

The background of the cover features a network diagram with several nodes (small circles) connected by thin lines, creating a web-like structure. The nodes are arranged in a way that suggests interconnectedness and movement.

RESOLVE

NETWORK

From Paramilitaries to Parliamentarians: Disaggregating Radical Right Wing Extremist Movements

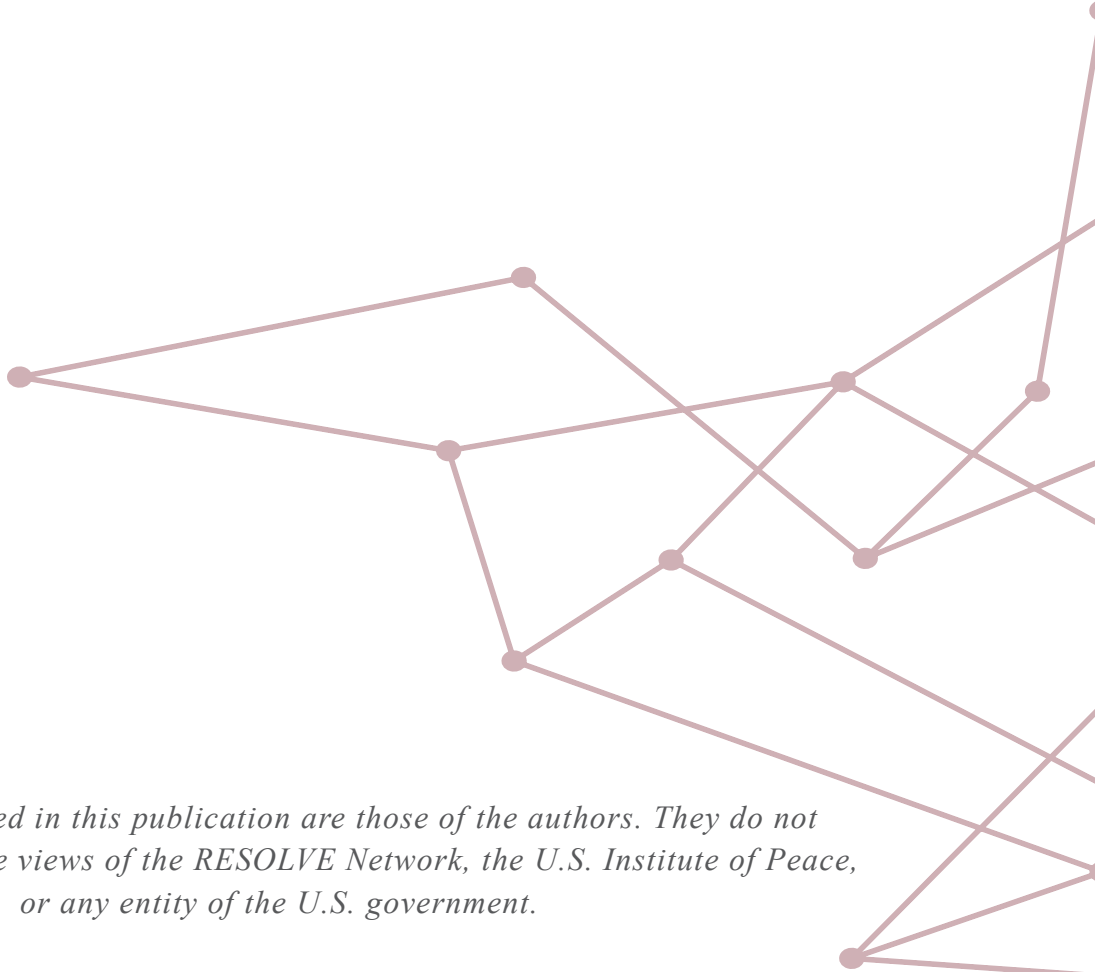
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An abstract graphic consisting of several thin, dark red lines that intersect to form a series of irregular, overlapping shapes. The lines are scattered across the bottom right portion of the page, creating a complex, web-like pattern.

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INTRODUCTION

The world has seen a dramatic increase in the visibility and activity of Racially and Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists (REMVEs), including radical right-wing extremist (RRWE) movements over the past decade. After nearly two decades of Western countries focusing almost exclusively on the threat posed by Salafi-jihadist groups, the challenge posed by a growing RRWE movement is now impossible to ignore. High-profile attacks in North America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific have forced policymakers and security agencies to address the insidious nature of the various ideologies underpinning radical right-wing extremism.¹ There is a belated, but growing, recognition of the dangers presented by the far-right and outward expressions and increasing resonance with far-right views and behaviors in the past decade around the world. Now, after an attack occurs involving a far-right perpetrator, extremists in online and virtual spaces celebrate the event and distribute propaganda meant to promote this ideology.²

The global far-right is extremely broad in nature and far from monolithic. While the “far-right” is often used as an umbrella term, using the term runs the risk of over-simplifying the differences and linkages between white supremacist, anti-immigration, nativist and other motivating ideologies. These beliefs and political platforms fall within the far-right rubric, and too often the phrase presents a more unified image of the phenomena than is really the case. In truth, the “far-right” and the individual movements that comprise it are fragmented, consisting of a number of groups that lack established leadership and cohesion. Indeed, these movements include chauvinist religious organizations, neo-fascist street gangs, and paramilitary organs of established political parties. Although such movements largely lack the mass appeal of the interwar European radical right-wing extreme, they nevertheless can inspire both premeditated and spontaneous acts of violence against perceived enemies.

1 For the purposes of this paper, “radical right-wing extremism” is used synonymously with far-right extremism, primarily to offer word and phrase variation to avoid repetition.

2 As witnessed with both the Christchurch attack in New Zealand and the January 6, 2021 storming of the U.S. Capitol. See, for example: Milo Comerford, Jakob Guhl and Elise Thomas, “Two Years On Understanding the Resonance of the Christchurch Attack on Imageboard Sites,” *GNET*, March 24, 2021, <https://gnet-research.org/2021/03/24/two-years-on-understanding-the-resonance-of-the-christchurch-attack-on-imageboard-sites/>.




Support for far-right extremism in general is often couched in the language of domestic politics. This remains true even as the objectives are more ideological in nature and less about actual policy reform per se. In many European countries, where the fragmentation of the far-right has accelerated, far-right groups lack established leadership and are the subject of more aggressive efforts to combat them.³ One result of fragmentation has been the proliferation of numerous smaller groups, parties, and organizations. While concerns of a Neo-fascist takeover of Europe are exaggerated, it is still important to identify and track the development of diffuse organizations across several different echelons, which will be described in more detail below.

This report is intended to provide policymakers, practitioners, and the academic community with a roadmap of ongoing shifts in the organizational structures and ideological currents of radical right wing extremist movements, detailing the difference between distinct, yet often connected and interlaced echelons of the far-right. In particular, the report identifies and analyzes various aspects of the broader far-right and the assorted grievances it leverages to recruit, which is critical to gaining a more nuanced understanding of the potential future trajectory of these movements.

The report will begin by defining the typologies of RRWE movements, specifically highlighting attributes, categorical distinctions, and geographical differences as well as why they matter. These typologies are categorized into what we call the four main milieus of RRWE: Parliamentary, Protest, Street, and Underground movements.

The second section of the paper contextualizes these typologies, providing examples of RRWE organizations that populate—the parliamentary, protest, street, and underground milieus. While the focus of this report is mainly on European RRWEs, examples from Israel and other countries typically included in the broad category of “the West” are also included where relevant. In this section, we examine the grievances commonly exploited by various RRWE movements to recruit new members and communicate to sympathizers and supporters. A common element that binds these movements is a fear of “the other” — in particular, fear of immigrant communities that threaten the preferred policies of populists and portend a potential “Great Replacement” of existing ethnic, racial, or religious majorities.

³ Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, and Nicholas Harrington, *The Right-wing Terrorism Threat in Europe* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2020), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/right-wing-terrorism-threat-europe>.



