

Subjects and Occasions

Articles,

Comment Pieces, and Reviews

on the Far Right and Other Matters. Vol. 2

Essays by

Matthew Feldman

Edited by Kate Yanduganova

With an Afterword by Steven Matthews

ibidem

Matthew Feldman

Subjects and Occasions

Articles, Comment Pieces, and Reviews on the Far Right
and Other Matters

Vol. 2

Edited by Kate Yanduganova

With an Afterword by Steven Matthews

The Best of Scholars and Scholarship in the Humanities

Edited by:

Elliot Y. Neaman, Matthew Feldman, and Karim Mamdani

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|---|
| 1 | Elliot Neaman
<i>Selected Writings</i>
A Journey in Intellectual
History (1988–2025)
With a foreword by Martin
Woessner | 6 | Roy Starrs
<i>Understanding Modern
Japan</i>
Through Its Literature |
| 2 | Matthew Feldman
<i>Subjects and Occasions</i>
Articles, Comment Pieces,
and Reviews on the Far
Right and Other Matters,
Vol. 1
Edited by Karim Mamdani | 7 | Martin Jay
<i>At the Crossroads of Phi-
losophy, Politics, and Cul-
ture</i>
Essays for a Troubled Time |
| 3 | Matthew Feldman
<i>Subjects and Occasions</i>
Articles, Comment Pieces,
and Reviews on the Far
Right and Other Matters,
Vol. 2
Edited by Kate Yanduganova
With an afterword by Steven
Matthews | 8 | Paul Hoyningen-Huene
<i>Selected Writings, Vol. I</i>
Papers on Kuhn and Feyer-
abend, 1989-2025 |
| 4 | Dan Stone
<i>Thinking Europe's Cata-
strophe</i>
Essays on Fascism and the
Holocaust, Vol. 1 | 9 | Zachary Shore
<i>Judgment Calls</i>
Finding the Way to Wise De-
cisions |
| 5 | Dan Stone
<i>Thinking Europe's Cata-
strophe</i>
Essays on Fascism and the
Holocaust, Vol. 2 | 10 | Peter Nicholls
<i>Modernist Figures, Vol. 1</i>
New Poetries |
| | | 11 | Peter Nicholls
<i>Modernist Figures, Vol. 2</i>
Ezra Pound and After |
| | | 12 | Jeffrey Herf
<i>Perspectives on Reaction-
ary Modernism</i>
Nazi Germany and Beyond |

Matthew Feldman

SUBJECTS AND OCCASIONS

Articles, Comment Pieces, and Reviews on
the Far Right and Other Matters

Vol. 2

Edited by Kate Yanduganova

With an Afterword by Steven Matthews

ibidem
Verlag 

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

This is volume 2 of a 2-volume publication:

Vol. 1:

Subjects and Occasions

Articles, Comment Pieces, and Reviews on the Far Right and Other Matters

ISBN 978-3-8382-1753-6

Vol. 2:

Subjects and Occasions

Articles, Comment Pieces, and Reviews on the Far Right and Other Matters

ISBN 978-3-8382-2153-3

ISSN (print): 3054-0488

ISSN (digital): 3054-0496

ISBN (Print): 978-3-8382-2153-3

ISBN (E-Book [PDF]): 978-3-8382-8153-7

© *ibidem*-Verlag, Hannover • Stuttgart 2026

Leuschnerstraße 40
30457 Hannover
Germany / Deutschland
info@ibidem.eu

Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlages unzulässig und strafbar. Dies gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und elektronische Speicherformen sowie die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any person who commits any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

Printed in the EU

Contents

Introduction.....	7
Section 1: Channels of Propaganda	
Tracing the Far-Right's Digital Revolution: A Conversation with Matthew Feldman	21
Understanding the Alt-Right: Ideologues, 'Lulz,' and Hiding in Plain Sight	37
Social Media and the <i>Cordon Sanitaire</i> : Populist Politics, the Online Space, and a Relationship that Just Isn't There	53
<i>Siege</i> : "Sheer political terror"	71
Siege Culture after <i>Siege</i> : Anatomy of a Neo-Nazi Terrorist Doctrine	107
From 'Brexhaustion' to 'Covidiot': The United Kingdom and the Populist Future	147
The Real Story Behind Pavel Durov's Arrest in France....	167
A Call for Civil Courage.....	175
Section 2: The Branches of the Radical Right	
The Evolution of the Radical Right: An Interview with Matthew Feldman	187
Paging Mr. Aaronovitch: The Radical Right Is Scarcely without Platform	193
Broadband Terrorism: A New Face of Fascism.....	199
The Radical Right in Britain	203

The (Democratic) Football Lads Alliance: A Far Right Antechamber?.....	211
--	-----

Section 3: Scapegoating and Its Discontents

Far-Right Islamophobia: From Ideology to ‘Mainstreamed’ Hate Crimes.....	257
Anti-Muslim Hatred Briefing Paper.....	281
Xenophobia and Radicalism in the UK (2017).....	305
A Working Definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred with a Focus on Hate-Crime Work	355
How Should Europeans Respond to the Paris Attacks? ..	395
No Comment?	409

Section 4: The Ethics of the Present Day

<i>Terrorist’s Creed</i> by Roger Griffin	415
Nazi-Satanism? Yes, It’s a Thing ... Fanned by Big Tech.....	421
American Thanatocracy	427
This Is Not Your Parents’ Terrorism.....	431
Pandering to the Far Right Is No Way to Counter Them..	437
Afterword.....	441

Introduction

Kate Yanduganova

This second volume in the collection of Matthew Feldman's shorter texts focuses on 21st-century developments. The task of these essays is to describe the situation that has first arisen in the post-Cold War multi-polar climate. It is characterized by increasing globalization, better and faster ways of sharing information and of using this information to influence people's thought—despite geographical distances. The far right has embraced the information revolution and become especially visible online, using its increased internet presence for marketing and indoctrination. In the articles that follow, Feldman looks at radical right movements that develop in the internet and in the streets, assesses their public danger, and gives practical advice on how to counter them.

The first section begins with a look on the global spread of far-right movements in the digital age, as new technologies “amplify their reach, foster anonymity, and create enduring networks.” Harking back to the first section of volume 1, Feldman underscores that “the far right—and, in particular, fascism, which is the revolutionary form of the far right—has always been very skilled at leveraging technology,” starting with the use of radio for propaganda between the wars. This makes internet and social media a site of enormous possibility as well as danger, especially at the time when the memory of fascism is being gradually obscured, and there little legal recourse to protect users online, especially from risks that

might come from other countries—or in the guise of offering, again, a better world built on the basis of scapegoating.

Feldman traces the resurgence of the far right online to the social changes of the 1990s-2000s. The economic upheavals such as the collapse of the Communist block and, later, the great recession, created a feeling of insecurity that was also fostered by the collapse of traditional regional and national identities tied to the rewiring of the global work and production market. At the same time, disillusionment with Cold War narratives meant that no new coherent political story has come into being, even as politicians are increasingly seen as corrupt, out-of-reach, or perverting the “will of the people.” This has created a vacuum into which extreme groups (of all flavors) can expand, “increasing the likelihood that radical or fringe outriders could fashion a narrative that framed social problems—stagnating wages, identity precariousness, immigration, and rising inequality—as the result of inefficacy, political corruption, and globalization. Against this backdrop, the emergence of anti-migrant political discourse and hostility to the institutions of globalization—in the case of Europe, the European Union above all—is perhaps unsurprising.”

