

Terrorism Event Analysis Review

Alaina Babb

Department of Public Administration, Florida State University

Emergency Management & Homeland Security Program

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Professor: Dr. Audrey Casserleigh, PhD

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Abstract

A Terrorism Event Analysis Review (TEAR) paper is written to display an understanding of the intricacies of terrorism and to display one's knowledge and expertise in a terrorism event. A TEAR paper should successfully explain each event, the context in which it exists, the motivations and actors, the type of terrorism it falls under, and the effect of the attack. The paper should also compare and contrast the attacks.

This TEAR paper explores two distinct attacks: the 2020 Hanau Shootings and the 2021 Kabul Airport Bombing. These two attacks vary in motives, execution, contexts, and outcomes. Each attack demonstrates a different type of terrorism, thus these examples will provide differing insights into terrorism. The Hanau Shooting occurred in Germany, and specifically targeted those of an ethnic minority, while the Kabul Airport Bombing occurred in Afghanistan, and targeted a large number of Afghan civilians trying to flee Afghanistan (Astaburuaga, 2023) (BBC, 2021). These topics were chosen for the TEAR paper to provide information on two differing types of terrorism, and to highlight how terrorism takes many forms.

Keywords: terrorist attack, Afghanistan, Hanau, ISIS-K, domestic terrorism, religious terrorism

This Terrorism Event Analysis Report (TEAR) paper introduces two independent terrorism attacks that are to be compared and contrasted to one another: The 2020 Hanau Shootings in Hanau, Germany, and the 2021 Kabul Airport Bombing in Kabul, Afghanistan. These attacks exist in different contexts, committed for differing motives and by different perpetrators, which will be further illustrated. This TEAR paper should thoroughly answer what each attack is, why it happened, who was responsible and who was targeted, what types of terrorism each attack respectively represents, and what the outcomes of each terror attack were.

Event 1: The Hanau Shootings (February 19, 2020)

On the 19th of February, 2020, 43-year-old Tobias Rathjen shot and killed nine individuals, including his mother, and himself in Hanau, Germany (Kupper et al., 2024). Rathjen began his attack that night at 10:00 in Heumarkt Square, targeting two bars, one of which being a Turkish-owned shisha (hookah lounge), killing three individuals there (Astaburuaga, 2023). Rathjen then drove two kilometers to the nearby neighborhood of Kesselstadt, where he killed five patrons of the Arena Bar & Cafe (Hummel, 2020). Here, Rathjen also murdered the driver of a car that was pursuing the perpetrator and attempting to interfere and contact police forces (Kupper et al., 2024). Finally, he then returned to his family home where he killed his mother and himself (Hummel, 2020). The entirety of the victims, save of himself and his mother, were of ethnic minorities in Germany, being of Turkish, Kurdish, Sinti, Afghan, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Romanian, and Polish-Roma descent (Astaburuaga, 2023). It is evident through the nature of the attack and his online presence that his intent was rooted in xenophobic ideology (Kauhanen, 2020). On the 13th of February, six days before the attack, Rathjen created a YouTube account, posting a single self-titled video the following day expatiating far-right American conspiracy theories (Hummel, 2020). He also posted additional videos and a 24-page “script” (manifesto) in his native German on a personal website (Hummel, 2020). The contents of these videos and the manifesto elucidate Rathjen’s motivations and underscore a degree of mental derangement (Kupper, 2024).

Rathjen’s evident radical and violent xenophobia had been present online since August of 2019 and even manifested in a 2019 interaction with German police (Astaburuaga, 2023). In these videos and posts, Rathjen expressed genocidal fantasies targeting non “pure of race” Germans, particularly those of North African and Middle Eastern heritage, calling to “halve” the German population, referring to those not ethnically German (Astaburuaga, 2023). The

aforementioned interaction with the police consisted of a racially charged complaint, and expressing fear of being under the surveillance of the “deep state” (Astaburuaga, 2023). The details of this complaint are unavailable, but it appears as though Rathjen called Hanau police in a state of mania, spewing racist conspiracies and displaying paranoia (Astaburuaga, 2023). Rathjen’s actions and behaviors when compared to what is known as the Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP-18), a tool used for identifying lone-actor terrorists, asserts that Rathjen was positive for 94% of the TRAP-18 indicators, meaning that according to this evaluation, Rathjen exhibited many traits typical of a lone-wolf terrorist (Kupper, 2021). Further, Rathjen also exhibited tendencies akin to someone suffering from paranoid schizophrenia and chronic delusions, explaining in part his mania and paranoia, which manifested in his evident militant xenophobia and exacerbated his extremism (Kupper, 2024).

