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RISE OF THE REACTIONARIES: COMPARING THE IDEOLOGIES OF SALAFI-JIHADISM AND WHITE SUPREMACIST EXTREMISM

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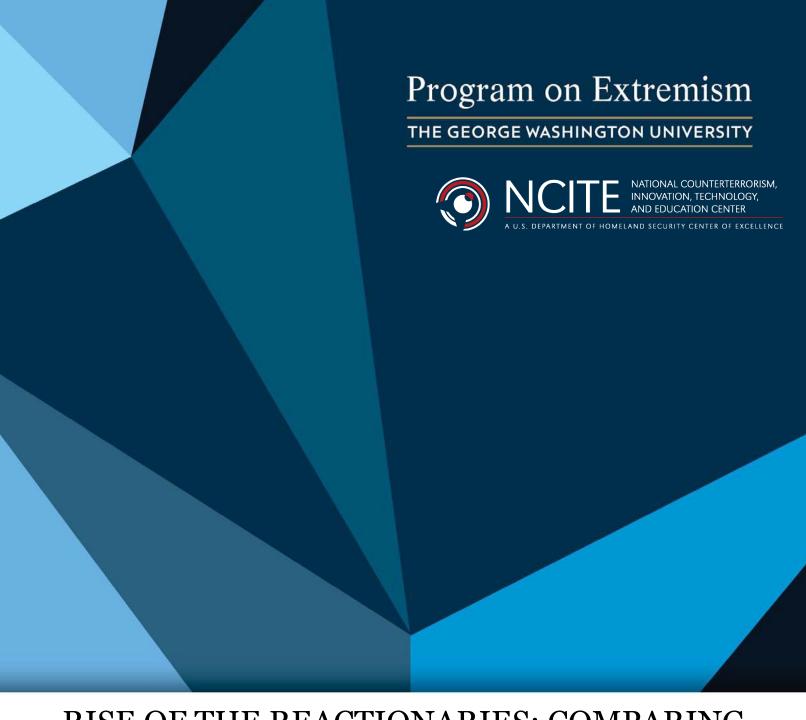
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About the Program on Extremism

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Contents

Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

Salafi-jihadism and right-wing white supremacist extremism are two of the most visible, active, and threatening violent extremist movements operating in the West today, responsible for dozens of attacks throughout North America and Western Europe. With the increased threat of white supremacist terrorism in the West have also come questions about its relationship to jihadist terrorism. This study provides an assessment of the ideological similarities between the two movements, concluding that they share key traits and political outlooks, some of which have become increasingly widespread over recent years in the Western world and beyond.

Firstly, these forms of extremism are the most violent iterations of their respective movements. Jihadists are the ideological fringe of the wider Islamist movement, while white supremacist extremists emerge from more mainstream, right-wing white identity and supremacist politics. They are both ***reactionary political movements***. They treat any form of social or political progress, reform, or liberalization with great suspicion, viewing these chiefly as a threat to their respective 'in-groups'. In this sense, jihadists too are extreme right-wing actors even if they are rarely referred to in such terms. Both movements share a similar underlying diagnosis for the ills of their respective societies, placing blame primarily on the forces of liberal progress, pluralism, and tolerance.

Connected to this are white supremacist and jihadist constructions of ***chauvinist and hyper-masculine collective identities*** and their dehumanization of 'out-groups'. Both movements have developed a strong, historically grounded collective identity coupled with a sense of superiority and a requirement that the in-group view those on the outside as both inferior and inherently threatening. While these identities differ in their content, there are similarities in their underlying structure. What is on offer in both cases is not only a strong sense of identity and belonging which is rooted in a glorious past, but also new meaning derived from seeing oneself as a historic project to save or cure humanity. Thus, while the term 'supremacist' is generally reserved for the extreme right in popular discourse, it too is an accurate description of how jihadists view their position in the world. As both movements share an ultra-conservative reactionary outlook, they also hold similar views on the traditional gender roles of men and women in society. Both movements rely heavily on reinforcing these roles, with a particular interest in supposedly recapturing 'true' masculinity through hyper-masculine portrayals of their most heroic members.

Jihadists and white supremacist extremists also share similar ways of thinking about the threats they perceive their respective in-groups as facing. In both cases, the threat is viewed as a ***wide-ranging conspiracy*** which seeks to annihilate them. For jihadists, Muslims face a "war on Islam," while white supremacist extremists warn of a "white genocide" or "great replacement" of white populations. While different in context and language, the content of both conspiracy theories is similar, including the virulent ***antisemitism*** which undergirds them. Both existential threat conspiracy narratives are also concerned with the ***preservation of purity***, which is seen as under threat due to the deliberate actions of the enemy.

These extremist movements have also made significant efforts to prove both the **_legitimacy and necessity of violence_** for the protection of their in-group and its interests. Both seek to either take part in, or be the catalyst of, a violent conflict, be it a race or holy war. Not only must fighting be used to save and protect those under threat, but it also serves as a means to a glorious end in which humanity will live in peace and prosperity

Thus, through their activism and acts of terrorism, they both hope to achieve the establishment of **_utopian_** societies in which their in-group reigns supreme at the cost of most, if not all, others. Due to their reactionary tendencies, they also share a belief that the blueprint for this idealized society can be found in a past civilization or society that was destroyed or dismantled at the hands of nefarious forces pursuing a conspiracy to weaken and subjugate them. The imagined white ethnostate and the Islamic state to which the movements are respectively committed are, in most cases, **_totalitarian_** in nature. In order to function as intended, both require strict control over many aspects of citizens' lives to maintain both the order and purity they desire.

Introduction

Salafi-jihadism and right-wing white supremacist extremism are two of the most visible, active, and threatening violent extremist movements operating in the West today, responsible for dozens of attacks throughout North America and Western Europe. Despite key distinctions, both movements rely on ideas which, while vastly different in language and context, are rooted in a similar set of underlying structural processes and drivers. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze these similarities, with the aim of contributing to the understanding of why both are enjoying a moment of increased popularity in the West today.

There are several potential points of comparison between jihadist and white supremacist extremist groups, including overlaps in their tactics, targeting, and methodology. However, this study will focus on identifying shared traits in each movement's ideology. Ideological comparison is especially important as one major shared trait between jihadists and white supremacist extremists is that both represent the far-flung ideological fringes of their respective movements. Jihadists are the most militant and uncompromising members of the wider Islamist movement, while white supremacist extremists represent one of the most violent components of the spectrum of right-wing politics.

The work is structured around the five most important ideological overlaps identified by the authors: **chauvinist collective identity**, **conspiracism**, **antisemitism**, **necessity and legitimacy of violence**, and **utopianism**. Each of these has a dedicated chapter that both explains how these traits are manifested in each movement and provides a comparative analysis. How these traits are connected is also reflected in the order in which they are presented in the study, reflecting how one feeds into and is linked to the next.

Given that the two movements emerged from very different contexts – the term 'right-wing' is generally regarded as a Euro-centric construct which denotes a Western classification of one of the two competing views of politics, while jihadism is the product of a mix of religious revivalism and anti-colonial religio-political activism in the Arab world and south-Asia – how is such a comparison possible? And, even if it is, what is the merit in pursuing this line of inquiry?

The answer to the first question relates to their underlying aims and visions for society. Both movements are driven by a conservative political impulse found throughout the world, namely a reactionary view of how to solve the problems of, or at least improve, a given society. More specifically, they both consider any form of social or political progress, reform, or liberalization with great suspicion, viewing these chiefly as a threat to their respective in-groups. In both cases, these in-groups are presented in supremacist terms, seen as superior to others while offering a chauvinist view of all out-groups.

In addition to being reactionary, the underlying ideologies of both movements have authoritarian (and in some cases totalitarian) characteristics in that they often seek to enforce uncompromising obedience to sources of authority, usually at the expense of a range of personal freedoms. Salafi-

jihadist groups also have totalitarian traits, as any analysis of the societies they have managed to take control over in recent years would demonstrate. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, for example, made efforts to exert complete control over most aspects of its population's lives, from their personal beliefs, relationships, and social interactions to their political views.[1] Similar totalitarian instincts are found in some white supremacist extremist groups, in particular those within the neo-Nazi/neo-fascist current, often taking inspiration from the totalitarian nature of the German Nazi state to call for the creation of modern totalitarian Aryan nations.[2]

Individual freedom is, therefore, opposed to the principles of jihadism and the white supremacist extremist movement. Both ideologies also view existing society as corrupt and immoral, to the point that it is beyond any reform and must be overthrown in favor of a new vision for the organization of human affairs.[3] Once a totalitarian movement takes power, it differs from other forms of oppressive governance in that it is concerned not only with subjugating and terrorizing political opponents but rather the entire society.[4]

Thus, to some extent, totalitarian ideologies like Salafi-jihadism and those found within white supremacist extremism carry some psychological appeal. In the first instance, Eric Hoffer tells us how such ideologies are attractive to the frustrated, especially those who fail to gain satisfaction, meaning, or a sense of glory through their lives and individual achievements and experiences. By surrendering to the inherent collective greatness and achievements of the movement they "find elements of pride, confidence and purpose."[5]

Totalitarians also appeal to those who feel isolated from wider society or their own community and find traction among populations who perceive themselves to be facing an existential threat. They clearly identify the enemy, while offering a strong, stable collective identity, purpose and meaning. Totalitarian ideologies offer simple answers to the complex undulations of history, along with solutions to the problems of the present and a vision for a utopian future if the "correct" means are pursued. In short, totalitarianism offers comfort where there is chaos and threat, real or perceived. This is one reason why totalitarians rely heavily on propaganda.[6] It offers ways to skew reality and truth, allowing a movement to offer alternative interpretations of events so that they appear threatening to the in-group and help increase support and inculcate a lack of trust in competing interpretations and claims.

Connected to this, both Salafi-jihadists and the extreme right also therefore tend to view human affairs through a morally reductionist, conspiratorial lens. The pace of history is, in their view, determined by a constant battle between good and evil. The forces of evil are determined to destroy the group each movement claims to represent and do so via a deep-rooted and wide-ranging conspiracy. Due to their reactionary tendencies, they also share a belief that the blueprint for a better society, often presented as an achievable utopia, can be found in a past civilization or society that was destroyed or dismantled at the hands of nefarious forces pursing a conspiracy to weaken and subjugate their respective in-groups.

Both views – belief in an evil conspiracy and the utopian solution – form the basis for a justification of the necessity of violent responses from each movement. Not only must fighting be used to save and protect those under threat, but it also serves as a means to a glorious end in which humanity will live in peace and prosperity. Seen in this way, horrific acts of violence conducted by both movements begin to look more like rational and necessary choices by movement members.

As for the second question – the merits of pursuing such a comparison – by identifying both shared traits and divergence between these two movements, we can gain a better understanding of the dynamics and appeal of two extremist movements that have found increasing bodies of support in the West. Such a comparison can therefore contribute to an understanding of how each movement addresses and appeals to the concerns, desires, and fears of their target populations.

Chapter 1: Methodology

This chapter will begin by providing an overview of what guided and shaped the research and analysis for this study, and what sources were relied upon. Here, we also explain how we came upon the five key shared traits which are identified as important ideological overlaps between jihadism and white supremacist extremism. Following this is an explanation of how the authors define key terms used throughout the study, including Islamism, jihadism, extreme right, and white supremacist. Included in this is a discussion of how the authors understand and pursue the concept of extremism, and how this shaped both the research and analysis for this study. The chapter ends with a review of other studies which have sought to compare the two movements and how they have influenced this study.

Research Design

This is primarily an exploratory study aimed at providing further analytical background to popular claims that extreme right and jihadism share similar ideological traits.[7] As such, it is designed to contribute to our understanding of contemporary extremism in the West. The first stage of the research was based on studying past and more recent definitions of extremism. This literature review, which is detailed below, allowed us to identify some of the key components of extremist thought. These are: chauvinist collective identity construction; a morally reductionist, conspiratorial view of an imminent existential threat; legitimization of hostile actions including violence to respond to threats; and a blueprint for a utopian solution.

These four components of extremism acted as a guide of our analysis of primary sources produced by the extreme right and jihadists to determine how, if at all, they expressed these traits. For the latter, we focused primarily on the output of *al-Qaeda*, ISIS and individuals associated with these two groups. While we endeavored to follow the same approach for our analysis of the extreme right as we did with our selection of jihadist groups, the very nature of this movement means that the choices of groups to analyze are not as straightforward. Within the extreme right, we identified two relevant subcategories. The first are currently or recently active neo-Nazi groups based in Britain and America, namely National Action (NA) and Atomwaffen Division (AWD) respectively. There is clear ideological overlap between these two groups. Both idolize Adolf Hitler and closely follow the tenets and language of National Socialism. Similarly, both call on members to become involved in forms of lone-actor violence against ethnic minorities and the state. As a result, NA was designated as a terrorist group by the British government in December 2016.[8] AWD, however, is widely regarded as a terrorist group but has not been subject to official designation by the U.S, although it has been designated as such in other countries, including the UK and Canada.[9]

While this study is primarily concerned with the violent manifestations of Islamism and the extreme right, these are both outcrops of wider systems of belief and political activism. As such, at times our analysis also touched on the pronouncements and activities of ostensibly non-violent iterations of

both Islamism and the extreme right.

Our subsequent analysis of these primary sources led us to conclude that we needed to add a further category of comparison: antisemitism. There is, of course, a case to be made for antisemitism to be included in the conspiracy discussion. However, we chose to use antisemitism as a separate category as it is something that is not simply the by-product of a conspiratorial mindset for each group, but rather we found it to be an inherent component of their belief systems, written, as it were, into their foundational DNA.

Definitions

Most of this study's analysis focuses on groups and individuals involved in violence to further the aims of their given movements. Jihadism represents the most militant form of Islamist activism, of which there are multiple types, from the terrorism and violence pursued by jihadists to the political activism of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Here, we define Islamism as a wide-ranging religio-political movement that presents Islam as a political ideology, and the primary texts of the faith, the Quran and hadith, as the blueprints for the formation of a state. Jihadism is defined here as a category of the Islamist movement which seeks to create an Islamic state through jihad while also pursuing an international terrorist campaign against its adversaries.[10] While the focus of the study is on the actions and pronouncements of Jihadists, at times the authors will also rely on the works of Islamist thinkers who, while not necessarily advocates of terrorism, are considered important influences on modern jihadist thought.

When it comes to the other point of comparison, namely white supremacist extremists, the authors have chosen a more flexible definition and choice of groups and individuals to analyze. White supremacy is, first and foremost, a form of right-wing extremism which is a far more nebulous term than jihadism and can refer to a wide range of groups with different histories, ideologies, and tactics.

The primary focus of this study is the "extreme right" rather than "far right." Mudde details that the term "far right" should be regarded as "those on the right who are 'anti-system'," specifically those "hostile to liberal democracy." He stresses that "far right" is an umbrella term encompassing two broader subgroups, the "radical right" which "accepts the essence of democracy, but opposes fundamental elements of *liberal* democracy," and the "extreme right," which "rejects the essence of democracy" entirely.[11] Ravndal and Bjørgo add to this definition by specifying that the extreme right "favour violent or other non-conventional means to generate political change."[12]

Bjørgo and Ravndal also offer one of the clearest explanations of the deep-rooted link and overlap between the radical and extreme right. They outline that the radical right aligns most closely with the bent of cultural nationalism, which opposes immigration and Islam. While some radical right factions may use violent rhetoric, "these movements are not usually preoccupied with racial differences but focus on cultural differences, claiming that Islam is incompatible with Western culture and society."

In contrast, the extreme right is primarily concerned with racial nationalism which advocates for "a society based on ideas of racial purity and embrace[s] totalitarian principles." What unites the radical and extreme right is that both also have some overlap with "ethnic nationalism." Ethnic nationalism often avoids overtly discussing issues of "race," focusing instead on principles of maintaining "ethnic diversity," proposing that "different ethnic groups should be kept separate in order to preserve their unique norms, cultures and characteristics." The utopian vision of ethnic nationalism is "ethnopluralism," where "ethnic mixing and assimilation are considered harmful," and as such immigration is strongly opposed and doctrines of nativism are often idealized. Bjørgo and Ravndal highlight the online, youth-focused American Alt-Right, and the European Identitarian movement as prominent examples of ethnic nationalist groups.[13]

Crucially, "the distinctions between [cultural, ethnic, and racial nationalism] are never sharp in practice" and there is significant ebb and flow between the radical and the extreme right with there even being variance within some movements as to whether specific "wings" of a movement align with either radical or extreme ideology.[14] Benjamin Lee also highlights that a number of radical right political parties have "extreme roots," again showing that the boundaries between radical and extreme are somewhat fluid.[15] Furthermore, scholars like Luke Munn, drawing upon work by Becca Lewis, have argued that the "pipeline" between radical and more extreme-right online content is "ideologically cohesive" and individuals spending time in radical right online collectives may experience less of a "major "leap" into white supremacism," and more a journey of "hundreds or thousands of micro-nudges over time" into the extreme right.[16,17]

Therefore, in contrast to the term "jihadism," where there exists more consensus on which groups, ideas and movements constitute this trend, it is significantly more difficult to concretely define a single group or movement as being definitively and solely radical or extreme right. As such, while the primary focus of this paper is the extreme right, focusing on white supremacists, including neo-Nazis and other neo-fascist groups, we also consider a number of groups, movements, and individuals which exist in the nebulous space that influences and, at times, indirectly encourages right-wing terrorism, somewhere between the radical and the overtly extreme.

White supremacist extremists are defined as a subsection of the extreme right, the most defining feature of which is a belief that white Europeans represent a genetically and culturally superior ethnic group which should be in a position of either national or global dominance. They embrace racial nationalism, calling for the exclusion and dehumanization of other races, and pursue a range of violent methods including terrorist attacks against both ethnic minorities or government and political institutions which they view as perpetuating damaging progressive notions of racial tolerance and equality in the West. Their ultimate goal is the creation of all-white ethnostates or enclaves which ensure the purity and superiority of what they define as the "white race."[18]

While American militia movements are also often considered as part of the extreme right, they will not be considered in this analysis due to their uniquely American roots and idiosyncratic nature which makes them less comparable to other forms of extreme right-wing activism.

What is Extremism?

Both jihadists and the extreme right are often popularly referred to as extreme or extremist movements. While this is often seen as an inherently subjective term – the meaning of which depends largely on how its user views the social and political status quo or mainstream – efforts have been made to better explain the key structural components of extremist thought while avoiding a values-based approach. It is worth briefly discussing these to first build up an understanding of the components of jihadist and extreme right ideology which will then be compared in further detail.

Beginning with more subjective approaches, these are often found in cases where government or official bodies attempt to offer a definition of extremism. One of the most notable is a recent definition provided by the UK Government, in which it is described as "the vocal or active opposition to our shared values. These include democracy and the rule of law, mutual respect and tolerance of other faiths and beliefs. We also consider calling for the death of our armed forces either in the UK or overseas to be extremism."[19] Here the term relies on an attack on the status quo defined by liberal democratic values. Such approaches, however, are not as useful for present purposes as those which seek to take a more objective stance which allows us to approach the extreme right and jihadism through as clear an analytical lens as possible.

The US government has also recently provided an official definition of what it calls "domestic violent extremism." A March 2021 paper published by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence defines domestic violent extremists as: "US-based actors who conduct or threaten activities that are dangerous to human life in violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any state; appearing to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; and influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping."[20] Unlike the U.K. definition, this does not necessarily include the expression of illiberal and anti-democratic political or social views and beliefs and is primarily concerned with violent action, hence its specific use of the term *violent* extremist. However, unlike other Western nations, the U.S. has created a specific "domestic violent extremist" category, which does not include jihadists, and is used officially only to refer to violent right-wing extremists, along with movements such as violent environmentalists and anarchists.

The definition of extremism provided by the *Palgrave-Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought* offers a useful structural and objective starting point which seeks to present what it refers to as a "vague term" as either a mode of thought, action, or combination of the two:

Taking a political idea to its limits, regardless of 'unfortunate' repercussions, impracticalities, arguments, and feelings to the contrary, and with the intention not only to confront, but also to eliminate, opposition. 2. Intolerance towards all views other than one's own 3. Adoption of means to political ends which disregard accepted standards of conduct, in particular which show disregard for the life, liberty and human rights of others.[21]

More recently, scholars have tried to apply a similar approach to the concept of radicalization, or the study of the processes that influence a person's move towards extremist thought and, in some cases, taking part in violent political action. To capture the two forms of extremism noted above, Peter Neumann suggests a distinction between cognitive radicalization, or a process of a change in values away from the mainstream, and behavioral radicalization, the process of a change in behavior towards more violent or risky means.[22]

Going beyond short definitions, among the earliest attempts to add structural meaning to the term comes from American academics Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab. In the 1970s, they authored *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*. The book, which provided one of the first and most comprehensive accounts of American right-wing extremism, begins with a discussion on what they term "Political Extremism." While the discussion is based on their observations of right-wing activity in America, much of the lessons taken from it can be applied to a wide range of other movements.

While they acknowledge that the term can fall into the trap of relying upon the context in which it is used to derive meaning – specifically that it is often used in liberal democracies to describe those with illiberal tendencies and beliefs – there is also a more universally applicable approach. Put simply, extremism describes "a generalized measure of deviance from the political norm" in which actors have a "tendency to go to the poles of the ideological scale."[23] Despite this, much of their discussion relates to those who are willing to "go beyond the limits of the normative procedures which define the democratic political process." More specifically, extremists are against the political pluralism which defines this process. Rather than demonstrating a willingness to nurture and embrace constant dialogue, compromise and legitimate interactions between different political identities, ideas and ethnic or religious groups, extremists are largely concerned with "the repression of difference and dissent" and seek "the closing of the market place of ideas."[24] Indeed, internal debate among movement members is not only actively discouraged by extremists, but those engaging in it will often find themselves under suspicion and subject to expulsion or worse.

This distrust and hostility towards pluralism is a feature of extremist groups partly due to how they view themselves and the groups they claim to represent. There is, in their view, only one group that shares the "correct" qualities and views on how society should be organized, and any attempt to include others in this discussion in not just a waste of time, but the result of malign intentions. In essence, this relates to how extremists view and use identity and collective identity.

For some scholars, the question of identity is a central component of any extremist thought and activity. Berger, for example, relies heavily on the instrumentalizing and exploitation of identity in his structural definition of extremism as a "belief that an in-group's success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against the out-group." Drawing from social identity theory, he defines an in-group as "a group of people who share an identity...the group to which one belongs," while the out-group represents all of those who do not meet the criteria of the in-group, be it religious belief, nationality, or race, among other identity markers. [25] While there is only one in-

group for each extremist movement, there can be multiple out-groups, each with different characteristics and posing different types of threat.

Berger's definition therefore depends on the question of identity and how it is defined and defended by different movements: "extremism refers to the belief that an in-group's success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against an out-group."[26] The structure of extremism, according to him, is made up of two key beliefs, that identities are created through the definition of in- and out-groups and that a "crisis-solution" approach demands action on the part of the in-group.[27]

While most extremist groups follow this type of formulation, it is particularly important for both extreme-right and jihadist movements. The creation and definition of both in- and out-groups rests largely on a supremacist view of the former and a chauvinist intolerant approach to the latter. Unlike, for example, extreme left-wing ideologies such as Stalinist communism, the declared aim of which was (in theory) universal equality, the extreme right and jihadists share the goal of the eventual supremacy of their group.[28] The approach each movement takes to constructing a chauvinist collective identity and attacking those who do not share it will form the basis for the **Chapter 2** of this study.

This binary view of identity also extents to how world events are perceived as well as how extremists believe they can solve the problems of the in-group. For extremists, there is only one "correct" solution, political position, or way to think about the organization of society and the preservation and prosperity of the in-group. As a result, ambivalence and difference is seen as inherently illegitimate and suspicious – a sign of one's either lack of commitment to the cause or, worse still, nefarious intentions. This approach has been described using a term from philosophy called "monism," which while it carries different meanings depending on context, in political terms can be understood as the photo negative of pluralist thought – a belief that there is only a single correct answer to a given problem.[29] Thus, extremists often view the shaping of human history as a binary struggle between good and evil, in which either the right or wrong choice was made. All decisions, policies enacted, and historical events can, in the eyes of a monist, be explained either by "good" or "bad" intentions.[30]

This, in turn, is connected to another common strand of extremist thought – a deep-seated belief in an all-encompassing conspiracy designed to subjugate or otherwise harm the in-group. When history is viewed through a monist lens the underlying assumption is that whenever there is a negative outcome there must be a specific reason for it, namely a cabal of nefarious actors whose hidden hand is controlling events to undermine the in-group. For monists, it is the responsibility of those in power to ensure that competing ideas and views are blocked out. If this does not happen, the inevitable conclusion is the existence of a conspiracy.[31] Conspiracy theories thrive during times of real or imagined uncertainty. They offer simplistic explanations to complex issues and, by presenting the world in this way, offer reassurance to those seeking order among chaos.