To this *long durée* explanation, Feldman adds an emphasis on the centrality of the media, which has made far-right messaging much more visible, despite the currently small number of activists. In addition, far-right ideologues have learned how to dilute their messages so as to attract a broader audience. This audience potentially includes people who are dissatisfied with their lifestyle: for some, mental health challenges might be a factor, while others accept extremist messages because of a history of prior violent behavior, and yet others fall prey to the far-right promises of restoring “traditional” respect for masculinity (historically most

of the far-right supporters are male). Even though the average internet user is likely pragmatic, there will always be people who are unsure and who can be hooked, while propaganda makes it easy to find a class, a nation (note the modern-day rebranding of fascism), or a group of people who look different, who sound different, and who are associated with all the problems of the stale and unjust modern world, against which the far-right activists are crusading. And the assault of content is unabating—an average person spends about two hours a day on social media, an unprecedented amount of time to absorb information, with almost no pauses to reflect on its truthfulness. The situation is made more difficult by algorithms, adopted by social networks and many other websites, that are trained, once the user has expressed interest in a certain topic, to offer more and more similar content.

The articles in this section look at extremist pages in social networks, websites, and online collections of essays, offering examples of propaganda in hopes of fostering digital literacy. Perhaps, if extremist content “exists online in a permanent or semi-permanent state, could that fact serve as an unintended advantage? Might it enable us to more effectively catalogue, analyze, and counteract such ideologies, eventually relegating these groups to the periphery?” Hopefully, there is a future where national actors and organizations that spread awareness and encourage content filtering on the internet can work together across borders. Either way, it is imperative that users are taught which websites are trustworthy, and how to cross-check the information they find online.

In addition, there is a need to offer alternative narratives in place of propaganda. Most websites have a low entry cost barrier due to lack of moderators and editors. Anyone can publish harmful content—but it is equally easy to offer stories of positive cooperation. Social media, for one thing, has

been built around the tradition of “sharing” posts, which can massively expand the reach of these narratives. Put simply, the same algorithms that make it easy for members of average public to see extreme news content can also be used to challenge extremism.

For example, communities can acknowledge cultural pride that the far-right movements try to exploit, and use it to build a healthy acknowledgment of moral and ethical values. Ideally, these efforts will transition from respecting one tradition to holding a measure of respect for all traditions, so as to negate white suprematism and the calls towards a “race war” that are very much present in online circles.

Section 2 looks at the manifestations of the radical right at the level of government parties and officials, and at the level of street movements. Discussing the situation in various European countries before centering on Britain, this section explores the connection between power, including political power, and violence, and asks whether this nexus can be broken.

A major hurdle, for Feldman, is that the Western radical right has produced parties that have learned to camouflage themselves: they project a democratic façade as they promise more legislative support to majority populations, while obscuring the fact that their programs include limitations or the withholding of protection for minority groups. This deception takes root among publics who are no longer inured by historical example, as “the memory of historical fascism and the destruction it has caused passes into historical memory. The experience of fascist terror is being consigned to history books, making the risk of radical right extremism less visceral.”

In addition, much of the public's understanding of political programs has been diluted with the advent of digital media. As Feldman has shown in section 1, the radical right has sufficiently expanded its networks in the digital age, making ample use of new tools and tactics such as trolling, internet memes and clickbait, while benefiting from the limited space of social network post to provide a seductive, distorted picture. Feldman's review of European rightist parties boils down to this: the radical right's most dangerous weapons are currently not its politics but its tactics; it has learned to find a key to almost any heart. And the biggest problem is not that radical parties win votes, but the social consensus that allows them to do so, the public's belief that they can give the power to make political decisions over to a group who looks like they know what they are doing. Yes, radical groups might offer "genuine campaigns against homelessness, IRA terrorism, and Catholic child abuse scandals." But that is only part of the truth. The impression of being a positive force is, for these groups, simply the result of aggressive marketing, and the underlying problem is people's fear to be active and to stand against scapegoating. It is not sufficient to deplore intolerance, one also must call it out when one sees it.

The mainstreaming of user-friendly radical right ideas is, for Feldman, a challenge to liberal institutions, to humanist values, and even to intellectualism—even though he concedes that some radical right organizations offer a genuinely intellectualized message. Feldman proposes to counter it with a similar radicalization on the side of liberalism: "a radical defense of the other," especially the migrant minorities who have borne the brunt of Western extremists' hate for decades. Feldman urges internet users to learn to identify and weed out violent ideas, becoming, in the process, better, more engaged citizens, and thus also transforming their states and even international politics. Just how exactly to do

this remains an open question, as Feldman finds, for example, few watchdog organizations currently existing able to offer detailed guidance. Some measures against online extremism are offered below in section 3 of this volume. As an aside, the footnotes for the articles in section 2 provide evidence for the struggle undertaken together by the governments and internet providers to police the internet: many refer to snapshots of webpages that have been taken down in the time since these articles were first published. Legal mechanisms for moderation in the online spaces already exists; what is needed is simply a more consistent implementation.

To give some examples of identifying radical rights rhetoric online, Feldman delves into the genealogy of far-right texts in his paradigmatic “Broadband Terrorism,” a term he coined. Apart from so-called ‘lone wolf terrorists,’ to whom Feldman devotes much space in his articles on the terrorist book *Siege* in the first section, the internet has enough material to create armies. The online dissemination of radical content means that these movements are not limited to specific locations and can easily coordinate the activities across countries, as Feldman shows by quoting their summons to hold a “Punish a Muslim Day.” He uses radical right movements’ attitude towards Muslims as a touchstone to assess their wider worldviews. As the articles in the next section of this volume demonstrate, anti-Muslim sentiment is one of the most common hate crimes in Europe and the US. Feldman links it to a larger problem of scapegoating the minorities, “which remains the sine qua non for far-right activism.”

After diagnosing the problem, Feldman offers in his co-authored article about the Democratic Football Lads Alliance, a British far-right group, a section on “Recommendations” for members of public as well as police officers. If online extremism is often untraceable, violence in the streets

can be prevented, traced and reduced by a cooperation between the police and the public. Feldman gives very specific advice regarding the organization of the protests: ensuring that counter-protesters are kept away from a protest's route, and ideally any demonstrations are to be organized outside town centers. He favors "low-key approaches," which include "negotiations with protesters and communities both on the day and in the lead up to" demonstrations, which have been shown to reduce disorders and even to dissuade some would-be demonstrators. As a remarkable, creative example of such successful communication Feldman relates the 2013 story from York where "a local mosque faced down an EDL protest with tea, biscuits and a football kick-about in mixed groups," showing that "emphasizing shared values goes much further than widening divisions through belligerence, abuse, or harassment—let alone violent confrontations." Like radicalization, de-radicalization proceeds best at a personal level, in each locality and for each individual psychology. This is why Feldman encourages the public to stand behind local peace-makers, support them, and learn from their experience. "Amplifying voices that seek commonality and understanding is sensible and easy; it also works." This heartwarming advice reflects an idealistic belief that everyone is able to talk rationally and to hear arguments from another side—this belief is the unerasable, core value of humanism.