The third section examines current trends that are shaping the contours of RRWE movements. These trends elucidate the methods employed by groups within these movements to bring about an atmosphere of fear within their respective countries or regions, in an effort to create broader societal fissures that can be exploited.

As the aforementioned trends in RRWE have begun to crystallize, key themes, including disinformation surrounding COVID-19, government lockdowns, and other ongoing crises and events have emerged. As discussed in the final section, the weaponization of these trends is alarming and necessitates fresh thinking regarding policy solutions. As such, in the final section, we offer recommendations that governmental and private sector entities might pursue to temper the possibility that parliamentary, protest, and street movements take a turn toward the explicit violence frequently perpetrated by underground groups.

TYOLOGIES OF RRWE MOVEMENTS: PARLIAMENTARY, PROTEST, STREET, AND UNDERGROUND

There is substantial discussion about the various ideologies, motivations, and political rhetoric of different individuals, groups, and movements associated with the far-right. Sorting these myriad elements associated with RRWE movements into categories can help to make sense, at least analytically, of an otherwise fragmented far-right landscape. Many efforts to categorize various far-right movements exist.⁴ Informed by these, we propose categorizing RRWE formations into four main groupings—parliamentary, protest, street, and underground (defined in Table 1)—because they represent important distinctions in areas that are commonly conflated.

Table 1: Four Typologies of RRWE Movements

<p>Parliamentary Movements</p>	<p>Parliamentary movements or parties are primarily focused on electoral success, representing a radical right-wing extremist fringe breaking into the political landscape.</p>
<p>Protest Movements</p>	<p>Protest movements are, in our conception, often connected to more radical political elements but, at least publicly, remain concentrated around single issues (often nativist rage) rather than any larger plan for reorganizing society.</p>
<p>Street Movements</p>	<p>Street movements are a close relative to protest movements, but often take a more macro approach to grievances. Street movements are generally less concerned with securing electoral power, and instead represent a more concerted effort at mass mobilization and a revival of traditional fascist or ultranationalist movements.</p>
<p>Underground Movements</p>	<p>Underground movements are largely organized online or through affiliated subcultures. Although far less popular and visible than other, more public radical right-wing extremist organizations, these groups often are rhetorically more extreme, and more prone to violence—both spontaneous and premeditated—for example, the British National Party (BNP).</p>

4 For additional reading, see, for example: Sam Jackson, *A Schema of Right-wing Extremism in the United States* (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, 2019), <https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2019/11/ASchemaofRWEXSamJackson-1.pdf>; Jacob Aasland Ravndal, “Thugs or Terrorists? A Typology of Right-wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe,” *Journal for Deradicalization* 3 (2015), <https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/16/16>.

Indeed, it is critical to distinguish because while their rhetoric and activities may be similar, their operations and the levels and types of violence within them are often distinct. For example, while protest may be an activity employed by each of the four groupings, the mechanisms through which they are employed vary, and often are subject to different legal considerations. Moreover, while each of these movements may deploy violence, the degree and nature of that violence varies. There may also be times when individuals progress between these various groupings, and although it is beyond the scope of this specific paper, future research could be designed to assess what factors drive individuals to migrate between groupings. How individuals and small cells or components of networks move between these groupings could yield valuable information on the relative effectiveness of various recruitment tactics. Still, we acknowledge that the boundaries between these categories are porous and often overlap, and at times might even be working at cross-purposes or competing with each other for resources. Beyond the categorical distinctions, there are also differences in the way RRWE movements view the role of violence, are formed geographically, and define what they purport to stand for.

Gradations of Violence

Underground movements are defined by their use of violence, viewing it as a *raison d'être*, an integral part of their identity. Protest and street movements have also engaged in violence, though it is typically not as premeditated as that perpetrated by underground movements. And while some may dismiss parliamentary movements due largely to the absence of violence, these movements can be the most insidious in some sense, attempting to normalize and mainstream aspects of far-right ideology that will, almost inevitably, incite future acts of violence, marginalization, or abuse heaped on various segments of agreed upon “out-groups.”

Local, State, and Regional Variations

While exclusionary politics predicated on preconceived notions of a superior native race or people is essentially a given, the different historical processes in each locality, state, or region naturally leads to variations in how radical right-wing extremist movements appear, what they call for, and how they interact.

- **Localized movements** may use more common radical right-wing extremist rhetoric to address a specific, immediate grievance.
- **State-level movements** may include, for example, irredentist qualities actively in contention with other radical right-wing extremist organizations in neighboring countries, or may target convenient minority groups (such as the Roma people in Hungary, or recently arrived Syrian or Afghan migrants in Europe) as internal threats to societal stability.⁵

5 Miroslav Mareš, “Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Hungary in the Beginning of the 20th Century,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 6 (December 2019): 123-35.

- **Regionally**, despite many commonalities, there are significant differences between radical right-wing extremist organizations in mainland Europe, who often exhibit statism, qualified anti-capitalism, or explicitly authoritarian tendencies in the mold of traditional fascist movements and those found in new-world settler states, such as the United States, Australia, or Israel, where far more radical libertarian and anti-statist tendencies remain dominant.⁶

While the following examination presented herein of the various organizing principles of radical right-wing extremist movements outside of the United States is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive, it will hopefully help to illuminate the myriad forms these ideological formations take. In efforts to do so, the following section examines each category further, focusing specifically on different movements that fall into each category and the grievances, ideologies, and activities defining them.

CONTEXTUALIZING RRWE TYPOLOGIES: GROUPINGS, GRIEVANCES, AND ACTIVITIES

Throughout history, paramilitaries have ascended to become parliamentarians, as once radical ideologues seek to transform into statesmen. Sometimes these transformations are genuine, but other times they serve as a Trojan horse for extremists to hijack national politics and implement a radical policy agenda. Support for far-right extremism exists across the ideological spectrum, from those explicitly organized for violent activity to others that exist as part of a country's political fabric. Across Europe, there has been growing support among populations of democratic countries for the political goals of xenophobic, nativist, and exclusionary or even eliminationist political platforms in recent years.⁷ As aforementioned, the far-right is not monolithic and assumes various forms. The subsections below expand upon the organizational structures of RRWE movements detailed above, including parliamentary movements, protest and street movements, and underground movements, and provide specific examples of RRWE entities that fall within each.

Parliamentary Movements

Parliamentary movements within the broader far-right milieu are essential to the legitimacy of the movement writ large, as well as its sub-components. Parliamentary movements are critical to the far-right because they are able to promote policies and push for legislation based upon the platform advanced by adherents of the movement. When these far-right groups operate within the confines of a legal and political framework, it allows them to couch ideas and policies that some might consider “beyond the pale” in a veneer of legitimacy. Moreover, it opens up opportunities to network with other far-right par-

6 Leonard Weinberg and Eliot Assoudeh, “Political Violence and the Radical Right” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, ed. Jens Rydgren (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): 414.

7 Cas Mudde, “Nativism is Driving the Far-right Surge in Europe – and it is here to stay,” *The Guardian*, November 12, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/global/commentisfree/2019/nov/12/nativism-is-driving-the-far-right-surge-in-europe-and-it-is-here-to-stay>.

liamentary movements across borders. It should be noted that there is nothing illegal about far-right parliamentary movements, although, as evidenced by Germany's recent decision to place the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party under surveillance, the situation can be complicated.⁸ Carrying out full-scale electronic surveillance to monitor the conversations and keystrokes of politicians is a delicate task and once made public, it may be used as a cudgel to rally the hardcore supporters of that political party's base.

Unlike the United States or much of the British Commonwealth that maintain first-past-the-post electoral processes, most European nations operate parliamentary systems based around proportional representation, which in turn allows for the propagation of a wider variety of political parties, including those on the ideological fringes.⁹ While radical right-wing extremist parties certainly maintain support within the American electorate, they are often—theoretically at least—subsumed through tactical voting into larger, more centrist political parties.¹⁰ Within European parliamentary democracies, however, political representation and some form of governmental power is far easier achieved by fringe parties.¹¹

Buoyed by the international economic downturn of the late-2000s and the subsequent austerity policies imposed across much of the continent and reinforced by a dramatic rise in anti-immigrant sentiment, exclusionary radical-right political parties achieved significant electoral gains throughout Europe, although recent election results in many countries suggest their popularity may be waning.¹² Although they often emerge from the street-level soup of unreconstructed fascism and nativist rage, these parliamentary movements have traditionally sought to shed the more unpalatable aspects of their ideology, at least publicly, upon entrance into the political mainstream, as detailed below. Yet the origins, international ties, and street-level activism of these parties often belie their radicalism and support for more openly fringe and dangerous ideological fellow travelers.

