

Driven by Conspiracies: The Justification of Violence among “Reichsbürger” and Other Conspiracy-Ideological Sovereignists in Contemporary Germany

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Abstract

Violence is an integral part of the sovereignist milieu involving the “Reichsbürger” and other groups. Shootouts between sovereignists and police officers in 2016 left several people injured and one police officer dead. Since then, their violence has been a subject of nationwide investigation and media reporting in Germany. The visibility of the sovereignist milieu increased significantly due to recent protests against the government’s COVID-19 pandemic measures and a subsequent centralization of protest communications on the social media platform Telegram. This article examines how the use of violence is being justified within the German sovereignist milieu. Drawing from primary sources on the milieu’s main planned and executed acts of violence in 2016, this article reveals a conspiracy-ideological Manichaeism that serves both as a driving force and justification for the use of violence. In addition, evidence indicates that violence is not solely directed against government and state officials, but against groups perceived as part of an alleged conspiracy against their in-group, especially Jews and migrants. At its core, the sovereignist milieu spreads a thin ideology that is particularly amenable to right-wing extremism and antisemitism.

Keywords: Reichsbürger, sovereignism, conspiracy ideologies, anti-government extremism, Germany

Introduction

The phenomenon of the “Reichsbürger” [literally: “citizen of the empire” - JR] scene has often been downplayed in public discourses as consisting of a collection of nutcases who play “Reich” government in their living rooms and mostly just send long letters to the government of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). However, this changed in 2016, when two shootouts between “Reichsbürger” and the police occurred in quick succession, injuring several persons and killing one police officer. Since then, Germany’s national domestic intelligence service (the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) has been monitoring the phenomenon more closely. Most recently, actions by “Reichsbürger” were part of international news coverage when several hundred members from this milieu climbed over the police barriers in front of the Reichstag building (the seat of the German parliament) in Berlin on August 29, 2020, and occupied the steps leading to the entrance. Three police officers managed to prevent the crowd from entering the building by threatening to use force. After a few minutes, the stairs were cleared when more police officers arrived. However, the pictures of Reich flags in front of the Bundestag garnered worldwide attention.[1]

Generally, it can be stated that so far there have been only isolated scientific analyses on the topic of conspiracy-ideological sovereignism. The existing studies are mainly devoted to a specific (national) phenomenon from a criminological, legal, or psychological perspective,[2] such as the Sovereign Citizen Movement, the Freemen on the Land, or the German “Reichsbürger”.[3]

This article addresses the question of how members of the sovereignist milieu view and use violence. An exploratory qualitative study analyzes common patterns of justification to show that violence is an inherent part of the milieu’s ideology. After a brief section on definitions, the results of quantitative analyses provide information on the extent and nature of violence emerging from the sovereignist milieu. In the main body of this article, a qualitative analysis explores the two central violent events of 2016. There, a chronology of the events is followed by elaborations on the patterns of justification used by sovereignists. In the concluding sections, the findings are summarized and placed within the larger context of the milieu. Here, particular attention is paid to the Manicheism of conspiracy ideologies, which plays an important role in the justification of violence in the sovereignist milieu.

Definitions

To analyze the justification of violence in the German sovereignist milieu, one first has to establish some definitional boundaries. As a categorical term for the phenomenon under consideration, the author proposes *conspiracy-ideological sovereignism*.^[4] This description does not reduce the phenomena to national specifics (“Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter”/“Self-administrators” in Germany)^[5] or to simply extremism directed against the state (“staatsfeindliche Verbindungen”/“anti-state associations” in Austria)^[6] and government (“Anti-Governmental-Extremism” in the USA)^[7], but instead allows one to describe interconnected milieus^[8] ideologically and with regard to the actions of their members transnationally. Conspiracy-ideological sovereignism is understood in this article as the effort to (re-)establish individual or people sovereignty, as well as a related order conceived as natural, against the prevailing social and political order, which is identified as the product of a global conspiracy with the aim of destroying one’s own group.^[9]

The sovereignist milieu in Germany is very heterogeneous and older than the Federal Republic of Germany (which dates back to 1949) itself. It can be divided into four sub-milieus:

1. *Traditionally organized National Socialists, neo-Nazis, and right-wing extremists since 1945* who seek to restore the (National Socialist) German Reich and its ethnic community (“Volksgemeinschaft”). They were and are active in and around political parties (e.g. the Socialist Reich Party and the National Democratic Party of Germany) as well as other right-wing extremist organizations, networks, and/or publishing houses. Some adherents describe themselves as “Reichsbürger”.
2. *“Reichsbürger” who follow the tradition of the “Reich Chancellor” Wolfgang Gerhard Günter Ebel*^[10]—persons who had not previously held memberships in traditional right-wing extremist organizations. They form pseudo-“Reich governments” and believe that they have therefore restored the legal framework of the German Reich.
3. *Individual, group, and secessionist sovereignists* who do not (initially) want to restore a German Reich, but declare themselves sovereign as individual persons, families, groups, or state founders. They dissociate their “state territories” from the one of the German Federal Republic, which most of them believe to be a corporation rather than a state.
4. *“New Right” sovereignists* act as a link between conservative circles and other extreme right, sovereignist, and conspiracy-ideological milieus. Superficially, they do not mention the National Socialist German Reich but lament the lack of sovereignty of Germany, which is not seen as coexisting with the current territory of the German Federal Republic. The first members of the “New Right” openly called for the (re-)establishment of a new German Reich.^[11]