The third section revolves around three terms: phobia, prejudice, or hatred. Anti-Muslim prejudice became pervasive after Islamist terror attacks in the early 2000, with 9/11 in the foreground. In Western, and especially British, contexts far-right organizations used the fear of Muslims in society to pro-

mote hatred against anyone who might be identified as Muslim. This is only an example of the far-right demonization of all things that can be perceived as different. Feldman describes cases of mistaken identity where attackers seized Hindu or Sikh victims believing them to be Muslim. But, going deeper, the nature of this hatred is the same as with any scapegoating of minorities, including BAME racism and antisemitism.

The papers in this section stem from Feldman's involvement with Tell MAMA (an acronym for Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks), which uses quantitative data to provide a picture of anti-Muslim hate crimes in Britain. Together, they give a statistical picture of anti-Muslim attacks to show that these acts are rarely motivated by responses to international terrorism. Instead, they target a much larger part of the Muslim population that is not connected to terrorist organizations—and may even produce an opposite effect insofar as young Muslims may become radicalised as part of response to far-right hatred. To curb ongoing radicalization on both sides of the mainstream vs. minority divide, Feldman and his co-authors offer educational instruments, which allow to teach that blind hatred is delusional and criminal. As Feldman explains, each Islamist attack triggers a spiral of criminal reprisals victimizing innocent people. And there is one other harmful consequence: on the political level, these attacks prompt talks about limiting freedom of travel and other civil liberties, which Feldman see as fundamental for post-Second World War “West,” from the United States to Romania, because they represent core “humanistic and human values.” As governments introduce new legislation to combat terrorism, public bodies should be on the lookout to ensure that these freedoms, “what unites us and what it is that makes us strong,” are not violated. Similarly, non-governmental organizations can and must fight for adequate hate

crime reporting and for better protection against hate crimes, which go against these humanistic values.

Feldman sees this public work as a form of engaged citizenship. Ideally, he implies, this is what academics should be doing: gathering specialist knowledge and finding ways to share it with the public in a way that will positively affect everyone's life. As in the first volume, he argues that ready-made answers deaden thought; that knowledge producers should be attentive to details: "it is a race better run as a tortoise than a hare. Telling is for pundits; explaining should be the academic's preserve." The question is, how to ensure that the academic's explanation will win the public's attention? That they will be believed and credible? To achieve this, Feldman develops a genre that bridges the academic and the public domain. He produces a string of short essays, originally published online at websites such as Fair Observer, where he uses his experience as a researcher studying the radical right. In this way, the last two pieces in section 3, and most of section 4, are very telling: they are Feldman's best attempts to lead by example, as he reiterates his humanistic credo for public consumption.

The fourth section begins by reiterating that radical violence, which Feldman unabashedly terms 'terrorism,' has come home to roost in the last twenty years. Yes, Islamist terrorism is still a thing—but when understood broadly, as "violence against non-combatants for social, political, religious, or ideological goals," modern terrorism can be found inside any society, including the affluent West. Feldman asks us to reject reductive pictures of terrorism imported from abroad, because it does not reflect the full reality and has often led to

scapegoating minorities and engendering new forms of hatred. Instead, he returns to the socio-psychological explanation of terrorism as a response to chaos, alienation, and ennui. Harkening back to Conrad, Feldman stresses the banality of terrorism. But the question remains: why do some people choose to respond to existential crises with acts of terror?

After acting as an expert witness in some 30 high-profile trials in Britain, Feldman suggests that a main driver in this new form of terrorism is the internet. In this new 'broadband terrorism,' "a seemingly ineffectual 'loner' can now turn a suburban bed-sit into an individual terrorist 'cell.'" Algorithms in search engines, streaming services, and social networks are geared so as to give a user more information similar to what they have just accessed, which means that, once a user encounters an unsavory argument or conspiracy theory, there is a potential for them to be bombarded with this sort of (dis)information, further distorting their worldview. These untruths can be connected to the Islamist scare ('all Muslims are terrorists'), antisemitism ('Jews are a secret world government'), or indeed any other fear. Radical right extremism "seeks to attach itself to any bandwagon; to bend any situation to fit a warped ideology." So "the question must be posed: what next? Are we simply to await more death?"

An obvious response to the threat of online radicalization is an insistence on stricter moderation from individual platforms—which is challenging due to the amount of data that some of them, such as Facebook or Telegram, generate. Governments can take action by classifying specific radical groups as terrorists. However, governments that wish to be labeled as democratic have to dance around freedom of speech clauses and similar legislation. This means that radical groups can remain free to spread their ideology as long as they maintain a decent façade.

Feldman laments the absence and perhaps even impossibility of “proactive” action from “governments and concerned citizens.” He agrees that “the challenge for decent people is not pandering or placating but tackling the threat at source. The question is how.” Notably, in this most relevant section he offers no clear solution, but instead invites the public to “start urgently asking these questions. And start demanding answers. Otherwise, quite simply, more innocent victims will die at the hands of infatuated teenagers.”

The minimum that can be done is to stay committed to “liberal self-confidence and political leadership,” protesting the infringement of democratic freedoms from governments and radical street movements alike. “But just as important, in the longer term, is recognizing both the appeal and the destructiveness presented by the radical right’s scavenger ideology.” The public is invited to keep themselves informed about the current “local grievances” to which the radical right can hook their narratives, about manifestos that appear on the internet, and about survivor accounts. In this way, we can hope to form a community of support, and present a united front against “the radical right and jihadi Islamists alike, who agree on two things: disgust with equality and human rights, and the value of attacking community cohesion locally and nationally.” Feldman invites his readers to make extremists’ jobs harder “by standing up for one another.” Perhaps this is the only reliable solution in the struggle against internet overlordship: a meaningful emotional investment in the lives of other people. From one’s family to one’s neighbors and colleagues, involved listening, sharing, and communication can go a long way.

Subjects and Occasions

This volume ends on a positive note. Although no activist himself but an old-fashioned teacher of 'how' rather than 'what' to think, Feldman's main aim is to empower his readers, to instill in them a desire to do things. Still, an academic as astute as Feldman will definitely trust his readers to make their own choices. Some readers might be disheartened by his expose of the radical right, or even sympathize with some of the radicals' ideas. Still, Feldman's writings demonstrate the power of unbridled thought that is not afraid to go into the darkest, most unpleasant details. His commitment to present a faithful chronicle of the radical right movements in the Western world, and to sound a public call to arms against them, is impressive. This massive undertaking certainly deserves the same engaged attention which he asks us so many times in his essays to give to all interlocutors in our communal life.

Section 1:
The Channels of
Propaganda

Tracing the Far-Right's Digital Revolution: A Conversation with Matthew Feldman

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Matthew Feldman stands as one of the foremost authorities on fascist ideology and the modern far-right in Europe and the United States. A prolific scholar, Feldman has explored the intersections of politics, faith, and extremism in the contemporary world, sharing his insights with students and scholars alike for more than a decade. [...]

