



# Remembering Utøya, 10 Years Later: Enduring Lessons for Counter- Terrorism

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ICCT Policy Brief

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## Abstract

22 July 2021 marks the 10-year anniversary of Anders Behring Breivik's lone actor attack on Oslo. The intervening decade has seen a wave of far-right violence targeting Western cities, many inspired by the Norwegian terrorist. The anniversary accordingly offers an important opportunity to revisit counter-terrorism lessons learned, and to assess whether they have been sufficiently implemented in strategies preventing political violence. This Policy Brief finds that lessons learned from events transpiring before, during, and after the attack have been insufficiently considered, and that new counter-terrorism strategies targeting far-right violence should re-assess failures that permitted the attack and incorporate responses to those weaknesses.

**Keywords:** Terrorism, Far-Right, Neo-Nazism, White Supremacy, Oslo, Breivik

## Introduction

July 2021 marks the 10-year anniversary of the twin attacks on Oslo and Utøya, a rampage of violence that shocked the world and provided a devastating reminder that terrorism can also be home-grown. Designing his attacks as a “marketing operation,” the perpetrator, a 32-year-old white supremacist named Anders Behring Breivik, also released a 1,518-page manifesto, which laid out his motivations and preparation.<sup>1</sup> The target of his vitriol was the Norwegian liberal class. “The biggest threat to Europe is the cultural Marxist/multiculturalist political doctrine of ‘extreme egalitarian emotionalism,’” he wrote. “The Islamisation of Europe is merely a ‘secondary infection’. Western Europe has grown weak and decadent and will be completely annihilated culturally unless we succeed to implement a second European renaissance and reverse the damage done.”<sup>2</sup>

Breivik’s twin attacks remain the deadliest far-right terrorist attack in the Western world since the Oklahoma City Bombing, now over 25 years ago. To mark the anniversary, leading counter-terrorism journal *Perspectives on Terrorism* released an invaluable special issue, analysing themes from the enduring centrality of the so-called “lone wolf” in terrorism to Norwegian unity in the wake of the attack. Although comprehensive, the issue did not shed much light on lessons to be learned from the incident, particularly for counter-terrorism professionals and policymakers. So, ten years on, the question bears asking: what counter-terrorism lessons did we or can we learn from Breivik’s attacks, to better address contemporary far-right terrorism and prevent future attacks? And how can policymakers and law enforcement agencies use the anniversary to review best practices and assess their counter-terrorism strategies? Those questions are particularly pressing in the US context—the United States, suffering a crippling rise in far-right terrorism over the past half-decade, recently released a new National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, this Policy Brief aims to review the Breivik case in order to inform policymakers and practitioners on the enduring legacy of the attack, and to ensure that lessons learned from the deadly incident 10 years ago are not forgotten in counter-terrorism strategies moving forward.

The following analysis proceeds along three paths, each correlating to a different stage of Breivik’s life, attack, and impact. First, what can we learn from the build-up to Breivik’s attack (“before”)? Second, what can we learn from the events that transpired that July day (“during”)? And, finally, what can we learn from the aftermath (“after”)? While there are indeed countless lessons to learn, the six issues discussed below represent the most pressing—those that, while perhaps not ignored, continue to cause damage and facilitate further attacks. The article, accordingly, concludes that we have sadly not learned as much as we should have, and therefore that the lessons from Breivik’s attack should be included in ongoing, renewed efforts to fight far-right terrorism, particularly in the US context.

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1 Mattias Gardell, “Crusader Dreams: Oslo 22/7, Islamophobia, and the Quest for a Monocultural Europe,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26 (2014): 131.

2 Andrew Berwick, “2083: A European Declaration of Independence,” 2011. ‘Andrew Berwick’ is an English-language pseudonym for Anders Breivik.

3 National Security Council, *National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism* (Washington DC: The White House, June 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/National-Strategy-for-Countering-Domestic-Terrorism.pdf>.

## Before

To begin, the years preceding Breivik's attack and his radicalisation pathway may offer clues as to how to better deter future terrorism. Anders Behring Breivik was, in many ways, the archetypal 21<sup>st</sup> century terrorist. Radicalised mostly online, Breivik was largely unknown to authorities until he parked a Volkswagen van under the H block offices in Oslo's Regjeringskvartalet (Government Quarter) on 22 July 2011. Memories of his attack, therefore, evoke a painful, and still challenging, counter-terrorism question: how do we interdict terrorist violence when the terrorist is acting entirely on his or her own, and does not leave any clues to their radicalisation or signs of impending mobilisation? That said, among Breivik and his successors, a number of similarities suggest certain conditions and community associations might make one more susceptible to radicalisation and mobilisation. A closer study of these themes in context might illuminate better paths forward for counter-radicalisation and counter-extremism efforts.

Firstly, in the years leading up to his attack, Breivik spent excessive amounts of time online—"hibernating," in the words of one friend.<sup>4</sup> In the 10 years since the attack, social media companies have moved to the very front line of counter-terrorism.<sup>5</sup> But Breivik's acceleration towards militancy was additionally made in the gaming world—it was from there that he found the same online forums which have similarly inspired thousands of subsequent extremists. Hours spent on *World of Warcraft* gave way to hours spent on sites like *Stormfront*, *Gates of Vienna*, and *Jihad Watch*. It was on those sites that the extremist seed in Breivik's mind germinated.<sup>6</sup> "The websites had a strong sense of solidarity, of 'us,'" Åsne Seierstad, author of the defining book on Breivik's attack, writes. "It's us against the interlopers. Us as a group under threat. Us as the chosen people. Us against them. Us against your lot."<sup>7</sup>

The research on gaming and its nexus to extremism is still in its infancy.<sup>8</sup> But, it indicates that the path to violence comes less from the violence of the games, and more from the inability of its players to separate the real world from a virtual one. "The potential danger of such an alternative reality is that it can be so attractive to some that they decide to spend most of their time in it, and gradually lose their connections to the 'real' world and the people closest to them," Norwegian terrorism analyst Jacob Aasland Ravndal writes. "The latter are perhaps the only ones that could potentially prevent someone like Breivik, who already suffered from multiple personality disorders, from self-radicalising and gradually accepting mass violence as a legitimate means to an end."<sup>9</sup>

4 Åsne Seierstad, *One of Us: The Story of Anders Breivik and the Massacre in Norway* (New York: FSG, 2015), 153.

