

**ONLINE**  
**CIVIL**  
**COURAGE**  
**INITIATIVE**

**OCCI UK Insight Report**  
*Volume 4 (June 2018)*  
**'Alternative' Social Media**

## **OCCI Research: Insight Reports**

The OCCI Insight Reports equip NGO partners on an ongoing basis with the knowledge needed to develop effective, targeted campaigns. Without access to in-depth, data-driven insights into the fast-evolving landscape of extremist and terrorist propaganda, narratives and networks, it is impossible to mount a proportional targeted response. Additionally, the reports highlight recommendations for future counterspeech campaigning to address the identified narratives. OCCI will work closely with any organisation who is interested in piloting and implementing these recommendations.

### **UK Insight Report Volume 4 Summary:**

The OCCI UK Insight Reports have highlighted examples of how the UK far-right operate on mainstream social media, exposed the central narratives that drive their propaganda and uncovered the underlying sub-narratives which allow their messaging to resonate with their target audiences. They have also explained the tactics the far-right uses to mainstream their ideology, mobilise support and recruit new members, as illustrated in Volume 3 with the co-opting of the Football Lads Alliance and the use, by far-right groups, of free speech to introduce their ideologies into broad appeal conversations.

The reports have also alluded to how increasingly strict content policies, enforced by mainstream social media platforms, have pushed some groups towards using alternative platforms and even creating their own. In this report, ISD explores these alternative social media platforms that are used by both far-right and Islamist extremists to sew hate and galvanise online support. The report lists a selection of these platforms, explains their functionality and details their usage by extremist groups. None of these platforms, with the exception of MuslimCrypt, were founded with extremist intentions. However, through research conducted by ISD, it is evident that they are being used by extremist groups operating in the UK. Some of the platforms considered in this report have made efforts to restrict extremist content, although the report does not go into the details of this, and is intended primarily as an introduction to the platforms for the OCCI UK community. The report concludes with recommendations for civic engagement with these online spaces.

**The usability and practical application of the reports depend on the feedback of its recipients. Please contact [uk@occisupport.org](mailto:uk@occisupport.org) with any feedback and recommendations you have so that we can ensure that these reports meet the needs of OCCI partners and community.**

## The Mainstream and Alternative Online Ecosystem

Over the past few years ISD has been interested in how extremist groups and influencers use social media and online communication technologies to migrate members and information between platforms. This insight report uses the migration patterns of extremists within this online ecosystem to introduce the OCCI community to the various alternative platforms being used by extremist groups.

### 1. Isolation in the Fringes

When social media was in its infancy, small communities of people who held extremist views, both violent and non-violent, communicated in closed chatrooms and forums. Within these, they engaged with likeminded individuals and galvanised support for their ideologies. These exclusive spaces allowed the fringes of society to mobilise a supporter base around ideologies rejected by society, and innovate new online technologies to increase their interactivity and nourish their communities. Extreme-right groups in the US were early adopters. Stormfront.org, founded in 1996, is often gifted the title of the first white supremacist website. It functions as a bulletin board style blog, providing information and resources for anyone interested in learning more about white nationalism, neo-Nazism and white supremacy. The site [struggles to remain online today](#) (Figure 1).

