



The Christchurch Attack Report: Key Takeaways on Tarrant's Radicalization and Attack Planning

Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, Chelsea Daymon and Amarnath Amarasingam

The Christchurch Attack Report: Key Takeaways on Tarrant's Radicalization and Attack Planning

**Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, Chelsea Daymon and
Amarnath Amarasingam**

ICCT Perspective

December 2020

About ICCT

The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) is an independent think and do tank providing multidisciplinary policy advice and practical, solution-oriented implementation support on prevention and the rule of law, two vital pillars of effective counterterrorism.

ICCT's work focuses on themes at the intersection of countering violent extremism and criminal justice sector responses, as well as human rights-related aspects of counterterrorism. The major project areas concern countering violent extremism, rule of law, foreign fighters, country and regional analysis, rehabilitation, civil society engagement and victims' voices.

Functioning as a nucleus within the international counter-terrorism network, ICCT connects experts, policymakers, civil society actors and practitioners from different fields by providing a platform for productive collaboration, practical analysis, and exchange of experiences and expertise, with the ultimate aim of identifying innovative and comprehensive approaches to preventing and countering terrorism.

Licensing and Distribution

ICCT publications are published in open access format and distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

Contents

What do we know about the perpetrator’s radicalization process?	1
Did the internet have a particularly important role in his radicalization process?	2
What does the report say about how the attack was planned?	3
Conclusion	4
Bibliography	6
About the Authors	8

On 8 December 2020, the Royal Commission of Inquiry in New Zealand released its report into the 15 March 2019 Christchurch mosque shooting during which 51 Muslim worshippers were killed.¹ The nearly 800 page report concludes that despite shortcomings on the part of various security agencies, there was no clear signs the attack was imminent, and made 44 recommendations, ranging from improvements to counter-terrorism, firearms licencing, calls for new legislation to criminalize planning or preparing a terrorist attack, and strengthening existing laws around hate-speech.

After conducting more than 400 interviews, and combing through over 73,000 pages of evidence and submissions, the report took about 18 months to draft. The interviews included Muslim community leaders, governmental agency officials - including police, customs, immigration and intelligence services - along with experts and officials in England, Norway, and Australia. In a manner similar to the Gjørsv Report commissioned after the 2011 Norway attacks,² this report provides the public with an exhaustive and clear picture of the perpetrator, his process of radicalization, and his plan of attack. In what follows, we summarize and contextualize, based on the academic literature, these three important elements of the attack.

What do we know about the perpetrator's radicalization process?

While the report is quite clear in detailing Tarrant's process of radicalization, it is also the aspect of the report that, for radicalization researchers, feels a little incomplete. Just as pathways to terrorism are a personal process with divergent factors, this can also be said for the process of radicalization. Sageman and McCauley and Moskalenko note that there are two types of radicalization.³ The first is gaining extreme beliefs, or what is known as "cognitive radicalization," while the second is a change in behavior which can lead to violence, known as "behavioral radicalization." The report outlines Tarrant's shift from cognitive to behavioral radicalization in a rather unexceptional way. Various factors including a broken home, unrestricted and unsupervised access to the Internet, the consumption of far-right literature, a lack of personal connections, a "loner" type personality, and behavioral worries. These resulted in two school in-

terventions from anti-racism officers due to anti-semitic remarks, and point to a nonconformist personality, along with the development of more extreme views.

However, as Borum and Schuurman and Taylor note, having extreme beliefs does not mean that an individual will engage in violence.⁴ Many people with similar personality types, beliefs, or traits to Tarrant's do not commit attacks. McCauley and Moskalenko state that "individuals with radical ideas are 100 times more common than individuals involved in radical action; targeting ideas rather than actions multiplies the enemy by a factor of a hundred."⁵

This points to what scholars of radicalization and terrorism have labeled the "specificity problem", which as Lorne Dawson notes, is "at the core of all analyses of the process of radicalization."⁶ The specificity problem is defined simply as follows:

"whenever we encounter an explanation of why some person or group has engaged in terrorism, we need to ask if the causal factors identified are sufficiently specific to explain why that person or group engaged in violence, since, more often than not, the factors apply equally well to a wider set of individuals who did not become violent."⁷

In other words, while the report places much emphasis on Tarrant's time online, his travel experiences, and his struggles in early childhood, none of these are "sufficiently specific" to be explanatory in themselves.