This tension between broader electoral success and radical right-wing extremist roots has bedeviled more than one radical right-wing political movement within Europe. Some, such as the Le Pen family's National Rally (formerly National Front), have intentionally softened more radical aspects of their platforms on the way to striking electoral victories, making the move to the mainstream, and often going so far as to spurn previous allies in the European rightist milieu.¹³ Others, like the Hungarian right-opposition party Jobbik, have distanced themselves from their paramilitary arms and more explicit antisemitism in an attempt to broaden their electoral appeal, with strong—albeit ephemeral—results, given the

8 Katrin Bennhold, "Germany Places Far-Right AfD Party Under Surveillance for Extremism," *The New York Times*, March 3, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/03/world/europe/germany-afd-surveillance-extremism.html>.

9 Weinberg and Assoudeh, "Political Violence and the Radical Right."

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 For recent reporting and analysis on recent left electoral gains throughout Europe, see, for example: Thomas Erdbrink, "A Pro-Europe, Anti-Populist Youth Party Scored Surprising Gains in the Dutch Elections," *New York Times*, March 24, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/19/world/europe/netherlands-elections-volt.html>; Marc Santora and Melissa Eddy, "Do Germany's Election Results Signal a Left Turn for Europe?" *New York Times*, September 29, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/29/world/europe/politics-germany-election-left.html>.

13 Kim Willsher, "Marine Le Pen to Meet Other Far-Right Leaders in Move to Create EU Bloc," *The Guardian*, May 27, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/27/marine-le-pen-meet-far-right-leaders-eu-bloc..>

party's recent dramatic electoral failure.¹⁴ Similarly, many new right-wing political movements, despite bursting into the mainstream, have failed to adequately extract themselves from their radical roots. One instructive example of this tension is the electoral rise and fall of the Greek party Golden Dawn. The mini case studies below provide an overview of different, but instructive, experiences of various parliamentary movements, highlighting key aspects related to their evolution; their relationship to other protest, street, and underground RRWE movements; and their implications for broader analysis of RRWE parliamentary movements.

Case Study

Golden Dawn: From Violent Street Movement, to Political Party, to Criminal Organization

Formed in the mid-1980s (although not officially registered as a party until 1993), Golden Dawn was, for much of its history, an explicitly neo-fascist organization.¹⁵ Largely unconcerned with political clout, Golden Dawn instead published a self-titled, pro-junta journal and engaged in acts of disorganized violence, largely targeting immigrant communities and leftist community organizations.¹⁶ The global financial crisis and subsequent implementation of heavy austerity policies in Greece (through only somewhat optional pension reform and budget cuts dictated more or less from Brussels) created space for extreme-right parties previously thought to be beyond the pale.¹⁷ A first among radical right-wing extremists parties operating in mainland Europe, Golden Dawn received nearly half a million votes and seized a shocking number of seats in the May 2012 Hellenic Parliamentary election, becoming something of a *cause célèbre* among fellow travelers in the European and American neo-Nazi scene.¹⁸

While remaining in the governing coalition, Golden Dawn's success would be repeated across Europe by other parties with similarly dubious ties.¹⁹ The party would, likewise, expand both throughout the Greek diaspora abroad and through networking with other neo-Nazi parties and organizations, such as the then-declining British National Front.²⁰ This popularity, however, would not last. Unable, or unwilling, to actually distance itself from the street-level violence that was long the party's calling card, a significant number of Golden Dawn's leadership was arrested in conjunction with the assassination of anti-fascist musician Pavlos Fyssas.²¹ This would prove a crippling blow, as up to that point the party's rise, and the rise of related radical-right parties across the continent, seemed inevitable in the post-austerity malaise.

14 "Anti-Semitic Hungarian Party Embraces Israel and Jews," *Haaretz*, January 12, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/anti-semitic-hungarian-party-embraces-israel-and-jews-1.5485311>.

15 Graham Macklin, "The BNP and Golden Dawn" in *'Tomorrow Belongs to Us: The British Far-Right Since 1967*, ed. Nigel Copsey and Matthew Worley (New York: Routledge, 2017): 185.

16 George Bistis, "Golden Dawn or Democratic Sunset: The Rise of the Far Right in Greece," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2013): 44.

17 *Ibid.*, 46-47.

18 Macklin, "The BNP and Golden Dawn," 187.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*, 185.

21 "Greek Police Arrest Far-Right Party Leader," *DW*, September 28, 2013, <https://www.dw.com/en/greek-police-arrest-golden-dawn-far-right-party-leader/a-17120483>.

As other radical-right movements outside of Greece became committed to publicly moderating their most extreme positions, they rejected any chance of a coalition with Golden Dawn in the European Parliament, firmly signaling the party's continued status as a pariah.²²

Despite the limited political gains—the party continued to agitate around ultranationalist causes and torment migrants—Golden Dawn has seen its fortunes precipitously decline, receiving less than 3% of the vote for a seventh-place finish and precisely zero seats in the 2019 Hellenic Parliament election.²³ Like many other radical right-wing extremist parliamentary movements, the inability to publicly separate party leadership from the traditional street-level radical extremism would doom its electoral chances. Yet, things would become worse for the Golden Dawn, resulting in its ejection from the Greek political system. Following a five-year investigation, Golden Dawn's role in the 2013 assassination of Fyssas became clearer.

In October 2020, an Athens court convicted Golden Dawn's senior leadership for their involvement in multiple crimes, including the death of Fyssas.²⁴ In many ways, the ultimate death-knell for the Golden Dawn was meted out when a week prior to its leadership's convictions, the Greek government labeled the group a criminal organization.²⁵ Although the radical right maintains significant support across Europe, electoral success has proven more difficult to sustain, as support wanes in the face of extremism or is absorbed into more centrist political movements. The narrative arc of Golden Dawn is a distinct example of the difficulties violent street movements will face even if they strike lightning and achieve temporary electoral gains. The same story holds true in other parts of the world, including the Middle East.

Case Study

Kach: Banned Party, Enduring Political Influence

Some RRWE electoral movements have managed to influence more mainstream political discourse without taking power or winning elections themselves. While the former Israeli RRWE party Kach²⁶—founded on the principles of religious orthodox Zionism that in many ways presaged the exclusionary ultranationalism of many RRWE movements across the world today—has been banned (largely due to their actions following the assassination of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin), their ideological and organizational descendants have seemingly moved closer to the mainstream.²⁷

22 Willsher, "Marine Le Pen to Meet Other Far-Right Leaders in Move to Create EU Bloc," 2014.

23 "Nationwide: National Elections—July 2019," *Ypes, Ministry of Interior*, 2019, <https://ekloges.ypes.gr/current/v/home/en/parties/>.

24 Niki Kitsantonis, "Court Sentences Leaders of Greece's Golden Dawn to Prison," *The New York Times*, October 14, 2020.

25 Niki Kitsantonis and Iliana Magra, "Golden Dawn Found Guilty of Running a Criminal Organization in Greece," *The New York Times*, October 7, 2020.

26 Kach was founded in 1971, and there was a split after Kahane's assassination and the parties were outlawed in Israel in 1994.

27 Arie Perliger and Ami Pedahzur, "The Radical Right in Israel" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, ed. Jens Rydgren (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): 671-72.

