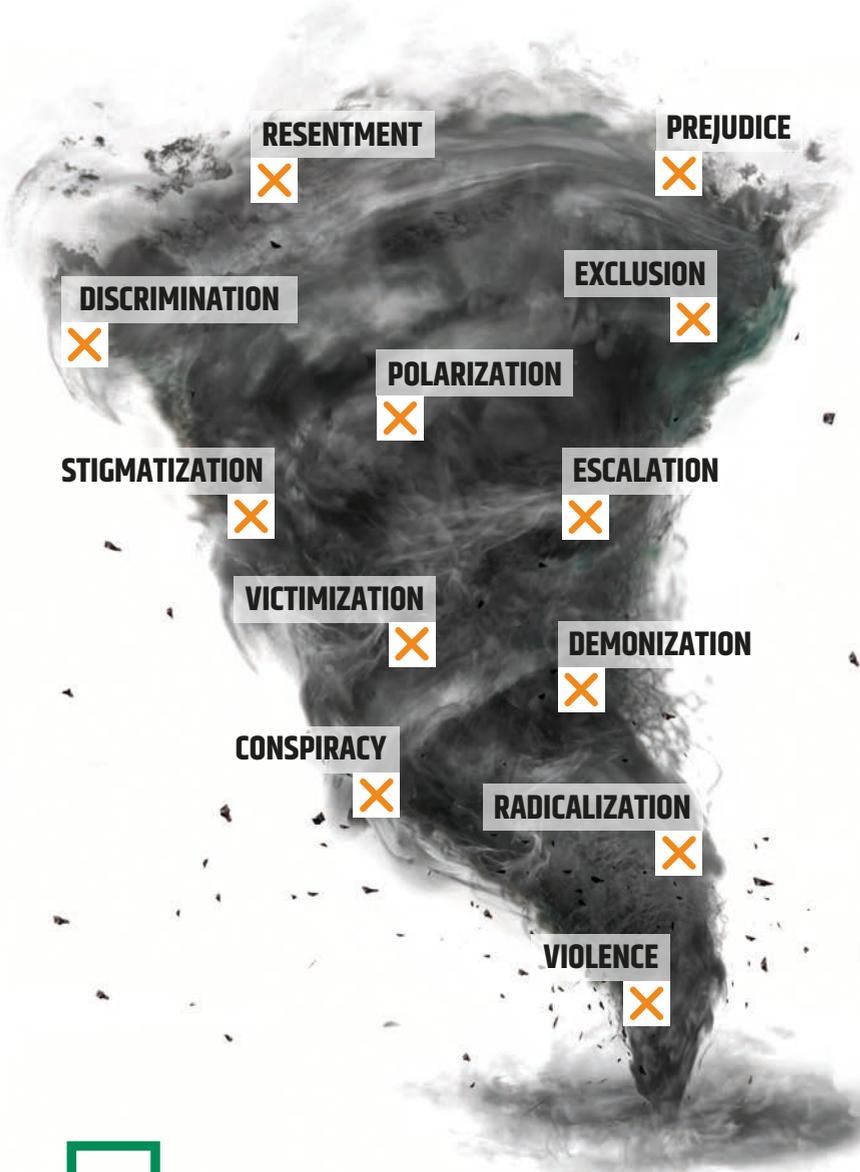


# LOVING HATE.

RESEARCH  
REPORT

## ANTI-MUSLIM EXTREMISM, RADICAL ISLAMISM AND THE SPIRAL OF POLARIZATION



RESENTMENT



PREJUDICE



DISCRIMINATION



EXCLUSION



POLARIZATION



STIGMATIZATION



ESCALATION



VICTIMIZATION



DEMONIZATION



CONSPIRACY

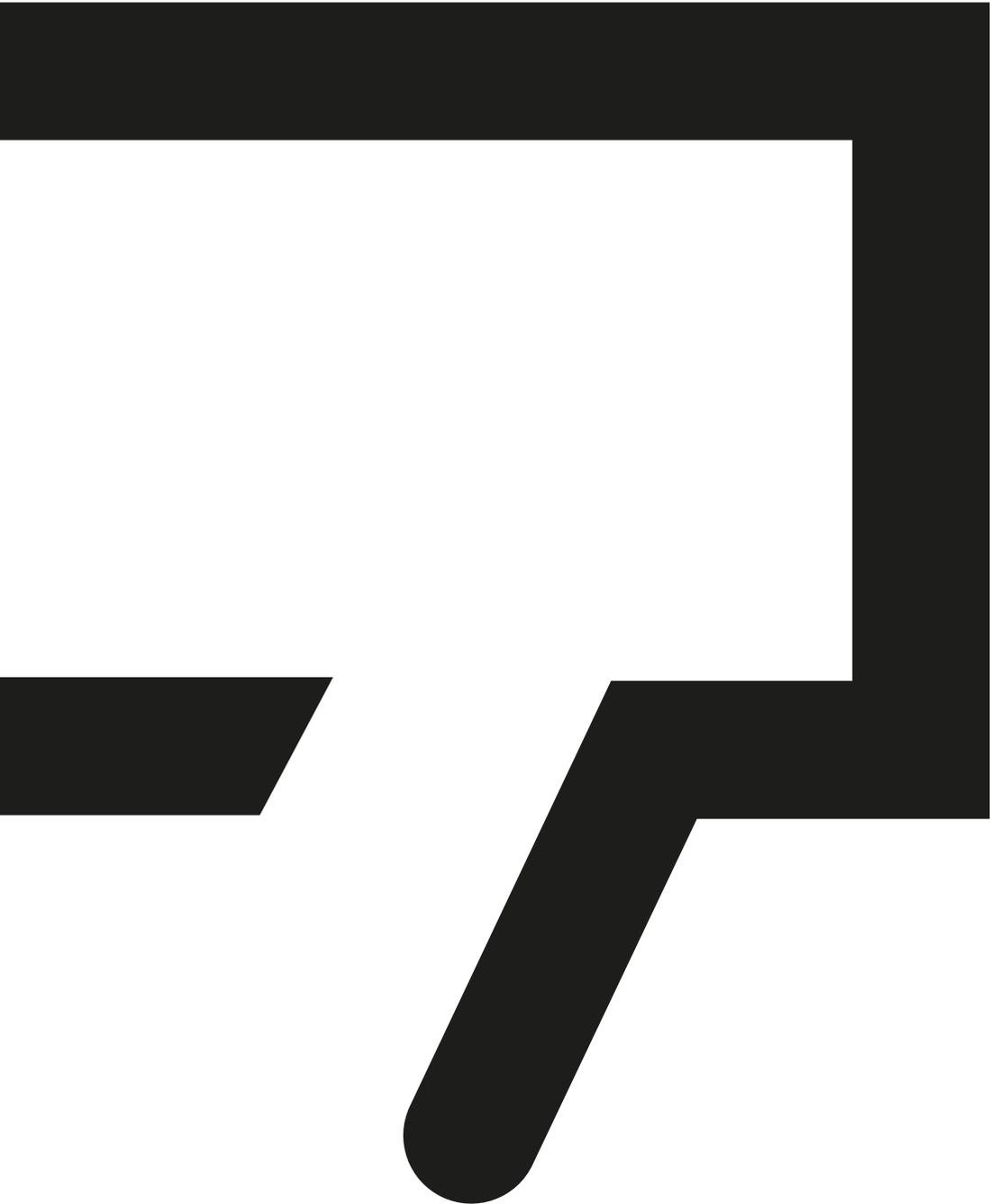


RADICALIZATION



VIOLENCE





by: Maik Fielitz, Julia Ebner, Jakob Guhl and Matthias Quent  
Jena/London/Berlin 2018



**LOVING HATE.**  
**ANTI-MUSLIM EXTREMISM,**  
**RADICAL ISLAMISM AND THE**  
**SPIRAL OF POLARIZATION**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Summary

This report focuses on the interactional dynamics between anti-Muslim extremists and radical Islamists in Germany and beyond. It reveals ideological underpinnings, approaches to mobilization and communication patterns, which all prove to be analogous on both sides, and it places emphasis on the reciprocity of hate that may serve to intensify processes of individual and group radicalization.

Our study presents the first systematic analysis of the interplay between both forms of extremism that plays out on different places on the Internet. It provides direct evidence showing that Islamist and far-right movements converge at different levels and mutually amplify one another. The analysis focuses on measuring the online interaction between extremist content, individuals and events. Overall, over 10,000 Islamist and far-right Facebook posts and over one million German anti-Muslim tweets between 1 January 2013 and 30 November 2017 were analyzed for this study. Additionally, we conducted three months of ethnographic research into encrypted pro-IS and pro-Al-Qaeda groups on Telegram as well as into far-right chat groups.

## Key Findings

Radical Islamism and anti-Muslim racism, which manifest themselves in the form of far-right extremism and right-wing populism exhibit a symbiotic relationship. In the context of glocal interaction patterns, the far right operates as a national sphere of resonance for international jihadism. Both negate and dismantle basic democratic values such as the inviolability of human dignity and religious freedom. What's more, racism against Muslims paves the way for radicalization through Islamic fundamentalists.

We identified three key patterns that reveal common worldviews and argumentative resemblance: First, the *demonization of enemies* based on a clear distinction between friend and foe. Second, *the victimization of one's own group* as both sides take advantage of the alleged discrimination of their own group and the constructed dominance of the other. Third, *conspiracy*, which is the basic explanation provided for why the respective milieus do not share their exclusionary claim to truth. The alleged systematic blindness caused by the Jews or fake news are needed to balance the dissonance between claims and reality as well as to contribute to demonizing other groups.

When considering the interaction between the two groups, three developments stand out:

- *Mutual Learning*: Both movements learn from one another in terms of their communication strategies, tactical innovation and security needs. Far-right extremists and Islamists familiarize themselves with successful models of intervening into larger circles and strive to create safe (digital) spaces.
- *Strategic references*: The provocative act of adopting symbols is especially prevalent among far right groups. Paradoxically, within these circles, a certain degree of recognition is articulated in regard to the strategic and operative approaches taken by Islamist groups.
- *Reciprocal radicalization*: Interactions between Islamist and far-right extremists tend to take place when a common discursive framework is generated among the public through events with a high level of media exposure. In some cases, an increase in hate crimes can be observed directly following high-profile events involving the the opposing side. As such, certain events can be deemed as triggers of an escalation spiral that amplifies a transition from prejudiced attitudes to hate crimes.

**Strong Interplay of content:** Our discourse analysis of more than 10,000 Islamist and far-right posts revealed a strong interaction between the narratives of both extremes. By frequently employing victimhood and demonization narratives and normalizing the idea of an imminent civil war, Islamists and far-right extremists rhetorically validate each other.

**Shared vocabulary:** Linguistic analysis of the posts of Islamist and far-right accounts also show major overlaps in their vocabulary: However, Islamist terms are used more frequently by far-right users than by Islamist ones.

**Common narratives:** Our observations revealed shared narratives between Islamists and far-right extremists, which mainly focus on three elements: the victimization of the “in-group“, the demonization of the “out-group“, and conspiracy theories about political elites and the media.

**Asymmetry in online hate speech:** Recently introduced measures by Facebook and Twitter had a significant effect on the online extremism landscape. Our analysis shows that communication by Islamist extremists has been greatly constrained, forcing them to soften their rhetoric when compared to early 2017. This applies much less to the propaganda and networks of far-right extremists. The extent of openly far-right and anti-Muslim contents easily surpasses the extent of Islamist contents.

**Limited direct interactions:** The majority of all registered interactions between far-right extremists and Islamists were indirect: they often spoke of one another, but rarely with one another. References to the other side of the extremist spectrum were especially common in reaction to political events, demonstrations and acts of violence. Far-right posts about Islamists and Islamist posts about the far-right primarily served as a means to present oneself as the victim and construct a bogeyman.

**Strong far-right reactions to Islamist events:** The analysis of more than one million anti-Muslim posts between the beginning of 2013 and the end of 2017 revealed significant spikes in the volume of anti-Muslim contributions on social media in the aftermath of Islamist terror attacks. Additionally, the basic level of anti-Muslim posts rose with almost every attack.

**Strong Islamist reactions to far-right events:** Our observation of pro-IS and pro-Al Qaida groups also showed clear Islamist reactions to far-right events and activities. Both far-right demonstrations as well as political events such as the electoral success of the AfD were used to reinforce the image of the anti-Muslim West and use it as a recruitment tool.

**Mutual dependency:** The results illustrate the interdependent relationship between far-right extremists and Islamists. Since the respective enemy is necessary for the propagandist purposes of lending credibility to their narratives and legitimacy to their activities, the two extremes need each other.

## Recommendations

Based on our analysis, we conclude that both forms of group-focused enmity must be considered together if the processes of mutual radicalization and social polarization are to be stopped. We therefore urgently recommend that an approach is taken which considers both forms as being part of the same phenomenon.

**More work on research and education:** In-depth studies and analyses about the online dynamics and the phenomenon of reciprocal radicalization are urgently needed to create a more sophisticated understanding and awareness of the topic among policy-makers, media-stakeholders and civil society. We especially recommend the development of a holistic framework and methods toolkit to measure reciprocal radicalization and its influence on the political discourse. Additionally, we advise building better technological capacities for the analysis of online dynamics, such as the closer cooperation with social media companies.

**Equal efforts to fight both types of extremism online:** Measures to remove dangerous and hateful speech should be applied in equal measure to both types of extremism online. Our analysis shows that more restrictive regulations for online hate speech have led to a significant diminution of Islamist content, but have not led to the same results on the far-right side.

**Sensitivity to the effects of co-radicalization:** The position assumed by the police, media and civil society is a decisive factor for how interactions between both groups are configured. Governmental interventions should therefore be based on in-depth analyses of the situation at hand and attempt to ensure precise differentiation so as to not push individuals from the grey areas into the arms of the radicalized groups.

