

The Interplay Between Extremist Narratives

Understanding and Countering Cumulative Extremism in the Digital Space

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Open Meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on countering terrorist narratives and preventing terrorist use of the Internet

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ISD's Work on Counter-Narratives



The Intertwined Narratives of Islamist and Far-Right Extremists

Research Methods

- Digital ethnographic research
- Statistical analysis of terrorism datasets
- Digital analytics (i.e. linguistic analyses)
- Field studies (UK, France, Germany and the US)
- Interviews with extremists, formers and experts

Findings

- Parallels and interplay of goals, narratives, strategies and tactics
- Mutual amplification of narratives and mobilisation interdependence
- Amplification of the meta-narratives and spiraling hate torrents by identity politics and new media eco systems
- Cases of tit-for-tat violence but also cases of explicit and implicit collaboration and cross-inspiration



Extremists Are Early Adopters of Technology



The Goal

To bring about political and/or societal change

Strategies

Meta-political

- Influencing elections and pressuring existing governments via (dis)information operations, campaigns or protests

Militant

- Orchestrating or inspiring acts of violence and terrorism

Tactics

- Radicalisation campaigns → sympathisers
- Influencer campaigns → "normies"
- Intimidation campaigns → opponents

Collective Victimhood and Inevitable War Narratives

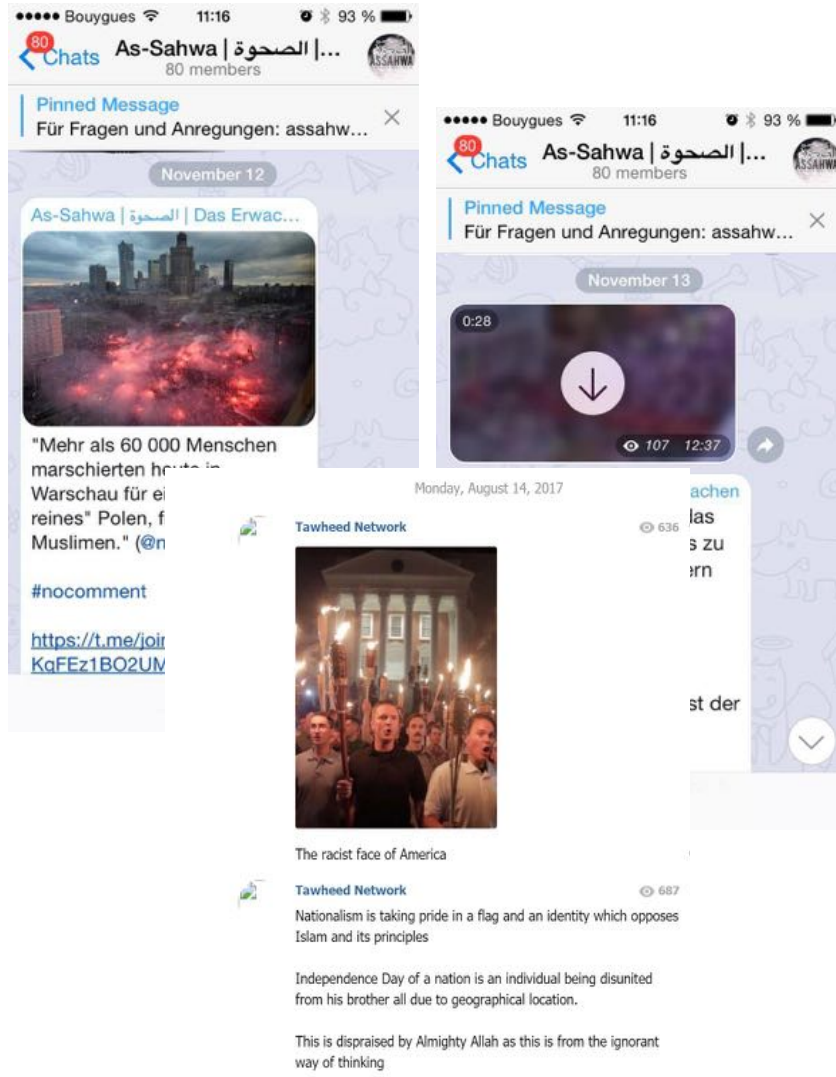
“The West is at war with Islam”



“Islam is at war with the West”

		Islamist Extremist	Far-Right Extremist
	Event	A beheads B.	A beheads B.
	Story	Brave soldier of Allah beheads infidel.	Vile Muslim terrorist beheads Western hostage.
	Narrative	Islam fights back against imperialist West.	Evil Islam attacks West, seeking to extinguish it.
	Master Narrative	Islam vs. Crusaders: War between Muslims and non-Muslims is inevitable.	Islam vs. Crusaders: War between Muslims and non-Muslims is inevitable.