The governing Likud party, long considered center-right, has as of late seen its elected Knesset Members lean into fringe conspiracy theories and exclusionary policies, to the point of actively stoking mob violence against immigrants.²⁸ Even the Otzma Yehudit party, an ideological offshoot of Kach long thought to be beyond the political pale, was invited to join with Jewish Home, a conservative party in coalition with Likud itself.²⁹ That this merger fell apart following the narrow Likud victory—with parliamentary confusion precluding the seating of an Otzma Yehudit member in the Knesset—is but a small favor.³⁰

This trajectory—a RRWE movement not succeeding through electoral victory but rather through longer-term ideological impact on more nominally centrist movements seeking to solidify their base—is perhaps the most common, not to mention potentially dangerous.

Protest & Street Movements

Although the electoral radical right has, in many places, seemingly moved toward the center or collapsed, other modes of extremist political organizing have continued apace. In many European states, as well as Australia, radical right-wing protest movements have erupted. These are not traditional political parties; instead, protest movements are often organized around, or at least galvanized by, single issues that form a critical pillar of the far-right's ideological agenda.³¹ Often ideologically radical and potentially violent, yet politically unsophisticated, such movements can serve as fertile recruiting ground for other, more militant, RRWE organizations.³² Similar to the anticlimactic collapse of many RRWE parliamentary movements, the Islamophobic protest movements of the early-2010s have largely seen their thunder stolen by other, more organized, RRWE forces.³³ Protest movements, however, remain relevant since they can identify issues, often emotional ones, that create us-versus-them narratives, which can mobilize the masses. For the purposes of this section, given the close relationship between street and protest movements, the case studies below expand on both.

28 Ibid.; Ilan Lior and Tomer Zarchin, "Demonstrators Attack African Migrants in South Tel Aviv," *Haaretz*, May 24, 2012, <https://www.haaretz.com/demonstrators-in-south-tel-aviv-attack-african-migrants-1.5162222>.

29 Jacob Magid, "Jewish Home Votes Overwhelmingly to Back Merger With Extremist Party," *The Times of Israel*, February 20, 2019.

30 Toi Staff, "Otzma Yehudit Breaks Away From Jewish Home in Spat Over Knesset Seat," *The Times of Israel*, June 25, 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/otzma-yehudit-breaks-away-from-jewish-home-in-spat-over-knesset-seat/>.

31 Dominic Alessio and Kristen Meredith, "Blackshirts for the 21st Century? Fascism and the English Defence League," *Social Identities* 20, no.1 (2014): 106-107.

32 Ibid., 104-105.

33 Matthew Collins, "The Collapse of the BNP and EDL has Made the Far Right Deadlier," *The Guardian*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/02/collapse-bnp-edl-far-right-terrorists>.

The English Defense League: An Ongoing Inspiration for Protest and Violence

The English Defense League (EDL), although today a shadow of its former self, was at one time on the cutting edge of radical street movements. Founded and led, for a time, by Steven Yaxley-Lennon (under the more blue-collar pseudonym “Tommy Robinson”), a former member of the neo-Fascist British National Party (BNP), the EDL was a patchwork of far-right politics and nativist grievances.³⁴ The self-described “anti-Jihadist” or “anti-sharia law” movement’s chief activities were marches and other public gatherings—as often as not in predominantly Muslim neighborhoods throughout English cities.³⁵ Similar to far-right wing marches in the United States, these were meant both to antagonize political opponents and instill fear in the targeted population, and would often descend into violence.³⁶ Critically, the EDL was instrumental in feeding into a cyclical radicalization process within England through its harassment of Muslim communities, which in turn invited reaction from more radical Muslim leaders.³⁷ Although the departure of Yaxley-Lennon would fatally weaken the movement, the EDL represents a critical inflection point in the development of radical right-wing extremist movements abroad.³⁸

Now trending towards irrelevancy, the EDL has inspired a number of similar Islamophobic offshoots across the world, such as the Australian Defense League, which is but one of numerous Australian protest groups.³⁹ Today, it is far more likely to see protests in support of Yaxley-Lennon personally (he has been in and out of prison multiple times) than anything.

Indeed, while the more formalized protest groups may be in decline, the broader architecture of Islamophobic conspiracy theories and quasi-academic advocacy that they inhabit has proven to have had significant impact on radical right-wing extremist mass killers. Darren Osborn, who drove his van into a crowd of worshipers outside a mosque in London’s Finsbury Park, quoted the EDL and British radical-right party Britain First at length throughout his trial.⁴⁰ Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik, who himself was, for a time, a member of his local EDL offshoot as well as a voracious consumer of American Islamophobic propaganda, approvingly cited the EDL and other American anti-Islam activists and thinkers in his

34 Alessio and Meredith, “Blackshirts for the 21st Century?,” 107..

35 Juris Pucpenoks and Ryan McCabe, “The Rise of the Fringe: Right Wing Populists, Islamists, and Politics in the UK,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 33, no.2 (2013): 176.

36 Jamie Bartlett and Jonathan Birdwell, “Cumulative Radicalisation Between the Far-Right and Islamist Groups in the UK: A Review of Evidence,” *Demos*, November 5, 2013: 4.

37 Ibid.

38 Collins, “The Collapse of the BNP and EDL has Made the Far Right Deadlier.”

39 Andy Flemming and Aurelien Mondon, “The Radical Right in Australia” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, ed. Jens Rydgren (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): 660; Alessio and Meredith, “Blackshirts for the Twenty-First Century,” 107.

40 Kevin Rawlinson, “Darren Osborne Jailed for Life for Finsbury Park Terrorist Attack,” *The Guardian*, February 2, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/feb/02/finsbury-park-attack-darren-osborne-jailed>.

manifesto.⁴¹ That same manifesto would, in turn, be a foundational document for Brenton Tarrant, the Christchurch, New Zealand killer, creating a deadly ideological chain of transmission.⁴²

Case Study

The Identitarian Movement: Persuasion Beyond Protest

Recent reporting highlights similarly important dynamics in Germany. According to a 2019 Soufan Center IntelBrief:

In Germany, the Identitarian Movement has links to official political parties and has maintained a presence in far-right marches, including the one in Chemnitz in the eastern part of the country. The movement retains meaningful connections to political parties in Europe, including the far-right Freedom Party in Austria and the Alternative for Germany (AfD).⁴³

The activities of the German Identitarian branch, however, span beyond their protest activities, and in doing so, highlight another important aspect of modern far-right movements. Not only does the group—which, like Generation Identity more broadly, focuses on “Ethnopluralism” focused anti-immigration to preserve so-called European identity—use its own website and social media to expand its reach and advertise itself, it also ran its own online store, craft beer label, and financial and media services.⁴⁴ The group’s marketing and branding appeals to young and professional classes⁴⁵ who can “blend into the mainstream— even if it is more toward the fringes of the mainstream.”⁴⁶ Despite being officially classified as an extremist entity by German’s domestic intelligence service in July 2019, official estimates suggest that, in 2020, there were still nearly 600 active members of the Movement in Germany.⁴⁷

While Identitarian branches in Europe, much like that in Germany as well as Generation Identitaire in France—which hosted an annual “Summer University” convening followers from around the world⁴⁸—

41 Heidi Beirich, “Hate Across Waters: The Role of American Extremists in Fostering an International White Consciousness” in *Right Wing Populism in Europe*, eds. Ruth Wodak, Majid Khosravini, and Brigitte Mral (London: Bloomsbury, 2013): 89-90.

42 Jerusalem Post Staff, “New Zealand Gunman Inspired by Mass-Murderer Anders Breivik,” *The Jerusalem Post*, March 16, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/International/New-Zealand-gunman-inspired-by-mass-murderer-Anders-Breivik-583624>.

43 “IntelBrief: The Far Right Seeks to Normalize Its Ideology,” *The Soufan Center*, April 17, 2019, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-the-far-right-seeks-to-normalize-its-ideology/>.

44 Ben Knight, “Who is Germany’s ‘New Right,’” *DW*, June 18, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/who-is-germanys-new-right/a-57949592>.

45 Linda Schlegel, “The Cultivated Extremist? How the Identitarian Movement Frames Its Ideology,” *GNET*, July 17, 2020, <https://gnet-research.org/2020/07/17/the-cultivated-extremist-how-the-identitarian-movement-frames-its-ideology/>.

46 “IntelBrief: The Far Right Seeks to Normalize Its Ideology.”