5 For more, see Peter R. Neumann, "Options and Strategies for Countering Online Radicalization in the United States," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36, no. 6 (2013): 431-459.

6 For more, including examples of Breivik's posts on online forums, see Jacob Aasland Ravndal, "Anders Behring Breivik's use of the Internet and social media," *Journal EXIT-Deutschland* 2 (2013), <https://journals.sfu.ca/jed/index.php/jex/article/view/28>.

7 Seierstad, *One of Us*, 155.

8 See, for example, Linda Schlegel, "Jumanji Extremism? How games and gamification could facilitate radicalization processes," *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 23 (Summer 2020), <https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/359>. For more on video gaming and violence, see "APA Resolution on Violent Video Games," *American Psychological Association*, February 2020, <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/resolution-violent-video-games.pdf>.

9 Jacob Aasland Ravndal, "The Online Life of a Modern Terrorist: Anders Behring Breivik's Use of the Internet," *VoxPol*, October 28, 2014, <https://www.voxpol.eu/the-online-life-of-a-modern-terrorist-anders-behring-breiviks-use-of-the-internet/>.

Secondly, and perhaps relatedly, Breivik struggled for employment, romance, and friendship, growing increasingly isolated, and outright misogynistic, during his adolescence and young adulthood.<sup>10</sup> Breivik's inability to fit in was identified early in life: "He does not take the initiative in making contact with other children," an evaluation completed when Breivik was three found. "He participates mechanically in activities without showing any pleasure or enthusiasm. Often looks sad."<sup>11</sup> Although that may not have provided any indication of future behaviour, it may have contributed to loneliness he later experienced through his adolescent years.<sup>12</sup> Some have even argued that Breivik's loneliness was the ultimate driving factor in his attack. "He wanted to be seen; that is what drove him, nothing else. Look at me. Look at me. Look at me."<sup>13</sup> This conclusion aligns with research on "significance quest" and its role in violent extremism: "the quest for significance once aroused directs individuals' attention to the collective ideology that tells them how significance can be gained."<sup>14</sup>

Mental health issues may also have contributed to his inability to develop relationships. In fact, Breivik's mental state was the subject of much media and public debate in the months after his attack and at his trial, and two teams of psychiatrists were assigned to assess the killer.<sup>15</sup> Although the contribution of mental health issues in violent extremism is often debated, it has played an important role in several recent attacks.<sup>16</sup> In a recent study, scholars Emily Corner and Paul Gill concluded a lone actor terrorist was 13.49 times more likely to possess a mental illness than an individual in a terrorist group—a finding that heightens the possibility that mental health issues may have contributed in Breivik's case.<sup>17</sup>

Thirdly, Breivik shunned sobriety, preferring instead to abuse drugs for several years, most notably anabolic steroids.<sup>18</sup> "I wonder if it is possible to acquire specialized 'aggressiveness' pills on the market," Breivik noted in his diary about three weeks before the attack. "It would probably

10 On Breivik's misogyny, see Fredrik Wilhelmsen, "The Wife Would Put on a Nice Suit, Hat, and Possibly Gloves": The Misogynistic Identity Politics of Anders Behring Breivik," *Fascism* 10 (2021): 108-133.

11 Seierstad, *One of Us*, 26.

12 See, for example, Merete Landsend, Gunnar Thorenfeld, Snorre Bryne, Linn Kongsli Lundervold, and Astrid Meland, "1995: Året da alt forandret seg," *Dagbladet*, July 28, 2011, <https://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/1995-aret-da-alt-forandret-seg/63567996>.

13 Karl Ove Knausgaard (translated by Kerri Pierce), "Inside the warped mind of Anders Breivik," *The Telegraph*, July 22, 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/22/anders-breivik-inside-the-warped-mind-of-a-mass-killer/>.

14 Arie W. Kruglanski, Michele J. Gelfand, Jocelyn J. Bélanger, Anna Sheveland, Malkanthi Hetiarachchi and Rohan Gunaratna, "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism," *Political Psychology* 35 (February 2014): 81.

15 Ingrid Melle, "The Breivik case and what psychiatrists can learn from it," *World Psychiatry* 12, no. 1 (2013): 16-21.

16 Not least a 2020 attack in Hanau, Germany, which prompted one terrorism researcher to say, "There's a serious question of whether the mental issues were so severe that we can no longer speak of an act of terrorism. It's not a frivolous question." Lori Hinnant and Frank Jordans, "Paranoia, racism: German killer drew on conspiracy tropes," *Associated Press*, February 20, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/22f46b2de06ebe04c59e0e9bff87850e>. For a recent addition to the literature, see Paul Gill, Caitlin Clemmow, Florian Hetzel, Bettina Rottweiler, Nadine Salman, Isabelle Van Der Vegt, Zoe Marchment, Sandy Schumann, Sanaz Zolghadriha, Norah Schulten, Helen Taylor, and Emily Corner, "Systematic Review of Mental Health Problems and Violent Extremism," *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 32, no. 1 (2021): 51-78.

17 Emily Corner and Paul Gill, "A False Dichotomy? Mental Illness and Lone-Actor Terrorism," *Law and Human Behavior* 39, no. 1 (2015): 23-34.