**Building resilience among civil society:** Consistently removing contents that clearly threaten violence or violate existing hate speech laws is an urgent necessity. While we observed the moderating effect achieved by recent measures aimed at online Islamist discourse that have been taken by social media companies, not all extremist content can or should be removed. For the remaining contents that do not clearly incite violence or violate existing hate speech laws, civil society needs to step up to challenge the extremist narratives spread through such contents. Hence, we recommend developing and promoting counter-narratives and campaigns to strengthen civil society's resilience towards extremist propaganda. This mainly concerns building up resources and networks, which enable quick responses to far-right and Islamist activities. This will ensure that extremists are prevented from framing the prevailing discourse in the aftermath of terror attacks, demonstrations, election results and other events that are of importance to extremists. Campaigns that promote cooperation among social networks and civil society, such as the Online Civil Courage Initiative (OCCI), should be taken into account within prevention and democracy work.

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**RACISM AGAINST  
MUSLIMS PAVES  
THE WAY FOR  
RADICALIZATION  
BY ISLAMIST  
FUNDAMENTALISTS.**

# Racism, right-wing populism and extremism as spaces of resonance for international Jihadism

*Dr. Matthias Quent*

On December 19, 2016, jihadi terrorism finally made its debut in Germany: An attack by the Islamist assailant, Anis Amri, would claim the lives of 12 victims and injure another 55, some in a life-threatening state ways, as they were visiting a Christmas market at Breitscheid Square in Berlin. With this attack, the number of people who have lost their lives to Islamist violence since 1990 amounts 14 in Germany. In the shadow of the memorial services that marked the first anniversary of the horrible act of violence in December 2017, the right-wing extremist Identitarian Movement instrumentalized the commemoration for its own purposes. The far-right extremists unloaded five concrete slabs from a trailer in front of the Brandenburg Gate, titling the set up the “European Memorial for the Victims of Multiculturalism and Islamist Terrorism”. One of the symbols affixed to the stones of this tasteless and racist production was the Christian cross. The objective of this and other similar acts is obvious: placing the blame for Islamist attacks on “the Muslims” and on the entire community of immigrants. The ostensible alternative that the extreme right offers is a social model of national homogeneity that stands in opposition to liberal democracy. The extreme right uses this to divert attention from the serious everyday danger that originates from prejudiced violence: since 1990, there have been at least 193 fatalities of hate crimes and attacks committed by the far right in Germany, a number that has seen a significant increase since 2014 in the context of the polarized immigration debate.

Even before the background of the attack at Breitscheid Square in Berlin was known, hate speech was greatly increasing on the Internet. In the moments after the first news about the terrible attack by Islamist Anis Amri was reported, Facebook and Twitter were flooded with thousands of anti-Islam, racist, right-wing populist and far-right extremist comments, images and slogans. Social networks have become an important tool among a greater number of people, especially as platforms have allowed political and public debates as well as battles over interpretation to be carried out directly, without mediation, and at an accelerated place.

The good news, however, is that with hashtags such as #prayforberlin and #breitscheidplatz, a greater number of supportive messages were posted expressing empathy, sorrow and solidarity – far removed from the generalized hate and political instrumentalization.

Both online and offline, nationally and internationally, the escalation spiral represented by terrorism is putting democracy to the test. The operating principle of terrorism is an attempt to instigate (over-) reactions from the public by carrying out frightening acts of violence against victims who are interchangeable on an individual level. Killing and injuring people is not the end of terrorism but rather its means. The objective is to propagate fear and anxiety, to rob the populace (or parts thereof) of their feeling of safety, and to evoke reactions from society and policy-makers that are in line with the goals of the terrorists. Terrorism researcher Peter Waldmann has analyzed that repressive overreactions, which serve to restrict basic rights and liberties and expand the security architecture, “play along in the game of the terrorists.”<sup>1</sup>

The media serves as the messenger for terrorism. The decentralized, indirect nature and visibility of communication processes in the wake of the digitalization of information transfers amplifies the effects of this: even attacks in far-away regions can be received, experienced and interpreted on a person’s smartphone or tablet in real-time and with a high level of authenticity. More than any other group, right-wing actors take advantage of this through their own array of interpretations so that their group may benefit from the terrible acts of violence along with the consternation and insecurity that they give rise to. They present themselves as radical counterparts to Islamic terror. Yet, are far-right extremism and jihadism really two opposing poles, as they set out to make the public believe through their propaganda? This position is subject to some doubt. In terms of their ideologies, for example, Islamists and far-right extremists converge in their antisemitic and anti-pluralist views. Perpetrators of violence often combine a high affinity for violent acts with religious or political ideologies, providing them with the scapegoats they need and justifying their acts. In this context, an ideologically or theologically grounded worldview oftentimes cannot be identified.

The topic of "Islam" has been gaining attention both socio-politically as well as in the practice of prevention and intervention work aimed at curbing hostility towards democracy and demographic groups, especially after the attacks in Europe and Germany. New measures and support programs are being developed and new actors are addressing this issue through civil society and regulatory efforts. Yet, progress here calls for more than just professional quality standards and a high level of sensitivity when handling religious emotionality and the complexity of radicalization processes.

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<sup>1</sup> Waldmann, Peter (2011): *Terrorismus. Provokation der Macht*. Hamburg: Murmann, p. 44.

As terrorism researcher Peter Neumann argues, the interaction and escalation dynamics of radicalized Muslims and local far-right extremists must also be taken into consideration when approaching Islamism:

“ Those who [...] only concentrate on Muslims and the threat of Jihadism impede cooperation with Muslim communities. What’s even more important: They misjudge the danger that threatens European communities by Jihadists and extremists augmenting one another at the right end of the spectrum. Though Jihadist terrorism is terrible, the political polarization that could result from a confrontation between extreme Muslims and right-wing extremists is an even greater strategic threat. Whoever desires to preserve the peaceful coexistence of people with diverse origins in Europe needs a preventative approach that understands the connection between all forms of radicalization.”<sup>2</sup>

Radical Islamism and anti-Muslim racism, which manifest in the form of far-right extremism and right-wing populism, among others, exhibit a symbiotic relationship. In this context, the far right operates as a national sphere of resonance for international jihadism. Both negate and dismantle basic democratic values such as the inviolability of human dignity and religious freedom. What’s more, racism against Muslims paves the way for radicalization by Islamic fundamentalists. This was apparent, for example, in the statements made by Omar Bakri Muhammad - who gained prominence as the “architect” of the jihadist scene in London - that were directed at the researcher Quintan Wiktorowicz:

“ If there is no racism in the West, there is no conflict of identity [...]. When they experience discrimination, they begin thinking about their own situation. If there is no discrimination or racism, I think it would be very difficult for us.”<sup>3</sup>

While it is important to study the parallels and interactions among different forms of extremism, differences between them should likewise be taken into consideration and proportionality must be maintained. Despite the number of converts to radical Islamism, a quantity that should certainly not be overlooked, a far greater portion of German and west European societies are capable of associating with far-right extremism and racism.

The present study focuses on the hitherto underexplored connections and interactions between Islamist and racially charged enmity towards democracy and certain segments of the population. Based on a meta-analysis of international studies along with recent empirical research on social networks, the Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ) in Jena, Germany has worked in cooperation with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) in London to identify concordant patterns, interactions among the milieus, strategies and points of division, both online and offline.

<sup>2</sup> Neumann, Peter R. (2016): Die neuen Dschihadisten. IS, Europa und die nächste Welle des Terrorismus. Berlin: Ullstein, p. 204.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in: Neumann, Peter R. (2016): Der Terrorist unter uns. Dschihadismus und Radikalisierung in Europa. Berlin: Ullstein, p. 56.

The study introduces terms and it offers novel insights into the two interdependent operational systems through which liberal democracy is subject to the greatest of pressures. In the end, it draws conclusions and outlines recommended actions for preventing and intervening in various subfields of society. Additional information about this research project, along with the data and methods used, can be found at [www.idz-jena.de](http://www.idz-jena.de) (in German).

This study would not have been possible without the support from the funding program “Demokratie Leben” of the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and the Thuringia Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. We would like to acknowledge and express our appreciation for the support provided by the two outstanding teams at IDZ and ISD. We wish to thank Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Frindte (University of Jena), Daniel Köhler (German Institute for Radicalization and Deradicalization Studies), Jan Riebe (Amadeu Antonio Foundation), Janusz Biene (City of Offenbach), Jenny Renner (Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany), Pia Lamberty (University of Mainz) and our colleagues at the Online Civil Courage Initiative (OCCI), Cristopher Stewart, Cooper Gatewood, Iris Boyer and Natasha Hanckel-Spice, for their support with this research project. We are also much obliged to Dr. Milena Uhlmann (German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees), Jonathan Birdwell and Rashad Ali (ISD) for their constructive feedback and their insightful recommendations. Finally, we also wish to thank Alex Krasodonski-Jones from the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media (CASM) at the London think tank Demos for his support with all issues related to the technical details of our analysis program. Last, but not least, we thank our extremely reliable and highly creative translator and language editor, Nick Gemmell.



**ONLINE AND OFFLINE,  
NATIONALLY AND  
INTERNATIONALLY,  
THE ESCALATION  
SPIRAL OF TERRORISM  
IS PUTTING  
DEMOCRACY  
TO THE TEST.**



**BOTH FORMS OF  
INHUMANITY MUST  
BE CONSIDERED  
TOGETHER IN ORDER  
TO STOP THE  
PROCESSES OF  
MUTUAL  
RADICALIZATION  
AND SOCIAL  
POLARIZATION.**

# Introduction

## Misfortune seldom comes alone.

According to a popular proverb, misfortunes seldom come alone. And, indeed, when one considers attitudes and actions that exhibit enmity towards certain groups, it would appear that reactionary ideologies are able to gain ever-greater strength the more they find confirmation through alleged counter-movements. This phenomenon has manifested itself in the interplay of anti-Muslim and Islamist extremism ever since more attention has turned to Islamist acts of violence in Europe. This interaction often takes the form of a spiral as though engaged in a dance of tango, the energies of one partner are transferred into the actions of the other. In recent years, this hostile tango has assumed a new dynamic among Western European societies, subjecting democracy and human rights to a difficult test.

This dynamic can be seen in the reaction patterns to events with a high degree of media resonance. On the one hand, the Islamist attacks in Paris, Brussels, London and Berlin augmented the mobilization capabilities of racist groups. At the same time, anti-Muslim rhetoric expressed by groups such as the *English Defense League* or the *Identitarian Movement* has contributed to experiences of exclusion among Muslims, which, in turn, can prove useful for jihadist groups. These polarizing interactions are further exacerbated by virtual confrontations: both sides are adept at utilizing and manipulating new social media channels and apps to strategically position information and more deeply penetrate the social discourse.

Islamist and far right extremists both share a notion of society based on exclusive identity and the demonization of different or foreign groups and worldviews. Generalized abasement and stigmatization of entire groups of people threaten the very foundations of democratic cultures and open societies. Anti-Muslim racism and Islamist extremism manifest themselves in various forms and degrees of intensity and they also interact with one another: ideologically, discursively and in real-world practice. At times, they even depend on each other to legitimize their very existence.

This is especially apparent within anti-Muslim mobilizations, which construct an idea of the demise of the “Christian occident” through a presumed “Islamization”. “Islam” has served as the primary mobilization resource for far-right extremists since the end of the 2000s. Moreover, organizations, movements and networks that primarily focus on rejecting Islam have also taken shape beyond the traditional structures of far-right extremism. In many cases, they promote a wide-ranging agenda bound to ideas of national isolation and an authoritarian restructuring of society.

At the same time, security agencies in Western European countries register Salafism and its particularly strict interpretation of Islam to currently represent the fastest-growing youth movement in Europe. With over 10,000 adherents in Germany,<sup>4</sup> we are dealing with a loud and proactive minority within the Islam mosaic, even though its share of the Muslim community may be low. The main victims are often Muslims themselves who do not wish to orient themselves towards the radical interpretation of Salafism.

Neither anti-Muslim nor Islamist actors operate in a vacuum. They use various channels in an attempt to achieve polarization within the societal discourse. Their objective is to eliminate grey areas and exclude deviant ways of life by achieving subordination through collective pressures. In doing so, they consciously try to undermine social coherence in (post-) migrant societies for their own purposes.

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**Islamism aims to restructure society, culture, the state and government in line with values and norms that are understood to be Islamic.**

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Seidensticker, Tilman (2015): Islamismus. Geschichte, Vordenker, Organisationen. Originalausgabe, 3. Auflage. München: Verlag C.H. Beck, p. 9.

Based on our analysis, we conclude that the reciprocal conditionality of extremism must be considered together if the processes of mutual radicalization and social polarization are to be stopped. Researching these interactions contributes to a better understanding of the (self-)positioning in wider milieus and society as a whole. It highlights the imperilling attraction to violent youth cultures and pinpoints flaws in the state social security systems that are not trusted by the respective adherents. Overall, the increased relevance of Islamist and far-right extremism says a great deal about the state of polarization in west European societies. Hence, through this study, we aim to draw attention to the possibility of disrupting this spiral of hate.

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**Salafism is a modern, transnational and fundamentalist reform movement within Sunni Islam whose adherents promote a strict return to the teachings of early Islam.**

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Biene, Janusz et al. (2015): Nicht nur eine Frage der Sicherheit. Salafismus in Deutschland als gesamtgesellschaftliche Herausforderung. Frankfurt am Main (HSFK-Standpunkt, 1), p. 2.

In this study, we investigate the ideological, discursive and practical interaction between the two ends of the spectrum, with *Islamist extremism* at one end and *anti-Muslim, far-right extremism* at the other. Are there any common ideological foundations shared between them upon which they both build? What commonalities and differences exist in terms of mobilization? What sorts of interactions can be identified both online and off? And, finally, how can this cycle be disrupted?

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<sup>4</sup> Zeit Online (15 Sep 2017): Zahl der Salafisten in Deutschland gestiegen <http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2017-09/verfassungsschutz-salafismus-deutschland-gefaehrder-terrorismus>.



