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ACTION ZEALANDIA, NEW ZEALAND'S ASPIRING BROWNSHIRTS?

Chris Wilson and James Halpin¹

Most far right terrorist violence is now committed by individuals who have radicalised in physical isolation, although often deeply engaged in online extremist communities. At the same time, many far right groups do not engage in terrorism despite the militant views and violent rhetoric of their members. This article contributes to the study of the avoidance of mass casualty terrorism by extremist groups through an in-depth examination of New Zealand's main white nationalist group, Action Zealandia. The literature on this topic finds that groups sometimes strategize that terrorist attacks would be counter-productive to longer term and more important political goals. Our study of Action Zealandia, based on eighteen months of participation in the group by one of the authors, supports this hypothesis. We contend that groups such as Action Zealandia often see themselves as the seeds of a mass nationalist movement rather than the perpetrators of mass casualty terrorist violence. We therefore propose a typology of violent far right extremist actors: Individual Actor; Paramilitary Group; and Terrorist Group. We place Action Zealandia within the Paramilitary Group type, a category of extremist actors that poses a less violent but longer-term risk to society.

Keywords: Action Zealandia, Extremism, Terrorism, New Zealand, Far Right, White Nationalism

Introduction

It is now accepted that only a minute proportion of those who hold extremist views go on to commit terrorist violence.¹ Perhaps more surprisingly, many extremist groups also refrain from engaging in large-scale terrorism, despite their frequently violent rhetoric and virulent racism.² Examining why many such groups do not commit such violence is a key step in our attempt to understand why others do, and the processes of radicalisation that get them there.

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This article illustrates the frequent gulf between violent online rhetoric and (lack of) offline action by examining Action Zealanda, Aotearoa New Zealand's largest and most visible far right extremist group.³ Formed in 2019 out of a precursor group, the Dominion Movement, Action Zealanda is an overtly white nationalist organisation. In private, members discuss extreme, even fascist ideas and goals. In private chatrooms and messaging applications, the members of Action Zealanda engage in racist, misogynistic and often violent language. Several members have made online and offline threats and discussed plans to establish cells to engage in politically-motivated violence against the left and other enemies. Yet over the three years since its formation, the group has not engaged in terrorist violence, restricting itself to vandalism and the intimidation of several politicians, journalists and academics.

We engage with the broader literature on terrorism and violent extremism to propose several explanations for this discrepancy between online extremism and offline inaction. We contend that involvement in a group paradoxically works to temper the extremism of members. Many members receive sufficient reward from participation, feeling they have already done their part, while also gaining friendship and a sense of meaning. Offline meetings are also often deflating after the fervour of online interaction. All of these influences work to reduce the likelihood of terrorism or other form of extensive extremist violence. Importantly too, the group has faced external pressure from New Zealand Police and anti-fascist activists which has motivated its leaders to control group members and to prohibit any form of violence. Privately, the group's leaders have taken steps to demand members refrain from engaging in violence and focus more on community building and political activism.

In finding that some far-right extremist groups often seek to avoid terrorism we propose a typology of such organisations. While some groups are explicitly focused on planning and engaging in terrorist violence, others (such as Action Zealanda) perceive themselves more as the vanguard of a white nationalist movement rather than terrorist organisations. As such this type of group plans for societal change and instability during which they will violently oppose political and social enemies and provide paramilitary support to far right parties and politicians. We therefore propose a threefold typology of far-right extremist actors: Individual Actor; Paramilitary Group; and Terrorist Group. All three types hold the potential to engage in extremist violence of different levels and therefore pose different challenges for security officials. Throughout this article we seek to identify which actors engage in terrorism, defined here as politically motivated violence with the possibility of causing casualties; and those which engage in lower forms of extremist violence and quasi-violent activity such as brawling, rallies, intimidation and vandalism. As we discuss below, by highlighting the differences in goals, repertoires and radicalisation pathways of these different actors, this typology points to a more nuanced understanding of each and potentially more effective ways of countering them.