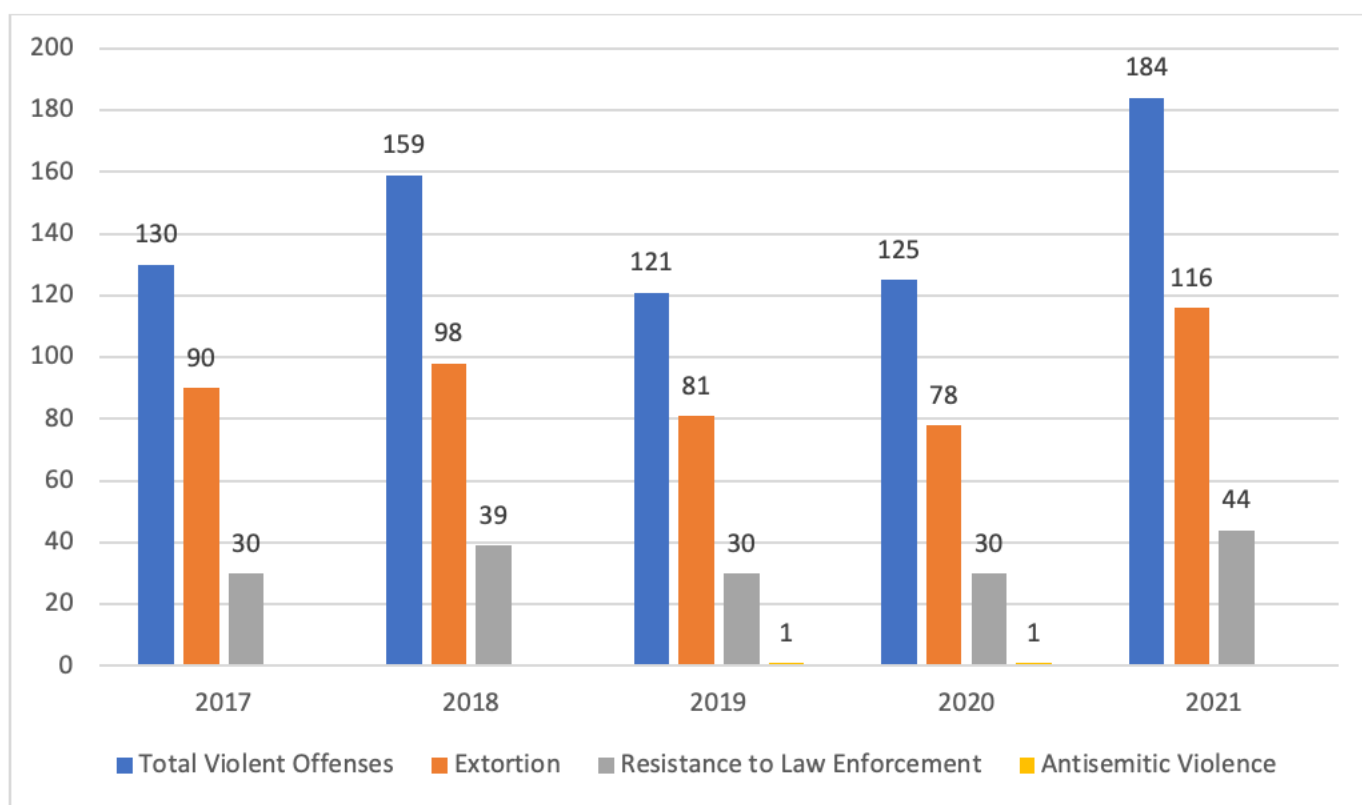
In this article, violence is understood as an action potential in a power relationship with an inherent perpetrator-victim structure. In addition to the physical act of harming, violence has verbal and nonverbal dimensions that can precede or accompany the physical expression. The perpetrator aims to hurt and marginalize the target emotionally and cognitively.^[12] From a criminal law perspective, physical violence in Germany includes murder, manslaughter and killing on request (gun for hire), rape and sexual assault, robbery, extortion, bodily harm resulting in death, dangerous and serious bodily harm, kidnapping for extortion, hostage-taking and attacks on the captains of air and sea transport.^[13] However, the subsequent analysis of the justification of violence in the sovereignist milieu primarily considers its physical and verbal dimensions.

Quantitative Findings on Sovereignist Violence

Since 2016, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) has systematically recorded misdemeanor and felony incidents from the sovereignist milieu in Germany as part of its collection of statistics on politically motivated crime.^[14] The figures are also published in the annual reports of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (the German domestic intelligence service), which provides more specific information on developments in the milieu. In terms of violence, the Federal Office records show that cases of extortion and resistance to law enforcement officers showed the strongest growth between 2017 and 2021 (see Figure 1).

In parallel to the figures from German governmental offices, similar data have been collected by Daniel Koehler and Verena Fiebig. These are based on an analysis of media reports about misdemeanors and criminal offenses of sovereignists from 2003 to 2018.[15] Their database features 730 entries. Broken down into various categories, the authors counted, inter alia, 141 cases of resistance against law enforcement officers (19.32%), 116 cases of (attempted) coercion and extortion (15.89%), 81 cases of bodily harm (11.10%), and 5 cases of manslaughter/murder (0.69%). According to Köhler and Fiebig, resistance to law enforcement officers occurred primarily during enforcement, routine traffic stops, and identity checks, as well as in emergency situations in which calls to the police were made. Cases of coercion and extortion occurred mainly in response to official notices, or as a result of criminal prosecutions and seizures, but also took place without any prior contact with the authorities. In most cases these were attempts to confront officials with claims for damages in an effort to intimidate them. This includes, for example, the entry of fictitious debts of officials in the U.S. Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) register—a tactic adopted by German sovereignists from their American counterparts—to lend an aura of legitimacy to their claims.[16]

Figure 1: Sovereignist/”Reichsbürger” Violence by Type [17]



The reports cited provide only general information on the sovereignist justifications for acts of violence. “Reichsbürger” justifies violence—especially against state officials—most often through the portrayal of an assumed/fictitious self-defense situation, usually based on conspiracy ideologies and myths widespread in their milieu. In his analysis of discourses of violence in the German sovereignist milieu, Georg Schuppener identified two lines of argumentation: sovereignists proclaim that on the one hand violence is perpetrated against Germany and its people by external powers and/or groups and individuals through state or pseudo-state institutions and organs, which, on the other hand legitimizes violent resistance.[18]

Below, two case studies will be presented to illustrate which conspiracy ideologies and myths are specifically associated with the use of violence and to identify how sovereignists use conspiracy ideologies and myths to justify their violence. The following analysis focuses on two acts of violence that took place in 2016 that can be attributed primarily to the sub-milieu of secessionist sovereignists—although other sovereignists have also planned and carried out acts of violence in the past decades.[19] These two cases led to a shift in the perception

of the milieu by German law enforcement agencies which began to view it as producing an “extremism sui generis”.[20] Furthermore, for both cases extensive source material for an analysis is available.

Reuden, “State of Ur”, Adrian Ursache

On August 25, 2016, a dispute with state authorities escalated during a foreclosure procedure in Reuden, Saxony-Anhalt. Beginning in 2006, the family of Adrian Ursache had accumulated debts of over €480,000, money they could not repay. For this reason, a compulsory auction procedure was opened in August 2013 and the family’s house was sold in mid-June 2016. In 2015, disputes began between the sovereignist Adrian Ursache and the responsible bailiff. Ursache claimed that the bailiff was not a civil servant and that the FRG was in fact an occupying administrative corporation, meaning the bailiff was not authorized to carry out foreclosures. In addition, he had proclaimed his property to be the “State of Ur”,[21] a territory on which the bailiff supposedly held no sovereign powers. To settle his debts, Ursache and his wife took their cue from actions of U.S. Sovereign Citizens. At the beginning of 2016, Mrs. Ursache tried to settle the leasing fees for a car using a forged or fabricated promissory note from the director of the Zeitz District Court worth €1,500,000 in gold. Adrian Ursache sent the ‘promissory note’ to the local court.[22] Because he had copied a signature of the director onto his ‘promissory note’, the court ordered (to preserve evidence) a search of the already-sold house, where the Ursache family still lived, given the suspicion of document forgery. It was carried out on July 6, 2016.

