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FOR GLOBAL
CHANGE

Narratives of Hate

The Spectrum of Far-right Worldviews in the UK

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Foreword

by Jacqui Smith

The relationship between violent and nonviolent extremism, and the delicate balance of freedom of speech and protection from hate-fuelled violence, have dogged governments since my time as Home Secretary 10 years ago. Arguments as we developed the Prevent strand of the counter-terrorism strategy were heartfelt across government. While some of us felt that the Islamist extremist narrative created a space for the development of violent action and radicalisation, others argued that tackling nonviolent extremism represented an encroachment on the principle of free speech. These arguments have continued in recent years and are exacerbated by the sheer difficulty of defining extremism at all. This is advanced-level policy making.

But these are far from academic policy arguments to be left in the corridors of think tanks. As we know only too well in the Jo Cox Foundation, what starts as hate-fuelled rhetoric can end in the terrorist murder of a serving MP, wife and mother. A year later, worshippers at a London mosque were targeted by a man who, the judge ruled, had been motivated by UK far-right groups. Rants against Islam ended in the murder of worshipper Makram Ali. Just a few months later, it was only the brave action of whistle-blower Robbie Mullen who prevented a member of the now-banned National Action from murdering another MP, Rosie Cooper.

The growth of far-right extremist groups and the threat they pose cannot be left on the ‘too difficult’ pile. While ad hoc action has been taken against some groups and the Intelligence Services are now prioritising the monitoring of far-right terrorists, we need to return to the vexed problem of how to identify the link between violent and nonviolent extremism, and develop a coherent policy approach to tackling the threat of far-right groups. This paper is significant to this work.

Firstly, in providing an analysis of the overlap between supposedly nonviolent far-right groups and the ideology of mass murderer Anders Breivik, it provides a starting point to develop criteria for determining the definition of nonviolent, but nevertheless dangerous, extremism. This could be used as a framework alongside the work of the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) to create a working definition of extremism. The definition will need to encompass both far-right and Islamist extremist narratives. There are, of course, considerable overlaps anyway: the supposed clash between Islam and the West; the emphasis on ‘otherness’; the claims of victimhood and an undermining of democratic institutions.

An agreed definition could form the basis of a much clearer and more wide-ranging set of policy responses. There is a need to increase the level of intelligence gathering about domestic threats and international influences. The law on hate crime and proscription needs review. We also need more work to involve and empower people – on and offline – to challenge the divisive and dangerous narrative behind the growth of far-right violence.

Even before these far-right world views morph into terrorism, they are also a contributor to the growth in a toxic culture that is particularly reflected in the intimidation of those in public life, which has grown so quickly in recent years. At the Jo Cox Foundation, we are making tackling this and protecting our public and democratic life a priority. Clarity around far-right tropes and effective counter arguments will help with this project too.

This is difficult and contested territory, but we cannot simply shelve the arguments. This report is an important contribution to helping communities, lawmakers and the criminal justice system find a way through – and, in doing so, to protect our democratic way of life.

Rt Hon Jacqui Smith, August 2019

Chair of the Jo Cox Foundation

Former Home Secretary of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland

Executive Summary

Understanding how to identify, define or tackle nonviolent extremism – or simply separate it from divisive rhetoric – remains a grey area. This report helps policymakers better clarify this space, by creating a spectrum of ideology for the modern British far right.

The far right is a growing threat to the UK.¹ Although government, public agencies and security services have taken steps to tackle far-right violence, action against nonviolent activity is limited and uncoordinated. The challenges are understandable; violence is a clear and identifiable threshold for intervention. Yet as our previous research has consistently highlighted, there is a complex but undeniable link between the ideas behind nonviolent and violent extremism.²

Our report *Narratives of Division: The Spectrum of Islamist Worldviews in the UK* explored the ideological connection between violent and nonviolent Islamist-inspired groups. This report turns to the messaging of four far-right activist groups in the UK, exposing the key ideas that underpin their activism. It compares their messaging to that of a convicted far-right extremist, to gauge the extent of ideological overlap between the violent and nonviolent manifestations of the far right.

The groups are: Generation Identity England, Britain First, For Britain and the British National Party (BNP). All have been sanctioned by UK authorities or social media companies for promoting problematic views.ⁱ Many of these groups claim to represent ordinary British people and are increasingly creeping into the mainstream, whether through appearances on mass media or through political parties directly targeting their support bases.^{3 4}

These groups are trying to dominate the narrative on key political and social issues, including immigration, Brexit and Islam. Some of them have fielded candidates in European, national and local elections, with limited but not insignificant success. It is crucial to understand the ideas these groups advance and their underlying ideology; if left unaddressed, these groups will continue to sow division in Britain.

The manifesto of terrorist Anders Breivik is emblematic of extreme-right ideology and is the comparison point for the groups studied in this report. In July 2011, Breivik murdered 77 people in Norway, in one of the most notorious terrorist attacks in recent years. The ideological motivation and actions detailed in this manifesto have inspired at least five other terrorists, including the attacker who killed 50 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand in March 2019.⁵ The assessments of the level of overlap between these groups' messaging and Anders Breivik's come from hundreds of pieces of public content for each group as well as the researchers' judgements. This produced a rigorous framework, though one that can be open to debate.ⁱⁱ While the wider far right also includes anti-Semitic, neo-Nazi, white supremacist, anti-women and anti-LGBT sentiments, Breivik's narratives about in-group victimisation, out-group demonisation, and his anti-establishment views, are a clear baseline to examine other extremist messages in the far right.

Government interventions have been frustrated by failed attempts to create a statutory definition of extremism in the UK.⁶ However, the spectrum of far-right positions provided in this report could be a useful tool, alongside our previous work on nonviolent Islamist worldviews, in creating a working definition

of extremism. It gives an objective standard against which society can evaluate whether certain UK activist groups promote views of an extreme, far-right nature. This is the first step to establishing a coordinated and effective strategy to tackle them.

KEY FINDINGS

Four main themes form Breivik's warped worldview: victimisation, opposition between the West and Islam, anti-establishment sentiment and the justification of violence. These themes show a consistent ideological framework that forms the basis of a spectrum of ideas, from mainstream to extreme, that can be applied to other actors on the far right (see table 1.1).

- **Most of the nonviolent activist groups studied promote a worldview that significantly overlaps with Breivik's.** It describes a world where the white race and Western civilisation are under threat from the growing influence of Islam, a religion they present as inherently barbaric. This indicates a thread linking the messaging and narratives of these activist groups to those of a convicted extremist, which can be difficult to delineate. These narratives form building blocks to promote some version of a shared divisive worldview that believes in the victimisation of white populations, and seeks to create a chasm between Islam and the West (see table 1.2).
- **All the groups promote a divisive view of the relationship between Islam and the West through their public messaging.** Britain First, the BNP and For Britain show a near complete overlap with Breivik on this theme, using their public content to advance a worldview which demonises Islam and depicts it as being in permanent conflict with the West. There are three main arguments that form this narrative, which all the groups promote:
 - Believing that Islamic scriptures **promote violent jihad and terrorism**
 - Claiming that Muslim immigration to Western countries is paving the way for **implementing Sharia** and Islamic laws, and **'Islamifying' Europe**
 - Suggesting that Muslims are **more prone to committing acts of sexual violence and rape**






ⁱ See Appendix: Methodology

ⁱⁱ See Appendix: Limitations of research

TABLE 1.1 A Range of Positions on Four Key Narrative Themes

| | Islam vs. the West | Victimisation | Anti-Establishment | Justification of Violence |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| For Britain | | | | |
| Generation Identity England | | | | |
| Britain First | | | | |
| British National Party | | | | |
| Anders Breivik | | | | |

TABLE 1.2 Four Activist Groups' Narrative Overlaps with Anders Breivik on Four Key Themes

| | Islam vs. the West | Victimisation | Anti-Establishment | Justification of Violence |
|------------|--|---|--|---|
| Mainstream |  <p>Sees no conflict between being British and Muslim</p> | <p>Does not believe people are discriminated against for being white</p> | <p>May criticise but does not reject wider political system</p> | <p>Does not condone violence</p> |
| |  <p>Criticises some aspects of Islam and multiculturalism</p> | <p>Believes political correctness can make it harder to be white</p> | <p>Believes certain 'elites' are responsible for an unjust system</p> | <p>Provides some justification for violence</p> |
| |  <p>Believes in protecting British culture against multiculturalism</p> | <p>Believes that society is privileging minority groups ahead of white people</p> | <p>Accuses the 'elites' of betraying the 'people'</p> | <p>Argues that violent action is sometimes justified to achieve change</p> |
| |  <p>Sees Islam as a growing and violent threat</p> | <p>Believes Britain is becoming unsafe for white people</p> | <p>Advocates drastic changes to the democratic system which it sees as corrupt</p> | <p>Openly supports individuals and groups who have committed acts of violence</p> |
| Extreme |  <p>Believes that the Christian West should unite against Islam</p> | <p>Believes there is a global conspiracy to replace the white race</p> | <p>Advocates complete overhaul of political system and rejection of democracy</p> | <p>Urges people to fight to defend their religion or culture with force</p> |

The centrality of this theme is particularly troubling at a time when the UK saw a rise of 26 per cent in reports of anti-Muslim hate in 2017-18.⁷

- **Generation Identity England and the BNP share identical worldviews with Breivik on the theme of victimisation.** They both explicitly refer to far-right conspiracy theories of a government enforced “white genocide” of native populations and the belief that there is a “great replacement” of white people because of immigration or multiculturalism. The Christchurch terrorist’s manifesto was even entitled “The Great Replacement”. These concepts, taken directly from far-right ideology, risk being increasingly accepted in mainstream discourse unless there is consensus on how to draw the line between legitimate activism and conspiracy-fuelled extremism.⁸ Other key arguments that form this narrative include:
 - Accusing authorities and media of **covering up crimes** committed by Muslims and immigrants
 - Claiming that **freedom of expression is under threat** and that anyone who opposes political correctness is branded a racist and denied a voice
 - **Denigrating feminists** for supporting Islam
- Unlike Breivik, **the groups do not incite or call for violence or illegality.** They are neither violent nor encourage or incite violence by others nor act unlawfully in promoting terrorism. We see at most an apparent willingness to find reasons for violence committed by others who believe in far-right ideology. However, this only points to a need to redefine the UK’s standard of permissible extremism, where violence is not the only threshold for action, given the significant overlaps these groups’ messaging otherwise have with that of a convicted terrorist.
- **Nevertheless, these groups’ messaging is dangerous.** It inspires wider harms beyond violence. Anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia are replacing immigration as one of the main drivers of support for the far right.⁹ Our recent hate crime report points to legal loopholes that allow far-right activists to mask hatred against Muslims as legitimate criticism of Islam. At the same time, divisive groups from all sides continue to perpetuate each others’ positions: while the far-right English Defence League emerged as a reaction to Islamist extremist group Al-Muhajiroun, the growing far right today is inspiring a resurgence of Islamist extremists who see it as their duty to confront the far right.¹⁰ Meanwhile, far-right activist groups present globalisation, immigration, multiculturalism and so-called cultural Marxists – a catch-all conspiratorial term, deeply steeped in anti-Semitism – as diseases that have corrupted Western civilisation. Such groups claim to represent ‘the people’ who are bringing change and are suspicious towards the so-called political elites who run the alleged establishment.