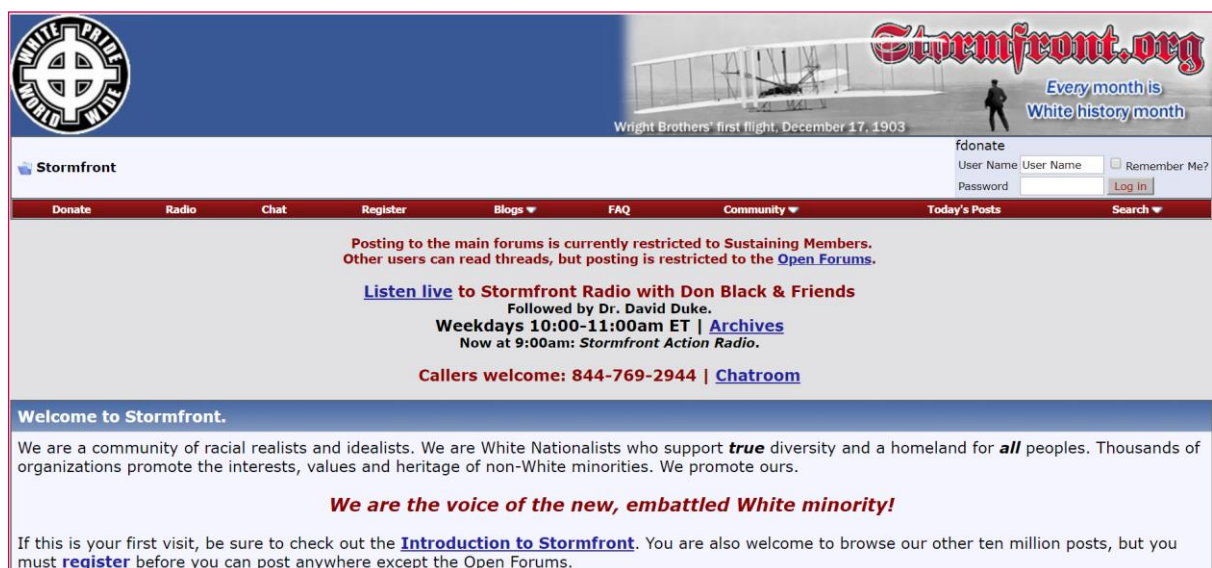


Figure 1: Stormfront, one of the earliest and most popular white nationalist blogs, has message board threads such as 'Privacy, Network Security & Encryption' where users can discuss methods for evading online detection. (Source: Stormfront.org)

### 2. Migration to the Mainstream

The rapid growth of social media platforms provided an opportunity to access new audiences on a scale previously unattainable. Extremist groups and influencers which migrated onto Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and YouTube, were able to utilise the in-built functionality of each platform to amplify and target their propaganda. Some groups'

members natural affinity with online technology, such as [Daesh](#), allowed them to integrate complex [media marketing strategies](#) into their propaganda, including even the use of ‘bots’. The introduction of [encrypted communication tools](#) then provided a safe space for direct engagement with potential recruits, with apps such as [Telegram](#) widely used by both Islamist and extreme-right groups (Figure 2).

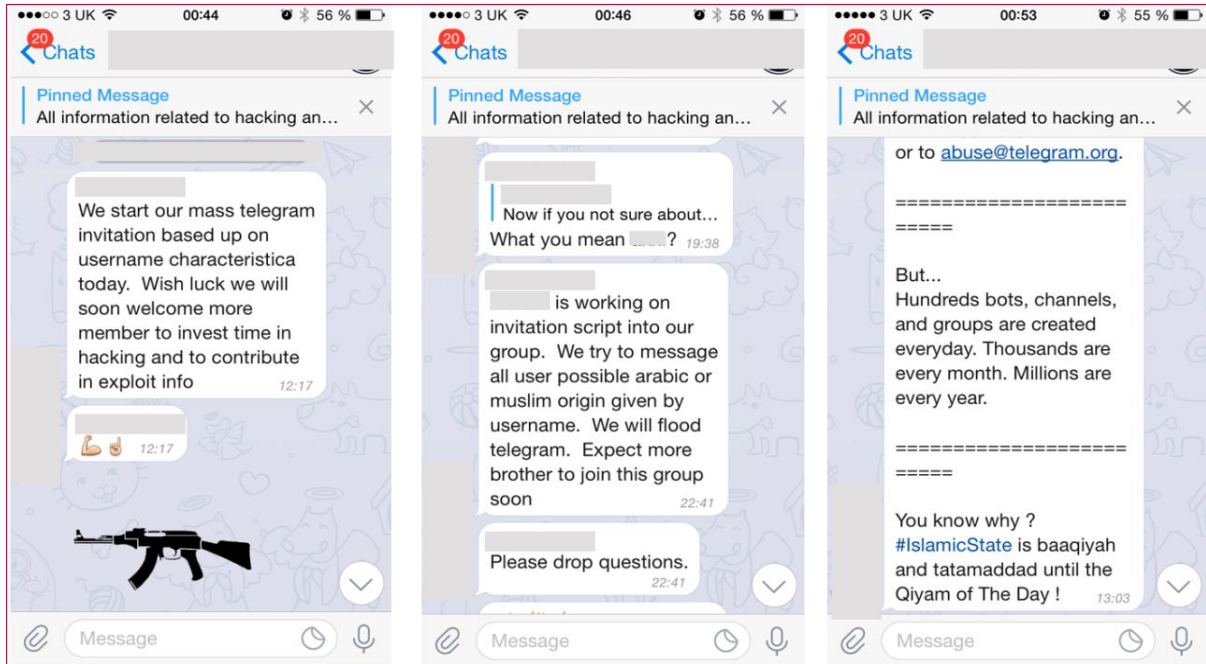


Figure 2: A Daesh Telegram channel shows how users attempted to organise a mass invitation to Arabic and Muslim Telegram users, with the aim of connecting with potential new recruits in a secure communication setting. (Source: Telegram app)

Whilst influencers within the far-right in Europe, the UK and the US are often technologically astute, as evidence by the speed with which they embrace new content types such as memes, the broader audiences they have sought to reach can have low levels of digital literacy, making them easier targets for new messaging techniques. This was highlighted in ISD’s [counter-conversations publication](#) where the majority of far-right supporters in the UK were elder people with less familiarity or understanding of the digital space in general, and of the kinds of content and messaging they were being targeted with.