This article is based on eighteen months of infiltration of Action Zealandia by one of the authors. The author was invited to join the group while researching a more mainstream conservative organisation in New Zealand. He did not provide his real name to the group, although all members and leaders used pseudonyms to conceal their identities. As such, we did not obtain informed consent from the members of Action Zealandia as is the normal practice in social sciences research. Despite this, we proceeded with the research for several reasons. First, we determined that obtaining consent from the group would be very difficult if not impossible. Secondly, to have been inside the group with their consent would have altered their behaviour and likely led members to mislead the researcher. Third, we believe that understanding the risks of further terrorism in Aotearoa New Zealand was a goal of sufficient importance to reduce the normal requirement of obtaining consent. Fourth, we have ensured that the anonymity of all members of the group is maintained, providing no identifying information for any member, including several already identified in media reporting. This research was approved by the University of Auckland Human Ethics Committee, University of Auckland, Approval number UAHPEC3163, approved on 30 October 2020. This approval covered research into the group's online discourse but not into its offline activities. This latter research was undertaken by James Halpin who was not affiliated with the University of Auckland.

Violent Online Communities

Extremist language is increasingly ubiquitous across a range of online spaces. In chatrooms and imageboards, on social media and in threats towards public figures, individuals now commonly engage in violent and threatening racist and misogynistic rhetoric. The same is true of the dialogue of formal far right extremist groups, the members of which engage in hateful rhetoric just like more isolated individuals. Yet does this volume of hateful rhetoric necessarily lead to a greater risk of violence? Does the greatest threat come from those who are the most extreme and active online? In this article we join a growing literature which contends that a great deal of extremist online discourse is no predictor of violent action. Only a minute proportion of those who speak violently online go on to engage in terrorism.⁴ Even more paradoxically, some extremist groups, seemingly formed with the explicit goal of engaging in terrorism, often refrain from doing so.

Several phenomena explain this large discrepancy between online rhetoric and offline action. Online spaces encourage extremism, participants receiving status and attention for radical statements and disparaged or ignored for taking a more moderate stance. Online provocation is also not subject to the restrictions or risks of physical or social consequences as is similar action in the real world. Because the threshold for online expression is so much lower than offline, people often express far greater moral outrage online than they in fact feel.⁵ For many individuals extremist discourse is its own

reward. Online, people can create a personality which has always been out of reach offline, becoming brave, confident and charismatic when they are the opposite in the 'real' world.⁶ Many people therefore act radically online with no intention of acting in the same way offline. Engaging in extremist rhetoric online also allows individuals to feel that they are part of a community and to obtain friendship and interaction which they do not enjoy offline.

Online radicalism also serves important purposes for extremist online communities and groups. Extremist engagement online serves to create a sense of collective identity and meaning for the community.⁷ Participants 'police' the boundaries of the community and the identities of its members, and identify outsiders and enemies of the group.⁸ In extremist online spaces, participants build and maintain a collective identity by demonstrating their racism, heteronormativity and hyper-masculinity.⁹ Speaking violently is often key to this process of building and policing an extremist collective identity.¹⁰ By speaking violently online, participants show their commitment to the cause, set and police boundaries and identify political and social enemies and prescribe courses of action.¹¹ Using violent language can also act as a stand in for taking actual violent action, releasing and demonstrating extremist fervour without having to put yourself at risk.¹²

Yet for a small number of individuals, violent rhetoric is insufficient and some choose to put this dialogue into action. As discussed, hateful online rhetoric often serves to identify political enemies and potential targets of violence. Participants often cast doubt on the commitment of others and mock their apparent unwillingness to do anything in the real world. And some individuals seek to bring their offline identities more in line with their more radical online personas. Jarret Brachman and Alix Levine write that the "gap between online participation and real-world action is a source of discontent and pain".¹³ A "select few users...will try to live up to their virtual, extremist, and pro-violent selves in the real world".¹⁴ The final statements of some perpetrators of terrorism demonstrate this sentiment. Brenton Tarrant's posted to 8chan before his first attack "Well lads, it's time to stop shit posting and time to make a real life effort post".¹⁵ Robert Bowers posted online "I can't sit by...Screw your optics, I'm going in" before his attack against a Pittsburgh synagogue.¹⁶