In this conversation, Feldman traces the global evolution of far-right movements, delving into how digital technology amplifies their reach, fosters anonymity, and creates enduring networks. He charts the erosion of the historical “antifascist consensus” and examines how societal polarization, identity politics, and fragile masculinity have created fertile ground for extremism—particularly among Generation Z. Rejecting simplistic labels, Feldman critiques the tendency to brand figures like Donald Trump as outright fascists, instead framing their actions within broader trends of conservative authoritarianism that serve as pathways to extremism. Through long-form dialogue, he champions critical reflection and historical literacy as tools to confront the modern challenges posed by authoritarianism and extremism.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: We’ve witnessed a significant rise in domestic terrorist activity within the United States, much of which is rooted in white identity and nationalist ideologies—commonly grouped under the banner of “white nationalism.” Why do you think this trend has escalated in recent years, and how is it shaping our current political and social landscape?

Matthew Feldman: It's a pleasure to talk about these issues, even though they are deeply troubling. No doubt, some of the territory we'll cover will be difficult—addressing racism, violence, and extremism. But it's important to remember that what we call the far-right, or right-wing extremism, has existed for more than a century. This is not a new phenomenon. However, its context and geography have evolved. Today, we'll focus primarily on North America.

One crucial point is that the far right—and, in particular, fascism, which is the revolutionary form of the far right—has always been very skilled at leveraging technology. In the 1930s, they used radio and the press to spread propaganda. In the 1980s, they were early adopters of bulletin board systems. More recently, they have turned to the Internet and social media, leveraging these platforms to amplify their messaging in ways that provide three key advantages, particularly since the postwar period. First, the anonymity of online posting shields extremists from accountability. Second, far-right content, including terrorist manifestos, often remains online indefinitely, making it notoriously difficult to remove completely. Finally, online spaces enable far-right actors to connect with like-minded individuals locally or globally.

These elements were largely unavailable during the far right's 'dark days' during the Cold War when a colleague of mine coined the term 'antifascist consensus.' Back then, expressing far-right ideas could result in imprisonment in Eastern Europe. In Western Europe and North America, there was a strong cultural and social taboo against far-right ideologies, making it difficult for them to gain traction. However, we have seen this change dramatically in recent years.

Jacobsen: To what extent do online platforms play a central role in amplifying these ideologies and their visibility?

Feldman: The importance of online spaces in this context cannot be overstated. This is not to say that social media

platforms themselves are far right. Still, they provide the three elements I mentioned: anonymity, permanence, and global reach. These are incredibly significant.

Social media has made far-right messaging much more visible. I'm not convinced that there are necessarily more far-right extremists in the world or the United States today than there were, say, 50 years ago. But they are far more visible and emboldened in some respects. That brings us to the Trump administration, which seems emboldened to promote far-right themes, such as nativism and immigration.

Jacobsen: If much of this extremist content exists online in a permanent or semi-permanent state, could that fact serve as an unintended advantage? Might it enable us to more effectively catalogue, analyze, and counteract such ideologies, eventually relegating these groups to the periphery—similar to organizations like the Church of Scientology, which remain intimidating and politically active but ultimately limited in broader influence?

Feldman: In other words, could these movements be pushed back to the fringes of society? Yes, but I would push back slightly, Scott, and suggest that the question depends on who we mean by 'we.' I'm based in the United Kingdom, and some of your viewers or listeners might be based in Europe, where the approach to content moderation differs significantly. In the United States, the trend is moving toward even less protection than section 230 of the Communications Decency Act provided. Even that might be rolled back.

So, 'we'—if we're talking about how the online world appears—see it differently depending on geography. For example, how the far-right operates online in Germany differs from that in the United States.

Jacobsen: Does combating these groups require a universal approach, or should tailored tools and strategies be

developed to address different ideological or regional contexts?

Feldman: I tend to lean toward the latter, especially in the context of the American First Amendment. In the United States, there's a much broader understanding of free speech and a much narrower understanding of what constitutes hate speech or incitement.

But let's consider the bigger picture. It seems inconceivable to me that, if the world is still around in 50 years, we won't have some form of a global Supreme Court of the internet. The internet does not respect national borders. People can use VPNs to bypass restrictions. Even those who aren't particularly tech-savvy can recognize that while countries like China might build firewalls around social media, the Internet is not the same as a physical border crossing. The Internet is truly global, and it has changed not just how we date or shop but also how the far right represents itself and its role in the world. It has fundamentally reshaped their ability to operate and influence others.

Jacobsen: When discussing far-right radicalism or ethnic-based extremism, the focus often lies on its harmful, one-directional impact on society—politically, socially, and culturally. However, could there be a case for viewing this as a two-way dynamic? For instance, does the cosmopolitan and interconnected nature of the Internet have the potential to influence these groups, making them extreme but perhaps less so than they might have been in earlier, more isolated eras?

Feldman: It's not just a one-way street; that dynamic is unlikely to change. The far-right has adapted its strategies over the past few decades, using a tactic that some scholars have described as 'front stage' and 'backstage.' The 'backstage' refers to the hardcore supporters and their messaging, which is often too extreme for public consumption. On the

'front stage,' the messaging is toned down—more cosmopolitan, as you put it—to appeal to broader audiences.

This approach has been around for a long time. For example, if we go back a century to the most radical form of the far right—fascism—Adolf Hitler demonstrated this strategy. When he gave a speech to the so-called Düsseldorf Club in January 1932, an audience of business people during Germany's Great Depression, he didn't mention Jews or anti-semitism even once. He tailored his speech to appear as a 'reasonable' far-right extremist rather than the genocidal fascist he truly was. He knew his audience and adjusted his rhetoric accordingly.

Jacobsen: Are you noticing a dual strategy among these groups? One that involves outward-facing rhetoric designed for public appeal paired with more covert, strategic operations behind the scenes.

Feldman: I see it all the time. Ten years ago, I published *Doublespeak: The Rhetoric of the Far Right since 1945*. There are numerous case studies in that book, but let me share one from a group in the United Kingdom called the British National Party (BNP), which had dozens of councilors in 2009. We're only 15 years on from that, Scott.

At the time, they had two members of the European Parliament. During the European parliamentary elections, the party leadership distributed a *Language and Concepts Discipline Guide* for their members and activists, who numbered in the thousands. Rule number one: "We are not a racist party." Now, if you need to tell your hardcore activists, "We are not a racist party," you're admitting quite a lot there, aren't you?

They were trying to present themselves as the 'common-sense' choice, wrapping their messaging in historic British and patriotic themes while masking their more extreme, rad-

ical agenda. This is not new territory. The strategy of appearing reasonable in public while pursuing a more extreme agenda behind the scenes is as old as the far right itself.

Jacobsen: As the saying goes, 'Hate makes strange bedfellows.' Who are the current unlikely alliances forming in these extremist spaces?

Feldman: That's a good question. It isn't easy to pin down. Some of my colleagues have pointed to connections between Islamists and the far right—limited but real—largely revolving around antisemitism. You also see some strange bedfellows aligned on the issue of anti-Muslim prejudice, which has become a kind of lowest common denominator among various far-right groups. For example, you might find some level of proximity between a far-right group in India, like the RSS, and a far-right group in the United States, both sharing that anti-Muslim sentiment.