The audience size of the bigger platforms such as Facebook have also allowed larger populist movements such as Pegida, Britain First and the English Defence League to begin and grow on mainstream social media without first being cultivated on smaller forums and chatrooms. Conversely, some of the earlier small communities e.g., Stormfront and Ironmarch, continued to be important incubators for the most extreme ideologues away from the mainstream platforms and without the need for a large mainstream presence.

### 3. Regroup in the Fringes

As mainstream social media companies were made increasingly aware of the presence of extremist groups on their platform, hastened by the rapid emergence of both Daesh and the

US alt-right, access restrictions and content removal policies were emboldened. The mainstream social media and communication platforms became (and continue to become) hostile spaces for extremists. This can be witnessed not only with large social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, but also on crowdfunding sites such as [Patreon](#), DNS service providers such as [Cloudflare](#), online payment companies such as [PayPal](#) and even music streaming platforms such as [Spotify](#).

In response, extremist groups have migrated back to the fringes of the online ecosystem. In platforms considered by extremists as safe spaces for hate, they are able to once again fortify their echo chambers and engage directly with likeminded people without limitations on what they can say or do. Both the extreme-right and Islamist extremists, accustomed to finding new communication technologies to avoid detection, have been using alternative platforms for a host of reasons e.g., to share [instructional materials](#) for online and offline activity, coordinate [online 'raids'](#) to undermine counter-messaging content and harass their opponents, plan terror attacks, [crowdfund projects and events](#), and design content creation websites to decentralise the production of propaganda within their wider support networks. In August 2017, Discord and Gab were used by white supremacists in the US to mobilise members for the ['Unite the Right'](#) rally in Charlotte's Ville, and numerous sites such as BitChute and PewTube are used by Defend Europe to publicise their efforts to forcibly repel refugees and migrants from entering Europe.

#### **4. Return to the Mainstream**

In 2017, a popular bulletin board website for the alt-right named Gab, called for 'The Free Speech Tech Revolution' as a response to a perceived liberal-bias of mainstream media and the constraints being placed on some groups when using mainstream social media platforms (Figure 3). Free speech is also cited as the principle reason behind why many alternative social media platforms ([Minds](#), [Gab](#), [BitChute](#), [PewTube](#) etc.) were created, including concerns over data privacy following breaches on platforms such as Facebook. Whilst these push-factors are not wrong in principle, a vital challenge for those countering extremism online is how extremist communities use these exclusive spaces to then coordinate and mobilise efforts to re-introduce their ideologies back onto mainstream platforms, and infiltrate mainstream audiences by co-opting broad appeal conversations. 8Chan, 4Chan and Reddit have been used to coordinate mass 'YouTube Raids', like the one orchestrated [in June 2017](#) to undermine a video posted by YouTube's Creators for Change vloggers on World Refugee Day. On that occasion, the coordinators of the raid insidiously introduced discussions on free speech and censorship as a way of mainstreaming their more hateful views on Muslims and Jews. The use of 'free speech' to mainstream and justify hateful ideologies is common in extreme-right groups across Europe and the US. It is worth noting how the motivation behind why many of the alternative platforms were created are also the reason why extremists are able and willing to use them.

In May 2018, under the stewardship of the now imprisoned Tommy Robinson, a 'Day of Freedom' rally outside parliament saw several thousand supporters (comprised of groups such as the Democratic Football Lads Alliance and Anne Marie Waters' For Britain Party)

turned up in ‘support’ of free speech. Speakers at the event claimed the truth, and their voices, were being silenced by the government and the liberal-biased media. The event was also an opportunity for anti-Muslim and anti-Islam bigotry, with the crowd booing when speakers said the word Islam. Both mainstream and alternative platforms were used to coordinate the event, and mobilize active members of groups as well as attract new audiences under the guise of ‘free speech’. There is a clear hypocrisy in the way free speech has increasingly become a mobilising platform for far-right and extreme-right groups in the UK, despite those same group’s explicit attempts to stifle and remove the free speech rights of those they oppose.

This is a time when patriots around the globe are rising to defend the liberty, freedom, and values that they cherish. We may not have the billions of dollars and thousands of employees to create the platform we want today, but together we can all start working on the long term for the future. The most important thing we at Gab can do is develop the tools and technology to give people the power to build a free and sovereign community committed to liberty and truth.