Policy Recommendations

The far-right groups analysed here show significant overlap in narratives with Anders Breivik, with almost complete convergence on the theme of victimisation, and an image of the West and Islam in conflict. The key difference is on the justification of violence, where all groups clearly demarcate themselves from the violent fringes of the extreme right. By eschewing violence, far-right groups make themselves presentable to a wider audience. The level of overlap on dangerous divisive narratives shows that violence is no longer the only line on which to define extremism.

To address this, political leaders need to focus on measures that:

- Define the relationship between violent and nonviolent extremism, to understand the breadth of the far right
- Tackle far-right hate and associated hate crimes
- Stop problematic groups and stem their narratives

Most of these ideas could be broadly applied to address factors that contribute to other forms of extremism, including Islamist extremism.

DEFINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIOLENT AND NONVIOLENT EXTREMISM

Government must:

- **Develop a working definition of extremism, which includes the far right.** Attempts in the UK to create a statutory definition of extremism have failed because of the difficulty in reaching consensus on where to legally ‘draw the line’ between activism and extremism. This was seen most recently in the proposed 2015 and 2016 Counter Extremism Bills.¹¹ The UK government should instead help to establish a working definition, through consultation with civil society organisations, experts and others. This would provide consistent examples for practitioners to identify the ideology behind extremist narratives for both far-right and Islamist extremism. A working definition would be adaptable to changing threats without needing primary legislation. The framework in this report could serve as a model for this working definition. The Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE), which has already begun consultation around this question, would also play an important role.¹²
- **Undertake a review to improve understanding of far-right networks.** Members of the Austrian Generation Identity are currently under investigation for potential connections to the Christchurch terrorist.¹³ It is vital to understand where violent groups end and nonviolent ones begin. While our research outlines the ideas that link the far right, we need to understand the physical, financial and social networks of this threat. Foreign connections allow far-right groups to increase their capability and reach. Right-wing extremists are travelling overseas to meet and exchange views with like-minded individuals, while funding for nonviolent extremists is increasingly cross-border.^{14 15} The UK must clarify the transnational element of far-right extremism and its UK reach. This review would follow similar ones undertaken on nonviolent Islamist groups, such as the 2015 Muslim Brotherhood review. It would be the first public government review into the far right.¹⁶

TACKLE FAR-RIGHT HATE

A common theme in the messaging of far-right groups is the demonisation of Muslims, through generalisations that present them as scapegoats for broader societal problems, including violent crime and rape. Such characterisations go beyond legitimate activism around issues such as immigration or integration, instead fomenting division and hatred towards people from a specific minority group. To tackle hate from the far right, the government should:

- **Create a new law to designate ‘hate groups’ through an Act of Parliament.** This new tier of hate group designation would help tackle nonviolent extremist groups.ⁱⁱⁱ Despite the FBI¹⁷ and several US-based NGOs labelling^{iv} and monitoring hate groups, no country has built a tool to tackle them. We have proposed below suggested criteria and processes that could be adopted for such a designation, based on existing proscription mechanisms.

Designation criteria

We define a hate group as:

- Spreading intolerance and antipathy towards people of a different race, religion, gender or nationality, specifically because of these characteristics
- Aligning with extremist ideologies as per our table (see table 1.1, showing the spectrum of far-right worldviews), though not inciting violence
- Committing hate crimes or inspiring others to do so via hate speech
- Disproportionately blaming specific groups (based on religion, race, gender or nationality) for broader societal issues

ⁱⁱⁱ Our Institute’s work has consistently highlighted the link between the ideas that underpin nonviolent and violent extremism and has proposed resources for governments to begin defining nonviolent extremism.

^{iv} The Southern Poverty Law Group, for example, list 100 anti-Muslim hate groups active in the US.

Designation mechanism

Drawing the line between free speech and hatred remains a difficult task for policymakers, but lack of intervention has resulted in greater intolerance in public discourse. Based on existing procedures for proscribing terrorist groups in the UK and those used by regulatory bodies such as the Charity Commission, our recommended mechanism for hate group designation is outlined below:

- Designation would sit alongside proscription but not be linked to violence or terrorism
- Powers to designate would, like proscription powers, fall under the Home Office's remit
- If a group meets the criteria above, the Home Office would serve them with a notice of investigation
- Based on the Home Office investigation, the Secretary of State could consider designation and would bear responsibility for the decision
- The Secretary of State would inform parliament of a decision to designate through a written statement
- Groups could appeal the decision, which would temporarily suspend the process until review
- The Home Office could appoint an independent oversight committee of non-governmental experts to regulate decisions and ensure transparency, similar to bodies like the Animal Science Committee

Impact

- Under designation, hate groups would be impeded from appearing on media outlets or engaging with public institutions
- Like proscription, the list of designated hate groups would be publicly available to ensure coordination across institutions; hate groups should always be prohibited from processions using Section 13 of the Public Order Act (1986)
- Related offences would be civil not criminal
- Unlike proscription, hate designation would be time-limited and automatically reviewed, conditioned on visible reform of the group

For further information, please see our report *Designating Hate: New Policy Responses to Stop Hate Crime*.

- **Clearly define terms related to hate crimes in law**, including hatred and hostility to bring greater and equal protection to British Muslims. Currently wide definitions in the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, and Public Order Act (1986), give a high and varied evidence bar. Language should be consistent, with the same phrasing for religious, racial and other forms of hatred. Recognising anti-Muslim hatred is not about restricting free speech, but acknowledging the harm that British Muslims are experiencing when attacks on individuals are masked as criticism of their religion.

STOP PROBLEMATIC GROUPS AND THEIR NARRATIVES

The working definition must inform a consistent strategy across government, society and frontline practitioners to bring consistency in the fight against the far right.

- **Ensure those at the coalface have the resources to tackle divisive narratives.** Divisive messages must be tackled by trusted actors closest to those who are vulnerable to such ideas. Beyond political leadership, an anti-establishment worldview cannot be tackled from Westminster. Frontline practitioners in local communities, including the police, schools and local government, are best placed to counter far-right narratives. But practitioners need to understand the language of extremists to be able to separate words and context from ideology and deliberately divisive tactics. The resource in this report should be included in training toolkits to extend across all layers of public institutions, to help those on the frontline engage with and recognise far-right ideology.

- A new working definition should also **begin a conversation between government, civil society and online media about the limits of acceptable online content.** Our Institute has previously published on the importance of a new approach to regulating internet companies that is fit for the modern world. The real-world examples provided here combined with expertise from the tech world can help foster a discussion on how to protect users against harmful extremist content and hate speech, building on social media's recent efforts to tackle white nationalist and supremacist content. This report analysed hate speech on Twitter and GAB, but it is vital that all media are coordinated. Policymakers often overlook media outlets that they may not use themselves, such as Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat, which are becoming powerful recruitment tools for the far right.^{18 19 20} The Online Harms Consultation should begin a joined-up approach.

Chapter 1:

The Growing Far Right in the UK

The far right is rising in the UK

Globally the far right is posing an increasing security challenge. As counter-terror chief Neil Basu warned in January 2019, the UK is not immune to the growing threat.²¹ After the Christchurch, New Zealand attack in March 2019, then-Security Minister Ben Wallace warned that something similar could happen in the UK.²²

Dangerous attacks have already happened. On 16 June 2016, an extreme-right terrorist murdered British MP Jo Cox. He is thought to have shouted “Britain first, this is for Britain” as he killed her. Police later confirmed he was inspired by Nazi ideology.²³ A year later in June 2017, Darren Osborne targeted Muslims in an attack outside a mosque in Finsbury Park, London, killing worshipper Makram Ali and injuring nine others. Osborne’s trial heard that he consumed material from UK far-right groups, with the judge ruling that he was motivated by his “ideology of hate towards Muslims”.²⁴ In 2018, the Old Bailey heard Jack Renshaw plead guilty to preparing acts of terrorism by plotting to kill British MP Rosie Cooper in an act of “white jihad”.²⁵

These incidents of violent extremism are part of a broader trend in increased far-right activity in the UK. Numbers of far-right related referrals to the Prevent programme, one of the four strands of the UK government's counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST, rose by more than a third in 2017/18 (making up about 18 per cent of Prevent referrals) – a 300 per cent rise since 2012/13.²⁶ While some of this rise is due to improved awareness and reporting practices, it nevertheless indicates a shift in the UK's threat landscape.

“CONTEST does not differentiate between what motivates the threat: it is designed to address all forms of terrorism whatever the ideology, whether Islamist, neo-Nazi, far right or extreme left.”

Ben Wallace, (in former capacity as Minister for Security and Economic Crime), 18 March 2019

“The marked shift in the nature of extreme right-wing activity, and in the organisation of such groups and their reach, from being small groups mainly focused on promoting anti-immigration views and white supremacy to actual engagement in terrorist activity, has resulted in this aspect of the threat presenting a higher risk to national security than it previously has.”

Sajid Javid (in former capacity as Home Secretary), 9 Apr 2019

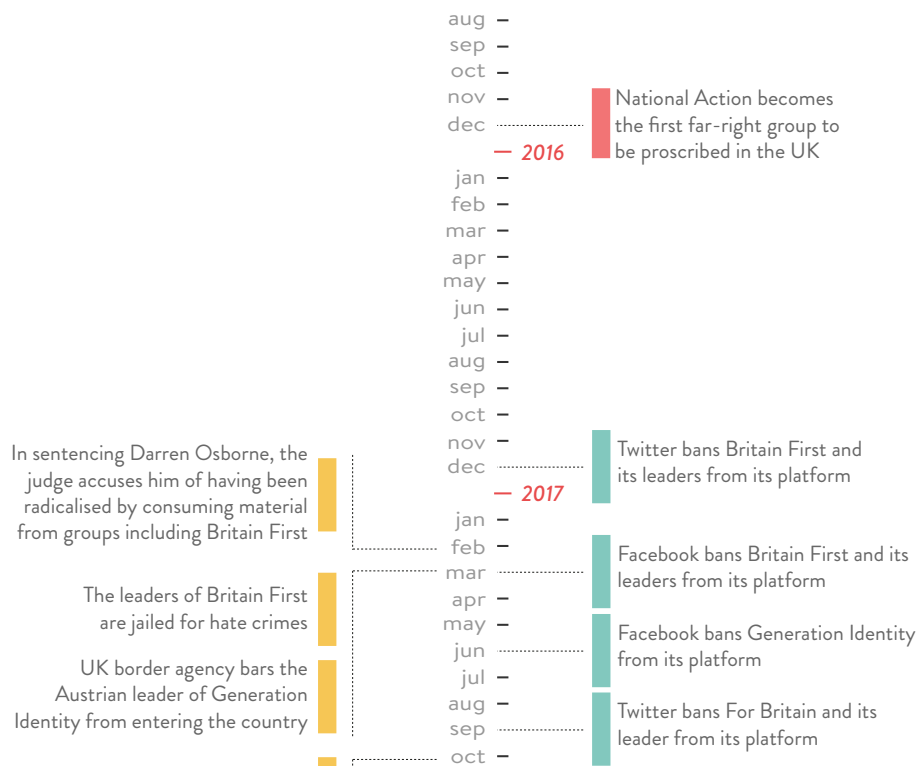
The UK security services and the government have recognised the threat of violent and nonviolent far-right extremism in the UK. The domestic Security Service MI5 took over from police in the fight against far-right extremists in 2018,²⁷ meaning the far right is now officially designated as a major national security threat.