What also remains wanting in the report is a deeper examination of why some of the early interventions did not prove effective. We know from the report that Tarrant was racist, spewing hate speech, and engaging with hateful online content since his teenage years. It is also clear from the report that this did not go unchallenged or unnoticed. As the report states, "He was twice dealt with by one of his high school teachers, who was also the Anti-Racism Contact Officer, in respect of anti-Semitism."⁸ As the report acknowledges, some of this kind of racism and hate speech would not have raised the same kind of alarm bells as, by way of comparison, an individual spewing jihadist rhetoric. Even still, it would be important to know more about the kinds of interventions that were attempted with Tarrant, and whether there are any lessons that could be learned about why such early diversion strategies did not work.

¹ "Ko Tō Tātou Kāinga Tēnei, Report: Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Masjidain on 15 March 2019" (The Royal Commission, December 2, 2020), <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/>.

² *Rapport fra 22. juli-kommisjonen: Oppnevnt ved kongelig resolusjon 12. august 2011 for å gjennomgå og trekke lærdom fra angrepene på regjerskvartalet og Utøya 22. juli 2011: Avgitt til statsministeren 13. august 2012.* (Oslo: Departementenes Servicesenter, 2012), <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2012-14/id697260/>.

³ Marc Sageman, *Misunderstanding Terrorism* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Clark R. McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Friction: How Conflict Radicalizes Them and Us*, Revised and expanded edition (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁴ Randy Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (December 2011): 37–62, <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.2>; Bart Schuurman and Max Taylor, "Reconsidering Radicalization: Fanaticism and the Link Between Ideas and Violence" 12, no. 1 (2018): 20.

⁵ McCauley and Moskalenko, *Friction*, 274.

⁶ Lorne Dawson, "Clarifying the Explanatory Context for Developing Theories of Radicalization: Five Basic Considerations," *Journal for Deradicalization* 18 (2019): 149.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Ko Tō Tātou Kāinga Tēnei, 168.

Did the internet have a particularly important role in his radicalization process?

Despite attempts to conceal some of his online activities - including purging his Facebook profile in 2018, using Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), Tor browsers, encrypting emails, deleting emails, and removing a hard drive from his computer prior to the attack - Tarrant still left a significant digital footprint. His online activities prior to the attack serve to highlight the complex and nuanced role the internet can play in the process of radicalization. Indeed, while a growing body of anecdotal evidence suggests that the consumption of extremist materials online plays a decisive role in radicalization processes, some scholars remain skeptical of such a relationship.⁹ While a considerable body of scholarly work has recently emerged focused on analyzing extremist digital content,¹⁰ its producers,¹¹ and distribution mechanism,¹² Conway argues that “insufficient substantive empirically grounded social science research has been undertaken to date in order to allow us to convincingly answer” whether the internet is influential.¹³

While Tarrant’s manifesto suggests that the internet was responsible for the creation of his belief system, asserting that “you will not find the truth anywhere else,” the report provides us with a much more complete overview of his online activities prior to the attack. Throughout his childhood, Tarrant had nearly unrestricted and unsupervised access to the internet. The report described how he became interested in video games at the age of six or seven, with a particular affection for online multiplayer role-playing games and first-person shooters games.

The report establishes that he was by-large an avid consumer, rather than a creator/disseminator of hateful and harmful content. According to his mother, he claims to

have started frequenting the imageboard website 4chan - a notorious hotbed of white supremacist and conspiratorial content¹⁴ - at the age of 14, around the time he started expressing racist ideas.

The influence of 4chan’s subculture is apparent in Tarrant’s manifesto. Robert Evans shows how Tarrant’s manifesto employs “shitposting,” a tactic used to distract a general audience away from an intended meaning, while grabbing the attention of its targeted audience.¹⁵ Notable far-right memes are also used in this way, providing a sense of solidarity and unification among those familiar with the memes in the manifesto and the internet culture surrounding them.¹⁶ Consequently, the manifesto can be seen as a coded document aimed at far-right audiences.¹⁷ Although it provides some clues into Tarrant’s reasoning for the attack, it is mainly directed at individuals with similar, extreme, views.