The free speech tech revolution has begun. [Won't you join us?](#)



Never miss a story from Gab, when you sign up for Medium. [Learn more](#) [GET UPDATES](#)

Figure 3: A post by Gab.ai, a bulletin board website created in response to growing content restrictions on Twitter, posts a call to arms for people to join 'The Free Speech Tech Revolution' (Source: Gab.ai)

By looking at these migration patterns, and the ways in which extremists have adapted to changes in the online space, it becomes clear that whilst alternative social media platforms may not have the high numbers of users that Facebook and YouTube does, their influence over audiences using mainstream platforms exists (Figure 4). During the US Presidential elections in 2016, Donald Trump retweeted an anti-Semitic meme created by a member of 8Chan. For those studying the ‘weaponisation’ of memes by far-right groups, it was proof of just how dynamic the online ecosystem really was.



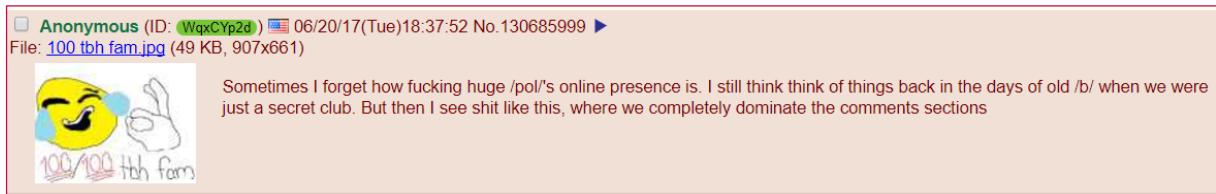


Figure 4: An anonymous user on 4chan’s politically incorrect thread /pol/ gloats over the influence the users have on mainstream content. This was posted after a 'YouTube Raid' was organised in June 2017 by members of /pol/, with the aim of filling the comment section of a pro-refugee video on YouTube with hateful messages, including anti-refugee, anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic rhetoric. (Source: 4chan)

When looking through the list of alternative communication and social media platforms being used or created by the extreme-right, it is clear that censorship and free speech are driving factors in this migration away from mainstream platforms, as well as providing a route back into mainstream conversations. In the following section, ISD takes a closer look at what some of these specific alternative platforms are, what they were created for and how extremist groups are using them.


## Guide to an ‘Alternative’ Social Media

Listed in the tables are examples of alternative social media and communications platforms that we have found, through our research, are used by extremists. ISD define ‘alternative’ as those sites with less active users than larger platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, SnapChat and YouTube. The guide list is not exhaustive, nor intends to paint with a broad brush. None of the platforms were created, with the exception of MuslimCrypt, with extremist intentions. However, the usage of these sites helps to illustrate the ingenuity and innovative side of extremists that have been pushed away from the mainstream. Each table includes the platform’s origin, functionality, how the site may be used by extremist groups and an example of extremist content found on the platform by ISD researchers. The list is set-out chronologically, from earliest to most recently created platforms.

Guide Content			
Platform	Type	Founded	Page Number
Pastebin	Information Sharing	2002	8
4Chan	Bulletin Board	2003	9
Reddit	Bulletin Board	2005	10
Metapedia	Online Encyclopaedia	2006	11
8Chan	Bulletin Board	2013	12
Telegram	Encrypted Messaging	2013	13
Justpaste.it	Information Sharing	2014	14
Discord	Chatroom	2015	15
Minds	Social Network	2015	16
Infogalactic	Online Encyclopaedia	2016	17
Voat	Social Network	2015	18
Gab	Bulletin Board	2016	19
PewTube	Video Host	2017	20
Hatreon	Crowdfunder	2017	21
BitChute	Video Host	2017	22
MuslimCrypt	Image Encryption	2018	23

## Pastbin.com

### Information Sharing founded in 2002

<b>Origin</b>	Created for Internet users to paste and store text, and share the link online.
<b>Function</b>	Much like Justpaste.It, this site allows users to paste and easily share HTML code and written information.
<b>Usage</b>	Due to the low internet data required to access, upload and share information from the site, it has been used by extremist groups to communicate instructions and propaganda undetected. In 2016, an alt-right user pasted instructions on weaponizing meme’s in the run up to the Trump/Clinton Presidential race explained what topics to focus on in order to undermine Clinton’s credibility.
<b>Extremist Example</b>	<p>The example is an extract of a lengthy post describing ‘Advanced Meme Warfare’, with details on how to conduct research, and create and disseminate content. It goes into great detail on the coordination needed to inflict an impactful and succesful meme campaign against Hilary Clinton. A quote from the article outlines the confidence of the author for this approach: “Trump has to keep his image squeaky clean because everything he does is under the microscope of MSM. Notice how hard the media pushed the star of david angle. We, on the other hand, have the advantage of being an anonymous swarm with a singular goal. We don't have to play fair. We can say and spread whatever we want.”</p>  <p>The screenshot shows a Pastebin.com interface with a text file of 9.89 KB. The content includes a title '- A guide for /cfg/   v1.3' and a list of steps: 'Successful guerilla PR / Astroturfing campaigns can be broken down into 3 simple steps: Step 1: Research, Step 2: Content Creation, Step 3: Outreach.' The final paragraph discusses the challenge of facing the MSM and the power of collective effort.</p>