One of the most influential early contributions to understanding extremist tendencies towards

viewing the world through the lens of conspiracy comes in the form of Richard Hofstadter's 1964 essay about what he referred to as the "paranoid style" of politics pursued by the American extreme right and other extreme political actors. He notes the tendency of conspiracy theories to exaggerate the extent of real or perceived threats. Extremists are not content with merely addressing a threat as one of a collection of challenges, but rather present it in an "apocalyptic and absolutist framework."[32]

Purveyors of conspiracy theories often present threat as both existential and deeply-rooted throughout society – the conspiracy is usually a "grand scheme" made up of many layers as opposed to being the product of a single set of actors. Referring specifically to the American extreme right of the time, Hofstadter noted how they viewed themselves as already dispossessed because of the success of a conspiracy against them:

America has been largely taken away from them and their kind...the old American virtues have already been eaten away by cosmopolitans and intellectuals; the old competitive capitalism has been gradually undermined by socialist and communist schemers; the old national security and independence have been destroyed by treasonous plots, having as their most powerful agents not merely outsiders and foreigners as of old major statesmen who are at the very centers of American power.[33]

Crucially, what gives conspiracy theories their apparent legitimacy in the eyes of followers is that they often make claims couched, at least partly, in fact. Drawing on real events, often ones that have had a detrimental impact on a given movement's in-group, they are presented as proof of the validity of the conspiracist's suspicions. Thus, "for every error and act of incompetence, one can substitute an act of treason."[34] The most influential and popular conspiracy theories often therefore come down to how real events are interpreted to yet again prove the existence of a grand scheme to annihilate the in-group. The threat is also usually presented as both internally and externally derived. Not only is there a plan being implemented from above in the centers of power, but it is being helped along by traitors within the in-group.

Returning to Lipset and Raab, they describe this extremist instinct as "simplism," defined as the "ascription of simple and single causes to complex human events."[35] Thus, for the jihadists, almost any negative experience or event involving Muslims comes down to the all-encompassing war on Islam conspiracy, while the extreme right focus on some form of "white genocide" which they often believe is being undertaken by the left in concert with powerful Jews and ethnic minorities under their control.

Meanwhile, the solutions offered by extremists are similarly basic – be it fighting jihad to establish a caliphate or igniting a race war to regain the dominance of the white race and remove the presence and supposed negative influence of ethnic minorities from Western nations. How each movement formulates and disseminates the existential threat they face in the form of a grand conspiracy will therefore make up **Chapter 3** of this study.

In the case of the two movements analyzed here, one of the key components of the conspiracy theory they have constructed is the influence of Jewish people within various strata of society. The literature on extremism does not, however, present antisemitism as an inherent feature of all extremist groups. It is, nonetheless, a feature that closely binds jihadism and the extreme right. How these two movements share a very close understanding of the threat of the Jewish "hidden hand" will be analyzed in **Chapter 4**.

Extremists are not, however, interesting only in diagnosing the ills of the world. Indeed, much of their appeal lies in their ability to offer solutions, both in the short and long term. The urgency and scale of the threat facing the in-group means that short-term solutions offered by extremists involves some form of hostile action.[36] As noted earlier in the *Palgrave Macmillan* definition, they take part in forms of activism which "show disregard for the life, liberty and human rights of others."[37]

This can take many forms, from violence to verbal attacks, but constitutes some form of harmful activity directed towards those seen as threatening the group. This belief in the necessity of hostility must, according to Berger, "be unconditional and inseparable from the in-group's understanding of success in order to qualify as extremist."[38] The focus of this study is primarily on the more violent manifestations of the extreme right and Islamism, both of which justify their hostile actions (usually in the form of terrorist attacks) on the basis that the threat they face is too far along and entrenched to confront using non-violent means. In addition, they view other non-violent components of their wider movement as either cowards or traitors who are willingly taking part in the conspiracy. Hofstadter writes that, due to the apocalyptic terms in which extremists view the world which is based on a view of a conflict between good and evil, there is rarely a willingness to debate or compromise with the agents of the conspiracy. The only solution is that the enemy, seen as "totally evil and totally unappeasable," must be "totally eliminated."[39] **Chapter 5** of the study will look at how each group justifies violence and finds ways to make terrorism appeal to members.

Beyond pursuing violence, extremists also offer attractive long-term solutions, often coming in the form of a utopian vision of a pure society made up of perfected individuals in which the suffering of the in-group is eradicated, and prosperity and happiness reign.[40] Indeed, violence is often justified as a means to this glorious end. Totalitarian extremist groups are particularly vulnerable to this pursuit of an imagined utopia, which is often based on an idealized view of a glorious past once enjoyed by their in-group.[41]

The form of purity this society takes depends upon the nature of the group in question.[42] For our purposes, purity for the extreme right relates primarily to racial homogeneity, while for jihadists the focus is on the adoption of the correct religious creed and how it is practiced and implemented. For some extremist groups, and in particular those with totalitarian tendencies, this purity also extends to morality (or at least their interpretation of morality) at both a societal and individual level. To solve the problem of the threatening conspiracy and begin building towards a better future for the in-group, a high level of moral purity is required at the individual level to ensure that such evil intentions are not allowed to again lead to the persecution of the group.[43]

This utopianism is, to an extent, a product of the absolutist and conspiratorial view of the world held by extremist groups. It is partly the result of both their refusal to accept the chaotic and multicausal nature of human history, and their desire to make the world bend to their will. If, as extremist conspiracy theories claim, we are to assume that the current world order is the result of the "bad" intentions and actions of nefarious actors, then surely a "good" alternative is also possible, one in which those pursuing the correct methods and beliefs can create a good, just, and perfect world. How precisely these utopias take shape will be the focus of **Chapter 6** of this study.

Comparative Studies: A Literature Review

This is not the first attempt to provide a comparative analysis of the ideologies of militant Islamist groups and those of the extreme right, nor is it the first to note some important similarities. Some works have compared how each movement views and constructs collective identity. A recent example can be found in Walter Laqueur and Christopher Wall's analysis of the future of terrorism. Looking at the Alt-Right and the jihadist movements, they argue that both "advocate a homogenous society that absolutely rejects outsiders."[44] However, as we also note in the analysis below, the parameters of each movement's collective identity are drastically different. In the case of the white supremacist right, membership to the movement and a key component of the required identity is based almost solely on race and bloodlines. One can only be a member of a white supremacist group if they are some type of what is often described by them as white European. In contrast, while jihadists also have strict collective identity requirements related to principles of Islamic belief and practice, anyone has the potential to be a member regardless of culture, race, or ethnicity. As long as they are Muslims who practice the jihadist interpretation of Islam then, in theory, they are welcome.

Similar to Laqueur and Wall, Ebner, in her research on how each movement bolsters the other, a process also known as "reciprocal radicalization," analyzes how they each deploy their own version of identity politics. Both, she argues, adopt and disseminate identities built around a narrative of grievance and victimhood, real or perceived. The extreme right, she argues, see their victimizers as a mix of ethnic minorities and the white liberal establishment that supports them, while jihadists view the enemy in religious terms, with non-Muslims representing an existential threat to the doctrines and practice of Islam. Thus, they "explain grievances with black-and-white narratives that link evil to ethnic or religious identity," while each ideology "offers a framework to judge and treat evil."[45] This is one of several comparisons Ebner makes. Others include how each rely heavily on narratives that share the same five core elements: a simplistic dichotomy between good and evil; the importance of maintaining consistency between narrative and action; a responsiveness to pre-existing grievances and desires of the in-group; an appeal to human emotion through the evocation of empathy for fellow in-group members by using common language, symbols and customs; and a desire to inspire action against the out-group by claiming that it represents an existential threat.[46]

Other studies have chosen to focus on one specific component of each movement. Winter and

Mattheis, for example, analyze how ISIS and the Identitarian movement view gender, in particular the role of women. They highlight a "structural quality these two extremisms deeply share," with both viewing women as a "submissive heroine" while men are presented as protectors and the vanguards of each respective movement. Together, men and women are seen to perform exclusive but complementary roles that assist in the pursuit of a utopian project, be it an Islamic state or a racially and culturally 'pure' and homogeneous society.[47]

A recent study by the Soufan Center has attempted to compare both ideologies and activities of the movements.   On the former, it notes that both movements justify the use of violence and terrorism as an act of self-defense against an existential invading threat; be it military incursions into Muslim countries by Western forces, or the immigration of ethnic minorities into the West.[48] As for shared activities of the two movements, the report notes "white supremacy extremists" devised and employed the lone-actor terrorist approach long before jihadist groups adopted it, using it as a way of "minimizing infiltration of the movement by federal law enforcement agents in the 1980s."[49] The research also compares the phenomenon of jihadist foreign fighters, where radicalized individuals leave their home countries to join jihadist insurgencies overseas, to white supremacists, noting that members of the latter have – to a more limited extent – also travelled outside of the US to fight since 1960s.[50] More recently, a small number of white supremacist extremists are thought to have travelled to Ukraine and Russia, with the Ukrainian ultra-nationalist group Azov Battalion having reportedly recruited and trained a number of foreign fighters from the West who are motivated by white supremacism and neo-Nazism.[51] Although it remains true that the phenomenon of foreign fighters is a far more prominent fixture of jihadist extremism than the extreme right, recent attacks such as Anders Breivik's July 2011 attack in Norway and Brenton Tarrant's March 2019 shooting in New Zealand, also reveal that extreme-right terrorism, too, is developing a transnational flavor.

While the studies reviewed here take different approaches to comparing the two movements, they have all made important early contributions to this discussion. Both in terms of ideology and activism, analysts and scholars have noticed important similarities and differences. The following analysis hopes to further contribute to this discussion by contrasting five key components of their ideology identified through the process discussed in the preceding methodology and extremism sections.

Chapter 2: Chauvinist Collective Identity Construction

This section will analyze both movements' approaches to the creation and dissemination of a supremacist and chauvinist collective identity. It is one of the features that both movements share and arguably the clearest link between the two and their appeal to individuals who feel part of an in-group which they view as under threat.

The concept of collective identity refers specifically to efforts that define a group's membership, the boundaries that separate members from wider society and the activities they undertake.[52] According to Alberto Melucci, collective identity is "an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals…."[53] This creation of what is effectively a collective agency to act is further elaborated upon by Polletta and Jasper who define it as, "an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connections with a broader community…It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly.'[54] It is these collective identities that form the bonds which bind together seemingly unconnected groups and individuals who share a common purpose and commitment to the given cause, and not any sort of official and hierarchical member-based organization. Such an identity can be expressed using a range of cultural materials including names, narratives, symbols, verbal styles, and clothing.[55] Collective identity is also closely related to ideology in that by its very nature it demands an agreed upon set of ideas that all members must adhere to.[56] For many extremist movements, therefore, it is imperative that collective identities are constructed effectively and convincingly depending on the terrain in which they are deployed.[57]

As in-group and out-group(s) constitute one another, the identification of the out-group(s) is as vital as the construction of a distinct in-group identity. If the out-group's existence per se is successfully framed as a threat to the in-group, its members, and their shared identity, violent action against out-group members can easily be justified as a necessary means of in-group preservation.[58]

Collective identity is a feature of a range of movements, the vast majority of which cannot be classified as extremist. However, in the case of extremist movements, and especially the two under examination here, a key feature of this this shared identity is a sense of superiority over all other groups.

The Jihadist Construction of a Chauvinistic Collective Identity

Given that, as Haroro Ingram argues in his analysis of *al-Qaeda*'s *Inspire* and the Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazines, "[i]dentity plays a significant role in how individuals and groups perceive the world, generate meaning and rationalize decisions," it is not surprising that jihadists put much emphasis on the construction of a chauvinistic in-group identity and its subsequent juxtaposition with various out-group identities.[59] The promise of a strong and stable identity constitutes a key aspect of the ideological appeal of jihadist groups like the Islamic State. Scholars such as Staub and Wiktorowicz have also pointed out that people who suffer from real or perceived grievances turn to groups which are able to offer them a more stable and rewarding group identity.[60] The following

section will look at how jihadists use long-standing Islamic concepts to construct a coherent and stable collective identity which not only marks the in-group as morally and spiritually superior but requires a deep and uncompromising hatred of those on the outside.

In the case of the jihadist movement, the chauvinistic in-group identity is primarily built around their interpretation of Salafi concepts including *iman* (faith), *al wala' wal bara'* (loyalty and disavowal), *shirk* (polytheism), *takfir* (excommunication) and – most importantly – *tawhid* (the oneness of Allah). While *tawhid* is important for all Muslims, it has constituted the absolute cornerstone of Salafi thought ever since Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792).[61] To this day, Salafis and jihadists make use of al-Wahhab's categorization of *tawhid* into numerous branches. However, whereas most Salafists consider *tawhid* to be three-dimensional, Islamists added a fourth dimension which has also become central to jihadist thought. In addition to *tawhid al-rububiyyah* (oneness of lordship), *tawhid al-uluhiyyah* (oneness of worship), and *tawhid al-asma wa al-sifat* (oneness of names and attributes), they portray *tawhid al-hakimiyya* (oneness in sovereignty) as an indispensable aspect of Islam.[62] This added dimension portrays all sovereignty as lying with Allah, meaning that all forms of government that do not fully comply with Allah's rules and laws must not only be rejected but overthrown by means of *jihad* and replaced through an Islamic state that is, according to Marc Lynch, defined by "the rigorous enforcement of Islamic morality, an absence of civil law independent of *Sharia*, zero tolerance of diversity of interpretation and no place whatsoever for the institution of the nation-state."[63] Most recently, ISIS used the concept of *tawhid al-hakimiyya* to establish and justify its totalitarian state in parts of Iraq and Syria.

The jihadist interpretation of *tawhid* is absolute and non-negotiable. Those who disagree risk being portrayed as disbelievers and falsifiers of Allah's message. In their study on the ideological overlaps of ISIS, *Jabhat al-Nusra*[64]*,* and *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)*, El-Badawy, Comerford, and Welby found *tawhid* to be the most recognizably shared theme of the three groups, "with direct and indirect references appearing in 74 per cent of the propaganda."[65] For jihadists, it is not enough simply to believe in the oneness of God. Rather, one can only be considered a 'true Muslim' when taking action against those who have not complied with *tawhid.*[66] On the basis of *tawhid al-hakimiyya,* this alleged rejection of *tawhid* can happen quite easily, as evidenced by an article in the third issue of *Rumiyah* which argues that "those who vote in the democratic elections and referendums and those who seek judgment from courts judging by manmade laws [...] believe in and worship *taghut* [infidel rulers/tyrants] and have left the basis of Islam – the testimony that there is no god but Allah, that there is none deserving worship or obedience except Allah."[67] Osama bin Laden conveyed an equally absolute and unambiguous interpretation in a statement on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of the 9/11-attacks, claiming that "[d]isbelief in the *taghut* [...] [is] one of the pillars of *tawhid,* and if he [...] doesn't fulfil this pillar, he is not a *muwahhid* (a Muslim monotheist)."[68]

The jihadist identity can be understood as something that is established between the poles of *tawhid* and *takfir*. *Tawhid* is needed to create and define the positive self-image, while *takfir* embodies the key tool of demarcation against non-jihadist Muslims who constitute one of many identified out-groups. It is well established that the adoption of an encompassing social identity and the

accompanying increased "in-group love" can not only lead to aversion but to actually hatred of out-groups and the dehumanization of their members.[69] By making use of the Salafi concept of *al wala' wal bara'*, jihadists draw a rigorous line between *muwahiddun* (believers) and *kuffar* (disbelievers), thereby building what Maher describes as, "a protective carapace around the faith which guards against impurity and inauthenticity."[70] While the dogma as such commands Muslims to show loyalty (*wala'*) to other Muslims and disavowal (*bara'*) to non-Muslims, it was long confined to a Muslim's personal interaction with infidels and did not necessarily have implications for the political level.[71] In 1979, this changed drastically when Juhayman al-Utabi and other militants rebelled against the Saudi royal family arguing that it had defied the doctrine of *al wala' wal bara'* by establishing friendly relations with Western infidel states.[72] Joas Wagemakers argues that their convictions "were perpetuated by several eighteenth- and nineteenth-century [...] scholars, the most important of which were Sulayman ibn 'Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh and Hamd ibn 'Ali ibn 'Atiq, who both reformulated the concept as a distinguishing feature of Islam that was derived naturally from tawhid."[73] Prior to these events, the house of Saud had for centuries benefitted from the religious legitimacy granted by the official Wahhabi clergy which presided over the mandate to oversee all societal issues in return.[74] Al-Utabi's action was a starting shot for other scholars who expanded on *al wala' wal bara'* and began to utilize it against the rulers of the Muslim world similarly to the way Sayyid Qutb had accused Muslim leaders of governing on the basis of *jahiliyya* (un-Islamic ignorance) two decades earlier.[75]

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and the Emergence of Takfirism

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi became one of the most important Salafi-jihadist scholars with regard to the reformulation of *al wala' wal bara'*.[76] By converting it into "a theory of contention and enmity towards the political rulers in the Islamic world," he set the stage for the rise of groups that propagated *takfir* and *jihad* as indispensable tools in the struggle to keep Islam pure.[77] According to Islamic scholar Rüdiger Lohlker, *al wala' wal bara'* developed into "the fundamental principle of exclusivism."[78] Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the founder of *Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* – the group that became known as *al-Qaeda in Iraq* (*AQI*) after al-Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden in 2004 – was an early follower of al-Maqdisi and his message of 'true Islam'. However, due to his extreme demonstration of piety, al-Zarqawi began to eclipse al-Maqdisi when both were imprisoned in Jordan from 1994 to 1999. Eventually, al-Maqdisi was left no choice but to concede his leadership among jihadist prisoners to al-Zarqawi – a harbinger of the latter's ascent to the top of Jordan's Salafi-jihadist movement overall.[79]

Al-Zarqawi's understanding of what it meant to be a Muslim was extremely narrow and in the chaos that ensued in the aftermath of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, he made it clear that he considered virtually everyone who did not share his beliefs in their entirety a disbeliever. The ideological exclusivism of *Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* and *AQI* and the levels of brutality with which they were willing to enforce their religious convictions quickly turned al-Zarqawi into the symbol of the most radical form of Salafi-jihadism, sometimes referred to as neo-takfirism.[80]

Inspired by the ultra-sectarian ideologue Abu Abdallah al-Muhajir, al-Zarqawi declared war on the whole Shia community in Iraq in 2004. In his eyes, the Shia had been "a sect of treachery and betrayal throughout history and throughout the ages" and Shi'ism had to be seen as "the looming danger and the true challenge" for all true Muslims.[81] While anti-Shi'ism had a long history in Salafi thought, al-Zarqawi's excessive hatred and proven willingness to kill as many Shia as possible was unprecedented.[82] More recently, it has been pointed out that the aggressive anti-Shi'ism of ISIS and other current jihadist groups can be traced back to al-Zarqawi's ideas and actions.[83] It is ISIS's declared position that "the Rāfidah [pejorative for Shi'a] are [...] apostates who must be killed wherever they are to be found, until no Rāfidī walks on the face of earth."[84] Due to their goal of establishing a perfectly pure Muslim identity, Hurvitz and Alshech have suggested that groups like ISIS can best be described as "violent purifiers"[85]. While not quite as frequently mentioned as *tawhid,* the findings of El-Badawy, Comerford, and Welby leave no doubt about the relevance of *takfir* in the construction of an all-encompassing chauvinistic identity in recent jihadist propaganda.[86] How rigorously ISIS interprets *takfir* is demonstrated in an article in the seventh issue of its magazine *Rumiyah* which contends that "anyone who refuses to make takfir of those who consider the Shari'ah of Allah to be unsuitable for this era, or refuses to make takfir of those who are fighting to establish democracy, is himself a murtadd [apostate]."[87]

Fitting to its Manichean outlook on the world, ISIS has established an identity that only revolves around the absolute poles of good/faithful/just on the one hand and evil/disbelieving/unjust on the other. In no uncertain terms, ISIS has repeatedly propagated that "the world has split into two encampments, one for the people of faith, the other for the people of kufr [disbelief]" and that it aims for "the extinction of the gray zone" in-between.[88] There is no room for ambiguity: one can either choose to be part of the highly exclusive in-group by adopting the group's rigid interpretation of Islamic customs and practices or alternatively become a part of the out-group that is said to violate *tawhid* by engaging in actions of *shirk* (polytheism), thereby losing its protection as co-religionists. ISIS has contrasted the adherence to its form of 'true Islam' with the infidel concept of citizenship, arguing that "Islam [...] has conditions by which one enters it and nullifiers by which can leave it – even without knowing it."[89] The group prides itself in relentlessly "making takfir of the individuals from the parties who fight us" and insists that "[t]here is not a single enemy which the Islamic State is fighting that is free of kufr."[90] The argument plays an important part in justifying *jihad* against Muslims who would normally be protected by their status as fellow believers. ISIS clearly views itself as the vanguard of the true believers whose self-imposed duty it is to violently rid the religion of Islam of all impure elements and influences. Since the Muslim world has allegedly been in a state of *jahiliyya* for decades, the time has finally come to re-establish Allah's reign and rebuild a truly faithful *ummah*. Anyone who claims to be a Muslim but does not declare *takfir* on others who he has witnessed to sin against the overarching principles of *tawhid* and *al wala' wal bara'* is cast out of the in-group and becomes an apostate themselves.[91]

A Matter of Pure Belief: Jihadist Social and Racial Inclusivism

Interestingly, the rigid and highly exclusivist interpretation of what it means to be a true Muslim runs counter to the inclusive message of jihadist groups when addressing social background, race, and nationality. In ISIS's propaganda, it is argued that "racism is a tool of Shaytan [Satan], which, like nationalism, is intended to divide and weaken the children of Adam and prevent them from uniting upon the truth."[92] When Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed the caliphate in June 2014, he focused heavily on a message of racial inclusivity and called on Muslims around the world to join the Islamic State "where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers."[93] In a similar fashion, AQAP dedicated an entire chapter to the problem of racism in the United States in an issue of *Inspire* magazine. In the piece, parallels are drawn between the killings of African Americans through U.S. policemen and "the thousands of Muslims killed in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Yemen."[94] In contrast, it is maintained that "Islam prohibits discrimination, demolishes social castes and unites Muslims as a single body."[95] As early as 2010, the hugely influential American-Yemeni jihadist Anwar al-Awlaki had spread a similar message in a memorandum to the American people, juxtaposing U.S. racism and imperialism with the jihadist pursuit of "truth and justice" and reiterating the claim that – in stark contrast to American politicians – "the Muslims do not have an inherent animosity towards any racial group or ethnicity."[96]

The embracing theme of these examples should be understood as a powerful jihadist recruitment asset. People of all social classes and ethnic backgrounds are offered the opportunity of belonging to an impeccable community that is said to be set up according to the ideals of Muhammad and his companions. In this community, egalitarianism is supposed to be the guiding principle and if you are willing to fully devote your life to Allah, nobody will care about the color of your skin, where you come from, or which social and economic hardships you went through. This outlook has a particular appeal to people who, often after suffering from persecution, find themselves looking for a less ambiguous and more consistent "framework for the interpretation of reality."[97] As Basra and Neumann have demonstrated in their research on the so-called crime-terror nexus, many of today's European ISIS members and supporters are former petty criminals who spent time in prison.[98] These individuals hope to resolve their individual identity crises by taking up a collective identity as group members of ISIS, *al-Qaeda* or any other jihadist group that propagates a sense of belonging on the sole basis of unconditional fellowship.[99] However, what seems inclusive on the surface, certainly also highlights the uncompromising and all-encompassing nature of the constructed jihadist identity. According to groups like ISIS and *al-Qaeda,* a true Muslim's allegiance and loyalty is confined to Allah and the Islamic *ummah*. Hence, a multi-faceted identity is not permitted. A true Muslim is a Muslim only: all previously held sub-identities are to be renounced.

Women as Mothers, Men as Warriors

On top of the religious chauvinism characterizing the jihadist identity, a distinct type of anti-feminist male chauvinism is also often evident in their writings and pronouncements. In the jihadist worldview, the role of women is inferior and subservient to men. As a partial consequence, the jihadist identity often oozes hyper-masculinity. In an ISIS propaganda publication entitled

"Women in the Islamic State: Manifesto and Case Study," the ideal role of a woman is described as one of caring and providing for her husband and her family. Whereas a faithful Muslim man is expected to wage *jihad* in the name of Allah, a woman's obligation first and foremost lies at home with "the purpose of her existence" being "the Divine duty of motherhood."[100] It is emphasized that classical patriarchal gender roles should not be questioned, and that women and men should always know their place in society. Otherwise, the anti-feminist argument goes, "humanity is thrown into a state of flux and instability [...] [and society's] foundations crumble and its walls collapse."[101] The female responsibility to bear children is repeated in numerous other publications. For instance, in an article in *Rumiyah*, it is asserted that "[e]very woman to whom Allah has granted the blessing of giving birth in the Islamic State should take advantage of this tremendous grace."[102] In *Dabiq* No. 11, the women in the caliphate are addressed directly: "O sister in religion, [...] I see the Ummah of ours as a body made of many parts, but the part that works most towards and is most effective in raising a Muslim generation is the part of the nurturing mother."[103] Women are supposed to be submissive and constantly "reform [them]selves" in order to please their husbands.[104] Following the allegation that they "often engage in nonsense," women are urged to stop "showing ingratitude towards their husbands."[105] They are advised to always behave properly and only leave the house occasionally, "in comparison to the default rule, which is that she stays at home."[106] As one of their main duties apart from giving birth and raising children, women are expected to prepare their male dependents for their role as mujahedin and even be "saddened by the return of their husbands and sons from the battlefield without shahadah [martyrdom]."[107]

This message of devotion and sacrifice for the greater good is mirrored in *al-Qaeda*'s publications that deal with the role of women as members of the *ummah*. In issue 10 of *Inspire* they are challenged to play a bigger part in the global *jihad*. However, as with ISIS, this is confined to raising children, demonstrating virtue and loyalty, and "push[ing] [their] loved ones to the battlefield."[108] In both cases, the upbringing of children is inherently tied to the task of turning them into Muslims who take a pride in belonging to the vanguard of true *iman*. Through this task, women fulfil the important but clearly subordinated role of securing the continued existence of the in-group and its identity. Mattheis and Winter draw a similar conclusion, arguing that, "the Islamic State's ideal civilization is positioned as being a gift from Allah. Crucially, though, this gift is facilitated and preserved by men, who are, the line goes, in need of support and procreation from in-group women."[109]

Overall, it is evident that jihadist ideology is dependent on a chauvinistic identity that revolves around a certain warrior-type of masculinity and the absolute interpretations of *tawhid* and *takfir*. Both concepts perfectly encapsulate jihadism's general Manichean outlook on the world. The jihadist identity is constructed in a way that leaves no room for ambiguities – pure virtue on the one side of the equation and pure evil and immorality on the other. The positive image of the in-group is built on a rigid understanding of *tawhid* that demands every in-group member to act in a way that pays tribute to the sanctity of the oneness of Allah. As self-declared vanguards of true faith, the in-group has an extremely narrow and exclusionary understanding of what can be considered adherence to *tawhid*. According to jihadists, if a Muslim does for instance vote in elections, he forfeits his membership and should be considered an infidel.