47 Knight, “Who is Germany’s ‘New Right.’”

48 For more on Generation Identity’s efforts to connect transnational supporters, see: Anita Nissen, “The Trans-European Mobilization of ‘Generation Identity,’” in *Nostalgia and Hope: Intersections between Politics of Culture, Welfare, and Migration in Europe*, eds. Ov Cristian Norocel, Anders Hellström, Martin Bak Jørgensen (Springer Open, 2020), 85-100. See also: “IntelBrief: The Far Right Seeks to Normalize Its Ideology.”

have faced bans from governments⁴⁹ and deplatforming from social media sites in recent years, their activities are likely to continue.⁵⁰

The normalization and mainstreaming of political messages of violence and hate, like those spread by the Identitarian Movement, can quickly spread in a number of ways, including and far beyond Facebook posts, tweets, and YouTube videos. Meanwhile, couching that rhetoric in mainstream politics and social trends can obscure the true origins of that message, essentially the hate behind it, in a manner that is not readily apparent to the masses. What is more, when politicians adopt the language of groups like the Identitarian Movement, they normalize the talking points of hate.

Case Study

CasaPound: Neo-fascists with a Leftist Agenda

Elsewhere in Europe, street movements with political complexity extending beyond rote Islamophobia have proliferated in the societal space long thought ceded to the radical left. While these movements have succeeded in establishing bases of support, they have so far seemingly failed to successfully break into the electoral realm. CasaPound Italia, an avowedly neo-Fascist organization in Italy, is one such street movement. The group gained notoriety through the occupation of abandoned buildings in Rome—converting them to housing, food distribution centers, and contributing to other professed “social goods”—albeit, ones explicitly excluding non-ethnic Italians.⁵¹

By focusing on social programs and selectively utilizing anti-capitalist rhetoric, CasaPound has managed to establish itself as a nominally third-positionist political movement, or a syncretic fusion of social conservatism and nativism alongside radical left-wing economic programs and anti-globalization.⁵² Between their leadership’s proven media-savvy, and their base of young men’s superficially counterculture aesthetic, CasaPound’s public profile managed to reach levels far above what, perhaps, their organizational power might justify.⁵³ Despite lofty promises, subsequent electoral failures have led the movement’s leadership to renounce electoralism as a tactic and recommit to street-level activism.⁵⁴ In a political situation where a far-right political party—in this case, Matteo Salvini’s Northern League—has already suc-

49 Jules Darmanin, “France Bans Far-Right Group Generation Identity,” *Politico*, March 3, 2021, <https://www.politico.eu/article/france-bans-far-right-group-generation-identity/>.

50 Jean-Yves Camus, “Génération Identitaire Ban Could Tally Supporters of the Radical Right in France,” *Open Democracy*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ration-identitaire-ban-could-rally-supporters-of-the-radical-right-in-france/>.

51 Tobias Jones, “The Fascist Movement That has Brought Mussolini Back to the Mainstream,” *The Guardian*, February 22, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/feb/22/casapound-italy-mussolini-fascism-mainstream>.

52 Roger Griffin, “Interregnum or Endgame? The Radical Right in the ‘Post-Fascist’ Era,” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 5, no. 2 (2000): 167-68.

53 Jones, “The Fascist Movement That has Brought Mussolini Back to the Mainstream.”

54 “Casapound, Iannone: ‘Finita Esperienza di Partito, Torniamo Movimento,’” *La Repubblica*, June 27, 2019 (Italian), https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2019/06/27/news/casapound_torna_movimento_iannone-229739363/.

ceeded in taking the reins of power, there is less space for street movements to institutionalize, because there is more emphasis on achieving objectives from a purely political perspective.

Case Study

Ukrainian Street Movements: Political Ties and Paramilitary Activities

Street-level RRWE groups have proliferated in Ukraine following the Euromaidan protests of 2014 and subsequent armed conflicts in Crimea and the Donbass.⁵⁵ The most well-publicized of these groups are associated with the Ukrainian National Guard formation commonly known as the Azov Battalion.⁵⁶ While the international RRWE sympathies of the paramilitary (now formally incorporated into the Ukrainian military, at least in theory) arm have been well documented, veterans of the movement have formed several more informal street organizations.⁵⁷ These street-level organizations, such as the National Corps (or National Militia), have been implicated in brutal attacks on ethnic Romani encampments—pogroms justified by their ultranationalist, exclusionary rhetoric and stated goal of “cleaning the streets.”⁵⁸

Other street movements unaffiliated with Azov, such as C14, have even received the official imprimatur of government officials for their “street patrols.”⁵⁹ The proliferation of paramilitary groups in Ukraine has likely been exacerbated by the ongoing conflict, which has both drawn foreign fighters and undergirded the rise in exclusionary ultranationalism.⁶⁰ That being said, despite some reports of government funds being diverted to social programs run by members of Azov or related groups, the recent Ukrainian elections—including the election of Volodymyr Zelensky as President, who was born to Jewish parents and speaks Russian as a first language—would seem to indicate that the bulk of the population continues to reject the exclusionary radical right-wing extremism of their erstwhile defenders.

Underground Radical Right-Wing Extremist Movements

Beyond parliamentary or street movements that seek to reshape society through the mobilization of people (whether in protest, on the street, or by way of electoral politics), numerous smaller groups exist. These underground movements, similar to many American radical right-wing extremist groups, are often

55 Lev Golinkin, “Neo-Nazis and the Far Right Are On the March in Ukraine,” *The Nation*, February 22, 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/neo-nazis-far-right-ukraine/>.

56 Ibid.

57 Josh Cohen, “Commentary: Ukraine’s Neo-Nazi Problem,” *Reuters*, March 19, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cohen-ukraine-commentary/commentary-ukraines-neo-nazi-problem-idUSKBN1GV2TY>.

58 “Ukraine: Fatal Attack on Roma Settlement,” *Human Rights Watch*, June 26, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/26/ukraine-fatal-attack-roma-settlement>.

59 Iuliia Mendel, “Attacks on Roma Force Ukraine to Confront an Old Ethnic Enmity,” *The New York Times*, July 21, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/21/world/europe/ukraine-roma-attacks.html>.

60 “IntelBrief: The Transnational Network That Nobody is Talking About,” *The Soufan Center*, March 22, 2019, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-the-transnational-network-that-nobody-is-talking-about/>.

tied into specific subcultures or organize primarily (or, at times, entirely) online. These movements are significant because, for the most part, they are the ones mobilizing toward acts of violence and encouraging others to do the same. In many ways, these are the storm troopers of the far-right and receive the lion's share of media attention (and accordingly, attention from law enforcement and the security services). Because they appeal to the most hardcore elements of far-right extremism, they can be effective recruiters and also marshal resources, from manpower to financing.

Traditional underground movements include neo-Nazi skinheads, groups of whom exist across the globe.⁶¹ Usually organized around hardcore music scenes, some promotional networks and labels have proliferated internationally, spreading messages of racial hatred and violence through the medium of hardcore punk and an aggressive countercultural posture. Most notorious among these networks is Blood & Honor, an international promotional group, music label, and zine publisher.⁶² Founded in England by the notorious neo-Nazi skinhead musician Ian Stuart Donaldson, Blood & Honor has loose affiliates across Europe, the Americas, and Australia—although the movement is explicitly banned in Germany,⁶³ Spain,⁶⁴ and, recently, Canada.⁶⁵ While Blood & Honor, itself, produces violent and, at times, illegal (especially in some European states) content, the neo-Nazi organization's banning is likely in part due to its affiliation with the nebulous Combat 18 group.⁶⁶

Case Study

Combat 18: Past Networks and Underground Linkages

Combat 18 (the 18 representing, in classic neo-Nazi form, the first and eighth letters of the English alphabet—A and H, for Adolf Hitler) emerged from the toxic combination of neo-Nazi skinhead culture and British football hooliganism as early as 1995, when they were involved in riots alongside radical unionists following football matches in Northern Ireland.⁶⁷ Rhetorically committed to the principles of “leaderless resistance” as promulgated by the American neo-Nazi Louis Beam, Combat 18 was, for much of the late 1990s and early 2000s, the highest profile radical right-wing extremist terror organization in the British

61 Heidi Beirich, “Hate Across Waters: The Role of American Extremists in Fostering an International White Consciousness” in *Right Wing Populism in Europe*, eds. Ruth Wodak, Majid Khosravini, and Brigitte Marl (London: Bloomsbury, 2013): 94.