While recognizing that Tarrant frequented imageboards such as 4chan and 8chan, and regularly posted Islamophobic rhetoric on far-right Facebook groups such as the Lads Society Season Two, United Patriots Front, and True Blue Crew, the report identifies YouTube specifically as a significant source of information and inspiration. The report also found that Tarrant had donated money to the YouTube channel of Stefan Molyneux, a Canadian white nationalist and conspiracy theorist, now banned from the platform for violating their hate speech policies.¹⁸

The notion that YouTube might serve as a digital ecosystem that can normalize or amplify extreme discourse - either due to corporate indifference or the nature of the platform itself - has gained considerable traction in recent years.¹⁹ In the aftermath of the Christchurch attacks, Caleb Cain - now a researcher at the Polarization and Extremism Research Innovation Lab at American University - came forward with a deeply personal tale of falling into a ‘alt-right rabbit hole’ on YouTube, in part due to charismatic YouTubers like Molyneux.²⁰

As it stands, the bulk of the discussion around the role

9 David C. Benson, “Why the Internet Is Not Increasing Terrorism,” *Security Studies* 23, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 293–328, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2014.905353>.

10 Mia Bloom and Chelsea Daymon, “Assessing the Future Threat: ISIS’ Virtual Caliphate,” *Orbis* 62, no. 3 (2018): 372–88; Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, “Paradigmatic Shifts in Jihadism in Cyberspace: The Emerging Role of Unaffiliated Sympathizers in Islamic State’s Social Media Strategy,” *Journal of Terrorism Research* 7, no. 1 (February 5, 2016): 36, <https://doi.org/10.15664/jtr.1183>.

11 Charlie Winter, “The Virtual ‘Caliphate’: Understanding Islamic State’s Propaganda Strategy” (Quilliam Foundation., 2015), www.quilliaminternational.com/shop/e-publications/the-virtual-caliphate-understanding-islamicstates-propaganda-strategy/.

12 Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, “A Typology of Islamic State’s Social Media Distribution Network,” in *Media and Mass Atrocity*, ed. Allan Thompson (Toronto: CIGI Press, 2019), 453–82.

13 Julia Conway, “Determining the Role of the Internet in Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Six Suggestions for Progressing Research,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1157408>.

14 Rob Arthur, “We Analyzed More Than 1 Million Comments on 4chan. Hate Speech There Has Spiked by 40% Since 2015.,” *Vice*, July 10, 2019, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/d3nbzy/we-analyzed-more-than-1-million-comments-on-4chan-hate-speech-there-has-spiked-by-40-since-2015>.

15 Robert Evans, “Shitposting, Inspirational Terrorism, and the Christchurch Mosque Massacre,” *Bellingcat* (blog), March 15, 2019, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/rest-of-world/2019/03/15/shitposting-inspirational-terrorism-and-the-christchurch-mosque-massacre/>.

16 Aja Romano, “How the Christchurch Shooter Used Memes to Spread Hate,” *Vox*, March 16, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/3/16/18266930/christchurch-shooter-manifesto-memes-subscribe-to-pewdiepie>.

17 J. M. Berger, “The Dangerous Spread of Extremist Manifestos,” *The Atlantic*, February 26, 2019, sec. Ideas, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/02/christopher-hasson-was-inspired-brevik-manifesto/583567/>.

18 Julia Alexander, “YouTube Bans Stefan Molyneux, David Duke, Richard Spencer, and More for Hate Speech,” *The Verge*, June 29, 2020, <https://www.theverge.com/2020/6/29/21307303/youtube-bans-molyneux-duke-richard-spencer-conduct-hate-speech>.

19 Zeynep Tufekci, “YouTube, the Great Radicalizer,” *The New York Times*, March 10, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/opinion/sunday/youtube-politics-radical.html>.

20 Kevin Roose, “The Making of a YouTube Radical,” *The New York Times*, June 8, 2019, sec. Technology, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/08/technology/youtube-radical.html>, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/08/technology/youtube-radical.html>.

of the platform as a potentially ‘radicalizing’ force points to two reasons: corporate indifference, namely the lack of proper moderation and transparency; and the nature of the platform, particularly its algorithm and recommendation stream.²¹ Having analyzed 72 million YouTube comments on 330,925 different videos, a recent study suggests that a “significant amount of commenting users systematically migrate from commenting exclusively on milder content to commenting on more extreme content.”²²

While the report acknowledges that YouTube has changed its hate speech policy after Christchurch, and banned Stefan Molyneux, David Duke, and Richard Spencer’s channels, amongst others, there is clearly still a lot of work to be done.²³ Notably, commentators have lamented the fact that music associated with extreme viewpoints, notable white supremacism²⁴ and violent dissident Irish republicanism,²⁵ remains widely available on the platform. A version of the Chetnik song praising Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader convicted of grave war crimes, can be heard in the background of Tarrant’s livestream during the massacre that was broadcasted on Facebook.²⁶ As Facebook noted after an internal investigation, “the video was viewed fewer than 200 times during the live broadcast” and “was viewed about 4,000 times in total before being removed from Facebook.”²⁷ Quite astonishingly, Facebook reported that in the first twenty-four hours, they “removed about 1.5 million videos of the attack globally” with more than 1.2 million of those blocked at upload.²⁸

What does the report say about how the attack was planned?