As "violent purifiers," jihadists are obsessed with declaring *takfir* on other Muslims who do not live up to their ideals or practice religious rituals that are deemed to be signs of *shirk*.[110] This kind of religious zeal has led to the excommunication of swathes of Sunni populations and the entire Shia community and their violent persecution at the hands of jihadist groups. The construction and

affirmation of the in-group identity through the interplay of *tawhid* and *takfir* is fundamentally linked to the concept of *al wala' wal bara'*. Again, we can see the dichotomous division into good (loyalty) and evil (disavowal). Jihadists consider the doctrine "crucial to defending Islam and the Muslims" and argue that declaring *takfir* and murdering infidels and apostates constitutes "the greatest form of disavowal."[111] The extreme lengths to which jihadists go to fulfil their vision of a purified Islam is evidenced by the level of in-fighting between rivalling factions, all of which claim to represent the one true form of Islam. Groups like ISIS have not hesitated to excommunicate other jihadists because of alleged impiety.[112]

However, it is equally important to recognize the appeal this tightly structured and rule-laden identity construction has on people seeking guidance and unambiguity above all else. The promise of making sense of one's own grievances in a vast and ever-changing world while at the same time belonging to an avant-garde group of heroic Muslims who fight for the re-establishment of Allah's reign on earth has undoubtedly played a vital role in jihadist recruitment efforts. In their propaganda, jihadist groups put much emphasis on the purportedly egalitarian nature of their ideology in which every person, no matter where they come from or the color of their skin, can become a member, and make a lasting impact – if they are determined to embrace the high standards of their specific puritan interpretation of Islam and renounce all previously held (sub-)identities.

The Extreme-Right Construction of a Chauvinist Collective Identity

While many elements of jihadist collective identity are dictated by adherence to religious doctrine and principles, Laqueur and Wall deem the extreme right's criteria for inclusion "more extreme," as the movement "rejects billions on the basis of their physical attributes."[113] This section will examine the construction of collective identity within the extreme right, with particular emphasis on white supremacy; focusing on the interplay between biological and cultural bases of discrimination, gender, and transgressive subcultural irony. It will show that the baseline requirements for involvement in white supremacist activism may be mainly biological factors, but that social factors such as expressions of masculinity and leverage of online subcultural capital are integral in shaping the essence of the movement's collective identity.

This observation rests on the white supremacists' philosophy of biological discrimination and racial nationalism which frames the white race as genetically superior. A number of white supremacist movements draw upon various scientific theories such as social Darwinism and evolutionary psychology - a (theoretically neutral) strain of social science which investigates the spectrum of human difference from the perspective of evolutionary biology - as the pseudoscientific basis for racial discrimination.[114]   In its essence, evolutionary psychology assumes that certain human traits are inherited generationally as adaptive functions and their prevalence may vary between groups. This perspective is adopted by white supremacists and interpreted as a logical basis for what they term "race realism," the assertion that there exist fundamental and indisputable biological differences between races.[115]

This biological discrimination comes most clearly into focus when considering white supremacist movements like Atomwaffen Division which openly calls for a "white revolution" in its propaganda. To Atomwaffen, the current society in which its members operate is regarded as having been corrupted – primarily by Jewish influence – beyond repair, and as a result, the white race is at risk of being replaced by other non-white races in a "racial eclipse."[116] The only solution, as it is framed in the pages of *Siege*, the group's accelerationist central text consisting of newsletters penned by influential neo-Nazi American thinker James Mason in the 1980s, is to initiate the collapse of society in order to rebuild a utopian white society in its place.

Propaganda produced by the group makes it clear that the crux of their shared identity is primarily racial. One propaganda video produced by Atomwaffen condemning the disorganized nature of the Charlottesville Unite the Right Rally in 2017, contains a lengthy quote from the white supremacist and founder of the white supremacist group 'White Aryan Resistance' Tom Metzger. Metzger, talking on behalf of "white lone wolves," stresses they are "not white nationalists, […] are not white conservatives or any other of those titles that are used by people who are too squeamish to say they are white racists…. The lone wolf has his or her skin as their uniform, it's all they need."[117] This notion that the core of their identity is primarily racial is echoed in posters produced and spread by the group, where they refer to themselves as "aryan

predator[s]," willing to attack and overcome those that stand in their path: "sodomite and degenerates," "yellow, black and brown."[118] Similarly, a *Siege* passage titled "family" which is showcased in one of Atomwaffen's propaganda videos dictates that the white race must band together in groups outside of the system, and that it is only by remaining closely in these racially-defined groups that the white race will survive.

Further passages from *Siege* also solidify the notion that the Atomwaffen Division regards white people as inherently genetically superior to other races. One early passage reads "our own foremost racial philosophers will tell you that truly noble instincts exist in only a small minority of Whites and not at all in other races."[119] Thus, Mason frames the cultural "nobility" of whiteness as a byproduct of white, racial genetics. Other sections in *Siege* stress that white people who are not prepared to fight in a white revolution are "unworthy of the white genes in [their] blood."[120]

Similar narratives of genetic, racial superiority are also espoused by the British neo-Nazi group National Action. In a speech made by one member during the 2015 "White Man March" held in the city of Newcastle which is featured in National Action propaganda videos, he states that "our race, the white race…. [is] unique in that we create geniuses century after century." The speaker cites King Leonidas of Sparta, Erwin Rommel, Napoleon, and Alexander the Great as examples of this greatness, a success which he later links to the "principles of our evolutionary nature."[121] In this way, he links the cultural greatness of the white race, to its racial, and evolutionary characteristics. In short, both AWD and NA attribute what they perceive to be superior features of white culture such as "nobility" and "genius" to superior white genetics. They therefore frame what they regard as the cultural achievements of the white race as a byproduct of their racial makeup. Thus, the cultural superiority of the white race becomes inseparable from its biological features, blurring the lines between each distinction.

Narratives such as superior genetics have not only historically underpinned white supremacist ideology, but also continue to be reflected in more recent attacks carried out by extreme right lone actors. For example, white supremacist Dylann Roof, who carried out the 2015 Charleston church shooting in the United States in which nine black worshipers were shot dead, described himself as "completely racially aware" in his manifesto, which primarily focused on perceived genetic differences between different racial groups.[122] Roof writes that black people "have lower Iqs [sic.], lower impulse control, and higher testosterone levels," than other races.[123] This narrative simultaneously leverages white superiority via the glorification of self-control, and serves to dehumanize non-whites, indicating that they are less evolved. It is redolent of traditional articulations of racism which depicted non-white races as unsophisticated and therefore animalistic in comparison to whites.[124]

Although certainly extreme, these narratives are also echoed in surrounding far-right ecosystems which, although not inherently white supremacist spaces, underpin and uphold white supremacist and extreme right ideas. For example, Alt-Right figurehead, Tara McCarthy, who

Lewis highlights as a key member of the Alt-Right's online "Alternative Influence Network" of *YouTube* personalities (although she no longer makes videos on the platform), extends the philosophy of race realism to illogical extremes and racist paleobiology.[125] In one video, McCarthy employs a flawed understanding of human evolution to argue that white Europeans are a different "species" or "sub-species" from non-white Africans. Despite being thoroughly debunked, this argument has long been employed by white supremacists as evidence towards the myth of the "genetic reality of race."[126]

Similarly, although the far-right Proud Boys movement has always marketed itself as being open to individuals from all racial backgrounds, off-shoot groups on Telegram which were – at the time of writing – endorsed by the Proud Boys have shared propaganda stating that the white race is being "destroy[ed]" by non-white immigration into the US. Following internal fracturing, this more extreme off-shoot of the Proud Boys, which rebranded as "The Western Chauvinist," having been formerly known as "Proud Boys: Uncensored," now posts overtly white supremacist content to its audience of over 50,000 users.[127] This demonstrates the considerable overlap or ebb and flow between the far- and extreme right, and indicates that even in more nebulous far-right spaces, where in-group identity is not so stringently dependant on biological race, movements may still endorse narratives which underpin white supremacy.

Gender as a Factor of Identity

Alongside race, gender is also a central component of extreme right identity which is expressed with a similar degree of chauvinism. Much like with race realism, Hawley argues that much of the extreme right adheres to a form of "sex realism," which dictates that "men and women have biological differences that make them suited to different social roles."[128] Much of the reasoning for this may stem from the world view of "familialism" which Mudde shows is centrally important to much of the far right. Familialism, as articulated by Kemper, is a "form of biopolitics which views the traditional family as the foundation of the nation, and subjugates individual reproductive and self-determination rights [of women in particular] to the normative demand of the reproduction of the nation."[129] This lens therefore dictates that men and women are – as a product of their biology – suited to particular gender roles in order to support the family unit, and therefore continue the legacy of the nation, or, in the case of the extreme right, the white race.

Through this lens, traditional gender roles in which men exert dominance over women, and women assume more responsibility for roles within the home, become naturalized as a product of biology. This narrative is espoused by the Alt-Right YouTube personality Rebecca Hargreaves, also known as the "Blonde in the Belly of the Beast," in a video in which she details her "Red Pill Journey" – the process by which she became more open to Alt-Right ideology – stressing that by becoming more "feminine," and less "dominant" in her relationships she found eventual peace

and happiness in the natural rigidity of Alt-Right gender roles. In concurrence with much of the Alt-Right, she parallels her own experience to the "gender confusion" of the left where gender roles are perceived to be less rigid, a condition she perceives as a symptom of a societal "mental illness."[130] Similar perspectives are also found within the central tenants of the Proud Boys where they claim they wish to "venerate the housewife" – therefore stressing that they wish to return to a time where women normatively stayed at home and were in charge of the domestic realm.[131]

While women are certainly active and often play key roles within the far right, Mudde stresses that the movement remains "predominantly male."[132] Indeed, the online face of the movement is often deemed part of the "manosphere," a "loosely connected group of anti-feminist Internet communities... [within which] virtual violence may be difficult to separate from real-world violence" and where expressions of masculinity become heightened in both importance and performance.[133] The influence of the manosphere can be felt in various aspects of the extreme right, and is evidenced in the doctrine of the neo-Nazi accelerationist collective Vorherrschaft Division – which was active on Telegram until early 2020 – which cites its only prerequisite for membership as being an "Aryan male."[134]

This heightened importance of hegemonic constructions of masculinity is pervasive throughout the extreme right. Yet, different subcultures are unique in their construction of what constitutes the ideal form of masculinity. Mudde outlines that much of the far right adopts an outlook of "benevolent sexism," wherein women are viewed as morally pure and physically weak, and as deserving of complimentary "alpha males." This, typically, is the outlook adopted by white supremacist groups, which view feminism as a corrupting outside force – potentially orchestrated by Jews – which is attempting to corrupt and break up the traditional family structure and thus further weaken the white race. In contrast, the Alt-Right and violent misogynist Incels (involuntary celibate) often adopt a form of "hostile sexism" which objectifies women, instead viewing them complicit in the evils of feminism and as overly powerful, wielding sexual power over men. Through this lens, women are framed as volatile, dangerous entities which must be controlled by men.[135] This sentiment of control is taken to extremes by actors such as American neo-Nazi Andrew Anglin who, in 2016, suggested that white men should have autonomous control over white women's wombs.[136,137]

Crucially however, Demetriou stresses that male hegemony is not only defined in contrast to women – "external hegemony" – but also in relation to other men – "internal hegemony."[138] Miller-Idriss expands upon this concept in relation to the far right in Germany, outlining two stereotypical forms of ideal masculinity found within the movement. She shows that in various far-right communities the "soldier/ sailor/ warrior" masculine trope characterized by complimentary traits of "conformity, belonging, trust, loyalty, solidarity, comradeship, courage, and heroism" may gain particular credence whereas in others, the "rebel/rule-breaker" type, defined by traits such as "transgression, challenge, rebellion, hatred, anger and violence" may emerge as more salient or desirable.[139] The former definition appears to most closely align with

the benevolent sexism of more traditional white supremacist collectives, and is observable in the rhetoric presented throughout propaganda videos produced by Atomwaffen Division, in which elements of male comradeship and solidarity are foregrounded through the repetition of the concept that group members constitute "brothers." In contrast, the latter definition may be particularly salient within collectives which espouse hostile sexism. However, by invoking stereotypes such as "rebellion" and "heroism," both are united in their dual celebration of dominant, "strong" men.

This trope is evidenced throughout Brenton Tarrant's manifesto, in which he writes "strong men do not get ethnically replaced, strong men do not allow their culture to degrade, strong men do not allow their people to die."[140] Here Tarrant explicitly celebrates the ideal of white male resilience, while also implicitly promoting notions of violence, indicating that the most masculine men are able to fight back against being "ethnically replaced." This notion echoes Andrews Önnerfors's assertion that right-wing extremists advocate for "violent action" as an expression of ideal-type masculinity.[141] Once more, propaganda produced by the Vorherrschaft Division, which members were encouraged to disseminate throughout social media, echoes these concepts, featuring the phrase "Strong men are needed in weak times," alongside a figure of a masked man, wielding a firearm.[142]

The notion that a physical capacity or ability for violence is important to extreme-right conceptions of masculinity is also evidenced by the differential reaction on *8chan's* /pol/ board to a series of lone-actor attacks. In response to the Christchurch attack carried out by Brenton Tarrant which was widely considered a success due to the large number of casualties inflicted, one user described Tarrant as "handsome, charming etc." – traits which Angela Nagle highlights are characteristic of alpha masculinity.[143] In contrast, in the wake of the Poway synagogue attack which was – at least initially – considered a failure after 'only' one person was killed, the perpetrator, John Earnest, was described as having a "wimpy kid physique," and was critiqued for his comparatively less muscular stature - a marker of beta, or subordinate masculinity.[144] Thus members of the community actively linked the capacity for violence to traditionally masculine traits, thereby policing the construction of masculinity within the white supremacist space. Therefore, it is evident that within the extreme right, masculinity is foregrounded as an important aspect of identity, and is reinforced by the perceived biological rigidity of gender roles. The form of masculinity which is upheld within various sectors of the extreme right may be somewhat malleable yet ultimately is grounded in notions of both mental and physical strength.

Irony and Transgression as Markers of Identity

Finally, most far-right movements cannot be fully understood fully without addressing their subcultural practices, and many utilise irony and humour as a way of binding members together as an in-group. Memes in particular play an important role in far-right identity construction.

Memes can be understood as "highly medium-specific" often user-generated "cultural units of transmission" through which, often humorous, messages are created via the "intertextual" relationship between image and text."[145] Milner outlines that many memes created or circulated by the far right are made to appear as benign sources of comedy, however often "familiarity with racist tropes is necessary to get the joke."[146] Thus, Lamerichs *et al* stress that memes of this sort make racial stereotypes more salient while downplaying the racist narratives they further.[147] By disseminating them, users on the far right intend to shift the "Overton Window" – the boundaries of acceptable public discourse – thereby propagating extreme ideology, and enabling a Gramscian-style slow creep of far-right-wing narratives into the broader societal consciousness.[148]

Memes can also be utilised in the construction of in-group belonging, functioning as a form of subcultural capital where propagating far-right memes creates a sense of communal understanding, binding users together using shared in-jokes. Nagle describes how the Alt-Right has adopted an "online politics of transgression" wherein offensive content, particularly veiled by humour, is viewed as having inherent countercultural value due to its perceived transgressive nature. This dynamic can be extended to describe much of the far- and extreme right, where offensive or graphically violent content is shared as a source of humour and where online users can generate a certain subcultural status of coolness either by actively celebrating this violence or responding with measured indifference.

Similarly, Milner shows that memes may also be used to leverage a sense of superiority over outsiders who may not understand the far right's dense irony and niche in-jokes. This is particularly evident Brenton Tarrant's manifesto and the opening minutes of the livestream of his attack. Moments prior to the shootings, which targeted two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, Tarrant refers to the /pol/ board of *8chan*, commending the users of the board for being "top blokes and the best bunch of cobbers a man could ask for," signalling the importance of his embeddedness within the online network. During his livestream, he similarly seems to signal to this 'extremely online' community, playing the soundtrack to the "Serbia Strong" music video – a notorious online meme – as he drove to the site of the attack, and instructing viewers to "subscribe to Pewdiepie" – the controversial *YouTuber* who was been ironically adopted (against his will) as a symbolic figurehead of the Alt-Right – before opening fire. Tarrant's manifesto, too, was littered with memetic references which Evans notes were not only intended to signal belonging to this extremely online far-right collective, and to inspire further attacks, but which were also essentially "trap[s], laid for journalists searching for meaning behind this horrific crime."[149] As Evans notes, Tarrant ironically claimed that the online provocateur Candace Owens was responsible for his radicalisation, a claim that Owens herself responded to, while *8chan* users revelled in the irony. The inclusion of these memes and ironic references in Tarrant's manifesto therefore serve to bind users familiar with the references together in an in-group, in opposition to the larger, confused, outgroup that they mock.

The inherent transgression of foregrounding humour and memes alongside an act of mass casualty violence also likely contributed to Tarrant's immortalisation and deification within extremist online communities. In his manifesto, he embraced the ideology of accelerationism – the notion that civilisation must be pushed to the point of collapse in order to rebuild a new society in its place. A key feature of this philosophy as described by Walther and McCoy is that violence is framed as a "chain reaction," and acts of terrorist violence are often intended to inspire subsequent attackers. Indeed, in the wake of the Christchurch attack, four subsequent attacks influenced by Tarrant were carried out in the United States, Norway and Germany.[150] Two of these attackers – John Earnest, who targeted first a mosque and then a synagogue in Poway, San Diego, and Stephan Balliet, who initially targeted a synagogue in Halle, Germany – included memetic references redolent of Tarrant in their manifestos. Balliet's manifesto is particularly notable for being the only document in this spree of attacks to include a visual meme.

Balliet also uploaded a picture of himself wearing a cap with a "moonman" meme badge pinned to it. The moonman symbol was originally a mascot created by the McDonald's restaurant chain in the 1980s, but was appropriated by the far-right in the 2000s when it was typically featured in music videos of racist or violent rap music, and has been adopted by some online white supremacists.[151] Although the meme is most often used in online circles, it has also been featured in Atomwaffen propaganda posters alongside the phrase "black lives don't matter," and is briefly seen in a video made by the group, next to their logo. By referencing this meme, movements and individuals therefore signal that they are 'in on the joke' of the symbol's appropriation, thereby bonding them together in a shared, collective understanding.

Comparative Analysis

Both movements have developed a strong, historically grounded collective identity coupled with a sense of superiority and a requirement that the in-group view those on the outside not only as inferior but as inherently threatening. While these identities differ in their content, there are similarities in their underlying structure. What is on offer in both cases in not only a strong sense of identity and belonging which is rooted in a glorious past, but also new meaning derived from seeing oneself as part of a historic project to "save" or "cure" humanity. However, it is not enough for either of these groups to simply offer identity, belonging and meaning; they both go to great lengths to demonstrate their inherent superiority over all others. The appeal of this approach is not difficult to grasp. Among the rewards which come with seeing oneself as part of the in-group, it can serve as a draw for those who view their individual achievements as less than satisfactory or stunted due to a wider conspiracy to deny them what they regard as their rightful place in society.

As both movements share a conservative reactionary outlook, it also comes as no surprise that they have very similar views on the traditional roles of men and women in society. Both

movements rely heavily on reinforcing these roles, with a particular interest in supposedly recapturing "true" masculinity through hyper-masculine portrayals of their most heroic members. They call for men to conform to this hyper-masculine ideal type partly because they believe this projection and application of strength is what is required to secure the existence and future of their in-group. However, re-establishing and enforcing these traditional gender roles is also part of the wider effort of both movements to recapture the purity, greatness, and moral clarity of the past they wish to revive. Progressive liberalism, and especially feminism, are therefore seen by both movements as not only fundamentally damaging to their mission, but a deliberate attempt to wipe them out.

More widely, on social issues jihadists and the extreme right have little to disagree on – both are deeply suspicious and hostile towards the gains made by pluralist progressive politics. As a result, they wish to see more traditional values reinstated, be it on gender roles, or the blocking of minority groups' (racial or religious) rights and access to power, and sexual "morality" (in other words a hostility to homosexuality and other sexual orientations and sexualities that differ from what they view to be the "norm").

There are, however, some key differences that are important to consider. The sources of each movement's sense of superiority are an obvious example. One uses their interpretation of a religion to define their identity and supremacy, while the other relies on a skewed understanding of science or, more specifically, biology. Nonetheless, the result is largely the same – a highly intolerant, exclusionary and supremacist identity built on what each movement would describe as undeniable facts, be they divinely or naturally derived.

As has already been pointed out in the early stages of this study, each movement also has a very different set of criteria upon which they base the characteristics of their collective identity. For the extreme right, this identity is built largely around ethnicity, whereas for the jihadists it is not only a shared faith but a shared interpretation of it. Islamists and jihadists have often highlighted this supposedly egalitarian quality of their ideology, usually presenting it as an alternative to the racism and discrimination they see within Western society. In some of his earliest writings, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood Hassan al-Banna presented Islamism as the ideal alternative to the prevailing ideologies within Western societies of the day. "What is in these man-made systems," he asked, "that elevates them above Islam when Islam has so marvelously blended the best of them together, to come up with one complete system?"[152] Islamism, he argued, provided a sanctuary from racial and ethnic discrimination, offering instead an ideology that transcends many of society's divisions which he identified as a nefarious Western influence. "Islam," he claimed, "has reaffirmed the racial and ethnic unity of all mankind."[153]

This was, in effect, a call for what Mitchell refers to as a divinely inspired Islamic nationalism, which in al-Banna's vision would transcend physical geographic boundaries as well as political,

ethnic, and racial divisions.[154] It was part of a rejection of what Islamism sees as the damaging secular Western notions of nationalism which divided the world into modern states and deliberately destroyed global Muslim unity. According to Mitchell, Western nationalism was seen by al-Banna as a sinful form of secularist worship in which the modern state has become "a partner with god," thus making its participants guilty of the sin of idol worship, or *shirk*.[155] It was to this global and borderless community – the *ummah* – that a Muslim's primary identity should be drawn from and allegiance must be given. However, and despite al-Banna's protestations here, while Islamic nationalism differs greatly in content from extreme right-wing ethnic and race nationalism, at their core they serve the same purpose, namely a framework for exclusionary chauvinism based on identity.

More recently, jihadists in ISIS recognized the power of this approach and have used it in propaganda aimed at Westerners, in particular Americans. In presenting the various advantages of living in the Islamic State, they note that ethnic minorities in the Islamic state will not suffer from racist persecution as they might do in their home country. In issue 11 of *Dabiq*, for example, a picture of two ISIS fighters of different ethnicities depicts a friendly embrace between them with the caption, ""Wala' and bara' [loyalty and disavowal] versus American racism." Around a year earlier, in November 2014 during protests in Ferguson, Missouri against the mistreatment of Black Americans at the hands of local police, ISIS propagandists exploited the social tension with a similar message about the alternatives offered by the Islamic state to oppressed ethnic minorities. From his base in ISIS territory, the influential British ISIS member, Junaid Hussein, tweeted his support: "From #IS to Ferguson." He also promised protesters that, if they converted to Islam and pledged allegiance to the then head of ISIS Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, he would send ISIS militants to Missouri to support them. While surely an empty promise, the symbolism of the message was clear – America was a land where one's life prospects are defined by their race, whereas the ideology of the Islamic state accepted all comers as equal if they converted and pledged allegiance.

In case of the extreme right, and more specifically elements of the Alt-Right, a rather unique process of online identity creation has taken place. The above analysis has demonstrated how this internet generated identity has begun to play out in the real world using unique symbols and language along with actions, from marches to terrorist attacks. The same could not be said about the jihad movement, in which the markers and make-up of the identity were long-established and have remained largely the same but which the internet has helped to disseminate and tailor to audiences in different parts of the world.