Narrative Interaction: Jihadists' Use of Far-Right Extremism

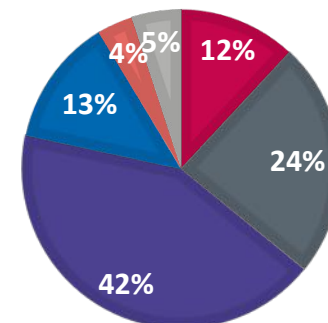


Research Summary

- Extraction of all 2016/2017 contents of five Islamist and five far-right Facebook pages
- Keywords-based analysis of victimhood and demonisation narratives: 1877 relevant keywords in 5163 analysed Posts and 35851 comments found
- Complementary qualitative research in closed Telegram and Discord forums

VICTIMHOOD NARRATIVES IN GERMAN ISLAMIST FB GROUPS

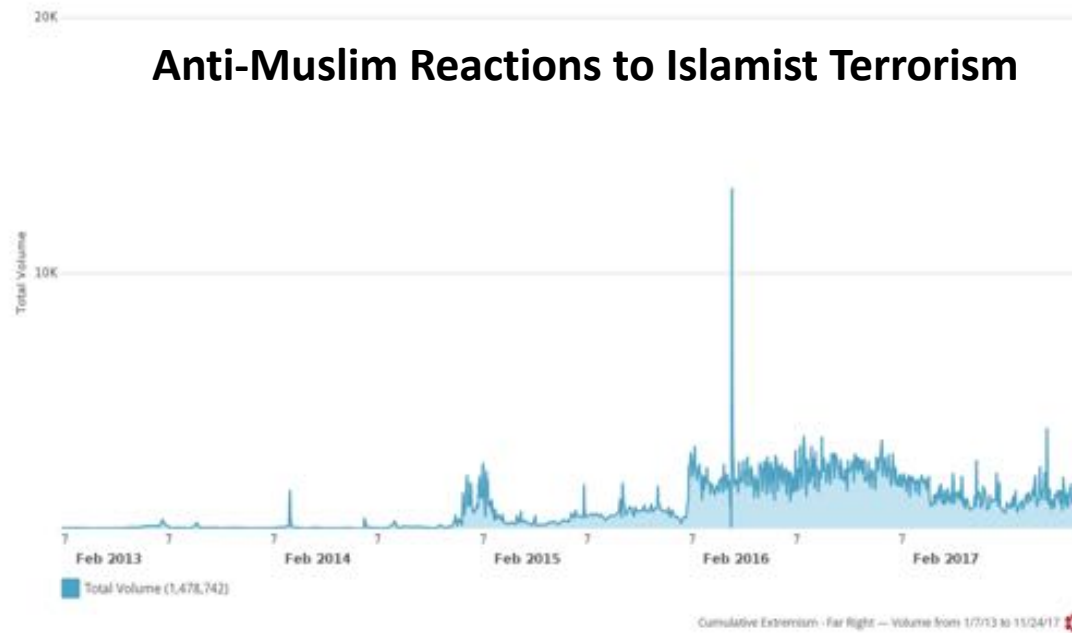
- Discrimination
- Oppression and persecution
- Anti-Muslim hatred
- Racism
- Crusades and historic narratives
- AfD and Pegida



Narrative Interaction: White Nationalists' Use of Islamist Terrorism

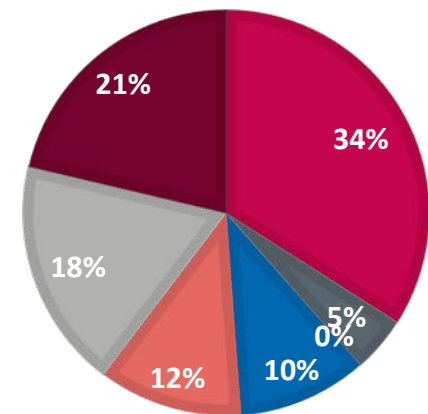
Research Summary

- We used Graphika's map of the German political spectrum
- We conducted a narrative analysis for the 10,000 posts Graphika identified as part of the far-right extremist spectrum
- We then analysed the key hashtags and topics used by these far-right accounts