In 2016 neo-Nazi group National Action, linked to the 2018 Cooper plot, became the first far-right group proscribed in the UK. Announcing the decision, then Home Secretary Amber Rudd said that National Action was a “racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic organisation which stirs up hatred, glorifies violence and promotes a vile ideology.”²⁸ The ban (which included three National Action splinter groups) has been effective, with several former members put on trial. But National Action is the only far-right group outlawed in the UK.

In Parliament, recognition and debate on the far right has soared. Mentions in the first half of 2019 outnumber those in 2018 and show almost a four-fold increase on a decade ago (see figure 1.1 below).

However, debate has often been reactive to events rather than proactive or preventative. In 2017, Amber Rudd referred to Britain First as extremist, and seeking to “divide communities through hate”.²⁹

FIGURE 1.1 Mentions of the Far Right in Parliament



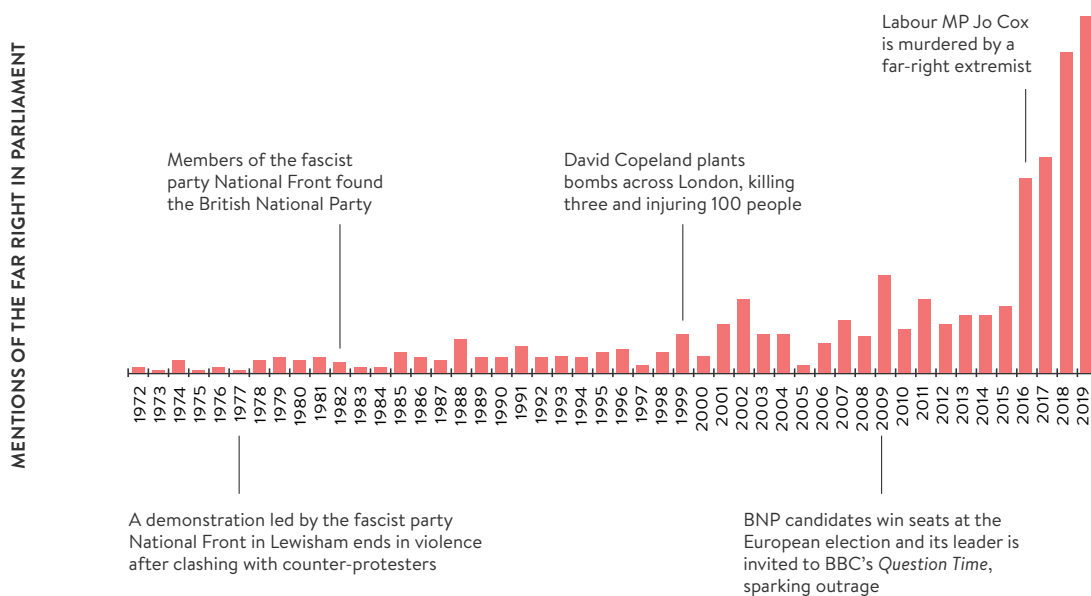
While this recognition is welcome, it was only in reaction to US President Donald Trump sharing Britain First material on Twitter and had no policy or action behind it.

As with other forms of extremism, authorities have struggled to consistently tackle nonviolent far-right activists. Further, action to address divisive groups like Britain First has been burdened on private companies, with government demanding that social media companies address what they have been unable to. The Online Harms White Paper sets out government's intention to mandate, through a new regulator, the removal of harmful extremist content. Social media companies like Twitter and Facebook, in response to recent events, have already been active in shutting down the accounts of activists like Tommy Robinson or groups like Britain First. Facebook meanwhile has improved its own guidance to ban white nationalist content, not just explicitly white supremacist as before.³⁰

Where government agencies or associated bodies have acted, it has been ad hoc and uncoordinated. For example, the UK Border Agency in March 2018 banned the Austrian leader of Generation Identity (GI) from entering the UK to make a speech.³¹ Yet GI's speech was still read out by UK-based far-right activists. Interventions have lacked consistency because there is no cross-government toolkit for nonviolent, far-right extremism.

Extremism, particularly on the far right, sits in a legal grey space between terrorism, hate crime and legitimate activism. Attempts to create a statutory definition have floundered because of the difficulty in establishing a legal line that would survive free speech challenges in court, as seen in the proposed Counter Extremism Bills of 2015 and 2016.³² Because of the difficulty, we suggest a working definition based on relevant examples of extremist worldviews.

FIGURE 1.2 Action Taken Against the Far Right



Source: Hansard

Such a definition would be adaptable to changing threats and help practitioners identify extremist narratives, without being confined to a narrow legal definition. Our report intends to contribute to this and the work of the CCE, which has been set up to build consensus around extremism.³³

A lack of definition is compounded by a difficulty in viewing far-right activity as part of a single, overlapping ideology. Some experts have suggested that far-right extremists are less likely to exhibit noticeable changes than Islamist extremists, further complicating this issue.³⁴

There are significant challenges in the consistency of language from politicians. Government moves between using the terms far right, neo-Nazi and the extreme right, often interchangeably. Some terms come with historical associations that create inaccuracy today. For example, the term fascist, often a synonym for far right, refers to an authoritarian, militarised style that we do not often see today. Inaccuracy makes it easier for the far right to dismiss accusations and attack strawmen. It is clear we need a new standard to accurately label, assess and ultimately tackle the far right.

Understanding extremist ideologies

This report builds on our Institute's expertise on the ideology behind nonviolent and violent extremists. Our report *Narratives of Division: The Spectrum of Islamist Worldviews in the UK* showed how the worldviews of some Islamist inspired activist groups in the UK had significant overlap with that of a proscribed extremist organisation. We have also shown how nonviolent Islamist organisations use strikingly similar ideological concepts in their written materials to violent Salafi-jihadi groups.³⁵

Applying this methodology to the far right is particularly fitting as far-right and Islamist extremists' messages often dovetail. Broader ideas – rejecting multiculturalism and social cohesion between Muslims and non-Muslims, and ideas fuelled by conspiracies – are strikingly similar.³⁶

The ideology behind these messages, in their mildest manifestations, can point to genuine concerns about the pace of change, or discrimination in society, yet certain groups prey on these feelings. Our report and the resource provided within it can help government answer the difficult question of where to draw the line, and ultimately intervene.

Chapter 2:

Understanding the Ideology of the Far Right

ANDERS BREIVIK

In July 2011, Anders Breivik murdered 77 people in Norway in one of the most notorious and high-profile extreme-right terrorist attacks in recent years. Terrorism scholar J.M. Berger has argued that Breivik was a “turning point” in the far right, because he carried out an attack of colossal proportions without any accomplices or support.³⁷

Breivik published a 1,500-page manifesto detailing his ideological motivation for the attack, which he sent to 1,000 people. The manifesto is a combination of Breivik’s own writings and several articles by right-wing authors. His ideology and actions have directly inspired at least five other far-right terrorists, including the Christchurch terrorist who killed 50 Muslims in New Zealand in March 2019.³⁸

Given that Breivik is idolised by sections of the far right, we use his manifesto as a benchmark of far-right extremist messaging. Far right is an umbrella term covering a wide spectrum of views, from white supremacism and neo-Nazi/anti-Semitic sentiments to anti-Islam movements. The biggest divergence among far-right groups is on two issues:

- defining the out-group or primary enemy, for example Muslims, Jews, women, non-whites, or all of those
- deciding the characteristics of the in-group, for example race, culture, religion, gender or all of those

While Breivik’s hate is directed specifically to Islam and Muslims, his narratives about in-group victimisation, out-group demonisation and his anti-left/anti-establishment views are still reflective of the wider thinking of the far right.

After coding the most recurrent arguments and keywords in his manifesto (see figure 2.1) we identified the four major themes and narratives that form his ideology. These four themes – the West vs. Islam, victimisation, anti-establishment and justification of violence – form the categories against which to assess the messaging of far-right groups in the UK. Previous studies focusing on Germany have identified similar themes as representative of the far right.³⁹

The West vs. Islam

TABLE 2.1 Theme of the West vs. Islam in Breivik’s Manifesto

| Theme |
|---|
| The West vs. Islam |
| Breivik’s Narrative |
| Believes that the Christian West should unite against Islam |
| Quotes from Breivik’s Manifesto |
| “Significantly, while the West has for some time now lamented the Crusades as mistaken, there has never been any mention from any serious Islamic authority of regret for the centuries and centuries of jihad and dhimmitude perpetrated against other societies. But this is hardly surprising: while religious violence contradicts the fundamentals of Christianity, religious violence is written into Islam’s DNA.” |

The starting point in Breivik’s ideology is a deep aversion to Islam, which he frames as the primary enemy of the West. Terrorism expert Thomas Hegghammer has described Breivik’s ideology as the Christian equivalent of al-Qaeda, as “both see themselves as engaged in a civilisational war between Islam and the West that extends back to the Crusades”.⁴⁰ For Breivik, Islam is a violent ideology rather than a religion. Even the title of his manifesto, “2083: A European Declaration of Independence”, is symbolic of this struggle between the West and Islam.

The use of 2083 is a reference to the 400th anniversary of the Battle of Vienna, in which Christians lifted the Ottoman siege of the city and stopped their march into central Europe.⁴¹

Breivik’s views on Islam are influenced by the transnational counter-jihad movement, which started in the 1980s and spread via internet blogs throughout the United States and Europe, particularly after the 11 September 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks in the US.⁴² The counter-jihad movement defines the West as “a culturally unified” bloc that subscribes to “Judeo-Christian morality and liberal values”.⁴³ Breivik does not claim to be fighting for Norway but rather the whole of white-Christian Europe against what he perceives as the growing influence of Islam in Europe.

Breivik represents a modern far right that has pivoted away from arguments about race to culture. The counter-jihad movement has tried to distance itself from the overt racism of the wider and historical far right by framing their discourse as a critique of Islam, rather than of any particular race.⁴⁴ In his manifesto, Breivik does not mention the white supremacist notion of a superior Aryan race, but rather claims to preserve Western culture against foreign ones. Indeed, Breivik urges far-right activists to avoid words that might be tainted in history, like white supremacy, nationalism and race.