Ursache continuously documented the escalating conflict with the authorities and initially published videos to this effect on his YouTube channel *Ich Bin [I am/exist]*. In March 2016, one of his videos attracted a great deal of attention within the sovereignist milieu and beyond—a fact which Ursache used to win supporters for the foreclosure hearing on August 24, 2016.[23] In one of the last videos before the deadline titled “Finale 24.08.2016 - Fascists of the FRG against State of Ur”, Ursache published the picture, name, and address of the bailiff, called him a “dirty pig” and threatened to “slaughter him like cattle” if he entered the territory of his ‘State of Ur’.[24] In addition, he threatened:

“So, if any pig should try to remove us from our holy ground here, it will be paid for in blood. It doesn’t matter if it’s women, children, pregnant women—it doesn’t matter.”[25]

On August 24, 2016, according to media reports, about 30–40 supporters gathered on the property still occupied by Ursache and succeeded in preventing an eviction. The morning of the following day, police provided support for carrying out the eviction with two hundred men and a special task force (SEK). Only a few supporters remained on the property and they were evicted by the police. In front of the residence, the armored special task force officers exchanged words with Adrian Ursache, who was carrying a firearm. Several SEK officers shot at Ursache, wounding him severely. Ursache was accused of shooting at a police officer as well, a fact that was substantiated in court. As a result of his injuries, Ursache underwent emergency surgery at a clinic in Leipzig and was subsequently arrested by police. In April 2019, Ursache was sentenced to seven years in prison for attempted murder, assault, resisting law enforcement officers, and for the illegal possession of arms and ammunition. The Federal Supreme Court rejected an appeal in 2020, making the sentence legally binding.[26]

Justifications

Adrian Ursache used several patterns of justification for his use of violence against the bailiff and the police. In his justification for the violent threats against the bailiff, he referred primarily to his claim of being the head of state of the ‘state of Ur’. He denied the bailiff access to his ‘state territory’, on which he saw himself as a self-declared head of state, claiming that he was authorized by international law to use any form of force.[27] Ursache took his own logic of legitimacy even further, telling a journalist on the original eviction date that he believed the ‘State of Ur’ was at war:

“We live in international law. So here are a people, they have been recognized. And if he [the bailiff; JR] comes now no matter what, then it would be aggression against international law. And then we experience a war. Nothing else.”[28]

In his opinion, not only Ursache's 'state' was in a state of war, but a war against the Germans outside the 'State of Ur' was also taking place. Even before the events of August 25, 2016, Ursache did not recognize the state sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany and thus the orders of the German court. For him, the FRG represented an occupation administration of the Allies, which, he claimed, had been secretly transformed in 1990 into a corporation that operated exclusively under private law.[29] Regarding law enforcement, Ursache stated that "[...] without a state there are no legal laws or officials—all measures used to collect money correspond to pillage and piracy according to HLKO [*The Hague Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land of 1907*; JR] and VStGB [the German Code of Crimes against International Law; JR]."[30] According to Ursache, as an occupying administration, the FRG was subject to HLKO Article 47, which expressly prohibited plunder by occupying forces. Using this logic, he was resisting alleged illegal appropriation attempts ("looting", "piracy") on his "state"/private property that occurred in Reuden on August 25, 2016. Based on this chain of reasoning, he called police officers and the responsible bailiff "criminals [using] the trademark POLICE" and also labeled them "terrorists" in his viral video from June 30, 2016.[31]

Ursache thus held that he was justified in defending his "state of Ur" in the event of an imminent war. In his sovereignist worldview, he placed the immediate conflicts with the FRG in the context of a global conspiracy. Consequently, he claimed the function of the occupying administrative corporation FRG was a) domestically the "continuation of the war against the German people", which included the "destruction of German culture and tradition," and the "physical annihilation and expulsion of the German people," as well as b) "internationally: to enforce the New World Order (NWO)."[32] Based on these premises, he stated, "Simple logic: as long as the covert war against Germany continues, there will be an occupying administrative corporation 'FRG' to conduct this war." [33] To end this war, he claimed, it was not enough to deal with just the FRG: "Resistance does not take place under the premise of dissatisfied people against state power but people against fraudulent foreign rule." [34] "The forces that planted the evil [the FRG; JR]" would also have to be "pulled into the light of day and eliminated! This is a world problem!" [35] Regarding the destruction of the German people and their culture, Ursache stated:

"The country is just now being flooded by the occupying administrative corporation, foreign-dominated as always, with a Muslim and criminal invasion army, disguised with a few real war refugees. The Germans will finally be wiped out in a war on their own territory, which will be presented as a religious conflict but is in fact a race war. So, unless a miracle happens here, sooner or later there will be violent confrontations."[36]

Here, Ursache repeats the right-wing extremist conspiracy myth of the "Great Replacement"/"Race War"/"White Genocide", which he sees as part of a "Jewish world conspiracy" to exterminate the German people. In this context, Adrian Ursache also quoted from a paper by Udo Walendy, a German far-right Holocaust denier.[37] Ursache not only believed in a replacement of German volk through a "Great Replacement" orchestrated by Jews but insinuated also that "Germans are currently experiencing the Holocaust against themselves." [38]

In Ursache's mind, his personal financial debts and a resulting dispute with banks and enforcement officials of the FRG was part of a decades-long conspiracy against the German people with the aim of annihilating them. In Ursache's view, the conspirators' will to annihilate them, as well as the existence of an ongoing state of war, justified the use of violence as a means of legitimate resistance. This resistance was directed against law enforcement officers in the immediate confrontation linked to the eviction from his home but was also directed against others who were identified as instruments (migrants, Muslims) and those behind the conspiracy (Jews). The designation of police officers as "Nazis" and "fascists" not only trivializes National Socialism but can also be interpreted as a justification for acts of violence through demonization. The designation of the bailiff as a "dirty pig" is also striking, as dehumanizing a target can lower the inhibition threshold for the use of violence.[39]

Georgensgmünd, "State of Plan"/"Government District Wolfgang", Wolfgang Plan

Closely related to the events in Reuden is the murder of a police officer by Wolfgang Plan a few weeks later, on October 19, 2016, in Georgensgmünd, Bavaria. In contrast to the incident in Reuden, the violent acts of the

secessionist sovereignist Wolfgang Plan did not occur in the course of an eviction, although Plan also had debts amounting to €166,500. In his case, the state officials came to search for arms held by Plan after his permit to possess weapons had been canceled. He had a number of weapons in his home, as he had been an active sports shooter for 25 years and was also in possession of a hunting license. In 2015, he began collecting information from members of the sovereignist milieu on the banking and financial system, as well as on secessionist sovereignism. In doing so, Plan (like Ursache) learned about forms of action from, and the explanatory models of, the Freeman on the Land and Sovereign Citizens. He also adopted the idea that the FRG was not a real country, but only a corporation.[40] He made several “life declarations” in front of other sovereignists, including one issued on January 25, 2016.[41] On that day, Plan returned his identity card issued by the Federal Republic of Germany to the municipality of Georgensgmünd. Two months later, he deregistered his residence there, although he continued to live in the same house.[42] By May 2016, he had attracted the attention of German administrative authorities by refusing to pay vehicle taxes, based on sovereignist claims. At the same time, he had apparently also sent a proclamation to the Red Cross in Geneva, Switzerland, informing them that he had created the “Absolute State of Plan” on his property. When a seizure at Plan’s house was scheduled to take place on May 25, 2016, he prevented it with help from supporters, claiming that his “state territory” was not to be entered. In addition, Plan had also supported other sovereignists who were also threatened with foreclosure. Consequently, he was also in Reuden with Adrian Ursache in August 2016. On August 23, both agreed to a pact between their “states” in which they pledged each other economic and military support. However, Plan was not on site during the events on August 25 but learned about them only later from the media. He interpreted the police action as a raid.[43]