18 The link between drug use and terrorism is not new. Victor Asal, H. Brinton Milward, and Eric W. Schoon, "When Terrorists Go Bad: Analyzing Terrorist Organizations' Involvement in Drug Smuggling," *International Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (March 2015): 112-123, <https://academic.oup.com/isq/article-abstract/59/1/112/1799055>.



be extremely useful in select military operations, especially when combined with steroids and ECA [ephedrine, caffeine, and aspirin] stack...! It would turn you into a superhuman one-man-army for 2 hours!”<sup>19</sup> Perhaps relatedly, Breivik struggled to stay out of legal trouble—he had been arrested three times by the age of 15, causing his father to disown him, compounding his anger and alienation.<sup>20</sup> Again, Breivik’s story of substance abuse is repeated elsewhere: Dylann Roof, the 2015 Charleston shooter, was also a regular drug user.<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, much of Breivik’s path may have contributed to what scholar Daniel Koehler has called the “trauma psychological” aspect of violent radicalisation.<sup>22</sup> According to a US Army veteran and former senior KKK leader, extremists recruit along three vulnerabilities: past trauma, mental health issues, and substance abuse.<sup>23</sup> Anders Behring Breivik may have hit all three. And, notably, Breivik’s possible “risk factors” are corroborated by data provided by the FBI.<sup>24</sup> In a study of 52 lone offender terrorists in the United States between 1972 and 2015, the Bureau found that the average terrorist, like Breivik, was male, in his thirties, single, and unemployed. In addition, 38 percent were diagnosed with at least one psychiatric disorder before or after the attack, at least 50 percent were or had been drug users, at least 70 percent had arrest records, and 96 percent produced some kind of written or recorded material to be viewed by others. Of the attackers since 1999, 60 percent had viewed online radical material. In other words, judging by the FBI’s data, Anders Breivik was a quite unremarkable terrorist. Additionally, a team of psychiatrists later found Breivik positive for six of eight warning behaviours that might indicate a risk for violence.<sup>25</sup> The prevalence of warning signs, though missed in Breivik’s case, should provide hope and optimism that other similar terrorists could be disrupted.

This brief study of Breivik’s path to violence and of the factors that contributed to his mobilisation, then, points to three recommendations. Firstly, better policing of online social media content is clearly an essential first step in combatting 21<sup>st</sup> century terrorism. Breivik was one of the earlier examples of social media radicalisation, a counter-terrorism vulnerability later again exploited by the Islamic State and the more recent wave of far-right attackers. Although the pushback on QAnon and other extremist elements in the wake of the 6 January siege in Washington D.C. was an important first step, radicals still freely mingle on sites and apps including Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, Reddit, and the “Chan” world, and are often openly plotting violence.<sup>26</sup> The obvious urgency in more aggressively working to combat extremist radicalisation and recruitment on social media likely contributed to the US government’s belated decision to join the Christchurch

<sup>19</sup> Berwick, 2083.

<sup>20</sup> Seierstad, *One of Us*, 69.

<sup>21</sup> Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, “A Most American Terrorist: The Making of Dylann Roof,” *GQ*, August 21, 2017, <https://www.gq.com/story/dylann-roof-making-of-an-american-terrorist/>

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Koehler, “Violent extremism, mental health and substance abuse among adolescents: towards a trauma psychological perspective on violent radicalization and deradicalization,” *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology* (2020): 3.

<sup>23</sup> Chris Buckley, Myrieme Churchill, and Jacob Ware, “Fighting demons, healing hatred, restoring hope: How to defeat extremism in the US military,” *Military Times*, November 28, 2020, <https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2020/11/28/fighting-demons-healing-hatred-restoring-hope-how-to-defeat-extremism-in-the-us-military/>.

<sup>24</sup> National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, “Lone Offender: A Study of Lone Offender Terrorism in the United States (1972-2015),” *Federal Bureau of Investigation Behavioral Analysis Unit*, November 2019, <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/lone-offender-terrorism-report-111319.pdf/view/>.

<sup>25</sup> J. Reid Meloy, Elmar Habermeyer, and Angela Guldemann, “The warning behaviors of Anders Breivik,” *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management* 2, no. 3-4 (Sep-Dec 2015): 164.

<sup>26</sup> For more, see Brad Honigberg, “Why Deplatforming Just Isn’t Enough,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, February 11, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/blogs/technology-policy-blog/why-deplatforming-just-isnt-enough>.

Call,<sup>27</sup> as well as the new National Strategy’s promise to address “domestic terrorism–related online recruitment and mobilisation to terrorism while respecting foundational constitutional protections for free speech and association.”<sup>28</sup>

Secondly, counter-radicalisation and countering violent extremism (CVE) programming should be expanded and more precisely targeted. Of course, this is not to encourage the profiling of certain groups—gamers with few friends in the real world, for instance, or drug addicts with criminal records. As Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf find, “Obviously, there is no single profile for a lone wolf.”<sup>29</sup> But the life stories of previous terrorists that repeat themselves with depressing regularity might offer clues, particularly for those engaged in CVE work. Those gamers with few relationships in the real world or drug addicts with criminal records are not automatically extremists, but they may well be more vulnerable to extremist blandishment. Training therapists, community workers, and medical professionals to familiarise themselves with such so-called risk factors might mean that new CVE programming could be more tailored to particular vulnerabilities—in Breivik’s case, loneliness, substance abuse, and trauma from a broken relationship with his father.<sup>30</sup>

Scaled-up CVE can play an important role in protecting vulnerable individuals from radicalisation and possible mobilisation to violence, and again, fortunately, the US government has begun to appreciate the importance of domestic counter-radicalisation programming. “While those who break the law in furtherance of domestic terrorism must face investigation and prosecution for their crimes, it is equally important that the Federal Government engage in efforts to prevent individuals from being drawn into the grip of domestic terrorism in the first instance,” the new National Strategy declares.<sup>31</sup> The initiative mimics steps taken after major attacks in Norway, New Zealand, and Germany, although sustained energy, focus, and resourcing will now be essential.<sup>32</sup>

Such policy programming will be complicated by committed terrorists’ own efforts to hide their mobilisation to violence. Breivik, in his manifesto, provided counsel on how to avoid detection: “Appear politically correct or at least moderate, dress normally. Try to limit your rhetorical activities. Avoid excessive forum posting. Excessive forum activity might get you ‘flagged’ by your national government.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, an additional, third factor becomes essential: in cases where CVE cannot reach, or where it reaches and fails to convince, family and friends must be better educated on how to speak out. In their assessment of 119 lone actor terrorists, three scholars found that “In 82.4% of the cases, other people were aware of the individual’s grievance that spurred the terrorist plot, and in [...] 63.9% of the cases, family and friends were aware of the individual’s intent to engage in terrorism-related activities because the offender verbally told them.”<sup>34</sup> In Breivik’s case, for instance, friends were aware of his radicalising views.<sup>35</sup> The FBI

27 Christchurch Call, “Home,” accessed June 30, 2021, <https://www.christchurchcall.com/>.

28 National Security Council, *National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism*, 22.

29 Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf, “Preventing Lone Wolf Terrorism: some CT Approaches Addressed,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 5-6 (December 2011): 44.