Chapter 3: Conspiracism

Viren Swami, a psychologist who focuses on the causes and impacts of conspiracy theories, defines a conspiracy theory as "a subset of false narratives in which the ultimate cause of an event is believed to be due to a malevolent plot by multiple actors working together."[156] This is a good starting point that, as he notes, is also not exhaustive. A useful addition to this definition is the role most conspiracy theories believe is played by an, often hidden, cabal of powerful people and groups. Bartlett and Miller, for example, define conspiracy theories as "accounts of events as the deliberate yet concealed product of a powerful few, regardless of the evidence."[157]

Lee demonstrates that the appeal of conspiracy theories is their ability to "explain events."[158] This is a concept Barkun expands upon, highlighting that "the essence of conspiracy beliefs lies in attempts to delineate and explain evil," thereby forming "a worldview characterized by a sharp division between the realms of good and evil."[159] This form of strict black and white thought is a staple of extremist thought, and may therefore partially explain the prevalence of conspiracy theories among many extremist movements.[160] However, Barkun also stresses that there is no one form of conspiracy, and highlights various levels of conspiratorial belief: "event conspiracies" wherein a "conspiracy is held to be responsible for a limited, discrete event of set of events," and "systemic conspiracies" where a "conspiracy is believed to have broad goals, usually conceived as securing control over a country, a religion, or even the entire world." Crucially, at the broadest level of "superconspiracy," "multiple [more isolated] conspiracies are believed to be linked together" to construct a far-reaching conspiratorial worldview.[161]

While a deeply held belief in a conspiracy theory is not the sole preserve of extremists, it is often a central component and driving force of their ideology and activity. However, unlike the two movements we focus on here, not all extremist or terrorist groups are closely aligned to any specific conspiracy theory. Bartlett and Miller remind us that groups such as the Real Irish Republican Army or individual terrorists like the Unabomber were not driven by a belief in a shadowy concerted effort to destroy them. They also argue that "conspiracy theories are not a necessary condition for extreme beliefs or action" and that they do not necessarily inspire violence in their adherents, citing groups such as 9/11 Truthers who conduct peaceful activism.[162]

In the case of extremist groups that do believe in a conspiracy theory, it is often seen in existential terms, presenting a threat against which violence is the only legitimate and effective response. While the extreme right and jihadist movements are not unique in their belief in a conspiracy theory, any comparative analysis of the two must include an appreciation for how both have constructed the threat they believe they face.

Beginning with the jihadist movement, this section will explain the various roots and key components of what they see as a global effort to fundamentally alter, if not destroy, Islam and

subjugate or kill Muslims, a conspiracy which is often referred to as the war on Islam. In the case of the extreme right, the exact nature of the conspiracy theory they subscribe to differs across specific movements. The most prevalent belief among the extreme right, and especially those who take part in violence, relates to a conspiracy in the Western world to undermine, take power away from, and eventually destroy what they define as the white race. Some versions of this conspiracy theory use the term "White Genocide," while others refer to "The Great Replacement," referencing a belief that the white race is being deliberately replaced by other ethnic groups at the behest of liberal elites and Jewish people. There are also branches of the far- and extreme right which have a more specific interest in the threat they believe is posed by Islam to Western culture. Often referred to as the counter-jihad movement, they view the threat through the lens of "Islamization" – a conspiracy in which Western governments, in concert with Muslims, seek to turn Western nations into Islamic states run under *Sharia* law in which non-Muslims would live as second-class citizens.[163]

The War on Islam

The existence of conspiracy theories is by no means limited to the Middle East or the wider Islamic world. However, Matthew Gray has pointed out that conspiracism tends to be more prevalent in countries with a significant gap between society and government.[164] The prevailing absence of democratic norms and institutions in most Muslim majority countries has arguably brought about a situation in which many citizens feel disconnected from the political establishment.[165] Based on a lack of transparency and accountability, they no longer believe in the official rationale given by their authoritarian leaders and look for other accounts that are able to shed some light on political decision-making. In combination with the very real history of foreign interference, this state of affairs has served as an ideal breeding ground for all sorts of conspiracy theories.[166]

In the jihadist worldview, much of the world in engaged in a concerted effort to destroy Islam.[167] This war against Islam is supposedly pursued on all fronts – militarily in form of active Western intervention in *dar al-Islam* (the land of Islam), culturally by mocking Allah and prophet Muhammad in inappropriate media portrayals, and spiritually by altering and diluting Islamic principles in order to make them fit within the context of modern society. Although jihadist groups hold the Western world responsible for leading these efforts, they are equally unequivocal in their condemnation of large parts of the Islamic world which are accused of no longer following the rightful path of Allah. According to Sageman, their view of the world effectively "boils down to a morality play where human events are totally shaped by a constant fight between good and evil."[168]

This kind of moral reductionism allows jihadists to portray anyone who does not share their understanding of the world in its entirety as a *kafir* (disbeliever), actively engaged in the

insidious conspiracy aimed at destroying Islam. This dichotomy is underscored theologically through the previously discussed Salafi concept of *al wala' wal bara'* (loyalty and disavowal) according to which loyalty should only ever be granted to true Muslims, while all *kuffar* (disbelievers) should be met with avoidance and disavowal.[169] Consequentially, if a Muslim decides to abandon this concept and cooperate with disbelievers, they become part of the hostile out-group to be fought. ISIS has fully embraced the concept in their propaganda, arguing that "[s]pilling the blood of the mushrikin [polytheists] is the greatest form of disavowal"[170].

The Lasting Relevance of the Crusades

The conspiratorial 'war against Islam' narrative is accompanied by a constant framing of today's struggle as a continuation of the crusades.[171] As with many other ideological components of jihadism, the Crusader theme was partly established by Sayyid Qutb who claimed that both colonialism and Western imperialism had virtually nothing to do with modern politics but were rather part of the ancient religious onslaught waged by the disbelievers against Islam. He saw in them nothing "but a mask for the crusading spirit, since it is not possible for it to appear in its true form, as it was possible in the Middle Ages."[172] The fact that the actual crusaders had indiscriminately killed Jews by the thousands did not stop Qutb from fabricating the idea of an everlasting "Crusader-Zionist war" against Islam.[173] While arguably inaccurate, the invention of an ancient anti-Islamic alliance between Christians (Crusaders) and Jews (Zionists) has been adopted by most Islamist and jihadist groups. The conspiracy gained new traction in the 1990s and 2000s when senior figures from *al-Qaeda* began to frequently refer to "western Crusader forces" and the "Judeo-Crusader alliance" in public statements.[174] As with most conspiracy theories, the actual words and deeds of the enemy are used by jihadists to prove the existence of this effort. One of the earliest examples of this comes from the early phases of the war on terror, which jihadists claimed was a cover for a more insidious wider war on Islam, when U.S. President George W. Bush was seen as vindicating the jihadist claim of an ongoing Crusader conspiracy against Islam, when he equated the so-called 'war on terror' against *al-Qaeda* and other jihadists with a "crusade" in a statement following the 9/11 attacks.[175] Other reports from the time, such as the leaks that documented inscribed Bible quotes on the title pages of Iraq war reports handed to President Bush by U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, lend further credence to those who argued that America and its allies were waging a religious war against Islam and the Muslim world.[176]

When taking Berridge's observation that Islamists of all sorts "employ a reductionist vision of Islamic history to legitimize their campaign for a renewed Islamic order" into account, it seems only logical that the Crusader narrative has taken up such a prominent role in today's jihadist propaganda.[177] The self-victimizing notion of a Christian-Jewish conspiracy against Islam explains virtually all developments affecting Muslims worldwide. By giving the call to jihad more imminence, it must also be seen as an important recruitment tool for jihadist groups. It

legitimizes violent action as a form of self-defense against an overly powerful and sinister enemy, thereby clearing the fighters' consciences when committing acts of murder. In a video that surfaced shortly after his attack on a Berlin Christmas market in December 2016, ISIS-aligned attacker Anis Amri justified the murder of twelve civilians by arguing that he was acting out of revenge for the actions of "those infidels who are shelling the Muslims every day," thus shifting the responsibility of his crimes to the so-called nations of disbelief and their alleged war against Islam.[178]

In an analysis of the Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine, Samantha Mahood and Halim Rane found the Crusader theme to be one of the group's most indispensable propaganda narratives.[179] They argue that ISIS "uses the Crusades to give historical legitimacy to its argument that the [...] West is engaged in a struggle against Islam" and that "the narrative is decisively powerful in [...] perpetuating an 'us' versus 'them' mentality."[180] The group makes use of the actual discrimination Muslims face by linking real experiences of anti-Muslim bigotry to the historically powerful image of the crusades. In this re-interpretation of the 'war on terror,' all military action by Western powers is founded in religious hatred against Islam. This line of thought is well-captured in the thirteenth issue of *Rumiyah*, in which one of the authors suggests that "the Crusader armies have united in their quest to invade us, purely because we believe in and implement 'La ilaha illallah' [the Islamic creed declaring belief in the oneness of Allah]."[181] *Al-Qaeda* makes a similar case, arguing that "[m]any think it is a war for land, oil or wealth [...] but the essence and the core of this war is Tawheed [the unitary oneness of Allah]."[182]

ISIS has also de-politicized European colonial expansion in the Middle East by asserting that "colonialism was but a front for the Crusaders."[183] The way ISIS applies the "crusader" label allows for a neat division of the world in good and evil: All the group's critics and enemies are either Crusaders themselves or supportive of the Crusaders' goals. This is perhaps best exemplified in issue 7 of *Dabiq*, in which a hostage from non-Christian Japan is accused of being a "Japanese Crusader" and Japan is portrayed as part of the ongoing anti-Islamic crusade.[184] Unsurprisingly, in *al-Qaeda's* main English publication *Inspire* the same "Crusader" reasoning is common, with the slight difference to ISIS being the even more distinct focus on the United States and Israel as key leaders of the "Zio-crusade war."[185]

Conspiracism and the Separation of the World in the "Camps of Good and Evil"

To further underscore the claim of an ongoing conspiracy against Islam, ISIS regularly points to alleged cases of Western hypocrisy and ideological inconsistency. Of particular interest is the fact that during 2012 and 2013 the Obama administration chose not intervene when Syrian government forces were reported to have repeatedly used sarin gas against civilians, something that ISIS juxtaposed against the swift Western military action taken against the group after it successfully conducted several terrorist operations in Western countries.[186] Western inaction in

Syria, despite the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Syrians at the hands of their government, is one of many examples supposed to reveal the anti-Muslim bias of America and its allies. In this way, the reductionist ideology of jihadism is further substantiated. As there is no room for ambiguity in this dichotomous view of the world, inconsistency can never be just that – it is always viewed and treated as a sign of a more sinister plot endangering the true believers.

It therefore makes sense that ISIS has proclaimed its intent to destroy the so-called grey zone, the area in-between the two poles of good (believers) and evil (*kuffar*/Crusaders).[187] Following the Salafi logic of *al wala' wal bara',* it is deemed obligatory for all Muslims to reject every aspect of the disbelievers' way of life and make *hijrah* (emigration) to *dar al-Islam* as soon as possible.[188] Thus, Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates which neither work for the establishment of a caliphate nor for the abolition of state borders but rather take part in their countries' political processes are presented as chess pieces in the all-encompassing conspiracy against Islam. Since the conspiracy is believed to be conducted on different levels, the Brotherhood is accused of being an invention of Western powers to fundamentally amend the principles of Islam on a theological basis: "the Crusaders initiated a corresponding project to replace the religion of the people and to alter the tenets and teachings of Islam, so that it would become harmonious with the jahili [ignorant] American vision for the world, […] they found no better than the Murtadd [apostate] Brotherhood to be the role model for people to be directed to and to thus follow."[189] By treating all Muslim groups and individuals who do not follow their rigid understanding of Islam as allies of the resented Crusaders and declaring *takfir* on them, jihadists establish an outlook on a future world which promises salvation and self-consistency. If only all forces of evil and disbelief were subjugated or wiped out and the grey zone destroyed, the rule of Islam would finally re-establish moral clarity and allow the Muslim world to reach its full potential.

With that said, the alleged conspiracy against Islam does not only aid in forging a strong in-group identity of true Muslims but also plays a crucial role when it comes to legitimizing attacks against the *kuffar* that have purportedly made it their mission to prevent the formation of a just and pious world as it once was. Thus, a common theme in jihadist propaganda is the blaming of victims of terrorist attacks. In the first issue of *Rumiyah*, for example, one article asks: "How can the disbelievers ever dream of safety and security while Muslims suffer anywhere in the world and while the rule of Allah is mockingly replaced by manmade monstrosities of democracy?"[190]

Conspiracy belief is crucial for jihadists because such theories are by their nature irrefutable and easily adaptable to changing external circumstances. As Jovan Byford points out, "[l]ogical contradictions, disconfirming evidence, even the complete absence of proof have no bearing on the conspiratorial explanation because they can always be accounted for in terms of the conspiracy."[191] Contradictory arguments are in fact used as further evidence for the authenticity of the conspiracy.[192] This is seen in ISIS*'s* assertion that the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran had long been covering their cooperation in the war against Islam behind an act

of reciprocal hostility.[193] U.S. sanctions against the Iranian regime can thus easily be reinterpreted as another ominous trick designed to fool true Muslims into believing the enemy was divided in its efforts to destroy Islam and its followers.

Conspiracism constitutes such an inevitable key aspect of jihadism because it cements the Salafi separation of the world in good and evil and allows for the establishment of a reductionist and reactionary explanation and outlook on today's global conditions and developments. By arguing that all that types of change affecting the lives of Muslims worldwide boil down to the ancient battle between Muslims and the Crusader forces and their disbelieving allies, jihadists portray their vision of an Islamic order as the natural structure of life that has been distorted by an inherently sinful modernity and its disbelieving proponents. This interpretation of current events through a reductionist lens of history helps groups in their efforts to recruit new members who are susceptible to the idea of a sinister anti-Islamic plot that is to blame for their grievances and lack of success in the modern world. As a result, incidents of genuine anti-Muslim discrimination as well as negative experiences that may have little to do with religious affiliation are equally perceived as a continuation of a centuries-old, coordinated war against Muslims and their religion. Cartoons mocking Muhammad, crackdowns on Muslim protesters through their secular authoritarian leaders, and the military deployment of Western forces to the Middle East are no longer seen as separate issues but are all woven into one overarching plot. The conspiratorial "personification of evil in history"[194] fosters out-group hate, consolidates the in-group identity, and provides "the dramatic background for the self-appointed role [...] as warriors willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of building a better world."[195]

The Great Replacement, ZOG, and Cultural Marxism

Conspiracy theories are not unique to the far right; however, Andrew Wilson suggests that the populist nature of far-right ideology means the conspiratorial and apocalyptic narratives have become the "*lingua franca*" of the movement.[196] This section will examine the conspiratorial nature of the modern extreme right by first providing a brief overview of the nature of conspiracy theories within it. It will then outline three of the most prominent conspiracies within extreme-right ideology, namely "The Great Replacement," the "Zionist Occupied Government" (ZOG), and "Cultural Marxism," finally detailing their interlinkages and cumulative influence in creating an overarching narrative of the threat of white persecution.

The mutually-reinforcing and structured relation of conspiracies in the extreme-right is evidenced in the processes of so-called 'red-pilling' – a term popular with the online extreme right which refers to individuals becoming gradually more receptive to white supremacist ideology and theories. Many red pills are fundamentally bound to conspiratorial thought, as they are grounded in the assumption that official explanations of major events and issues are not to

be trusted. Thus, as Julia Ebner and Jacob Davey stress, by taking the red pill members of the extreme right are becoming aware of the "illusion" in which they previously lived.[197] The essence of this process also relies on the notion that the "truth" about various events is being deliberately concealed from the public – presumably by an all-powerful force – a dynamic which Barkun also demonstrates is a staple of conspiracy belief.[198] Munn shows how becoming red-pilled is a gradual, cumulative process with various "waypoints," where individuals can be red-pilled on one issue at a time, in isolation from others, as they become gradually acclimated more extreme ideology.[199]

This hierarchical nature of red-pilling also relates to conspiratorial belief. As conspiracy theories are grounded in the notion that secretive forces are concealing the true nature of an event, they espouse a paradoxical logic, wherein the unfalsifiable nature of a narrative is regarded as further proof of its credibility.[200] Thus, paradoxically, although after being initially exposed to conspiracy belief one's interest and curiosity surrounding subsequent conspiracies may become heightened, finding tangible evidence for these beliefs becomes less important.[201] Goertzel describes this dynamic as a "monological belief system" wherein individuals reject knowledge that contradicts their worldview, and instead "each of the beliefs serves as evidence for each of the other beliefs," meaning "the more conspiracies a monological thinker believes in, the more likely he or she is to believe in any new conspiracy theory which may be proposed."[202] In this way, it is demonstrated that conspiracy belief is not only hierarchical in nature, but also that single conspiracies are co-influential. Thus, by becoming increasingly embedded in extreme right enclaves, individuals become further pre-disposed to conspiracy belief.

Wilson also shows that conspiracy theories thrive online partly because online space allows anyone "with a little technical savvy to present their ideas in a polished manner that belies their fringe origins," therefore bestowing credence onto ideas which may previously have been rejected and increasing the potential circulation of these ideas beyond the fringe of society.[203] Many extreme right online spaces also exist as echo chambers, devoid of any substantive ideological disagreement, which may frame some conspiratorial beliefs as rational due to collective agreement.

"The Great Replacement"

One of the most pervasive conspiracies to gain traction among the extreme right is the notion of "The Great Replacement," which, in parallel to the jihadist "war on Islam" narrative, views the white race as perpetually persecuted and at risk. It combines lines of biological and cultural racism to unite adherents in a sense of generalized paranoia where the racial and cultural integrity of the white race is perceived to be under threat from a combination of migration along with decreasing birth rates among white Europeans. The Great Replacement frames multiculturalism as inherently dangerous to the purity of the white race, and therefore gives rise

to generalized racial discrimination against non-whites.[204] The notion itself is in some ways a reinterpretation of Bat Ye'or's "Eurabia" conspiracy theory, which suggests that elite forces orchestrated increased levels of Muslim immigration to Western countries to dilute "native" white populations and "Islamize" society. However, the current narrative which is most pervasive within the extreme right combines paranoia surrounding cultural dilution with the overtly racist logic of racial science.[205] As has been detailed previously, members of the extreme right regard racial differences – and therefore racial inequality – as a naturally occurring phenomena within biology and extend this logic to support an overtly racist agenda of racial separatism.[206]

This articulation of the Great Replacement narrative has been re-invigorated more explicitly following the Christchurch attacks, and subsequent propagation of Tarrant's manifesto (also titled "The Great Replacement") in which he repeatedly frames the decline in white birth rates as a primary motivation for his attack.[207] These narratives were also explicit within *8chan's* /pol/ page during various discussions on the topic of so-called "race-mixing" – or mixed race relationships – which was frequently compared to bestiality.

The extreme-right also draws upon more isolated "event" conspiracies to justify and supplement the narrative of the Great Replacement. One example of such a conspiracy is the notion that violent land seizures in South Africa as part of post-Apartheid reparation are a thinly veiled agenda of ethnic cleansing targeting white farmers, and an indication of imminent global race war. Violent farm attacks are prevalent in South Africa, and while white people are statistically the least likely group to be targeted by violent crimes in South Africa generally, members of the far- and extreme right have argued that the farm seizures unfairly target white people in numbers that amount to attempted "white genocide."[208] This narrative is propagated by South African ethno-nationalist extremist groups such as the Suidlanders, and has been amplified in the international press, particularly on Alt-Right news sites such as *Breitbart*, following a notable tweet by Donald Trump which suggested white farmers were being unfairly targeted in the seizures.[209] In this way the fractured history of race relations in South Africa is exploited within extreme-right conspiracies to provide legitimacy to a narrative of a persecuted white race, which is inherently endangered by the presence of non-whites.

The 'Zionist Occupied Government' and Anti-Jewish Conspiracies

While in general Brenton Tarrant received widespread praise for his attack within extreme-right communities, a minority of individuals within the online extreme right sphere criticized him for his failure to "name the Jew" within his manifesto.[210] This critique evokes the Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG) conspiracy, suggesting that Tarrant failed to clearly designate Jewish people as the root of the white race's endangerment in his manifesto. The ZOG conspiracy theory claims that a group of Jewish elites are secretly in control of the U.S. government, although the theory

is often extended to refer to an overarching global power, not specific to North America.[211] This view of Jews first gained legitimacy after the publication of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fabricated antisemitic tract from the early 1900s which purported to expose the reality of the Jewish elites' systematic plan to take over the world.[212] That it is rooted in a in text which masquerades as scholarship may contribute to the conspiracy's ubiquity among far- and extreme-right communities, and Mason's *Siege* which refers directly to *The Protocols* and calls for readers to rail against "ZOG's tyrannical power."[213]

Narratives from *The Protocols* therefore remain prevalent in more modern discourse, as is exemplified by the 'happy merchant' meme portraying a "heavily stereotyped" Jewish man "greedily rubbing his hands together" which is frequently shared throughout white supremacist online communities.[214] Furthermore, while the meme itself is a clear reference to the supposed power of secretive Jewish forces, it is also often "remixed" within these communities to suggest Jewish forces are secretly masterminding a number of larger corporations or international events such as the coronavirus pandemic, making the reference to the ZOG conspiracy more overt.[215]

Cultural Marxism

The final narrative that will be discussed here – that of Cultural Marxism – is perhaps the most ubiquitous between facets of the far right and serves to unite various singular conspiracies. It also often serves as a thin veil for overt antisemitism. Mirrlees details the origins of Cultural Marxism within the far right, tracing the narrative to the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci who, after becoming frustrated with working-class inaction against capitalism "devised a plan for winning the working class voluntarily to socialism called 'cultural Marxism'," which he intended would be superseded by political change. Mirrlees demonstrates that some within the extreme right believe Cultural Marxism originated in American society after Jewish Marxist intellectuals fled Nazi Germany to the United States, gradually becoming embedded in American political thought until the agenda had "taken control of the Federal government, the public education system, and the media and cultural industries."[216]

King also demonstrates that this warped historical narrative is evidenced within extreme-right online discourse surrounding John Dewey, the progressive American education reformer and founder of the philosophical Pragmatism movement. Through the rampant misattribution of quotes and reinterpretation of history he is constructed a totalizing figure with an aspiration to "'the goal of atheist tyranny" through "the deliberate dumbing down tactics used in (US) public schools," and the imposition of socialism through the American education system.[217]

A key component of the doctrine of Cultural Marxism is the notion that free speech is being limited by the imposition of political correctness. Through this lens "criticism of chauvinism,

racism, or capitalist operation is itself [interpreted as] an affront to the free speech and civil rights of the Right, and of white males in general."[218] Thus, Mirrlees shows that "the Alt-Right uses the discourse of cultural Marxism to construct non-white people and minority groups, as well as their allies, as cultural Marxist elitists… that use 'political correctness' to undermine or oppress virtuous alt-American people," thereby implicitly suggesting that Cultural Marxism is a threat to the norms and standards of American life.[219]

Some have cautioned against the overgeneralization of categorizing all right-wing groups as inherently paranoid, stressing that it is an "unmistakably pejorative" term, and note that paranoia is also a defining characteristic of general society, which creates a permissive environment for extreme-right conspiracies.[220,221] However, the Cultural Marxism conspiracy inherently implies that mainstream media – often abbreviated to "MSM" – is an agent of the enemy and cannot be trusted, thereby incentivizing adherents to consume media from alternative news sources – such as *Breitbart* or *Infowars* – within an echo-chamber and thus strengthening their monological belief system. This generalized distrust of mainstream culture is pervasive throughout the far- and extreme right, and continuously shapes and polices the construction of their world view.

The conspiracy theories discussed here have considerable overlaps, and merge naturally together to construct an overarching narrative. This narrative imagines a persecuted white race which is under constant biological and cultural threat from increased levels of immigration, orchestrated by looming elite Jewish forces. In turn, this persecution is compounded by the perceived suppression of this narrative by the mainstream media – as controlled by these same Jewish powers – which simultaneously prevent the 'truth' of this persecution being revealed. In this way, extreme-right actors construct an overarching narrative of perpetual endangerment from a range of interlinked, existential threats, which in turn frame subsequent events as a continuation of this narrative of white persecution.

Comparative Analysis

Through detailing the nature of the conspiracy theories which drive jihadism and white supremacist extremism, significant differences emerge in both content and structure. In the first instance, the war on Islam is primarily the product of events and beliefs emanating from the Arab world and, while Western jihadists have also identified a war on Islam taking place in the West, it is driven by post-colonial experiences in the region which served as one of the inspirations for early Islamist activism. The two most prominent early Islamist movements, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and India's Jamaat-e-Islami, were largely responsible for identifying the West as the main source of Islam's ills during the mid-20th century. Thus, while the war on Islam was constructed by these movements to put forward a much more wide-ranging socio-political program focused on establishing Islamic supremacy, this conspiracy theory

cannot be entirely separated from experiences of colonial rule.

The Great Replacement, meanwhile, has its roots in traditional right-wing xenophobia and isolationism which has over the years evolved into several related grand narratives about why "white" nations have supposedly declined. While different in their details, be it a fear of "replacement," "genocide" or "Islamization," they are all based on a belief that it is those who are entering the West who present the gravest threat to the white European in-group.

It is also clear that the all-encompassing war on Islam is a unifying narrative, and there are few competing or rival beliefs on the nature and source of the threat. This is rather different than what can be observed in the less homogeneous extreme right where, for example, there are arguments over whether it is in fact Muslims or Jews who present the most significant threat and whether the Holocaust took place. These disagreements among the extreme-right can become acrimonious, with different factions accusing one another of being enemies in disguise, sent to confuse adherents about the true nature of the threat they face.