The failed seizure against Plan at the end of May 2016 and his openly signaled affiliation with the sovereignist milieu had led to the revocation of his right to possess firearms. Several attempts to convince Plan to surrender his 31 firearms and ammunition failed. In the early morning of October 19, 2016, a special police task force entered Wolfgang Plan’s residence to confiscate his firearms. Plan shot at the officers in rapid succession through the still-locked apartment door, wounding several policemen—one fatally. He then surrendered to the police officers. In October 2017, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder by the Nuremberg-Fürth Regional Court.[44]

Justifications

Wolfgang Plan, like Adrian Ursache, claimed the German Federal Republic to be a “sham state” whose “mercenaries” planned to carry out an attack on the territory of his supposedly sovereign state—an attack against which he was merely defending himself. In his *Pact with the State of Plan*, also sent by Plan to the Red Cross in Geneva, he promised that his “state” would be “ready at any time to defend the freedom of the people [...] with blood, iron, and fire.”[45] This was also recorded as his main explanation and justification in the judgment of the Nuremberg-Fürth Regional Court.

Plan had also used an additional justification, independent of his secessionist aspirations. He claimed in court that he was surprised by what he considered to be an unannounced police intrusion and that he had not recognized the policemen. He said that he had thought that the Third World War had broken out and that he was being attacked.[46] In an interview from 2021, he substantiated the rationale behind this justification. In this interview, he stated that he was left in a state of fear after the attacks by Islamists in Paris on November 13, 2015, which were followed by other acts of terrorism closer to home—in Würzburg on July 18, 2016, and in Ansbach on July 24, 2016. This fear was intensified, he claimed, because he had received secret information from security circles and the Internet about an impending civil war triggered by Islamists and armed refugees. Plan claimed he had believed the deployment of the special task force on the morning of October 19, 2016, was the start of this civil war, and that he would not have shot at police officers if he had known who they were.[47] Plan consequently justified the fatal shootings as supposed acts of resistance against criminals or foreigners he claimed were the attackers.

Like Ursache, Plan included the “Great Replacement” conspiracy myth in his reports of an impending Third World War/civil war. On Facebook, Wolfgang Plan placed several posts pointing to such a connection. Five

days before the fatal shooting, he had shared a post from the antisemitic, racist, and far-right blog *Lupo Cattivo*, which portrayed the “Great Replacement” myth as being part of a “secret war against the Germans.”[48] Plan also propagated the myth of a “Jewish world conspiracy” on Facebook. On April 23, 2015, before the Paris attacks, he shared an antisemitic and sovereignist post calling police officers “Zionist mercenaries.” It also warned of a “Day X”, “when Zionists will seek to reduce the population to a minimum of 500 million worldwide.”[49]

Wolfgang Plan saw himself—or portrayed himself—as not only resisting the FRG, but also fighting a “Jewish-Zionist world conspiracy” that would carry out a “secret war against the Germans” with the aim of exterminating them. He connected these (pseudo) events with apocalyptic ideas of a “Day X” and the outbreak of a civil war or the Third World War. With the framework of such a logic, he was not only engaging in resistance, but was “at war”. As a defender of his “countrymen” or even just of his own life and the lives of his fellow residents, he saw himself justified in shooting at the people invading his home.

Manichaeism and the Legitimation of Violence

The analysis of the cases from Reuden and Georgensgmünd initially confirms the findings of Köhler and Fiebig’s study, that conspiracy ideologies are used to justify self-defense against supposedly unlawful behavior within the sovereignist milieu. As the analysis shows, however, the legitimation of violence through conspiracy ideologies is not merely linked to the alleged conspirators’ desire for power and an associated “disregard for the well-being of the allegedly oppressed,”[50] as Köhler and Fiebig indicated, but above all with the assumed existential threat to the sovereignist self-group. Violence as self-defense is thus part of a Manichean conception of the world in which, according to conspiracy ideologues, including sovereignists, a final battle between the forces of good and evil is imminent. This notion offers relief in crisis situations because it decouples local conflicts from individual responsibility, reducing it to a simple face-off of good versus evil with clear sides to identify: Ursache and Plan did not bring about their situation themselves with their economic decisions, but, as part of the German people, are victims of a global conspiracy waging a secret war against them. In the war that Ursache and Plan believed in, the conspirators are not merely concerned with territorial gains—such as occupation or annexation of the state territory of a German empire—but with the annihilation of the enemy. Adrian Ursache stated, regarding this, that: “[...] the shifting of the [German; JR] border after 1918 happened without legal basis and by breaking the HLKO [The Hague Convention of 1907; JR] and everything that happened afterward was genocide against the German people.”[51]

This emphasis on one’s own identity as victims and the violence presumably perpetrated against the individual and the German people is typical for the whole of the sovereignist milieu, as Georg Schuppener’s politico-linguistic study of discourses of violence in the German sovereignist milieu has shown.[52] This creates a special identity for those who engage in resistance in contrast to those who remain passive. Ursache and Plan thus saw themselves in this apocalyptic constellation as heroic fighters for good and against evil.[53] Others shared this perception, as shown by the positive response to Ursache’s calls for support on the day of the planned eviction of his former property.

The Manichaeism of the sovereignist milieu encompasses not only its own identity as a victim but also the identity of state officers and others as perpetrators. The characteristics attributed to the perpetrators can lower the inhibition threshold for the use of violence through demonization and an assumed lawlessness. In the logic of the sovereignist milieu, the alleged conspirators have been committing atrocious acts (“genocide”, “holocaust of the Germans”) for decades, for which they have not been held accountable. Although pseudo-legal recommendations for action have spread within the milieu, they have not been able, despite all assurances of their effectiveness, to eliminate the perceived injustice and save the German people. Against such an enemy, who in the last instance personifies evil itself, all means seem morally justified. These conspiracy-ideological, Manichean, and (structurally) antisemitic ideas were not only an essential part of the ideology and propaganda of National Socialism but were already propagated by German antisemites since the end of the 19th century.[54] They are still part of the ideology and propaganda shared by right-wing extremists worldwide.[55]

Targets of Sovereignist Violence

As the quantitative studies on violence from the sovereignist milieu show, such violence is primarily directed against law enforcement officials of the Federal Republic of Germany.[56] However, this is primarily because of their function in the rule of law, in which they necessarily come into contact with sovereignists who consistently refuse to pay debts, taxes and duties or otherwise deliberately violate the laws and regulations of the FRG, which sovereignists view as illegal or invalid. Within conspiracy-ideological sovereignism, other perceived enemies exist besides law enforcement and other officials in people who are perceived as the means used by the conspiracy in its war against the German people. Consequently, migrants and refugees are also marked as targets when they are identified as part of the conspiracy, such as through the myth of the “Great Replacement”. In February 2012, the sovereignist group *Die Reichsbewegung - Neue Gemeinschaft von Philosophen* (“The Reich Movement - New Community of Philosophers”) published a folkish racist appeal “to all foreigners in Germany who are alien to space, nature, and culture, especially Turks, Muslims and Negroids (blacks and half-blacks).”[57] In this appeal, the group demanded that those they were addressing leave Germany within a certain period, or else they would face summary execution on “Day X”, the outbreak of World War III. Wolfgang Plan also used the outbreak of World War III to justify his shooting of the policemen as self-defense against an attack by Islamists/armed refugees.[58]

In addition to racist and ‘ethnopluralist’ ideas, antisemitism plays a special role within the sovereignist milieu, which is expressed in the propagation of the myth of the “Jewish world conspiracy”. Accordingly, Jews are also marked as legitimate targets of violence, as they are identified as representatives of the secret foreign rule. Ursache and Plan also insinuated that the FRG and its officials were controlled by a Jewish/Zionist plot. This conspiracy myth is not voiced by sovereignists by chance but is rather directly related to the genesis of German conspiracy-ideological sovereignism.

