his operation for two years and started the logistical preparation six months before the attack. His modus operandi (MO) is relatively simple: armed with multiple firearms (two semi-automatic assault rifles, two shotguns, and one lever action rifle), he entered two mosques during prayers and opened fire on the worshippers. Though the weapons he used were legally purchased, his 30 round magazines were illegal in New Zealand, and were purchased online and taped together to allow a faster reload. Importantly, he was also a competent marksman, well trained and used to the weapons he used.

During the shooting, he stayed on the move and acted fast. In order to kill the maximum number of victims, he "double tapped" (two shots fired in rapid succession at the same target with the same sight picture) most of his victims. This MO is not entirely new. The terrorist attacks of Anders Breivik in Oslo and on the island of Utoya, of Alexandre Bissonette in Québec, or of Luca Traini in Marcerata share common elements with the killing perpetrated by Brendon Tarrant. These similarities can be explained by shared aspects in their ideologies, as illustrated in Christchurch terrorist's manifesto.

Ideology

Brendon Tarrant's manifesto, titled "The Great Replacement", is a 74-page long string of text. After a drawing were Brendon Tarrant presents the eight pillars of his ideology⁶, the manifesto is divided into four parts: an introduction, a series of self-interviews, several messages to various audiences, and then a summation titled "General Thoughts and Potential Strategies".

From the start, the introduction states the reason of the attack: the birthrate of immigrants. In the manifesto, immigration is described as an ethnic, cultural, and racial replacement. Therefore, the shooter describes his objective as the defense of the European people and the execution of its "revenge". These subjects are common in right wing discourse. However, the Christchurch shooter also takes some less common positions, describing himself as an "ecofascist" and promoting environmental protection.

He acknowledges a "racial component" to the attack, which could justify his description as a neonazi. The number 14, written on his weapons, referenced the 14 Word Pledge: « *We must secure the existence of our*

4 <https://www.insider.com/christchurch-shooting-timeline-49-killed-new-zealand-mosques-2019-3>

5 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/15/one-of-new-zealand's-darkest-days-jacinda-arden-responds-to-christchurch-shooting>

6 Anti-Imperialism, Environmentalism, Responsible Markets, Addiction-Free Community, Law and Order, Ethnic Autonomy, Protection of Heritage and Culture, Worker's Rights.

Furthermore, the terrorist chose to broadcast his attack abroad, hoping to stimulate similar attacks in various Western countries. These “spectacle murders” were precisely choreographed and executed, complete with music and decorated weapons.

people and a future for white children »⁷, a well known neonazi slogan. Nonetheless, the usual white supremacist talking points are not a predominant part of the manifesto, as the author appears more concerned about cultural and ethnic segregation. Another surprising element came from the foreign based examples used by Brendon Tarrant to justify his actions: the murder of Ebba Akerlund, a young Swedish girl rammed by a jihadist in Stockholm in April 2017,

and the defeat of Marine Le Pen in the French presidential elections of 2017. The shooter shows a knowledge of international politics, and selects examples of what he calls a “white genocide” in the United Kingdom, France, Germany as well as in the United States and Turkey. He explains his choice of using firearms for the attack in order to reignite the gun control debate in New Zealand, and by extension in the United States.

His hope appears to be to start a balkanization of the debate “along political, cultural and, most importantly, racial lines” in America. Furthermore, the terrorist chose to broadcast his attack abroad, hoping to stimulate similar attacks in various Western countries. These “spectacle murders” were precisely choreographed and executed, complete with music and decorated weapons. The victims weren’t randomly selected either. Brendon Tarrant explain his choice of targets using two arguments: the birthrate of the Muslim community; and the tensions around Islam in Western societies. He states that targeting the Muslim community will bring him “more support” from a radical fringe of the violent right wing.

I - The Threat

Right wing terrorism is a criminal phenomenon, well known by Western security professionals despite the tactical and ideological disparities in each country. However, the Christchurch attack takes inspiration from the two main frames of right wing terror: the Anglo Saxon frame and that of continental European, to blend them in a new, more dangerous and more lethal version.