**ISLAMISTS AND  
FAR-RIGHT  
EXTREMISTS  
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**PEOPLE WHO  
ARE IDENTIFIED  
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OF DISCRIMINATION  
AND ACTS OF VIOLENCE**

# Two sides of the same coin?

## Anti-Muslim and Islamist extremism

In recent years, West European societies have been confronted with a massive increase in number of people who sympathize with anti-Muslim and Islamist organizations. This has been accompanied by a marked rise in hate crimes and politically motivated acts of violence perpetrated by both camps. While Islamist terrorism leads to devastating consequences with just a few acts, racist hate crimes in Germany (and beyond) have virtually turned into a bitter everyday reality. According to statistics from the Federal Criminal Police Office, in 2017, 994 offences that specifically targeted mosques or Muslims were carried out, 52 of them were violent.<sup>5</sup> The perpetrators were first and foremost far-right extremist. The figures of unaccounted attacks may very well be higher. Additionally, there are difficulties in delimiting between anti-Muslim bigotry and racist or xenophobic crimes. People identified as Muslim are confronted with the latent threat of discrimination as well as crimes and acts of violence stemming from prejudice.

Public debates addressing the influence of anti-Muslim extremism and Islamism are invariably connected with the question of security, preventing dangers and counter-measures. However, the sheer fixation on political violence masks the multiplicity and everyday character of anti-Muslim and Islamist activism. These can escalate from prejudice and the abasement of other groups to actual acts of hate and terrorism and they build upon a broad social foundation.

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Definition according to Levin:

**Hate crimes relate to discriminatory criminal acts that are committed on the basis of actual or perceived membership within a certain socially identifiable status group.**

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Geschke, Daniel (2017): Alle reden von Hass. Was steckt dahinter? Eine Einführung. In: Wissen schafft Demokratie 1, p. 173, online: <http://www.idz-jena.de/wsddet/alle-reden-von-hass-was-steckt-dahinter-eine-einfuehrung/>

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<sup>5</sup> Numbers according to the politically motivated crime statistics released by the Ministry for Interior for the year 2017. Online: <https://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/sicherheit/kriminalitaetsbekaempfung-und-gefahrenabwehr/politisch-motivierte-kriminalitaet/politisch-motivierte-kriminalitaet-node.html>

## Islamophobia, Anti-Muslim racism and extremism

The academic debate about the phenomenon of group-related enmity against Muslims is characterized by disputes over differing terminologies and the underlying definitional problems. In the international context, the term Islamophobia is most commonly used to express the (unfounded) hostility to Islam.<sup>6</sup> The concept basically refers to religious intolerance against Islam. Especially in the German context, the term Islamophobia has been criticized because it conflates criticism of religion with hostility towards Muslims as a group and shifts the focus away from those affected by resentment (Muslim individuals or groups). As the political scientist Armin Pfahl-Traughber argues: "For hostile attitudes towards Muslims, the term 'Islamophobia' does not seem [...] appropriate. It suggests that this is about exaggerated feelings of anxiety and not serious resentments."<sup>7</sup>

In turn, the term anti-Muslim racism makes it clear that these resentments are directed towards groups and individuals who are categorized as Muslim.<sup>8</sup> The construction of Muslims as something entirely foreign is of crucial significance and can only be understood in the context of the instrumentalisation of Islam: pursuing the aim of exclusion, a national and/or European identity is created through the ethnification of people, who are labeled as categorically "different" from one's own collective. It proves difficult for people who are deemed to be Muslim to shake off this imposed attribution, whether it is an accurate designation or not. In accordance with this mentality, Muslims are held collectively responsible for statements and acts associated with Islam. Hereby, Muslims are assigned specific positions within societal power relations.

Since we are focusing on organized anti-Muslim prejudice, we frequently use the term anti-Muslim extremism. The ideological core of anti-Muslim extremism is the depiction of Islam as a religion of violence; as a political ideology that either overtly or subtly aims to attain dominance over Western societies. This secrete takeover is allegedly facilitated by the liberal, multicultural political system, which attempts to replace the current population through immigration and demographic developments. Anti-Muslim extremism is therefore linked to other forms of exclusion: One recurring metaphor describes immigration as a "Trojan Horse" from which Islamism will rise and take control over society. According to this trope, Europe is being exposed to Sharia, terrorism and the abandonment of national identity through immigration under the guise of multiculturalism and diversity.

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<sup>6</sup> Runnymede Trust (1997): *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All*. London: Runnymede Trust.

<sup>7</sup> Pfahl-Traughber, Armin (2014): *Islamfeindlichkeit, Islamophobie, Islamkritik – ein Wegweiser durch den Begriffsdschungel*. Online: <http://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/180774/islamfeindlichkeit-islamophobie-islamkritik-ein-weg-weiser-durch-den-begriffsdschungel>.

<sup>8</sup> Shooman, Yasemin (2014): »... weil ihre Kultur so ist«. *Narrative des antimuslimischen Rassismus*. Bielefeld, Berlin: tran-script; De Gruyter (Kultur und soziale Praxis), S. 45-51.



**Image 1:** Anti-Muslim propaganda at Polish National Independence Day (November 11, 2017 in Warsaw): Polish ultra-nationalists depict refugees as suicide bombers and immigration as the Trojan Horse of the "Islamization" of Europe, along with their counter-measures.

©Agnieszka Pikulicka

It is not our aim to deepen definitional debates, but we also want to be as precise as possible in our usage of terminologies. As a rule of thumb, we use the term anti-Muslim extremism when referring to organized enmity against Muslims and the term anti-Muslim racism to refer to structural and diffuse anti-Muslim sentiments that are present in society. This is not to say that we can make a clear distinction between both of these phenomena, because they do overlap at times. Since we focus on collectively expressed anti-Muslim hate within anti-democratic and anti-pluralist discourses, we prefer this terminology. It is also important to note that we use the term extremism throughout the text to describe the negation of pluralism, self-determination and open society.

## “Counter-jihad”

Given these circumstances, international networks have formed since the end of the 2000s and taken up action against “Islam”, online and offline, under the banner of “counter-jihad”, with the shared aim of banning Islam from Europe.<sup>9</sup> “Counter-Jihad” activists accuse Islam of being a homogeneously constructed movement with the intention of asserting foreign domination over Europe (“Eurabia”) through diverse means such as the immigration of Muslims, cultural infiltration and violent attacks against non-Muslims. These resentments, which are primarily expressed online, have translated into groups such as the *English Defence League* and its multitude of offshoots within political movements, some of which commit acts of violence against Muslims and are supported by Neo-Nazis.

<sup>9</sup> Fielitz, Maik; Ebner, Julia; Mulhall, Joe (2018): Organisierte Islamfeindlichkeit: Die Inszenierung des "Counter-Dschihad". IDZ Fact Sheet. [www.idz-jena.de](http://www.idz-jena.de).

The movement *Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident (Pegida)* is the German pendant of these movements in Great Britain, even though the conditions surrounding its formation were quite different. For the far-right extremists, anti-Muslim racism provides a strategic gateway for specifically taking advantage of wide-spread fears of jihadist violence and being able to command a majority within society. To facilitate this, the long prevailing antisemitism has been strategically ignored within the extreme right. In some cases, an instrumental relationship is established with the state of Israel, through which the latter is distorted and proclaimed to be the vanguard against Islam. The tense relationship between anti-Islam sentiments and antisemitism has recently morphed into agitation based on anti-Muslim racism. This, however, often goes hand in hand with antisemitic meta-narratives as well as conspiracy theories in relation to the “Islamization” of Western Europe allegedly being orchestrated by the Jews or “Zionist Occupied Governments”.

## Radical Islamism

Radical Islamism – understood as a political ideology that strives to establish a purely religiously legitimated societal and governmental order in the name of Islam – can, despite its backwardness, be taken as a modern counter-movement to the Enlightenment. It rejects deviant ideas of social, religious and sexual practices in abidance with an Islamic theocratic state.<sup>10</sup> Members of any groups who do not submit to these rigid ideas should expect to face persecution and/or discrimination. Here, an ideal-typical distinction must be drawn between *movement Islamism* and *Islamist puritanism*.

Movement Islamism relates to political movements that developed early in the twentieth century from protests against colonialism, imperialism and the dissemination of European values in the Middle East and North Africa, seeking to form political orientations in the name of Islam. As in the case of Salafism, Islamist puritanism understands itself, in the original sense, as a religious reform movement that tends to manifest itself more through networks of ultra-conservative preachers and schools of Islam than through the expression of political interests.<sup>11</sup> Both areas have various gradations that broker the relationship between religion and politics in different ways. It proves difficult to draw clear boundaries here, especially since Salafism, in its political and jihadist expression, consciously blurs the borders between religion and politics.

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**Jihadism is a radical form of Islamism for which violence is the only reliable strategy for achieving Islamic goals.**

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See Khosrokhavar, Farhad (2009): *Inside jihadism. Understanding jihadi movements worldwide*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers (Yale cultural sociology series), p. 1.

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<sup>10</sup> See Seidensticker, Tilman (2015): *Islamismus. Geschichte, Vordenker, Organisationen*. Original edition, 3rd edition. Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck (C.H. Beck Wissen, 2827).

<sup>11</sup> Biskamp, Floris; Hößl, Stefan E. (2013): *Politische Bildung im Kontext von Islam und Islamismus*. In: Floris Biskamp und Stefan E. Hößl (ed.): *Islam und Islamismus. Perspektiven für die politische Bildung*. 1st Edition, Giessen. NBKK (Schriften zur politischen Bildung, Kultur und Kommunikation, Bd. 5), p. 14.

However, the majority of Salafists living in Europe practice their puritanical religious interpretations in private, accept the social framework and categorically reject political activism as well as violence.<sup>12</sup> There are marked differences in the extent to which pious Muslims allow their religion to influence policy formation. The political-missionary Salafists, who garnered attention through their Quran distribution campaigns, primarily aim to transfer their desired social model to Western societies through an invitation to Islam (*da'wa*). Jihadist Salafists believe the relationship between Islam and “the West” to be irreconcilable and actively seek conflict with the “infidels”.

The mistake is often made of assuming that Salafism is a phenomenon exclusive to Muslim immigrants in Western Europe. However, around 20 percent of the German Salafists are converts that are attracted, especially in their adolescence, to the purifying elements of Salafist ideology and their promise of community, solidarity and rebellion against western societies. These are features that we can find in far-right extremism as well. In fact, far-right extremism and radical Islamism resemble one another in terms of their formation conditions, ideology, structure and action. There are, for example, parallels in terms of anti-feminism, homophobia and sexism. As such, this suggests that we are neither dealing with a problem purely introduced from the outside nor with a religion that is radicalizing in itself. However, due to its fundamental religious outlook, which is allegedly open to people of all backgrounds, Islamism markedly differentiates itself from the biologically and culturally justified ideas of superiority adopted by far-right extremism, a stance that constitutes the core of extreme right ideology. Thus, Islamists aim to establish a worldwide *Umma*, a community of all Muslims with the intent of absolutizing Islam and organizing society holistically upon the foundation of theocratic sovereignty.

## Commonality in difference

The relationship between far-right extremists and Islamists is not solely characterized by hostility. On the contrary, alliances between both spectra have existed throughout history and they often converge around the common denominator of antisemitism – generally in reference to anti-Zionism or conspiracy theories surrounding “world Jewry”.

Cooperation between far-right extremists and Islamist groupings are subject to strong situational dynamics and are dependent on the prevailing political climate. In post-war Europe, two strains of thematic cooperation and solidarity can essentially be demonstrated. One of these involves revisionism, which attempts to reinterpret historical records with a view towards the Holocaust and the history of Israel. In this context, conferences have repeatedly been held that promote the destruction of Israel and a re-evaluation history, drawing the attendance of representatives from both camps. On the other hand, anti-imperialism and its underlying anti-American attitude has been combined with the call for resistance against the “New World Order” by both groups. Upon cursory glance, connections between individual groupings are demonstrated time and again; yet these often prove to have a sporadic character, such as the links between the NDP and the Islamist organization *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, which is banned in Germany.

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<sup>12</sup> Biene, Janusz; Daphi, Priska; Fielitz, Maik; Müller, Harald; Weipert-Fenner, Irene (2015): Nicht nur eine Frage der Sicherheit. Salafismus in Deutschland als gesamtgesellschaftliche Herausforderung. Frankfurt am Main (HSFK-Standpunkt, 1).

## **Three corresponding patterns**

Three patterns can generally be identified that serve the purpose of identity construction for a respective group as a demarcation to an outside group. Semantically, they are closely connected to one another and manifest themselves through quite contradictory justifications for political action.

### **Demonization of outside groups**

Both spectra require a canvas for projecting their group-focused enmity. A clear distinction between friend and foe serves as the foundation for pursuing an identity-based policy approach through which the deplorable actions of a stigmatized other justify the righteousness of one's own actions. This stance of demarcation is accompanied by a special form of contempt against the other who, as either a non-believer or an alien, does not fit into one's own fundamentalist worldview that sets out to eliminate grey areas.

### **Victimization of one's own group**

Islamists and far-right extremists both simultaneously act based on a position of strength and of weakness: on the one hand, they believe they are superior to the other while, on the other, they find themselves to be constantly subject to unjust discrimination and threats. This has both a strategic and an intrinsic reasoning: The worldview of Islamists and far-right extremists is, for both, based on apocalyptic conceptions which portend the demise of traditional ways of life or the eradication of one's own group. They communicate their actions from a position of defence, justifying the use of any means available. As such, both sides take advantage of the alleged discrimination of their own group and the constructed dominance of the other to attract broader circles of adherents.

### **Conspiracy**

According to the views of Islamists and far-right extremists, the world as it is today can only be held together through sinister machinations. The coherency of their respective simplistic explanations of the world is confronted with a contradictory reality in everyday life, which has little to do with the promises that both spectra issue. It proves difficult to explain why the majority of national populations or the Muslim communities do not share their respective exclusionary claim to truth. The alleged systematic blindness caused by the Jews or the fake news are needed to balance the dissonance between claims and reality as well as to contribute to demonizing other groups.

These three patterns are also reflected in our empirical analysis of the online interactions of both spectra.



**BOTH SIDES  
DEPEND ON  
ONE ANOTHER:  
WHILE THEY  
EACH REQUIRE  
A RESPECTIVE  
BOGEYMAN, THEY  
ALSO DRAW  
INSPIRATION AND LEARN  
FROM THE OTHER.**



**RADICALIZED  
GROUPINGS REQUIRE  
DOOR-OPENER  
ISSUES THAT  
ALLOW THEM TO  
BETTER POSITION  
THEIR POLITICAL  
MESSAGES AND  
GARNER GREATER  
SUPPORT.**

# Related in spirit:

## Narratives in recruitment and propagation

How do these groupings implement justification narratives when promoting their own positions? In terms of recruitment, similar patterns can be found in online and offline mobilization, which would hardly be possible without their respective pendant. Moreover, they condition one another: While they both require a bogeyman, they also inspire and learn from one another.