As with any conspiracy theory, they both rely on the exploitation of real-world events to prove the existence of the plot. Since 9/11, the belief in the war on Islam has been driven largely by conflicts in Muslim majority countries as part of the war on terror, and as such it is a conflict-driven conspiracy theory. This is not to say that conflict is the only driver, and over the last two decades other components have been added to bolster the war on Islam theory including claims that there also exists an ideological component bent on discrediting and ridiculing Islamic belief. Thus, Islamists and jihadists point to things such as the Mohammed cartoons controversy or attempts by Western governments to define a "moderate" Islam as part of a wider ideological effort to dismantle the faith. The Great Replacement and its variants, meanwhile, are a reaction to a wide range of domestic policies enacted by Western governments, along with socio-economic instability and significant changes in society related to things such as the wider acceptance of inter-racial marriage and increasing levels of tolerance towards different cultural and religious beliefs and practices. Such rapid changes in Western societies, often driven by immigration, have been used to convince white adherents that the needs, beliefs and cultures of non-white populations have been prioritized over their own due to the machinations of liberal elites in concert with migrants and Jews.

Despite such disparate roots, both narratives are concerned with the preservation of purity, which is seen as under threat due to the deliberate actions of the enemy. Thus, for example, Western decadence is viewed by Islamists and Jihadists as imported into Muslim societies with the express intention of sullying the purity of Islamic belief by encouraging secularism and "immorality." Similarly, the extreme-right regard the introduction of new bloodlines and cultures in their countries as specifically intended to create an existential threat to the purity of their own. Both movements also share an obsession with the ill effects of perceived Jewish power and control, and there is a clear agreement on both sides when it comes to the nature of the

Jewish threat, something which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Chapter 4: Antisemitism

While antisemitism is inextricably linked to the subjects of other chapters of this report (and especially to conspiracy theories), the report dedicates a standalone section to its role and function within jihadist and extreme right-wing movements. It merits this level of focus because, while antisemitism is by no means exclusive to jihadism and the extreme right, it is integral to both of their belief systems in a way that few other extremist movements could claim. Were antisemitism to be removed from either of these movements, they would look fundamentally different in their ideology and their acts of violence. The following chapter will look at the roots and evolution of antisemitism within each movement, which continues to shape their beliefs and actions today.

Jihadist Antisemitism

Given that jihadists use a literal interpretation of scripture to justify their beliefs and actions, it makes sense to begin this analysis by looking at the depiction of the Jewish people in the Quran, where Jews play an important role in the genesis of Islam. When Muhammad arrived in Medina in 622 CE, he encountered the long-established local Jewish communities. As a result of the frequent exchange, the Prophet and his followers adopted certain rites and religious practices, such as fasting and religiously motivated food restrictions. However, his attempts to convert Medina's Jews all came to nothing. Frustrated by the Jewish unwillingness to accept his message, Muhammad began to see the Jewish tribes in Medina as Islam's enemies. In successive campaigns they were expelled and – if deemed necessary – killed in battle.[222] In 629, the decisive battle was fought against the Jews of Khaybar, a small oasis in close proximity to Medina.[223] To this day, the chant "*Khaybar, Khaybar, ya yahud, Jaish Muhammad, sa yahud*" ("Jews, remember the battle of Khaybar, the army of Muhammad is returning") can be heard at anti-Israel protests around the globe.[224] Despite jihadists' selective use of religious scripture and history to justify their antisemitism, it is important to note here that Islam isn't inherently antisemitic and that today's jihadists are using a generalization to assume that all Jews (in any time, place or context) should be treated in the same way that Muhammad dealt with specific Jewish tribes in Medina at the time. Further, as is demonstrated below, modern jihadist antisemitism has more in common with European anti-Jewish trends than it does with Islamic history and scripture.

European Imperialism and The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Europeans and the import of European ideas undoubtedly played a fundamental role in the development of today's Islamist antisemitism. While Jews were depicted in negative terms by Muslims long before European countries became involved in the Middle East, Europeans, most of them church dignitaries, altered the Jewish picture when they introduced their Muslim counterparts to an array of anti-Jewish tropes in the course of the 19th century.[225] Whereas Jews had been characterized as weak and pathetic in Islamic anti-Jewish portrayals, Christian anti-Judaism depicted them as much more powerful and sinister.[226] The first major event highlighting the growing salience of newly imported patterns of anti-Jewish hatred in the region was the so-called Damascus blood libel in 1840. A Jewish barber was accused of kidnapping and killing a monk in order to use his blood for ancient Jewish rituals. Fellow monks and the Catholic consul of France led a rigorous campaign against the Damascene Jewish community and portrayed its members as potential malevolent murderers. In a short space of time, the blood libel spread and re-appeared in numerous places under Ottoman control.[227]

Anti-Jewish resentment among Arabs grew more pronounced in the late 19th and early 20th century. Apart from the import of Christian anti-Judaism in general, the Europeans had brought along one document that would shape Muslim attitude towards the Jews in a fatal way. Scholars like Efraim Karsh have called *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* "the most successful antisemitic import of all in the Muslim-Arab world."[228] The fabricated publication purported to be a genuine report of a historical meeting between several influential Jewish men in Prague that had been convened to forge a long-term plan for Jewish world domination. *The Protocols* had first appeared in Czarist Russia where they were distributed by the secret police to legitimize recently introduced antisemitic legislation by the Czar. Even though it was quickly proven that *The Protocols* were a fabrication, they were distributed around the globe: Henry Ford published them in the United States and when in power, the Nazis turned them into an integral part of their propaganda and education efforts.[229] As certain character traits became inherently linked to an alleged racial Jewishness, it was no longer possible for Jews to leave Judaism and the connotations of what it meant to be a Jew by converting to either Christianity or Islam.

The Protocols played a major part in introducing Muslim-majority societies to the idea that the Jews, by their very nature, were treacherous conspirators.[230] This depiction also fueled the deprecating view many Muslims had of Zionism. It was not seen as a project of national self-determination but rather as the spearhead of a global Jewish conspiracy. In November 1917, many Arabs felt vindicated by British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour's declaration that the British government "view[ed] with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."[231] To them, the declaration – which had first been made in a letter to British Zionist Lord Walter Rothschild – served as definitive proof of a Jewish conspiracy implemented by the British.

From that point onwards, *The Protocols* became an important pillar of anti-Zionist propaganda. They have been invoked by Arab nationalist leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser as well as violent Islamist groups like *Hamas* whose 1988 charter explicitly refers to the forgery as proof of the all-encompassing conspiratorial plot the 'Zionists' were pursuing.[232] Distribution of the text in the Middle East reached its peak in the 1930s and 1940s when constantly increasing levels of antisemitism in Europe brought thousands of new Jewish immigrants to Palestine.[233] The Palestinian leadership at the time tried its best to limit the influx. When Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem and leader of the Palestinian national movement was called before the Shaw Commission that dealt with the 1929 Hebron massacre in which Palestinian-Arabs killed almost eighty Jews, he did not hesitate to invoke *The Protocols,* claiming that the full extent of the Jewish machinations had been revealed and that it was obvious that the British would not lead a fair trial given the fact that their parliament was "nothing more than a council of the Elders of Zion."[234]

Amin al-Husseini and the Nazis

Klaus Holz and Michael Kiefer characterize Husseini as "the first significant Arab anti-Semite." While German historian Matthias Küntzel argues that, by merging Islamic prejudices against Jews with Nazi-like racial attributions, it was Husseini who "invented" this new form of antisemitism in the Muslim world.[235] Klaus Holz and Michael Kiefer who characterize Husseini as "the first significant Arab anti-Semite."[236] It was through Israel's former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's 2014 assertion that the Mufti had been "one of the leading architects of the final solution" that the name Husseini received renewed international attention.[237] Netanyahu's false allegation was quickly debunked, but several recent publications on the Nazi endeavors in the Arab world have suggested that Husseini's collaboration was more comprehensive than previously believed.[238] After escaping prosecution in Palestine in 1937, he began to publicly endorse the Axis powers in the summer of 1940.[239] When the pro-Axis coup in Iraq failed and the British re-established control, Husseini quickly left for Iran from where Italian diplomats smuggled him to Rome in October 1941. He was flown to Berlin a month later and had an audience with Adolf Hitler on 28 November 1941 in which he reaffirmed his conviction that they were fighting the same enemies, namely Jews, Britain and Bolshevism.[240]

In the following four years, Husseini was a crucial component of the Arabic-language Nazi propaganda programs broadcasted through *Radio Zeesen* in the Middle East and North Africa.[241] After the Nazis realized that their sole focus on racist antisemitism did not fully resonate with their Muslim Arab listeners, they decided to introduce a more religious narrative and Husseini was chosen to lead those efforts.[242] He gave regular speeches aimed at inciting anti-Jewish violence and winning over the Muslim population against the Allies.[243] When it came to antisemitism, his speeches were virtually inseparable from those of the German Nazi leaders.

For instance, in July 1942, a statement of Husseini was broadcasted in which he called upon the Egyptians to "kill the Jews before they have a chance of betraying the Egyptian people."[244] On a different occasion, in March 1944, when the Nazis had long been driven out of North Africa and the war was effectively decided, Husseini was still warning his listeners against the alleged establishment of "a Jewish empire in the Arab world" by trying to convince them that it was their Islamic duty to commit genocide: "Kill the Jews wherever you find them! This pleases God, history, and religion. This serves your honor. God is with you."[245] As if this type of incitement was not disastrous enough already, Husseini's collaboration did not stop with propaganda alone: By recruiting Muslims for the *Waffen-SS* in the Balkans and personally intervening with Nazi officials to make sure that Jews from Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania were transported to Poland and not – as brokered by international organizations – to safety in Palestine, he became an active perpetrator in the Holocaust himself.[246]

Husseini was hailed a hero when he returned to Cairo in 1946 after avoiding prosecution as a war criminal. Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, produced a statement in which he mourned Nazi Germany's loss and indicated that it was precisely Husseini's collaboration that made him the perfect man to lead the Arabs in the intensifying conflict with the Zionist movement in Palestine: "Germany and Hitler are gone, but Amin al-Husseini will continue the struggle."[247] Statements like these suggest that Islamism's anti-Zionism was tainted with antisemitism from the outset.

"Our Struggle with the Jews": Sayyid Qutb's Antisemitic Impact

The inherently antisemitic nature of Islamist thought becomes even clearer when looking at Sayyid Qutb's work on the topic. In 1951, he published a pamphlet called *Our Struggle with the Jews* in which he singled out the Jews as primarily responsible for the demise of Islam in recent times. Their alleged meddling in global affairs had corrupted the morale of the Islamic community and led Muslims astray. Qutb juxtaposed a glorified image of a peaceful and traditional Islamic past with what he believed was a deeply perverted modernity that had been brought upon the world through Jewish machinations. To underline the claim of a Jewish-induced modernity, he singled out Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Emile Durkheim, stating that "[b]ehind the doctrine of atheistic materialism was a 'Jew'; behind the doctrine of animalistic sexuality was a Jew; and behind the destruction of the family and the shattering of sacred relationships in society [...] was a Jew."[248]

Qutb's hatred of modernity must be seen as a central feature of Islamism, inextricably linked to the conspiratorial and antisemitic belief in a hidden Jewish power: The upheavals of modern societies and the increased complexity of the international economic order are wrongly blamed on the Jews as purported main beneficiaries of these developments. Thus, while addressing some real existing symptoms of crisis in the modern Muslim world, Islamism fails to analyze their

causes and tries to explain them by means of a conspiratorial friend-foe dichotomy.[249] The conjunction of anti-modernism and antisemitism is in no way limited to Islamism or Middle Eastern thought but given that the emergence of statehood in the region and its accompanying social changes occurred at virtually the same time as the mass immigration of foreign-looking European Jews set in, the Islamist explanation resonated with the day-to-day experience of many Muslims. The arriving Zionists were not just seen as messengers of modernity – they themselves embodied modernity.[250]

The establishment of Israel in the midst of *dar al-Islam* and the overwhelming defeat of the Arab armies against the Jewish state in the 1948 war had brought about a situation in which – for the first time in history – a Jewish majority ruled over a minority of Muslims, seemingly reversing Muhammad's glorious conquest against the Jews of Medina and underscoring Islam's "final collapse after a centuries-long decline."[251] In *Our Struggle with the Jews*, Qutb drew a straight line from the days of Muhammad to the present, arguing that the Jews had "plotted against the Muslim community from the first day it became a community."[252] An alleged Jewish enmity against Islam therefore became a time-independent universal truth among Islamists. Qutb was adamant that only by returning to a literal interpretation of the Quran and by restructuring the Arab states according to a pure and uncorrupted Islam, the Muslim people could live in dignity and self-determination again. By portraying secular Arab leaders and intellectuals as either hidden Jews themselves or at the very least as acting on behalf of Jews, Qutb made clear that there was no middle ground: One could either be a devoted Muslim and follow the path of Allah without any exception or become a stooge in the ancient Jewish plot to destroy Islam.[253]

Qutb's deliberations on crypto-Jews and secret Jewish conspiracies leave little doubt about the significant influence *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* must have had on his worldview. Additionally, his belief in an unalterable Jewish nature suggests that Nazi Germany's war time propaganda equally played a role. His admiration for Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust was manifested in the Nazi-propaganda-like assertion that "Allah brought Hitler to rule over them [the Jews]."[254] However, since the Jews had – in Qutb's words – "returned to evil-doing, in the form of 'Israel'," he argued that Hitler did not go far enough and called upon Allah to "bring down upon the Jews [...] the worst kind of punishment."[255] This appeal makes it clear that Qutb hoped for the complete extinction of the Jewish people. Only then, he believed, could Muslims live in peace and prosperity. It also emphasizes that there is no distinction between anti-Zionism and antisemitism in Islamist thought: The establishment of Israel is seen as merely another episode in the long history of Jewish hostility towards Islam and the *ummah* (the global Muslim community). This interpretation was further amplified in the aftermath of the six-day-war in which Israel had taken control of the Eastern part of Jerusalem after swiftly defeating the Arab armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan.[256] The proclaimed liberation of Jerusalem – or *al-Quds* as it is called in Arabic – from the hands of the Jews became a key element of all Islamist propaganda.

Sayyid Qutb's work on this topic is still directly or indirectly influencing Islamists and jihadists

today. In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, *al-Qaeda*'s then number two Ayman al-Zawahiri[257] underscored Sayyid Qutb's impact on the group, asserting that it was "Qutb's message […] [that] fanned the fire of Islamic revolution against the enemies of Islam at home and abroad."[258] Qutb's absolute and uncompromising partition of the world in good (believers) and bad (non-believers/*kuffar*) as well as his genocidal hatred of Jews and Israel constitute the foundation of militant Islamist thought. While America is ostensibly portrayed as Islam's key enemy, it is the Jews who are ultimately held responsible for the American "war against Islam," as evident in Osama bin Laden's 2002 message to the American people in which he justified the attacks on the United States by referring to "American support for Israel."[259] He then indicated that this support as well as all other American wrong-doings were caused by the fact that "the Jews […] control your policies, media, and economy."[260] Bin Laden's claim of a "Zionist-Crusader alliance" has its roots in Qutb's writings and is frequently echoed in Islamist propaganda targeting Jews, Israel, and the United States today.[261] The conspiratorial term "world Zionism" that had first been propagated in wartime Nazi broadcasts to discredit the Soviet Union and the United States as alleged puppets of their Jewish overlords, equally grew more prominent due to Qutb's publications.[262]

Islamist antisemitic thought has directly influenced the statements and actions of modern jihadist groups. It is shared by most Salafi-jihadist groups and has culminated in multiple deadly attacks against Jews in recent years. While the 2012 murder of a rabbi and three Jewish school children in Toulouse was committed by an *al-Qaeda* sympathizer, the subsequent attacks on Jews in Brussels (2014), Paris (2015), and Copenhagen (2015) as well as the gruesome attack on the Jewish-owned Bataclan Theater in Paris (2016) were all linked to ISIS.[263] Amedy Coulibaly, the assailant of the 2015 attack on a kosher supermarket in Paris, asked one of the hostages about his origins and killed him after the man revealed himself to be Jewish. Afterwards, he shouted, "So you know why I am here then. Allahu Akbar."[264]

More widely, antisemitism is seen to play a role in ISIS recruitment.[265] In a video released through one of ISIS's media outlets in October 2015, Jews are portrayed as "murderers of the prophet" and ISIS supporters are called upon to "[s]tab the Jew with a knife or run over him with a car, poison him, […] burn their faces and their houses."[266] The group's magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* are filled with antisemitic depictions of the Jews as "filthy," "accursed," "corrupt and deviant."[267] Osama bin Laden's son Hamza, who was rumored to become *al-Qaeda*'s future leader before being killed by U.S. forces in the summer of 2019, had made similar calls. In a statement from May 2017, he portrayed Jews as Islam's key enemy and encouraged fellow jihadists to kill them wherever possible.[268]

It is important, therefore, to recognize that antisemitism is deeply rooted in both Islamist and jihadist thought and constitutes an ideological cornerstone for both movements. It has shaped their thinking and actions from the very start and continues to do so today. However, it is also clear that some key features of the modern jihadist view of Jews have their roots not in the Arab

world but in early European antisemitism and extreme-right ideology, something discussed in further detail below.

Antisemitism in the Extreme Right

Dubbed by Matthew Feldman as the "long-standing shibboleth of the far right," antisemitism is a defining cornerstone of most extreme-Right movements.[269] Most broadly, it can be considered as the "belief or behavior hostile toward Jews just because they are Jewish." Yet, in practice, there is little academic consensus over the exact nature of antisemitism.[270] Werner Bergmann outlines two approaches to the study of antisemitism: the "essentialist," and the "functionalist." In the essentialist approach, "hatred of Jews… arises from their mere existence as an alien group living amongst other peoples and practicing different customs," this fundamental 'otherness' remains "unvarying over time and place."[271] In contrast, the functionalist approach dispels notions of immovable otherness, and instead locates Jewish hatred in "the internal, changing problems of the non-Jewish majority and the specific historical constellations in which the relationship between Jews and their non-Jewish environment is played out," thus the hatred of Jews is envisaged as contextually dependent, and "not necessarily connected to the behavior and position of the Jewish minority."[272]

Over time, the prominence of each perspective has fluctuated, yet the hatred of Jewish people has remained a staple of the white supremacist movement. This section will examine the background of antisemitism and will trace its emergence within the extreme right. Due to the far-reaching legacy of antisemitism, it is impossible to capture the full historical extent of the prejudice in this section, instead, therefore, only the emergence of central prejudices within extreme-right will be examined, to give a particular insight antisemitism with the movement.

Anti-Jewish Sentiment in European History

According to Phillips, modern-day antisemitism can be considered as a "manifestation of an ancient prejudice." Similar to the roots of Islamist antisemitism (perhaps even more so), one origin for this prejudice among the extreme right can be traced to scripture. Some Christian readings of the death of Christ place the blame for his death on the Jewish people, and notions of deicide defined anti-Jewish sentiment in early Christian history, dictating the status of Jewish people within society and legitimizing consistent violent attacks against them which cemented their position as "increasingly isolated… outsiders."[273]

Antisemitic tropes and stereotypes with which we are familiar today began to mature and crystallize throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries. The predominant image of the Jew in this period was of a thoroughly othered individual, an "unscrupulous, dishonest, cheating, unworthy"

citizen, in fundamental opposition to the non-Jewish majority.[274] While, early history continued to influence the perception of Jewish people, the perception of Jewish people as frugal and conniving gained salience in the 19th century, both in public perception and academic consensus.

Perhaps most pivotal to the evolution of this stereotype was the publication of *The Protocols* in 1905 which Gervase Philips deems to have been "tragically influential" in the spread of antisemitism.[275] Despite being identified as a fake soon after its publication, the text remained prominent among proponents of anti-Jewish sentiment, being utilized by actors on the extreme-right as justification of their antisemitism, much in the same way as by jihadists. For example, in his autobiography *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler praised the credence of *The Protocols*, writing that "the best criticism applied to [disbelievers of *The Protocols*] is reality."[276]

Indeed, *The Protocols* were particularly influential in the emergence of the ZOG conspiracy.[277] While in its simplest form, the theory refers only to Jewish people supposedly infiltrating the American government, it has been furthered by adherents all over the world, which regard Jewish people as behind systematic attempts to engineer a "multiculturalist" state, and cause the extinction of the white race.[278] Thus, at this time, cultural narratives became salient which perpetuated stereotypes of Jewish people as an evil, and othered minority, entrenched in a global conspiracy for power at the expense of the white race.

During this period, these cultural conceptions of the Jew were bolstered by biological interpretations of the Jewish 'threat.' It is of note that despite the prevalence of anti-Jewish discrimination, the term 'antisemitism' only originated in 1879 in the German Empire, as attacks against Jews became more common.[279] Neuberger adds that this definition was explicitly grounded in an understanding of Jewish people as a distinct race, genetically dissimilar to the white population.[280] Bergmann stresses that with this shift, Jewish people were no longer "defined primarily on the basis of their religion… [but] were now categorized as a people, nation, or race."[281] MacMaster conveys that this "racial anti-Semitism… carried far more weight than the ancient Biblical prescriptions," and gave rise to the enduring linkage between "Jewish blood and Jewish sentiment."

This "expression of racial peculiarity," enabled separatist attitudes wherein Jewish communities were perceived as wholly segregated from broader society and owing to "marriage endogamy," survived as a "distinct racial minority… unassimilated in Europe," and biological incompatible with the white race.[282] Thus, Jews were imbued with the potential to cause the "mongrelization" of society, leading to its eventual decline.[283] Peter Holtz and Wolfgang Wagner describe this kind of relation as an inseparable "Jewish essence," toxic and inseparable from the Jewish people itself, owing to the biological specificities of the Jewish racial makeup, creating a perpetual fear around the global Jewish community.[284] Neuberger notes that this attitude was perpetuated in the early nineteenth century by the German journalist and founder of the 'League of Antisemites,' Wilhelm Marr who contended that societal assimilation would not enable Jews to

become 'proper' Germans, owing to their incompatible racial origins.[285] This biological categorization of Jews merged with cultural elements of discrimination, constructing a notion of a racially "inferior" Jewish population, with the simultaneous furtive aspiration of "destroy[ing] societies and control[ling] the world through financial, political, and media systems."[286]

The influence of these historic developments on societal feelings of antisemitism culminated in the most devastating example of antisemitism in practice in modern history, directly preceding and during Adolf Hitler's governance between 1933 and 1945. The ideological roots of the antisemitic doctrine of Nazi Germany are complex, and Hitler's regime both emerged from historic manifestations of anti-Jewishness and contributed new inflections to the prejudice in the establishment of a nation-wide, state-run campaign of virulent antisemitism and extreme violence. Nazi ideology was influenced by the historic notion that Jews, as a people, were inherently anti-Christian, a position which, at the time, was supported by most mainstream churches in Germany, thus lending legitimacy to emerging societal paranoia towards Jews.[287] Zygmunt Bauman suggests that the Nazi regime can be understood through the dichotomy of purity and impurity, wherein Jews were constructed as "impure," and "polluting agents" within German society.[288]

The Christian Identity Movement

Following the end of the Second World War the Christian Identity Movement, described by Berlet as an "inherently... racialised religious philosophy," gained some salience, particularly in the United States, where it already had a solid following.[289] Tourish and Wohlforth outline that the tenets of the movement were grounded in fears of an impending "Armageddon," and blended notions of theological antisemitism, overt racism, and biological understandings of racial purity.[290] The movement has its origins in the 1920s British-Israel movement which viewed contemporary Jews as descendants of ancient Israelites, however as the doctrine began to migrate to the United States in the 1930s, it became imbued with antisemitism, instead viewing Jewish people as "false Israelites," who were in fact "descended from an Asiatic people known as the Khazars."[291] This ideological shift was then furthered by Wesley Swift, described as one of the "chief architects" of the Identity movement.[292] Swift influenced the movement's trajectory as it became increasingly focused on antisemitism, racism, and nativism.[293] This new direction regarded white Europeans as the descendants of the Israelite people of the Bible, while regarding Jews as the biological offspring of the Devil.[294]

Thus, despite the general fall in the salience of belief in Jewish biological differences following the era of human experimentation carried out in Nazi Germany, within the Christian Identity movement the myths of racial and blood-line purity were reignited and given theological justification.[295] In the 1960s, Swift popularized the "two-seed theory" which held that Jewish people were the "direct biological offspring of the Devil," after Satan appeared, in the form of the

snake, to mate with Eve in the Garden of Eden, who gave birth to Cain – the "father of the Jewish people." [296,297] As a result of this mating process, Raphel Ezekiel shows that Jewish people therefore, are regarded within Christian Identity doctrine as a third "dangerous species," separate from humanity.[298] Thus, by employing this reasoning, adherents of Christian Identity exonerated the German Nazi regime, finding theological justification for the extreme violence of the Holocaust. Furthermore, the Identity movement went further to pave the way for increased antisemitism, by suggesting that any counter-arguments to their anti-Jewish claims were merely conspiracies propagated by Jewish people themselves.[299] Crucially, Tourish and Wohlforth demonstrate that Christian Identity also regarded non-whites as fundamentally "not fully human," having been "created with other animals before Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden."[300] In the Identity movement, the white race is positioned as the only truly human race, being the only race which can trace its descendance back to Adam in the Garden of Eden as is outlined in the Book of Genesis. While the influence of the Christian Identity movement faced a decline towards the end of the 1990s, the joint influence of biological and theologically rooted antisemitism as key features of its ideology remains influential.[301] Recent research also shows that Christian Identity beliefs and rhetoric "currently function as a soft influence in neofascist accelerationist groups."[302]

The Legacy of Holocaust Denial as a Form of Antisemitism

The Christian Identity movement was particularly embraced in the United States, where many American lives remained comparatively untouched by the recent memory of Second World War, and some were skeptical as to the legitimacy of the reports of cruelty in Nazi concentration camps.[303] As such, the Identity movement was both bolstered by, and furthered, notions of Holocaust denial. The legacy of the Holocaust has proved an important motif for the extreme right and especially white supremacists.