30 For example, see the work of Parents for Peace, a non-government organisation taking a “public health” approach to counter-terrorism. Parents for Peace, “About us,” accessed April 5, 2021, <https://www.parents4peace.org/about/>.

31 National Security Council, *National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism*, 19.

32 Cynthia Miller-Idriss, “Extremism Has Spread Into the Mainstream,” *Atlantic*, June 15, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/06/us-fighting-extremism-all-wrong/619203/>.

33 Berwick, 2083. See also Michael Schwartz and Matthew Saltmarsh, “Oslo Suspect Cultivated Parallel Life to Disguise ‘Martyrdom Operation,’” *New York Times*, July 24, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/25/world/europe/25breivik.html>.

34 Paul Gill, John Horgan, and Paige Deckert, “Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists,” *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 59, no. 2 (2014): 425-435.

35 See, for example, Seierstad, *One of Us*, 154.

data is also instructive. In every one of the aforementioned 52 cases, “concern was expressed” over the offender’s behaviour. However, the data also suggests that in at least 33 percent of cases, “bystanders expressed concern to one or more community authority figures at some point during the offender’s life,” suggesting that responders, whether in law enforcement or medical professionals or religious leaders, must take such warnings more seriously.<sup>36</sup>

Although it may be unfair and unrealistic to expect friends and family to warn community authorities about their loved ones (in the US, “If You See Something, Say Something”), events transpiring in the wake of the 6 January siege on the US Capitol might provide hope and optimism. In the weeks and months after the incident, friends and family of perpetrators have played a critical role in responding to the FBI’s pleas for help in identifying suspects.<sup>37</sup> Generally, the US has been particularly slow on this issue, and friends and family have frequently expressed frustration about the lack of options for seeking help for extremist loved ones.<sup>38</sup> Another example, the UK’s Prevent programme, though controversial, has provided an effective venue for reporting on possibly radicalising far-right extremists, and might have contributed to the relatively low number of far-right terrorist incidents in the country.<sup>39</sup>

Better moderation online, CVE programming, and more greased channels for reporting mobilising friends and family came too late to avoid Breivik’s attack, but might help prevent the next would-be white supremacist mass murderer, particularly in the US, where a response against far-right violence has been slower. That said, those defences may fail for others too. Accordingly, countermeasures need to be in place during and after an attack as well.

## During

Perhaps the most tragic aspect of Breivik’s assault on Norway lies in the helplessness of the children who were murdered on Utøya island. Breivik had chillingly calculated that the bombing of Oslo’s government quarter would distract police officers, allowing him to sneak away towards his true target: the summer camp of the Workers’ Youth League, the youth wing of Norway’s Labour Party. In fact, Breivik smuggled himself onto the island by wearing a police uniform. “Routine check because of the bomb in the government quarter,” he had said. “Officers are being posted

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36 National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, “Lone Offender: A Study of Lone Offender Terrorism in the United States (1972-2015),” *Federal Bureau of Investigation Behavioral Analysis Unit*, November 2019, <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/lone-offender-terrorism-report-111319.pdf/view>.

37 Hannah Knowles and Paulina Villegas, “Pushed to the edge by the Capitol riot, people are reporting their family and friends to the FBI,” *Washington Post*, January 16, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/01/16/capitol-riot-family-fbi/>. Earlier in American history, the Unabomber was only caught after his brother had reported him. David Johnston, “On the Suspect’s Trail: The Investigation; Long and Twisting Trail Led To Unabom Suspect’s Arrest,” *New York Times*, April 5, 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/04/05/us/suspect-s-trail-investigation-long-twisting-trail-led-unabom-suspect-s-arrest.html>. In another recent case study, a plot to attack a data centre in Virginia was thwarted by citizen reporting. “Texas Man Charged With Intent to Attack Data Centers,” *Department of Justice, US Attorney’s Office, Northern District of Texas*, April 9, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndtx/pr/texas-man-charged-intent-attack-data-centers>.

38 Zolan Kanno-Youngs and Nicole Hong, “Biden Steps Up Federal Efforts to Combat Domestic Extremism,” *New York Times*, April 4, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/04/us/politics/domestic-terrorism-biden.html>.

39 Jamie Grierson and Dan Sabbagh, “Largest number of Prevent referrals related to far-right extremism,” *Guardian*, November 26, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/nov/26/just-one-in-10-prevent-referrals-found-at-risk-of-radicalisation>.

at various locations. To make sure nothing more happens.”<sup>40</sup> From there, Anders Behring Breivik was left alone on Utøya island for over an hour.

Breivik’s operational art raises another crucial counter-terrorism lesson: be prepared for a follow-on attack(s). A number of far-right terrorist successors have copied Breivik’s successful twin-attack model. Most notably, in March 2019, an Australian white supremacist attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. Other so-called “rampage” attacks include mass shootings in Germany, California, and Atlanta.<sup>41</sup> These incidents are not unique to the far-right; such multipronged yet lone-actor attacks have also been oft-deployed by Islamic State adherents, most recently in Vienna in November 2020.