### “Islamization” and “Islamophobia” as door openers

Radicalized groupings require door-opener issues that allow them to better position their political messages and garner greater support. The depiction of attacks on one’s own community connected with negative images of an oppositional power are especially useful for gathering support. As such, it is no wonder that we are able to find similar communication strategies within both spectra.

For far-right extremists, stigmatization of Islam serves as a hook for expressing racist and anti-democratic positions under the guise of “criticizing Islam”. This argumentation purports to articulate a critique of religion covered by the constitutional law and to warn others of an insidious “Islamization” that threatens national identity and culture. However, very clear resentments against Muslims are fomented which undermine togetherness and consciously aim to use distortions to break up social cohesion. This cultural racism is also constantly directed at liberal democracy, which is made to bear responsibility for the prevailing condition.

Mobilization strategies adopted by Islamist actors are specifically targeted at Muslims who have experienced discrimination due to their background or religious affiliation. For many years, the military conflicts in the Muslim world and the existence of the state of Israel stood at the center as the core motives. Recently, Islamist propaganda has, however, mobilized followers to a much greater extent by referring to the threat to “the” Muslim identity – through an apparent “Islamophobia” within Western European societies that is depicted as an unassailable anti-Muslim movement. This makes it evident “how the fight against ‘Islamophobia’ is used to disguise jihadism”.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Kepel, Gilles (2017): *Der Bruch. Frankreichs gespaltene Gesellschaft*. Munich: Kunstmann, p. 10.

Here, the challenge becomes clear once again: The actors create their argumentation based on experiences of discrimination and exclusion. They explain these “with the ‘disintegration’ of society through an allegedly decadent and colonialist Western culture, which then [serves] as a justification for anti-democratic, anti-pluralist and criminally relevant political actions”.<sup>14</sup>

The labelling of the foe by both sides thus creates various guises for inhumane policies. Under the pretext of ostensibly legitimate criticism, hateful ideologies are adopted and require a hostile counterpart in order to become effective.

## **Similar youth and subcultural propagation patterns**

Research on radicalization has shown that the individual turn towards far-right extremism and Islamist ideologies is fostered by personal crisis experiences, particularly in one’s early years. Islamists and far-right extremists take advantage of this in a targeted manner.<sup>15</sup> To do so, they primarily turn to the Internet and social media, which they use to present appealing formats and content.

The majority of newcomers become attracted by way of low-threshold experience-oriented offers from the respective constituencies. This specifically includes music, clothing, computer games and social leisure activities, which all provide an entry point into the respective parallel worlds of ideology.<sup>16</sup>

Music, in particular, has a high potential for bringing about collective identification with a political or religious idea. Songs permeating with political messages give young people a cultural interpretation of their everyday lives and the collective experience of listening to certain songs creates a (virtual) community among the like-minded. While white power music (Rechtsrock) within racist circles combines messages of hate with entertainment value, naschids, religious eulogies sung a cappella, create an entry point that Islamists make particular use of for further recruitment through spiritual framing.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Häusler, Alexander (2014): *Geliebter Feind?*, p. 314.

<sup>15</sup> Wiktorowicz, Quintan (2005): *Radical Islam Rising. Muslim Extremism in the West*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

<sup>16</sup> Glaser, Stefan; Pfeiffer, Thomas (ed.) (2007): *Erlebnisswelt Rechtsextremismus. Menschenverachtung mit Unterhaltungswert; Hintergründe, Methoden, Praxis der Prävention*. Licensed edition. Bonn: Federal Agency for Civic Education (publication series / Federal Agency for Civic Education, 629).

<sup>17</sup> Said, Behnam T. (2016): *Hymnen des Jihads. Naschids im Kontext jihadistischer Mobilisierung*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag (Mitteilungen zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der islamischen Welt, Band 38).

Certain articles of clothing and worn symbols serve to facilitate recognition among the like-minded along with provocation within the public arena. For organized far-right extremists, codes are communicated through clothing markers in particular.<sup>18</sup> Salafists, on the other hand, appropriate certain brand products with political-religious messages: the Adidas logo is used for provocative Al-Qaeda promotions with reference to September 11th. At the same time, male Salafists wear traditional, open-ankle garments and pants while female Salafists wear black veils (niqab) in order to conceal their face and body and abide by a strict interpretation of the Quran.

Our analyses also uncovered a recent trend: Computer games, especially, and the associated gamer forums have turned into important centers for recruitment. Within Salafist circles, in particular, the first-person shooter game *Call of Duty* has largely become popularized under the designation *Call to Jihad*.<sup>19</sup> Appeals are specifically made to young people in the game's online chats and they are familiarized with the ideas of jihadist Salafism. Among far-right extremists, on the other hand, gamer forums are consciously infiltrated and used for political coordination and international networking. For example, members of the German Identitarian Movement reach agreements about things such as online campaigns and political activities using a platform called Discord.<sup>20</sup>

Similar patterns for attracting young people can be found in the offerings for social leisure activities. Far-right extremists and Salafists set up "care-taker" profiles, especially in regions with little social engagement and a weak civil society landscape, that approach social issues from a very personal perspective. Here, Salafists operate as social workers that may, for example, address young people who consume drugs, offering them perspectives to Islam through sports activities.<sup>21</sup>



**Image 2:** This picture shows 19-year old David G. from Kempten (right) wearing a t-shirt of the now banned Salafist group Millatu Ibrahim, which makes reference to the attacks from September 11th and to Al-Qaeda. David G. later died among the ranks of the so-called Islamic State.

© Screenshot Facebook 18.02.2014

<sup>18</sup> Miller-Idriss, Cynthia (2018): *The Extreme Gone Mainstream. Commercialization and Far Right Youth Culture in Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>19</sup> New Yorker (18.09.2014): *ISIS's Call of Duty*. <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/isis-video-game>.

<sup>20</sup> Davey, Jacob; Ebner, Julia (2017): *The Fringe Insurgency. Connectivity, Convergence and Mainstreaming of the Extreme Right*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. London.

<sup>21</sup> Mansour, Ahmad (2015): *Generation Allah. Warum wir im Kampf gegen religiösen Extremismus umdenken müssen*. 4th edition. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer.

Due to their vulnerable situations, refugees are increasingly becoming targets of missionary Salafists. Some far-right extremists in Germany attempt to attract people and give themselves a social image through song recital evenings and childcare. Additionally, both sides strive to serve as replacement for the state in a staged manner by providing clothes donations and food banks. In order to portray the state as being helpless, both play the role of protective powers for their respective reference groups and organize themselves within defence leagues that medially insert themselves onto the scene.<sup>22</sup> The support provided by condemned and imprisoned activists in the scene also serves as a sphere of activity through which sympathizers and supporters in prison can also be recruited.<sup>23</sup>

## Manliness, readiness to defend and a warrior culture

Both scenes are primarily dominated by men and they promote a patriarchal social design in which women are to assume a specified passive role. Both sides equate manliness with the readiness to defend and it is not uncommon for overt or diffuse misogyny to serve as a motivating force for turning to the respective ideology.<sup>24</sup> At public appearances, men generally make martial displays while women act in the background. This provides a distinct division of complementary role models with clearly defined fields of action.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, gender identities beyond the male-female binary are categorically rejected.

Particularly when comparing sources of jihadism and right-wing terrorism, we can identify marked overlaps in relation to sacrifice narratives of both extremes. They operate based on a “sense of obligation” and fetishize violence with a view to an apocalyptic vision of the end times that they aim to prevent. The aestheticization of fighting and war and the glorification of militarism and heroism serve to support the respective identities of both spectra. There are segments of each current that understand themselves to be soldiers who are either at war against “infidels” or “the blinded”. The crusades assume a special position as a historical point of reference, be it positive or negative.

It is striking that, on the basis of confrontational incidents and discourse and with strategic reference to the protection of women and the defence of their communities, far-right extremist and Islamist groupings make an effort to obtain support for their broader vision of an authoritarian restructuring of society from the mainstream segments of society. However, it quickly becomes evident that the recourse to their “own” women only illustrates their patriarchal dominance all the more.

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<sup>22</sup> Quent, Matthias (2016): Bürgerwehren. Hilfssheriffs oder inszenierte Provokation? Amadeu-Antonio-Stiftung. [http://www.idz-jena.de/fileadmin//user\\_upload/buergerwehreninternet\\_3\\_.pdf](http://www.idz-jena.de/fileadmin//user_upload/buergerwehreninternet_3_.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> BBC (12 May 2014): From jail to jihad? The threat of prison radicalisation. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-27357208>.

<sup>24</sup> Schiedel, Heribert (2017): Unheimliche Verbindungen. Über rechtsextremen Islamneid und die Ähnlichkeiten von Djihadismus und Counterdjihadismus. In: Judith Goetz, Joseph Maria Sedlacek und Alexander Winkler (ed.): *Untergangster des Abendlandes. Ideologie und Rezeption der rechtsextremen „Identitären“*. Hamburg: Marta Press, pp. 285–307.

<sup>25</sup> Schröter, Susanne (2015): Die salafistische Genderordnung und die (falsche) Romantisierung des Dschihad. <https://www.sicherheitspolitik-blog.de/2015/12/15/die-salafistische-genderordnung-und-die-falsche-romantisierung-des-dschihad/>.



**THE  
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WAR AND THE  
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**BOTH SPECTRA  
REQUIRE A  
CANVASS FOR  
PROJECTING THEIR  
GROUP-FOCUSED  
ENMITY.**

# Tit for tat:

## Dynamic processes of interaction at the discursive and action level

Research on protests and social movements has shown that actors always draw orientation from existent patterns of their successful predecessors. It is also common practice to adapt repertoires of opposing groups and adjust their methods to one's own ideological foundation. In the present case, this mutual influence assumes a peculiar constellation. On the one hand, both groups draw their increased popularity from the mobilization of their counterpart. On the other hand, they follow the same patterns as the other side, which are supposed to mobilize their own supporters. This section will explore these contradictory interactions.

### The escalation spiral of dramatic events

Interactions between far-right extremists and Islamists arise when events with high media attention create a common discursive framework within the public sphere. Events demand interpretations and justifications, which are adapted to the narratives of the respective worldview. Terrorist attacks from the right or the Islamist side are a paradigmatic example of this. Here, the groupings focus on convincing third parties of their own viewpoint and attaining the privilege of interpretation for their own polarizing ideology. They do so with the claim that they had predicted certain worst-case scenarios in the framework of their ideology. In so doing, they emphasize the irreconcilability of the respective oppositional side.

Key events can be considered as triggers of an escalation spiral for inter-group conflicts, which heighten support for the radicalized group while also provoking polarizing counter-reactions from the other side. Research has discussed this using the term “cumulative radicalization” or “cumulative extremism”.<sup>26</sup> The polarizing consequences for people's everyday lives highlight this concept of mutual escalation that originated from the British context. Such escalation spirals are particularly easy to observe on the Internet: As we will demonstrate in our empirical analysis, the Internet gives rise to powerful, and in part international, reactions to mutual mobilization attempts.

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<sup>26</sup> Bartlett, Jamie; Birdwell, Jonathan (2013): Cumulative Radicalization Between the Far-Right and Islamist Groups in the UK. A Review of Evidence. Hg. v. Demos. London. Eatwell, Roger (2006): Community Cohesion and Cumulative Extremism in Contemporary Britain. In: *Political Quarterly* 77 (2), pp. 204–216.

While actual confrontations between the two camps rarely take place in Germany, we can witness dynamics of mobilization and counter-mobilization in Great Britain that lead to stronger internal bonds within the groups and contribute to the politicization of the adjoining milieu as well as the radicalization of those who are already part of organized groups.

## Strategic references

Reference to the respective opposition is of a symbolic nature and is specifically created by way of mobilizing texts and graphics. In line with the three specified frameworks of *demonization*, *victimization* and *conspiracy*, we can identify versatile ways of expressing ideology that manifests in contradictory messages. One aspect that both spectra share is the homogenization and antagonism of identities. The constructed “inseparability of a nation” is, for example, always directed at an external group. It implies an inevitability of confrontation between the two sides and depicts the opponent as either dehumanized or overpowering – or both.

Both far-right extremists and Islamist groups utilize provocations through which they communicate their political designs. In this context, the far right, in particular, often works with the adoption of symbols of the opposing side. Paradoxically, a certain degree of recognition for the strategic and operative approach taken by Islamist groupings is articulated within far-right circles. Anti-Muslim groups repeatedly employ Muslim concepts in order to draw attention to themselves. This includes the rallying cry “Deut Vult” (God wills it), which alludes to the capture of Jerusalem during the first crusades and is used as an equivalent to the Muslim expression “Allahu Akbar”. Within the Anglo-American realm, this provocation is carried even further: online activists from the alt-right movement use memes and video animations to invoke a “white jihad” or a “white sharia”. This approach is part of a calculated ambivalence within right-wing online culture, which operates between seriousness and humour as well as between cynicism and blatant group-focused enmity.<sup>27</sup>



**Image 3:** A meme of a counter-jihad scene that uses the aesthetics of the Crusades to make the threat that there is also a Christian jihad and calls for the struggle against Islam.

© Screenshot from the site Defend the Modern World  
<https://defendthemodernworld.wordpress.com/2013/08/20/counterjihad-a-brief-clarification/>



**Abbildung 4:** Cover of the book by Salafist Sven Lau and the right-wing “Compact Magazin”

<sup>27</sup> See Fielitz, Maik; Ebner, Julia; Guhl, Jakob (2018): Zwischen Online-Hass und rassistischer Gewalt. Die sogenannte Alternative Rechte'. Fact Sheet des Instituts für Demokratie und Zivilgesellschaft. [www.idz-jena.de](http://www.idz-jena.de).

On the Islamist side, we can, for example, see the adoption of certain frames that are derived from far-right territory. Incarcerated Salafist Sven Lau titled his book “Fremd im eigenen Land” (A Stranger in one’s own Country) and used a narrative which had been characteristic of a loss of identity propagated by the right.