The report suggests that significant planning and resources were devoted to perpetrating the attack. In January 2017, while travelling in the Balkans, Tarrant emailed the rifle club in Dunedin, New Zealand, inquiring as to whether the club was still in operation and in-

dicating his intention to move to Dunedin in August that year. According to the report, this indicates that seven months prior to his arrival in New Zealand Tarrant “had a terrorist attack in mind.”²⁹ Furthermore, the report claims that upon his arrival in New Zealand on 17 August 2017, it was with “a fully-developed terrorist ideology based on his adoption of the Great Replacement theory and his associated beliefs that immigration, particularly by Muslim migrants, into Western countries is an existential threat to Western society and that the appropriate response (at least for him) was violence” and “from that time on, his primary focus in life was planning and preparing for his terrorist attack.”³⁰

The report goes on to detail the influence of the 22 July 2011 attacks in Oslo and Utoya, committed by Anders Behring Breivik, which left 69 people dead - 33 of whom were under 18. Several references to Breivik’s manifesto are present in Tarrant’s own manifesto. For example, Tarrant claims to have “taken true inspiration from Knight Justiciar [Breivik]” and to have received a “blessing” from him “after contacting his brother knights.”³¹ Despite Tarrant traveling to Poland to attend a ‘Knighting Ceremony’ organized by Knights Templar Order International - an organization which shares a name but no links with the fictional underground paramilitary group to which Breivik claimed he belonged³² - Tarrant later admitted, according to the report, that these references and the trip were nothing more than an elaborate “red herring.”³³ Nonetheless, several elements of the planning and execution of the attack show striking similarities with Breivik’s course of action.

On 1 September 2017, just fifteen days after arriving in New Zealand, Tarrant took the first steps in obtaining a firearms license. Similar to Breivik, joining a shooting club provided Tarrant with a necessary cover to acquire firearms without arousing suspicion.³⁴ The report notes that by December 2017, Tarrant “had acquired a number of semi-automatic rifles and large capacity magazines” as well as body armour, and had engrossed himself in tutorials on YouTube detailing how to modify his own firearms.³⁵

21 Becca Lewis, “All of YouTube, Not Just the Algorithm, Is a Far-Right Propaganda Machine,” *FFWD* (blog), January 8, 2020, <https://ffwd.medium.com/all-of-youtube-not-just-the-algorithm-is-a-far-right-propaganda-machine-29b07b12430>; Chris Stokel-Walker, “YouTube’s Deradicalization Argument Is Really a Fight About Transparency,” *FFWD* (blog), January 7, 2020, <https://ffwd.medium.com/youtubes-deradicalization-argument-is-really-a-fight-about-transparency-fe27af2f3963>.

22 Manoel Horta Ribeiro et al., “Auditing Radicalization Pathways on YouTube,” *ArXiv:1908.08313 [Cs]*, December 4, 2019, <http://arxiv.org/abs/1908.08313>.

23 Todd Spangler, “YouTube Bans White Supremacists David Duke, Richard Spencer and Stefan Molyneux for Hate Speech,” *Variety*, June 30, 2020, <https://variety.com/2020/digital/news/youtube-bans-stefan-molyneux-david-duke-richard-spencer-hate-speech-1234694079/>.

24 Lamoureux, Mack, “How A White Supremacist Recruitment Tool Thrives on YouTube,” *Vice*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/xw7gaa/how-white-power-music-continues-to-thrive-on-youtube-v25n1>.

25 Joshua Courter, “Cyber Activities of the Irish Republican Army,” *Small Wars Journal* (blog), November 15, 2020, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/cyber-activities-irish-republican-army>.

26 “Christchurch Shootings: Serb Song in Gunman’s Video Opens Old Wounds in the Balkans,” *The Straits Times*, March 18, 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/serb-song-in-gunmans-video-opens-old-wounds-in-the-balkans>.