Almost all far right mass casualty terrorism is now perpetrated by individuals who radicalised in isolation and through online interaction only. This is the case in attacks perpetrated in Christchurch, El Paso, Escondido, Poway, Quebec, Halle, Hanau, Pittsburgh, Trollhattan and Buffalo. Although these perpetrators were influenced by an extensive and transnational online extremist community, none of them were affiliated with extremist groups¹⁷. While as discussed below, some far right groups exist with the explicit intention of engaging in terrorism, it is now clear that the current greatest risk of far-right terrorist attacks is posed by individuals radicalising alone rather than as part of groups.

Conversely, internal dynamics within some groups can act to reduce the likelihood of terrorism. Pete Simi and Steve Windisch¹⁸ argue that leaders and members often recognise that engaging in terrorism will dramatically undermine the group's goals. Some groups have long term political goals, the realisation of which require maintaining a presence over time and building a larger nationalist movement through recruitment and convincing an increasing number of people of the correctness of their ideology.¹⁹ Groups often recognise that engagement in terrorist violence will generate extensive pressure from security agencies potentially leading to the elimination of their group and the broader movement.²⁰ This is particularly the case when they can see that an attack is unlikely to achieve much in pursuit of their broader goal.²¹ As they meet offline and maintain websites and podcasts, groups are also easier for security officials to monitor than individuals. For these reasons, some extremist groups at least, opt for political and social activism and refrain from terrorism.

Typology of Violent Far Right Extremists

The common practice within scholarship and policymaking is to consider these different types of extremist actors as a single category: far right extremists. We contend that there are substantial advances in both theory and praxis that can be made by recognising the differences in goals, radicalisation pathways, 'red flags' for violence and other phenomena exhibited by these different actors. Identifying the insidious impact of some non-violent groups on democracy and societal cohesion allows for more effective approaches to countering this influence.

We therefore contend that far right violent extremists can be divided into three types: Individual Actors; Paramilitary Groups; and Terrorist Groups. These three types overlap to some degree. Individual Actors sometimes join or exist on the periphery of one of the Group types. Paramilitary Groups sometimes become Terrorist, and vice versa. But in most cases, these types are separate and possess different goals, use different repertoires and forms of violence and pose different challenges (and opportunities) to security agencies.²² Action Zealandia, discussed in this article, falls within the Paramilitary Group type. Typologies are an important part of the qualitative research 'toolkit'. By dividing a large category (such as far right extremism) into sub-types, the analytical task becomes more manageable, and the researcher is able to provide more nuanced theoretical insights and more targeted policy prescriptions.²³

Individual Actor: Actors within this type are individuals radicalising in physical isolation, so called lone actors (or lone wolves). While they are physically isolated, often not interacting with likeminded others in person as they radicalise and prepare their attacks, they are deeply enmeshed in online subcultures. As discussed above, isolated interaction online possesses a number of characteristics which enhances the radicalisa-

tion process. Individual Actors are also the most difficult violent extremists to stop. The majority of far-right terrorism is carried out by actors from this type; examples include Brenton Tarrant, Patrick Crusius, and Payton Gendron.