However, this appears to be strategic rather than ideological, and possibly an attempt to widen his audience. He claims that “a cultural conservative is a closet nationalist, who is just using different rhetoric to avoid the stigma”. Although Breivik’s manifesto attempts to differentiate his worldview from the racism of fascist and Nazi movements of the 1930s, he has associated himself with that ideology in other ways, including by giving a Nazi salute to the court in 2017 during his trial.⁴⁵ For the most part, Breivik interprets Western culture as the culture of white indigenous Europeans.

Victimisation

TABLE 2.2 Theme of Victimisation in Breivik's Manifesto

| Theme |
|--|
| Victimisation |
| Breivik's Narrative |
| Believes there is a global conspiracy to replace the white race |
| Quotes from Breivik's Manifesto |
| "It is a pretty terrifying prospect that the prevailing ideology that dominates Western Europe long term will result in the extermination of people like me and you. Nevertheless, it is the only plausible theoretical explanation of the current development. As such, multiculturalism is an inversed form of Nazism where white European Christians end up at the bottom of the food chain instead of on top." |

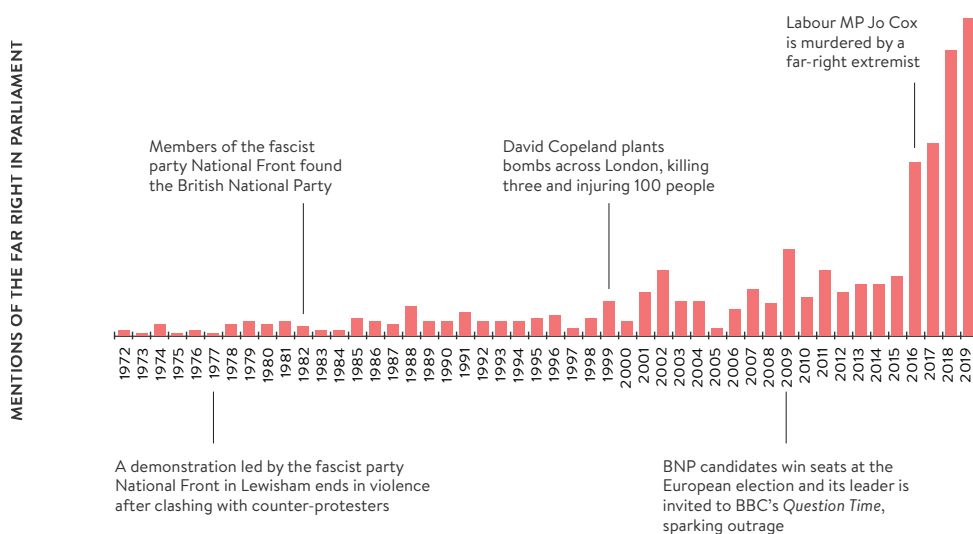
After painting Islam as the foreign enemy threatening the West, Breivik attacks the "domestic" forces that he thinks have allowed it to gain a foothold in Europe. For Breivik, the new domestic threat is cultural Marxism.

The term cultural Marxism was first used during 1920s by Marxist scholars such as Antonio Gramsci to posit that the socialist revolution had failed because it did not tackle the cultural values that allowed capitalism to exist.⁴⁶

To Gramsci, political change could only come with cultural change.⁴⁷ This idea was later adopted by the Frankfurt school, a Marxist school of social theory founded during the interwar period (1918-1939). When Jewish members of the Frankfurt school fled Nazi Germany for the US, right-wing conspiracy theorists claimed these cultural Marxists were undermining traditional Christian Western culture through feminism, multiculturalism, gay rights and atheism.⁴⁸ Given that this conspiracy was blamed on Jewish immigrants, the term carries deep anti-Semitic connotations.

Breivik refers to Western authorities and media as "cultural Marxists", whom he believes are engaged in a conspiracy to "replace" white, Christian people in Europe with Muslims and immigrants. The idea that the Northern European race is under threat of replacement can be traced back to 19th-century Europe, although it was not until before the First World War when this argument became a staple of far-right thought in the US. Replacement helped pave the intellectual and cultural foundations of white supremacism, including through novels such as *The Camp of Saints* (1975), a fictitious tale about Indian migrants invading the south of France to destroy white Christian civilisation⁴⁹, and *The Turner Diaries* (1978), about white people slaughtering black people, Jews and non-whites. The latter is said to be the inspiration for the killing of 168 people in the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing.⁵⁰ More recently the Christchurch terrorist titled his manifesto "Great Replacement".⁵¹

FIGURE 2.1 Mentions of Keywords in Anders Breivik's Manifesto



Source: Hansard

Anti-Establishment

TABLE 2.3 Theme of Anti-Establishment in Breivik’s Manifesto

| Theme |
|---|
| Anti-establishment |
| Breivik’s Narrative |
| Advocates complete overhaul of political system and rejection of democracy |
| Quotes from Breivik’s Manifesto |
| “A necessary first step toward recovery is to look at politics, social policy, and government emanating from Brussels with new eyes, unclouded by a lifetime of false information and deception propagated by elitist sponsors. Pretending any longer that the bought and paid for political prostitutes in your parliament and the EU parliament represent you or anyone you know is tantamount to cutting your own wrist with a razor blade. Self-destructive behaviour may qualify one for government “protected class status” under diversity laws, but it will not save you, your family, or your nation.” |

Breivik sees cultural Marxism as so prevalent that it extends to the entire European political establishment, including the EU, which he labels “undemocratic” and a “power grab by the elites”. A common theme that runs across Breivik’s concept of the so-called establishment is that of betrayal, suggesting that the current system is undermining or working against white Europeans.

Betrayal narratives are rooted in the emergence of the Nazi regime in the 1930s. In June 1919, Germany surrendered to the Allies and signed the Treaty of Versailles to end the war. The treaty led Germany to pay substantial reparations, disarm its army and hand over territory.⁵² In reaction to Versailles, a conspiracy gained traction that Germany had never actually lost in the battlefield, but rather had been allegedly stabbed in the back by traitors to the nation, including liberals, socialists and Jews.⁵³

To reverse cultural Marxism, Breivik’s manifesto advocates the creation of a “pan European conservative consolidation” that would be an alternative to the so-called establishment. He dedicates several chapters to explain how “cultural

conservative” movements should organise in Europe and in the US to promote the worldview of the far right. Breivik mentions anti-immigration parties, such as the Norwegian Progress Party (NPP), as role models of how far-right political parties in Europe should organise. Yet, he favours armed resistance instead of democracy because he thinks the system is rigged against parties like the NPP and will not change.

Justification of Violence

TABLE 2.4 Theme of Justification of Violence in Breivik’s Manifesto

| Theme |
|---|
| Justification of violence |
| Breivik’s Narrative |
| Urges people to fight to defend their religion or culture with force |
| Quotes from Breivik’s Manifesto |
| “The justification for use of armed resistance against the European cultural Marxist/multiculturalist systems is tied to the outlook for cultural conservative political success. You have to ask yourself; is it remotely possible under the current conditions that a conservative, monocultural political party will ever gain substantial political influence?” |

The second half of Breivik’s manifesto is titled “Declaration of pre-emptive war” and describes an imaginary future in which conservative forces launch an armed resistance against cultural Marxism and multiculturalism. Breivik envisions a Christian military organisation, which he calls the Knights Templar (no relation to existing organisations using the name), taking over Europe and re-enacting the Crusades. He imagines the conflict developing in three phases: in phase one patriotic youth movements emerge; in phase two these movements lynch “multiculturalist traitors”; in phase three these groups launch a coup d’état to create a new Christian Europe through civil war.

Breivik identifies different categories of traitors whom he charges with “abetting to cultural genocide and foreign invasion of Europe” and “contributing to institutionalised persecutions of individuals who attempt to resist the Islamic invasion”.

These include high-profile political leaders, EU parliamentarians, policy advisors and those he deems guilty by association for supporting the political system. These include professions such as doctors, teachers, artists, journalists and church leaders. He sees all these people as deserving of violent punishment. Breivik's terrorist attack reflected this thinking, as he targeted the government quarter and young members of the Norwegian Labour Party.

Breivik's manifesto contains a set of detailed instructions to commit a similar attack, including how to acquire weapons and avoid attracting suspicion. Court records show that a US Coast Guard lieutenant accused of plotting to kill politicians to defend his so-called "white homeland" studied Breivik's manifesto as a guide and identified a list of targets following Breivik's categories of so-called traitors.⁵⁴ As Berger has written, there is a dangerous "potency in the combination of words and demonstrable actions" for others to replicate violence.⁵⁵

SELECTION OF GROUPS

This report focuses on the messaging of UK activist groups with a platform to spread divisive narratives. We studied public remarks, media reports and parliamentary debates to identify groups that are currently active in the UK, and that authorities and social media companies have accused of and taken action against for holding or fostering extreme far-right views.

Our study eliminated groups without a modest public following (at least 5,000 followers on any one social media platform) and any group that was not regularly sharing content on at least one social media platform, as this was the medium through which we analysed their public messaging. We also eliminated individuals and proscribed organisations. For a detailed methodology, see the Appendix.

This led us to four groups for further study:

- Britain First
- For Britain
- British National Party
- Generation Identity England

Britain First

Britain First is a political movement, founded by a former British National Party member in 2011, that promotes Christianity to repeal the influence of Islam in society. Both the current leader and the former deputy leader have been found guilty of hate crime and hate speech against Muslims.^{56 57} Before it was banned from Facebook, it had close to two million followers, making it the second largest UK Facebook group after the Royal Family (in the category of Politics and Society).⁵⁸ The group gained prominence in 2017 when US President Trump retweeted a series of anti-Muslim tweets posted by its former deputy leader. The group was banned from Twitter in 2017 but its leaders are still active on GAB, a new social media platform that claims to defend free speech and is popular with the far right. The group's current leader has 14,000 followers.⁵⁹

For Britain

For Britain was founded in October 2017 as a political party by a former member of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) after losing that party's leadership contest. The leader of For Britain, who used to be involved with the anti-Islam organisation Pegida UK, is also the founder of Sharia Watch UK, a website that has been identified as being part of the counter-jihad movement. Before it was banned from Twitter, For Britain had around 17,000 followers and its leader had around 72,000 followers.

British National Party (BNP)

Founded in 1982 as a splinter from the neo-Nazi party National Front, the BNP is a far-right political party that claims Britain should be home to only white people. It is not represented at any level of government as in 2018 it lost its last councillor. Nonetheless, at its peak in the mid-2000s, the BNP had more than 50 councillors, a seat in the London Assembly and two MEPs. Its former leader received a suspended sentence for inciting racial hatred in 1998⁶⁰ and controversially appeared on the BBC's flagship political debate programme *Question Time* in 2009, sparking outrage at the channel for platforming far-right ideas.