27 Chris Sonderby, “Update on New Zealand,” *About Facebook* (blog), March 19, 2019, <https://about.fb.com/news/2019/03/update-on-new-zealand/>.

28 Ibid.

29 “Ko Tō Tātou Kāinga Tēnei, 167.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid, 197.

32 Daniel Wollenberg, “The New Knighthood: Terrorism and the Medieval,” *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (March 1, 2014): 21–33, <https://doi.org/10.1057/pmed.2014.1>.

33 “Ko Tō Tātou Kāinga Tēnei, 219.

34 Cato Hemmingby and Tore Bjørge, “Terrorist Target Selection: The Case of Anders Behring Breivik,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 6 (2018): 13.

35 “Ko Tō Tātou Kāinga Tēnei, 231.

In addition to obtaining weapons in a manner similar to Breivik, the report also illustrates several ways in which Tarrant appears to have followed a course of action similar, and potentially inspired by, Breivik. Like Breivik, Tarrant appears to have engaged in a strict exercise regimen and began using anabolic steroids and testosterone in preparation for the attack. While this might be a mere coincidence, it is worth noting that Breivik also detailed at length his physical exercise routine and his use of performance-enhancing substances.³⁶ Investigators also found a copy of Breivik's manifesto on one of Tarrant's memory cards.

In their book on the 22 July attacks, Hemmingby and Bjørgo lay out a target selection framework and note that Breivik's attack was influenced by four factors: ideology; strategy; external factors (gun control laws, local environment, and the timing of other events); and internal factors (manpower, funding, skills).³⁷ This framework helps us understand both why Tarrant chose to immigrate to New Zealand to commit his attack, and the timing of the attack.

According to the report, firearm regulations in New Zealand, particularly with regards to semi-automatic weapons, allowed Tarrant to purchase a number of weapons and large capacity magazines, which he could neither lawfully obtain in Australia or transport there. The report also states that Tarrant believed planning and carrying out the attack in New Zealand would have several strategic advantages. Namely, as an Australian, "he was able to fit in" and the lack of close social contacts and the physical distance from his family made it less likely that someone would "raise an alarm about the way he was living and how he was acting."³⁸ Lastly, like Breivik, the timing of Tarrant's attack was largely influenced by dwindling funds. Tarrant had originally planned to conduct his attack in mid-August 2019 to coincide with Eid al-Adha, the Muslim celebration commemorating Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ismail. However, the plan was revised as he started running out of money.

The report also lays out Tarrant's extensive planning as evidenced by documents retrieved on a memory card associated with his drone and a series of emails he sent to himself and later attempted to delete. One document lays out a 550-day budget from early February 2018 until August 2019 (the original date for the attack) with a \$380 (AUD) / per budget line for ammo, while another is

a detailed 'to do' list. The 'to do' list is particularly interesting as it gives us insight into how the plan evolved. By 18 July 2018, the authors of the report assess that "a plan was in place in general terms, but the reference to 'other mosques' suggests that he had not yet finalised the locations of his terrorist attacks."³⁹

Investigators discovered that in early January, Tarrant began conducting reconnaissance exercises in Christchurch. As part of these reconnaissance exercises Tarrant flew a small commercial drone over the Masjid an-Nur, "recording an aerial view of the masjid grounds and buildings" focusing on "entry and exit doors, as well as the alleyway where he parked" on the day of the attack.⁴⁰ Tarrant's use of a drone to conduct aerial reconnaissance gives credence to a growing body of anecdotal evidence that terrorists are increasingly beginning to adopt commercial drone technology.⁴¹

Finally, there is the important question of whether Tarrant was a lone actor terrorist. The authors of the report note that Tarrant was not recruited by anyone living in New Zealand or abroad, and did not recruit anyone to assist him in his attack. Ramon Spaaij defines a lone actor terrorist as individuals who "(a) operate individually, (b) do not belong to an organized group or network; and (c) whose *modi operandi* are conceived and directed by the individual without any direct outside command or hierarchy."⁴² As research has shown, lone actor terrorists are relatively rare, tend to be more difficult to detect and pre-empt, are often overwhelmingly male, and are more likely to have a mental illness when compared to group actors.⁴³

In a study analyzing 55 lone actor terrorists, Schuurman, Bakker, Gill, and Bouhana found that most lone actor terrorists were deficient in operational security, were not exceedingly lethal attackers, and they had a habit of leaking their plans in advance.⁴⁴ Thus, Tarrant provides an exception to these findings, highlighting the difficulty that some lone actors present to law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Conclusion

Aside from the detailed information about Tarrant and the planning and preparation of the Christchurch mosque attacks, the report reveals and takes respon-

36 Paul Gill, John Horgan, and Paige Deckert, "Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists." (International Center for the Study of Terrorism, Pennsylvania State University, 2012), https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OPSR_TP_ARC-Lone-Actor-Routine-Activity-Analysis-Report_Aug2012-508.pdf.