Despite the difficulties in stopping an ongoing attack, law enforcement agencies appear to have absorbed that particular lesson from Oslo: in 2013, for instance, an FBI report noted “the value in quickly assessing the circumstances where the first shooting occurs [which] may aid law enforcement’s ability to predict other potential targets.”<sup>42</sup> In London, police train for incidents such as the roving – siege-style attacks that occurred in Mumbai in 2008 and Paris in 2015, preparation which has allowed them to respond quickly to recent attacks in the city.<sup>43</sup> Britain’s Operation Temperer, which deploys the military to guard key sites in order to free up police officers for other duties, also helps the country respond quickly to attackers possibly pursuing multiple targets.<sup>44</sup>

But the broader counter-terrorism community can do more to interdict such rampage attacks. Far-right attacks in Christchurch, Hanau, and Atlanta all involved secondary and tertiary assaults targeted at related (and in some cases almost-identical) locations, where victims had not prepared defences—they may not even have been warned. In Christchurch, 12 minutes passed between the first bullets fired at two mosques; the Christchurch Commission report noted that the second location’s “worshippers had not been alerted to the terrorist attack at Masjid an-Nur.”<sup>45</sup> Local municipalities, in collaboration with counter-terrorism professionals, should consider developing early warning measures: if one mosque, government building, or other political or religious site has been targeted, warnings should immediately be sent to others nearby, to allow possible further targets to erect stronger defences.<sup>46</sup> This is especially important when the perpetrator is

40 Seierstad, *One of Us*, 297.

41 See Jenny Hill, “Halle shooting: Trial begins for Germany synagogue attack suspect,” *BBC*, July 21, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53471496>; “Germany shooting: ‘Far-right extremist’ carried out shisha bars attacks,” *BBC*, February 20, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51567971>; Neil MacFarquhar and Thomas Gibbons-Neff, “Air Force Sergeant With Ties to Extremist Group Charged in Federal Officer’s Death,” *New York Times*, June 16, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/16/us/steven-carrillo-air-force-boogaloo.html>; Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, “Atlanta Spa Shootings Were Hate Crimes, Prosecutor Says,” *New York Times*, May 11, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/11/us/atlanta-spa-shootings-hate-crimes.html>.

42 “Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013,” *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, September 16, 2013, <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-study-2000-2013-1.pdf/view>.

43 Steve Hewitt, “Eight minutes on London Bridge: years of training led to lightning police response,” *Conversation*, June 4, 2017, <https://theconversation.com/eight-minutes-on-london-bridge-years-of-training-led-to-lightning-police-response-78815>.

44 Gordon Rayner, “What is Operation Temperer: Theresa May becomes first PM to deploy up to 5,000 soldiers on streets,” *Telegraph*, May 24, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/23/operation-temperer-theresa-may-becomes-first-pm-deploy-5000/>.

45 “Ko tō tātou kāinga tēnei: Report: Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019,” accessed April 5, 2021, <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/>.

46 For more, see Bruce Hoffman and Jacob Ware, “The Public Should Be Warned When a Rampage Is Underway,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 24, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/article/public-should-be>

known or thought to have departed the scene—as occurred in Oslo.

Beyond preparing stronger defences against rampage attacks, counter-terrorism analysts and law enforcement officers can also improve their preparedness against lone actor terrorism—which, of course, makes counter-terrorism far more difficult, given that perpetrators frequently do not leave a trace of their mobilisation. Despite common assumption, Breivik’s long-term impact on the tactical choices made by far-right terrorists has been limited: “The majority of Breivik’s ‘influence’ appears to be indirect and ideational,” Graham Macklin and Tore Bjørgo write. “There is little evidence that Breivik has exerted a direct tactical influence on extreme right terrorism.”<sup>47</sup> However, this may actually complicate counter-terrorism further, as there is no template for law enforcement to consider when addressing an ongoing attack. Relatedly, terrorism scholar Magnus Ranstorp provides a perhaps even more challenging recommendation: “to expect the unexpected and not ignore the morphing of different types of extremism.”<sup>48</sup> In recent years, the rise of ideological convergence has led to increasingly personal and idiosyncratic terrorist motivations, and in turn, increasingly diverse terrorist targeting.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps no movement captures the trend as clearly as QAnon—individuals inspired by QAnon or its predecessors have attacked sites including pizza parlors, dams, the mafia, and Democratic politicians.<sup>50</sup> Intelligence and law enforcement professionals need to think creatively and outside the box—a “corkscrew mind,” in the words of one World War II-era British intelligence officer—in order to prevent future lone actor attacks.<sup>51</sup> This is made all the more challenging by an ongoing restriction of counter-terrorism resources, as the Western world shifts towards a renewed great power competition posture.

Better intelligence and law enforcement measures might interdict or mitigate attacks when they are ongoing. For those who still succeed, like Breivik, we must prepare better post-attack mitigation measures.

## After

Are there also lessons to be learned from the aftermath of the attack? In the decade since, Breivik’s act has inspired a number of further mass murders, both politically motivated and not.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps the most direct linkage concerns another 22 July attacker—David Sonboly, who killed nine people in Munich in 2016. Sonboly had used Breivik’s picture on a social media account, and likely selected the date as an homage to the Norwegian.<sup>53</sup> Breivik’s enduring impact suggests

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warned-when-rampage-underway.

47 Graham Macklin and Tore Bjørgo, “Breivik’s Long Shadow? The Impact of the July 22, 2011 Attacks on the Modus Operandi of Extreme-right Lone Actor Terrorists,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 15, no. 3 (June 2021): 15.

48 Magnus Ranstorp, “‘Lone Wolf Terrorism.’ The Case of Anders Breivik,” *Sicherheit und Frieden (S+F) / Security and Peace*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2013): 92.

49 For more, see Bruce Hoffman and Jacob Ware, “The Challenges of Effective Counterterrorism Intelligence in the 2020s,” *Lawfare*, June 21, 2020, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/challenges-effective-counterterrorism-intelligence-2020s>.

50 Amarnath Amarasingam and Marc-André Argentino, “The QAnon Conspiracy Theory: A Security Threat in the Making?” *CTC Sentinel* 13, no. 7 (July 2020), <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-qanon-conspiracy-theory-a-security-threat-in-the-making/>.

51 Ben Macintyre, *Operation Mincemeat: How a Dead Man and a Bizarre Plan Fooled the Nazis and Assured an Allied Victory* (New York: Broadway Books, 2011), 12.

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

53 Macklin and Bjørgo, “Breivik’s Long Shadow?” 26.

the broader counter-extremism and counter-terrorism community has not sufficiently stunted his relevance.