In 2010, a court ruled that elements of the BNP's constitution were discriminatory because of the limitations it placed on non-white people becoming members, following legal action by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.⁶¹ The BNP has 13,100 followers on Twitter. In April 2019, Facebook banned the BNP and its former leader from its platform.⁶²

Generation Identity England

Generation Identity are the European founders of the Identitarian Movement, which promotes the conspiracy theory that white people are being replaced by non-whites in European nations. The main group was founded in France in 2003 and has since created branches across Europe, America, Australia and New Zealand. UK authorities barred one of the group's leaders from entering the UK in 2018, claiming that his presence was not "conducive to the public good".⁶³ He has since been permanently banned from entering the country for posing a serious threat to the UK's interests of preventing social harm and countering extremism.⁶⁴ In 2019, it emerged that the perpetrator of the terrorist attack against Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand, had donated money to Generation Identity via its leader Austria.⁶⁵ Generation Identity England was launched in 2017. Generation Identity England has 5,600 followers on Twitter, while the leader of the parent organisation in Austria has 34,200 followers.

These groups have diverse histories, modes of operation, sizes and levels of influence, but each has solicited action from one or more UK authorities or have been banned from social media platforms for promoting or holding problematic views of a far-right nature, as described above.

METHODOLOGY

We compared the public messaging of the four groups to assess where they fell on a spectrum of far-right views (from mainstream to extreme), based on the key themes identified in Breivik's manifesto. This included:

- preliminary research to assess whether the groups had engaged with these themes historically
- analysing and coding a three-month sample of the groups' Twitter activity (plus GAB activity for one group) from January to March 2018

This two-pronged approach was designed to minimise limitations. The background research provides a useful overview of the groups' past activities but may not reflect more recent developments in the groups' positions. Twitter activity gives a larger, more recent sample to analyse but is limited in content because tweets are restricted to 280 characters.

Comparing the groups' messaging with the four key themes in Anders Breivik's manifesto enabled us to measure each group's content and classify its views from mainstream to extreme. Anders Breivik's manifesto constitutes our baseline for violent far-right extremist messaging. Demarcating this framework reflects the researchers' judgements and could be open to interpretation. This framework can be used to assess other similar groups on the far right.

Britain First had already been banned from Twitter at the time when the coding took place and its official channel on social media platform GAB was inactive. We therefore coded the GAB accounts of the group's then leaders Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen. We judged both as representatives of the group's ideology since they were the only visible heads attached to the movement and had been publicly associated with the group, including in the social media content analysed. In September 2018, For Britain and its leader were also banned from Twitter for breaking the platform's guidelines on hate speech, though the content for this report came before the ban.⁶⁶

Chapter 3:

Narrative Overlaps of Activist Groups

Our analysis of hundreds of pieces of public content from the groups found that all the groups' messaging had a significant ideological overlap (70 per cent or higher) with the themes identified in Breivik's manifesto, except for justification of violence.

To understand how the groups engaged with the different themes, we delineated narratives from acceptable, mainstream views to those that could be classed as extreme (see table 3.1). This does not imply there is an inevitable progression from divisive to extreme ideas, or through the spectrum. Rather, it shows that divisive ideas can be ideologically linked to extreme narratives and how a more extreme worldview is founded on divisive ideas.

Applying this framework to the four groups, we classified the degree of severity of each group's messaging from mainstream to extreme. All groups share a very high narrative overlap with Breivik in the themes of the West vs. Islam, victimisation and anti-establishment (see figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4).

The theme of justification of violence was the only theme in which there was narrative distance. This is significant as violence is the line that authorities use to separate violent extremist groups from activist ones. However, the high percentage overlap in the rest of the narratives prompt a rethink in terms of what type of content is currently permissible within public discourse.

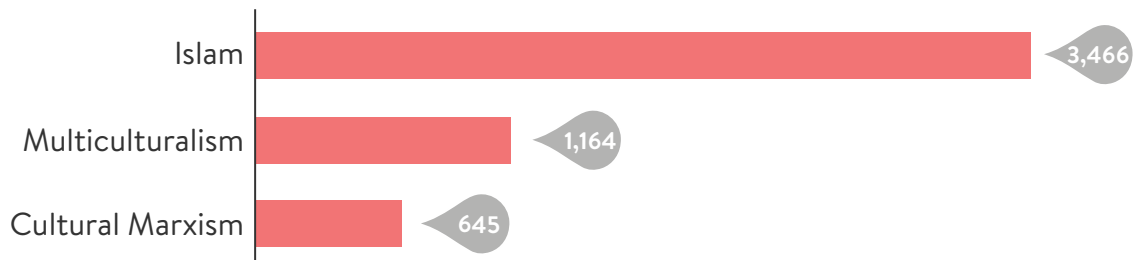
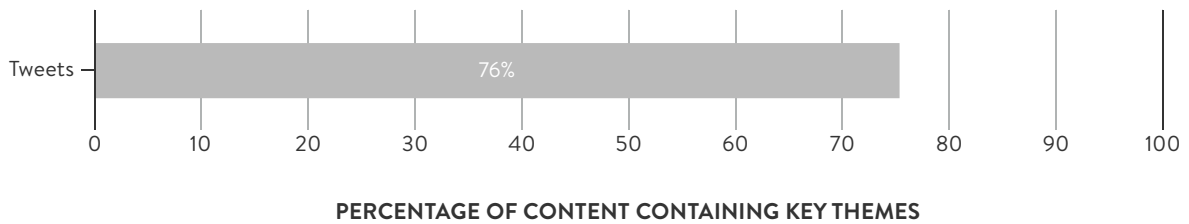
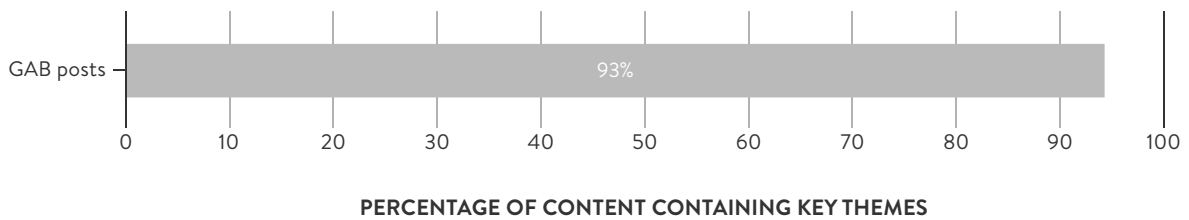
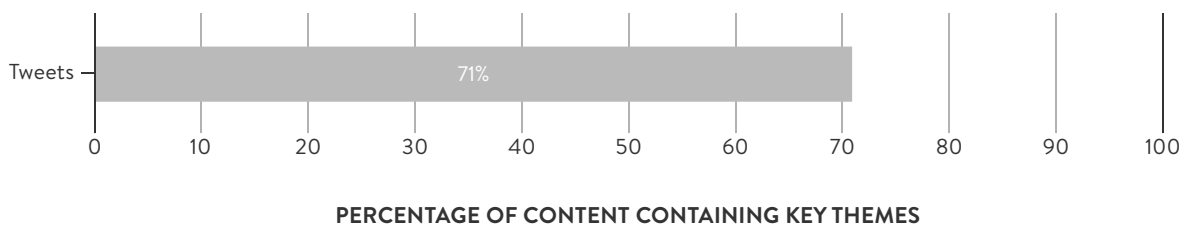
FIGURE 3.1 Prevalence of Three Key Themes in For Britain's Tweets**FIGURE 3.2** Prevalence of Three Key Themes in Britain First's Posts on GAB**FIGURE 3.3** Prevalence of Three Key Themes in Generation Identity's Tweets**FIGURE 3.4** Prevalence of Three Key Themes in British National Party's Tweets

TABLE 3.1 A Range of Positions on Four Key Narratives Themes

| | Islam vs. the West | Victimisation | Anti-Establishment | Justification of Violence |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| For Britain | | | | |
| Generation Identity England | | | | |
| Britain First | | | | |
| British National Party | | | | |
| Anders Breivik | | | | |

TABLE 3.2 Four Activist Groups' Narrative Overlaps with Anders Breivik on Four Key Themes

| | Islam vs. the West | Victimisation | Anti-Establishment | Justification of Violence |
|-------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Mainstream | Sees no conflict between being British and Muslim | Does not believe people are discriminated against for being white | May criticise but does not reject wider political system | Does not condone violence |
| | Criticises some aspects of Islam and multiculturalism | Believes political correctness can make it harder to be white | Believes certain 'elites' are responsible for an unjust system | Provides some justification for violence |
| | Believes in protecting British culture against multiculturalism | Believes that society is privileging minority groups ahead of white people | Accuses the 'elites' of betraying the 'people' | Argues that violent action is sometimes justified to achieve change |
| | Sees Islam as a growing and violent threat | Believes Britain is becoming unsafe for white people | Advocates drastic changes to the democratic system which it sees as corrupt | Openly supports individuals and groups who have committed acts of violence |
| Extreme | Believes that the Christian West should unite against Islam | Believes there is a global conspiracy to replace the white race | Advocates complete overhaul of political system and rejection of democracy | Urges people to fight to defend their religion or culture with force |

TABLE 3.3 Themes in Activist Groups' Public Content

| Theme | Sub-themes and Related Words |
|--------------------|---|
| The West vs. Islam | Christianity, cultural enrichment, death cult, diversity, evil, fundamentalism, grooming gangs, halal, immigration, incompatibility, integration, invasion, Islamisation, jihad, multiculturalism, no-go zones, religion of peace, Sharia, terrorism |
| Victimisation | Cover up, cultural Marxism, demographic change, discrimination, ethnic cleansing, Eurabia, lefties, feminism, freedom of speech, great replacement, indigenous, mainstream media, majority, minority, occupation, persecution, politically correct, prioritised, submission, victim culture, white genocide |
| Anti-Establishment | Alternative, betrayal, Brexit, Brussels, clean up, conspiracy, counterculture, elites, establishment, democracy, Donald Trump, globalisation, globalist, nation state, patriotic, people, treason, truth, undemocratic, unelected bureaucrats, Viktor Orbán |

THE WEST VS. ISLAM

The theme of the West vs. Islam was the second most recurrent theme in the groups' messaging, with 25 per cent of all the groups' tweets focusing on the theme. However, while Breivik suggests that Christianity is the only defence against what he perceives as the growing influence of Islam in the West, the groups studied in this report do not define the West as explicitly Christian. Rather, they define it as an ethnic entity that shares the same cultural values.

Out of all the tweets in the category of the West vs. Islam, 71 per cent belong to Britain First. Indeed, only Britain First has complete overlap with Breivik on this narrative. As a political movement, Britain First has promoted a form of street-based Christian activism that involves provocative tactics, such as entering mosques uninvited and then handing out Bibles and anti-Islam pamphlets.⁶⁷ These so-called Christian patrols were deemed to cause community tensions and led the police to obtain an injunction^v, banning Britain First activists from mosques in England and Wales.⁶⁸ Britain First members frequently dress up as crusaders and carry crosses during protests, evoking an idealised vision of a Christian soldier.⁶⁹ Its leaders often add the hashtag #OnwardChristianSoldiers to their posts on GAB.⁷⁰

^v Bedfordshire Police in 2016 successfully obtained a civil injunction preventing Britain First organisers from entering Luton town centre and Bury Park for three years. The injunction was enforced and following a breach, one organiser was taken to court.