Even the naming of certain organizations cannot be understood without the opponent. Established in October 2015, the *Hooligans gegen Salafisten* (Hooligans against Salafists) was the first grouping on the far-right fringes that consciously justified its existence based on the rejection of opposing groups. *Pegida* is another example of a perceived threat being adopted in the name. Then again, Generation Islam represents an example of how Islamist actors draw inspiration from the *Identitarian Movement* for their branding, as well as in the form of a youth-oriented presentation of radical content.



**Image 5:** Logo of the organization *Generation Islam*

© Screenshot from the site <http://generation-islam.de/>

## Mutual learning

Both movements learn from one another in relation to their communication strategies, security needs and defense against prosecution. Far-right extremists and Islamists observe how the communication strategy of their opponent affects society and they adopt models that prove successful.

They are both active in the creation and development of secure (digital) spaces. They make use of modern media in order to evade monitoring by security authorities and strict measures against hate speech on the Internet. The so-called German Facebook Law and the NetzDG (German Network Enforcement Act), which came into force in Germany on October 1, 2017, led to the accelerated development of new technological applications and cyber strategies created by Islamists and far-right extremists. For example, the German and English-language Islamist telegram group *Muslim Tec DE/EN* made a call for “cyber jihad” in the fall of 2017 and developed their own text encryption method: *MuslimCryp*. Their administrators also work on automated mass invitations meant to attract accounts with Arabic and Islamic-sounding names to the closed IS groups.

Meanwhile, there has been a growing trend among far-right extremists to change over to self-created social networks (e.g., Gab and Minds) as well as crowdsourcing platforms (e.g., Hatreon) and they are developing their own news applications (e.g., the new Patriot Peer application created by the *Identitarian Movement*). On the far-right extremist side, the introduction of stricter laws against hate speech in Germany and the systematic deletion of racist and anti-democratic comments following the Charlottesville demonstrations in the United States in August 2017 have accelerated this worldwide shift towards alternative technologies (“alt tech”). Cooperation between alt right and the *Identitarian Movement* has led to the increased use of these technologies in Germany as well.

Islamist groups discuss their strategies for reaching “Muslims from the grey areas” on Telegram

while far-right extremists talk about their methods for radicalizing the “normies”, e.g., average internet users, on the Discord platform. Due to the heightening restrictions on the large-scale online platforms, online activists on both sides of the spectrum are creating ever-more bots and fake accounts to disseminate their (often short-lived) propaganda on Facebook and Twitter. While Telegram remains the preferred communication channel for groups close to the *Islamic State* (IS) and *Al-Qaida*<sup>28</sup>, Discord is increasingly being used by far-right extremist networks (e.g., the *Identitarian Movement* and *Reconquista Germania*) for internal communication and coordination of their Facebook and Twitter campaigns and trolling activities.

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**Trolling: A strategy to undermine political discussions by emotionally provoking other dialogue partners.**

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Collective learning processes can be observed at the operative level as well. It is no coincidence that the use of vehicles for terror attacks are lauded as particularly effective weapons in both pro-Islamic State chats as well as Neo-Nazi private chats. In the second week of August 2017, when, first, an anti-racist activist lost her life in a car attack during the far-right extremist demonstration in Charlottesville and then, a few days later, an Islamic State-inspired terrorist drove into a group of people in Barcelona, both Islamist and far-right extremist groups shared images of cars and trucks with a call to make increased use of improvised attacks with vehicles. Prior to that in June 2017, an anti-Muslim vehicular attack was carried out in London against a group of pedestrians in front of the Finsbury Mosque. During the Islamist attack at Breitscheid Square in Berlin in December 2016, as well, the perpetrator used a truck as the instrument of crime.

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<sup>28</sup> See Fielitz, Maik; Ebner, Julia; Guhl, Jakob (2018): Zwischen Online-Hass und rassistischer Gewalt. Die sogenannte Alternative Rechte'. Fact Sheet des Instituts für Demokratie und Zivilgesellschaft. [www.idz-jena.de](http://www.idz-jena.de).



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**THE DISCOURSE AND  
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# Virtual skirmishes and real consequences:

## An empirical analysis

Islamist and far-right extremist narratives clash with particular frequency on the Internet and mutually stir each other up. Our study of online interactions between Islamism and far-right extremism provides direct evidence that Islamist and far-right extremist movements both approximate and amplify one another at various levels.

Our analysis of virtual skirmishes by Islamist and far-right extremists focuses on measuring content-related, personal and event-related interdependencies between the two currents on the Internet. We apply a combination of social-listening tools, linguistic analysis programs and network analysis instruments. In total, we analyzed over 10,000 pieces of Islamist and far-right extremist Facebook content and more than one million anti-Muslim German-language Twitter posts from the period of January 1, 2013 to November 30, 2017. Additionally, three month's of ethnographic research into social media was carried out.

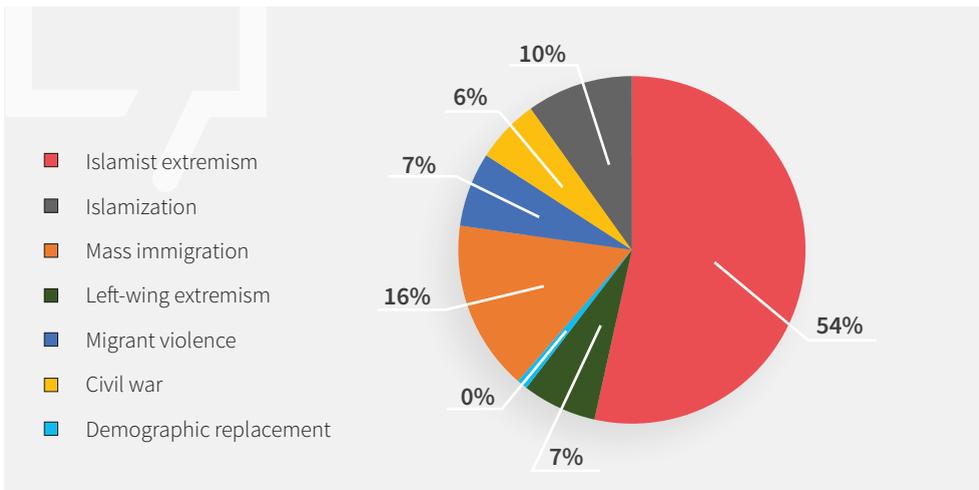
### Contentual interdependencies

The discourse and language analysis of far-right extremist and Islamist online content published in German language illustrates an interrelation between the narratives of both spectra. Both employ strategies of victimization of one's own group and the demonization of the external group, often in connection with the idea of an inevitable war between "the West" and "Islam" along with conspiracy theories involving the political elite and media. While we observed topics such as jihadism, terrorism and Islamization dominating the far-right extremist side, the Islamist side was characterized by posts about anti-Muslim sentiments, experiences of racism and violence against Muslims. Far-right extremists accuse the entire Muslim community of harboring violent intentions and describe jihadism as one of the inherent traits of Islam. On the side of Islamist users, on the other hand, anti-Muslim racism is ascribed to the entire West.

## Far-right extremist internet content

Based on qualitative preliminary research into social media, we first created a list of recurrent terms that arise within far-right extremist victim and foe narratives. The stems of the following words were used for the analysis:

mass migration	foreign	infiltration	islamization
the great replacement	jihad	terror	kuffar
islamist far-left extremists	invasion	stopIslam	rapefugees
crimegrants	sharia	isolated case	reconquista
remigration	deportation	closed borders	civil war



**Image 6:** Victim and foe narratives in far-right extremist Facebook groups

Of a total of 6,190 analyzed posts (including comments), 5,945 contained key words that expressed victimization and demonization narratives based on Islamist violence directed towards the West.

An analysis of these key words showed that “Islamist extremism” comprised more than half (54 percent) of all identified victim and foe narratives. The word “terror” appeared most frequently across all pages, by far (a total of 2,372 times).

The idea of an insidious Islamization – often linked with the allegation of an “invasion” – was likewise seen to be a significant threat (16 percent). Apart from that, “mass immigration” assumed a relatively high position within the discussions. Here, a distinction can be made between posts that spoke of a “immigration problem” and those that referenced acts of violence committed by migrants (7 percent). “Far-left extremism”, as well, took a prominent position in the victimhood discussions (7 percent).

While fears of a demographic (e.g., ethnic) “replacement” were only explicitly discussed in less than 1 percent of the analysed victim narratives, 6 percent concretely addressed the danger of a civil war between “original Germans” and immigrations or Muslims.

The quantitative analysis of the key words was supplemented with a qualitative analysis of far-right extremist posts on Facebook, Twitter and Discord in order to also collect content that was not text based. Our observations here likewise confirmed the strong emphasis placed on the demonization of refugees and Muslims, who are associated with terrorism, and a victimization of the “German nation” or “European civilization”.

**The following images, graphics and quotes contain discriminatory and hurtful expressions. We distance ourselves from these statements and only reproduce them here for academic purposes.**

The following examples demonstrate the differing victim and foe narratives used by far-right extremist groups.

### Example 1: Victimization of one’s own group

The identitarian group *Ein Prozent für unser Land* (One Percent for our Country) portrays its adherents as a victims. In this post, the group suggests that the “Germans” lead less safe lives due to the presence of “more refugees” and “more Islam” and that they will receive even lower pension payments during retirement.



**Image 7:** Facebook page of the Identitarian Movement “Ein Prozent”.

(<https://www.facebook.com/einprozentfuerunserland/posts/1698148433569423>)

## Example 2: The narrative of the unavoidable conflict

The anti-Muslim *Pegida* movement shares a post which presents the presumption that “dishonest news reporting” about far-right extremist violence directed at refugees and Angela Merkel’s popularity ratings seeks to achieve the goal of “instigating the nation’s people into fighting a civil war against each other”.



Image 8: Facebook page of *Pegida*  
(<https://www.facebook.com/pegidaofficial/>)

## Example 3: Demonization of the outside group

The anti-Muslim Facebook group *Patriotische Deutsche Kraft* (Patriotic German Power) reports about a far-right extremist demonstration and labels refugees as “illegal invaders” and “Naf-ris”<sup>29</sup>, whom they accuse of committing “mass rape” and “sexual attacks”.



Abbildung 9: Facebook page of *Patriotische Deutsche Kraft*  
([https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=1711303925828137&id=1523795871245611](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1711303925828137&id=1523795871245611))

<sup>29</sup> This racist terminology is an abbreviation of North Africans and, since the night of New Year’s Eve 2016, it has been used in connection with offensive behavior in relation to women. This entails a generalized abasement of people who are allegedly of North African heritage.

## Islamist internet content

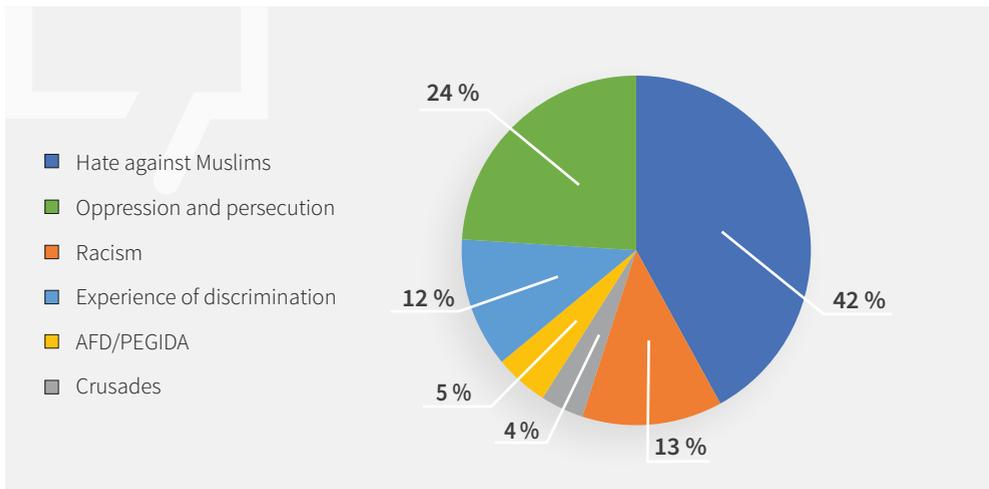
We repeated the language analysis and applied it to the content of Islamist Facebook groups. In order to measure the relevance of the victim and foe narratives in connection with Islamism and Islamist terrorism, we used the following key words based on qualitative research into social networks:

discrimination  
racist  
anti-Muslim

oppression  
persecute  
crusades

islamophobe  
islamophobia  
crusader

xenophobia  
anti-Islam  
AfD / PEGIDA



**Image 10:** Victim and foe narratives in Islamist Facebook groups.

In 5,163 Facebook posts (including comments), we found a total of 1,877 key words emphasizing one's own victimhood and the image of a hostile West.

In the Islamist networks, more than half of all victim and foe narratives made references either to perceived hate directed against Muslims (42 percent) or against ethnic minorities or racism (13 percent). A total of 24 percent spoke of oppression and persecution of Muslims and 12 percent addressed experiences with discrimination. The reference to historical victim narratives, such as the Crusades and crusaders, accounted for around 4 percent, while present-day right-wing populist movements and parties such as *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) and *Pegida* were mentioned in 5 percent of victimhood content.

A supplementary qualitative analysis of Islamist rhetoric in social networks and applications confirmed the central role of victimhood narratives in reference to far-right extremism and anti-Muslim racism. The observed Islamist Facebook groups shared videos of European right-wing populists, images of far-right extremist demonstrations, articles about violence against Muslims abroad and experiences with discrimination from everyday life in Germany.

These articles were accompanied by statements such as “Day after day, the aggression against our religious community increases” and “It’s not about Salafists, extremists, jihadists, etc. Awake, o you Muslims and do not let yourselves be manipulated. They hate Islam!”<sup>30</sup>

The following examples demonstrate the differing victim and foe narratives that are used by Islamist groups.

### Example 1: Global aggression against Muslims

The radical Islamist Facebook group *Gefangene Muslime Team Hamburg* (Imprisoned Muslims Team Hamburg) placed itself in the role of the victim the day after the group *Die Wahre Religion* (The True Religion) was banned, drawing from injustices and aggression against Muslims across the world.