Paramilitary Group: What we refer to as Paramilitary Groups are groups which do not pursue terrorism but to varying degrees engage in other forms of extremist violence and intimidation. Actors in this type seek to play a 'shock troop' role in society and politics, often through engaging in political violence and intimidation of political enemies, including leftists, the LGBTQI community and other groups. In some cases, actors in this type seek to engage in formal politics by joining political parties or by offering their services to act as 'muscle' for far-right politicians. In other cases, these groups take more of a 'prepper' approach to violence. They seek to build a vanguard movement and prepare and wait for the system to crack by creating a strong, cohesive unit that is self-sustaining and would be ready to move towards violence once the state becomes weak enough. These groups are the most visible and easy to monitor, but because they do not engage in terrorism they are more difficult for authorities to legally proscribe or disband. While this type of group does not lead to the number of casualties caused by the first two types, we contend that they are more likely to have a larger and more long-term negative impact on society by undermining positive intergroup relations, democratic institutions and the participation of minorities in the political process. Examples of this type of actor include the Proud Boys,²⁴ Patriot Front, and Action Zealanda discussed further below. Such groups were also prevalent in the era of fascist political parties in the 1930s, including the Nazi's Brownshirts and the Blackshirts of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists.

Terrorist Group: Other extremist groups exist explicitly to engage in terrorist violence. Actors in our third type are organised although generally clandestine groups which engage in mass casualty violent extremism (or seek to do so). These groups have no interest in engaging with the democratic system, nor do they see any chance of building a mass movement. These groups are often accelerationist, seeking to spread chaos through violence and weaken and destroy the current liberal democratic system. The collective nature of these groups, their planning for violence (such as the purchase of weapons) and the communication between members (of goals and planning for example), makes them easier to detect than Individual Actors, and to legally proscribe. While Paramilitary Groups provide a greater risk as a streetfighting force for a far right or fascist movement, Terrorist Groups, like Individual Actors, present a greater risk of mass casualty violence. Examples of this type include: Atomwaffen; Order of Nine Angles; and The Base.

In the following section we provide an overview of Action Zealanda based on eighteen months of infiltration of the group. We discuss the public and private identity of the group, the group's goals, the discrepancy between its violent on-

line rhetoric and its offline behaviour. We demonstrate that for several reasons, the group seeks to position itself as a political and activist Paramilitary Group rather than a terrorist organisation.

Action Zealandia

Action Zealandia formed in the months after the March 2019 Christchurch terrorist attacks. The group emerged out of a precursor organisation, the Dominion Movement, which disbanded following the attacks. Action Zealandia maintains a website, podcast and public Telegram channel, although members interact on private messaging applications such as Riot. The group markets itself as a self-improvement group for young European men with 'dissenting voices.' Its website states that "Action Zealandia is a movement of young nationalists dedicated to the revitalisation of our people, culture, environment and community." The site states that the group has five 'Values': Self-Improvement; New Zealand European Identity; Community Building; Nationalism; and Sustainability.²⁵

The group's propaganda seeks to frame Action Zealandia's members as part of an idealised and mythologised white race. Posts to the Telegram channel or the website portray the group as sentimentally observant of nature, athletic participants in Mixed Martial Arts training and bushwalks, and righteous citizens doing rubbish clean-ups and advocating for whiteness by stickering and posterizing public places. Users sometimes posted photographs of themselves (often masked) picking up rubbish from public fields. Through such actions Action Zealandia focuses on 'good optics' conveying a message of honest moral and natural simplicity, a return to masculine strength and traditional values, set against a world they portray as decadent and collapsing. Their whiteness is central to this propaganda.

In private however, the members of the group engage in highly extreme, misogynistic and racist language. The group is explicitly white nationalist, even neo-Nazi in nature. The leaders see Action Zealandia as part of a transnational far right network and engage with members of extremist groups elsewhere such as the Nordic Resistance Movement, the Patriot Front, Northwest Front, and The Base. The literature read and disseminated within the group is the same as that which circulates within the most extreme parts of the white nationalist movement. Members read and discuss texts such as William Pierce's *The Turner Diaries*, James Mason's *Siege*, and Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. The group subscribes to the ideological positions held by many groups overseas: a belief in a discrete transnational white race; white supremacy; antisemitism; nativism and the desire for a homogenous white homeland; opposition to liberalism and progressivism; misogyny; ecofascism; transnationalism and anti-degeneracy.