37 Cato Hemmingby and Tore Bjørgo, *The Dynamics of a Terrorist Targeting Process: Anders B. Breivik and the 22 July Attacks in Norway* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-57997-3>.

38 "Ko Tō Tātou Kāinga Tēnei, 231.

39 Ibid, 216.

40 Ibid, 220.

41 Emil Archambault and Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, "Drone Imagery in Islamic State Propaganda: Flying like a State," *International Affairs* 96, no. 4 (July 1, 2020): 955–73, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa014>.

42 Ramón Spaaij, "The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism: An Assessment," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 9 (August 16, 2010): 856, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2010.501426>.

43 Brent L Smith et al., "Patterns of Lone Actor Terrorism in the United States: Research Brief" (College Park, MD: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, October 2014), https://start.umd.edu/pubs/START_ATS_PatternsofLoneActorTerrorismUS_ResearchBrief.pdf; Gill, Horgan, and Deckert, "Bombing Alone."

44 Bart Schuurman et al., "Lone Actor Terrorist Attack Planning and Preparation: A Data-Driven Analysis.," *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 63, no. 4 (2018): 1191–1200.

sibility for some significant oversights. Firstly, the report admits that the firearm licensing system did not meet standards, with a lack of attention given to vetting how well Tarrant's referees actually knew him. The report suggests that there was "a lack of guidance and training for licensing staff and incomplete guidance for dealing with applications where nominated referees cannot be interviewed in person."⁴⁵

Secondly, the report found that there was "an inappropriate concentration of counter-terrorism resources on the threat of Islamist extremist terrorism."⁴⁶ The report points out that this was due to limited counter-terrorism resources, a "lack of capacity until mid-2018 both to deal with that threat," while New Zealand's counter-terrorism focus was not based on a "comparative risk analysis," or unanimous public sector agency agreement on terrorist threats outside of Islamic extremism.⁴⁷ With that being said, the report states that this oversight was not the reason why Tarrant's planning and preparation for the attack went undetected. Instead,

"given the operational security that the individual [Tarrant] maintained, the legislative authorising environment in which the counter-terrorism effort operates and the limited capability and capacity of the counter-terrorism agencies, there was no plausible way he could have been detected except by chance."⁴⁸

As one Muslim interviewed by the inquiry told them, "they were watching us, not watching our backs."⁴⁹

All in all, after over a year of research and interviews, the report is an exhaustive and much-needed look into all aspects of the attack: the broader culture for minorities in New Zealand; the radicalization process of Tarrant; the planning of the attack; as well as the fallout, and unrelenting trauma of the attack, for New Zealand's Muslim community. As widely acknowledged, the way in which New Zealand and its Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern dealt with the attack, and a grieving nation, has, as Masha Gessen wrote, "rewritten the script for how a nation grieves after a terrorist attack."⁵⁰ Ardern focused on the victims, made it clear to them that they were part of New Zealand, and refused to even speak the attacker's name. "He may have sought notoriety," she said, "but we in New Zealand will give him nothing."⁵¹

45 "Ko Tō Tātou Kāinga Tēnei, 19.

46 Ibid, 10.

47 Ibid, 14-15.

48 Ibid, 15.

49 Ibid, 140.

50 Masha Gessen, "Jacinda Ardern Has Rewritten the Script for How a Nation Grieves After a Terrorist Attack," *The New Yorker*, March 22, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/jacinda-ardern-has-rewritten-the-script-for-how-a-nation-grieves-after-a-terrorist-attack>.

51 Ibid.

Bibliography

Alexander, Julia. "YouTube Bans Stefan Molyneux, David Duke, Richard Spencer, and More for Hate Speech." *The Verge*, June 29, 2020. <https://www.theverge.com/2020/6/29/21307303/youtube-bans-molyneux-duke-richard-spencer-conduct-hate-speech>.