Image 11: Facebook page of *Gefangene Muslime Team Hamburg*

(<https://www.facebook.com/gefangemuslimeteamhamburg/photos/a.1519451211702182.1073741828.1519444915036145/1696875120626456/?type=3&theater>)

### Example 2: Personal experiences of hostility

This post on the Islamist Facebook group *Wacht auf* (Wake Up) presents a case of anti-Muslim harassment in public. Towards the end, the author gave up trying to talk to “this kafir” (non-believer). This post demonstrates the dynamic of mutual verbal debasement.



Image 12: Facebook page of *Wacht Auf*

(<https://www.facebook.com/WachtAufDawa/posts/534822783372513>)

<sup>30</sup> See Facebook post from *Gefangene Muslime Team Hamburg* <https://www.facebook.com/gefangemuslimeteamhamburg/posts/1696875120626456:0>.

### Example 3: Victimization of one's own group

In November 2017, the Islamist Telegram channel *AlUsudal Ghuraba* complained about oppression of Muslims around the globe, which would never cease in this life (“ad-dunya”). God is therefore the only hope since “there is neither strength nor power outside of God” (*La hawla wa la quatta Illah Billah*).

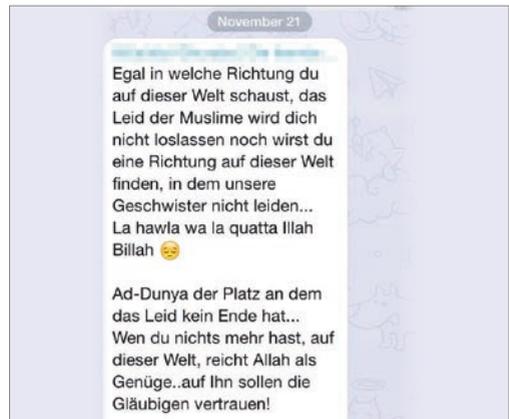


Image 13: Telegram message, 21.11.2017

(Telegram group)

Linguistic analyses of posts by Islamist and far-right extremist accounts have also indicated that there are significant overlaps in the vocabulary used by both. Our analysis of over 95,000 posts from the period between January 1, 2013 and November 30, 2017, using the Crimson Hexagon social listening tool showed that Islamist terms were more frequently used by far-right extremists than by the Islamists themselves. For key words that would otherwise normally be ascribed to the Islamist spectrum, such as “*shirk*”, “*tawheed*”, “*tauhid*”, “*jannah*”, “*takfeer*”, “*khawarij*”, “*allahuakbar*”, “*kuffar*” and “*kafer*”, we uncovered more posts by far-right extremists than by Islamists. (The explanations of the terms can be found in the attached glossary.)

### Person and group-related interdependencies

Based on network analyses and ethnographic online research, we studied the extent and the nature of direct and indirect interactions between Islamists and far-right extremists on the Internet. While we classified discussions and commentary as direct interaction, we took references to media articles by the other side of the respective spectrum to entail indirect interaction.

With the help of the Method52 social listening tool, we evaluated the extent to which far-right extremists and Islamist users directly interacted with one another. Through this, we attempted to reconstruct just how high the portion of Islamist comments in anti-Muslim groups was as well as how high the portion of anti-Muslim comments in Islamist groups. We first filtered out all comments from the extensive database of far-right extremist and anti-Muslim commentary that fell within the three areas of demonization of the external group, victimization of one's own group and unavoidable conflict.

This made it evident that anti-Muslim commenters exhibited a great deal of interest in directly influencing discussions within Islamist groups. Among the 3,934 comments that we analyzed in the Islamist groups, a total of 459 were left by far-right extremist users (12 percent). Inversely, hardly any Islamists engaged in debates carried out in anti-Muslim groups. Even after numerous attempts at finding Islamist commenters in far-right extremist comment sections, we were unable to identify a single one among the one hundred coded comments in the anti-Muslim groups that could have been clearly classified as Islamist simply due to the content of the posted text.

This leads us to the conclusion that far-right extremist Facebook users try to express their resentment directly towards Islamist groups, while Islamist Facebook users only do so quite rarely. This indicates that anti-Muslim groups and individuals place greater significance on the Islamist online discourses than Islamists place on those of far-right extremist groups and, as such, make much greater efforts to “infiltrate” the opposing discourse – as well as to articulate their hatred. Far-right extremists operate with greater aggression and attempt to directly attack presumed opponents on the Internet.

### Example 1: Anti-Islam comments on IZRS post

Below is one post in which the fundamentalist *Islamic Central Council of Switzerland* (IZRS) sought to draw attention to a survey which stated that 46 percent of Swiss youth perceive Islam to be a threat. One user commented that this is understandable: “OF COURSE MORE AND MORE PEOPLE HATE MUSLIMS!”



Image 14: Facebook page of *Islamischen Zentralrat Schweiz* (IZRS) (<https://www.facebook.com/islamrat/>)

## Example 2: A racist comments on a picture of Abou Nagie

Below this picture posted by the preacher of hate, Abou Nagie (of *Die Wahre Religion*), who has since fled Germany, one user calls for a ban on distributing the Quran, to which another user added: “You're right, all the rats need to get out”.



Image 15: Facebook page of Ibrahim Abou Nagie  
(<https://www.facebook.com/Abounagie/>)

## Example 3: Anti-Islam comment on IZRS post

Shortly after the Islamist attacks in November 2015, an anti-Muslim commenter left a comment below a post by IZRS, characterizing Mohammed as a “mix between Breivik und Dutroux”.



Image 16: Facebook page of Islamischen Zentralrats Schweiz (IZRS)  
(<https://www.facebook.com/islamrat/>)

Based on our ethnographic research into social media and apps, we set out to identify the extent to which direct interactions arise between the two spectra. Our observations showed that Islamist and far-right extremists regularly refer to one another in their communication. This often takes place in the form of references to newspaper articles or links to people or organizations of the other extreme.

### Example 1: Article about the Islamist “Read” campaign

*Pegida Austria* posted an article by the anti-Muslim newspaper *Jungen Freiheit* about the ban on Salafist Quran distribution activities in Hamburg, organized by the radical Islamist network *Die Wahre Religion*, which was banned by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior just a few months later.



Image 17: Facebook page of *Pegida Austria*  
 (<https://www.facebook.com/pegida.at/posts/1803221459923301>)

### Example 2: Article about Salafist activities

The far-right magazine *Compact* posted its own article about a Muslim militia in Mönchengladbach, Germany, under surveillance by German Office for the Protection of the Constitution, which set out to “protect brothers and sisters from the ever-growing hate against Islam”.<sup>31</sup>



Image 18: Facebook page of Ibrahim Abou Nagie  
 (<https://www.facebook.com/Abounagie>)

<sup>31</sup> See RP Online (28 July 2017): Das steckt hinter der angeblichen Muslim-Bürgerwehr. <http://www.rp-online.de/nrw/staedte/moenchengladbach/das-steckt-hinter-der-angeblichen-muslim-buergerwehr-aid-1.6973642>.

### Example 3: Post about terrorist Anis Amri

The far-right extremist *Identitarian Movement of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* posted the following comment a few weeks after the terror attack at the Christmas market at Breitscheid Square in Berlin. In its post, the group declares that people like the Islamist terrorist Anis Amri should have never been allowed to enter Germany and that the authorities should have been able to identify them based on their false identities. In turn, the *Identitarian Movement of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* called for “safe borders and strict #Remigration”.



Image 19: Facebook page of the *Identitarian Movement of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*

(<https://www.facebook.com/IBmeckuvp/photos/a.1519126851648122.1073741828.1519084381652369/1983493241878145/?type=3&theater>)

### Example 4: References to right-wing populists

The Islamist IZRS posted a video on Facebook in which Gerald Grosz, former chairman of the Austrian right-wing populist party *Bündnis Zukunft Österreich* (BZÖ) compared the hijab to the swastika.

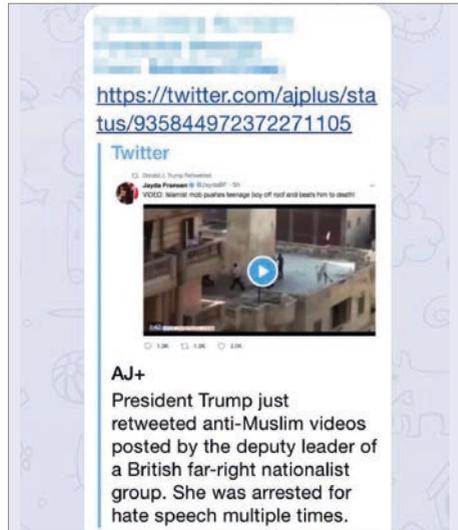


Image 20: Facebook page of *Islamischen Zentralrats Schweiz* (IZRS)

(<https://www.facebook.com/islamrat/videos/1544812535607947/>)

### Example 5: Reference to Trump’s retweet of Britain First

In the Telegram group, *Terror Agency Sister*, one user shared an article which reported that US president Donald Trump had shared anti-Muslim videos that had previously been posted by the far-right extremist British organization *Britain First*. The fact that the president of the United States would grant the appearance of legitimacy to an openly anti-Islam group is taken to be evidence that “the West” is “at war” with “Islam”.



**Image 21:** Post in the Telegram group: *Terror Agency Sister* chatting group... an article from AJ+ was (including a video from Britain First activist Jayda Fransen, which was retweeted by Donald Trump).

(Telegram group)

### Example 6: Article about a “racist professor”

The radical Islamist group Islam – Die wahre Religion (Islam – The True Religion) shared a posting by *Generation Islam* about the protests against racist statements made by a law professor teaching in Leipzig. This is a prime example of how groups that exhibit enmity towards others are able to access further circles of potential sympathizers through shared discontent.



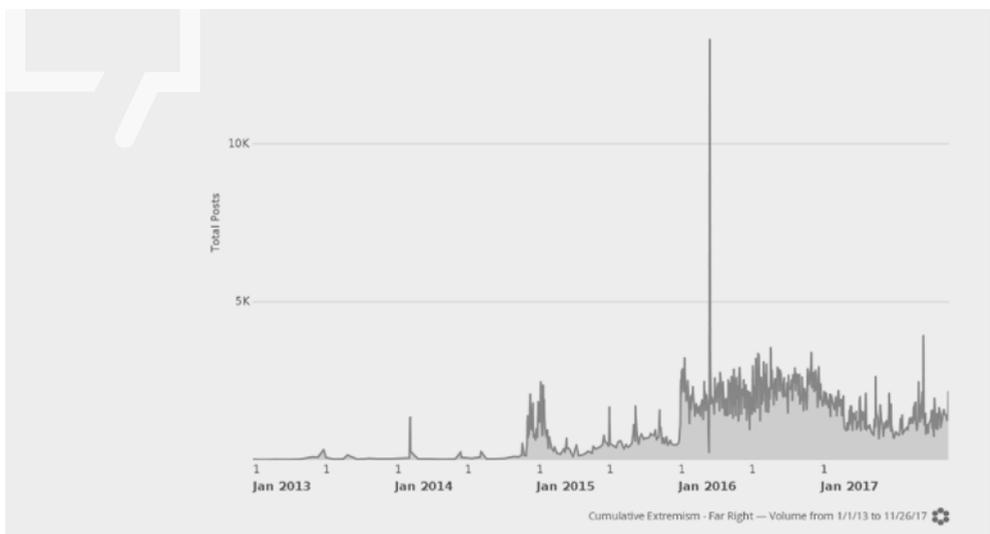
**Image 22:** Facebook page of *Islam - Die wahre Religion* <https://www.facebook.com/derwahreglaube/>

The majority of all observed online interactions between far-right and Islamist extremists were of the indirect sort: though they often spoke about one another, they seldom spoke with one another. References to the other side of the spectrum often occurred on occasion of political events, demonstrations or acts of violence. While far-right extremists frequently turned Islamists into scapegoats through their rhetoric and projected their activities onto the entire Muslim community, actual direct interaction remained limited.

These observations allow us to conclude that far-right extremists are not primarily concerned with fighting Islamism; rather, the issue of terrorism is used in order to extend their reach in political grey areas and to radicalize potential sympathizers. In the first place, far-right extremist posts about Islamists and Islamist posts about far-right extremists serve the purpose of producing notions of victimhood and constructing an image of the foe. The observed dynamics elucidate the mutual dependency between far-right extremists and Islamists, as the respective foe is instrumentalized for the purposes of propaganda.

## Event-related interdependencies

The analysis of over one million anti-Muslim posts created between the beginning of 2013 and the end of 2017 reveals that there are significant increases in anti-Muslim postings across social media channels (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, blogs and forums) in the wake of Islamist terror attacks. With each attack, new terms for demonizing Muslims are reinforced through the vocabulary of anti-Muslim extremism. Additionally, the base level of anti-Muslim postings rises with nearly every attack. Our observations of pro-Islamic State and pro-Al-Qaida groups likewise reveal distinct Islamist reactions to far-right extremist events and activities. Both far-right extremist demonstrations as well as political events, such as the electoral victories achieved by AfD during the German parliamentary elections were taken up in order to strengthen the image of a generally anti-Muslim West and to serve as a recruiting argument.



**Image 23:** Number of anti-Muslim statements made in German on Twitter between 2013 and 2017.

The illustration shows that, in the years 2013/2014, the base level for anti-Muslim statements on Twitter was very low, except for minor outliers such as during the Swiss referendum, through which immigration was limited by a constitutional amendment. Shortly before Christmas Day 2014, reports about the *Pegida* protest movement, which was still relatively new at the time, led to a larger increase, which would be surpassed just a few weeks later following the attacks on the satire magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and a Jewish supermarket in Paris. After these two peaks, the base level of anti-Muslim statements never again returned to its pre-December 2014 level. Over the course of 2015, the base level continued to rise gradually, with peaks caused by an article frequently shared within right-wing circles about the “insidious Islamization” of Indonesia, the 2015 migration wave and the Paris attacks in November 2015.