So, yes, hate does create strange bedfellows. But by and large—and forgive me if this sounds like a platitude—I believe people tend to know their own. Socialists recognize other socialists. Anarchists know other anarchists. And indeed, fascists and far-right extremists recognize and align with others like themselves.

Jacobsen: How prevalent are these ideologies outside Western Europe and North America? Do we see similar patterns emerging in regions such as Africa, Latin America, East Asia, or South Asia? If so, are they adapted for local political and social contexts, or do they retain their Western origins?

Feldman: The first question I would suggest is methodological: What glasses are we wearing? If we're wearing the glasses of fascism—which I regard as a revolutionary ideology from the right—then we must acknowledge its Eurocentric origins. Ever since Nazi Germany emerged as the dominant force in fascist ideology, eclipsing Italian Fascism by the

mid-1930s, fascism has largely been synonymous with white supremacism.

That said, it is not to say there are no non-white fascists, but fascism remains a Eurocentric ideology. However, the far-right is more of an umbrella term. It certainly includes fascism, but it also encompasses other shades of extremism that can be applied to different parts of the world. For example, far-right ideologies emphasize race and nation adapted to other regions.

In Turkey, we have the Grey Wolves. In India, the BJP and particularly the RSS exemplify these tendencies. In Brazil, we saw this with Jair Bolsonaro. These movements may differ in some respects, but they share core elements of far-right ideology adapted to local contexts.

Now, these are not fascist revolutionary regimes, in my view, but they are far-right, and they underscore the global connectivity of far-right movements. This, in itself, is a strange irony. When we think of fascism and the far-right, most people's first synonym would probably be nationalism. Yet, I'm writing a book on the history of fascism—almost a biography of the ideology, if you will—and one of the more unusual findings is that, from its inception in the 1920s, fascism has always been a globalist creed.

Even when we're talking about federal attachments or German hegemony, there was a sense of evangelical, missionary work aimed at converting people to this ideology—literally around the world.

Jacobsen: In your view, what is the most pressing institutionalized far-right threat in the United States today? This doesn't necessarily have to be the largest group, but the one that poses the most serious risk regarding ideology and organization.

Feldman: Regarding the far right, one could argue that Donald Trump's administration falls under that umbrella.

We could discuss where and how it may or may not be considered far right, but it is part of the broader landscape.

Within that umbrella, there are numerous fascist revolutionary groups. Most of them are small, typically numbering in the hundreds, but they have significant potential for growth. The title of the book I'm working on is *A History of Fascism from 1919 to the Present*. The title reflects my belief that fascism has essentially returned to what it was 105 years ago: small, intensely violent, often terroristic, media-savvy, and primed for explosive growth.

We're also observing a growing gender divide among Generation Z. While I recognize the semi-arbitrary nature of labels like 'Boomer,' 'Gen X,' 'Gen Y,' and so on, these generational categories can help demographers catalogue trends. Within Gen Z, we see a significant political and social divergence by gender. Women in this cohort continue to become more progressive and oriented toward gender parity, likely reflecting broader psychosocial leanings.

However, men in Gen Z appear to be breaking from that several-generation trend, becoming more conservative. Essentially, we're witnessing a literal fork in the road between men and women within this younger generation.

Jacobsen: Younger men often seem particularly susceptible to far-right propaganda. Do you believe this stems from genuine grievances, or are these issues largely fabricated to manipulate this demographic?

Feldman: No group is inherently insulated from the seductions, lies, and deceptions of far-right extremism. That said, certain groups may have particular vulnerabilities. For example, we've been conducting research on mental health and neurodiversity, particularly Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), where it seems there may be specific vulnerabilities. These individuals, already facing stigma, might be more susceptible to certain narratives.

It's important to note, though, that the vast majority of people with mental health challenges do not turn to political violence. For example, in the United Kingdom, we see something like 1 in 20,000,000 people with mental health conditions committing political violence. But when we reverse the perspective, we find that people convicted of far-right terrorist offences in the United Kingdom are overrepresented in terms of neurodiversity—something like four times more than the general population. These susceptibilities are worth exploring.

Another significant factor we see in far-right terrorism is a history of prior violent behavior. This might include domestic abuse, animal abuse, stalking, or harassment. These behaviors often signal susceptibility to being drawn into far-right extremism.

And it may well be that what we want to call a sense of fragile masculinity—or masculinity under threat—can be another one of these susceptibilities. There is no question that the far-right image of masculinity, femininity, and family life is deeply reactionary. One could call it chauvinist or traditionalist—take your pick—but it valorizes sameness.

The far-right has always valorized sameness and opposed what it perceives as difference: people who look different, sound different, or are differently abled. The far-right has always targeted these groups, just as sameness and homogeneity have been its ideals. I don't expect that to change anytime soon.

Jacobsen: Are there any books you recommend that are particularly insightful in addressing the generational challenges we're seeing in this context?

Feldman: There are certainly books that address the growth of the Internet and social media use, which is a critical aspect of this discussion. Let me share a statistic that still makes me sit up and take notice: two out of three human

beings on the planet spend an average of 120 minutes a day scrolling social media. To put that another way, 5.07 billion people on this planet spend an eighth of their waking life on social media. That is a fundamentally new phenomenon in human experience.

We're still trying to understand what this does to us. It may still be too early to tell, but we are, in effect, engaged in a massive social experiment. What does an infinite amount of content—or, to be diplomatic, let's call it 'information'—do to our brains? Internet usage varies by region, but the percentages are even higher in places like Canada and the United States.

However, one thing that seems consistent is that it reduces opportunities for quiet reflection. If you arrive 10 minutes early to meet a friend for a film, you're far more likely to scroll through your phone than to sit quietly and think about your day or consider spiritual or material matters. These are fundamental changes.

Regarding the politics of the matter, I strongly recommend Kurt Weyland's *The Assault on Democracy*.¹ Weyland argues quite compellingly that people who call Donald Trump a fascist are making an error. He suggests that what proliferated during the 1920s and 1930s in Europe was not totalitarian fascism but conservative authoritarianism.

Jacobsen: Could you expand on Weyland's analysis and relevance to contemporary far-right movements?

Feldman: Certainly. In *The Assault on Democracy*, Weyland emphasizes that what proliferated during the 1920s and 1930s in Europe—what we might call the interwar crisis—was not fascism as a totalitarian force but conservative au-

1 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

thoritarianism. This distinction is crucial because conservative authoritarianism, as Weyland describes it, served as the 'gateway drug' to fascism.

In Germany, figures like Franz von Papen and other authoritarians held power in the early 1930s before Hitler's rise. Similarly, this critique extends to Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Romania—countries that eventually had fascist regimes but were first governed by conservative authoritarian or far-right regimes.

The guiding question is whether history repeats itself—or at least we can learn lessons from it. Assuming there are parallels between our time and the interwar crisis, it's essential to recognize that conservative authoritarianism was often the precursor to fascism. This isn't just about Germany; it's a pattern we see across multiple countries in that era.

And that is a hugely important point. In history, the only instance of fascism seemingly coming out of nowhere is Fascist Italy. Unlike most examples, Italy wasn't 'softened up' by conservative authoritarianism before fascism took hold. What we're seeing now, rather than asking if Trump is a fascist, is whether the conservative authoritarianism of the Trump administration is softening the ground or proliferating conditions that could make fascism possible. That is the core of my critique.