While some extreme right groups celebrate the Holocaust as the extermination of Jewish people, many others reject the authenticity of the Holocaust narrative. Holocaust denial has existed since the collapse of the Nazi regime in 1945 as an attempt Nazis and their sympathizers to whitewash the activities of the Third Reich with the aim of rehabilitating the movement.[304] Kaplan shows that much of the "revisionist" mindset is grounded in the "obsessive search for random, often "'long suppressed' facts," which will debunk the 'conspiracy' of the Holocaust.[305] One particular element of Holocaust revisionism, that of the 'six-million- myth,' which suggests that while *some* Jewish people were killed during the Second World War the 'actual' number that died is far less than six million, may act as an entry point for some into a broader denial of the entire event. Holocaust denial narratives such as this have seen a resurgence among online extreme right spheres on platforms such as 8kun and Telegram where a number of members compile 'evidence' in an effort to disprove the dominant narratives of the Holocaust.[306] It should be noted also that these ideas are bolstered by an online climate where disinformation is rife and filter bubbles may

decrease individuals' resistance to increasingly extreme ideas, as users attempt to red-pill each other to specific logical inconsistencies in the Holocaust narrative, unveiling the broader deception that it ever took place.[307]

However, Holocaust revisionism or denial goes beyond a mere quest for 'facts,' is instead grounded in pre-existing prejudice, distrust of the mainstream political sphere, and explicit antisemitism. The concept of Holocaust denial is inherently bound to the notion of Cultural Marxism – itself an important facet of the Zionist Occupied Government conspiracy – which supposes that Jewish elites have taken control of the U.S. government, the public education system, and the media or other cultural industries, and as a result free speech is limited by the imposition of political correctness.[308] Using such claims, revisionists argue that their voices have been suppressed by the societal norms which prevent the questioning of the Holocaust, a dynamic they regard as engineered by Jewish elites.[309]

Furthermore, Jewish people are perceived by some in the extreme right as 'pushing' the story of the Holocaust in order to pursue wider agendas today.[310] Neuberger stresses that the Jewish people are thought to be motivated to lie or "weaponize" the false notion of the Holocaust in this way either as a defense for "'their' actions in the Middle East," and as leverage for the legitimization of their own state, for monetary gain in the way of repatriations following the Second World War, or as an inherent byproduct of their evil racial characteristics.[311] In the most extreme cases, some white supremacists may claim that the Holocaust was a hoax as a way to absolve 'innocent' Nazis who after the war were executed for their role in it.[312]

Narratives of Holocaust denial are undoubtedly grounded in antisemitism, and are perpetuated with the intention of further targeting Jewish people, depicting them as dishonest, scheming, and inherently evil. They legacy of the Holocaust and its impact on the modern-day extreme-right movement is complex, with some groups embracing denial, whilst others celebrate the murder of Jews in Nazi Germany as fact.

The Manifestation of Antisemitism in Recent Extreme-Right Acts of Violence

In the wake of Robert Bower's attack at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, it was uncovered that his social media account on the online platform 'Gab,' was littered with antisemitic propaganda, much of which referenced the ZOG conspiracy theory, and implied that senior members of the U.S. government, including then President Donald Trump, were planted by Jews in order to help keep the white race docile while they were quietly "replaced" with non-white "invaders."[313] Furthermore, a paraphrased quote from the Bible verse John (8:44) "Jews are the children of Satan," was displayed as an introduction to his profile page.[314] The ideology which may have fuelled Bowers' attack is therefore grounded in antisemitic stereotypes perpetuated throughout the history of the racist right, and narratives of the ZOG conspiracy and Jewish Satanic origins were combined in his paranoid perception of Jewish people.

Antisemitic narratives were also a central influence in the shooting outside a synagogue in Halle, Germany carried out by Stephan Balliet in October 2019. Balliet initially intended to begin his attack inside the synagogue and, in documents uploaded to the *chan* site *Meguca* prior to the attack, claims that the primary target of his attack were Jewish people, stating "If every white man kills just one, we win."[315] However, he was ultimately unsuccessful in gaining access to the building, eventually shooting one passerby before driving to a nearby district and killing another man. In a livestream of the attack Balliet emphasized that he did not believe the Holocaust took place, and, in the same statement, claimed that declining [white] birthrates in the West and mass immigration were also orchestrated by Jewish people. Balliet therefore drew upon staple extreme-right narratives of the ZOG conspiracy and Holocaust denial – and thereby implicit Cultural Marxism – as justification for his attack. In short, the recent spate of extreme-right attacks demonstrates both the continued importance, and intersectionality, of historic narratives of antisemitism on the modern-day violent extreme right.

Comparative Analysis

Both movements therefore share a deep distrust and enmity toward the Jewish people. As our analysis shows, the roots of this sentiment are more related than is often assumed. Antisemitism within the jihad movement has to a large extent been influenced by early- and mid-20th century racist European views of Jewish people as wielding disproportionate levels of power which they are perceived as exercising in a variety of nefarious ways.

While it is often assumed that jihadist antisemitism is rooted in a religious intolerance based on their interpretation of several Quranic verses and stories from the *hadith*, it is worth noting that neither of the Islamic primary texts make conspiratorial claims about outsized Jewish power and control. This trope is largely rooted in European 20th century antisemitism, expanded upon in texts such as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and appears to have been adopted by jihadists after their Islamist predecessors encountered European thinking on the matter. As we have seen, Islamists found some common cause with Nazi Germany in the 1930s, particularly over their view of the Jewish threat, and jihadists followed suit decades later.

One example of a specifically Nazi influence on jihadist antisemitism is found in Osama bin Laden's October 2002 "letter to America" in which he addresses the American people and attempts to explain why his organization targeted them on 9/11. Buried in his exhaustive list of American crimes is the following accusation:

You are the nation that permits Usury, which has been forbidden by all the religions. Yet you build your economy and investments on Usury. As a result of this, in all its different forms and guises, the Jews have taken control of your economy, through which they have then taken control

of your media, and now control all aspects of your life making you their servants and achieving their aims at your expense; precisely what Benjamin Franklin warned you against.[316]

Of particular interest here is bin Laden's claim that American founding father Benjamin Franklin had at one time warned the nation of the potential threat posed by Jewish control of the country. This is based on a fabricated claim by an American Nazi sympathizer named William Dudley Pelley, who in the 1930s purported to have found reports from the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia which proved Benjamin Franklin, who was in attendance, made a series of claims about Jewish control in America. Among them was his apparent belief that Jews funded the civil war in order to prevent American from becoming financially independent and thus less reliant on Jewish money, and his desire to place them in concentration camps.[317] It is hard to imagine where bin Laden found this claim other than in American Nazi propaganda.

Also, it appears that some factions within both movements often oscillate between celebrating or denying the Holocaust. This peculiar cognitive dissonance is difficult to fully account for. It may simply be that they are willing to exploit the Holocaust in whatever ways they see fit, sometimes denying it may have more propaganda value than celebrating it, and vice versa. This is a common feature of conspiracy theories, in which facts and linear narratives are often sacrificed in pursuit of pushing whichever theory is the most expedient to time, place and audience.

Antisemitism must therefore be a central component of any comparison between the extreme right and jihadism. Unlike many other extremist movements, removing antisemitism from either of these movements would change them beyond recognition. It forms a key component of their ideology and evolution and continues to indelibly shape both jihadism and the extreme-right today.

Chapter 5: The Legitimacy and Necessity of Violence

For both movements analyzed here, violence is regarded not only as a legitimate reaction to the existential threats they believe they face, but also as a necessary one. So much so, in fact, that both view those among their in-group who choose non-violent activism as, at best, cowards and at worst traitors. The following will show how both have a deeply held belief in the use of violence as one of the only true drivers of change and the pathway towards achieving utopia.

The Case for Global Jihad

The issue of violent *jihad* is arguably one of the biggest points of divergence between 'mainstream' Islamist organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi-jihadist groups like *al-Qaeda* and ISIS. While the Brotherhood and similar groups recognize the theological importance of *jihad*, they have by and large abandoned its violent interpretation as a means to bring about change. Salafi-jihadists, on the other hand, consider violence to be divinely sanctioned and indispensable in their efforts to re-establish Allah's reign on earth. They reject the purported peacefulness of Islam and instead insist on it being "the religion of war" with Muhammad as "the prophet of slaughter."[318]

Abdullah Azzam: The Father of Global Jihad

Jihadists have fully embraced the "elevation of the duty of jihad to a central pillar of Islam," as established during the era of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by Abdullah Azzam, the Palestinian Islamic scholar who has been dubbed "father of Global Jihad."[319] According to Calvert, Azzam must be regarded as the one person who "did more than any other [...] to create the theoretical underpinnings of the contemporary jihadist movement."[320] Born into a pious Muslim family in Mandatory Palestine in 1941, Azzam grew up under the perception of being a part of a community that had been the victim of large-scale injustice.[321] It was, however, the 1967 Six-Day War, that triggered Azzam's steering towards a more radical and encompassing vision of Islam as the sole solution to the Palestinian plight.[322] In the immediate aftermath of the war, he emigrated to Jordan where he joined the local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.[323] Soon after, he began to deepen his Islamic knowledge at the prestigious Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. As member of the Brotherhood, he started to engage more intensively with the writings of Sayyid Qutb. While he did not agree with Qutb's diagnosis of the state of Muslim world in its entirety, he certainly related to his overall message of ongoing Western aggression that urgently needed to be challenged. According to John Calvert, "Qutb's discourse reinforced and sanctioned Azzam's growing belief in the necessity of direct action."[324]

Following his return to Jordan, he felt disconnected from the Palestinian struggle on the ground due to the secular leadership of the *Palestine Liberation Organization* (*PLO*).[325] Thus, when offered the chance, he took up a teaching position at the King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. According to Andrew McGregor, the university was known to be "a hotbed of uncompromising approaches to the establishment and conduct of an Islamic state, bred in an atmosphere of puritanical Wahhabism," a claim that is corroborated by Jed Lea-Henry who argues that Azzam "became a part of a much larger community of highly radicalized Muslims who had been steadily moving to the kingdom since the 1950s after running afoul of their own governments."[326] Being in a group of like-minded Muslims further convinced Azzam of the righteousness of violent *jihad.* He decided to move to Pakistan in 1980 to support the Afghan *mujahedin* in their battle against the Soviet invaders. Not only did he begin to refer to Afghanistan as the more pressing and imminent Muslim concern than Palestine in his writings; he set up the *Makhtab al-Khidamat*, a services center that served as a fundraiser and as a contact point for foreigners looking for a way to join the *jihad* in Afghanistan.[327] Thereby, Azzam laid the groundwork for the phenomenon of the jihadist foreign fighter.[328]

The way Calvert sees it, "Azzam's greatest accomplishment lay not in recruiting hardened Islamists (they needed little convincing), but in publicizing the jihad among ordinary Muslims."[329] To him, the *jihad* in Afghanistan symbolized the starting shot of an era of Muslim liberation worldwide and the *mujahedin* were the long-awaited vanguard of the faith that Sayyid Qutb had evoked in his work *Milestones* two decades earlier.[330]

It was Azzam's construction of *jihad* and *istishhad* (martyrdom) that would permanently shape the jihadist fixation on relentless violence against all disbelievers.[331] He influenced the meaning of *jihad* by insisting that the *hadith* about 'lesser *jihad*' (violent external struggle) and 'greater *jihad*' (non-violent internal struggle) had been fabricated.[332] Azzam utilized his comprehensive Islamic knowledge to construct *jihad* as inherently violent and argued that it was the absence of true *jihad* that had brought about the current situation in which Muslims had become the "rubbish of the flood waters."[333] He established violent *jihad* as an act of purification, indispensable for the individual and the Muslim community overall, suggesting that "[t]he soul is cleansed through violence and death, and Islam is restored through violence and death."[334] In a crucial step, he differentiated between offensive and defensive *jihad* against the *kuffar* (disbelievers) and between *fard kifaya* (collective duty) and *fard ayn* (individual duty). Offensive *jihad* was a case of *fard kifaya,* meaning that a Muslim army should be gathered and sent "at least once a year to terrorize the enemies of Allah" and that it was obligatory for all Muslims – and especially those living in the lands of disbelief – to assist said struggle.[335] Defensive *jihad*, on the other hand, constituted *fard ayn*, which clearly outranked *fard kifaya* in Azzam's deliberations. It was triggered when Muslim territory came under attack by infidel aggressors. In this scenario "expelling the Kuffar from our land" by means of *jihad* became "the most important of all compulsory duties."[336]

In his speeches and writings, he argued the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a clear case of an infidel attack that turned *jihad* into *fard ayn* for each Muslim worldwide. Effectively, his case for the absolute necessity of violence was reminiscent of what Immanuel Kant had considered a categorical imperative.[337] While he did not say it explicitly, Azzam clearly elevated *jihad* into the status of a sixth pillar of the Islamic faith by stating that it was as important as praying and fasting. According to him, there was "no difference between one who abandons jihad without excuse when it is *fard ayn*, and one who eats without excuse during the day in Ramadan."[338] He went as far as to refer to *jihad* "the zenith of Islam."[339] He saw it as "the obligation of a lifetime" and argued that it remained *fard ayn* until every place on earth that had once been in Muslim control was violently liberated and Allah's reign on earth revived.[340]

Effectively, this meant that there was always a *jihad* to be fought and Muslims were challenged to seek and embrace it wherever possible. Given that Azzam considered *jihad* to be "a collective act of worship," it was almost irrelevant "whether an individual act of jihad scored a success against the enemy."[341] Success could – all aspirations of global domination notwithstanding – not truly be measured in earthly measurements anyway.

True success, Azzam believed, meant pleasing Allah and there was no better way to achieve that than by relentlessly waging *jihad* in his name and eventually being martyred on the battlefield. Azzam argued that martyrdom had to be seen as the highest goal of all *mujahedin*. What may not seem as outlandish today as we have grown used to the jihadist glorification of martyrs, be it through Osama bin Laden's portrayal of Muslims as "[t]he Nation of Martyrdom; the Nation that desires death more than you desire life" or through ISIS's claims that "when the mujahedin proceed towards battle, death is not just a possibility for them, it is a wish that they seek and endeavor to attain."[342]

However, this line of thought is heavily inspired and influenced by Abdullah Azzam. According to Assaf Moghadam, he was "the first theoretician to succeed in turning martyrdom and self-sacrifice into a formative ethos" of what it meant to be a jihadist.[343] In Azzam's eyes being martyred symbolized the highest form of piety and devotion. He glorified *shahids* (martyrs) by insisting that they were "the ones who build the palace of glory, because palaces of glory are built only by skulls and limbs severed from the body [...] [and] the ones who keep the tree of this religion from wilting and drying up, because the three of this religion is watered only with blood."[344] It was revealing of Azzam's impact, when ISIS spokesperson Abu Muhammad al-Adnani used an almost identical phrasing in the 2014 proclamation of the caliphate, asserting that "[w]e spilled rivers of our blood to water the seeds of the khilafah, laid its foundation with our skulls, and built its tower over our corpses."[345]

Osama bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, and the Far Enemy

While Abdullah Azzam was the ideological father of global *jihad*, it was his admirer and student Osama bin Laden who globalized Azzam's vision and put *jihad* in the limelight of world attention. Azzam had first met the young bin Laden in Jeddah. "Modeling himself on Azzam," Lea-Henry argues, "Bin Laden consciously presented the elder man as a leader of the faith."[346] As the son of a rich Saudi businessman, he was able to extend large amounts of money to Azzam and the *Makthab* to provide the *mujahedin* with everything they needed.[347] According to As'ad Abukhalil, "there is no question that it was Azzam who [...] inspired bin Laden more than anybody else."[348]

Bin Laden adopted Azzam's views and after his former mentor was assassinated in November 1989, he took it upon himself to fulfil Azzam's dream of a constantly expanding the violent struggle. Unlike other leading jihadists at the time, bin Laden intended to export *jihad* to Islam's enemies around the globe and in his view there was no bigger enemy than the United States who had "transgressed all bounds and behaved in a way not witnessed before by any power [...] in the world."[349] This belief paved the way for *al-Qaeda*'s prioritization of the 'far enemy,' America and its Western allies, over the 'near enemies,' the Muslim leaders in the region that had governed without strict adherence to Islam.[350] Azzam had refrained from calling for *jihad* against fellow Muslims and although influential jihadists like Ayman al-Zawahiri resented him for that, one can clearly see how bin Laden's 'far enemy'-doctrine was at least partially influenced by his mentor's convictions.[351] Bin Laden's enmity against the United States had surged after the Bush Sr. administration had deployed troops to Saudi Arabia during the First Gulf War. In his view, "the invasion by the American and western Crusader forces of the [...] home of the Noble Ka'ba, the Sacred House of God, the Muslim's direction of prayer, the Noble Sanctuary of the Prophet, and the city of God's Messenger" was a clear example of what Abdullah Azzam had labelled as a situation that turned defensive *jihad* into an obligation.[352] He officially declared *jihad* against the United States in August 1996 and vowed to expel all Americans from the Muslim lands.[353] The bombings of the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya (1998) and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (1998) as well as the attack on the Navy vessel *USS Cole* in Aden, Yemen (2000) were result of this strategic shift. In retrospective, they must also be seen as the prologue to the unprecedented attacks on September 11, 2001.

Al-Zarqawi, ISIS, and the Near Enemy

However, with the rise of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to prominence and eventual leadership of the Iraqi branch of *al-Qaeda* in the early 2000s, the violence of *takfir,* that has been discussed in-detail in the identity section, came to the forefront of the jihadist ideology. Al-Zarqawi did not prioritize spectacular attacks against the "far enemy" in *dar al-kufr* (the land of disbelief). Like

Sayyid Qutb, he blamed the Muslim leaders in the region for leaving the basis of religion and re-shifted the jihadist focus on the "near enemies." However, his absolute enemy number one was the Shia community: According to Ghobadzeh and Akbarzadeh, it was al-Zarqawi's view that "Shias did not practise true Islam and their sole purpose was to destroy Islam by subverting its tenets."[354] He was convinced that each and every single Shia deserved to be killed as a violator of *tawhid* (the oneness of Allah).[355] By the end of the decade, it was hard to overlook a certain divide within the Salafi-jihadist movement, with followers of bin Laden on the one hand and proponents of uncompromising violent takfirism in the style of al-Zarqawi on the other.[356]

ISIS undoubtedly stands in the tradition of the latter. As a matter of fact, the group's origins can be neatly traced back to al-Zarqawi which is why the Jordanian is commonly referred to as ISIS's "founding father."[357] From the outset, ISIS has very much operated along the ideological lines set by al-Zarqawi, most evidently by embracing extreme violence against its declared enemies and promising to rid the religion from all impure elements. ISIS's ambition of global domination as well as its apocalyptic belief in the approaching end of times (discussed in the upcoming utopia section) have both closely been linked to the way it has used merciless violence to instill terror in its enemies. As established already, ISIS is determined to destroy all places of co-existence between Muslims and non-Muslims. The quicker this 'grey zone' is extinguished, the group believes, the sooner the world will fall into two camps, initiating the final battle between the forces of good and evil. Gruesome attacks can thus be seen as a method to accelerate the much-anticipated apocalypse. According to its long-time leader and self-declared caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "it is upon the Muslims to understand well and realize that jihad is obligatory upon each individual from amongst them, and that jihad is the best of deeds and the peak of Islam."[358] Hence, ISIS has not merely elevated the status of *jihad* to that of a sixth pillar but clearly suggested that it stands above all other obligations of a Muslim.

Apart from al-Zarqawi, ISIS's leadership has been particularly inspired in their violent approach by the works of Abu Bakr al-Naji, Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir and Sayyid Imam al-Sharif.[359] According to Gerges, all three make the case for "all-out war and advocate offensive jihad as opposed to defensive jihad in order to bleed the *kuffar* [...], thus creating chaos and fear."[360] They argue that only the relentless pursuit of ultra-violent *jihad* will guarantee the re-establishment and preservation of Allah's rule on earth. Al-Naji's case for total war is the most explicit, insisting that the faithful Muslims "must drag everyone into the battle in order to give life to those who deserve to live and destroy those who deserve to be destroyed" and "burn the earth under the feet of the tyrants so that it will not be suitable for them to live in."[361] He deems self-sacrifice obligatory and justifies the potential death of millions of Muslims in the battle against Allah's enemies by presenting absolute victory or martyrdom as the sole options.[362] Al-Naji vows to "make this battle very violent, such that death is a heartbeat away"[363].

The Justification of Jihad and the Appeal of Performative Violence

Jihadist ideologues portray Islam as inherently violent, a view that has been a cornerstone of ISIS propaganda since its inception. In *Dabiq*, former ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is quoted stating that "Islam was never for a day the religion of peace. Islam is the religion of war. Your Prophet was dispatched with the sword as a mercy to the creation."[364] Al-Baghdadi's quote also reveals jihadists' key argument with which they justify killing anyone they consider to be an infidel, a polytheist, or an apostate. As Gerges puts it, "[t]he goal is to kill and terrorize [...] for a higher moral purpose: cultural cleansing and the imposition of God's laws on kuffar."[365]

According to Robert J. VandenBerg, there are five types of justifications for political violence: defensive, moralistic, legalistic, imperialistic, and apocalyptic.[366] The justification provided by al-Baghdadi above combines traits of moralistic and legalistic framing. Like other jihadist groups, ISIS views itself as morally superior to its enemies and sees itself as bearer of absolute truth and purity. VandenBerg explains that "[t]he moralistic frame justifies violence against an outgroup by drawing attention to some way in which the target supposedly transgresses normative limits" whereas "pronouncements employing legalistic framing [...] call[] for the imposition of a legal or political system rooted in scripture or some other sacred corpus."[367] ISIS sees violence as a necessary means to rid the world of all impure elements in order to establish what they believe to be the ideal society. In a quasi-response to George W. Bush's famous deliberations on the reasons for jihadist's hatred against the United States in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, ISIS published an article under the title "Why we hate you" in one of the issues of *Dabiq*. In the piece, it is claimed that "[w]e fight you in order to bring you out from the darkness of disbelief and into the light of Islam, and to liberate you from the constraints of living for the sake of the worldly life alone so that you may enjoy both the blessings of the worldly life and the bliss of the Hereafter."[368] In addition to the moralistic and legalistic framing, one can also see the apocalyptic idea of a better existence in the afterlife.

Al-Qaeda and ISIS have both justified the murder of civilians in Western countries by pointing to the democratic process in countries like the United States through which – in their thinking – every citizen is responsible for the purportedly anti-Islamic actions of the elected government. Thus, this kind of defensive justification is based on the idea of collective guilt.[369] It is evident in bin Laden's claim that *al-Qaeda* does "not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians" and al-Adnani's incitement to "[k]ill the disbeliever, whether he is civilian or military, for they have the same ruling."[370] Strikingly, while ISIS has also made use of defensive arguments to frame their use of violence as "retaliation for [...] the crusader [...] campaign which continues to result in the killing of countless Muslims," they have not nearly been as prominently featured as they were in *al-Qaeda*'s pamphlets.[371] In 2002, Osama bin Laden justified *al-Qaeda*'s attacks against Americans as essentially retaliatory, stating that "the oppressed have a right to respond to aggression."[372] Rhetorically, bin Laden questioned whether

it was "in any way rational to expect that after America has attacked us for more than half a century, that we will then leave her to live in security and peace?"[373] Ayman al-Zawahiri has reiterated this stance, announcing that "[i]f we become safe you will be safe and if we live in peace you will live in peace."[374] In contrast, ISIS has unequivocally embraced the idea of absolute moral superiority and made it abundantly clear that there is no compromise to be reached: "even if you were to stop bombing us, imprisoning us, torturing us, vilifying us, and usurping our lands, we would continue to hate you because our primary reason for hating you will not cease to exist until you embrace Islam."[375] In the group's totalitarian worldview, the necessity of employing violence will only stop when the whole world has learned to accept Allah's message and the Caliphate has been expanded to the last corner of the earth. Until then, "the blood of the disbelievers is halal [permissible], and killing them is a form of worship to Allah."[376]

It is important to acknowledge the fact that the gruesome violence of ISIS has – at least partially – served as a recruitment asset for the group. The extensive and explicit depiction of beheadings and other brutal forms of executions in ISIS media publications obviously seem repugnant at first sight. But according to criminologist Simon Cottee, "they are also weirdly fascinating – and they go viral for this reason."[377] Cottee believes that this kind of fascination constitutes a powerful motivational aspect for some potential recruits to join jihadist organizations like ISIS. He maintains that "ISIS has killed not just with savagery, but with a demonic creativity, energy and exuberance."[378] The raw and unrestrained display of brutality and force promises empowerment. That ISIS has not tried to hide atrocities but instead prided itself on its unprecedented use of violence by publishing photos and videos, leaves little doubt that the group believes in the appealing effect of bloodshed. Apart from instilling terror in the ranks of their enemies, there seems to be a consensus among ISIS's leadership that this type of "performance violence" has the potential of convincing even more people of its cause. [379]

White Supremacist Race War

While only a minority of actors associated with the extreme right ever carry out acts of terrorism, much of the ideology which fuels the movement lends credence to violent action.[380] This section will explore several elements of extreme-right ideology which advocate for, or justify, violence. It will first explore the 'race war' narrative, noting how this position is legitimized by the Great Replacement theory, and by the broader logic of accelerationism. It will then conclude by touching upon the social and group dynamics within the extreme right which may also influence and legitimize violent mobilization.