Right-Wing Extremism and a Tradition of Antisemitism

For historical reasons, conspiracy-ideological sovereignism in the Federal Republic of Germany is closely linked to neo-Nazism and right-wing extremism. National Socialists attempted to restore the German Reich’s governing ability after the Allied victory over the German Reich in 1945, the subsequent occupation, and the establishment of two German states in 1949. Like the neo-Nazis and right-wing extremists who succeeded them, they insinuated that the Federal Republic was an instrument of domination over the Germans controlled by foreign powers.[59] German right-wing extremists ran a campaign for the restoration of the German Reich until the 1980s but it was subsequently displaced from its position by other racist and ‘ethnopluralist’ campaigns, such as one against asylum seekers.[60] Various individuals and groups, however, continued to devote themselves to the Reich campaign. Revisionism, and especially Holocaust denial, became the central field of action for these traditionally organized far-right “Reichsbürger” and their continued effort to restore the legal capacity of the German Reich. The neo-Nazi and Holocaust denier Horst Mahler formulated the connection between antisemitism and conspiracy-ideological sovereignism in a court case exemplary for this sovereignist sub-milieu:

“The Germans will only ever be free again when the German Reich has regained its legal capacity. The path to the self-glorification of the German Reich goes through the overthrow of Jewish foreign rule. The Jewish foreign rule falls with the unmasking of the Auschwitz lie.”[61]

Traditionally organized right-wing extremist “Reichsbürger” provided not only the ideological foundations for German conspiracy-ideological sovereignism, but also used acts of violence to achieve their goals. For example, the right-wing extremist “Reichsbürger” Manfred Roeder, who had already convened a “Reichstag at Flensburg” in 1975, went underground in 1978 because he no longer saw any legal means of restoring the German Reich’s ability to act. In 1980, he joined the far-right terrorist group *Deutsche Aktionsgruppen* (German Action Groups), which was responsible for seven arson and explosive attacks that fatally injured two Vietnamese. Other targets included an exhibition on the Auschwitz concentration camp and a Jewish school.[62] That same year he was caught by the police and sentenced to 10 years in prison. From 1990 onwards, Roeder was active in the settlement of Germans in the Russian city of Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg), the dissemina-

tion of Reich-related propaganda, and Holocaust denial.[63]

Today's "Reichsbürger" and other sovereigntists still draw on the traditional knowledge of the right-wing extremist "Reichsbürger" of the past. Since the 2000s at the latest, there has also been evidence of personal contacts between members of these sub-milieus.[64] The Internet, and especially the social network Telegram, bring the individual milieus even closer together and facilitate the exchange of ideology and narratives. While, for example, the right-wing extremist "Reichsbürger" Horst Mahler was still accusing the "Reichsbürger" in the tradition of Ebel of high treason because of their positive reference to the Allies in 2003, his ally Nikolai Nerling fifteen years later interviewed Adrian Ursache in prison for his video blog *Der Volkslehrer* (The Volk's Teacher) and reported on his trial.[65]

Conclusion

The findings of both case studies confirm the results of previous studies on the justification of violence within the German sovereignist milieu.[66] In both cases discussed here, violence was legitimized through conspiracy myths about a supposed annihilation of the German people and through apocalyptic visions of the future. The Manichean conception of history and society contained in such beliefs compel believers to action on behalf of the good people and to fight the evil enemy. At the same time, the exaggeration of the enemy's "bestiality", their supposed lawlessness, and almost limitless power provides moral justification for violent resistance by members of the sovereignist milieu. In this sense, violence is an integral part of the milieu's ideology. The function of conspiracy narratives for extremists to legitimize their own acts of violence as their only option—highlighted also in a study by Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller—is evident in the two case studies analyzed here, as are the in-group/out-group dynamics and the increasing demonization.[67]

In contrast to (other) openly right-wing extremist milieus in Germany, which spread the same or similar conspiracy ideologies and myths, conspiracy-ideological sovereignists focus on 'proving' the supposed lack of sovereignty, as well as on actions to (re-)establish sovereignty by means of (pseudo-)legal documents and concentrate also on the establishment of their own structures. It is precisely this sovereignty construction that inevitably leads to a confrontation with the sovereign established and internationally recognized German state. This challenge to the official state has increased the pressure of repression on the milieu in Germany since 2016. A pending eviction (Adrian Ursache), as well as the seizure of weapons due to being part of the violence-prone milieu (Wolfgang Plan) can be interpreted by sovereignists as the beginning of the final showdown and thus justify the use of violence. The concrete use of violence, however, is not only dependent on ideology, but also on the individual psychological dispositions of sovereignists. This marks the limits of the present analysis, with its focus on the ideological dimension, especially when comparing the findings here to those of studies on American Sovereign Citizens. Although these U.S. analyses acknowledge the antisemitic and conspiracy-ideological origins of the sovereignist ideology,[68] they focus more on the personal reasons behind sovereignist violence, emphasizing individual psychological dispositions more than the perpetrators' ideology (which legitimizes violence).[69]

The analyzed type of violent confrontation was related to foreclosures or the seizure of weapons. The violence that resulted does not amount to terrorism. While the selection of the targets was based on ideology, the intent of having a wider psychological impact played at best a limited role.[70] This does not mean, however, that sovereignist violence is limited to cases in which individuals face financial hardship. Terrorist acts of violence were committed as early as 1980 by another German "Reichsbürger", Manfred Roeder. Other individuals of the sovereignist milieu are currently under investigation for allegedly planning attacks on infrastructure and for plans to kidnap the German Minister of Health, Karl Lauterbach in order to trigger a "Day X." They also share the old conspiracy myths of a "Jewish world conspiracy" and the "Great Replacement".[71]