Anglo Saxon Right Wing Terrorism

The Anglo Saxon right wing terrorism frame originated in the United States. After the 1945 dissolution of the Ku Klux Klan, various right wing extremist group appeared in the late 70’s. Louis Beam, one of the pioneers of the violent right wing, theorized and made popular the concept of “leaderless resistance”, in an essay written in 1983. American right-wing extremism of this era, organized in hierarchical groups, was regularly infiltrated by the FBI, and routinely saw its members “turned” by law enforcement, as happened with the Order white supremacist organization. Beam’s theory suggests a system composed of solitary cells with only one or two members, with no hierarchical relations between cells, leaving them to select their own objectives and methods, while fighting for the same cause. With this system, the arrest of one operative does not jeopardize the entire movement. The absence of communication between terrorists limits the chances of being detected by law enforcement. Leaderless resistance was soon adopted by the vast majority of American right wing extremists.

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Nearly 10 years after Beam’s manifesto, a rental truck, loaded with 3,500 kilos of explosive⁸, detonates in

7 The slogan was created by David Lane, a member of the white supremacist group The Order.

8 McVeight used a combinaison of ammonium nitrate, nitromethane and Tovexin barrils he loaded in the back of the truck.

from of the Alfred Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people. It was the deadliest terrorist attack on U.S. soil prior to the 9/11 plane attacks. The perpetrator, Timothy McVeigh, a right-wing extremist, considered the US federal government to have become tyrannical. He planned his attack alone, and was only help by an accomplice to load the truck⁹.

This type of attack, by a lone, self-radicalized terrorist, next appeared among the British right wing movement. In 1999, a series of nail bombs around London killed three and injured one hundred and forty. The perpetrator, David Copeland, a self-proclaimed neo-nazi, targeted the black and gay communities of the British capital. He is well versed with American right-wing literature and did not mention his attack to anyone. Recent examples are numerous. In 2016, a British MP, Jo Cox, was murdered by Alexander Mair, who called her a “traitor to the white race” because of her involvement for the Remain campaign. The investigators discovered his interest for American right-wing books and David Copeland. A year later, Darren Osborne rammed his car into the Finsbury Park mosque. He justified his attack by citing the Rochdale¹⁰ sex abuse cases and the latest jihadist attacks on British soil. Finally, in 2018, British law enforcement arrested Ethan Stables, a neo-nazi activist, who was planning a machete attack on a gay pub. In each of these cases, the terrorist was self radicalized, acted outside of right wings organization he frequented, without telling anyone about his projects. They found his motivation and his *modus operandi* online, but lacked deep ideological training.

Continental Europe Right Wing Terrorism

Right wing terror in continental Europe varies significantly from the Anglo Saxon model. In most countries, right wing networks were built after World War Two by former collaborators of the Nazi regime. At first, they aimed for the return of Nazism in Europe, but soon moved to an identitarian rhetoric, which became predominant in the 1980's. During the second half of the twentieth century, national issues arose and fueled right wing extremism: French Algeria, the fight against communism, American imperialism, the rise of the State of Israel, before focusing on immigration and the struggle against Islam in Europe. The European groups communicated in Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Italy and Germany, and developed an extremist intellectual corpus as a response to growing immigration from outside of Europe.

Though some of these groups' members may have joined just for the “rough and tumble”, the European right wing fringe is much more ideologically trained than its American or British counterparts. Specifically, these groups developed contacts in the universities, among students (GUD), think tanks (GRECE, Erkerbrand Study Association), and theorized their fight. The “Great Replacement” theory, made popular again by the French author Renaud Camus in 2010, gave its title to the Christchurch shooter's manifesto.

The tactical doctrine of Continental European right-wing terrorist groups are also different. They usually prefer acting as a group, without claiming any involvement after the attacks. Groups such as the Organisation Armée Secrète in France, or Terza Posizione in Italy had tremendous destructive capacity and professionalism, making them more dangerous adversaries than most current groups, which are more violent but less organized than their predecessors. In 2016, weapons and ballistic protections were found during a home search of members of the Blood and Honour Hexagone group (France). Recently, Action des Forces Opérationnelles, a French small group disbanded in 2018, were gathering weapons and planning a series of attacks on French soil targeting Muslims. These types of terrorist groups, composed of multiples members, are easier for law enforcement to detect, and recent arrests have put the brakes on their actions. However, these recent successes and the mediatic impact may trigger a change of methods for potentials terrorist looking to cause destruction.

Hybrid Right Wing Terrorism

European security services are growing concerned over the threat of right wing terrorism. Former Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley of the London Metropolitan Police Services recently stated that “*the change and growth in extreme right-wing terrorist threat has [not] been explained or described well enough*”¹¹. Patrick

9 Terry Nichols was aware of the attack and help McVeight load the truck. He was sentenced to life in prison. Michael Fortier and his wife were aware that McVeigh was planning an attack.