The reactions to the sexual assaults at Cologne’s central station on the night of New Year’s Eve 2015 significantly increased this base level. Ever since, serious terror attacks such as those in Brussels, Nice, Berlin, London and Manchester repeatedly led to large increases. Even though the base level somewhat decreased around the end of 2017, even approaching the level from 2015, events such as the attack in Manhattan at the beginning of November 2017 once again led to a marked increase in anti-Muslim posts.

A closer look into the 625,861 German-language tweets with the relevant key words in the period from December 1, 2016 to November 30, 2017, underlines the increase in the volume of anti-Muslim and xenophobic tweets after terror attacks. The two most significant increases were recorded on March 23, 2016, the day of the attack in Brussels, and September 23, 2017, the day before the German parliamentary elections. In the 24 hours following the terror attack at the Breitscheid Square Christmas market in Berlin on 19 December 2016 and the attack on the London Bridge on June 3, 2017, there was also a considerable increase in the number of anti-Muslim Tweets. The days surrounding New Year’s Eve 2017, which were marked by the nightclub attack in Istanbul and the anniversary of the sexual assaults at the central rail station in Cologne, also witnessed increased hate speech against Muslims and immigrants. These trends coincide with the observation of a greater number of hate crimes in the wake of terror attacks, as, for example, the British anti-racism organization *Tell MAMA* reported.<sup>32</sup>

Due to the prompt removal of Islamist posts and profiles on Twitter, it was not possible for us to conduct the same qualitative analysis for Islamist reactions to far-right extremist activities. Instead, we analyzed postings made by Islamist groups over a period of three months.

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<sup>32</sup> Tell MAMA (17 October 2017): Hate Crime sharply rose in England and Wales after terror attacks. <https://tellmamauk.org/hate-crime-sharply-rose-england-wales-terror-attacks/>.

Our analysis of five German-language and five English-language Telegram channels presents Islamist reactions to far-right extremist events. Both political as well as militant far-right extremist activities were seized by pro-Islamic State and pro-Al-Qaida groups in order to reinforce the image of the generally “evil Islamophobic West” and their own victimhood. There were, for example, strong reactions to the far-right extremist demonstrations in Charlottesville, Warsaw and Paris, as well as in response to the German parliamentary elections and the growing influence of AfD.

### Example 1: Reactions to far-right extremist demonstrations in Europe

In November 2017, the German and Arabic-language Islamist Telegram group As-Sahwa shared images of far-right extremist demonstrations in France and Poland in order to draw attention to the anti-Muslim sentiment of these demonstrations, which suited their own worldview quite well.



**Image 24:** Telegram message from November 12, 2017, *As-Sahwa Das Erwachen* (Telegram group)



**Image 25:** Telegram message from November 12, 2017, *As-Sahwa Das Erwachen* (Telegram group)



**Image 26:** Telegram message from November 13, 2017, *As-Sahwa Das Erwachen* (Telegram group)

## Example 2: Reactions to far-right extremist demonstrations in Charlottesville, USA

On Monday, August 14, 2017, the pro-Islamic *State Tawheed Network* used Telegram to share photos of far-right extremist demonstrators who had marched in Charlottesville the previous weekend to promote a white America. The comment below read: “The racist face of America”. Moreover, the rise of nationalism and its connection to the rejection of Islam and its values were discussed in the channel.

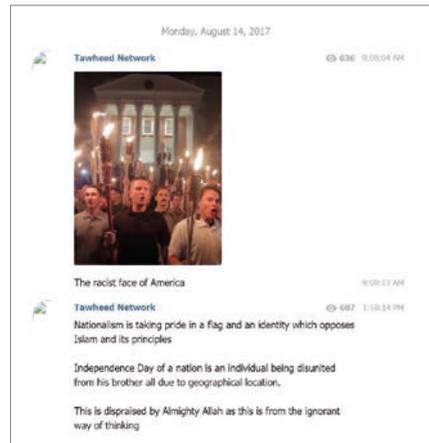


Image 27: *Tawheed Network* from August 14, 2017

(IS-Taswheed Network)

## Example 3: Reactions to the German election results

Immediately after the German parliamentary elections on September 24, 2017, the results were discussed in the Telegram chat titled *MuslimTec DE/EN*. One user expressed his dismay about the electoral success of the AfD party.

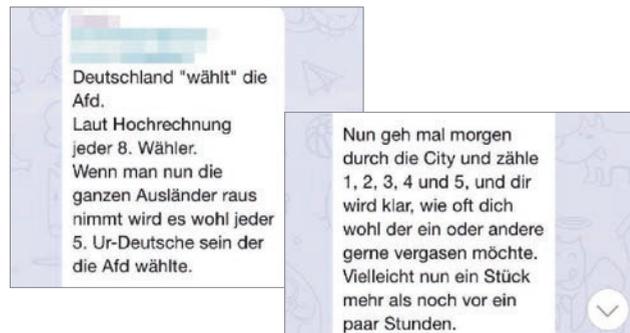


Image 28: Telegram message from September 24, 2017, *MuslimTec DE/EN*

(Telegram group)

Based on the election results, he calculated that one-in-five “original Germans” likely foster genocidal intentions towards Muslims.

The results of our online analysis illustrate the reciprocal dependency between far-right and Islamist extremists. As the respective adversary is instrumentalized for the purposes of propaganda to confer credibility to each side’s own narrative and legitimacy to its own activities, both movements rely on one another.



**THE RESPECTIVE  
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**ISLAMISTS AND  
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EXTREMISTS PIT  
THEMSELVES  
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INTER-RELIGIOUS  
AND INTER-CULTURAL  
TOGETHERNESS  
WITHIN WESTERN  
EUROPEAN SOCIETIES.**

# Beyond cozy togetherness:

## Third parties and communicative action

The interaction between both sides cannot be understood without the (discursive) reference to third parties. Political action is always directed at a certain audience, one that is addressed with differing, in part contradictory, messages. It is difficult to categorize political action without addressing the state or other third-party actors as additional relevant target audiences. In this context, the communication strategies employed by both actors have to be considered. Finally, the constructed threat of an external group is utilized to enforce one's own (regressive) agenda.

### Strategic polarization and the elimination of grey zones

As is the case with other social movements, one aspect that both movements have in common is that they address a broad milieu with which they selectively interact. Neither radical Islamism nor anti-Muslim far-right extremism operate without an attachment to broad social environments. They attempt to achieve a polarizing influence on these in order to render their worldviews and ideologies more effective. They are concerned with establishing a clear friend-foe marker and instilling a compulsion to choose a side instead of remaining in the grey zone. They pit themselves against respectful, inter-religious and inter-cultural togetherness within Western European societies and assert the incompatibility of Islam and democracy. In this, both aim to incite Muslim and non-Muslims to stand against one another.

In the context of Islamism, the Islamic State argued for the “extinction of the grayzone” in its magazine *Dabiq* as a response to the condolences expressed by many Muslims in regard to the victims of the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015.

This denies the possibility of being able to live out a non-fundamentalist interpretation of Islam within Western European societies; any Muslims who try to do so are considered by the Islamic State to be deluded, as they are said to ignore the general enmity towards Islam harboured by Western society. They are taken to be non-believers as long as they do not proclaim the ideas and undertakings of the caliphate. The aggressive reaction expressed in this



Image 29: Cover of the magazine *Dabiq* of the Islamic State terror militia.

edition of *Dabiq* shows that a nerve was struck among militant Islamists: the supposed antagonistic relationship between the West and Islam was broken apart in the reality of everyday life, which entailed a rejection of the protective function for Muslims across the world that is communicated by the Islamic State.

In the context of anti-Muslim extremism, a similar dynamic is directed against the 'tolerance' of many people who welcome refugees or promote inter-religious dialogue. The argument made here is that the actual threat of Islamist terrorism concealed behind the immigration of people from Muslim countries is being ignored. Accordingly, this behaviour can be explained by the prescribed political correctness that forces people to give up their own identity. And, in order to counteract this, it is now more vital than ever to take a definitive stance against Muslims as well as against tolerant positions in relation to refugees, immigration and Islam.

Anti-Muslim racism thus helps to normalize far-right extremist groups and their agenda while, at the same time, satisfying the narratives of the Islamist extremists. This is likewise the cause and consequence of the rise of reactionary powers: The more that anti-Muslim stereotypes spread within society, the more space is granted to fundamentalist interpretations on both sides. This dynamic renders it increasingly difficult to distinguish between diffuse fears and organized anti-Muslim racism, which is part of the far-right's strategy. As such, Islamist groupings and their actions consciously contribute to the stigmatization of the entire Muslim community, despite their numerical marginality. This strategy works on account of the resonance generated within right-wing populist and far-right extremist movements.

## Enhancing cohesion within one's own milieu

In both Islamism and far-right extremism, we are confronted with a mosaic of conceptual designs and actors who struggle for a common agenda. The various sub-groupings compete for limited resources and predominance within the extended milieu. This includes the existence of cleavages, personal feuds and conflicts over the strategic orientation of the respective movement in day-to-day operations. The reference to a common enemy does, however, contribute to bringing together a divided political field under a common campaign and overcoming disputes (at least temporarily).

At the same time, making use of prejudices against Muslims serves as the lowest common denominator among far-right extremists.<sup>33</sup> All the elements of the far-right mosaic coalesce around this point – from the right-wing populist AfD to the extreme right *Identitarian Movement* and from right-wing conspiracy theorists to the militant Neo-Nazis. Through the high degree of public attention and the appeal of new support groups from society, all facets take anti-Muslim racism to be an effective vehicle for better positioning the group politically and for forging alliances.

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<sup>33</sup> Feldman, Matthew (2012): From Radical-Right Islamophobia to 'Cumulative Extremism'. Published by: Faith Matters. London. <https://www.faith-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/islamophobia.pdf>, p. 8.

We are also able to identify similar mechanisms within Islamist circles. While German Salafism constituted a rather homogeneous phenomenon in its early pioneering phase, the spectrum became fragmented in the wake of a greater intake of adherents and the struggles for prestige and resources that erupted within the group.<sup>34</sup> While theological debates about the interpretation of Islam gave rise to internal discord, these were put aside (at least temporarily) through references to a common enemy. Groupings that are otherwise critical of one another particularly unite in the context of mobilization against the state of Israel. The communicated stigmatization of Muslims thereby elicits the unification of their self-appointed leaders, who place tactical imperatives on the backburner, dependent on the occasion; this, in turn, allows for conflicts to be reduced in the long term.

Overall, we can therefore determine that both sides benefit from cohesion among the scenes. They rely on the constructed threat based on the figure of the outsider/non-believer as it provides an inverted canvass for projecting their own ideology. In order to broaden their base and establish political unity among divided actors. The unity of their own camp is constantly emphasized to demonstrate a position of strength in relation to the opponent. Conflicts within the opposing camp are depicted as weakness and are therefore utilized by both sides as a source of propaganda.

## Challenge of the state

For both sides, the state remains the indirect or implicit target of their actions. Far-right extremists as well as Islamist groups both attempt to provoke official government reactions through their high-profile public appearances or make use of propaganda to substitute government actions and thereby acquire legitimacy for their own actions. In the first case, the aim is to make a demand for legal consequences, such as a ban on certain associations, more stringent punishment for criminal offenders or the closure of certain premises. The anti-Muslim *English Defence League* attempted to institute policies aimed at closing mosques by constantly escalating protest marches, such as the one held in the town of Dudley in 2015. Islamist attacks also aim to elicit over-reactions by the state that go on to limit human rights, destabilize the pillars of democracy and further push ethnic and religious minorities to the margins.

This also involves depicting the government as unable or unwilling to satisfy the needs of its citizens. As such, both spectra employ parallel structures that either aim to replace official social services or to challenge the state's monopoly on the use of violence. Two examples illustrate this: Both far-right extremists as well as Islamists attempt to promote themselves as the better social workers – with close ties to disadvantaged youth and families who live below the poverty line. Their aim in this is to gradually draw their respective targets into the parallel worlds of the far-right or Islamism. Independent militias comprise the second example. Both Islamists as well as far-right extremists portray themselves as being either the protectors of threatened communities left on their own by the state or as the guardians of public morals.

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<sup>34</sup> Wiedl, Nina (2014): Geschichte des Salafismus in Deutschland. In: Behnam T. Said (ed.): Salafismus. Auf der Suche nach dem wahren Islam. 1st edition, new release. Freiburg, Basel, Vienna: Verlag Herder, p. 433.

The latter also applies to the *Sharia Police*, which went on patrol in Wuppertal, Germany for a short time, calling for a ban on alcohol, drugs and gambling. On the other hand, the internationally active anti-Muslim independent defence league called the *Soldiers of Odin* provided a permanent presence on the streets of Scandinavian cities and arbitrarily attacked Muslims whom they branded to be a danger to the public sphere. What both scenarios share is the fact that they are part of a political communication strategy that is skeptical of the state's promise to protect.

Here, the function of the state as a frame of reference is placed into doubt. Both spectra attempt to set up spaces for themselves through the creation of parallel structures, removed from official control. Their aim is to establish safe spaces, such as the housing project of the *Identitarian Movement* in Halle<sup>35</sup>, or their own mosque spaces in which their jihadist propaganda can be disseminated. In particular, this withdrawal into the private sphere following several waves of repression – as we have recently experienced with Salafism – often allows groupings to operate away from the public radar and renders it more difficult to assess them with regard to their orientation towards violent strategies.

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<sup>35</sup> See: MDR (28 Oct 2017) Identitäres Hausprojekt in Halle Das "Gespenst" im Steintor-Viertel. <https://www.mdr.de/sachsen-anhalt/halle/anwohner-zu-identitaeren-haus-steintorviertel-100.html>.



**THE AIM OF BOTH  
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# Breaking through the cycle:

## Reciprocal prevention

There is reason to fear that Islamist and far-right extremist attitudes and actions will likely become more virulent. As issues like national security, the closure of borders and dominant cultures (Leitkultur), come into focus within the public discourse, Islamist and far-right extremists will find it easier to take advantage of and exacerbate identity conflicts for their own purposes. The politics of anti-Muslim prejudices – which gained parliamentary representation in the German Bundestag through the party AfD<sup>36</sup> – have a polarizing effect on society. We are dealing with a phenomenon that massively influences the state of society as mistrust of minorities is consciously being propagated, thereby fanning the flames of Islamists. The spiralling, escalating character of confrontations between Islamist and anti-Muslim extremists is violently shaking the very foundations of an open society and it should be given the attention that it deserves.