This analysis shows more than just a close connection between extremist ideology and willingness to engage in violence in the German sovereignist milieu. It emphasizes also that, in addition to law enforcement officers, migrants, Muslims and Jews are also potential targets of attacks. In 2019 as well as in 2020, cases of antisemitic violence from sovereignists were registered by German authorities. These do not represent anomalies but can

be explained by the explicit and implicit antisemitism present within the milieu. For the assessment of the potential for violence and possible targets of sovereignists, the focus should not only be on the (pseudo-)legal and (pseudo-)administrative texts of the milieu, which are particularly frequent in communication with the state. Georg Schuppener rightfully points out that these texts have less room for expressions of violence than texts with directive or emotive textual functions.[72] These other texts—many of them available online—must be examined more closely in order to assess the potential for violence of members from the milieu and identify possible targets—especially since studies have so far failed to identify any clear differences between sovereignist perpetrators and non-perpetrators of violence.[73]

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Notes

- [1] See Rathje, J. (2021). “Reichsbürger” und Souveränismus. *Aus Politik Und Zeitgeschichte* (35-36), pp. 34–40.
- [2] See e.g., Keil, J.-G. (2017). “Zwischen Wahn und Rollenspiel: Das Phänomen der ‘Reichsbürger’ aus psychologischer Sicht.” In D. Wilking (Ed.), *“Reichsbürger”: Ein Handbuch* (3rd ed., pp. 54–115). Potsdam: Demos - Brandenburgisches Institut für Gemeinwesenberatung; Schönberger, C. & Schönberger, S. (Eds.). (2020). *Die Reichsbürger: Verfassungsfeinde zwischen Staatsverweigerung und Verschwörungstheorie*. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag; Sarteschi, C. M. (2020). *Sovereign Citizens: A Psychological and Criminological Analysis*. Cham: Springer.
- [3] On Sovereign Citizens see e.g. Pitcavage, M. (2012). *The Lawless Ones: The Resurgence of the Sovereign Citizen Movement*. New York: ADL; Berger, J. M. (2016). *Without Prejudice: What Sovereign Citizens Believe*; Washington: Program on Extremism; Sarteschi, C. M. (2020). “Sovereign Citizens: A Narrative Review with Implications of Violence Towards Law Enforcement.” *Aggression and Violent Behavior*. Advance online publication. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2020.101509>. On German “Reichsbürger”, see e.g. Wilking, D. (Ed.). (2017). *“Reichsbürger”: Ein Handbuch* (3rd ed.). Potsdam: Demos - Brandenburgisches Institut für Gemeinwesenberatung. Furthermore, it should be noted that the focus is mainly on the USA, Canada, Australia and Great Britain as well as Germany and Austria, although sovereignist groups exist in other states as well, e.g., Russia and the Czech Republic; Luxmoore, M. (2019, May 25). “You understand what’s happening? All the organs of Soviet power are being recreated”. *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*. URL: <https://www.rferl.org/a/flouting-law-in-nostalgia-s-name-russia-s-growing-movement-of-soviet-citizens-/29962523.html>; Czech Ministry of the Interior. (2022). *Hnutí Suverénních občanů a jejich aktivity v České republice*. URL: <https://www.mvcr.cz/chh/clanek/hnuti-suverennich-obcanu-a-jejich-aktivity-v-ceske-republice.aspx>.
- [4] The term was proposed by Susann Bischof as a categorical description for the milieu as a whole.
- [5] See Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. (2022). *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021*. Berlin.
- [6] See Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung. (2019). *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2018*. Wien. Bundesministerium für Inneres.
- [7] See ADL. (2017, June 26). *Anti-Government Extremism*. URL: <https://www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms/anti-government-extremism>; Alcock, M. (2019, November 19). *The Evolving and Persistent Terrorism Threat to the Homeland*. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, DC. URL: <https://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/the-evolving-and-persistent-terrorism-threat-to-the-homeland-111919>; Southern Poverty Law Center. (2021). *Antigovernment Movement*. URL: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/antigovernment>.
- [8] Like Colin Campbell’s concept of the cultic milieu, the phenomenon could be described as an independent milieu that is primarily ideological and characterized by a culture of conspiracy. It shows overlaps with the current forms of the cultic milieu, as well as with right-wing extremist, antisemitic and other conspiracy-ideological milieus. See Barkun, M. (2013). *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (2nd ed.). *Comparative Studies in Religion and Society: Vol. 15*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. (Originally published in 2004); Campbell, C. (2002). The Cult, the Cultic Milieu, and Secularization. In J. Kaplan & H. Löw (Eds.), *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization* (pp. 12–25). Walnut

Creek, Lanham and Oxford: AltaMira Press; Campbell, C. (2012). *The Cultic Milieu Revisited*. Universität Leipzig, Leipzig. URL: <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.4473.3286>; Kaplan, J. & Lööw, H. (2002). Introduction. In J. Kaplan & H. Lööw (Eds.), *The Cultic Milieu*, op. cit., (pp. 1–11). On the link between conspiracy ideological milieus and the cultic milieu, see Asprem, E. & Dyrendal, A. (2019). “Close Companions? Esotericism and Conspiracy Theories.” In A. Dyrendal, D. G. Robertson, & E. Asprem (Eds.), *Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion: Vol. 17. Handbook of Conspiracy Theory and Contemporary Religion* (pp. 207–233). Leiden and Boston: Brill. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004382022>.

[9] See Rathje, J., “Reichsbürger”, op. cit. The concept of conspiracy ideological sovereignism is based on the concept of national and popular sovereignism. Sovereignists argue that national or popular sovereignty is at fault and needs to be restored, see Spiegleire, S. D., Skinner, C. & Sweijs, T. (2017). *The Rise of Populist Sovereignism: What it is, Where it Comes From, and What it Means for International Security and Defense*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, pp. 32–40. As a conspiracy ideology, conspiracy-ideological sovereignism, like Cas Mudde’s definition of populism, can be described as a thin-centered ideology that may be combined with other ideologies. See Mudde, C. (2004). “The Populist Zeitgeist.” *Government and Opposition*, 39(4), pp. 541–563. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>. On the concept of conspiracy ideologies, see Pfahl-Traughber, A. (2002). “Bausteine’ zu einer Theorie über ‘Verschwörungstheorien’: Definitionen, Erscheinungsformen, Funktionen und Ursachen.” In H. Reinalter (Ed.), *Quellen und Darstellungen zur europäischen Freimaurerei. Verschwörungstheorien: Theorie - Geschichte - Wirkung* (pp. 30–44). Innsbruck: Studienverlag; Rathje, J. (2017). *Reichsbürger, Selbstverwalter und Souveränisten: Vom Wahn des bedrohten Deutschen*. Münster: Unrast.

[10] Current research indicates that this sub-milieu of “Reichsbürger” emerged in the mid-1980s. It is particularly linked to the actions of Wolfgang Gerhard Günter Ebel, who claimed to be “Reich Chancellor”, formed a “Provisional Reich Government”, and inspired many others. See Gessler, P. (2000, August 15). “Die Reichsminister drohen mit dem Tod.” *Taz* (6219), p. 19. URL: <http://www.taz.de/!1217553/>.

[11] See Rathje, J., Reichsbürger, Selbstverwalter, op. cit.

[12] Schwarz-Friesel, M. & Reinharz, J. (2017). *Inside the Antisemitic Mind: The Language of Jew-Hatred in Contemporary Germany*. Waltham and Berlin: Brandeis University Press, pp. 12–13.