The group is mainly comprised of white men aged between 18 and 25 from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, with most in low skilled employment. Action Zealandia has had a core membership of approximately 15, with an overall membership fluctuating between the low and high 30s, with approximately 50 members in total since the group's formation. Individuals vary in the extent of their involvement in the group. The largest proportion of members (approximately 15) live in Auckland (New Zealand's largest city), with the remainder mostly spread between Nelson, Christchurch and Wellington. We consider the discrepancy between the online personas they build and their beliefs in idealistic white identities and the low-status lives they lead in real life to be a key reason why members join the group.

Most recruitment into Action Zealandia occurs through word of mouth and recommendations. An internal poll conducted by the group (and received by one of the authors) found that the majority of members (61 percent) said they had heard of Action Zealandia through word-of-mouth from a friend (other means were 17 percent 'propaganda', 14 percent 'media hit piece', 7 percent '4chan'). As in extremist groups elsewhere, recruiting from friends and family allows for greater trust and security. Action Zealandia's leaders interview prospective members and monitor their online behaviour to ensure their political opinions align with those of the group. Indeed, most new recruits already subscribe to white nationalist positions to some degree. In addition to recommendations, the group's leaders also placed links to group chat forums on sites such as 4chan, inviting likeminded online posters to join their discussion. The group gets its greatest recruitment boost from attention in the media and community outrage generated by its campaigns of places stickers, posters and other propaganda in public places.

Six members – and therefore a sizeable proportion – of Action Zealandia are former armed forces personnel. This pattern follows far right groups overseas. In December 2019, one serving member of the Defence Force was arrested for disseminating classified material to an unnamed country likely to prejudice national security.²⁶ The Defence Force charged the man with espionage in November 2020, and he faces court martial at the time of writing.

Online Hate

The group's online discussion is extremely violent, racist, misogynistic, and heteronormative.²⁷ Members are derogatory of minorities, women and sexual minorities, and often abusive of each other, as a way of demonstrating their white nationalist credentials, masculinity and commitment to the cause. In many cases, the more extreme they act online, the more attention and status they receive. During our research, discussion was most vigorous surrounding dramatic political events overseas, particularly in the United States. Members are far more engaged in discussing international rather than New Zealand-related current affairs. Much of this discussion was racist and violent. During the Black Lives Matter protests, members called for the remigration of African

Americans and for civil war.²⁸ Online, members depicted protesters as criminals or used dehumanising language about those involved. Several made similar comments about Ahmaud Arbery, who was murdered in a hate crime by two white men. At the heart of far right ideology is 'nativism', the sense that immigrants and other minorities are encroaching on the resources and cultures of Europeans. Calls for the 'remigration' of minorities and a racial civil war have been central to some of the most violent strains of white supremacist ideology, including that of Anders Breivik. The author saw members use highly racist and derogatory language towards almost all minorities including Māori, Muslims and Jews. Many made violent threats against these groups. Members also engage in misogynistic and homophobic language, often referring to each other in derogatory terms related to sexual identity.

Members also made several direct threats of violence throughout 2019 and 2020. In March 2020, police arrested a member for posting a photograph of himself outside Christchurch's Al Noor Mosque wearing a skull balaclava.²⁹ Another member posted a video in an Australian white nationalist Telegram group of himself lifting weights and attached the threat "I'm *** amped right now I wanna kill". One member posted online his desire to "bomb a marae". He followed this with a further post, writing "in Minecraft" making a common online joke among members regarding calls for violence. Some members venerated past perpetrators of extremist violence when talking online, celebrating the Christchurch terrorist as 'Saint Tarrant' and wishing each other a 'Happy Saint Tarrant's Day'. In May 2020, Member C posted a photograph of scissors fashioned into a blade on a copy of *The Turner Diaries*. Under the post he wrote "alright, guess we're going sicko mode the night quarantine (Covid lockdown) ends".³⁰ In response, New Zealand Police visited the man, taking possession of a rifle. These members comprised a more extreme faction of Action Zealandia, which over time came into friction with more moderate and ideological leaders of the group.