This situation might be uncomfortable now, but it's important to remember that dying under a far-right regime, such as those under Pinochet or the Greek colonels, isn't necessarily 'better' or 'worse' than under a fascist regime. Fascism, however, is revolutionary and sits at the end of far-right politics. What we're observing is the potential for those who come after Trump to be the revolutionary fascists. That is the historical parallel I'm keen to point out.

Conservative authoritarianism doesn't necessarily have to include a specific religious ideology or a rigid view of ethnic

identity. It can be a political ideology incorporating various elements without requiring a complete a la carte set of beliefs.

Jacobsen: That's a fascinating distinction. Could you explain how Nazi Germany, in particular, complicates or challenges this comparison?

Feldman: Certainly, Nazi Germany complicates this narrative somewhat. For example, in Fascist Italy between 1922 and 1938—before the regime introduced Nazi-style race laws targeting Jewish people—it wasn't necessarily more racist than other societies of the time. If you compare it to France, Britain, Eastern Europe, or even the United States, it wasn't exceptional in its racism.

Of course, Italy was xenophobic and nationalistic. Still, it wasn't until the mid-1930s—when Nazism became the dominant model of fascism—that white supremacism and extreme antisemitism became central. Since then, it has been difficult to disentangle fascism from antisemitism or ethnic supremacism, but they are not definitive or exclusive criteria for what constitutes fascism.

Jacobsen: Shifting gears slightly, I'd like to reference an interview I conducted with Eric Kaufmann.² Kaufmann made an intriguing point about cultural and group identity. He noted that identities tied to national traditions—like those of the Dutch, French, or English—often incorporate elements such as language, dress, or behaviors that foster a kind of cultural distinctiveness. While these 'white identities' can manifest as benign forms of cultural pride in specific contexts, extremist nationalist or religious ideologies are an en-

2 Scott Douglas Jacobsen, "Unpacking White Identity and Nationalism: A Conversation with Eric Kaufmann," *International Policy Digest*, January 18, 2025, <https://intpolicydigest.org/unpacking-white-identity-and-nationalism-a-conversation-with-eric-kaufmann/>.

tirely different phenomenon. Kaufmann argued that engaging with cultural pride in a constructive way could potentially deter individuals from radicalizing, yet this topic often remains taboo. What's your take on this distinction, and do you see merit in his argument?

Feldman: It's an important and nuanced point and a sensitive one. This taps into the broader issue of identitarianism—people's identities based on ability, gender, national origin, faith, and so on. You're right that there is a historical precedent here. In white-majority countries, such as those in North America and Europe, we know from history that marginalized groups—such as people of color and Jewish people—have been mistreated.

Acknowledging cultural pride can be positive and help build community. Still, the challenge is to draw the line where pride morphs into exclusion or extremism. That contact point, where healthy pride can prevent radicalization, is worth exploring. It could be a preventative measure, but navigating it without reinforcing harmful ideologies is a delicate balance.

Oftentimes, through things like Jim Crow laws, people of color were legally segregated and treated as second-class citizens. That history is undeniable. However, we can contrast that history of identitarianism with the vision of one of my heroes, Martin Luther King Jr., who advocated for universalism and a colorblind society.

As we know, particularly on the left, some argue that this ideal doesn't work in practice because significant gaps and ongoing discrimination persist. Most people, upon reflection, would agree that such inequalities persist. However, if we continue to emphasize individual identity, it becomes challenging to create a universalist outlook. Certain outgroups—whether Jewish people, Asian Americans in North

America, or even white people—may reasonably ask, ‘What about us? What about our identity?’

This brings us back to the legacy of white supremacy that dominated previous centuries. As I see it, the risk here is that if everyone focuses on their identity and prioritizes smaller, cohesive group identities, we may find ourselves picking at the scabs of some ugly past areas.

Jacobsen: Finally, as we wrap up, do you have any reflections or parting thoughts on this conversation or the broader issues we’ve discussed today?

Feldman: I want to end with something that happened a few days ago, as it encapsulates some of our discussion. I’m not going to suggest there’s a definitive answer to this. Still, many of your readers will have their own opinions on the controversy surrounding Elon Musk’s alleged fascist or Nazi salute during the inauguration.

Some, including the ADL, have urged people not to read too much into it. Others, including certain historians of fascism, are convinced it was a deliberate Nazi salute. I think this sort of all-or-nothing, zero-sum thinking is mistaken. It’s not necessarily either one or the other. If anything, Elon Musk seems to be engaging in a tradition of what’s often referred to as online ‘shitposting’ or trolling—using irony or provocation to stir reactions.

Let’s not forget that much of the mass media was labeling Trump and his movement as fascist in the lead-up to the election in November and even afterward. This points to a broader issue: how we interpret such gestures and symbols often depends on our biases and cultural lenses.

And, to some extent, Elon Musk may have been responding to that, essentially saying, ‘Here’s another taboo broken.’ Let’s not forget that Musk did visit Auschwitz-Birkenau, so he does have an understanding of the past and the

annihilation of entire ethnic groups who were viewed as sub-human under Nazi Germany. However, this act—and the broader combination of Internet culture, social media, politics, and the tendency for everyone to be so certain in their interpretations—is part of the conundrum we face today.

This isn't just about the Trump administration. It's about a rising conservative authoritarianism that, if we're not careful and don't learn the right lessons from history, could lead us into some very dark places.

Jacobsen: Thank you so much for your time and insight.

Feldman: Credit you, Scott, for persevering through a less-than-happy subject with me today.

Understanding the Alt-Right: Ideologues, ‘Lulz,’ and Hiding in Plain Sight

With Rob May

The alt-right has perhaps performed the most successful re-branding of fascist ideology since the Axis dénouement of 1945. Fascist ideology has been a vexatious term for almost as long as fascism has existed, resistant to definition and typically used as either an insult or political hyperbole. Yet the utility of the term as a definitional starting point for understanding fascists past and present has changed markedly over the last generation. There has come to be a notable confluence of scholarly views on this forward-looking, revolutionary, and even cultic form of (usually ethnically based) integral nationalism:

Since it first emerged in the wake of World War One, fascism can be profitably conceptualised as a *specifically modern form of secular ‘millenarianism’ constructed culturally and politically, not religiously, as a revolutionary movement centring upon the ‘renaissance’ of a given people (whether perceived nationally, ethnically, culturally, or religiously) through the total reordering of all perceivedly ‘pure’ collective energies towards a realisable utopia*; an ideological core implacably hostile to democratic representation and socialist materialism, equality and individualism, in addition to any specific enemies viewed as alien or oppositional to such a programme.¹

1 This is Matthew Feldman’s definition, given in the “Introduction” to *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, ed. Matthew Feldman (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), xviii. Griffin is considered to be a leading proponent of what he has called the ‘new consensus’ in Fascist Studies, which sees fascism as a “revolutionary form of nationalism bent on mobilizing all ‘healthy’ social and political energies to resist the onslaught of ‘decadence’ so as to achieve the goal of national rebirth, a

Not all groups falling under the umbrella term ‘alt-right’ fit this view; for instance, the arch-reactionary racists of the League of the South take their inspiration from the Civil War-era Confederate States of America. Yet most of the ideologues who self-identify with the alt-right movement do fit this understanding, like hand in glove.