(Source: Pastbin.com)



## 4Chan



### Bulletin Board founded in 2003

<b>Origin</b>	The site was primarily used for sharing images and discussions on anime and manga, but quickly expanded to a wide range of interests.
<b>Function</b>	The site allows users to join message boards, begin new threads, share images and make comments on a variety of topics. It has been instrumental in pushing ‘memes’ as a form of content communication.
<b>Usage</b>	Previously unrestricted policies around what could and could not be discussed and shared on the platform led to a litany of hateful and bigoted message boards being created ranging from anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic to anti-LGBTQ and misogynistic. The site is now used by alt-right and far-right sympathisers to coordinate online ‘raids’ on mainstream social media platforms.
<b>Extremist Example</b>	<p>In June 2017, a video launched by YouTube’s Creators for Change program on World Refugee Day was subject to a coordinated YouTube Raid by alt-right users on 4Chan. Within hours of the video being uploaded, large numbers of supporters had mobilized to launch an attack on the video comment section and had filled it with anti-Muslim, anti-Immigrant and anti-Semitic commentary.</p> <div data-bbox="359 1308 1442 1839" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>#MoreThanARefugee</p> <p>Time to use their hashtag against them. Take all the pictures of Islamic Terror in Europe, and put the hashtag #MoreThanARefugee on them, and start sharing. We need to meme the truth that migrants are more than refugees, they’re terrorists and sympathizers.</p> <p>=====::=====</p> <p>&gt;&gt;130727448 Underated</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#">Read post on 4chan.org</a></p> </div>

(Source: Crimson Hexagon)