The Violent Vanguard of a Nationalist Movement

Following these threats and the arrests and publicity that followed, the group faced (and perceived) far greater pressure from police and anti-fascist activists. As a result, the group's leaders made a concerted effort to ensure that no member engaged in violent or illegal behaviour. Instead, the group increasingly focused on building a nationalist community, on recruiting greater numbers of members and widening the Overton Window of extremist discourse – the bounds of socially acceptable racist and nationalistic rhetoric.³¹ Members hoped for white nationalist ideas and ideology to become more widespread and commonly discussed throughout New Zealand society.

After the arrest of several members, others in the group began to express their fears that their identities would be made public leading to the loss of employment or arrest, and that the group and movement would be terminated. After the online threat against

Al-Noor Mosque, Member J wrote “Kind defeats the point of having this kind of group if one is going to be like that.” Member I agreed: “They could take little things like this and eventually ban us as an organization.”

Two older members, Members L and J, argued against the use of violence, and advocated for a ‘prepper’ approach, that it was best to wait for a time of greater political opportunity. This more moderate and ideological faction demanded Action Zealandia focus instead on community building, self-improvement and providing a voice for ‘dissenting European voices’. They also attempted to steer online conversation to more ideological and historical topics. In mid-2020, the leaders produced a code of conduct document which disallowed any threats of violence or objectionable material. For these individuals, and soon for the group as a whole, it became apparent that violence would achieve little in the current environment while almost certainly proving fatal to their goal of creating a larger social movement.

While some members still advocated violence, this was to be of a paramilitary form rather than terrorist in nature. In early 2020, Member B discussed online his hopes of establishing “independent cells of 3 – 5 men each” to attack “leftist buildings and people”.³² The cells were to constitute a new group called Southern Order. While media commentators and activists referred to this new organisation as a “terrorist group” the member privately stated that he intended Southern Order to be more like a paramilitary group, likening it to skinhead neo-Nazism. He saw it as “an aggressive underground group that would do street fighting and flash demos... It would have been a group who would be known publicly as Nazis... I’d be looking for people who are willing to take a hit for their beliefs. Who cares if people know you’re a nazi.”³³ “The old national front would counter ... every leftist protest in Christchurch and for years the commies couldn’t even protest anything without about 10-20 nazis showing up making their lives hell.” However, media attention meant he largely abandoned the idea: “But now its viewed as an atomwaffen terror cell so that’s not going no where anymore...” as Member C put it.³⁴

Action Zealandia, along with the small and now largely inactive Wargus Christi, organised a boxing tournament in a forest in the central North Island.³⁵ The event was intended to build group cohesion, work on self-improvement after lockdown and to practise fighting for any future clash with antifascist forces. One of the authors was invited to and fought in the event (although played no role in proposing or organising the tournament). As one of the key attempts to establish Action Zealandia as a Paramilitary Group, the tournament proved discouraging. Several key members did not participate, and most were unfit or poor fighters. The member who had discussed establishing the streetfighting group, Southern Order, lost his bout to a junior member. Even though the event was disappointing, and to our knowledge has not been repeated, it was intended more as preparation for clashes with anti-fascists and leftists as well as a means of augmenting fitness and group cohesion than for mass casualty terrorist activity.

The group attempts to engage in activities to support its community building goal, including the collection of rubbish in parks and beaches, attendance at ANZAC Day commemorations and other publicly palatable actions. Several members expressed dissatisfaction with others in the group for not being sufficiently community focused. Member G stated, "Building a real community for European NZers is still an important part of our work."³⁶ Another member, J, told one of the authors that he saw Action Zealandia becoming a political party. At the time of writing, at least one member of the group is standing in an election for a local board in late 2022.