The 2020 Hanau Shootings, are an example of domestic dissident terrorism. Considering Rathjen was a German who was born and lived in the Hanau region - where he perpetrated the attack - highlights the fact that this would be considered domestic terrorism (Casserleigh, 2024) (Astaburuaga, 2023). This attack would be considered dissident terrorism as dissident terrorism can be a manifestation of nativism, of which the Hanau Shootings are an example (Casserleigh, 2024). Rathjen was motivated to, from his perspective, cleanse Germany of foreigners, and he attacked as a means to protect the nation from the supposed threat of immigrants (Hummel, 2020).

A significant facet of this attack was in reaction of the government and media in its wake. Particularly, the inaction of German police and lack of coverage by German media (Astaburuaga, 2023). During the attack, multiple calls to the Hanau Police Department went unanswered, many made by Vili Viorel Păun, the individual who pursued Rathjen’s car, who was unfortunately later shot by the Rathjen (Astaburuaga, 2023). Other examples of police neglect, such as the inexplicable five-hour inaction of the police between identifying and apprehending Rathjen, seem to be representative and indicative of the German police force and German government’s attitude towards far-right terror, as is mirrored by media expression or lack thereof (Astaburuaga, 2023). Given the obvious history of German far-right extremism, it appears evident that German media and government make an effort to turn attention from iterations of Nazism or fascism, as was seen in media coverage of the Hanau Shootings (Kauhanen, 2020). Immediately after the attack, baseless theories of a Muslim (due to the location of the shootings) or Russian

perpetrators were dispersed across media outlets, with little correction to be made once the details were brought forward (Kauhanen, 2020). Though it is hyperbolic to claim that few media outlets truly spoke to the explicit racist/xenophobic motivations of the shooter, it is a founded statement to acknowledge that many German media sources habitually redirected attention from the motive of the Hanau Shootings from, for example, not labeling Rathjen “racist” but a “conspiracy theorist” (Kauhanen, 2020). The inaction of the police and government which was displayed by the media was also demonstrated by the lack of policy changes that followed the Hanau Shootings. The government did little in acknowledging the attack, and therefore no apparent change was seen in policy (Kauhanen, 2020).

Event 2: The Kabul Airport Bombing (August 26, 2021)

The 2021 Kabul Airport Bombing occurred on August 26, 2021, in the Kabul International Airport in Afghanistan (US Department of State, 2022). The attack was perpetrated by Islamic State - Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) suicide bomber Abdul Rahman al-Logari, and this attack followed the re-assuming of the government by the Taliban in Afghanistan on August 15 of the same year, during which al-Logari was released from an Afghan detention center (Olay, 2024). Al-Logari, on the day of the attack, detonated an Improvised Explosive Device attached to his persons near the Abbey Gate of the Kabul Airport, killing 150 Afghan citizens, 13 United States service members, and 3 United Kingdom citizens (US Department of State, 2022). Although large numbers of civilian deaths are common in war-torn countries, the mass casualty event that was the Kabul Airport Bombing was underreported and of a uniquely large scale, according to the emergency hospital that admitted the injured (93 of which were reported as deceased without surgery in the first 24 hours in the wake of the attack) (Spagnolello et. al, 2022). The large concentration of people at the airport was due to large numbers of Afghan citizens gathering in hopes of leaving Afghanistan, which at the time was recently under Taliban rule (BBC, 2021). Thus, al-Logari committed the attack amid a crowd of Afghans hoping to board an evacuation flight (BBC, 2021).

Al-Logari was originally from Pakistan and operated as a member of ISIS-K, a confirmed member of such, since 2016 (Olay, 2024). ISIS-K is a regional ISIS (Islamic State) franchise, partially linked to the Taliban, and the most violent and dangerous extremist group that operates in Afghanistan (The “K” in ISIS-K refers to “Khorasan”, the historical region covering parts of modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan) (Gardner 2021). ISIS and the Taliban, an Afghan militant

Islamic group, though not affiliated, tend to profit off of each other's existence in a sort of symbiotic relationship, in the way that they will not interfere with each other so long as it does not jeopardize their own interests (Olay, 2024). ISIS specifically operates under Violent Jihadism, which is militant Sunni Islam, and aims to spread this ideology across nations through means of fear and violence (Wood, 2015).