62 Matthew Worley and Nigel Copsey, “White Youth” in *“Tomorrow Belongs to Us:” The British Far Right Since 1967*, eds. Nigel Copsey and Matthew Worley (New York: Routledge, 2017): 114.

63 Darko Janjevic, “Reports: Banned Neo-Nazi Group ‘Combat 18’ Active in Germany Again,” *DW*, January 27, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/reports-banned-neo-nazi-group-combat-18-active-in-germany-again/a-37297774>.

64 “El Supremo ordena a la organización neonazi ‘Blood and Honour’ que se disuelva,” *Público*, August 6, 2011 (Spanish), <https://www.publico.es/actualidad/supremo-ordena-organizacion-neonazi-blood.html>.

65 Stewart Bell, “Canada Adds neo-Nazi groups Blood & Honour, Combat 18 to List of Terror Organizations,” *Global News*, June 26, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/5432851/canada-adds-neo-nazi-groups-blood-honour-and-combat-18-to-list-of-terror-organizations/>.

66 Tom Keatinge, Florence Keen, and Kayla Izenman, “Fundraising for Right-Wing Extremist Movements,” *The RUSI Journal*, 164, no. 2 (2019): 18.

67 “What Happened to Combat 18 After the ‘95 Landsdowne Road Riot?” *Newstalk*, May 27, 2013, <https://www.newstalk.com/news/what-happened-to-combat-18-after-the-95-landsdowne-road-riot-728506>.

Isles.⁶⁸ The organization was tied to a string of attacks (including the London nail bombings, and a spate of killings in Germany), and formed alliances with both the Blood & Honor (at times being described, or describing itself, as the “armed wing” of Blood & Honor) network and the neo-Fascist British National Party (BNP), as well as establishing cells in numerous other European states, most notably Germany.⁶⁹

Although Combat 18 is held by many observers to be largely depleted as a movement (not least because of their apparent infiltration by law enforcement), the group was significant enough to make widespread international connections through underground channels.⁷⁰ Reports of its activity still surface in conjunction with radical right-wing extremist attacks—such as the recent assassination of German politician Walter Lübcke by an individual closely tied to a Combat 18 cell.⁷¹ German Combat 18 leadership, likewise, maintained links to the National Socialist Underground, a similar neo-Nazi terrorist organization that committed a brutal series of murders targeting migrants through the 2000s.⁷²

Despite the overall decline of Combat 18, the cell-like structure, sporadic yet brutal violence, overlap with other subcultural movements, and widespread global network presaged later groups like the Atomwaffen Division.

Case Study

Atomwaffen Division: A Simmering Threat with Global Reach

Formed on the (since shut down) neo-Nazi Iron March forums, Atomwaffen is an ephemeral and idiosyncratic neo-Nazi movement organized almost wholly online, largely through the videogame-oriented Discord chat app.⁷³ Steeped in the sort of syncretic radicalism found perhaps only on the fringes of the internet—admiration for Islamic State executioners exists comfortably alongside references to Charles Manson and the neo-Nazi tract, *Siege*, by James Mason—Atomwaffen represents the apotheosis of radical right-wing extremism in the digital age.⁷⁴

68 “We’re at War and If That Means More Bombs, so Be It...” *The Guardian*, April 27, 1999, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/1999/apr/27/uksecurity>.

69 Ben Knight, “Combat 18: The Neo-Nazi Network Facing a Ban in Germany,” *DW*, July 5, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/combat-18-the-neo-nazi-network-facing-a-ban-in-germany/a-49493000>.

70 Ibid.

71 Deborah Amos, “A German Politician’s Assassination Prompts New Fears About far-Right Violence,” *NPR*, July 1, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/01/737561640/a-german-politicians-assassination-prompts-new-fears-about-far-right-violence>.

72 Knight, “Combat 18.”

73 A.C. Thompson, “An Atomwaffen Member Sketched a Map to Take the Neo-Nazis Down. What Path Officials Took Is a Mystery,” *Pro Publica*, November 20, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/an-atomwaffen-member-sketched-a-map-to-take-the-neo-nazis-down-what-path-officials-took-is-a-mystery>.

74 Alexander Epp and Roman Höfner, “The Hate Network—Atomwaffen Division: An Inside Look at a Global Extremist Group,” *Der Spiegel*, September 7, 2018, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/the-hate-network-an-inside-look-at-a-global-extremist-group-a-1226861.html>.

There are a number of affiliated groups internationally that have organized in similar fashion—either on the Iron March forums or as established offshoots of Atomwaffen.⁷⁵ Most notable among these is National Action, a U.K.-based neo-Nazi organization whose founding, likewise on the Iron March forums, predates Atomwaffen's.⁷⁶ Banned in the wake of British MP Jo Cox's assassination by a National Action sympathizer, the group continues to operate in secret.⁷⁷ Atomwaffen offshoots with significant presence—at least online—include the Sonnenkrieg Division in England and Antipodean Resistance in Australia, both of which remain somewhat active.⁷⁸ Although members of the U.S.-based Atomwaffen have been involved in several murders,⁷⁹ neither that organization nor any of its international affiliates have as of yet been implicated in systemic violence on par with that of the National Socialist Underground. Should the online network revolving around Atomwaffen ever metastasize into a full-scale underground terror movement, it could draw upon an anonymous, globalized network with an indeterminant number of supporters.

Case Study

The Russian Imperial Movement: Group Designation and Blurred International Lines

Not far from Ukraine, in Russia, another group, the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM), has demonstrated a high degree of international connections, including collaboration with U.S. based counterparts. The RIM, as the Soufan Center explained in its April 2020 report on the group, has likely received implicit support from the Russian Federation.⁸⁰ The RIM has used safehouses and camps in St. Petersburg, Russia, to train individuals who would go on to commission terrorist attacks in Sweden. The RIM, like Azov, has white supremacist tendencies, but the two diverge in a very important way. In 2014, the RIM deployed 300 soldiers to Ukraine to battle on behalf of separatists and Russian Federation military forces. While Azov and the RIM are united by white supremacist beliefs, what separated the two are nationalist beliefs. RIM is first and foremost an ultranationalist group that wants to restore Russia to a monarchy that harkens back the days of Nicholas II imperial rule.⁸¹

RIM's interaction with European and U.S. extremists is also well documented. For example, in 2017, Matthew Heimbach, one of the organizers of the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, and someone who spent years networking with groups in Czech Republic, Germany, and Greece, hosted a

75 Ibid.

76 Graham Macklin, "'Only Bullets will Stop Us!' – The Banning of National Action in Britain," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 12, no. 6 (December 2018): 105.

77 Becky Kelly, "Exclusive: Former Members of Banned Terror Group Meet at Far-right Training Camp," *ITV*, March 20, 2017, <https://www.itv.com/news/2017-03-20/exclusive-former-members-of-banned-terror-group-meet-at-far-right-training-camp/>.

78 Epp and Höfner, "The Hate Network—Atomwaffen Division."

79 Greg Myre, "Deadly Connection: Neo-Nazi Group Linked To 3 Accused Killers," *NPR*, March 6, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/03/06/590292705/5-killings-3-states-and-1-common-neo-nazi-link>.

80 *Inside the Russian Imperial Movement: Practical Implications of U.S. Sanctions* (The Soufan Center, April 2020), <https://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/TSC-Report-Inside-the-Russian-Imperial-Movement-Practical-Implications-of-U.S.-Sanctions.pdf>.