The alt-right’s ‘hand,’ in the analogy above, is its explicit ideological extremism. In keeping with historic fascism, despite savvy use of social media, this is a movement that seeks ethno-national ‘purity’ through revolution. Such revolutionary change is directed against social and political ‘sickness’; like a patient dying in the emergency room, fascists believe that only a defibrillating shock can return the race (and often synonymously, nation) to mythic glory and dominance. While this zap would undoubtedly be violent—and, as in the past, target leftists, ethnic, and religious minorities—the emergent society is invariably cast in utopian terms. For the alt-right, this means reactionary gender roles; a militant state focused on dynamic expansion, even colonisation; and above all, a top-down policing of ethics and politics putting the collective above any and all individuals, save a charismatic leader. The latter also helps to explain the importance of alt-right ideologues today, in both charting this ‘regenerative’ course, and in embodying the ‘healthy’ nation, giving it a renewed sense of self belief and, in a Nietzschean sense, a racist will to power able to eradicate weakness and opposition from all quarters—internally and externally.

To pursue this simile a bit further, far from the jack-booted paramilitaries who marched across the ‘fascist epoch’ between 1919 and the end of the Second World War, the alt-right’s ‘glove’—that is, its identifying feature and way of displaying its beliefs—has typically been the defense of mere

project that involves the regeneration (palingenesis) of both the political culture and the social and ethical culture underpinning it,” *ibid.*, xii.

'lulz'. A distortion of 'LOL,' or 'Laugh out Loud,' lulz are a sharper form of offensive humor directed by online activists. Exemplified by 'Pepe the Frog' avatars and targeted 'humor' about ethnic and religious minorities in Europe and North America, lulz provide ironic distance where necessary. In this way, the public response of 'just joking' is used as a 'frontstage' mechanism; or better, a shield to protect against charges of racism and their potential consequences, like falling foul in Europe of anti-racist legislation, including Holocaust denial. This characteristic feature is candidly described in Andrew Anglin's *Style Guide* for the neo-Nazi Daily Stormer online site, which has swiftly become amongst the most popular 'alt-right' websites today:

While racial slurs are allowed/recommended, not every reference to non-white should not be a slur and their use should be based on the tone of the article. Generally, when using racial slurs, it should come across as half-joking—like a racist joke that everyone laughs at because it's true. This follows the generally light tone of the site. It should not come across as genuine raging vitriol. That is a turnoff to the overwhelming majority of people.

A subsequent section of this *Style Guide* is still more explicit:

Lulz

The tone of the site should be light.

Most people are not comfortable with material that comes across as vitriolic, raging, non-ironic hatred.

The unindoctrinated should not be able to tell if we are joking or not. There should also be a conscious awareness of mocking stereotypes of hateful racists. I usually think of this as self-deprecating humor—I am a racist making fun of stereotype of racists, because I don't take myself super-seriously.

This is obviously a ploy and I actually do want to gas kikes. But that's neither here nor there.²

2 This document is analysed and reproduced in Ashley Feinberg, "This is the Daily Stormer's Playbook," *Huffington Post*, December 13, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/daily-stormer-nazi-style-guide_us_5a2ece19e4b0ce3b344492f2.

Speaking in forked tongues to a wider public while signaling a fealty to committed activists has long been a tactic for the postwar radical right, eager to counter the stigma of wartime totalitarianism and genocide committed by the Axis. Fully a generation earlier, Roger Eatwell raised a distinction between the neo-fascist British National Party's 'esoteric' nods-and-winks to hardcore members and their more populist 'exoteric' appeal intended for the general public.³ In a book examining this phenomenon across a range of different countries and groups, Chip Berlet termed this persistent feature "coded rhetoric," while Graham Macklin described this frontstage-backstage dynamic as "ideological bifurcation":

ideological bifurcation functions as an innate component of the operating system of post-war fascist ideology. It serves as a mode of communication and as a 'coping strategy' enabling far right groups to organize themselves around certain forms of 'rejected knowledge' which, since the Second World War, have been profoundly out of step with the values of the societies in which they organize. This duality co-exists without contradiction, resulting in an 'exoteric' articulation of its ideology for public consumption and an 'esoteric' truth understood by an initiated hardcore of political activists.⁴

To take just one alt-right example—chosen simply by reading the comments on the Daily Stormer about a mainstream new story current at the time of writing—in response to a child who was bullied for being gay and then committed suicide, Andrew Anglin's headline is "LOL: 9-Year-Old Mulatto Niglet Commits Suicide After Bullying! God Bless the USA!" The

3 Roger Eatwell, "Contemporary Fascism in the Local Arena: The British National Party and 'Rights for Whites,'" in *The Failure of British Fascism*, ed. Mike Cronin (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 1996), 100.

4 See, in particular, Chip Berlet, "Heroes Know Which Villains to Kill: How Coded Rhetoric Incites Scripted Violence"; and Graham Macklin, "'Teaching the Truth to the Hardcore': The Public and Private Presentation of BNP Ideology," both in *Doublespeak: The Rhetoric of the Far-Right since 1945*, ed. Matthew Feldman and Paul Jackson (Stuttgart and New York: ibidem / Columbia University Press, 2014).

opening of this account then proclaims: “It’s a proud day for all Americans. Things like this don’t happen in Europe, you know—because they love sucking cock and actually encourage little boys to do it, instead of bullying them into suicide for saying they like doing it. This heart-warming tale reminds me of my favorite patriotic song ...” Further racist and homophobic content is then cossetted in just enough lulz to provide a semblance of ironic distance, just as the Daily Stormer’s *Style Guide* advocates.⁵

Put simply, leopards do not change their spots. ‘Ironic misdirection’ is vital for understanding the mainstream push by alt-right ideologues and online activists. It is but one of the key techniques deployed in the alt-right’s rise to prominence over the last five years. The panoramic glimpse provided by this chapter, emphasizing recurrent themes and leading figures in this still-nascent movement, also serves as a salutary reminder that the revolutionary goals of fascist socio-cultural ‘purity’—especially in the previously hostile terrain of mainstream politics in Europe and North America, the most familiar stamping grounds for the alt-right to date—has many paths toward this goal. ‘Joking’ about the Holocaust is but one of them.