This should involve developing an awareness of the strategic approaches adopted by both sides in order to be able to intervene in a reflected manner. For those who focus on just one side “misjudge the danger that threatens European communities by jihadists and extremists provoking one another at the right end of the spectrum”<sup>37</sup>. If we take Islamist and far-right extremism to represent two faces of anti-democratic resentment, any attempts at intervention and prevention must relationally reference both phenomena and disrupt the cycle of perpetuating exclusionary worldviews. Considering this, we advocate for reciprocal prevention against a reciprocal form of radicalization. And just what does this imply in concrete terms?

### Research and dialogue

We must begin by deepening academic exchanges of the findings from radicalization research in the area of far-right extremism and Islamism. Specifically, we recommend developing a holistic framework and method toolkits for measuring reciprocal radicalization and its influence on the political discourse. Additionally, we advocate for the establishment of improved technological capacities to analyze online dynamics and cooperation using social media platforms. Despite an abundance of publications and research projects, a comprehensive system and financial resources for setting up dialogue between research and practitioners remains lacking.

<sup>36</sup> Handelsblatt (22.05.2018): Verfassungsschützer warnt AfD – „Wer Hass sät, der wird Hass ernten“. <http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/weidel-aeusserungen-zu-kopftuchmaedchen-verfassungsschuetzer-warnt-afd-wer-hass-saet-der-wird-hass-ernten/22587204.html?ticket=ST-1593854-9vPeh0RoS6CWg7Fnfl7r-ap2>

<sup>37</sup> Neumann, Peter R. (2016): Der Terror ist unter uns. Dschihadismus, Radikalisierung und Terrorismus in Europa. Berlin: Ullstein, p. 204.

## Policies

The shift to the right that has been observed in many countries is leading to an enlargement of resonance spaces for Islamist terrorism and anti-Muslim extremism. In response, democratic policies based on the value of equality among all people have to take an emphatic stand. The policies promoted by Donald Trump and Brexit are shifting the political climate from which anti-Muslim actors draw support. The marked increase in anti-Muslim and racist hate crimes that have occurred, for example, following the election of Donald Trump, after the Brexit vote and in the wake of Islamist attacks shows just how deep the connection is between changes in the political climate and the unleashing of anti-Muslim micro-politics. It is therefore vital to create positive points of reference and deny anti-Muslim racism any room to flourish, and the latter entails definitively countering any right-wing incitement. Every territorial gain achieved by anti-Muslim views emboldens right-wing fringe groups to live out their resentments more openly and to push the escalation spiral even further. The most important task for policy-makers is to prevent the development of youth and socio-political niches that serve as anchor points for caretaker strategies employed by extremists: ensuring social, cultural and economic integration for all people is the most effective means for preventing radicalization.

## Media

In the media, those who argue with the shrillest voice and instigate social polarization are often given the opportunity to speak on the issue of Islamophobia and Islamism, rather than exposing underlying causes and providing nuanced analysis. Stereotypes of the “other” mutually portrayed by the opposing sides are reproduced. It is important to take those segments into consideration which both extremes strive to eradicate: the grey areas. On the one hand, this entails making the contradictions within both spectra transparent in order to expose the inconsistency of their narratives and address existing tensions that become instrumentalized by radical demagogues. In the case of Salafism, for example, this includes entering into a discussion about its diversity and not reducing the movement to its jihadist expression. Even within the Salafist community itself, theological conflicts are carried out, the contradictions of which easily shatter the pretense of a coherent worldview. At the same time, this also means that structural forms of anti-Muslim racism have to be considered so as to not relegate this phenomenon to the fringes of the far right. Ultimately, we are dealing with a holistic worldview in relation to those within the group and the strangers outside of it, which spreads to other areas of life. A more responsible approach by the media that aims to avoid escalating the situation further should not provide a stage for racist actors who equate radical Islamism with Islam itself. The spirit of humanist universalism sets out to criticize attempts at condoning misanthropy, sexism, antisemitism or hostility towards homosexual and transsexual individuals in all social, religious and political contexts as well as to implement counter-measures in response to this situation.

## Security authorities

When it comes to intervening in spirals of radicalization, security authorities walk a fine line. If they grant to both spectra too much space, there is a danger that antagonistic stereotypes will establish themselves. Yet, if they are too repressive, there is a danger of co-radicalization, meaning that they trigger reactions through which supposed deradicalization measures end up benefiting further radicalization. It is particularly important to uphold proportionality in this matter so as to not dismantle democratic civil, basic and human rights; i.e. not to defend democracy with illiberal means. Exclusive identities always emerge through action and often trace their origin to the effect of situation-based impressions and feelings of injustice. The positioning assumed by the police is therefore a crucial factor for the effect of such encounters. As such, a basic understanding of strategic acting should be in place so that individuals may avoid being instrumentalized themselves as a part of far-right extremist or Islamist propaganda. The interdependency of both spectra should be addressed during education, which requires education that reflects on race, in particular.

## Civil Society

Civil society actors should recognize the interaction of both spectra as an affront to the democratic foundations of society. This must involve explaining the underlying enmity towards democracy and discussing both phenomena in terms of their commonalities and peculiarities as a threat to social cohesion on the basis of down-to-earth analysis. The regional diffusion of Islamist groupings proves to be quite disparate and the acute threat to democratic culture in general primarily originates from racist, right-wing populist and far-right extremist actors. What is particularly striking, however, is that areas registering significant degree of Islamist activity also experience a particularly high influx of far-right extremist groups.<sup>38</sup> The German cities of Braunschweig and Hildesheim are two notable examples of this. Here, both spectra demonstrate the parallel nature of their actions. Hence, interventions must take the respective contextual factors into consideration. As such, prevention work targeting Islamism should not only be a task that Muslim institutions and associations undertake. Rather, civil society actors must make it clearer than ever before that radical Islamism is to be understood as a concrete problem that affects the German society as a whole. When engaging in deradicalization work, it is also particularly important to establish alternative reference systems so as to not tap into the demagogic trap of far-right and Islamist extremism.

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<sup>38</sup> Ebner, Julia (2017): *The Rage. The Vicious Circle of Islamist and Far Right Extremism*. London, New York: IB Tauris, p. 157ff.

## Social media networks

In addition to promptly deleting posts from the Internet that contain hate speech and discrimination - as has been enacted through the introduction of the NetzDG law - we also recommend developing and promoting counter-narratives and campaigns that reinforce resilience among civil society in the face of propaganda that is hostile to certain demographic groups. This specifically involves developing resources and networks that allow for quick reactions to far-right extremist and Islamist activities to prevent far-right extremists and Islamists from seizing the taking over the discourse and its framing in the wake of terror attacks, demonstrations, election results and other influential events. Campaigns that promote cooperation among social networks and civil society, such as the *Online Civil Courage Initiative* (OCCI) should be taken into account within prevention and democracy work.



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AGAINST A  
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# Conclusion:

## Beloved enemies

“We are at war. A war that is being waged against us.”<sup>39</sup> We can find this statement, word for word, among both far-right extremists as well as prominent Islamist extremists. As far as their propaganda is concerned, the time is always at hand. The constant maintenance of a threat scenario proves to be constitutive, constructing a foundation for its legitimacy upon the communicated danger of an opponent.

This provides the basis for a war mentality that is developed among both sides, one which draws clear lines between good and evil and calls for a normalization of the conflict. Associated with this is the perception that a blurring of conflict lines is deemed to be a sign of weakness and/or decadence. Hence, both Islamist and far-right extremism are based on orchestrations that present the political order in which they live as hostile, and they feel obliged to take up resistance against it.

The narratives mutually define one another and depend on their opposition. However, confrontations in the real world seldom take place. In most cases, we are dealing with an imaginary battle: a threat is constructed so that more attention can be garnered among the public. At the same time, the reciprocal influence can also manifest itself in sinister alliances: just recently it came to light that an activist of the *Identitarian Movement* sold the weapons used for the Islamist attacks in Paris.<sup>40</sup>



**Image 29:** *It reads:* “Muslim, wake up! They kill us and you hang around in the Shisha bar?”

Call for action from the Islamist Facebook group *Dawa Pictures*.

© Screenshot of the Facebook page *Dawa Pictures*. Taken ca. September 2015.

<sup>39</sup> For example, Martin Sellner, the central figure of the *Identitarian Movement of Austria* is quoted using this motto on the right-wing platform *Opposition 24*. *Opposition 24* (11 Dec 2017): Sellner: “We are at war. Ein Krieg, der gegen uns geführt wird” <https://opposition24.com/sellner-wir-krieg-ein/379646>. The same can be said for the Islamist Bernhard Falk. See *Der Spiegel* (6 Oct 2014): *Der Luntenerleger*. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-129568329.html>.

<sup>40</sup> *Zeit Online* (10 Oct 2017): *Identitärer ermöglichte mit illegalem Waffenverkauf Islamistenanschlag in Frankreich*. [http://blog.zeit.de/stoerungsmelder/2017/10/10/identitaerer-ermoeglichte-mit-illegalem-waffenverkauf-islamistenanschlag-in-frankreich\\_24855](http://blog.zeit.de/stoerungsmelder/2017/10/10/identitaerer-ermoeglichte-mit-illegalem-waffenverkauf-islamistenanschlag-in-frankreich_24855).

Moreover, individual changeovers to the other side can also be identified, such as in the case of the German jihadist Sascha L., who, after being active in the Neo-Nazi scene for years, planned an attack with Islamist intentions against police officers and was convicted to three years of prison.<sup>41</sup> These biographic and organizational parallels further point to the complexity of the relationship. Despite their differing objectives, Islamist and far-right extremists ultimately converge at the same point: undermining an open, diverse society. Both utilize their respective counterpart to voice criticism aimed at democratic structures and practices. This extremist tango is ultimately being carried out at the expense of democracy.

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<sup>41</sup> NDR (19 Dec 2017): Drei Jahre Haft für Islamisten aus Northeim. [https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/niedersachsen/braunschweig\\_harz\\_goettingen/Drei-Jahre-Haft-fuer-Islamisten-aus-Norheim,prozess4252.html](https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/niedersachsen/braunschweig_harz_goettingen/Drei-Jahre-Haft-fuer-Islamisten-aus-Norheim,prozess4252.html).

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# Glossary:

**Alt-right:** An umbrella term referring to a loose group of far-right extremist individuals and organizations that promote “white nationalism”.

**Allahu akbar:** literally “God is greater”/“God is greatest”, is an expression especially used by Muslims on various occasions, such as at the start of a prayer.

**Bots:** Automatic software applications that carry out certain actions without human control.

**The Great Replacement:** One of the core concepts of the New Right claims that native European populations are on the path to be replaced by non-European immigrants.

**Die Wahre Religion/Lies!:** The Salafist organization Die Wahre Religion (the True Religion) primarily became well-known in Germany due to its Quran distribution campaigns called Lies! (Read!). In November 2016, the German Federal Ministry of the Interior banned the group on account of its close personal ties to jihadist groups.

**Discord:** An online chat application that was originally developed for video-game fans but has since also come to encompass numerous far-right extremist channels.

**English Defence League (EDL):** EDL is an anti-Muslim protest movement in the United Kingdom that is taken to be one of the inspirations for German movements such as Pegida and Hogesa.

**Gab:** Gab.ai is a social media platform that bears close resemblance to Twitter in terms of its functionality. As its contents are hardly moderated, the platform has become very popular among far-right extremists.

**Hatreon:** Hatreon was adapted from the crowdfunding site Patreon, on which users are able to donate a self-determined monetary contribution to fund YouTubers, bloggers, vloggers and other individuals. Hatreon is popular among far-right extremists since the platform does not restrict hate speech as Patreon does.

**Hizb ut-Tahrir:** A global Islamist movement that is banned in Germany and many Arabic countries.

**Jannah:** the Islamic term for paradise.

**Khawarij:** The historical Khawarij were a fanatical, religious minority movement from the early days of Islam notorious, in part, for having murdered the cousin and the son in law of Mohammed, the fourth caliph, Ali. Today, the term Khawarij is also used to deny the legitimacy of opposing groups (the Islamic State and Al-Qaida deem one another to be Khawarij).

**Kuffar/Kafir:** Kuffar is the Islamic term for non-belief and non-believers are called kafir.

**La hawla wa la quatta Illah Billah:** “There is neither power nor strength except with Allah”, an Islamic saying.

**La ilaha illa ‘llah: literally:** “There is no god but Allah”, part of the Islamic creed, the Shahada.

**Normies:** A term some far-right extremist use for their non-radicalized target group that either adheres to the political mainstream or is apolitical.

**Patriot Peer:** An app developed by the Identitarian Movement that is meant to allow far-right extremist activists to network with one another.

**PI news:** PI (Politically Incorrect) News is one of the most well-known anti-Muslim political blogs that speaks out against immigration, multiculturalism and Islam.

**Remigration:** The remigration (return) of non-European ethnic groups is one of the central demands of the Identitarian Movement, which sees this as the necessary response to the “Great Replacement”.

**Shirk:** Literally, the term shirk in Islam means polytheism, the opposite of tawheed. Shirk is considered to be a grave sin.

**Social listening tools:** Software programs which with communication among various social and political groups on social media can be observed and analyzed.

**Takfir/Takfeer:** Takfir (basically meaning excommunication) is the reproach directed at a professed Muslim of being a kafir (non-believer). Takfiris are Muslims who accuse other Muslims of being kafir.

Jihadist groups such as the Islamic State are also called takfiris as they are rumoured to dispute the faith of a large number of professed Muslims due to religious differences of opinion.

**Tawheed/tauhid:** Refers to the central concept of the unity and uniqueness of God in Islam, or monotheism.

**Telegram:** An encrypted messaging app that is utilized as a relatively secure communication platform among Islamist groups.



Further information about the project  
can be found at [www.idz-jena.de](http://www.idz-jena.de)

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The present study focuses on the hitherto underexplored connections and interactions between Islamist and far-right extremism. Based on a meta-analysis of international studies along with recent empirical research on social networks, the Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ) in Jena has worked in cooperation with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) in London to identify concordant patterns, interactions among the milieus, strategies and points of division, both online and offline.



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