81 Ibid.

delegation of RIM members in the United States.⁸² RIM, over encrypted social media platforms, also celebrated the January 6 insurrection at the United States Capitol and circulated additional propaganda lauding future planned protests in the United States. The degree to which an extremist group like RIM, which was designated as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) entity by the United States Department of State in April 2020, has both European and U.S. contacts and interest in those far-right movements exemplifies the increasing internationalization of RRWE entities beyond simple borders, with implications for policy decisions.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RRWE IN EUROPE: CURRENT AND EMERGING TRENDS

While the past and present manifestations of a variety of parliamentary, protest, and street movements are detailed above, the question remains as to what their future may bring. Based on ongoing trends and recent RRWE responses to them, this section provides a brief overview of how the actions, manifestations, and/or activities of each category of RRWE movement are or could be impacted by ongoing or emergent global, local, and regional dynamics. A proliferation of anti-government sentiment, much of it intertwined with COVID-19 and associated measures to deal with the pandemic; a publicized and large-scale far-right attack or event such as the storming of the U.S. Capitol in early January 2021; a spike in anti-migration sentiment; and a greater susceptibility among societies and populations to the spread and consumption of conspiracies⁸³ all affect or have the potential to affect the continued evolution and manifestation of each type of movement, as suggested below.

Parliamentary Movements

The growing distrust in government, and the success of the far-right in co-opting anti-government and anti-migration narratives,⁸⁴ could aid parliamentary movements in the RRWE stratosphere, as they use the momentum gained from groundswells of support for trending topics, including electoral fraud,⁸⁵ to rail against mainstream political parties and in the process, potentially gain more influence in electoral politics. As recently reported, various groups in Germany, including QAnon and the far-right political party Alternative for Germany (AfD), have sought to utilize allegations of voting fraud and condemnation of the German government's COVID-19 response to bolster the far-right's 2021 electoral positioning.⁸⁶

82 Ibid.

83 Including but not limited to conspiracies related to vaccines, origins of the coronavirus, and 5-G technology, to name just a few issues

84 "IntelBrief: The Far Right Seeks to Normalize Its Ideology."

85 For example, in the UK, Germany, and elsewhere throughout Europe, the events of January 6 in the United States resonated, with Europeans flooding social media with discussions and accusations of voter fraud. See, for example: "IntelBrief: How was the Capitol Insurrection Viewed by Far-right Extremists Globally?" February 8, 2021, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2021-february-8/>.

86 Isaac Stanley-Becker, "Election Fraud, QAnon, Jan. 6: Far-right Extremists in Germany Read from a Pro-Trump Script," *The Washington Post*, September 25, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/09/25/german-election-far-right-trump/>.

While AfD was less successful in the 2021 national polls, the outcome of the election did point to its continued support among its eastern base.⁸⁷

Accordingly, it is likely that conspiracies and disinformation about global events and trends will become a more frequent component of more radical political party rhetoric as they latch on to, amplify, and try to use popular disinformation and conspiracies spread by their constituents on social media to influence their own election outcomes.⁸⁸ Far-right politicians from Hungary's Prime Minister Victor Orban to Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro have also sought to utilize the events of and surrounding January 6th to bolster their own narratives, further demonize their political opponents, and rally their supporters.⁸⁹ The implications are worrisome as political benefactors of nativist rage continue to advance populist narratives that can motivate and inspire acts of political violence. Elsewhere, far-right politicians in Europe, including Matteo Salvini (Lega Nord), Giorgia Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia), and Marine Le Pen (Rassemblement National) have rhetorically distanced themselves from violence.⁹⁰

Protest & Street Movements

In response to the German government's COVID-19 restrictions, hundreds of individuals—some brandishing far-right, white supremacist, neo-Nazi, or QAnon insignia—attempted to overrun police and storm the Reichstag, or German parliament.⁹¹ In the aftermath of the events of January 6th, Martin Sellner, an Identitarian himself, spoke openly of how to harness the momentum resulting from the insurrection in order to grow RRWE protest and street movements throughout Europe.⁹² There are several scenarios that could provide further momentum to far-right protest and street movement, a growing anti-vaccination movement fueled by Russian disinformation campaigns,⁹³ momentum resulting from RRWE attacks and protests, and conflict in other parts of the world, including the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia, that sends surges of migrants seeking sanctuary in Europe. Moreover, as demographics in Europe continue to change, concepts like the 'Islamization of Europe' promoted by right-wing extremists such as Anders Breivik, could find resonance among larger swaths of European populations, especially if their parliamentarians achieve success at the polls and espouse these ideas as part of a broader, quasi-mainstream political platform. As expected, the COVID-19 pandemic fueled a sharp backlash against global-

87 Kate Connolly, "German Election: Far-right AfD Loses Status as Main Opposition," *The Guardian*, September 27, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/27/germany-election-far-right-afd-loses-status-at-main-opposition>.

88 "IntelBrief: How was the Capitol Insurrection Viewed by Far-right Extremists Globally?"

89 See, for example: Stanley-Becker, "Election Fraud, QAnon, Jan. 6"; Free Europe, Budapest, "Orbán: Ami Most Amerikában Történt, Azt Mi Ismerjük," *Szabad Európa*, January 8, 2021 (Hungarian), <https://www.szabadeuropa.hu/a/orban-viktor-donald-trump-szijarto-peter-joe-biden/31038414.html>; "CIA Akció Volt a Capitolium Ostroma? Eddig 4 Halott," *Minden Szó*, 2021 (Hungarian), http://mindenszo.hu/cia-akcio-volt-a-capitolium-ostroma-eddig-4-halott/?fbclid=IwAR0kqISjObsapa1L4rRyqVfVe_wTz1FdcngjHnp7cglduRJsudg1H_d_uypc.

90 "How Europe's Far Right Responded to Pro-Trump Capitol Riots," *Al Jazeera*, January 7, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/7/far-right-capitol-riots>.

91 Katrin Bennhold, "Far-Right Germans Try to Storm Reichstag as Virus Protests Escalate," *The New York Times*, June 9, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/31/world/europe/reichstag-germany-neonazi-coronavirus.html>.

92 "IntelBrief: How was the Capitol Insurrection Viewed by Far-right Extremists Globally?"

93 Julian E. Barnes, "Russian Disinformation Targets Vaccines and the Biden Administration," *The New York Times*, August 5, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/05/us/politics/covid-vaccines-russian-disinformation.html>.

ization, leading many Europeans to question the wisdom of open borders and the movement of people and goods across the Schengen Zone.⁹⁴

Increasingly concerning is how these various crises and emerging global events have become mainstreamed and couched in today's political and cultural environments. In Europe, efforts to cast RRWE causes, talking points, and personas to fit in, rather than stand out, in modern day social trends and discourse is prevalent. For example, as noted in a recent Soufan Center IntelBrief:

In Germany, for example, there has been a serious move to rebrand as 'the new right,' an attempt to distance themselves from the Neo-Nazis and skinheads of the past while still normalizing aspects of their hateful ideology to include a strong anti-immigrant message. This message is occasionally couched in softer terms like 're-migration,' which advocates 'sending people back' to countries from where their ancestors hailed.⁹⁵

Rebranding among RRWEs, in terminology or appearance, represents nothing more than a thinly disguised effort to normalize nativism and racist objectives in response to local and global events. The strategy and branding of the "Alt-Right" trotted out more than ten years ago, and, more recently, the "New Right" in many European circles, has the effect of portraying a political movement in almost neutral terms. When these terms are used within the mainstream media, they risk conflating those terms with right wing political entities who do not necessarily share the same agenda, namely institutionalizing racist laws and creating a white or "white European" ethno-nationalist state or inadvertently granting legitimacy to RRWE actors and ideas.

This and other attempts by RRWE to mainstream, normalize, and present their ideologies and agendas in a manner that is both not overtly violent and represents popular discontents within local populations, is likely to continue to be exploited in response to changing dynamics around the globe. Securing political "top cover" for extremist ideas remains a top priority of various strands of the radical right. Moreover, it is a strategy that has seemingly proven successful over the past several years.