Although not all radical right trolls are as gratuitously offensive as the Daily Stormer and its stable of online neo-Nazis, normalizing fascism, and above all Hitler’s Third Reich and its Axis partners’ genocidal crimes, remains the principal tollbooth through which every alt-right group and ideologue must pass. As this chapter underscores, it is alt-right ideologues that frame, justify and often direct the growing online

5 Andrew Anglin, “LOL: 9-Year-Old Mulatto Niglet Commits Suicide After Bullying! God Bless the USA!,” Daily Stormer, August 28, 2018, <https://dailystormer.name/lol-9-year-old-mulatto-niglet-commits-suicide-after-bullying-god-bless-the-usa/> (website terminated by Cloudflare in 2017).

army of so-called ‘shitposters.’ The idealogues are the self-appointed ringmasters of this racist circus, even if they often disagree and sometimes directly clash, with one another. Richard Spencer, perhaps their most influential and sophisticated ambassador, demonstrated this shockingly when speaking to a roomful of Nazi saluters shortly after Donald Trump’s shock election to the presidency: “For us, it is either conquer or die ... Let’s party like its 1933 ... Hail Trump! Hail our people! Hail victory!” accompanied by an English version of Nazism’s *Sieg Heil*!⁶

Key Alt-Right Activists

It was Richard Spencer who first popularized the term ‘Alternative-Right’ in 2008. Son of an heiress to cotton farms in Louisiana, Spencer is educated to MA level—having read English literature and music as an undergraduate and humanities as a postgraduate—before dropping out of a PhD in history “to pursue a life of thought-crime.”⁷ Perhaps tellingly, Spencer’s entrance essay for the PhD examined the German judicial theorist and onetime Nazi Carl Schmitt. Thereafter, Spencer became an assistant editor at the *American Conservative*, a magazine led by the noted paleoconservative Pat Buchanan who was White House director of communications under the Regan administration. Spencer was dismissed for

6 See a video recording of this speech, alongside commentary with cited quotations, provided in John Woodrow Cox, “The Big Read: Inside the Alt-Right World of Richard Spencer,” *New Zealand Herald*, November 23, 2016, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11753791.

7 Devin Burghart, “Who is Richard Spencer?,” Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, June 27, 2014, <https://www.irehr.org/2014/06/27/who-is-richard-spencer/>.

his extremist views.⁸ After a two-year period as executive editor at the fringe publication *Taki's Magazine*, Spencer founded the now-defunct AlternativeRight.com in 2010, which he defined as “an online magazine of radical traditionalism [which] marks an attempt to forge an intellectual right wing that is independent of and outside the American conservative establishment.”⁹ As far back as 2010, the Southern Poverty Law Centre described the website as extreme right and “loaded with contributors who, like Spencer, have long lamented the white man’s decline.”¹⁰

The success of AlternativeRight.com opened up various new avenues for Spencer. He accepted the role of president and director at the National Policy Institute (NPI), a racist organization dedicated to the “heritage, identity, and future of people of European descent in the United States and around the world.” On its website, the NPI continues to describe itself as “a central and indispensable component of the international Alt-Right,” while boasting that “Richard Spencer and NPI are at the forefront of Alt-Right activism.”¹¹ Spencer is also the executive director at Washington Summit Publishers, a white nationalist publisher specializing in eugenics, anthropology, and human biodiversity. As an offshoot of Washington Summit Publishers, Spencer also launched the

8 See Matthew Lyons, *CTRL-ALT-DELETE: An Antifascist Report on the Alternative Right* (Oakland: Kersplebedeb Publishing, 2017), 2; and Graeme Wood, “His Kampf,” *Atlantic*, June 2017, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/06/his-kampf/524505/.

9 Cited in Stephanie L. Hartzell, “Alt-White: Conceptualizing the ‘Alt-Right’ as a Rhetorical Bridge between White Nationalism and Mainstream Public Discourse,” *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* 8, nos. 1/2 (2018): 19, http://contemporaryrhetoric.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Hartzell8_1_2_2.pdf.

10 Larry Keller, “Paleocon Starts New Extreme-Right Magazine,” SPLC, March 15, 2010, www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2010/03/15/paleocon-starts-new-extreme-right-magazine.

11 “About,” National Policy Institute, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180606151527/https://nationalpolicy.institute/whoarewe>.

online *Radix* journal which, according to its website, produces “original work on culture, race, tradition, meta-politics, and critical theory.”¹²

Most recently, Spencer launched Alt-Right.com, an ‘academic’ think-tank seeking “to give a platform to dissident opinions within the right.” Its thinly veiled racist aim is to “promote information and discourse in support of Western civilization and draw attention to the imminent demographic threat of mass immigration which is on course to completely erase the unique cultures and peoples of the Occident.”¹³ Notwithstanding the sanitized language above, a legal complaint by civil rights groups claimed that the white supremacist site was actively promoting violence and hatred against racial and ethnic minorities. In response, the internet domain registrar GoDaddy.com, which hosted Alt-Right.com, shut down the website in May 2018.¹⁴

As a self-identified white nationalist, Spencer’s vision for a utopian United States is a place for whites only. He claims that “European America is being demographically dispossessed [and therefore] we are losing our culture [and] our sense of being.” Spencer’s aim is to influence politics and culture by “raising consciousness and influencing people,” which he claims to be engaged in daily. Spencer insists that he has an ‘amazing’ opportunity to achieve this with Donald Trump in the Oval Office. Although conceding that Trump is not alt-right himself, he sees Trump’s presidency as the first

12 “About,” *Radix*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200801192342/https://radixjournal.com/about/>.

13 “Who We Are,” Alt-Right.com, www.alt-right.com/who-we-are/ (website has been taken down).

14 Jason Murdock, “Richard Spencer’s ‘White Supremacist’ Website Alt-right.com Taken Offline,” *Newsweek*, April 5, 2018, www.newsweek.com/richard-spencers-white-supremacist-website-alt-right-com-goes-offline-910320; Simon Sharwood, “GoDaddy Exiles Altright.com after Civil Rights Group Complaint,” *Register*, May 4, 2018, www.theregister.co.uk/2018/05/04/whackanazi_resumes_as_godaddy_exiles_altrightcom/.

step towards white nationalist policies in the United States.¹⁵ For his part, though one of many alt-right ideologues, Spencer can rightly claim the mantle of *primus inter pares* given his editorial undertakings, media-savvy engagements, and long-standing activism for an ‘alternative right.’

However, the most repulsive and (at least publicly) extreme devotee to the alt-right is Andrew Anglin. In 2006, Anglin launched the conspiratorial website Outlaw Journalism, which was modelled on the works of Infowars founder, Alex Jones, and gonzo journalism (journalism without objectivity) originator Hunter Thompson, who he greatly admired. Before forming his first neo-Nazi website Total Fascism in 2012, Anglin went on a spiritual and psychological journey resulting in his conversion to ‘full Nazi.’ He worked as an English teacher in Asia where, according to Anglin, “all the White people you meet are outcast sorts who you can usually connect with easily.” In comments that must again be treated with large helpings of salt, Anglin claims that “having been raised mostly without exposure to non-Whites, this was when I first started thinking seriously about race as a biological concept. Eventually, I got fed up and realized that I couldn’t live in a jungle with a bunch of 80 IQ jungle people.”¹⁶ Combined with his continental experience was his obsession with the uncensored imageboard, 4chan, where anyone can post anonymously. Anglin explains how he had latched on to the less overtly fascist ‘brand’ of the alt-right, helping to give his patch a more explicitly neo-Nazi inflection:

15 “Richard Spencer, Chairman of the National Policy Institute,” YouTube (hosted by the Los Angeles Times), November 18, 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jm4DNMNEZM0&t=29s.

16 Andrew Anglin, “Andrew Anglin Exposed,” Daily Stormer, March 14, 2015, <http://dailystormer.name/andrew-anglin-exposed/> (website has been taken down).