Rather than engaging in terrorism, some members discussed creating a 'whites only' commune in a rural area to which the group could withdraw from society. Member P suggested: "You could zone it. Have the ethno sector (of white nationalists) and a normie sector for labourers and people that want to live in a low crime / high functioning area?" For Member Q, the main goal was "a degenerate-free zone for kids to learn and play." Another member stated he was attempting to convince his girlfriend to move to the commune: "she doesn't understand the comfort and safety of living in a white community."

Conclusion

We began this article with several observations. First, most far right mass casualty terrorism is now perpetrated by individuals who have radicalised in physical isolation with no affiliation with extremist groups (although deeply enmeshed in online far right communities). Second, extremist groups can be divided into those which seek to engage in mass casualty terrorist violence and those which engage in other forms of extremist violence such as streetfighting and intimidation of leftists and other political enemies. We therefore proposed a threefold typology of far-right extremist actors: Individual Actor; Paramilitary Group; and Terrorist Group. We contend this typology allows for more nuanced analysis of the goals, methods, risks, weaknesses and strengths of each type of actor.

We have presented a case study of New Zealand's largest and most visible far right extremist organisation, Action Zealandia, based on eighteen months of infiltration of the group by one of the authors. We have demonstrated how this group is highly racist and homophobic, and perceives and portrays itself as the vanguard of a mass nationalist movement. Instead of engaging in mass casualty terrorism, the group has attempted to project 'good optics' nationalism through propaganda, and by participation in environmental protection and fitness activities. The group hopes this approach, and the avoidance of illegal activities, will generate greater recruitment and create a larger, more influential white nationalist movement.

The group's leaders hope to widen the Overton Window of what is acceptable rhetoric in New Zealand around topics such as European heritage, white identity, and immigration. Like similar groups elsewhere, Action Zealandia seeks to 'educate' white New Zealanders of the threats to the white 'race'. Members have also discussed infiltrating or influencing political parties, and the creation of a 'whites only, high functioning and crime free' commune in rural New Zealand. Several members have discussed violence, but this often took the form of a fascist street fighting force in the manner of the Nazi brownshirts or the Proud Boys and other militant groups overseas.

We therefore do not suggest that Paramilitary Groups such as Action Zealandia are of no threat to society. In fact, as discussed earlier in the article, we contend that although they pose less risk of mass casualty terrorism, such groups pose a longer-term threat to society. We do not contend that Paramilitary Groups are peaceful, but that they pose a risk of a different kind of extremist violence to Terrorist Groups. While they have not engaged in terrorist violence themselves, the members of Action Zealandia generate substantial hateful rhetoric aimed at minorities, women, and leftists. Such discourse can motivate Individual Actors prone to violence. And the presence of groups such as Action Zealandia can also undermine the full participation of minority groups in the democratic process and society. And we do not contend that the group is not violent or will not engage in violence in the future if the New Zealand political and social context changes.

Yet it is important that security officials and commentators understand the type of risk that different types of actors pose to society. Individual Actors, Paramilitary Groups and Terrorist Groups not only threaten different forms of extremist violence, but also differ in the radicalisation pathways to reach that violence. Each possesses particular challenges in terms of how to counter them, and each also exhibits particular weaknesses which can be exploited. In highlighting not only the racism and fascism but also the dysfunction and uninspiring nature of groups such as Action Zealandia this can undermine their goals of recruitment and hopes of obtaining legitimacy. Properly understanding their goals allows us to better grasp the more insidious and long-term damage they can inflict on New Zealand's liberal democracy and social cohesion. Approaches to countering these groups should reflect these differences if we are to reduce this danger.