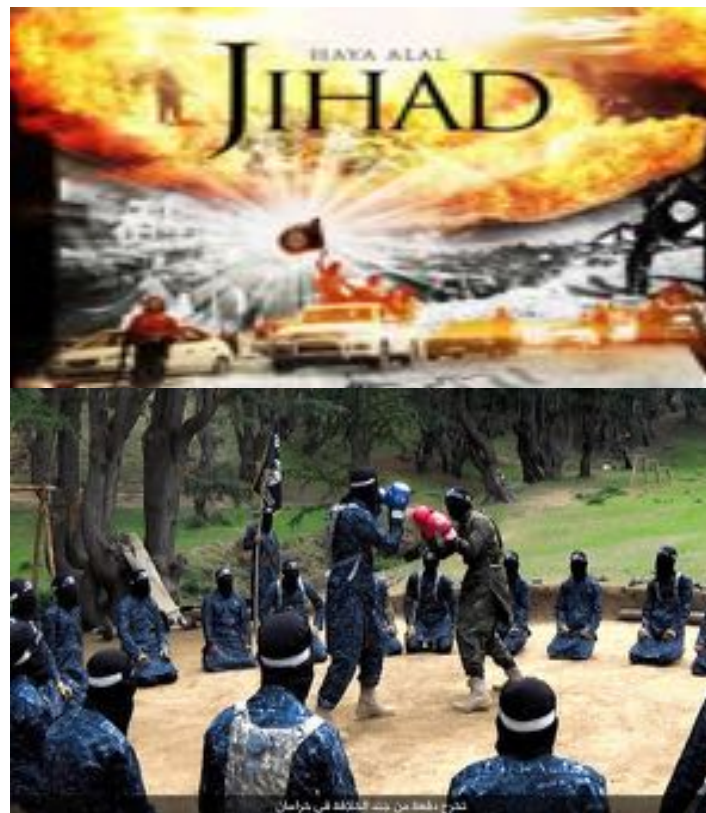


TOPICS OF GERMAN FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISTS

- Islamist Terrorism
- Mainstream Media and Reporting
- Freedom of Speech
- Security Forces
- The Left
- Immigration
- Other



Cross-Inspiration and Communication Parallels



Counter-Cultures Eliminating Grey-Zones and Targeting Generation Z



Islamist Propaganda Targeting
“greyzone Muslims”, especially Gen Z

Far-Right Propaganda targeting “the normies”, especially Gen Z



Radicalising Digital Natives: Strategies and Tactics

Activities to mainstream fringe ideologies and radicalise young audiences include:

The Creation of Extremist Echo Chambers

- Emerging alt-tech platforms and tools create self-radicalizing filter bubbles
- Hyper-targeted campaigns are used to exploit grievances of vulnerable sub-groups

Opportunistic Coalition Building

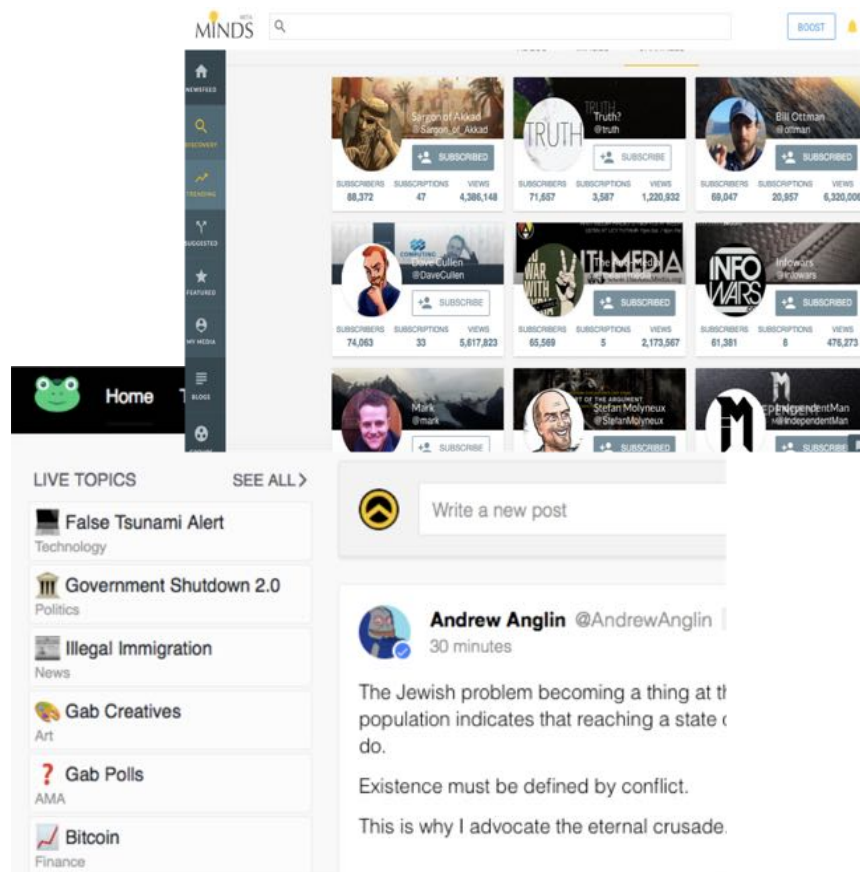
- Cross-border collaboration leads to global echo chambers
- Cross-ideological collaboration is used to increase the reach of campaigns