Race War Narratives and Accelerationism

One of the most pervasive narratives within the extreme right is that of a necessary and

impending race war wherein the white race is forced to defend itself against an apocalyptic onslaught of non-white immigration and attacks – a dynamic some factions insist is already in motion.[381] As has been shown throughout this paper, the notion of a race war has been particularly legitimized by the Great Replacement conspiracy theory, largely by its ability to frame the white race as threatened by non-white immigration at both a cultural and a biological level. Davies and Ebner show that the extreme right regard the white race as more culturally civilized than non-whites, and in his manifesto Brenton Tarrant stresses that non-white immigration poses a threat to European "traditions," which may be polluted in the face of immigration.[382] This threat is compounded by the dual notion that non-white peoples are also biologically incompatible with the white race. The combination of these narratives means the incompatibility of the races is framed as inherent and irreconcilable. These narratives therefore combine in forming a nativist perspective, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ('the nation') and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state."[383] This is particularly evident within El Paso shooter Patrick Crusius' manifesto where he expresses significant anxiety that increased levels of Hispanic immigration endangers the ability – and right – of white Americans to find employment, stressing that they should learn from the colonization of Native Americans who did not "take the invasion of Europeans seriously."[384] While this narrative is not nativist in the definitive sense as Crusius acknowledges the colonization of Native Americans as the original inhabitations of America, claims made by other attackers such as Tarrant, who laments multiculturalism as an attempt to "replace the native European populations," in his own manifesto, reflect a purer interpretation of nativism.[385] Immigrants are therefore emotively recast as potentially violent 'invaders' who must not be enabled to threaten the white race in this way.

These interconnected narratives are again compounded by the ZOG conspiracy.[386] This notion implies that the white race is not only threatened but actively targeted, thus fueling violent retaliation against perceived Jewish oppressors. This kind of paranoia is demonstrated within Poway Synagogue attacker John Earnest's manifesto where he states: "Is it worth it for me to live a comfortable life at the cost of international Jewry sealing the doom of my race? No. ... I'd rather die in glory or spend the rest of my life in prison than waste away knowing that I did nothing to stop this evil."[387] Earnest frames Jewish people as an indisputable threat, contributing to the narrative that the white race is at risk of "genocide," and therefore, justifying immense personal sacrifice as a necessity to protect the white race against the Jewish conspiracy.[388]

Furthermore, the conspiratorial nature of the ZOG narrative, in and of itself, may also influence the emergence of violence. Bartlett and Miller describe conspiracies as a "spur to violent action," and stress that they contribute to a narrative in which a persecuted group is threatened by "impending, apocalyptic doom and [to which] a response is needed urgently."[389] The all-encompassing nature of conspiracies which characterizes extreme-right antisemitism may frame violence as the only option to counter the impending threat of replacement.

Finally, these narratives fuel, and are reinforced by, the dehumanizing discourse present within extreme-right communities. Forscher and Kteily show elements of the extreme right partake in "blatant dehumanization" of their perceived enemies, often framing non-white, or Jewish people as less "evolved" than whites.[390] Recent propaganda from the accelerationist Rapewaffen movement openly states "Kill Subhumans" in reference to Jewish people. Dylann Roof adopts a similar lexicon in his manifesto by drawing upon the fallacy that the human race is composed of various different species and comparing black people to dogs, thereby implicitly excusing violence towards non-white as they are "lower beings."[391] The doctrine of biological racism is invoked to legitimize dehumanizing discourse, and thus endorse violence towards non-white and Jewish people (among other minorities). By simultaneously depicting non-white and Jewish people as an inherent threat to the survival of the white race, and by framing this threat in dehumanizing terms, the extreme right creates a climate in which violence becomes both legitimized and encouraged.

The urgency of violence is reflected particularly clearly in various accelerationist movements. In the context of white supremacy, accelerationism philosophises that modern society is "irredeemable" and that civilised society as a whole has been lost to forms of degeneracy spread by non-white 'invaders.'[392] Violence is presented as the only solution to this problem, and accelerationists promote the idea that society should be pushed to the point of collapse, so that a "fascist society built on ethnonationalism can take its place."[393] As May and Feldman explain, the solution offered by accelerationists is to cause a "defibrillating shock [which] can return the race... to mythic glory and dominance."[394] Walther and McCoy also conclude that "accelerationism has come to mean that the far-right must increase civil disorder, or accelerate violence and aggression, in order to create further polarization and bring about a societal collapse that fits their agenda."[395]

Analyzing Atomwaffen, Newhouse shows that it is an important node of a broader network of neo-fascist accelerationist groups, and that it was an important "catalyst" in "bringing James Mason back to the forefront of accelerationist activity and fully embracing the operational strategies laid out in *Siege*."[396] *Siege* outlines that "the best friends of a revolution in this country will be any worsening collapse of the economy along with any large-scale disaster, disruption, or upheaval from any source."[397] The influence of the accelerationism – although not necessarily new – has spread quickly throughout the white supremacist right, and "call[s] to action" are commonplace within these circles, as is exemplified by the common acronym – and the motto of the fascist social network site Iron March from which Atomwaffen's accelerationist philosophy emerged – "GTKRWN" (Gas the Kikes Race War Now).[398]

Lone actors such as Brenton Tarrant have also explicitly advocated for accelerationism. In his manifesto, he states: "stability and comfort are the enemies of revolutionary change. Therefore, we must destabilize and discomfort society where ever possible... only in times of radical change

and social discomfort can great and terrific change occur... destabilize, then take control."[399] Thus, Tarrant frames his attack as an incendiary attempt to overthrow the norms of modern society and incite widespread disruption, with the eventual goal of establishing a preferred system of white governance in its place. The attack itself also appears to have been engineered to inspire further waves of violent – a key dynamic of accelerationist violence.[400]

Social Factors

Finally, it should be stressed that various social dynamics characteristic of the extreme right may also legitimize violence. One social factor which has been particularly influential in the legitimization of extreme-right violence, and which Evans has characterized as a "real innovation" within the "global terrorism" landscape, is the "gamification of mass violence," which has occurred online, and has influenced the recent string of terrorist attacks emanating from online *chan* culture.[401] The dynamic of gamification refers to the practice – most prominent on *8chan's* /pol/ board – where users challenge each other to "get the high score" by "killing as many people as possible" in acts of mass casualty violence.[402] In this way, murder and terrorism are framed as competitive acts, providing an incentive for violent mobilization. This is evident not just in the discourse used within the *chans* but is also demonstrated in the manifesto written by Stephan Balliet. The main document he uploaded prior to the incident concludes with an extensive list of potential targets and possible "achievements" that he may attempt during his attack, and which appear engineered to influence and challenge other potential lone actors.[403] Thus, within extreme-right social media, violence may be framed as a challenge against one's peers, thus legitimizing acts of terrorism through the dynamic of gamification.

Yet, it is not only the prospect of competition which legitimizes violence within white supremacist social media, but also the glorification of past attackers. In the wake of Brenton Tarrant's attack, he was elevated to the status of a "saint" within *8chan*, and dedicated boards have been created as para-social shrines for him on more extreme *chan* sites on the dark web.[404] This idolisation of Tarrant is also reflective of another core aspect of accelerationism where mass shootings are designed and engineered to inspire more acts of violence.

The reverence with which Tarrant is regarded also takes on a gendered tone, with *chan* users describing him as "swole" – meaning muscular – and as "charming, handsome, and intelligent," mirroring characteristics Nagel argues are definitive to "alpha masculinity."[405] In line with this, prior to his attempted attack at a mosque in Bærum, Philip Manshaus posted to *Endchan*, attaching a meme which depicted Tarrant as a "Chad Saint," and John Earnest, and Patrick Crusius as "Loyal Chad Disciples."[406] The term "chad" is a cultural touchstone within far-right and Incel circles to refer to a parodic stereotype of a "young, attractive, muscular football player claiming dominance... in the contest for sexual success with women," and is regarded as the antithesis to beta masculinity.[407] By framing previous attackers as masculinized heroes within

extreme-right social media in this way, the movement thus incentivizes further acts of violence as a way for other members to generate status.

Bartlett *et al* note that this dynamic may encourage a game-like culture of "one-upmanship," in which members compete with each other to carry out increasingly deadly attacks and be immortalized as idols within the collective consciousness.[408] Within some extreme right factions there is a precedent that acts of terrorism cumulate in the veneration of the attacker, thus incentivizing and legitimizing increasingly brutal acts of violence as a method of generating status within the movement.

Comparative Analysis

That these movements share a belief in the absolute necessity of violence is hardly a new or unique observation. However, each movement differs significantly in how they reached this conclusion. In the case of the jihad movement, the process of moving from normative understandings of jihad in Islam to the innovations related to global jihadism involved the contribution of a relatively small collection of thinkers and activists. Through their writings and actions, figures such as Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam, Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abu Bakr al-Naji (among others), fundamentally altered the understanding of jihad in Islam. Not only did they greatly loosen and broaden the parameters for involvement but, crucially, unmoored it from requiring specific sanction from any central scholarly authority. In addition, they vastly increased the scope of who could be targeted in any jihadi campaign and, while this is still a point of contention among jihadists, allowed for the killing of a range of Muslim and non-Muslim categories previously considered as protected, such as civilians and Muslims who did not practice jihad.

This relatively formalized shift towards an agreed upon strategy and set of tactics geared towards violence is not as observable in the extreme right. While key thinkers such as James Mason and Louis Beam certainly made the case for extreme right terrorism as a tactic to bring down the ruling authorities, it is not underpinned by a body of scholarly thought and is often little more than an expression of hate against minorities with only a thin strategic basis. The more loosely organized nature of extreme right violence is also reflected in their early innovation ad adoption of the lone actor model, with Mason and other figures such as Louis Beam advocating for the inspiration of hate-driven attacks against minorities in order to drive them out of white nations.

Attention must also be paid to the targets of each movement's violence. While in the West jihadist attacks are aimed primarily at non-Muslim targets, most of the victims of jihadist violence globally are either Muslim civilians or Muslim-majority state authorities. Thus, while jihadism certainly targets Western nations as the "far enemy," the end goal of this violence is the purification of both the beliefs and practices of the *ummah* and is the main driving factor for

jihadist violence.

Cathartic violence, while certainly a feature, is not as prevalent within the extreme right. Since Anders Breivik's targeting of Norwegian government and the nation's next generation of liberal activists in Oslo and Utoya, most extreme right attacks in the West have targeted specific minorities, including Jews, Muslims and black Americans. As a movement seeking to spark a race war, the targeting of these groups makes more strategic sense as both a catalyst for violent responses against white populations and inspiration for other members to take up arms. In the case of Brenton Tarrant, his aim was more straightforward: to simply reduce the number of Muslims in New Zealand, whom he viewed as a direct demographic threat to the nation's white population.

While both movements utilize lone-actor violence, it is the extreme right which relies mostly upon lone actors to perpetuate cycles of violence and inspire future attacks. Unlike the jihad movement, they cannot rely on the assistance or inspirational role of formal, hierarchical organizations with a significant territorial presence. The recent wave of attacks and plots, arguably initiated by Breivik, then continued by Tarrant, Balliet, Crusius, Earnest, Manshaus, and others demonstrates the importance of inspirational terrorist figures and their manifestos and other pronouncements in creating the impetus for extreme-right violence.

Chapter 6: Utopianism

The term "utopia" was coined by Thomas More in 1516, stemming from his wordplay in which he conflated the Greek "*eutopos*" meaning 'good place,' and "*outopos*" meaning 'no place,' thus giving way to the more modern, broad, understanding of utopia as not only a "blueprint" for a "better way of living," but a concentrated "desire" to achieve this state.[409,410] Dystopia is a term often used to describe the opposite of a utopia, in which repression and totalitarianism is rife and true individual freedom no longer exists. In popular literature, these societies are often presented as the result of some form of global disaster, either natural or manmade.

However, as one of the most influential authors of dystopian fiction, Margaret Atwood, has pointed out, there is little difference between a utopia and a dystopia, preferring the term "utopia-dystopia." "What," asks Atwood, "do you do with the people who don't endorse your views or fit in with your plans?"[411] Not only are the measures required to create a utopia likely to include some form of totalitarian mass repression or killing, but even once it is established there will be outgroups for whom the utopia far more closely resembles a dystopia. As the following two subsections illustrate, this most certainly is the case for the visions put forth by both jihadists and white supremacist extremists.

The Islamic State: Returning to the Golden Age

While difficult to imagine given the scale of jihadist violence and atrocity, its ideology constantly emphasizes a desire for a better world based on a deeply felt discontent with the current state of human affairs. [412] Brown calls it "the combination of radical critique from an estranged perspective and the offering of a 'better' world based on a different understanding of the political 'good life'."[413] According to Sargisson, this kind of utopianism can best be described as "a phenomenon of social dreaming."[414] This section will look at how jihadists have derived their notion of a utopia from their readings of the core Islamic texts, and how groups like ISIS have implemented this totalitarian vision using the principle of commanding the good and forbidding evil.

Jihadists portray ideal life on earth as one of pure faith and complete submission to the rules of God as set out in the *Quran*.[415] Muhammad and his companions had established a perfect society which was impurified over the centuries and eventually destroyed when Western-style forms of governments began to be adopted in *dar al-Islam*.[416] They see it as their duty to reconstruct this age of perfection and absolute purity by modelling themselves and their surroundings after scripture and the so-called *al-salaf al-salih* (pious predecessors), the first three generations of

Muslims.[417]

This utopian ideal is juxtaposed with the current state of the world in which justice and piety are purportedly non-existent and Muslims are damned to a miserable existence in the shadow of the forces of *kufr* (disbelief).[418] As already discussed briefly in a previous section, Muslim Brotherhood ideologue Sayyid Qutb used the term *jahiliyya* (ignorance) with which he described a state of infidel ignorance that had allegedly taken hold of the world the moment the rule of Allah was abandoned and manmade laws were introduced. As part of helping to develop the doctrine of *hakimiyya* (sovereignty), Qutb argued that sovereignty could only ever lie with God and that every attempt at governing without strict adherence to the *Quran* and *Sharia* law had to be understood as a rejection of *tawhid* altogether.[419] Given that there was no country that came close to the envisioned ideal of *hakimiyya,* Qutb came to the conclusion that "all the societies existing in the world today are *Jahili*."[420] Hence, "a vanguard" of the truly faithful was needed "to initiate the movement of Islamic revival" and "elevate mankind from its depravity."[421] The all-encompassing global ambition of that movement was evidenced by Qutb's claim that "Islam is not a heritage of any particular race or country; this is Allah's religion and it is for the whole world."[422]

Qutb and other Islamist and Salafi-jihadist thinkers' vision of a pious society, free of *jahiliyya*, forms the core of today's jihadist utopian thought. The declared goal of recreating the "Golden Age" of Islam underscores the reactionary character their imagined utopia. jihadists believe that modernity introduced the world to chaos and immorality and that only by returning to Allah's rule peace, freedom, and stability will once again build the basis of human existence.[423] Thus, it is in the past that jihadist search for answers to the future. However, it is important to point out that the past jihadists aspire to emulate is an imagined past. The idea that there once was a perfect society of perfect people is a romanticized fantasy. Given that religious extremists believe their worldview to be divinely sanctioned and therefore infallible across all time and space, Sargisson considers the combination of utopianism and religious extremism as particularly hazardous. She insists that the notion of a universal unalterable truth "can only inform a utopianism that will be authoritarian, oppressive, and dogmatic."[424]

While the utopia of a resurrected Caliphate developed into one of the cornerstones of jihadist thought, it was mainly treated as a long-term goal. In *al-Qaeda*'s propaganda the *khilafa* was routinely mentioned but the group did not actually pursue a plan that would bring about its re-establishment in the imminent future.[425] *Al-Qaeda*'s leadership has favored an Islamist rule along the lines of the *Taliban* in Afghanistan ever since Osama bin Laden pledged allegiance to the so-called Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and its ruler Mullah Omar in 2001.[426] Although the *Taliban* enforced *Sharia* law, they never managed to emulate the original Caliphate and by de-facto accepting the Afghan borders as the borders of their Emirate continued to operate in the Westphalian state system.[427] Salafi-jihadists who pride themselves on their religious purity and their record as true defenders of the Islamic faith, have long articulated doubts about the piety

of the *Taliban* and the sufficiency of the Islamic character of the *Taliban* Emirate.[428] Their vision of an Islamic state is much more encompassing and does not leave any room for compromises.

Utopia Achieved? ISIS, the Resurrection of the Caliphate, and the End of Days

In 2014, when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared himself Caliph of a re-established Caliphate and a video emerged which showed ISIS fighters literally breaking down the borders between Syria and Iraq, the jihadist utopia suddenly appeared achievable.[429] The proclamation was the starting signal of an unprecedented recruitment effort, cumulating in the *hijrah* (immigration) of more than 30,000 foreigners from all around the globe.[430] ISIS's decision to actually take action instead of merely philosophizing about the eventual foundation of the Caliphate arguably bolstered their credentials as group of the true believers that was willing to go to exceptional length to please Allah and re-establish his reign on earth. In doing so, Charlie Winter argues, the group "asserted itself above all other jihadist groups as the utopia they all aspired to create."[431]

As established by analysts such as Winter, the utopian narrative of a life in complete harmony amongst true believers in the Caliphate was one of the major themes in ISIS propaganda publications up until 2017 when the group had to shift its focus to a message of survival in face of the ever-growing military opposition.[432] The promise of living in the constantly expanding land of Allah while taking part in the pious effort to reconstruct the greatest era of Islam served as one of ISIS's most powerful recruitment narratives. Al-Baghdadi called on all Muslims worldwide to fulfil their religious duty of joining the Caliphate, insisting that there was no longer any justification to live in *dar al-kufr*. Rather, he argued, directly addressing the global Muslim community, "you have a state and Khilafah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership."[433] From the outset, ISIS publications underscored the group's ambition "to become like the society of the companions of Allah's Messenger in terms of their iman, their worship, their justice, their concern in practicing the Sunnah, and their jihad."[434] On the one hand, the prospect of belonging to a vanguard of faithful and courageous Muslims that dared to break with man-made conventions promised a new life full of excitement and adventure, and on the other, the message of stability through divine rules and strict adherence to the Quran resonated with the desire of some recruits to make sense of their grievances in a seemingly ever more ambiguous and complex world.[435]

ISIS tried its best to frame the Caliphate as "a place of serenity and surreal beauty," in which everything a Muslim needed was provided.[436] People were promised money and accommodations for themselves and their family members.[437] Life outside of the Caliphate was juxtaposed with the pure existence Muslims were able to enjoy now that *Sharia* rule had been re-established and all worldly constraints had been cast off inside the Islamic state. Propagandists argued that it was effectively impossible to raise one's children as true Muslims in *dar al-kufr* considering all the "filth and corruption" they were subjected to daily.[438] Making

hijrah was thus presented as the sole logical alternative for Muslims who did not want to be led astray. The sole requirement to settle in the Islamic state and become a "major contributor towards the liberation of Makkah, Madinah, and al-Quds"[439] seemed to be absolute and unwavering faith.

The recruitment was further bolstered by a specific apocalypticism that has constituted an inherent feature of ISIS's utopianism from the outset, underscoring the group's ideological proximity to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who had – in contrast to Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri – made the looming end times a cornerstone of his belief system.[440] In its publications, ISIS has left no doubt about the quickly approaching day of judgement. Not only is its magazine *Dabiq* named after the city in Syria in which *al-malhamah al-kubra*, the final battle between the Muslim forces and the infidels, will supposedly take place; on top of that every single issue of the magazine begins with a quote from al-Zarqawi that reads, "[t]he spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify – by Allah's permission – until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq."[441] The group's emphasis on Islamic eschatology arguably impacted its recruitment efforts as the logic of the nearing end times provided Muslims around the globe with a sense of urgency to join the Caliphate in order to please Allah and avoid eternal damnation.[442] The eschatological outlook must certainly also be understood as a contributor to ISIS's complete lack of scruples on the battlefield. For an individual who does not only believe that his actions are divinely sanctioned but also that the world is ending soon, committing atrocities arguably loses some of its deterrence effect.

The Totalitarian Reality of the Jihadist Utopia

Propaganda aside, it is well-worth looking at the way that ISIS's utopian project unfolded in Syria and Iraq in order to get a better understanding of how jihadist governance looks in the real world. As noted by Hannah Arendt, totalitarian ideologies do not "aim at […] the transformation of the outside world or the revolutionizing transmutation of society, but the transformation of human nature itself."[443] From the outset, ISIS utopianism was inherently linked to a totalitarian claim to absolute truth and power. There was no room for dissent or a pluralist exchange of competing views. In the existential struggle between good and evil, the group insisted on its role as the one true bearer of Allah's infallible truth and saw it as its uncompromising duty "to drag the Muslims back to their religion in chains."[444] According to al-Tamimi and McCants, this kind of self-conception paved the way for the "totalitarian dictatorship" that the Caliphate was to become.[445] The pursuit of a state of absolute religious purity went hand in hand with a rigorous attempt to mold a group of perfect Muslims. In order to achieve this, Benard asserts, absolute control over all subjects of the Caliphate and a complete "negation of a private sphere" were established by means of rigorous enforcement of *Sharia* law.[446] Similar to other totalitarian systems, ISIS tried everything to get into the heads of the inhabitants to discourage the emergence of independent thought at the earliest stage. Any form of individualism and personal freedom was considered a

threat to the utopian vision of a state full of uncorrupted pure and faithful Muslims strictly adhering to God's word.[447] All measures were based on the group's fixed premise that "undoing any of the religion's rites and rulings […] will anger your Lord and assist your enemy against yourselves."[448]

Considering the totalitarian experiences of Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union, Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski developed a useful concept depicting the ideal type of a totalitarian state. They identified six core elements: "1. An elaborate ideology […] covering all vital aspects of man's existence […] 2. A single mass party typically led by one man […] 3. A system of terror […] 4. A […] near-complete monopoly of control […] of effective mass communication […] 5. A […] near-complete monopoly of the effective use of all weapons of armed combat […] 6. A central control and direction of the entire economy."[449] While there are certainly some minor discrepancies between this ideal type and ISIS's so-called Caliphate, it nonetheless seems clear that the group's utopian proto-state ticks most of the totalitarian boxes. Its jihadist ideology is all-encompassing and offers a rigid script for its followers to adhere to; its divinely sanctioned Caliph embodies the primary instance of power to whom every Muslim is supposed to show obedience and swear *bay'a,* the Islamic oath of allegiance.[450] Its rule has been based on and secured through draconian *Sharia*-based *hudud* penalties, which, according to McCants, include "death for blasphemy, […] death by stoning for adultery […] amputation of a hand for stealing […] [as well as] throwing people off buildings or crucifying them after shooting them in the head."[451] The pursuit of absolute purity through punishment is accompanied by constant incitement to denounce anyone who is suspected of not behaving properly to the *hisbah* (religious police) and other religious authorities.[452] On the issue of mass communication, Winter concludes that "Hitler would have been proud" of ISIS's efforts to establish an absolute media monopoly.[453] In its highly professional publications and media productions, the group has presented itself as an almost unbeatable force of divine power. Additionally, it has regularly included educational material to ensure the continued betterment and purification of its followers. While it is debatable to what extent the group has ever managed to attain a monopoly of arms, it has certainly tried to position itself as the only legitimate military force by waging war against all other militias and armies in Syria and Iraq. Lastly, ISIS has endeavored to establish its own isolated economic system and even minted its own currency, arguing that it needed to "disentangle the Ummah from the corrupt, interest-based global financial system."[454]

Judging from this comparison, it is fair to conclude that ISIS's utopian project of a recreated Caliphate is totalitarian in essence. The group has relentlessly pursued its vision of a perfect state for people expected to become as pure and perfect as Muhammad and his companions. By governing in an absolutist uncompromising manner, ISIS followed up on decades of Islamist writings on the proper conceptualization of a true Islamic state. As early as 1941, Pakistani scholar Abul A'la Maududi had published the first edition of its influential work *The Islamic Law and Constitution* in which he maintained that an Islamic state could not "restrict the scope of its activities" considering that its idea was "universal and all-embracing."[455] As a result, he argued

that "[i]n such a state no one can regard any field of his affairs as personal or private"[456], thereby setting the parameters for the totalitarian outline of the so-called Caliphate that ISIS (temporarily) established in the Middle East more than seventy years later.

Apart from the six core elements already discussed, ISIS has demonstrated another profoundly totalitarian trait that Hannah Arendt defined as "[t]he struggle for total domination of the total population of the earth."[457] In no uncertain terms, ISIS has announced its intention of expanding its utopian state to every corner of the earth, seizing on Qutb's assertion that Allah never meant for his religion to be limited to any specific region.[458] Eventually, the argument goes, when every person on earth will be Muslim, state borders will be obsolete and all of humanity will be able to live in peace and prosperity under the one rightful form of government.[459] As established in the earlier section on identity, the jihadist understanding of what it means to be a true Muslim is extremely narrow, and ISIS regards all non-zealous Sunni Muslims as *mushrikin* (polytheists) guilty of mocking Allah and endangering the purity of all of Islam. Jihadism's construction of an exclusivist identity and its utopianism are therefore intertwined. The expansion of its Caliphate has been accompanied by dozens of atrocities and war crimes against non-jihadist Muslims and other religious groups which are considered impure and unworthy of life.