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- 3 This article is the third of three papers which examine Action Zealandia. This article develops a separate argument to the other two in the series, by proposing a typology of far right extremist actors each of which engages in different forms of extremist violence. The other two articles are: James Halpin & Chris Wilson, "How Online Interaction Radicalises while group involvement restrains: a case study of Action Zealandia from 2019 to 2021," *Political Science*, Published Online 25 July 2022; and Chris Wilson & James Halpin, "Explaining the gap between online violent extremism and offline inaction," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, Published Online 01 Sep 2022.
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- 10 Pete. Simi & Steven. Windisch, "The Culture of Violent Talk: An Interpretive Approach," *Social Sciences* 9, 120 (2020b), pp. 1-16., DOI:10.3390/SOCSCI9070120.
- 11 Simi & Windisch (2020b), p.10.
- 12 Simi & Windisch (2020b), p.8.
- 13 Jarret M. Brachman and Alix N. Levine, "You Too Can Be Awlaki!," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 35:1 (2011), p. 42.
- 14 Brachman & Levine, p. 42.
- 15 However we know little about Tarrant's online interaction in the months before March 2019. He appears to have minimised his interaction as he approached his planned attack.
- 16 Masha Gessen, "Why the Tree of Life shooter was fixated on the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society," *The New Yorker*, October 27 2018, Accessed on 25 October 2022.
- 17 Noemie Bouhana, Emily Corner, Paul Gill & Bart Schuurman, "Background and Preparatory Behaviours of Right-Wing Extremist Lone Actors: A Comparative Study," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12:6 (2018), p. 150.
- 18 Simi & Windisch (2020a), pp. 831 – 850.

- 19 Ibid, p.837.
- 20 Busher, Holbrook & Macklin (2021), p. 8-10.
- 21 Ibid, p. 11.
- 22 Other types of extremist actors exist and sometimes engage in violence, such as skinhead groups like the Fourth Reich which operated on New Zealand's West Coast in the 1990s, but we omit these largely non-ideological groups from our typology. We consider groups like Fourth Reich or the Road Knights, both highly racist groups in New Zealand, to be more similar to gangs, with members' actions generally driven more by criminality and drug and alcohol abuse than white supremacist ideology.
- 23 Charles Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 45.
- 24 In June 2022, the New Zealand Government designated the Proud Boys (and The Base) as a terrorist entity meaning connections to or support for the group are legally proscribed.
- 25 <https://action-zealandia.com/ideals> Accessed on 11 November 2020.
- 26 "Arrested soldier continues to share white nationalist material," 7 February 2020, *Stuff*. Available at <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/119231183/arrested-soldier-continues-to-share-white-nationalist-material>.
- 27 The information in this section is taken from participation in and observation of Action Zealandia Discord, Element and other channels in 2020 and 2021.
- 28 Action Zealandia General Discussion, Element, June 20 2020. It is worth noting here that most members have never met an African American.
- 29 "Prime minister Jacinda Ardern says threats made against Al Noor Mosque hard to believe," 2 March 2020, *Newshub*. Available at <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2020/03/prime-minister-jacinda-ardern-says-threats-made-against-al-noor-mosque-hard-to-believe.html>
- 30 Action Zealandia General Discussion, Element, April 30 2020.
- 31 31 On the success of the far right to widen the Overton Window of acceptable discourse see Bradley E. Wiggins, "Boogaloo and Civil War 2: Memetic antagonism in expressions of covert activism," *New Media & Society* 23:11 (2021): 3181.
- 32 <https://thewhiterosesociety.writeas.com/max-newsome-matt-and-action-zealandia> Accessed on 1 September 2021.
- 33 Member B, 'NZpol', Telegram, March 26 2020.
- 34 Member C, 'NZpol', Telegram, March 26 2020.
- 35 Wargus Christi is a "martial-monastic order" formed by Palmerston North-based members of the defunct Dominion Movement.
- 36 Action Zealandia discussion on Riot, October 3 2020.