10 Brendon Tarrant used the same example in his manifesto.

11 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/aug/18/former-counter-terrorism-chief-says-uk-has-not-woken-up-to-far-right-threat>

Calvar, the former director of the French General Directorate for Internal Security, mentioned “ineluctable confrontation” between *l’ultra droite* and the jihadist groups¹². An attack like the Christchurch one is not unprecedented in Europe.

On July 22, 2011 Anders Breivik put a bomb in a van in Oslo, before going to the island of Utoya, dressed as a police officer, and opening fire on a youth camp organized by the Norwegian Labor Party. The two attacks killed 77 people. The shooter had published online a 1,500 page manifesto (referenced by Brendon Tarrant) where familiar themes were discussed, such as the defense of the European race. The Utoya attack shows that right wing extremism is a current and changing threat in Europe, able to act violently and efficiently. The 2018 attack by Luca Traini¹³ confirms this. While Italy was used to coordinated attack by trained groups in the 80’s, like the Bologna train station attack perpetrated by Terza Posizione, Traini chose to act alone. He opened fire from his car on a group of African migrants, injuring six of them. These attacks illustrate a change in the modus operandi of the terrorist European right wing. The threat is now less organized, more radical and more violent. The shooters are looking for a high number of victims and try to emulate others.

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Additional factors seem to show that the risk on a right-wing attack is increasing in Europe. The multiplication of attacks by jihadist, who see Europe as a land to conquer, triggers a reciprocal and cumulative radicalization, as seen in the writings of Brendon Tarrant. Contrary to the last developments observed at the end of the century, the right wing groups are trying to increase their competence. Belgium and Dutch security professionals are noticing an increase in gun registration among right wing activists in their respective countries. The connection of some of these groups inside the military and law enforcement communities are also worrying according to multiple analysts, who are concerned with their capacity for mayhem it could give to these groups¹⁴.

Europe is seeing many examples of the professionalization of its right-wing extremists. For example, a German military officer was recently arrested while planning an attack. Additionally, right wing groups are now recruiting “returnees” from combat zones. Most of them are coming back from Ukraine and have been trained and have fought in combat units on both sides of the conflict. The Azov Battalion, which upholds a neo-Nazi ideology, recruited dozens of volunteers attracted by their beliefs¹⁵, including ten French nationals.

In addition to these soldiers of fortune, another risk exists at the eastern borders of Europe. In June 2016, Ukrainian SBU police officers arrested a 27 years old French citizen attempting to cross the border into Poland. In his car, they found 5 Kalashnikov type assault rifles, two RPGs, 125 kilos of TNT and more than 5000 rounds of ammunition¹⁶. At his sentencing to six years in jail, he mentioned his plans of attacking mosques, synagogues, and tax centers with a group of ten people. If details are lacking, and some of the information is still unconfirmed, this arrest proves the existence of a rapidly evolving right-wing fringe. The inspiration of Brendon Tarrant by Anders Breivik illustrates a key development in modern terrorism. Similar to the November 13th attack in Paris, planned from Belgium by local and foreign operators, the current right-wing threat is now mobile and not restricted by national borders anymore.

12 <https://www.publicsenat.fr/lcp/politique/renseignement-interieur-craint-une-confrontation-entre-lultra-droite-monde-musulman-14>

13 His name was written on one of Tarrant’s weapons.

14 « Fluctuating waves of right-wing extremist violence in Western Europe » – NCTV, Octobre 2018.

15 Ibid.

16 <http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/ukraine-six-ans-de-prison-pour-un-francais-qui-preparait-des-attentats-pendant-l-euro-2016-21-05-2018-7727772.php>

II - The Response:

Right wing extremism is currently mutating and changing into a hybrid version of both historic models. Lone terrorists and small ultra-violent cells have replaced the hierarchical organized groups of the past. They are radicalized on the Internet and build ideology from a global culture, using talking points and examples they view as justifying their action. Their attacks are designed to be spectacular and they spread manifestos on social medias, following a “propaganda of the deed” strategy. Their modus operandi are currently simple and low cost, but recent trends to involve firearms, members in law enforcement or military forces, and returnees from war zones may multiply their destructive capacities. Both security experts and politicians need to address the threat.