Firstly, an urgent academic and political conversation must be held on the merits of suppressing extremist manifestos, with the unchecked spread of manifestos documented to have contributed to new attacks.<sup>54</sup> Breivik's deadliest successor, Christchurch gunman Brenton Tarrant, wrote in his manifesto that "I have read the writings of Dylan Roof and many others, but only really took true inspiration from Knight Justiciar Breivik."<sup>55</sup> Another far-right extremist, a US Coast Guardsman who aimed "to murder innocent civilians on a scale rarely seen in this country" but was fortunately caught in 2019, had also read and been inspired by Breivik's manifesto.<sup>56</sup>

Terrorist manifestos not only act as an ideological testimony, but as a call-to-arms. "As a Justiciar Knight you are operating as a jury, judge and executioner on behalf of all free Europeans," Breivik wrote, imploring his readers. "Never forget that it is not only your right to act against the tyranny of the cultural Marxist/multiculturalist elites of Europe, it is your duty to do so."<sup>57</sup> One cannot neatly separate Breivik, although certainly a lone actor, from the broader network from which he emerged.<sup>58</sup> When his manifesto spreads unchecked, Breivik's words become the latest addition to that extremist network's literature, contributing to more violence.

Some governments have taken active steps to suppress manifestos. Germany, for instance, quickly suppressed manifestos linked to attacks in Munich, Halle, and Hanau. Even among experts in far-right terrorism, the highly-deadly Munich shooting seems rarely discussed, its impact likely blunted by the German government's rapid and aggressive suppression of the attacker's manifesto. Meanwhile, New Zealand criminalised possession of the Christchurch gunman's manifesto.<sup>59</sup> Such a government measure is unlikely to be palatable in the US, where First Amendment rights protect freedom of speech, but social media companies and conventional media can do more to avoid broadcasting extremist rhetoric and allowing it to indoctrinate new followers. The *Washington Post*, as of July 2021, still hosts a version of Breivik's manifesto on its website.

Finally, and more positively, there are lessons to learn from Norway's reaction to the crisis, in how the country united around a common enemy. "One area where the Norwegians already know that the government performed with resilience was societal unity in the face of severe crisis. Prime Minister Stoltenberg's political leadership and communication managed to crucially unite rather than divide people and provided a focal point for remembrance, unity and direction,"

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54 For more, see Jacob Ware, "Testament to Murder: The Violent Far-Right's Increasing Use of Terrorist Manifestos," *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague*, March 2020, <https://icct.nl/publication/testament-to-murder-the-violent-far-rights-increasing-use-of-terrorist-manifestos/>.

55 Brenton Tarrant, "The Great Replacement: Towards a New Society," March 2019.

56 Lynh Bui, "'I am dreaming of a way to kill almost every last person on earth': A self-proclaimed white nationalist planned a mass terrorist attack, the government says," *Washington Post*, February 20, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/self-proclaimed-white-nationalist-planned-mass-terror-attack-government-says-i-am-dreaming-of-a-way-to-kill-almost-every-last-person-on-earth/2019/02/20/61daf6b8-3544-11e9-af5b-b51b7ff322e9\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/self-proclaimed-white-nationalist-planned-mass-terror-attack-government-says-i-am-dreaming-of-a-way-to-kill-almost-every-last-person-on-earth/2019/02/20/61daf6b8-3544-11e9-af5b-b51b7ff322e9_story.html).

57 Berwick, 2083.

58 Lars Erik Berntzen and Sveinung Sandberg, "The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism: Anders Behring Breivik and the Anti-Islamic Social Movement," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 5 (2014): 772. See also Sveinung Sandberg, "Terrorism as Cultural Bricolage: The Case of Anders Behring Breivik," in Daniel Ziegler, Marco Gerster, and Steffen Krämer (eds), *Framing Excessive Violence: Discourse and Dynamics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 177-196.

59 Nick Perry, "New Zealand debates free speech after ban of accused mosque shooter's manifesto," *USA Today*, March 24, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2019/03/24/new-zealand-mosque-shootings-free-speech-debate-manifesto-ban/3264886002/>.

one analyst wrote years later. “It also provided the antidote against a polarization of society.”<sup>60</sup> On CNN, one Workers’ Youth League activist defiantly declared, “If one man can create that much hate, you can only imagine how much love we as a togetherness can create.”<sup>61</sup> Norway’s united response helped not only limit follow-on attacks—with the exception of an August 2019 shooting at a mosque in Bærum—but also ensured that the political message shared by the killer was muted: “the national public rallied around the resolution that Breivik’s brutality would not undermine the nation’s commitment to its defining ideals,” E. Johanna Hartelius and Kaitlyn E. Haynal recall.<sup>62</sup>

Norway’s rejection of Breivik’s ideas and ideology was particularly pronounced during the killer’s trial. Breivik had initially intended to use the trial as “a stage to the world”<sup>63</sup>—he pled not guilty on account of self-defence, and claimed to “not recognize the Norwegian courts.”<sup>64</sup> Instead, Breivik spent his trial defending himself against claims of insanity, and saw his more political statements cut from broadcasts.<sup>65</sup> His inability to garner any influence from the courtroom and his jail cell curtailed his impact—and may have directly contributed to Brenton Tarrant’s surprising decision to plead guilty to his crimes in New Zealand.<sup>66</sup> The rejection of Breivik’s ideas has not necessarily been repeated elsewhere, however; like other far-right terrorists, he is frequently lauded as a martyr for the movement, his profile rising further after Tarrant’s killings.<sup>67</sup>

Political unity has been far harder to come by in the US, where leaders and conservative media have repeatedly refused to acknowledge rising rates of far-right terrorism. After a protestor was murdered by a neo-Nazi at Charlottesville in August 2017, then-President Trump famously wavered on condemning the extremist networks responsible, declaring there had been “very fine people on both sides.”<sup>68</sup> Regardless of President Trump’s intentions, those words were taken as a green light by far-right extremists and may have contributed to the tragedies in Pittsburgh, Poway, El Paso, and elsewhere.<sup>69</sup> Trump, more recently, has refused to condemn rioters who stormed the US Capitol on 6 January, at times even blaming far-left infiltrators. “Right from the start, it was zero threat,” Trump said on Fox News, about an attack on the country’s seat of government in which one police officer was killed and 140 others wounded. “Look, they went in — they shouldn’t have done it — some of them went in, and they’re hugging and kissing the police and the guards, you know? They had great relationships. A lot of the people were waved

60 Ranstorp, “Lone Wolf Terrorism,” 92.

61 Jens Stoltenberg, “Address by Prime Minister in Oslo Cathedral,” Speech, Oslo, July 24, 2011, Office of the Prime Minister, [https://web.archive.org/web/20120211093533/http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/smk/Whats-new/Speeches-and-articles/statsministeren/statsminister\\_jens\\_stoltenberg/2011/address-by-prime-minister-in-oslo-cathed.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20120211093533/http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/smk/Whats-new/Speeches-and-articles/statsministeren/statsminister_jens_stoltenberg/2011/address-by-prime-minister-in-oslo-cathed.html).