The Weaponisation of Youth Culture

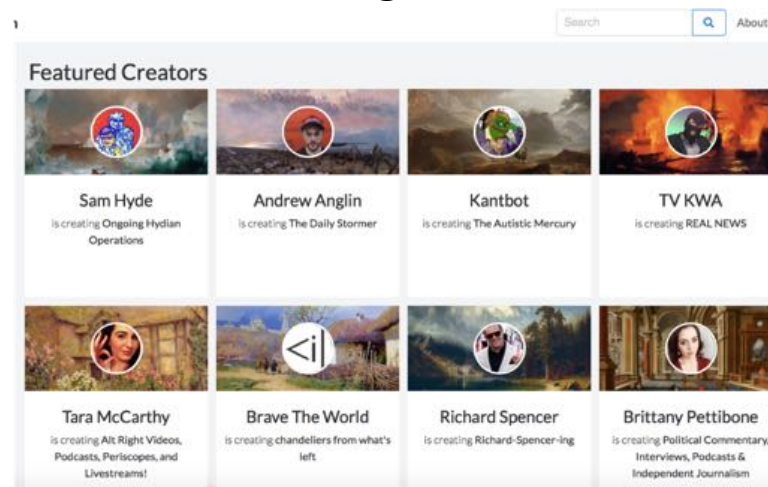
- Gamification is used to reach Generation Z
 - Humour and transgression are employed to mainstream fringe ideologies
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Extremist Echo Chambers: The Alt-Tech Alliance