## Reddit

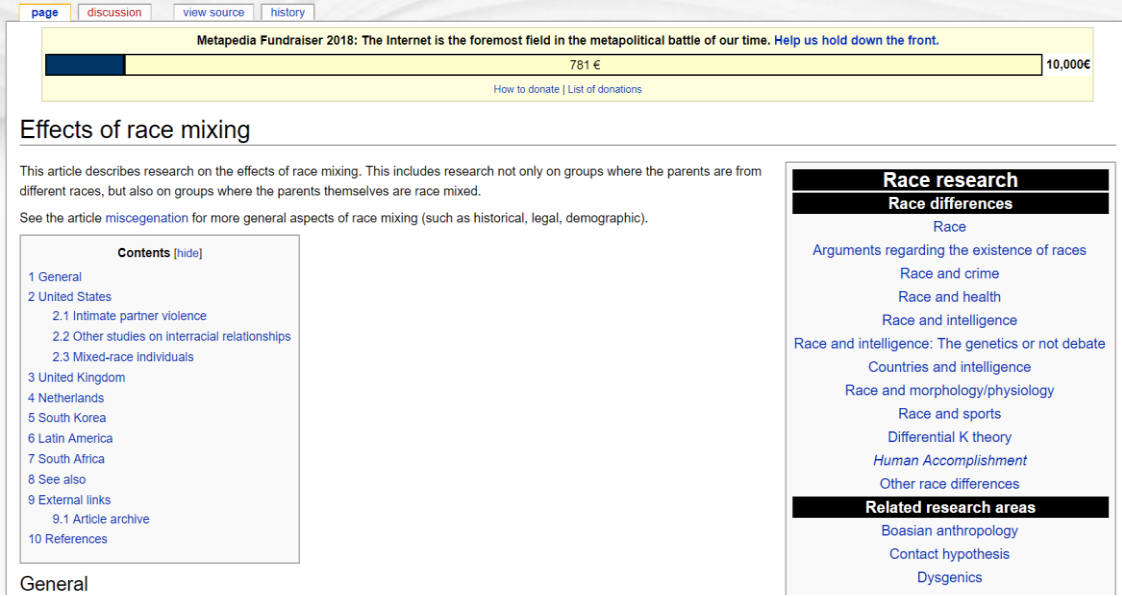
### Bulletin Board founded in 2015

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>Reddit is a social news aggregation, web content rating and discussion thread website, created for online communication (often between anonymised users).</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>Users can submit content to the site such as links, text posts and images, which can then be up-voted or down-voted by other members.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>Reddit increased its content removal policy after controversy over ‘gamergate’, and the exposure of highly offensive threads that were presenting the site as a place for abusive and violent speech. The site gained particular notoriety during the lead up the 2016 US Presidential elections with the notorious (and still active) ‘subreddit’ The_Donald/, in which alt-right users created pro-Trump and anti-Clinton memes for distribution on mainstream social media platforms.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>The_Donald/ subreddit is perhaps the most infamous of the subreddit’s still active on Reddit, with memes such as Kek and Pepe the frog a prominent feature and recognised as symbols of the alt-right. The subreddit was used by alt-right supporters to mobilise people to join the Unite the Right rally in Charlotte’s Ville, which led to the death of one person, as illustrated below:</p> <div data-bbox="494 1310 1321 1944" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px;"> <p>[-]  61 points 10 hours ago*</p> <p>↑ We live in a time where supporting the US President, Donald Trump, can get you beaten or even killed by radical leftist terrorism.</p> <p>↓ It is one thing to say you believe in Free Speech. It is another to stand up for the first amendment in the face of thousands of violent Marxists. If the leftists can shut down this event, then they will shut down ours too through the same intimidation and literal terrorism.</p> <p>This rally is a matter of Civil Rights and preserving American History and Heritage. Either we have Constitutionally protected free speech, or we already live in a Tyranny. We cannot allow BLM and Antifa terrorists to succeed in demolishing our rights to speak and peacefully assemble.</p> <p>Unite The Right in Charlottesville will be a massive and historic event. What will you tell your grand children when they ask where you were when right wingers united and told the left that ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! Be there, even if just to make new friends and feel the pride of living your values.</p> <p>If you can't make it to the event yourself, find ways to support those who are either by donations on crowd funding websites or other means. Let others know that the world will be watching one of the biggest moments in US history since Trump's inauguration on August 12.</p> <p><small>permlink embed parent deport</small></p> <hr/> <p>[-]  1776 23 points 9 hours ago</p> <p>↑ The left isn't diverse or accepting. It's monolithic, brutal, and authoritarian. Its ideas aren't ideas but rather strategies to destroy and suppress all other opinions and ideologies, and eventually suppress everyone's rights.</p> <p>↓ The left does not believe in liberty or individualism. It wishes to segregate people into groups, to demonize those groups, and to exact control over those groups. Do not trust the left. They are not your friend, they are your oppressor. Neomarxism is total oppression; an anti-human machine; an ideological weapon that turns people into slaves.</p> <p><small>permlink embed parent deport</small></p> </div>

(Source: Reddit)

## Metapedia

### Online encyclopaedia founded in 2006

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>Metapedia was created as a competition to Wikipedia, designed specifically to host information with a right-leaning ideology.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>The site describes itself as an electronic encyclopaedia which focuses on culture, art, science, philosophy and politics. Information and submissions are user generated.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>The site provides a large database of entries on topics such as race and crime, race and intelligence, eugenics, white demographics, genetics denialism, numerous political groups and figures. These topics are often discussed through the lens of white supremacy, and the site is used by white-nationalists looking for opinions on the main narratives embedded within extreme-right propaganda. In terms of its popularity, the main page has a bar indicating its donations target of \$10,000, of which it currently has received just \$781.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>This example illustrates the information and topics a visitor may be directed towards once they engage with an entry, with Metapedia offering a list of additional entries to visit and read about.</p>  <p>The screenshot shows a Metapedia page titled "Effects of race mixing". At the top, there is a fundraising bar for "Metapedia Fundraiser 2018: The Internet is the foremost field in the metapolitical battle of our time. Help us hold down the front." with a progress bar showing 781 € out of a 10,000 € target. Below the bar are links for "How to donate" and "List of donations". The main content area includes a "Contents" table of contents, a "General" section, and a sidebar with "Race research" and "Race differences" sections. The "Race differences" section lists various topics such as "Race and crime", "Race and health", "Race and intelligence", "Race and morphology/physiology", "Race and sports", "Differential K theory", "Human Accomplishment", and "Other race differences". The "Related research areas" section lists "Boasian anthropology", "Contact hypothesis", and "Dysgenics".</p>

(Source: Metapedia)