62 E. Johanna Hartelius and Kaitlyn E. Haynal, “The Politics of a Memory Wound: Norwegian Exceptionalism and the Trauma of July 22, 2011,” *American Behavioral Scientist* (April 2021): 12, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00027642211003131>.

63 Macklin and Bjørgo, “Breivik’s Long Shadow?” 21.

64 Mark Lewis and Alan Cowell, “Norwegian Man Claims Self-Defense in Killings,” *New York Times*, April 16, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/17/world/europe/trial-of-anders-behring-breivik-opens-in-norway.html>.

65 Macklin and Bjørgo, “Breivik’s Long Shadow?” 21.

66 “Christchurch shootings: Brenton Tarrant pleads guilty to 51 murders,” *BBC*, March 26, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52044013>.

67 Ari Ben Am and Gabriel Weimann, “Fabricated Martyrs: The Warrior-Saint Icons of Far-Right Terrorism,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14, no. 5 (October 2020): 130-147.

68 Jordyn Phelps, “Trump defends 2017 ‘very fine people’ comments, calls Robert E. Lee ‘a great general,’” *ABC News*, April 26, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-defends-2017-fine-people-comments-calls-robert/story?id=62653478>.

69 For more, see Daniel Byman, “Trump’s Rhetoric Is Raising the Risk of Right-Wing Terrorism,” *Slate*, January 21, 2019, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/01/right-wing-terrorism-trump-rhetoric.html>.

in, and then they walked in, and they walked out.”<sup>70</sup> In the days that followed, two more police officers committed suicide. Trump has also repeatedly denigrated the integrity of American law enforcement and intelligence agencies, “[creating] an atmosphere hostile to cooperation after an attack.”<sup>71</sup>

The main benefit of more unity in the wake of violence is that it will alienate and shrink the extreme, violent fringes of our societies. We now live in an age where political opponents and minority groups are regularly targeted with vitriolic rhetoric that sometimes borders on inciteful, something scholar Raffaello Pantucci had already flagged as worrisome in the months after Breivik’s attack: “Ideas and words have great power and in a world where we can see the ease with which terrorist operations can be launched by individuals without much outside direction, consideration must be paid to the fact that such extreme ideas might resonate in different ways than they are intended.”<sup>72</sup> Norway’s reaction to the attack has helped ensure follow-on attacks have remained limited—although the largely failed attack at Bærum in August 2019 provided a painful reminder of the simmering extremist underground.<sup>73</sup> Other countries, not least the US, would do well to learn lessons from Norway should their homeland ever come under further attack from within.<sup>74</sup>

Promoting unity might also involve counter-terrorism analysts and law enforcement officials exploring ways to split, or fracture, the cohesiveness of the extremist movement. “The white supremacist movement is also highly divided, and members disagree as to who their primary enemies are and how they should attack them,” leading terrorism and extremism analysts Daniel Byman and Mark Pitcavage write, flagging the lack of cohesiveness as a weakness that might be exploited. “In addition, they enjoy little public support, and their violence usually backfires, making the movement less popular.”<sup>75</sup> Whilst major incidents are met by celebration among some factions of the movement (Breivik and Tarrant have both been unofficially “sainted” within the movement<sup>76</sup>), they are also typically met with rebuke, as activists realise the greater scrutiny and public stigmatisation that inevitably follows acts of terrorism.

What counter-terrorism has often failed to sufficiently note is that Breivik’s reputation in the movement is not untarnished.<sup>77</sup> Let us not forget: the primary target of Breivik’s attack was ethnic Norwegians. Moreover, Breivik deliberately targeted children, executing many at close range. His targeting choices—and the sheer barbarity of his attack—have not evaded criticism within

70 Colby Itkowitz, “Trump falsely claims Jan. 6 rioters were ‘hugging and kissing’ police,” *Washington Post*, March 26, 2021, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-riot-capitol-police/2021/03/26/0ba7e844-8e40-11eb-9423-04079921c915\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-riot-capitol-police/2021/03/26/0ba7e844-8e40-11eb-9423-04079921c915_story.html).

71 Byman, “Trump’s Rhetoric Is Raising the Risk of Right-Wing Terrorism.”

72 Raffaello Pantucci, “What Have We Learned about Lone Wolves from Anders Behring Breivik?” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no 5/6 (December 2011): 40.

73 Henrik Pryser Libell and Megan Specia, “Norway Mosque Attacker Gets 21-Year Sentence,” *New York Times*, June 11, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/11/world/europe/norway-mosque-attacker-convicted.html>.

74 For a related debate on memorials to terrorist attacks, see Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn, “Remembering Terrorism: The Case of Norway,” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague*, September 30, 2019, <https://icct.nl/publication/remembering-terrorism-the-case-of-norway/>.

75 Daniel L. Byman and Mark Pitcavage, “Identifying and exploiting the weaknesses of the white supremacist movement,” *Brookings Institution*, April 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Identifying-and-exploiting-the-weaknesses-of-the-white-supremacist-movement.pdf>.

76 Am and Weimann, “Fabricated Martyrs.”

77 For more, see Lars Erik Berntzen and Jacob Aasland Ravndal, “Monster or Hero? Far-right Responses to Anders Behring Breivik and the July 22, 2011 Terrorist Attacks,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 15, no. 3 (June 2021); and Alessandro Orsini, *Sacrifice: My Life in a Fascist Militia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 31.



the movement. “I don’t agree with what Breivik did, but I could understand, my objection is what a waste [...] to kill those young Nordics,” one *Daily Stormer* poster wrote in 2015.<sup>78</sup> Although extremists should not be treated as allies, the amplifying of such voices might serve to counter the glorification of violence which freely pervades extremist social media channels. Indeed, one programme in New York is now working to prevent acts of terrorism without attempting to moderate ideology, a more targeted initiative that will hopefully provide more clarity on the process of mobilisation radicals might undertake, and how to reverse it.<sup>79</sup>

There is already evidence that the American far-right is fracturing in the wake of the 6 January storming of the US Capitol.<sup>80</sup> We must now better take advantage of such splits to drive wedges between factions along their various ideological and tactical disagreements, perhaps through a more cohesive and strategic counter-messaging and CVE programme, and ensure the movement is permanently weakened, and not merely rebuilding and reorganising.