Alt-Social Media Platforms



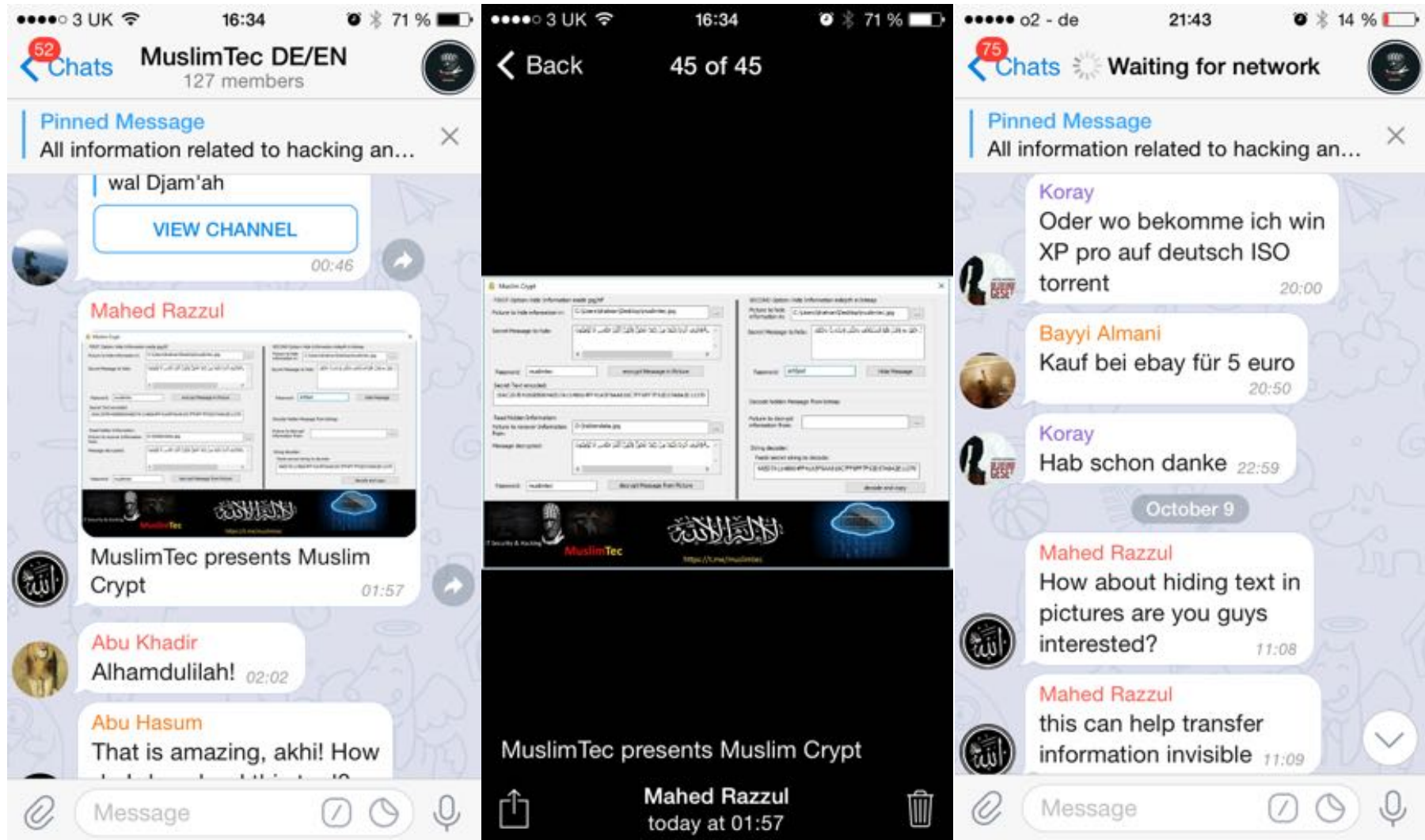
Alt-Crowdsourcing Platforms



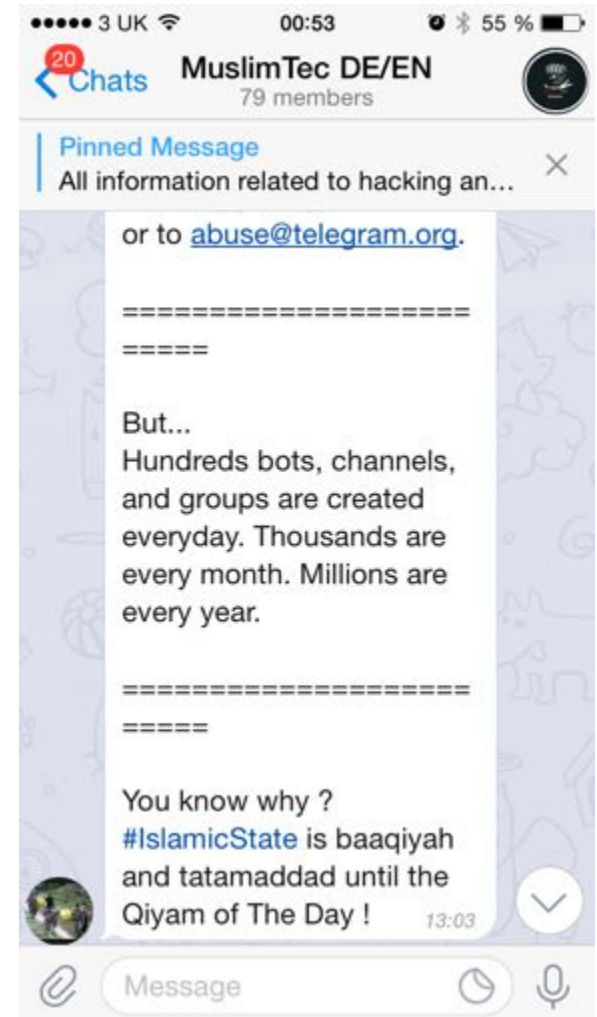
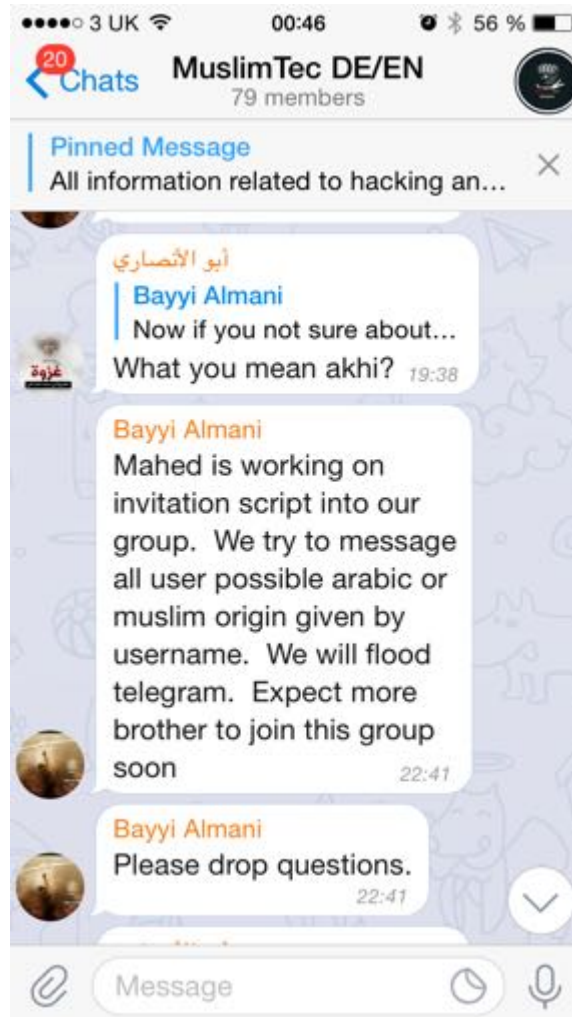
Alt-Dating Platforms