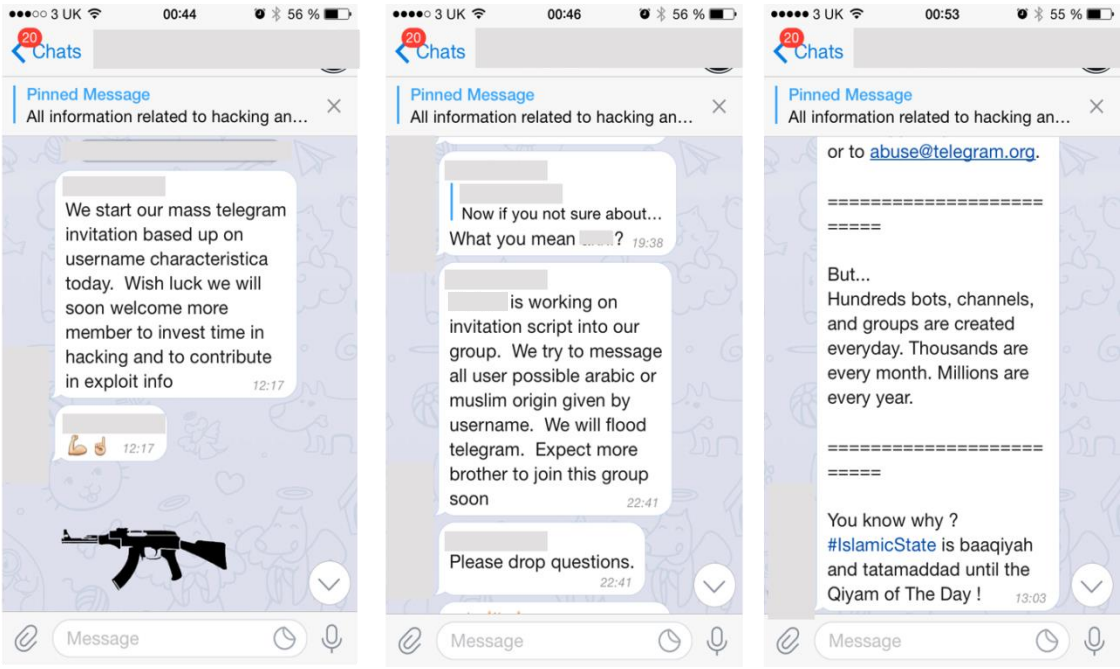
## 8Chan

### Bulletin Board founded in 2013

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>Created with a similar objective to 4chan, but with greater leniency on content removal policies.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>Allows users to join message boards, create new threads, comment on pre-existing ones, and share images and text with other users.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>Influential during Gamergate as a space where misogynistic users were able to interact and coordinate. It is used by extreme-right and white nationalists to discuss topics and threads that were previously banned on 4chan for being too offensive.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>In the lead up to the 2016 US Presidential election, Donald Trump shared an image created by an anonymous user on 8chan’s /pol/ (politically incorrect) board. It gained controversy due to the ‘Star of David’ with the words ‘Most Corrupt Candidate Ever!’ written inside of it. The ability of 8chan users to create content that infiltrates mainstream media is one of the reasons it is a chosen platform for far-right and alt-right supporters.</p> <div data-bbox="443 1339 1362 1957" data-label="Image"> <p>The image is a screenshot of a forum post. At the top, it shows the post metadata: 'Anonymous 06/22/16 (Wed) 06:16:56 ID: 9fe65a No.6415357'. Below that is the file name: 'File (hide): 1466576216676.jpg (263.62 KB, 929x839, 929:839, hILLhISTORY.jpg)'. The main content is a meme featuring a portrait of Hillary Clinton. The word 'History' is written in large white letters on a blue background at the top. At the bottom, the word 'made.' is written in white on a blue background. A red starburst graphic is overlaid on the right side of the portrait, containing the text 'Most Corrupt Candidate Ever!' in white. The background of the entire image is a collage of US dollar bills.</p> </div> <p>(Source: 8chan)</p>


## Telegram

### Messaging Service founded in 2013

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>The messaging service was designed to provide people with secure communication and avoid government observation. Today it has 200 million monthly active users, and is the most used 'alternative' platform within this guide list.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>An instant messaging service and voice over IP service that allows users to access public channels anonymously, and send encrypted messages to other users.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>Telegram has gained considerable media attention after being used by Islamist extremists to radicalise new members, and coordinate terror attacks. The public channels allow groups such as ISIS to reach supporters and sympathisers from around the world with their latest propaganda and instructions. A study by the Georgetown University's Program on Extremism uncovered 689 Telegram pro-Islamic State channels that contained English-language propaganda.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>Example of Daesh members discussing a mass invitation to Arabic and Muslim Telegram accounts.</p>  <p>(Source: Telegram app)</p>