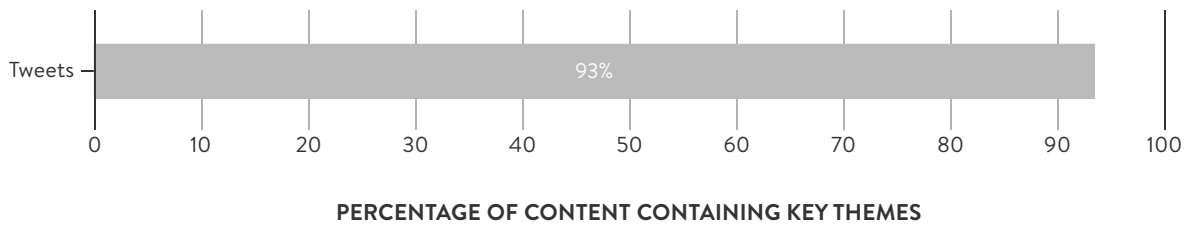
FIGURE 3.5 GAB Post by Paul Golding on Britain being a Christian Country

Paul Golding
@paulgolding

Britain is a Christian country! Sharia Law not welcome!

🗨️ ↺️ ❤️ ✉️

4 months

FIGURE 3.6 Prevalence of Theme of the West vs. Islam in Tweets and GAB Posts of Four Activist Groups**TABLE 3.4** Narrative Overlaps in Theme of the West vs. Islam

| | Islam vs. the West | Victimisation | Anti-Establishment | Justification of Violence |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| For Britain | | | | |
| Generation Identity England | | | | |

There are three main arguments that form the narrative of the West vs. Islam, which are replicated by all groups:

- Believing that Islamic scriptures **promote violent jihad and terrorism**
- Claiming that Muslim immigration to Western countries is paving the way for **implementing Sharia** and Islamic laws and **‘Islamifying’ Europe**
- Suggesting that Muslims are **more prone to committing sexual violence and rape**

Promotion of violent jihad and terrorism

These groups constantly mock characterisations of Islam as a religion of peace, blaming Islamist-inspired terrorism on Islamic scriptures and arguing that the Quran promotes violence. The former deputy leader of Britain First has described Islam as a “death cult”.⁷¹ In statements outside of the studied sample, a former leader of the BNP once referred to the Quran as “not a religious book, but a manual for conquering other people’s countries”.⁷²

This vilification of Islam applies to all Islamic symbols and practices, including the Quran, the Prophet Muhammad and halal food. In February 2019, activists from Generation Identity England gathered in Birmingham dressed up as Muslims and pretended to ‘slaughter’ the famous Bullring Bull statue to protest halal food, which they consider a “barbaric and inhumane practice” that has “no place in Europe” (see figure 3.7).⁷³

Sharia and Islamisation of Europe

Each group subscribes to Breivik’s conspiracy theory that the West is becoming more Islamised. References to an alleged increase of mosques and supposed no-go zones that they think are governed by Sharia law are constant in the groups’ messaging (see figures 3.8 and 3.9).⁷⁴ In March 2018, For Britain shared an article claiming that Islam is set to replace Anglicanism as the preferred religion of Britain’s youth, warning its followers that “your grandchildren will live under Sharia”.⁷⁵ The BNP used similar language in a tweet from January 2018, claiming that the UK will be an Islamic state in 25 years.⁷⁶

FIGURE 3.7 Generation Identity Activists Protesting Halal Food



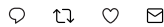
FIGURE 3.8 GAB Posts by Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen from Britain First about Islamisation

Paul Golding
@paulgolding

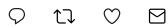
Is this what our forefathers fought and died for?

Jayda Fransen
@jaydafransen

The devastating reality...



2 months



A month

FIGURE 3.9 For Britain Picture about the Quran and 'Sex Slaves'



Sexual violence and rape

The idea that Muslims are prone to sexual violence is one of the most prevalent sub-themes in the messaging of the groups studied. For example, in January 2018, Fransen said that Muslims take child brides and commit rape to emulate the Prophet Muhammad.⁷⁷ On its website, For Britain has a picture of its leader at a demonstration against Islam, with a sign saying “Quran: A man is permitted to take women as sex slaves outside of marriage” (see figure 3.9).⁷⁸

While Breivik’s rhetoric scapegoats Islam and Muslims for violent crimes, he also extends the blame to immigrants from non-Western cultures. The term “rape” is mentioned 170 times in Breivik’s manifesto. Breivik advocates a divide between supposedly civilised Western nations and so-called uncivilised Islamic or third world countries, which is why he opposes multiculturalism. Far-right activist groups in the UK share this disdain towards immigrants. In a tweet published in January 2018, the BNP accused immigrants of “raping our children” and asked for their deportation.⁷⁹ In February 2018, Generation Identity England shared an article about the rise in sexual crimes in London, adding that we should not expect “somewhere subjected to mass migration and multiculturalism to remain peaceful for long”.⁸⁰

Consequences on the mainstream

Anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiments are increasingly prominent in the mainstream. Polling by anti-fascism group Hope not Hate in 2017 and 2018 showed that more than a third of those surveyed in the UK thought that Islam was a threat to the British way of life, while a quarter thought that Islam encourages violence.⁸¹ A 2018 study by the *Washington Post* found that newspaper coverage of Muslims in the US was overwhelmingly negative compared with coverage of other faith groups (over 78 per cent negative, compared with less than half for others).⁸²

The danger of demonising Muslims and Islam has visible consequences in public life. Our recent hate crime report documents how Muslims in the UK have borne the brunt of increases in hate crime. There is a need to recognise the extent that hate crimes might

be motivated by far-right ideology. Failing to do so masks the scale and threat of far-right activity.

VICTIMISATION

The theme of victimisation was the most recurrent for all groups in the dataset, accounting for almost half of all tweets. This narrative was especially relevant for the BNP (29 per cent of all victimisation tweets). The BNP’s language most closely resembles Breivik’s on this theme. In a tweet from February 2018, the BNP accused the BBC of being so-called Marxist propaganda, reminiscent of an image that Breivik included in his manifesto suggesting that the “C” in BBC stood for Communist (see figure 3.10). In a statement outside our sample from 2017, the BNP claimed that “the people in the West have been lulled to sleep by political correctness and the incessant propaganda of Marxism”.⁸³ The other groups do not use the term cultural Marxism, but instead refer to the left and leftists.

FIGURE 3.10 Breivik and the BBC



There are four arguments that form this narrative:

- Accusing authorities and media of **covering up crimes** committed by Muslims and immigrants
- Claiming that **freedom of expression is under threat**, and that anyone who opposes political correctness is branded a racist and denied a voice
- **Denigrating feminists** for supporting Islam
- **Claiming that white people are becoming a minority** in Europe because of mass migration

The studied groups frequently imply that authorities in Britain are turning a blind eye to a perceived threat from Islam because of government-enforced political correctness. In February 2018, Generation Identity England claimed that politicians needed to be brought in front of a judge for allegedly failing to intervene in the Rotherham child sex abuse scandal.⁸⁴

FIGURE 3.11 Prevalence of Theme of Victimisation in Tweets and GAB Posts of Four Activist Groups

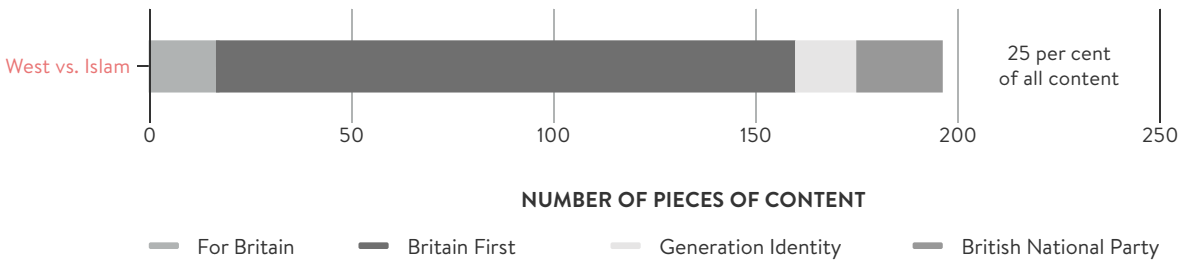


TABLE 3.5 Narrative Overlaps in Theme of Victimisation

| | Britain First | British National Party | For Britain | Generation Identity England |
|--------------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| The West vs. Islam | | | | |
| Anders Breivik | | | | |

The National Crime Agency (NCA) found in 2018 that around 1,510 children had been sexually abused in Rotherham in a period spanning 16 years and that 80 per cent of suspects were of Pakistani heritage.⁸⁵ The NCA were open about their failure to listen to and address all reports of abuse.⁸⁶ However, the far right has twisted these facts to suggest that politicians deliberately covered up and wilfully ignored the crimes to promote the interests of Muslims and Islam ahead of white Britons.

In an illustrative tweet from March 2018, For Britain implied that police “allowed girls to be raped” to avoid the “truth about men of the religion of peace”.⁸⁷ In a statement outside of the sample, the BNP accused several politicians and the Home Office of covering up “sex attacks on our young white girls” by “Muslim rape gangs” (see figure 3.12).⁸⁸ Blaming the entire Muslim population for the actions of a few is a key tenet of anti-Muslim hatred.⁸⁹

Freedom of expression

The groups mirror Breivik’s view that those who oppose what they call political correctness are branded as racist. This was a highly prevalent sub-theme in the sample. In his manifesto, Breivik claimed that there are only two types of Europeans: “politically correct surrender-monkeys”, who support cultural Marxism; and Nazis, who oppose “cultural Marxism”. In March 2018, UK authorities barred three anti-Islam activists, including the founder of Generation Identity, from entering the country. A Home Office spokesperson stated that the “Border Force has the power to refuse entry to an individual if it is considered that his or her presence in the UK is not conducive to the public good.”⁹⁰ In response, Generation Identity England claimed that their right to freedom of speech was being threatened and that this was a case of political censorship.⁹¹ In January 2018, the leader of Britain First claimed that the group was “under attack by the State and the police for criticising Islam”.⁹² Outside the studied sample, For Britain has claimed that their ability to speak their mind has been “radically undermined” and that democracy is “under threat”.⁹³

FIGURE 3.12 Facebook Post by the BNP on ‘Muslim Rape Gangs’ and British Politicians



Denigrating feminism

Feminism provokes ire in far-right narratives. Breivik's contention with feminism is twofold: he believes that feminism emasculates men and destroys traditional family values; and he thinks that feminists are wrong to defend mass migration and Islam because Muslims and other non-Western cultures are more sexist than white Europeans. Breivik's stance on feminism is an extension of his broader victimisation narrative. He believes white European men are unfairly labelled as sexist if they refuse to become "a touchy-feely subspecies" by "bowing to the radical feminist agenda".