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Security Response

The French response has been composed of three sections: intelligence gathering, tactical response, and legal prosecution. These three sections require highly trained professionals. The focus must be kept on the evolution of the right-wing extremism to better anticipate the changes of its modus operandi. Without prospective studies, these new kinds of attack will be extremely hard to manage for the security services.

The Merah case is a perfect example of these difficulties¹⁷. After the creation of the DCRI¹⁸, The French intelligence were being reorganized and did not completely appreciate the risk caused by the Toulouse jihadist, who acted outside of the usual networks. The terrorist then acted quickly and violently, making the investigations difficult as the detectives had to face a series of successive attacks. Finally, the operation at his apartment was especially hard. The RAID¹⁹ faced an individual ready to die for his cause and eager to kill as many victims as possible. Despite the professionalism of the French security forces, there were a series of flaws in the response, due to the combination of a new form of jihadism and a relative inertia in adapting the response to it.

Intelligence

Facing a growing jihadist threat, France reformed its internal intelligence agency, allocated more funds to the newly created DGSI²⁰, and increased its participation in international cooperation efforts. French intelligence officers are well aware of the right-wing terrorism risk and have built a solid expertise on the subject. However, due to the increasing jihadist activity on French soil, it is more complicated to spend resources on right wing extremism, despite its ongoing globalization of the threat. Indeed, Brendon Tarrant did not target Australia, his native country but New Zealand where he anticipated he could find easier targets. He also knew that an attack in a Western country that had so far been spared from international terrorism would have a bigger impact in the media. This transnational aspect of terrorism, well documented in jihadism, is now also characteristic of the right wing. Following the 2001 terrorist attacks, and again after 2015, France started to multiply its contacts with foreign intelligence agencies to improve information sharing on terrorism issues. These efforts must continue and extend to the right wing threat. French intelligence agencies need also to be able to use the full spectrum of captors at their disposal, from the local police officer and gendarme to trained analysts, in order to prevent the next attack.

17 Mohamed Merah killed seven people in Toulouse and Montauban in March 2012. He targeted French paratroopers and Jewish students. He was killed during a stand off with the National Police RAID.

18 Central Directorate of Internal Intelligence.

19 Research, Assistance, Intervention, Deterrence. The Raid is an elite tactical unit of the French National Police.

20 General Directorate for Internal Security.

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Tactical response:

After the 2015 attacks²¹, the Ministry of Interior entirely redesigned the French national tactical response²². Elite tactical units such as GIGN, RAID and BRI branches were set up in various cities all across France in a grid pattern. Local SWAT teams from both the National Police (BAC), and the Nationale Gendarmerie (PSIG Sabre) received better weapons and equipment following the BAC-PSIG Plan of 2016. A new tactical doctrine was also set in place, allowing every gendarmes or police officer to act quickly in order to stop an ongoing mass shooting event.

General Richard Lizurey, Director of the National Gendarmerie pleaded for a “transfer of useful skills”, trying to get some of tactical skill sets usually reserved to SWAT team members to the rest of the force²³.

Prosecution

The French Ministry of Justice has a long history of dealing with right wing terrorism. Under articles 431-13 (constitution of a combat group) and 421-1 (listing terrorist activities) of the Penal Code, prosecutors can go after groups which (1) possess or have access to weapons and (2) have hierarchical structure capable of triggering public disorder. Article 431-13 of the Penal Code is a more practical tool against right wing groups than article 450-1 (criminal conspiracy), which is preferred against jihadist cells. However, both articles are designed for terrorist groups and cannot be used against lone terrorists. In this case, “hate crimes” laws are another tool for the prosecution and were used in the case of the Chalon sur Saone hammer attacker. The 17-year-old terrorist committed 4 attacks, while claiming his affiliation to the fictitious “Commando for the Defense of the French People and Fatherland” and asking for the release of right wing inmates. When interrogated by the police, he stated having “*no racist thought, nor political motives*”²⁴. This example illustrates perfectly one of the major challenges facing politics today: defining the demands of today’s right wing extremists.

Right wing extremism and Yellow Vest

The demands of a radical fringe of right wing extremist can be hard to understand, especially in the rapidly evolving world of French politics. Former element of the right wing rhetoric, like the religious catholic roots, are less significant than before. However, subjects like the protection of European culture and the fight against the perceived rise of Islam in Europe are growing concerns for these populations, as illustrated by the Christchurch shooter.