[13] See Bundeskriminalamt (2005). *Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik 2004: Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Wiesbaden, p. 16.

[14] In 2016, two shootouts with sovereignists occurred, in which several persons were injured, and one policeman died from his wounds. Since then, authorities have published estimates on the size of the milieu. For 2021, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution estimated a size of 21,000 persons belonging to this milieu, of which 1,150 were counted as right-wing extremists. See Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. (2022). *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021*. Berlin, p. 103. The actual number of people in the milieu is probably higher, as the large number of subscribers to milieu-specific Telegram channels suggests.

[15] See Koehler, D. & Fiebig, V. (2019). *Taten, Täter, Opfer.: Eine Studie der Reichsbürgerbewegung auf Grundlage einer Presseauswertung*. Stuttgart. Ministerium für Inneres, Digitalisierung und Migration.

[16] For more detailed information on this, see Caspar, C. & Neubauer, R. (2015). “Durchs wilde Absurdistan: Was zu tun ist, wenn ‘Reichsbürger’ und öffentliche Verwaltung aufeinandertreffen.” In D. Wilking (Ed.), *“Reichsbürger”: Ein Handbuch* (2nd ed., pp. 93–171). Potsdam: Demos - Brandenburgisches Institut für Gemeinwesenberatung, pp. 126–128; Stahl, T. & Homburg, H. (2015). “‘Souveräne Bürger’ in den USA und deutsche ‘Reichsbürger’ - ein Vergleich hinsichtlich Ideologie und Gefahrenpotential.” In D. Wilking (Ed.), *“Reichsbürger”: Ein Handbuch* (2nd ed., pp. 203–224). Potsdam: Demos - Brandenburgisches Institut für Gemeinwesenberatung.

[17] See Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. (2018). *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017*. Berlin, pp. 30–31; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. (2019). *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2018*. Berlin, pp. 30–31; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. (2020). *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2019*. Berlin, pp. 30–31; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. (2021). *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2020*. Berlin, pp. 32–33; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. (2022). *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021*, op. cit, p. 32; Bundeskriminalamt. (2022, May 10). *Politisch motivierte Kriminalität im Jahr 2021: Bundesweite Fallzahlen*. On the problem of classification used by the police, see Keil, J.-G. (2021). “Zur Abgrenzung des Milieus der ‘Reichsbürger’ – Pathologisierung des Politischen und Politisierung des Pathologischen.” *Forensische Psychiatrie, Psychologie, Kriminologie*. Advance online publication. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11757-021-00668-7>.

[18] See Schuppener, G. (2019). “Gewalt-Lexik und Gewalt-Diskurse in reichsbürgerlichen Texten.” *Linguistische Treffen in Wrocław* 15 (1), 199–208. <https://doi.org/10.23817/lingtreff.15-16>.

[19] See e.g. Rathje, J. (2019). “Eine neue rechtsrerroristische Bedrohung? Souveränismus von ‘Reichsbürgern’ und anderen in Deutschland.” *Wissen schafft Demokratie* (06), pp. 158–167. URL: <https://doi.org/10.19222/201906/14>; Janz, C. & Speit, A. (2017). “‘Wir sind im Krieg’: Waffen innerhalb der Szene.” In A. Speit (Ed.), *Reichsbürger: Die unterschätzte Gefahr*, (pp. 115–132). Berlin: Ch. Links.

[20] See Freitag, J., Hüllen, M. & Krüger, Y. (2017). “Entwicklung der Ideologie der ‘Reichsbürger’” In U. Backes, A. Gallus, & E. Jesse (Eds.), *Jahrbuch Extremismus & Demokratie (E & D): 29. Jahrgang 2017* (pp. 159–174). Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft. URL: <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783845288642-158>, p. 165.

[21] See Chronologie: Der Fall Adrian Ursache: Mordprozess gegen “Reichsbürger” (2019, Dezember 30). *Mdr Sachsen-Anhalt*. URL: <https://www.mdr.de/sachsen-anhalt/halle/chronologie-reichsbuerger-prozess-adrian-ursache-100.html>.

- [22] See Ursache, A. (2016). *Warum Ur: Ich bin der ich bin*, pp. 129–136. On the tactics of the Sovereign Citizens' promissory notes; see Federal Bureau of Investigation (2011). *Sovereign Citizens: An Introduction for Law Enforcement*. URL: <https://info.publicintellgence.net/FBI-SovereignCitizens.pdf>.
- [23] Ursache, A., *Warum Ur*, op. cit.; Ursache, A. (2016, July 10). Interview by L. Coldwell.; Ursache, A. (2016, August 21). *Finale 24.08.2016 - Faschisten der BRD gegen Staat Ur*.
- [24] Ursache, A., *Finale*, op. cit., min. 03:17-03:36. The video was deleted from Ursache's YouTube channel shortly after it was published. A copy of the video can be found with a release date of 08/21/2016 on vk.com.
- [25] *Ibid.*, Video time 02:42-02:50.
- [26] See *Chronologie; Der Fall Adrian Ursache*, op. cit.
- [27] See Ursache, A., *Finale*, op. cit.
- [28] S und T Info. (2016, August 24). *24 08 2016 Adrian Ursache - Interview mit MDR Teil 1*. URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hizrq1GIgPc>, min. 1:06–1:16.
- [29] See Ursache, A., *Warum Ur*, op. cit., pp. 36–38.
- [30] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- [31] Ursache, A. (2016, June 30). *MENSCH setzt sich gegen Polizei, GV und 9 maskierte durch* [YouTube]. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2ENx8TFvf8>. The entry "POLIZEI" at the German Patent and Trademark Office as a trademarked word is wrongly interpreted within the sovereignist milieu as evidence that the German police cannot be an authority. See Schumacher, G. (2015). *Vorwärts in die Vergangenheit: Durchblick durch einige "reichsideologische" Nebelwände*. URL: <http://buch.sonnenstaatland.com/>, p. 67.
- [32] Ursache, A., *Warum Ur*, op. cit., pp. 84–86.
- [33] Ursache, A. (2016, May 27). *Kein Name! Kein Spiel! Teil 2*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IlsH3MAWln8>, min. 3:07–3:10.
- [34] Ursache, A., *Warum Ur*, op. cit., p. 94.
- [35] *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- [36] *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- [37] See *ibid.*, pp. 14–17.
- [38] Ursache, A. (2017, April 7). *Was stimmt hier nicht? Wovor habt ihr Angst?* URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmD6yfp922o>, min. 34:26–34:34.
- [39] See Giner-Sorolla, R., Leidner, B. & Castano, E. (2012). Dehumanization, Demonization, and Morality Shifting: Paths to Moral Certainty in Extremist Violence. In: M. A. Hogg & D. L. Blaylock (Eds.), *The Claremont Symposium on Applied Social Psychology. Extremism and the Psychology of Uncertainty* (pp. 165–182). Malden and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444344073.ch10>.
- [40] See Verurteilung eines "Reichsbürgers" wegen Mordes - Heimtückische Tötung eines Polizeibeamten bei Einsatz aus niedrigen Beweggründen, 5 Ks 113 Js 1822/16 (Landgericht Nürnberg-Fürth October 23, 2017). URL: <https://www.gesetze-bayern.de/Content/Document/Y-300-Z-BECKRS-B-2017-N-141430>.
- [41] See Plan, W. (2016, January 25). *Erklärung unter Eid*. Facebook post.
- [42] See *Verurteilung*, op. cit.
- [43] *Ibid.*
- [44] See "Reichsbürger" hortete in seiner Wohnung 31 Waffen (2016, October 19). *B.Z.* URL: <https://www.bz-berlin.de/archiv-artikel/reichsbuerger-schießt-bei-razzia-auf-polizisten-4-verletzte>; Maxwill, P. (2017, October 23). *Urteil in "Reichsbürger"-Prozess: Ein "wahrhafter Mensch", ein Mörder*. URL: <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/reichsbuerger-prozess-ein-wahrhafter-mensch-ein-moerder-a-1174273.html>.
- [45] As cited in *Verurteilung*, op. cit.
- [46] *Ibid.*
- [47] See Plan, W. (07.2021). Interview by M. Möglich.
- [48] See Plan, W. (2016b, October 14). *Geheimkrieg gegen die Deutschen*. Facebook post. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20181222141117/https://www.facebook.com/wolfgang.plan/posts/630129063815324>.
- [49] Plan, W. (2015, April 23). *B L I T Z E R – M A R A T H O N das Ende der zionistischen Söldnerschaft [POLIZEI]!* Facebook post. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20170731082403/https://www.facebook.com/wolfgang.plan/posts/426596134168619>.
- [50] See Köhler, D. & Fiebig, V., *Taten*, op. cit., p. 33.