This anti-feminism crusade is shared by the Incel (involuntary celibate) movement, who blame feminists, and often Jews whom they believe to be behind feminism, as being part of a conspiracy to deny men sex.⁹⁴ It goes as far as to say men are deserving of sex, and therefore justified in raping women.

The four far-right groups attack feminists of having double standards. In a tweet from February 2018, the BNP shared an article about female genital mutilation, accusing feminists of "hiding in the same PC [politically correct] place as the others".⁹⁵

In January 2018, Jayda Fransen from Britain First shared a picture of a woman holding a sign that reads: "Hey feminists! Now that you have the vote why don't you use it to defend women & girls from Islam sanctioned child marriage, polygamy, rape, domestic abuse, sex slavery, honour killings & subjugation?".⁹⁶ The leader of For Britain also tweeted that "feminism has gone full halal" as women can "cover in a black sack & live as slaves to religion" but not "wear a sexy dress".⁹⁷

Ironically, the groups claim to be defending women and their rights from oppression from Islam, though often this refers to an outdated faux-traditional view of women's role in society. By claiming to be the only ones defending white women from rape culture, grooming gangs or being forced to dress or act in a certain way, these groups are perpetuating another form of victimhood. Here white women are not only under threat, but also lack any agency to defend themselves, except with the help of the strong man that is idealised by the far right. Others have noted how Generation Identity use this white female victimhood trope to recruit women to their cause.⁹⁸

Great replacement

Finally, the most extreme extension of the victimisation argument promotes the conspiracy that white Europeans are being replaced by Muslims and immigrants from non-Western cultures. This is often referred to as the “great replacement”.

One of Generation Identity’s main objectives is to “stop and reverse the great replacement”.⁹⁹

In February 2018, Generation Identity England shared a tweet suggesting that Labour “is secretly planning to flood us with the migrants currently camping in the Calais Jungle” and that they are trying to “replace us”.¹⁰⁰ Generation Identity England has called for immigrants to “remigrate [sic]” and go back to their countries of origin to stop this replacement.¹⁰¹ Experts have likened this campaign for mass deportation of non-white Europeans to a form of ethnic cleansing.^{102 103}

In January 2018, the BNP accused multiculturalism and Western governments of committing white genocide (see figure 3.13 below). The myth of white genocide is

resonant in the BNP’s messaging, accounting for 14 per cent of all their tweets. This narrative is consistent with other statements that they have made in the past. In a promotional poster from 2016, the group displayed a picture of a young white girl alongside the caption “Rebecca will be in an ethnic minority group when she grows up” (see figure 3.13 below).¹⁰⁴

The great replacement is a modern, more euphemistic term that strips the previously popular white genocide theory of its violent, racialised connotations. This allows the far right to peddle the same ideologically driven conspiracy theory in the mainstream. By using cultural replacement as a proxy for race, far-right groups can find a wider audience for their victimisation narratives, while exploiting loopholes in free speech law that allow greater criticism of religious minorities than racial ones.

Consequences on the mainstream

Victimisation arguments show how the far right is manipulating facts to exacerbate anxieties about issues such as immigration, or concerns about changing traditional family or gender structures.

FIGURE 3.13 Facebook and Twitter Posts by the BNP on Ethnic Minorities and ‘White Genocide’



These narratives can be powerful in legitimising the movement and can serve as a recruitment mechanism. Populist political parties also co-opt these tropes: of sexual crimes committed by uncontrolled immigrant masses; of feminists and leftists who are complicit or apologetic for these crimes; and of the ultimate white, male victim. Often, this is opportunistic and contradictory. Spanish far-right party Vox, which recently gained 10 per cent of the vote in Spain's April 2019 national elections, is a recent example. Vox in June 2019 tweeted in response to the verdict on a high-profile gang rape case involving white Spanish men that domestic violence laws are only aimed at pitting women and men against each other. In the same thread however, Vox also claimed that media, politicians and feminists are ignoring "hundreds of immigrant wolfpacks" who are committing sexual crimes.¹⁰⁵

ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT

The theme of anti-establishment appears in 12 per cent of all tweets in the sample. It was most prevalent in For Britain's messaging, with 41 per cent of their tweets falling in this category. For Britain was founded as alternative to UKIP, after its leader lost that party's

leadership race. She has since strongly criticised the political system overall and UKIP specifically for not adopting a more hard-line position on Islam.¹⁰⁶ In a tweet from January 2018, For Britain said that it, "welcomes disillusioned UKIP members".¹⁰⁷

There are two sub-themes behind anti-establishment:

- Labelling so-called **elites for treason**
- Supporting international **conservative and right-wing movements**

Elites and treason

The groups frequently portray the so-called establishment as treacherous and anti-democratic. In a tweet from March 2018, the BNP claimed that the real enemy is not Russia, but "the traitors roaming around Westminster".¹⁰⁸ In another tweet, Generation Identity England praises far-right German party Alternative for Germany for "naming the guilty, anti-democratic parties" in Europe.¹⁰⁹ Outside of the Twitter sample, in December 2018 the BNP posted a meme with pictures of several British politicians and the title "drain the swamp".¹¹⁰

FIGURE 3.14 Prevalence of Theme of Anti-Establishment in Tweets and GAB Posts of Four Activist Groups

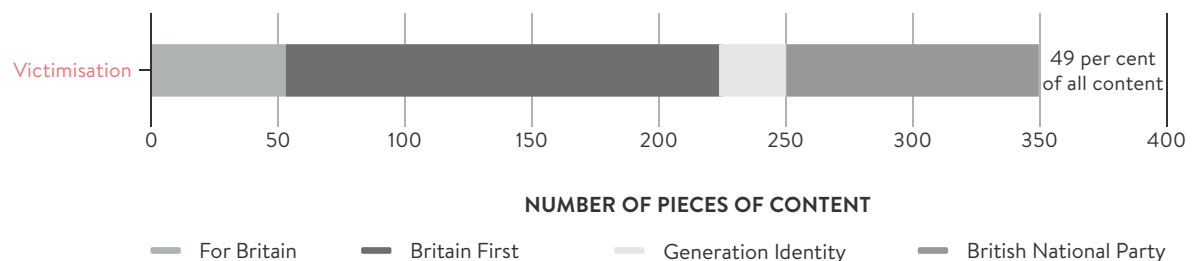


TABLE 3.6 Narrative Overlaps in Theme of Anti-Establishment

| | Britain First | British National Party | For Britain | Generation Identity England |
|----------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Victimisation | | | | |
| Anders Breivik | | | | |

Distrust for the EU has translated into fervent support for Brexit from each group. In February 2018, For Britain tweeted that public opinion against mass migration needed to be strengthened to “rid ourselves of the EU”.¹¹¹ In statements outside the studied sample, For Britain warned “Remoaner MPs” – a mocking expression to discredit MPs who voted to remain in the EU – that those who voted for Brexit will vote against parties trying to overturn the referendum and that they “will not be betrayed”.¹¹² This argument echoes Breivik’s disdain for the EU and so-called elites, which he painted as traitors and as corrupt.

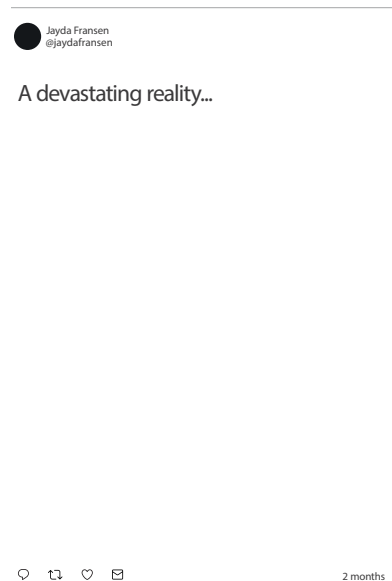
Conservative and right-wing movements

Breivik urged conservative movements to emerge to replace so-called cultural Marxism, although he was pessimistic about their potential democratic success. The groups studied in this report have coalesced in support of the growing far-right and populist movements in Europe and US. Viktor Orbán, the president of Hungary, is praised for his anti-immigration views, including his claim that “not even a single cent [of the EU’s budget] should be given to migrants.”¹¹³ In a GAB post from January 2018, Paul Golding from Britain First praised Orbán for putting “Hungary First”.¹¹⁴

In another post, Jayda Fransen from Britain First shared a meme imagining the before and after reaction of several figures after hearing the Islamic phrase *Allahu Akbar* (see figure 3.15). This image painted Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin as strong figures standing up to Islam, as opposed to others they consider supportive of Islam like German Chancellor Angela Merkel. This showcases how the groups push the message that only anti-establishment politicians, like Trump and Orbán, can reverse what they perceive as a corrupt system that submits to Islam.

These groups have also allied with other street-based protest groups to challenge and change traditional British politics. For example, in March 2018 the leader of For Britain spoke at a rally organised by far-right group Football Lads Alliance (now the Democratic Football Lads Alliance), which formed in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester in 2017. In a tweet from March 2018, For Britain

FIGURE 3.15 GAB Post by Jayda Fransen on Politicians’ Reactions to Hearing Allahu Akbar



reproduced its leader’s appeal to the crowd that “your first job is to believe you can change it”, referring to British politics.¹¹⁵ In January 2018, Generation Identity highlighted the importance of “joining together” with right wing groups to “help preserve our identity”.¹¹⁶

Consequences on the mainstream

Anti-establishment rhetoric is a strong recruitment tool and helps to further distinguish an in-group of far-right sympathisers from a broader out-group. This creates a powerful sense of identity and belonging, attractive to those disconnected or disenchanted with current politics.

Several activist groups in the far right are attempting to transition into mainstream politics by presenting themselves as the only forces standing up to the threat presented by Islam and the elites. Populist parties across Europe have already adopted this anti-establishment rhetoric. Our previous work mapping 46 populist leaders in power between 1990 and 2018 found that 37 of them held anti-establishment views, defined as a populism that presents “true people as hard-working victims of a state run by special interests and outsiders as political elites”.¹¹⁷ Examples include the Five Star Movement and Northern League in Italy.

For those disillusioned with government and politics, far-right groups can be a protest vote. However anti-establishment views combined with a sense of belonging offered by some of these groups can be a gateway to more extreme and dangerous narratives.

JUSTIFICATION OF VIOLENCE

The main distinction between Breivik and the four groups is that the groups do not commit or justify violence. There is no evidence of any of them advocating violence or illegality. However, the close convergence of the other themes shows a pattern of extremist messaging and an overlapping ideological framework. Far from dismissing the problematic nature of these nonviolent groups, this points to the difficulty in defining extremism when violence remains the clearest threshold.