Archambault, Emil, and Yannick Veilleux-Lepage. "Drone Imagery in Islamic State Propaganda: Flying like a State." *International Affairs* 96, no. 4 (July 1, 2020): 955–73. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaaa014>.

Arthur, Rob. "We Analyzed More Than 1 Million Comments on 4chan. Hate Speech There Has Spiked by 40% Since 2015." *Vice*, July 10, 2019. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/d3nbzy/we-analyzed-more-than-1-million-comments-on-4chan-hate-speech-there-has-spiked-by-40-since-2015>.

Benson, David C. "Why the Internet Is Not Increasing Terrorism." *Security Studies* 23, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 293–328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2014.905353>.

Berger, J. M. "The Dangerous Spread of Extremist Manifestos." *The Atlantic*, February 26, 2019, sec. Ideas. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/02/christopher-hasson-was-inspired-breivik-manifesto/583567/>.

Bloom, Mia, and Chelsea Daymon. "Assessing the Future Threat: ISIS' Virtual Caliphate." *Orbis* 62, no. 3 (2018): 372–88.

Borum, Randy. "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (December 2011): 37–62. <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.2>.

"Christchurch Shootings: Serb Song in Gunman's Video Opens Old Wounds in the Balkans." *The Straits Times*, March 18, 2019. <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/serb-song-in-gunmans-video-opens-old-wounds-in-the-balkans>.

Conway, Maura. "Determining the Role of the Internet in Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Six Suggestions for Progressing Research." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 77–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1157408>.

Courter, Joshua. "Cyber Activities of the Irish Republican Army." *Small Wars Journal* (blog), November 15, 2020. <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/cyber-activities-irish-republican-army>.

Dawson, Lorne. "Clarifying the Explanatory Context for Developing Theories of Radicalization: Five Basic Considerations." *Journal for Deradicalization* 18 (2019): 146–84.

Evans, Robert. "Shitposting, Inspirational Terrorism, and

the Christchurch Mosque Massacre." *Bellingcat* (blog), March 15, 2019. <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/rest-of-world/2019/03/15/shitposting-inspirational-terrorism-and-the-christchurch-mosque-massacre/>.

Gessen, Masha. "Jacinda Ardern Has Rewritten the Script for How a Nation Grieves After a Terrorist Attack." *The New Yorker*, March 22, 2019. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/jacinda-ardern-has-rewritten-the-script-for-how-a-nation-grieves-after-a-terrorist-attack>.

Gill, Paul, John Horgan, and Paige Deckert. "Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists." *International Center for the Study of Terrorism*, Pennsylvania State University, 2012. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OPSR_TP_ARC-Lone-Actor-Routine-Activity-Analysis-Report_Aug2012-508.pdf.

Hemmingby, Cato, and Tore Bjørgo. "Terrorist Target Selection: The Case of Anders Behring Breivik." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 6 (2018): 13.

———. *The Dynamics of a Terrorist Targeting Process: Anders B. Breivik and the 22 July Attacks in Norway*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-57997-3>.

"Ko Tō Tātou Kāinga Tēnei, Report: Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Masjidain on 15 March 2019." *The Royal Commission*, December 2, 2020. <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/>.

Lamoureux, Mack. "How A White Supremacist Recruitment Tool Thrives on YouTube." *Vice*, April 9, 2018. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/xw7gaa/how-white-power-music-continues-to-thrive-on-youtube-v25n1>.

Lewis, Becca. "All of YouTube, Not Just the Algorithm, Is a Far-Right Propaganda Machine." *FFWD* (blog), January 8, 2020. <https://ffwd.medium.com/all-of-youtube-not-just-the-algorithm-is-a-far-right-propaganda-machine-29b07b12430>.

McCauley, Clark R., and Sophia Moskalenko. *Friction: How Conflict Radicalizes Them and Us*. Revised and Expanded edition. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Rapport fra 22. juli-kommisjonen: Oppnevnt ved kongelig resolusjon 12. august 2011 for å gjennomgå og trekke lærdom fra angrepene på regjeringskvartalet og Utøya 22. juli 2011 : Avgitt til statsministeren 13. august 2012. Oslo: Departementenes Servicesenter, 2012. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2012-14/id697260/>.

Ribeiro, Manoel Horta, Raphael Ottoni, Robert West, Virgílio A. F. Almeida, and Wagner Meira. "Auditing Radicalization Pathways on YouTube." *ArXiv:1908.08313 [Cs]*, December 4, 2019. <http://arxiv.org/abs/1908.08313>.