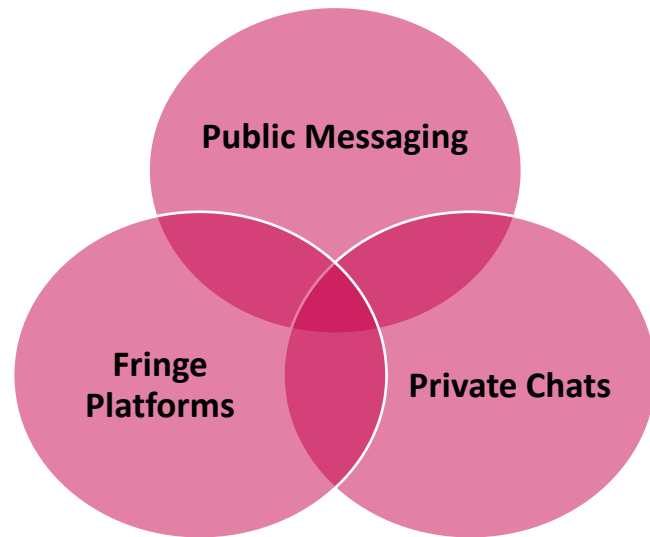
Extremist Echo Chambers: “Muslim Script” and Islamist Encryption Tools



Hyper-Targeted Campaigns: ISIS Mass invitations to Arabic and Muslim Accounts



Hyper-Targeted Campaigns: The Charlottesville “Unite The Right” Micro-Marketing

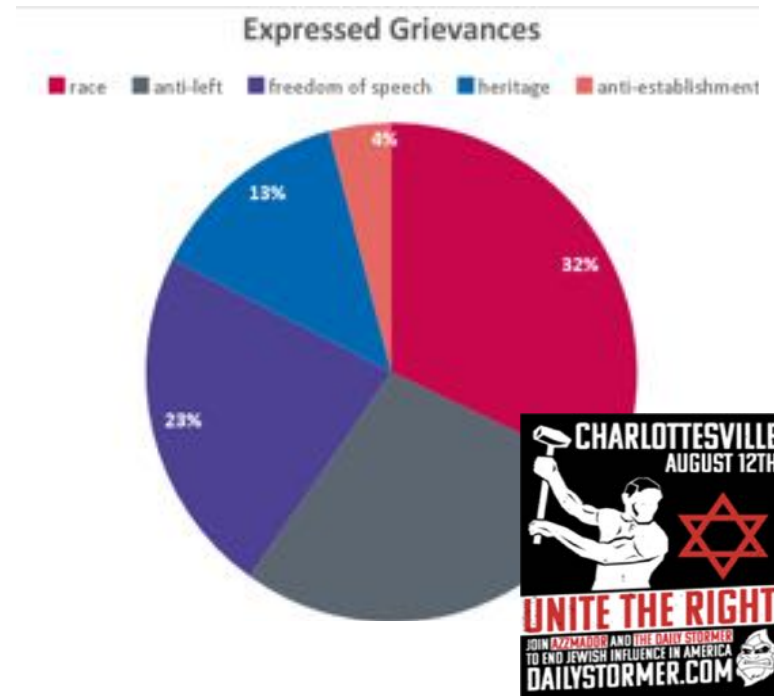


Cross-Platform Discourse Analysis:

Analysis of 10,000 posts and 200 pieces of propaganda across a range of platforms found strongly differing messaging tactics and language tailored to target audience