New subjects are also emerging among the right wing concerns: environmental protection, native worker’s right, and anti-globalization, among others. These new concerns are echoing demands from groups on different parts of the political spectrum. The convergence of the political struggles is clearly illustrated in the Yellow Vest movement. Short terms alliances are formed among radicals of various political fringe groups against what they see as common adversaries: globalization, “elites”, “the media”. The fight against immigration and its impact on the job market often unites right wing and left wing extremists. The clash between the Jewish intellectual Alain Finkielkraut and Yellow Vest demonstrators showed both right wing extremists and radical Islamists uniting around their shared antisemitism, a phenomenon already seen in French prisons. The wide variety of demands inside the Yellow Vest movement allows right wing extremism to recruit from a wider pool of candidates, some of them from populations which were traditionally hostile to right wing ideas. Right wing groups have already sent some of their trusted members, including mercenaries back from the Donbass

21 The January Charlie Hebdo and Hyper Casher attacks and the November Bataclan attacks.

22 <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Archives/Archives-ministre-de-l-Interieur/Archives-Bernard-Cazeneuve-avril-2014-decembre-2016/Interventions-du-ministre/Presentation-du-schema-national-d-intervention>

23 <https://lessor.org/operationnel/apres-trebes-la-gendarmerie-planche-sur-une-nouvelle-organisation-de-lintervention/>

24 <https://www.europe1.fr/societe/attaques-au-marteau-lado-de-17-ans-derriere-le-commando-mis-en-examen-3561839>

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region, to join the security staff of the demonstrations²⁵. This wider pool of recruits multiplies the capacity for action of a violent fringe of the right wing movement, which has already hardened its rhetoric and is gaining visibility.

Political response

The French political response has to take place in a continuously evolving situation, where radical political opinions are becoming the norm. If security professionals have to handle the capacity of action of violent groups, the hardening of the right's rhetoric and the growing number of militants is, by essence, a political issue. Legislators must monitor the actions of law enforcement and intelligence agencies by setting limits to their actions, before leaving the security apparatus act in a neutral, apolitical environment. Simultaneously, a specific social response has to be designed for the growing number of French citizens feeling alienated by the government, and who are susceptible to being recruited by radical right wing groups.

The combination of a difficult economic situation, a succession of jihadist attacks, and an absence of political representation is creating a dangerous trend. Gilles de Kerchove – the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator – made a similar statement on the absence of right wing representatives in the Belgian Parliament, when they represent the view of a non-negligible part of the electorate in many parts of European states. He also noted that this situation could escalate and trigger some right wing supports to “*act violently outside our democratic systems*”²⁶.

Right wing movements are traditionally legalistic and aspire to law and order. However, in a context of an anomic society, its supporters are ready to move to violence to attain their goals. Therefore, a multisectoral plan, including social, economic, as well as civil actions, must be designed to target that part of the population which feels left behind by the French Republic. The investigative committee on right wing violent groups which began last January, is a first step in that direction. However, the right wing threat is high and necessitates a complex and specific security response, based on prospective research on a large scale.

Prospective research

Research on right wing terrorism in 21st century France is scarce. Most of the body of literature is fixated on the OAS bombings or the emergence of skin head groups in the 80's, references that are not relevant to the current situation. Right wing terrorism has its codes, its factions, its objectives and each of them need in-depth research to be fully understood in similar fashion to jihadism. Experts on the subject exists in the French intelligence and law enforcement communities, but the evolution and globalization of the threat, and the predominance of the perceived jihadist risk, do not allow them any time for prospective research. Moreover, this type of research is time consuming and expensive and therefore extremely difficult for French security professionals who are required to be extremely

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25 <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/paris-ile-de-france/paris/anciens-miliciens-pro-russes-ukraine-presents-serviceordre-gilets-jaunes-1609961.html>.

26 https://www.rtbef.be/info/societe/detail_gilles-de-kerchove-coordonateur-pour-la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme-la-menaceest-encore-assez-elevee?id=10217561

versatile in their work. Building an analytical capacity, able to research and anticipate trends, requires the recruitment of highly trained individuals, the constitution of databases, and the ability to stay flexible in the treatment of the subject. All these elements are hard to set up for a public institution with a constantly growing workload.