Romano, Aja. "How the Christchurch Shooter Used Memes to Spread Hate." *Vox*, March 16, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/3/16/18266930/christchurch-shooter-manifesto-memes-subscribe-to-pewdiepie>.

Roose, Kevin. "The Making of a YouTube Radical." *The New York Times*, June 8, 2019, sec. Technology. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/08/technology/youtube-radical.html>, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/08/technology/youtube-radical.html>.

Sageman, Marc. *Misunderstanding Terrorism*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

Schuurman, Bart, Edwin Bakker, Paul Gill, and Noémie Bouhana. "Lone Actor Terrorist Attack Planning and Preparation: A Data-Driven Analysis." *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 63, no. 4 (2018): 1191–1200.

Schuurman, Bart, and Max Taylor. "Reconsidering Radicalization: Fanaticism and the Link Between Ideas and Violence" 12, no. 1 (2018): 20.

Smith, Brent L, Robert Paxton, Jeff Gruenewald, and Brent Klein. "Patterns of Lone Actor Terrorism in the United States: Research Brief." College Park, MD: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, October 2014. https://start.umd.edu/pubs/START_ATS_PatternsofLoneActorTerrorismUS_ResearchBrief.pdf.

Sonderby, Chris. "Update on New Zealand." About Facebook (blog), March 19, 2019. <https://about.fb.com/news/2019/03/update-on-new-zealand/>.

Spaaij, Ramón. "The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism: An Assessment." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 9 (August 16, 2010): 854–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2010.501426>.

Spangler, Todd. "YouTube Bans White Supremacists David Duke, Richard Spencer and Stefan Molyneux for Hate Speech." *Variety*, June 30, 2020. <https://variety.com/2020/digital/news/youtube-bans-stefan-molyneux-david-duke-richard-spencer-hate-speech-1234694079/>.

Southern Poverty Law Center. "Stefan Molyneux." Accessed December 17, 2020. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/stefan-molyneux>.

Stokel-Walker, Chris. "YouTube's Deradicalization Argument Is Really a Fight About Transparency." *FFWD* (blog), January 7, 2020. <https://ffwd.medium.com/youtubes-deradicalization-argument-is-really-a-fight-about-transparency-fe27af2f3963>.

Tufekci, Zeynep. "YouTube, the Great Radicalizer." *The New York Times*, March 10, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/opinion/sunday/youtube-politics-radical.html>.

Veilleux-Lepage, Yannick. "A Typology of Islamic State's Social Media Distribution Network." In *Media and Mass*

Atrocity, edited by Allan Thompson, 453–82. Toronto: CIGI Press, 2019.

———. "Paradigmatic Shifts in Jihadism in Cyberspace: The Emerging Role of Unaffiliated Sympathizers in Islamic State's Social Media Strategy." *Journal of Terrorism Research* 7, no. 1 (February 5, 2016): 36. <https://doi.org/10.15664/jtr.1183>.

Winter, Charlie. "The Virtual 'Caliphate': Understanding Islamic State's Propaganda Strategy." *Quilliam Foundation*, 2015. www.quilliaminternational.com/shop/e-publications/the-virtual-caliphate-understanding-islamic-states-propaganda-strategy/.

Wollenberg, Daniel. "The New Knighthood: Terrorism and the Medieval." *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (March 1, 2014): 21–33. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pmed.2014.1>.

About the Authors

Yannick Veilleux-Lepage

Yannick Veilleux-Lepage is an Assistant Professor of Terrorism and Political violence at Leiden University in The Netherlands. He holds a doctorate in International Relations from the University of St Andrews in Scotland. Dr Veilleux-Lepage is also a Senior Fellow of the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, and a Senior Research Associate of the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society.

Chelsea Daymon

Chelsea Daymon is pursuing a PhD at American University and is a Graduate Research Fellow at the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL) in the Center of University Excellence at American University. She is also an Associate Fellow at the Global Network on Extremism & Technology and the Executive Producer of The Loopcast, a podcast on national security and information security.

Amarnath Amarasingam

Amarnath Amarasingam is an Assistant Professor in the School of Religion at Queen's University in Ontario, Canada. He is also a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, an Associate Fellow at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, and an Associate Fellow at the Global Network on Extremism and Technology. His research interests are in radicalization, terrorism, diaspora politics, post-war reconstruction, and the sociology of religion.