This complete dehumanization of dissenting groups resembles similar practices in totalitarian states like Nazi Germany. In the summer of 2014, ISIS committed a genocide against the ethno-religious minority of the Yazidis in Northern Iraq. In its publications, the jihadists justified the mass murder of Yazidi men and enslavement of Yazidi women and children as an act of Islamic purification against "devil worshippers and Satanists."[460] Jihadism's utopian goal of global hegemony is based on an ideology that frames the murder of all so-called disbelievers who do not immediately convert to Islam as unavoidable. Although ISIS claims to accept the status of Christians as *dhimmis* in their ideal society if they pay the *jizyah* tax, there have been dozens of well-documented instances of systematic persecution of the local Christian populace.[461] Jews fall under the same category of *ahl al-kitab* (people of the book) and are supposedly able to reside in the Caliphate as long as they accept their duties as second-class citizens. Not only is this acceptance unlikely given the overt antisemitism that ISIS has demonstrated; it is also purely theoretical as only a minuscule number of Jews resides in territories that fell or were threatened to fall under jihadist rule.[462]

A Gendered Utopia

Considering that the jihadist identity contains a hyper-masculine element, it is unsurprising that the structures of the ISIS proto-state have been designed to benefit men primarily. Based on its rigid interpretation of Islam and *Sharia,* the group rejects the equality of men and women. "The woman," it is argued, has been created by Allah to serve the *ummah* by "being a shepherd in her husband's home" and giving birth to the next generation of *mujahedin*.[463] As a result, women are always obliged to ask their husbands or another male relative for permission to leave the

house and their word is effectively worthless in front of the *Sharia* courts in the Caliphate.[464]

In the jihadist utopia, male control over the female body is absolute. As Hamoon Khelgat-Doost notes, "[t]he notion that […] women have […] been vessels of sinful sexual power, has set the premise for IS to establish patriarchal restrictive regulations, curtailing and controlling women's social activities."[465] Women are commanded to fully cover themselves, in order for them to stay "hidden and veiled."[466] The strict dress code is enforced by the *hisbah* religious police and "[m]ale guardians are subject to punishment if women are not complying."[467] Even young girls are expected to be covered entirely.[468] To further ensure that there is no interaction between men and women, ISIS has introduced gender-segregated parallel institutions on every level of society.[469] On top of all the restrictions, women are told that "the legislation of polygyny contains many wisdoms."[470] Men supposedly 'deserve' several wives, given that there are "phases in which she [the woman] is unable to fulfil the rights of her husband, as in the case with menstruation, childbirth, and postpartum bleeding."[471] The misogynist nature of ISIS's utopian solution has been underscored by the behavior of its soldiers. Not only was rape frequently used as a means of war; in addition, Yazidi women were literally enslaved, kept as sex servants without any rights, and re-sold to other ISIS members when their initial owner had no use for them anymore.[472] According to Nadia Murad, the 2018 Nobel peace prize winner who survived ISIS captivity, her tormentors treated her and other Yazidi women "as if we were animals."[473] Reports about similar practices by other jihadist groups (e.g. *al-Shabaab* and *Boko Haram*) leave no doubt about the built-in misogyny of the jihadist utopia.[474]

Underpinning the Islamic State's profound interventions in the lives of its population (and the desire to do so among all Salafi-jihadists) is the Islamic duty of commanding the good and forbidding evil.[475] As with most Salafi concepts, this takes different forms depending on the outlook of those following it. At its most basic, it calls on Muslims to do what is in their power to encourage fellow believers to avoid sin. However, for groups like the Islamic State, it provides the framework for a totalitarian system. Thus, those who decide what constitutes "good" and "evil" use violence and intimidation to impose their values on the entire population.

jihadist utopianism is characterized by a strict anti-modernism, an all-encompassing claim to truth and power, that has fittingly been described as a "theocratic form of totalitarianism" by Jeffrey Bale, as well as a misogynist design that establishes uncontested male supremacy.[476] Jihadism's hatred of modernity is evidenced by the utopian attempt to recreate an imagined past of perfect Islamic purity. As demonstrated by Kumar, jihadists believe that "the Qur'an should […] delineate the principles of government, political life, economic activities, and all other dimensions of human existence."[477] Every form of government that does not follow Islamic scripture in its entirety is considered *jahili* and must be done away with. The utopia is totalitarian in that it pursues the constant purification of its state and people and the pursuit of global hegemony. Jihadist rule is solidified through terror and the attempt to abolish all freedoms. This is particularly clear in the case of female subjects, whose lives are completely taken out of their

own hands. As dependents, they are to accept absolute subjugation to their male co-religionists in every sector of jihadist society.

The Ethnostate: A Return to Ethnic Purity

Utopianism is a crucial aspect of many extreme-right movements, often helping motivate their racism and acts of purifying violence.[478] Coupland has also described fascism as "one of the most utopian movements of the modern period," owing to "the scope of its ambitions, and [the] ruthlessness with which it pursued them."[479] This section will examine the utopian vision of white supremacists and neo-Nazi factions of the modern extreme right. It will first outline the overarching ambition of a white ethnostate, which is elevated as the ultimate utopia within both these movements. It will also detail the palingenetic nature of this vision, focusing on elements of ancestry, family and gender, and nature, and how these are constructed as 'natural' and 'pure' ways of living.

As Hodge and Hallgrimsdottir argue, the extreme right "retains an abiding reverence for the idea of geography."[480] Consequently, the cornerstone of the utopian vision for many white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups is an ethnostate, which Munn implies is a thin façade for "racial utopia."[481] .The ideological underpinnings for this ambition within extreme-right spheres is grounded in the pseudo-scientific notion of racial inegalitarianism which has been outlined throughout this paper.[482] As has been evidenced elsewhere in this paper, this notion is grounded in the convergence of 'biological' race and culture, thus framing immigration and globalization as threats to white culture and existence. The perceived solution to the 'problem' of immigration, is the establishment of various "impenetrable" ethnostates, home only to the 'native' ethnic group and 'protected' by strictly closed borders. [483] Specifically, many extreme-right groups hold a common vision of a shared home for "pan-European," white culture.[484] Following this inherently nativist logic, each ethnic group is imagined as confined to its 'own' geography, ensuring the biological and cultural 'purity' of each group.

Similar to the aspiration of an ethnostate, a long-standing ambition within the white supremacist movement is the notion of race-based states. A version of this utopian vision is outlined by Patrick Crusius, the El Paso shooter, in his manifesto where he states: "The best solution… would be to divide America into a confederacy of territories with at least 1 territory for each race. This physical separation would nearly eliminate race mixing and improve social unity by granting each race self-determination within their respective territor(ies)."[485] Crusius evokes the notion that multiculturalism threatens the culture and "social unity" of the white race, and simultaneously threatens to eliminate the white race through "race mixing," thus necessitating the geographical racial segregation. The basis of this vision imagines that the only way to protect the cultural and biological integrity of the white race is through ethnic separatism, which would allow each ethnic group its own "organic culture and environment, uncorrupted by the influence

of outsiders."[486]

As Betz and Johnson observe, this vision of separatism is at times leveraged by white supremacists to argue that they are the true "defender[s] of diversity." By imagining non-white immigration as a "fundamental threat to the values, way of life, and cultural integrity of the 'indigenous' [white] people," the notion of various ethnostates is constructed as a way to preserve the *purity* of each (racial) culture, and protect it from dilution.[487]

This notion is evidenced in a speech made by a National Action member in Liverpool at the 2016 'White Man March,' where he asks "what could be more diverse than a nation of people built up by Vikings, Celts and Saxons? why does diversity mean replacing the white people with non-whites?."[488] Given the pervasiveness of antisemitism throughout the white supremacist and extreme right, many extremists such as Brenton Tarrant also advocate for the separation of Jewish people. In his manifesto, he states: "a jew living in israel (sic.) is no enemy of mine," which implicitly signals that Jewish people could not be welcome in a white ethnostate but are encouraged to create their own ethnic enclaves.[489]

Life in the Ethnostate: Visions of Purity

This subsection will address this extreme-right notion of purity and detail how it is pervasive throughout notions of life within an ethnostate. It will concentrate on three elements of 'natural living,' namely ancestry, gender and family, and nature.

Ancestry

In Griffin's authoritative definition of fascism, he described it as a "palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism."[490] Griffin's inclusion of an element of palingenesis (or, 'rebirth') is intended to denote the inherent "vision of a radically *new* beginning" held by fascists, "to which follows a period of destruction or perceived dissolution."[491] This rebirth that is longed for can be seen as a desire to return to a previous 'original' articulation of society, characterized by perceived racial purity.[492] Much of this retroactive perspective also informs extreme-right visions of utopia, which is fundamentally a reaction against the "current dystopian reality" which Betz and Johnson assert many in the extreme right feel they are living in.[493]

The vision of utopia imagined by extreme-right and white supremacist groups is characterized by a desire to revert to a time gone by, in which white ancestors lived in their full glory and power. This return is viewed as a way by which these past generations can be honored by revolting against the culture of modernity which is perceived as an insult to their legacy. This type of

thinking is seen both in Brenton Tarrant's manifesto where he writes, "Your ancestors did not sweat, bleed and die in the name of a multicultural, egalitarian nation," and in the National Action protest speech in which the speaker proclaims that "it is safe to say that our ancestors built this world… We must finish what our ancestors started. But we cannot do this in our modern decaying society for our race to flourish and even to survive, we must not only oppose non-white immigration but we must reject modern society's rope."[494]

Encapsulated within these remarks is the notion that a not only were white ancestors more racially dominant than members of the modern-day extreme right movement, but that they also lived more natural, or traditional lives, which have been corrupted by the 'decay' of modern society. In short, extreme-right ambitions of utopia are imagined, irreverently, as a 'return' to a glorified vision of the past which, where white people may better honor the "principles of [their] evolutionary nature," namely racial dominance and traditional living.[495]

Family and Gender

Marc Swyngedouw and Gilles Ivaldi assert that extreme right notions of a "natur[al]" utopia are also grounded in visions of an "organic community whose pillars are to be found in the long-standing traditional values that are said to have shaped the whole society throughout its formation." [496] Mudde notes that a sense of "familialism, which sees women as mothers and, as such, as essential to the survival of the nation/race," is common throughout almost all far-right groups.[497] This focus on family is evidenced in many aspects of the extreme-right ethos, and is made explicit within the "Fourteen Words," - "we must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children" - originally coined by David Lane, a member of American white supremacist terrorist group 'The Order,' and which now exists as a form of mission statement for modern white supremacists, framing the movement's aims through a more palatable lens of familialism.[498] The kind of utopian white nuclear family idealized by much of the far right is demonstrated by the images included within Brenton Tarrant's manifesto. The piece ends with a selection of eight images which seem to convey an idealistic depiction of the white race, superimposed with the neo-Nazi "Black Sun" symbol. Half of these images feature either slender white women or muscular white men caring for their young children, framing these relationships as ideal.[499]

During the height of the Nazi party's dominance in Germany, a focus on family and fertility was closely bound with racial purity and eugenics in an attempt to preserve the racial heritage of the white race.[500] This same ethos remains evident within modern neo-Nazi spheres, where the perceived degradation of traditional, nuclear family units through modern institutions such as divorce (a concept seen as bolstered by modern feminism and progressive politics more

generally), are linked to the existential threat of declining white birth rates. Relatedly, Norocel *et al* claim that "utilizing the family as a key social institution serves as a discrete proxy for references to (hetero)sexuality," as is demonstrated in the extreme-right's idealization of traditional gender roles, which is central to extreme-right visions of the ethnostate.[501]

This is apparent in the 'trad wives' (or 'traditionalist wives') movement, which is common throughout the far right and, as is highlighted by Lewis, has garnered a particularly strong presence on *YouTube*.[502] She notes that *YouTube* personalities such as Ayla Stewart, founder of the "Wife with a Purpose" channel, and advocates for "#TradLife," while others such as Caitlin Huber, founder of the "Mrs Midwest" channel make videos for "young women whose goal[s] in life [are] motherhood, family, and marriage."[503] These influencers are complimented by the pseudo-scientific doctrine of other personalities such as Lauren Southern who preach that 'traditional values,' such as having fewer sexual partners, result in longer lasting marital relationships and even "better marital sex," and together influence women within the far-right landscape to adopt this version of tradition in the name of preserving the integrity of the familial unit.[504]

These same narratives were espoused by Stephan Balliet during his livestream, where he stated that "feminism [as orchestrated by Jewish elites] is the cause of declining birth-rates in the West," implying that the corrosion of traditionally feminine roles, such as chastity before marriage, results in fewer white men and women marrying and having white children.[505] Furthermore, in a document uploaded to the internet before his attack, Balliet implied that this problem could only be fixed if white men "dedomesticate" themselves, hinting men must embrace their 'natural' roles as leaders outside the homes.[506] Thus the extreme-right's utopian vision of white family units, neatly converges with the biological paranoia surrounding the continuation of white racial purity.

Importantly, heterosexuality is viewed as a core underlying principle of the family, and homosexuality is viewed by many white supremacists as a threat to the white family unit.[507] This is seen, for example, in the "Fight the gay lobby" staged by the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement, and the "No Tolerance" homophobic propaganda produced by National Action as part of their campaign to criminalize teaching about homosexuality in British schools.[508,509] Indeed, when the /pol/ board on *8chan* was at its height, it was littered with discussion of how to "red-pill normies" about the inherent deviance of homosexuality and its potential to upset the 'natural order.'

This policing of sexuality, which also extends to transgender people, is a hallmark of wider extreme-right discourse, and this paranoia surrounding sexuality shapes utopian visions of a society populated by "strong [implicitly white, and implicitly straight, cisgender] men."[510] Any establishment of a white supremacist ethnostate would therefore necessitate the totalitarian-style policing of sexuality and gender.

Nature

Finally, notions of extreme-right utopia also often feature a reverence for nature and ecology, as is evidenced both in the "dark green ideology" of historic National Socialism, and the more modern revival of so-called "ecofascism."[511] Westberg and Årman note that, historically, Nazism's connection to nature was primarily supported by the use of metaphor.[512] This idea is furthered by Staudenmaier, who details that the Nazi ideological leader Walther Darré referred to Jewish people as "weeds"; and by Buscemi who outlines the use of "meat-production" imagery in Nazi propaganda, which heavily featured gory depictions of Jewish kosher slaughter, framing them as unnatural, and depicting Jewish people both as "guilt[y] and…impur[e]."[513] In addition, Zimmerman argues that a respect for nature was pervasive within Nazi ideology, because "many Nazis did in fact make a connection between healthy races and healthy land." This is expressed through the inherently nativist Nazi expression "blood and soil," which, in the words of European environmentalist and Nazi supporter Walter Schoenichen, refers to the "the nature-willed bond that subsists between us [the native people] and the sod of the homeland."[514]

This sentiment is alive within "ecofascist" factions of the extreme right. The doctrine of ecofascism draws on the concept of blood and soil, and encapsulates the notion that indigenous people have an inherent bond with 'their' land. According to Manavis, the philosophy implies that "[nativist] racial purity is the only way to save the planet."[515] This reverence for ecology is evident, for example, in the imagery used in Brenton Tarrant's manifesto, which depicts men adventuring in nature, and women collecting seeds on a small farm, alongside white, blonde children.[516] The vision of a natural utopia is made yet more explicit still in the "nine political points" outlined by the Nordic Resistance Movement, which advocates for "a modern society living in harmony with the rules of nature."[517] Other groups, such as the Green Brigade have also branded themselves explicitly as accelerationist ecofascist movements. In the Green Brigade's manifesto, it asserts that "National Socialism is the highest expression of Natural Law," and describe a "utopia" free of the pollutants of modern society "that would connect our people, our values, and our traditions to nature," thereby highlighting the centrality of ecology and nature to many extreme-right visions of the ethnostate.[518] Thus, visions of an extreme-right utopia are also informed by an inherent veneration for ecology in which white citizens maintain a close relationship with nature.

Totalitarianism in the Ethnostate

The notions of purity which have been discussed throughout this chapter are, in themselves, implicitly exclusionary concepts, owing to their inherently exclusionary constructions of what qualifies as 'pure.' Yet, it is the nature of how these concepts are enforced which qualifies

extreme-right notions of utopia as totalitarian. This principle is, in itself, somewhat oxymoronic given that Betz and Johnson show members of the extreme right justify their visions of an ethnostate as a necessary reaction to the current system's supposedly totalitarian nature which attempts to destroy the integrity of the white race in the pursuit of a "monocultural global village."[519] This notion is also echoed by Tarrant in his manifesto where he labels modern systems of governance as "anti-white."[520]

In particular, conspiracies such as the Cultural Marxism narrative fuel the perception that modern governments wish to silence (white) dissenting voices in the name of political correctness – and thus undermine the principles of free speech – limiting the inextricable freedoms of their citizens.[521] Narratives such as these thrive upon conspiracy and give rise to the doctrine popular among the extreme right that the white race is at threat of persecution. This perceived victimization, when combined with the extreme-right's perspective that biological race creates irreconcilable cultural difference, gives way to the notion that only a racially homogenous white government can properly protect the interests of white people.

Thus, a utopian government in an extreme-right ethnostate is one in which racial differences are eradicated and only white people occupy positions of power. The most obvious attempted realization of this form of governance is, of course, Nazi Germany, in which Adolf Hitler's forces attempted to eliminate racial differences and the Jewish population through a regime of terror in order to realize a vision of a Nordic people ruled by a totalizing Aryan government.[522]

As has been noted throughout this paper, Hitler's vision continues to be pervasive throughout modern extreme-right movements, and indeed – fueled by narratives of 'white genocide' and the 'great replacement' – the modern extreme right remains intent on the elimination of diversity. This kind of totalitarianism is reflected in the fundamental core ethos of the extreme right, which Zimmerman argues is grounded in the belief that there exist "unbridgeable differences... [between those who are of differing] worldviews, sexuality, [and] relationship to nature, etc."[523] Thus, the establishment of a white supremacist ethnostate is a totalitarian ideal founded upon strict racial discrimination and the imposition of restrictions on the minutiae of individual citizens' lives such as the policing of sexuality in order to promote stringent ideas of what constitutes purity.

Comparative Analysis

When analyzing their visions for utopia, it soon becomes clear that both Salafi-jihadists and the extreme right stake claims on geographic regions which act as the basis of their vision for a perfect state and society. The extreme right's interest in specific geographic locations means that the cornerstone of the utopian vision for both Alt-Right and Neo-Nazi groups is an ethnostate in land which they have identified as belonging to their race.[524] In focusing on the recreation of the

Islamic State in Syria and then Iraq, ISIS has demonstrated a similar desire to "reclaim" specific lands which they view as important launching pads for an expansionist project. This is not unique to both movements, of course, and it should be noted that this is the *casus belli* of all national liberation organizations, extremist or otherwise.

While the term "palingenesis" was coined by Griffin in reference to the fascist desire to recreate an imagined glorious past, it can just as easily be applied to the jihadist movement. Both view the utopia they strive for as some form of return to purity and dominance for their in-group, based on a selective and largely flawed view of their own past. The rebellion of both movements is therefore against a society they see as having deliberately diluted and destroyed purity and dominance.

Indeed, the importance of purity itself is also a key component of both movements, and this to a large extent explains both of their totalitarian tendencies. Lipset and Raab describe an extremist tendency towards "historical moralism" or the idea that human events are shaped entirely by a struggle between "good" and "bad" intentions. This sense of moralism pervades both movements discussed here, which are obsessed with the idea that a purification of human activity and thought must be undertaken before utopia can be achieved. It is also a core reason for the totalitarian approach – a desire to have a say in, if not full control of, the thoughts and actions of the population to ensure they are "correct" or "good" in their actions. This is not an instinct found in radical left politics, for example, which generally avoids any focus on policing morality. For jihadists, their source of morality is a literal reading of the religious texts. For the extreme right, Christianity and its values are used slightly differently, there is less quoting of scripture and the faith acts more as a reference for identifying good intentions and good character in the world. It is also viewed positively as the religion of the white race and Western civilization.

In Salafism, and in particular its more violent and strident forms, commanding the good and forbidding the evil best encapsulates this impulse of not simply being content with the one's conformity to morality and "good" values, but a desire to enforce this upon others within the society. Only then can it be purified and take a step closer to utopia. Thus, for jihadists, purity in religious belief and practice is paramount to the creation of the ideal state, and this can only be conceivably achieved through the policing of every aspect of an individual's life, from how they worship, to who they speak to and how they look. The concept of morality and its imposition by the state, informed almost entirely by its interpretation of Islam, is also a central concern of any jihadist group, viewing much of the supposed immorality within Muslim societies as the result of Western influences. The Islamic State, one of the first successful attempts at creating this utopia (save perhaps for earlier efforts of al-Shabaab between 2008-2012), has allowed the observation of the creation of a totalitarian state in real time and, as our analysis shows, it did not disappoint.

For the right, the policing of morality, or their version of it, is also a recurring theme – criminals

must be crushed, gay people exterminated, sin and vice must be purged for history to progress towards utopia. Unlike the jihadist movement, none of the modern extreme right groups in question have had anything nearing an opportunity to create a state based on their vision for an ideal society. However, they have made it clear what they would like this to look like. The idea of the racially pure ethnostate is inherently totalitarian as, by its very nature, it would require strict control over many aspects of life. Not only would it seek to oversee, and prevent, any sort of relationship between white people and other races, but also police morality in a similar way seen in the Islamic State. As demonstrated, there is a strong belief within the extreme right is that, due to the influence of liberal, Jews and ethnic minorities, white societies have slid into moral decrepitude, embracing things like prostitution and pornography, which the modern extreme-right regularly identify and decry.

Alongside an obsession with morality, both place great importance on a return to what they conceive as traditional values, in particular gender roles and the family unit. Indeed, the movements would have little to disagree on when it comes to any issues on how a household should be run. Related to this, both are also violently opposed to any sexual activities that deviate from these values, in particular homosexuality, viewed as a sign of moral decay; jihadists regard it as a sin against God and the extreme right as a sin against a race which requires procreation and the continuous growth of the "master race."

Both are also highly suspicious of feminism, viewing it as a liberal plot to weaken men, confuse society by mixing up gender roles, leading to a general weakening of the in-group and any state which represents it. As we have seen, it is not only men within these movements who have taken up the mantle of promoting and even enforcing these values; from white supremacist "trad wives" to the female ISIS recruits who made up part of the group's morality police, women have begun to play integral roles here.

All of this requires a significant amount of policing to ensure compliance. For both movements, this takes various forms, from terrorizing the population to mass propaganda aimed at creating a conformist society which sees little in the form of dissent or debate, and whose information comes from a single source, namely the state or the group.

Conclusion

This study has sought to contribute to the understanding of how and why the extreme right and jihadist movements attract support and attention through the pursuit of what are structurally very similar modes of thought. They both appeal to similar extreme and reactionary instincts found throughout society and play to some of the most basic human psychological needs.

Perhaps most importantly, their belief in, and creation of, a superior in-group with hostile and violent views towards all others is among the most familiar methods of inflaming communal tensions and encouraging extreme action, including violence. Connected to this is their heavy reliance on conspiracy theories (with both movements uniquely obsessed with Jews) to create a sense of imminent and widespread threat to the in-group, which only helps to further their potential for inciting violence and unrest. Alongside helping to create the building blocks of political violence through these components of their ideology, they both have doctrines of violence, viewing it as a purifying act and the only truly legitimate way to reach their utopian goals.

Lingering questions, however, do remain. Further studies are needed on more technical aspects of this comparison, such as the shared traits and differences between how each movement pursues violence and terrorism. Are they learning from each other? If so, how and why? Do their shared ideological traits mean that they should be treated similarly in official counter-radicalization efforts, or do their differences mean that unique approaches are needed for both?

Perhaps most importantly in the context of responding to the threat of jihadism and the extreme right is why movements which offer such simplistic, divisive, and violent visions of the world are experiencing relative success in attracting adherents today. This is worth investigating further to understand how to mount an effective response. More fundamentally, it also forces us to ask why an increasing proportion of Western society is attracted to such reactionary politics.

As groups which offer a stable, (supposedly) historically rooted collective identity coupled with moral certitude, it may be that violent reactionaries are thriving because of an increasing perception of a lack of identity and uncertainty about the future, alongside distrust towards traditional centers of power and influence and postmodern views of objective truth. Groups which offer to unburden the individual of having to decide what is "right" and "wrong" may hold a certain appeal today which they did not in more socially and politically stable moments of recent history. The shared promise of utopia, too, must not be discounted here. As increasingly bleak assessments of the future of humanity begin to gain increased traction, groups able to point to a glorious past as a blueprint for a better future are likely to succeed in gaining followers.

Whatever the reasons, the current success of jihadism and the extreme right serve as a warning that that extreme and reactionary politics have once again found a large and willing audience. Indeed, while much discussion within terrorism studies today revolves around the question of if we are now entering a new, right-wing 'wave' of terrorism after over two decades of what political scientist David Rapaport defines as the "religious wave," it may be that this misses the bigger picture; that the 9/11 attacks ushered in a 'reactionary wave' of terrorism, which the extreme right should be seen as a part of, rather than a distinct and wholly separate phenomenon.[525]

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RISE OF THE REACTIONARIES: COMPARING THE IDEOLOGIES OF SALAFI-JIHADISM AND WHITE SUPREMACIST EXTREMISM

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RISE OF THE REACTIONARIES: COMPARING THE IDEOLOGIES OF SALAFI-JIHADISM AND WHITE SUPREMACIST EXTREMISM

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RISE OF THE REACTIONARIES: COMPARING THE IDEOLOGIES OF SALAFI-JIHADISM AND WHITE SUPREMACIST EXTREMISM

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