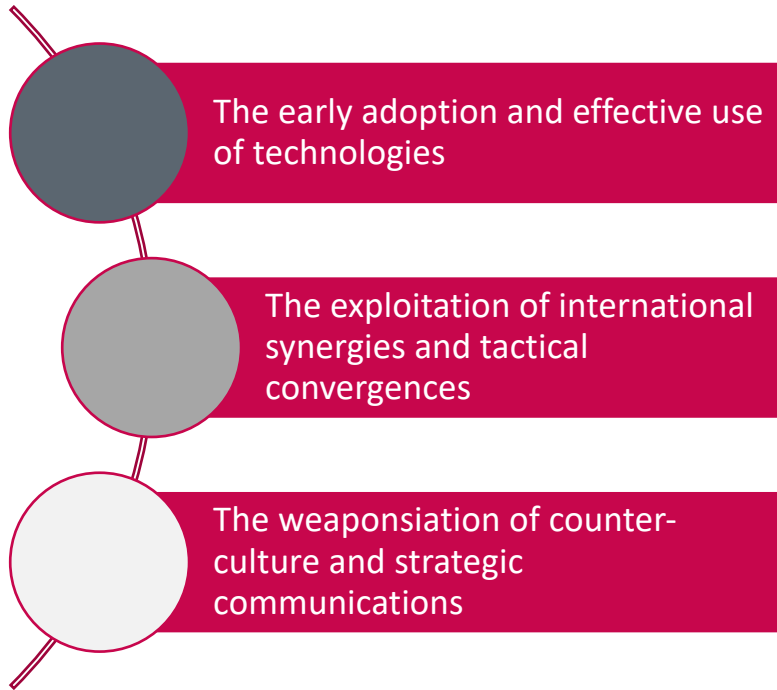
Frequent Keywords:

antifa communist left leftists multiculturalism
sjws amendment freedom free speech heritage
monument southern #whitepeople anti-white
diversity identity immigration jew white

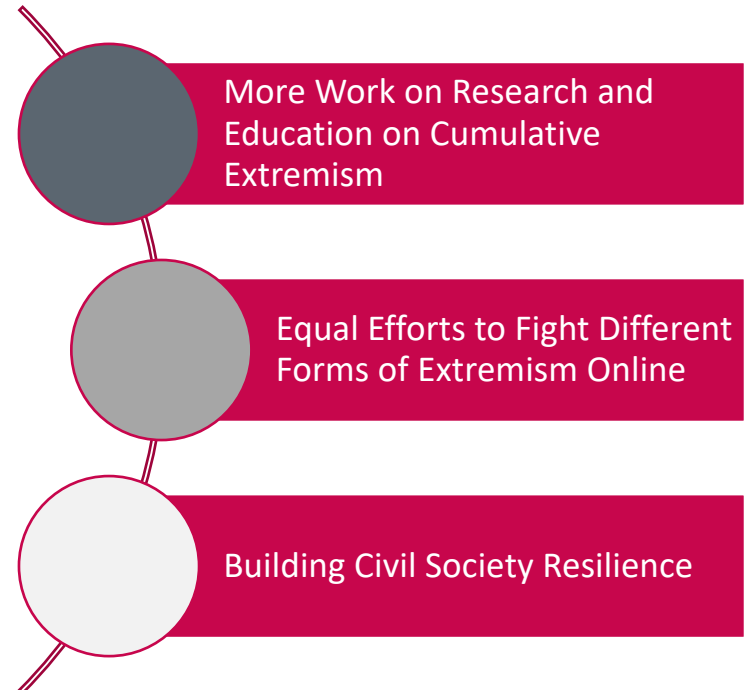


Conclusions and Recommendations

Extremists are currently ahead of the curve on at least three levels:



The Intertwined relationship of different forms of extremism means:



ISD's Counter-Narratives M&E: Findings 1/3

Counterspeech content is most effective when it...

... looks organic



... encourages engagement



Laut Gegen Nazis "Like-Attack" (EN)
59,778 views

... has emotional appeal



"There Is Life After Hate"
11,701 views

Experimental Counterspeech

- ❖ Video Games & App Games
- ❖ Interactive Videos
- ❖ Music: Hip Hop for CVE
- ❖ Charity/Volunteering
- ❖ Discussion forums/Q&As