Underground Movements

Global events have similarly impacted and been utilized by RRWE underground movements to inspire and bolster support for their causes. From COVID-19⁹⁶ to migration, violent RRWE underground elements have taken to conspiracy theories, misinformation, and disinformation to recruit and radicalize individuals to violence and to legitimize their own violent activities.⁹⁷ In Europe, several RRWEs were arrested in

94 Peter S. Goodman, "A Global Outbreak is Fueling the Backlash to Globalization," *The New York Times*, March 5, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/05/business/coronavirus-globalism.html>.

95 IntelBrief: The Far Right Seeks to Normalize Its Ideology."

96 Joey D'Urso, "An Old Conspiracy Theory Known As 'Agenda 21' Has Been Rebooted by the Coronavirus Pandemic," *BuzzFeed News*, April 4, 2020, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/joeydurso/coronavirus-agenda-21-5g>.

97 Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021), <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2021-tesat>.

2020 on charges related to far-right extremism and violent acts (plotted or implemented). Accelerationism, or advocating for violence to induce a “race war” and the collapse of existing political and economic systems, remains a concern among fringe RRWE movements, as does the prevalence of military and combat training camps among RRWE groups.⁹⁸ The use of online platforms to spread messages of violence and encourage it across social media platforms and online spaces also continues to be an issue and concern in terms of addressing ongoing connections, the spread of conspiracy theories and dis/misinformation, appeals to violent ideologies, and rhetoric among fringe RRWE elements and the general public.⁹⁹

While COVID-19 restrictions have largely pushed RRWE connections online, enabling international connections between different RRWE elements, further opportunities to converge in-person for trainings and RRWE gatherings have the potential to dramatically alter the current threat landscape with regards to violent activity from underground movements.¹⁰⁰

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There are multiple policy recommendations that stem from this research and analysis regarding RRWE movements and their evolution. The first pertains to the importance of appropriately identifying the type of movement and its associated activities.

The Type of Movement Matters

Properly identifying an extremist group within the broader RRWE movement can allow for tailored and appropriately scoped policy responses. In most cases, taking legal or law enforcement action against legitimate parties within parliamentary movements may not be legal or prudent. In fact, doing so may result in a new narrative that the parliamentary group could leverage to expand its movement. Yet, taking quick action against illicit underground networks is critical. The Atomwaffen Division, as discussed earlier in this report, is an example of where a group was able to operate with impunity for years before law enforcement pressure was applied against it. The delay in identification resulted in the Atomwaffen Division brand going global, with continued implications today. The appropriate categorization of groups within movements is also important because it decreases the possibility of conflation. There is a great danger in labeling all right-wing movements with a broad-brush stroke. While there are common grievances that groups within these movements may exploit, their *modus operandi* are often quite different across the spectrum. While parliamentary groups such as AfD may be keen to use the ballot box, underground movements, especially those motivated by accelerationist ideas such as Atomwaffen, almost exclusively advocate violence. Protest and street movements may adhere to a middle ground, willing to use whichever tactics are deemed the most effective in accomplishing their objectives.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

100 “IntelBrief: How was the Capitol Insurrection Viewed by Far-right Extremists Globally?”

Current Events Impact RRWE Rhetoric and Activities

Second, the movements discussed in this paper have thrived by latching on to current events and spinning narratives around those events that correlate to perceived grievances. In examining the key themes that underpin the current and emerging trends identified in this paper, every category of movement has groups within it that have become adept at using the rhetoric of a current event crisis to attract new followers. Through the use of mis- and dis-information, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, RRWEs have weaponized current events for propaganda value. The specific tools that allow for this to transpire vary, but social media is a common method. As such, private sector companies that provide a conduit for communication for groups within these movements, including parliamentary, have a responsibility to ensure that their services are not being used to create discord by allowing for the amplification of extremist narratives masquerading as “news” or mainstream beliefs. As discussed at length throughout this paper, the targeting of immigrants (more often than not minorities) via these mechanisms by all RRWE movements is of particular concern since it has resulted in real-world harm.

Political Rhetoric Can Motivate and Mainstream RRWE

Third, it is apparent from this paper’s analysis that politicians play an important role in mainstreaming, wittingly or unwittingly, the ideas, theories, and nativist content of RRWE. In effect, politicians can act as both an amplifier and a bridge that can unite RRWE agitators and the general public. As noted above, politicians and political parties, such as the AfD and Kach, have also adopted and adapted RRWE concepts for their own purposes, which can obscure the originator of a message. This obfuscation in the origin of a concept or message can allow for the legitimization of the message, especially over social media, among the general public and political supporters. In this regard, academics, think tanks, and civil society organizations can play an important role by improving transparency and accountability related to the political proliferation of far-right theories like the “Great Replacement.” They can do much the same by dispelling misinformation and disinformation. This will not be easy. In August 2021, Facebook banned researchers from New York University’s Ad Observatory who were studying how political advertisements on Facebook may be a source of disinformation.¹⁰¹ This type of research is precisely what is needed but restricting access to data that could provide important insights into the spread of RRWE content unnecessarily complicates the matter. Congress, working with the Federal Trade Commission, should examine possible remedies regarding data access and restrictions.

Go Beyond Government Interventions

Finally, government interventions alone are insufficient. The general public, civil society groups, and academics need to collaborate to build media and digital literacy capabilities so that communities can learn to recognize extremist content (far-right or otherwise). Parliamentary, protest, street, and underground

¹⁰¹ James Vincent, “Facebook Bans Academics Who Researched Ad Transparency and Misinformation on Facebook,” *The Verge*, August 4, 2021.

movements communicate online and spread their messages over a wide array of digital platforms. Understanding the source of information and how the messenger (political or media) may be trying to manipulate the target audience by peddling false narratives, specious, and racist theories is perhaps the most important long-term educative solution to stopping the spread of noxious content. Such identification will ideally happen at the individual level, but training is key. Here, governments may play a small role related to funding capacity building programs, but directive overreach by the government in this space could backfire—sparking conspiracy theories and popular discontent among the very populations they seek to aid.

CONCLUSION

It is important to keep the threat of far-right extremism in perspective. There is little doubt that emerging trends suggest a strengthening of the movement, but, as evidenced by Germany placing AfD under surveillance and France banning Generation Identity, there is also pushback against extremist elements. While AfD has suffered in the polls recently, in recent elections in The Netherlands, the far-right achieved its best combined results at the polls.¹⁰² Some expect far-right extremists worldwide to be energized following COVID-19 lockdowns and high-profile far-right events such as that on January 6th, which, to some extent as noted earlier, bolstered populists and other anti-government elements in European society.

Following the events of January 6, 2021, there is a groundswell of policymakers who are advocating to take the threat from the far-right, and REMVE broadly, more seriously, which includes reconsidering stricter laws surrounding the potential designation of some far-right groups. For example, in the aftermath of January 6th, Canada’s parliament labeled the U.S.-based Proud Boys as a terrorist entity.¹⁰³ Other countries may look to follow suit, especially as groups like the Proud Boys (and others similar to them) continue to network and expand globally. Still, as groups like this become designated entities, there could be unforeseen second order consequences, including pushing some members into mainstream political movements to represent, promote, and advance a far-right agenda and encouraging others to “rebrand” in name, rhetoric, and activities, which may make it difficult to make a designation actually stick. On the other hand, greater scrutiny towards the more violent underground, protest, and street movement fringes may result in those fringes being absorbed and pushed towards a more centrist stance, as noted in the earlier discussion about Golden Dawn.

With the exception of nascent terrorist networks like Atomwaffen and individual killers like Brenton Tarrant, the primary danger of RRWE abroad lies in its entrance into mainstream political discourse, rather than any dramatic seizure of power. To this end, even the electoral failings of radical right-wing extremist parties or dissolution of protest movements can have profound effects on the acceptability of ethnonationalist or eliminationist positions.

102 Eline Schaart, “4 Dutch Election Takeaways,” *Politico*, March 18, 2021, <https://www.politico.eu/article/4-dutch-general-election-takeaways-mark-rutte/>.

103 “Canada Parliament Labels US Far Right Proud Boys Group ‘a Terrorist Entity,’” *24 France*, January 26, 2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/americas/20210126-canada-parliament-labels-us-far-right-proud-boys-group-a-terrorist-entity>.

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