Our analysis of the groups' positions shows at most an apparent willingness to reason the violence committed by others in the cause of far-right ideals. This rhetoric was not prevalent within the sample period, though our analysis of other statements shows some engagement with this theme. Reactions from For Britain's leadership to the March 2019 Christchurch terror attack exemplify this. Although they clearly condemn the violence, For Britain also find reasoning in it:

"Only fear can prompt actions like this. People are afraid. They are afraid of the changes in our countries, in Western countries, to something we no longer recognise and they're afraid of Islam... If this continues, what do you expect to happen? People all over the Western world have been ignored for years about their concerns about immigration, Islam, globalisation. This is the result. This is the result. And it's time we started talking about why Western people react the way they do, rather than just why Muslims react the way they do."¹¹⁸

This quote exemplifies how hard it is to draw the line in connection to violence. For Britain's leadership also claimed that the attack would be used to silence activist groups like themselves, whom they believe are wrongly labelled as the far right.

The BNP reacted in a similar way to the Christchurch terror attack, blaming multiculturalism and "the corrupt and despised political class" for the attack, which they nonetheless describe as a "horrific criminal act of brutality".¹¹⁹

In a video published in March 2019, several activists from Generation Identity England discussed the Christchurch terror attack and claimed that it was "symptomatic of our governments' globalist policies".¹²⁰ Generation Identity England present themselves as a bulwark to violence by acting as a legitimate voice for peoples' grievances. Referring to the Christchurch attack, one of their leaders said:

"Actually, we have been trying to talk about the reasons for episodes such as this for decades and we've been silenced. So rather than taking ownership, we've actually been working to make sure things like this don't happen because violence, in almost all of its forms, is inevitable in societies."¹²¹









Their statements present the attack as an inevitable consequence of multiculturalism. This allows the groups to downplay any underlying role of ideology behind the attack. For example, two of the leaders of Generation Identity England wrote the Christchurch attacker off as a "neurotic" individual who suffered from mental illness, while complaining that mainstream media is trying to "attribute the blame to individuals or groups that have wanted to speak critically about mass immigration, about things like the great replacement".¹²²

Consequences on the mainstream

Separating themselves from violence is vital for groups to legally operate in the UK. The government deems any relation to violence unacceptable and these groups recognise this. By eschewing the violence of past far-right or neo-Nazi movements, these groups become more presentable and attractive to a wider audience – in a similar vein to moving away from racialised or violent terms like white genocide. However, the level of overlap with the ideas of a convicted terrorist, with the exception of violence, should make government feel uneasy about the platform these groups have. A reorientation of our definition of extremism is therefore vital.

The far right still retains violent fringes, particularly in neo-Nazism and white supremacy. The UK has already banned one group, National Action, while Canada in June 2019 added two more, Blood & Honour and Combat 18, to its list of terrorist organisations.¹²³ Others like the neo-Nazi Atomwaffen Division (Sonnenkrieg Division in the UK) have also had members jailed for terrorism offences.¹²⁴ In addition to tackling the nonviolent far right, the UK needs to continue to use its existing tools to tackle violent far-right actors.

TABLE 3.7 Narrative Overlaps in Theme of Justification of Violence

| | Britain First | British National Party | For Britain | Generation Identity England |
|--------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Anti-Establishment |  |  |  |  |
| Anders Breivik |  |  |  |  |

Conclusion

Our analysis of the messaging of four prominent far-right activist groups in the UK showed the significant overlap their worldviews have with that of Anders Breivik. Although many of these activist groups operate in the grey space between activism and extremism – and many attempt to distance themselves from the far-right label – we show they share a single, connected ideology. This analysis can equip policymakers with a resource to help delineate extremist rhetoric from political activism.

Within this divisive far-right ideology, the people are pitted against the corrupt elites; the white race is a victim of supposed genocide or conspiracies to replace them; and Islam is the true enemy of Western civilisation. To varying degrees of severity, all the far-right activist groups studied in this report align to some extent with this overarching worldview.

Yet ironically, while many of these groups present a narrow, ethno-nationalist worldview, they are part of a transnational ideology, which terrorists like Breivik or the Christchurch attacker have violently embodied. Not only do these groups perpetuate this ideology within the UK context, they also benefit from a global network of activists and media outlets (that fall beyond the remit of this study) that propagate similar messaging, potentially to millions of followers.

Political leaders must do more to directly challenge the ‘us vs. them’ narratives of such problematic activist groups. Counter-narratives require accuracy and political leadership from across the political spectrum. There should be greater consistency on how policymakers and civil society label and publicly refer to far-right groups, avoiding misnomers like fascist that are often unsuitable for a different modern threat. This would make it harder for such divisive groups to evade accusations or concerns directed at them.

This report complements our previous work on UK Islamist-inspired activist groups. Our findings across both reports show the parallels between the victimisation narratives of both far-right and Islamist groups, and their mutual view of an opposition between the West and Islam. Our cumulative research shows that these shared worldviews are based on feelings of victimisation, and a wariness of the establishment and ‘the other’. Our forthcoming work will seek to understand the extent to which such narratives from both far-right and Islamist-inspired groups are resonating with people in the UK. As politics in Britain and across the West becomes increasingly polarised, it is time for leaders to address the ideas that fuel these divisions, before they irrevocably damage social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

Appendix:

Methodology

This report analyses the messaging of four UK activist groups that UK authorities and social media platforms have expressed concern about for holding or advancing divisive or extreme views of a far-right nature. To identify the groups to include in the study, we selected UK-based activist groups that:

- have elicited enough concern for UK authorities (including government officials, parliamentary bodies, MPs and law-enforcement) or social media platforms to take action against them
- are not proscribed
- maintain at least a modest public following, as measured by more than 5,000 followers on at least one social-media platform
- are active in public engagement, as measured by the consistent use of a social media account in the period studied between January and March 2018

Applying these criteria, we identified the following groups:

- Britain First: banned on two social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) for violating the platforms' guidelines regarding hate speech.^{125 126} Its leader and former deputy leader were jailed in May 2017 for religiously aggravated harassment,¹²⁷ and its former deputy leader has been found guilty of hate speech against Muslims.¹²⁸
- British National Party: banned on Facebook for violating its guidelines regarding hate speech.¹²⁹ Its former leader, who has also been banned from Facebook,¹³⁰ received a suspended sentence for inciting racial hatred in 1998.¹³¹
- For Britain: banned on Twitter for violating its code of conduct regarding hate speech.¹³²
- Generation Identity England: the leader of the parent organisation in Austria was barred from entering the country in March 2018, because the UK Border Authority considered that his presence was not "conducive to the public good".¹³³ The Home Office has permanently excluded him from the UK on security grounds for posing a serious threat to the UK's interests of preventing social harm and countering extremism.¹³⁴

We adopted a two-part methodology to analyse the public messaging of the four groups, including:

- preliminary research to assess whether the groups had engaged with these themes historically
- analysing and coding a three-month sample of the groups' Twitter or GAB activity from January to March 2018

We analysed all tweets published by each group's primary Twitter account between January and March 2018. This accounted to a total of almost 800 pieces of public messaging for the four groups. A longer period of analysis was beyond the scope of this study but could be useful in future analyses. Since Britain First had already been banned from Twitter at the time when the coding took place, and its official channel on social media platform GAB was inactive, we coded the GAB accounts of the group's then leaders Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen. We judged it was accurate to portray both as representatives of the group's

messaging as they were the only visible figure heads attached to the movement and their accounts were clearly associated with the group.

This two-pronged approach was designed with the limitations of each individual method in mind:

- the background research provided a useful overview of the groups' past activities but may not have reflected more recent developments in their positions
- the Twitter activity provided a larger, recent sample with a bulk of data to analyse but was limited in length of content because tweets are restricted to 280 characters

We compared the messaging of the groups with that of a convicted extreme-right terrorist, Anders Breivik. This method enabled us to establish a benchmark against which to measure the messaging of the groups.

The conclusions reached in this report regarding the levels of overlap that the messaging of these groups have with that of Anders Breivik are based on analysis of hundreds of pieces of public messaging for each group, as well as the researchers' judgements. Therefore, these conclusions are based in part on opinion and could be subject to interpretation.

In studying Anders Breivik's manifesto, we identified four key themes that underpin his worldview. Using Breivik's narratives on each of the four themes as a benchmark of extreme views, we developed a catalogue of the four non-proscribed activist groups' public messaging to identify how, if at all, those groups approach these four concepts.

We chose to code Anders Breivik's ideology as the baseline for extremist messaging because:

- he is one of the most high-profile extreme-right terrorists, who killed 77 people in Norway in 2011
- he has inspired at least five other copycat extreme-right terrorist attacks, including the Christchurch attack in New Zealand
- his 1,500-page manifesto provided a valuable primary source of the ideas that motivated his attack

TABLE A1 The Four Key Themes and Narratives in Anders Breivik's Manifesto

| Theme | Breivik's narratives |
|---------------------------|--|
| The West vs. Islam | Believes that the Christian West should unite against Islam |
| Victimisation | Believes there is a global conspiracy to replace the white race |
| Anti-Establishment | Advocates complete overhaul of political system and rejection of democracy |
| Justification of Violence | Urges people to fight to defend their religion or culture with force |

While we acknowledge that a UK-based proscribed far-right group, such as National Action, would also constitute a suitable baseline of extremist messaging, its proscribed status and the lack of past public statements to the media from its leadership meant there was very limited publicly available content from the group.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

One of the primary limitations of this research is that it has not examined all groups that have solicited concern for holding divisive or extreme views of a far-right nature. Our preliminary list included 31 organisations, individuals and media platforms that could fall into this category. The methodology for this report largely mirrors the methodology of our previous research report, *Narratives of Division: The Spectrum of Islamist Worldviews in the UK*, in which we analysed the social media messaging of UK-based activist groups accused of holding divisive or extreme views of an Islamist nature. Both reports cover the same time period, between January-March 2018, though this could be extended in future studies.

It was outside of the remit of this report to examine the messaging of individuals who might espouse similar views to the groups examined in this report. Further research could explore the extent to which the ideology of prominent individuals in the far right resonates with the baseline of extremist far-right messaging. This report has also not sought to measure the influence or reach of these groups, nor the resonance of their messaging among the British public.

Our forthcoming work will seek to understand this through public opinion polling.

In the course of our research, we also identified several alternative media platforms that were amplifying the messaging of the far-right groups studied in this report, which hinted at a transnational network of activists and media platforms actively working together to promote this far-right ideology. While it was outside of the scope of this report to examine the extent of these transnational connections between far-right UK-based groups and individuals, it would constitute a valuable area for future studies in this area.

Given the diverse nature of the far right, we acknowledge that the ideology of other groups or individuals could also constitute a suitable baseline of extremist messaging against which to assess nonviolent far-right groups. For example, our table of positions on narrative themes could be modified to apply in more detail to neo-Nazi or white supremacist groups, by including themes relating to anti-Semitism, the superiority of the white race, or conflicts between white people and other races.

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