- [51] Ursache, A., Warum Ur, op. cit.
- [52] See Schuppener, G., Gewalt-Lexik, op. cit.
- [53] See Berlet, C. (2003). "Apocalypticism." In P. Knight (Ed.), *Conspiracy Theories in American History: An Encyclopedia* (85-91). Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO; Schuppener, Gewalt-Lexik, op. cit.
- [54] See e.g. Herf, J. (2006). *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. URL: <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674038592>; Marr, W. (1879). *Der Sieg des Judentums über das Germanentum: Vom nicht confessionellen Standpunkt aus betrachtet* (6.th ed.).
- [55] See e.g. Barkun, M. (1989). "Millenarian Aspects of 'White Supremacist' Movements." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1(4), pp. 409–434. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546558908427037>; Barkun, M. (1996). "Religion, Militias and Oklahoma City: The Mind of Conspiratorialists." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 8(1), pp. 50–64. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559608427332>.
- [56] See Köhler, D. & Fiebig, V., Taten, op. cit.
- [57] Die Reichsbewegung - Neue Gemeinschaft von Philosophen. (2012, February 1). *Ausweisung aus Deutschland*. URL: http://web.archive.org/web/20120227024449/http://www.reichsbewegung.org/portal/attachments/058_Ausweisung_aus_Deutschland.pdf.
- [58] See Plan, W., Interview, op. cit.
- [59] While the Allied occupation after the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 could actually be experienced as such during the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany, it must be noted that for the subsequent period a de facto military occupation or a central political supervision of the government of the German Federal Republic no longer existed (East Germany, the DDR occupied by the Soviet Union being a different story).
- [60] See Stöss, R. (2010). *Rechtsextremismus im Wandel* (3rd ed.). Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Forum Berlin., pp. 31–33.
- [61] Mahler, H. (2004). *Das Ende der moralischen Geschichtsbetrachtung führt zur Antwort auf die Judenfrage*. Einlassung zur Anklage wegen Volksverhetzung vor der 22. Großen Strafkammer des Landgerichts Berlin (522) 81 Js 3570/KLs (1/03), p. 5.
- [62] See Bauerschmidt, M., Brandt, S., Jentsch, U. & Ohrowski, K. (1996). "Deutsche Aktionsgruppen." In J. Mecklenburg (Ed.), *Handbuch deutscher Rechtsextremismus* (p. 156). Berlin: Elefant Press.; Manfred Roeder. (2002). In T. Grumke & B. Wagner (Eds.), *Handbuch Rechtsradikalismus: Personen - Organisationen - Netzwerke vom Neonazismus bis in die Mitte der Gesellschaft* (pp. 302–304). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- [63] For a detailed account of the development of conspiracy-ideological sovereignism in the Federal Republic of Germany and its relation to antisemitism, see Rathje, J. (2021). "For Reich and Volksgemeinschaft - Against the World Conspiracy: Antisemitism and Sovereignism in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1945." *Antisemitism Studies*, 5(1), pp. 100–138. URL: <https://doi.org/10.2979/antistud.5.1.04>.
- [64] See *ibid.*
- [65] See Mahler, H. (2003, December 7). *Verkündigung der Reichsbürgerbewegung*; Ursache, A. (2018, May 2). Interview by N. Nerling.
- [66] See Köhler, D. & Fiebig, V., Taten, op. cit.; Schuppener, G., Gewalt-Lexik, op. cit.
- [67] See Bartlett, J. & Miller, C. (2010). *The Power of Unreason: Conspiracy Theories, Extremism and Counter-Terrorism*. London: Demos. Benjamin Lee critically notes that in addition to this particular function of conspiracy narratives for extremists, their exact role in radicalization processes cannot yet be clearly determined; see Lee, B. J. (2020). "Radicalisation and Conspiracy Theories." In M. Butter & P. Knight (Eds.), *Conspiracy Theories. Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- [68] See e.g. McNab, J. J. (2010, August 1). 'Sovereign' Citizen Kane. Southern Poverty Law Center. URL: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2010/sovereign-citizen-kane>; Berger, J. M. (2016). *Without Prejudice: What Sovereign Citizens Believe*, op. cit.
- [69] See e.g. McNab, J. J., 'Sovereign' Citizen Kane, op. cit.; Challacombe, D. J. & Lucas, P. A. (2019). "Postdicting Violence with Sovereign Citizen Actors: An Exploratory Test of the TRAP-18." *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 6(1), pp. 51–59. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1037/tam000105>.
- [70] On the definition of extreme right-wing terrorism see Ravndal, J. A. & Bjørge, T. (2018). "Investigating Terrorism from the Extreme Right: A Review of Past and Present Research." *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 12(6), pp. 5–22.
- [71] See Rathje, J., Rechtserroristische Bedrohung, op. cit.; Dittrich, M. (2021). Zwischen Militärgericht und "Corona-Diktatur": QAnon und der "Tag X". In *Die Bundestagswahl 2021: Welche Rolle Verschwörungsideologien in der Demokratie spielen* (pp. 46–53); Junghans, R. (2022, April 27). "Vereinte Patrioten': Vom Protest zum Terror - Die Radikalisierung von 'Thomas O.'" *Belltower News*. URL: <https://www.belltower.news/vereinte-patrioten-vom-protest-zum-terror-die-radikalisierung-von-thomas-o-130453/>.
- [72] See Schuppener, G., Gewalt-Lexik, op. cit.
- [73] See Köhler, D. & Fiebig, V., Taten, op. cit.