Consequently, the monitoring of these trends can be externalized to structures capable of researching and analyzing the recent developments such as universities and private security companies²⁷. The payoff from combining research and investment could be enormous for the French security apparatus. Academics, and private security consultants can support the government effort, with a larger budget and less strict deadlines, and without having to react on the spot at any given terrorist attack. Think tanks such as the *Centre de Réflexion sur la Sécurité Intérieure* (CRSI) or the *Club des Directeurs de Sécurité & de Sûreté des Entreprises* (CDSE) are already contributing to the national security debate. Some initiatives mixing academics and specialist from law enforcement agencies already exist. The French Gendarmerie Officers Academy (EOGN) MBA program is a successful example of this trend.

A coordinated effort, combining academics and private contractors, with both in-depth knowledge of the subject and technical expertise, would offer a variety of tools to observe, evaluate and finally counter right wing extremism.

In addition, university researchers can provide more than security related data to security services. Terrorism is a complex, multi-causal, and evolving subject, and needs to be studied in an interdisciplinary fashion by experts from various background. Radicalization of right wing supporter, the impact of Big Data on intelligence gathering and analysis, the national identity debate are examples of subjects that affect terrorism research. Some

of them can be considered controversial, and difficult to handle for elected officials. However, they cannot be ignored as they are likely to bring necessary answers to decisions makers. An exhaustive and neutral study of the “Great Replacement” theory, including ethnic statistics²⁸, could be a solution to the ultra-right’s statements. Counter speech arguments, based on a scientific approach of established facts could prevent a number of potential recruits from joining the violent right wing ranks. Additionally, the financial and analytical capacities of companies such as the GAFA now exceed those of most public institutions. Beyond research, private security companies and academics are also able to evaluate the impact of the French counter-terrorism policies, and separate efficient initiatives from less useful ones. Their contribution to the audit of the counter-terrorism best practices could stop critics complaining about the cost and the impartiality of such evaluations²⁹. A coordinated effort, combining academics and private contractors, with both in-depth knowledge of the subject and technical expertise, would offer a variety of tools to observe, evaluate and finally counter right wing extremism.

Conclusion

The attack perpetrated by Brendon Tarrant last March showed the latest mutation of the of the right wing threat. The violent attack was executed by a heavily armed, lone operative, who was radicalized online by a heterogeneous compilation of ideologies, and who broadcast his attack online to a global audience. The shooter carefully planned and selected his modus operandi (firearms), his target (the Muslim community) and his environment (New Zealand), taking in account the political impact of each of them. He wrote a manifesto and

27 In it is a common occurrence in the United States, collaboration between the private sector and governmental agencies are a new trend in France, which have been only growing in the last few years.

28 Ethnic statistics are very strictly regulated in France.

29 The French Court of Auditors is already working on such audits but an optimization is necessary to fully evaluate the impact of the French counter terrorism policies.

shared a live broadcast of the murders in order to incite copycats. He is a right wing hybrid threat, using the Anglo Saxon modus operandi coupled with the continental European ideological training, in furtherance of a clear political goal. This is the new threat facing the Western security apparatus, which is already witnessing a growth in right wing extremism.

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In France, this growth is characterized by three main elements: a hardening of political discourse, and increasing capacity of action from violent groups, and a wider pool of recruits, especially from the Yellow Vest movement. Political lines are also dissipating between right and left wing on subjects of religion and worker's right. A dual response is necessary on both the security and the political level, based on a common basis such as the French Constitution. The Constitution is a common frame on values and rights which need to be the center of the fight against right wing extremism. Intelligence analysts, law enforcement officers and magistrates are already working to protect the population from the threat. However, risk monitoring and prospective research are mandatory in order to further counter this rising threat. Such efforts are expensive and time consuming, but partnership between public institutions, universities and private sector actors, can be an efficient solution. Terrorism is a social phenomenon, evolving alongside its host society. The growth of Internet and social media, the constant and global sharing of content, the continuous fight between conspiracies and fact checkers makes the confinement of information counterproductive, even when the information can be dangerous. The next Christchurch attack will only be avoided through prospective research, analytical study and forward thinking.

Antony Couzian-Marchand is a specialist in state and international organizations (UN, NATO) and public administrations. A graduate of both HEC-Assas (MBA and Bachelor of Law) and the Special Military Academy of Saint-Cyr; he joined the GIGN and before becoming the unit Second in Command. He then took a position as Magistrate of the French Court of Auditors, before joining Gallice International Services.

Alexandre Rodde is a consultant at Gallice International Service, specialized in terrorism and mass shooting response. He is a LLM graduate from the National Security Law Program at The George Washington University and a reserve officer in the French National Gendarmerie. As a security consultant, he trains French National Gendarmerie and National Police tactical teams.