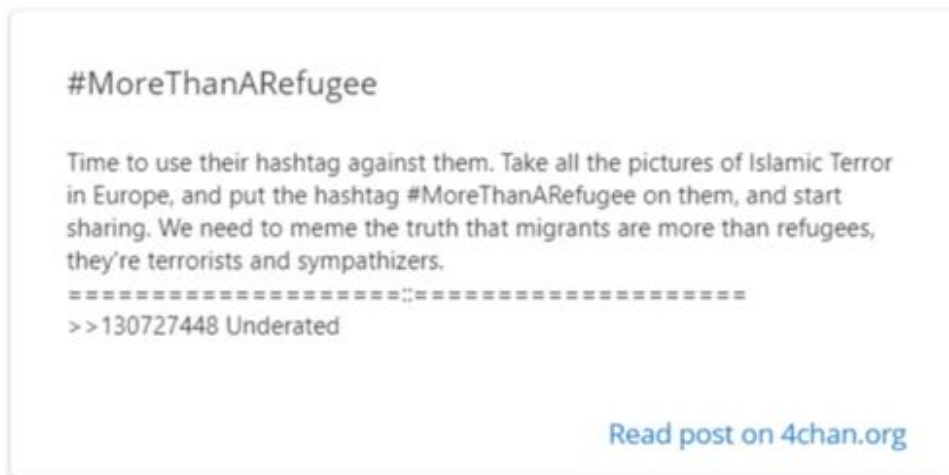
ISD
Counterspeech
Risk Framework

-
1. Trivialisation
 2. Negative Belief Re-enforcement
 3. Branding, Affiliation and Authenticity
 4. Unintended Exposure of Propaganda
 5. Cumulative Extremism
 6. Unsegmented Target Audience
 7. Identification of High-Risk individuals
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ISD's Counter-Narratives M&E: Findings 3/3

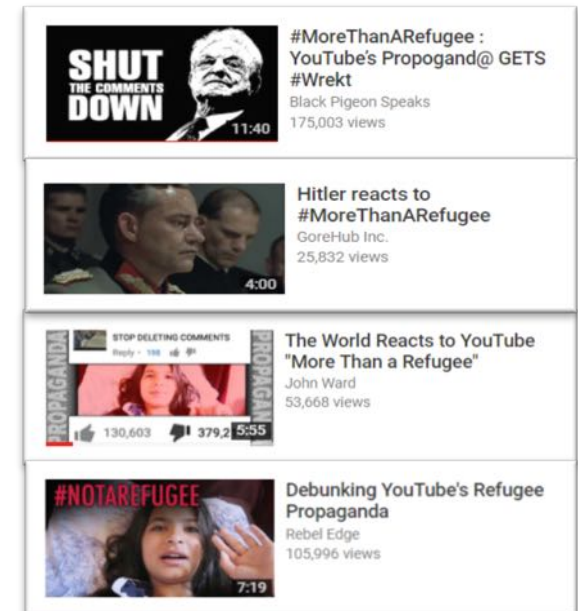
Case Study:

YouTube's #MoreThanARefugee video published on June 2



Our analysis revealed a disproportionate amount of people who responded negatively to the #MoreThanARefugee campaign operated on forums and blogs.

Once audiences on Facebook and Twitter were activated, the popular narratives moved from refugees as terrorists, to threats on free-speech, anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism.



Info from the negative campaign:

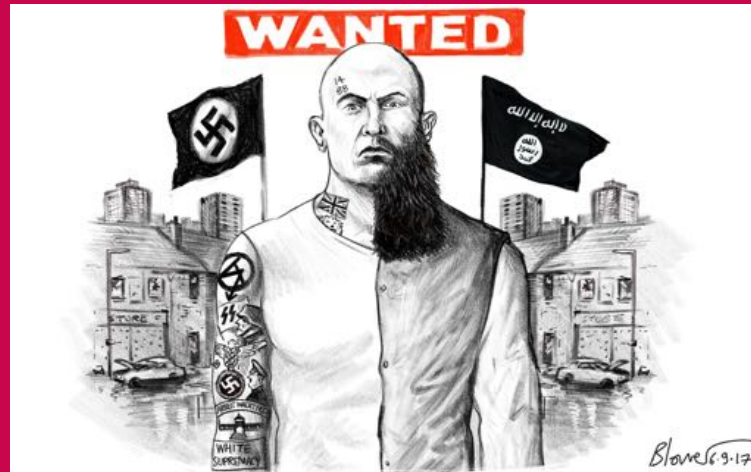
+80,000 YouTube comments

+450,000+ Dislikes

Activated people from +60 countries

Mobilization on fringe and mainstream platforms

Dozens of anti-YouTube videos created



Q&A

If you have a question later, send me an e-mail: je@isdglobal.org

Or get in touch on Twitter: [@Julie_renbe](https://twitter.com/Julie_renbe)