The Kabul Airport Bombing is representative of Religious Transnational Terrorism. This was an example of religious terrorism as ISIS-K is a franchise of ISIS, which spreads violent Jihadism and militant Sunni Muslim beliefs and aims to unite many nation-states under a Caliphate (Casserleigh, 2024) (Wood, 2015). As ISIS-K operates mainly out of two countries (Afghanistan and Pakistan), it is difficult to discern whether it falls under transnational or international terrorism, or even domestic terrorism as the act of terror occurred in Afghanistan (Gardner, 2021). However, as the bomber (Abdul Rahma al-Logari) was Pakistani, and ISIS-K a subset of the larger ISIS which is a transnational terror organization, this would be considered an act of transnational terrorism (Casserleigh, 2024) (BBC 2021). Another bolster that this would be considered transnational terrorism is due to the deceased being transnational, as the victims were not only Afghan citizens but United States service members and British nationals as well (US Department of State, 2022).

Unfortunately, the repercussions of the attack were seemingly detrimental only to innocent Afghan civilians, and not the perpetrators of the attack. Following the bombing, the United Kingdom announced that they would no longer help with evacuation flights of citizens (due to their citizens now being at risk), and Turkish troops, who had protected the airport for 6 years, were withdrawing (BBC, 2021). This left Afghan citizens unprotected with a lack of transnational protection as they had previously experienced. Due to the Taliban's control of Afghanistan, no further policy change or Government response on behalf of the nation in which the attack occurred was present, as the government in power condoned the attack (Olay, 2024).

Conclusion: Compare and Contrast

The aforementioned terrorist attacks distinctly vary in many regards. The motivations of the attacks differ in their style of terrorism, with the Haanu Shootings being domestic dissident terrorism and the Kabul Airport Bombing being transnational religious terrorism (Casserleigh, 2024). A clear distinction between the attacks has to do with the perpetrators themselves. Rathjen acted as a radicalized individual, a "lone wolf terrorist", who attacked as a means to fulfill an

internet-fueled fantasy of ethnic cleansing (Hummel, 2020). The process of radicalization for Rathjen was independent and self-sustained (Astaburaga, 2023). This is contrasted with the Kabul Bombing, in which al-Logari acted as an operative for a larger terrorist organization (BBC, 2021). In this way, al-Logari was a dispensable actor, and the organization (ISIS-K) the entity responsible, as the organization is always the credited body, not the individual (Casserleigh, 2024). The self-radicalization of Rathjen, contrasted to al-Logari's belonging to a terror organization, affects the nature of the attacks, as seen by the scale of Rathjen's attack compared to al-Logari. Rathjen, a lone wolf terrorist, committed an act of terror that required little resources and coordination, choosing to shoot multiple bars (Hummel, 2020). Al-Logari's attack, however, required more than simply a weapon available for purchase, but the construction of an improvised explosive device, access to the airport gates, and the sanction of ISIS-K (Olay, 2024). Thus, an attack committed through a franchise such as ISIS is inherently a larger-scale attack with over 150 casualties, while a significantly smaller number (10, including Rathjen himself) individuals were killed in the attack by Rathjen (Astaburaga, 2023).

The Kabul Airport Bombing and the Hanau Shootings have more disparities than they do similarities, and thus comparable aspects of the Hanau Shootings and the Kabul Airport Bombing are limited. Both attacks were physically committed by only an individual, even though the al-Logari of the Kabul Airport Bombing was an ISIS-K operative and therefore acting on the behalf of a terrorist franchise (Olay, 2024) (Hummel, 2020). Furthermore, both attacks appear to be premeditated in nature, as the Kabul Airport Bombing occurred once al-Logari was released from an Afghan detention center when the Taliban overtook the Afghan government, and Rathjen published his manifesto and self-titled videos only a few days prior to the Hanau Shootings (Olay, 2024) (Hummel, 2020). A further though admittedly obvious comparison is merely the assertion that the terrorists both felt justified in their motives, with Rathjen acting in an effort to "cleanse" Germany of ethnic minorities, and al-Logari, as a member of ISIS-K, acting on the grounds of religious justification (Hummel, 2020) (Wood, 2015).

The Hanau Shootings and the Kabul Airport Bombing were used for this TEAR paper to elucidate the disparities between types of terror and to explicate how terror takes different forms and is bred from different environments. Terrorism can be committed by a radicalized individual, such as Rathjen, or a member of a radical organization as seen with ISIS-K. Examining domestic dissident terrorism juxtaposed with transnational religious terrorism supplies a variegated

understanding of terrorism, as demonstrated in the manifestations of the Kabul Airport Bombing of 2021, and the Hanau Shootings of 2020.

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