## Conclusion

Anders Behring Breivik represents maybe the most painful example of how terrorists can be aggrandised by the international media and public, and, consequently, lionised by other extremists. The words of Karl Ove Knausgaard, published four years after the attack, are apt:

*“In many ways, I find it repellent to write about Anders Behring Breivik. Every time his name appears in public, he gets what he wants, and becomes who he wants, while those whom he murdered, at whose expense he asserted himself, lost not only their lives but also their names – we remember his name, but they have become numbers. And yet we must write about him, we must think about the crisis that Breivik’s actions represent.”*<sup>81</sup>

Despite much debate on the topic, the Western world has never figured out a sustainable way to bury the identity and motivations of mass murderers after their attacks. Perhaps the boldest move was taken by New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern after the twin shootings in Christchurch in 2019. “I implore you, speak the names of those who were lost rather than the name of the man who took them,” Ardern said. “He is a terrorist. He is a criminal. He is an extremist. But he will, when I speak, be nameless.”<sup>82</sup> Telling victims’ stories rather than taking deep dives into the lives and radicalisation of violent extremists might not prevent attacks,<sup>83</sup> but it will at least rob killers of the ability to tell their own version of the story. And, though not strictly a recommendation, the memory of the children killed on 22 July highlights an important call-to-arms: whenever we can, especially in public, non-specialist or national security settings, remember the victims, not the perpetrator.

The other recommendations that endure from the Breivik case and that are outlined above can be broken into six large categories: moderating extremism online, targeting countering violent

78 Berger, “The Dangerous Spread of Extremist Manifestos.”

79 Kanno-Youngs and Hong, “Biden Steps Up Federal Efforts to Combat Domestic Extremism.”

80 Neil MacFarquhar, “Far-Right Groups Are Splintering in Wake of the Capitol Riot,” *New York Times*, March 1, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/01/us/extremism-capitol-riot.html>.

81 Knausgaard, *Inside the warped mind of Anders Breivik*.

82 “Christchurch shootings: Ardern vows never to say gunman’s name,” *BBC*, March 19, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47620630>.

83 Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, “Should the Names of Terrorists Never Pass Our Lips?” *War on the Rocks*, March 26, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/03/should-the-names-of-terrorists-never-pass-our-lips/>.

extremism programming for “risk factors” repeating themselves over several violent extremist life stories, encouraging friends and family to more frequently identify a family member who may be mobilising to violence, expecting a second attack needing to be mitigated, suppressing extremist manifestos, and, where possible, avoiding societal polarisation.

To test the theory, we can assess whether the recommendations might have helped prevent the Christchurch shootings. In several ways, Tarrant’s life story and assault on New Zealand’s Muslim community were uncomfortably similar to Breivik’s path and attack (in fact, in the Christchurch Commission report’s words, “the individual was following a course of action similar to that of the Oslo terrorist”).<sup>84</sup> Tarrant, like Breivik, was radicalised online, including on gaming platforms. Both had traumatic deteriorations of their relationships with their father—Breivik was disowned in his teenage years, while Tarrant’s father committed suicide in 2010 after a cancer diagnosis. Tarrant had also used performance-enhancing drugs, and struggled to sustain romantic relationships or find work.<sup>85</sup> He targeted a second, unprotected location, and shared his own manifesto, which has also inspired further attacks.<sup>86</sup> Like Breivik, Tarrant had unchecked access to extremist rhetoric online, likely did not have sustained witting or unwitting engagement with CVE programming, and was not reported by family or friends; he was allowed to attack a second target that was unprotected; and his manifesto was able to inspire new attackers. We will, of course, never know if these countermeasures could have helped—but they are surely better, and more ambitious, than the status quo.

This Policy Brief provides only a sample of lessons to be learned from Breivik’s attack. Those chosen are the most critical—online radicalisation, lone actor terrorism, and the role played by manifestos, for instance, have become defining issues in post-Breivik far-right terrorism. Other themes warrant further review, and additional studies might consider assessing in greater depth the role played by Breivik’s trial and media suppression of his political beliefs, or any role played by broken relationships with father figures or hatred of women.

The failure to heed warnings repeats itself frequently in the history of counter-terrorism. It contributed to the devastation of 11 September 2001, and 6 January 2021. And it contributed to the attacks in Norway, too. The English-language release of Norway’s 22 July Commission report declared that “It gives particular cause for concern that several of the deficiencies had been pointed out in previous reports from oversight and auditing bodies, without them having been redressed.”<sup>87</sup> Sadly, at least in the international context, it seems we are repeating those mistakes. Breivik will remain relevant, at least in the dark shadows of far-right social media.<sup>88</sup> And if we cannot bury Breivik in the depths of history, the 10-year mark at the very least offers a good time for a specialist’s review of the incident, the lessons we learned, and why we remain poorly prepared to defend against far-right terrorism.

84 “Ko tō tātou kāinga tēnei: Report: Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019,” accessed April 5, 2021, <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/>.

85 All information from Christchurch Commission Report.

86 Tarrant is a notable exception to Macklin and Bjørgo’s argument that Breivik’s tactical impact was limited. Macklin and Bjørgo, “Breivik’s Long Shadow?”

87 “Preliminary English Version of Selected Chapters,” *Norges offentlige utredninger*, August 13, 2012, [https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/bb3dc76229c64735b4f6eb4dbfcd8/en-gb/pdfs/nou2012\\_14\\_eng.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/bb3dc76229c64735b4f6eb4dbfcd8/en-gb/pdfs/nou2012_14_eng.pdf).

88 Berntzen and Ravndal, *Monster or Hero?*, 54.

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