## Justpaste.it

### Information Sharing founded in 2014

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>Created as a way for Internet users to paste text, which can then be shared by other users with a direct link</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>Allows users to post text, anonymously, be it HTML script or written information.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>The site gained notoriety when it was uncovered how Daesh were using the platform to share information and propaganda undetected. Links to the text were shared amongst Daesh supporters online. Telegram analysis by the University of Georgetown’s Program on Extremism identified Justpaste.it as one of the top 5 most shared links in Daesh-related Telegram channels.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>In 2016, a letter to the leaders of the Islamic State was posted on JustPaste.It, and illustrates the kinds of easily shareable and readable content (requiring little internet connectivity in comparison to video or audio) that Daesh share on the platform.</p>  <p>The screenshot shows a JustPaste.it interface with a yellow header bar containing the text "JustPaste.it share text and images the easy way" and buttons for "Add new note" and "Popular notes". Below the header is the title "A Reminder To The Leaders Of The Islāmic State". The main text of the post includes:</p> <p>The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said, "The religion is nasīhah (sincere advice)." We (the companion) said, "To whom?" He (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said, "To Allāh, His Book, His Messenger, and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk." [1]</p> <p>Likewise, 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattāb (رضي الله عنه) said, "There is no goodness in people who don't give advice, and there is no goodness in people who don't like to be advised." [2]</p> <p>Based on the above two quotations, I advise those who hold power within the Islāmic state. This is my sincere hope that is touches the hearts of those who are sincere from among you.</p> <p>I firstly advise you to beware of this trust Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) has bestowed upon you. Review your use of it and any injustices you may have done before it's too late. For if you meet Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) with injustice in your scale, then your dream of becoming a martyr may not come true. You must realize that this power you hold can lead you to paradise or lead you to the lowest depths of hell. If you are just and upright with this power, then may Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) be pleased with you. But if you are mistreating some people and treating others well then know that you have committed injustice and may Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) forgive you.</p> <p>(Source: JustPaste.it)</p>

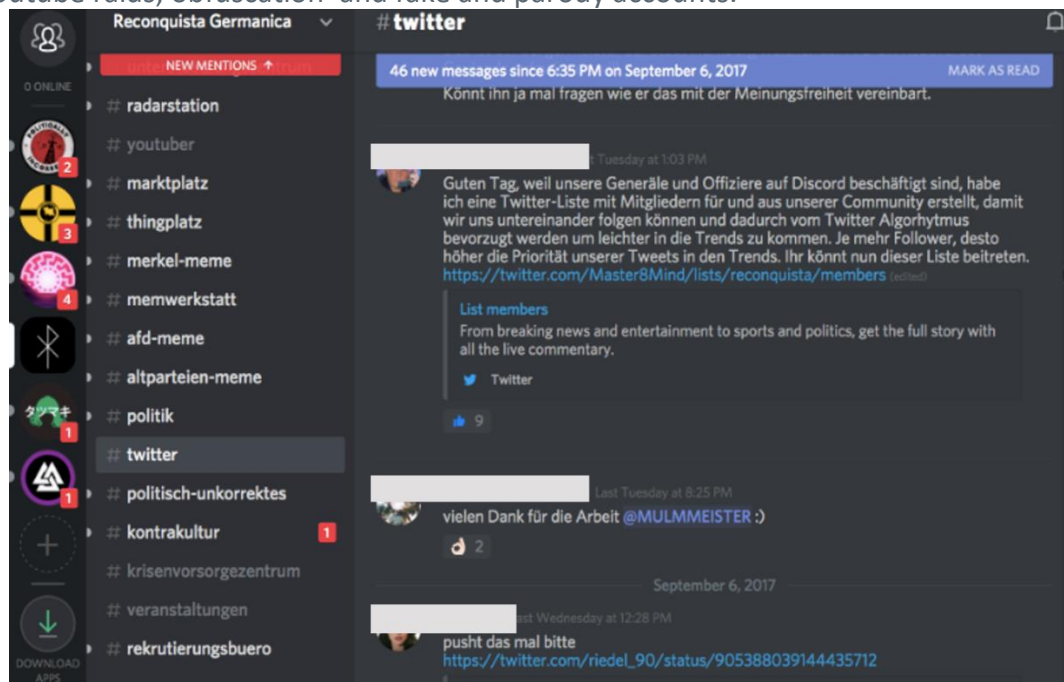


## Discord

### Chatroom founded in 2015

<b>Origin</b>	Discord was designed for gamers to communicate with each other while playing multi-player games that was distinct from the channels provided by games consoles.
<b>Function</b>	A free software, designed for gaming communities, that specialises in text and audio communication between users in a chat channel.
<b>Usage</b>	The site hosts a number of far-right channels, including those that helped alt-right and white supremacists in the US to coordinate the 2017 Charlottesville rally. There is also a channel called Reconquista Germania, which was set-up to disrupt the German election (as revealed in ISD’s publication <a href="#">The Fringe Insurgency</a> ). The anonymised channels provide a space for the far-right to discuss tactics for radicalising new members and feeding their ideology back on to mainstream platforms.
	On Discord, the channels Reconquista Germania and #Infokrieg were set up to coordinate large-scale social media campaigns and to encourage the use of a range of psychological operations and disinformation tactics. Their tactics, many of which were explicitly discussed on Discord, include: Memetic warfare, Twitter, Facebook and Youtube raids, obfuscation and fake and parody accounts.

**Extremist Example**



(Source: Discord)

## Minds

### Social Network founded in 2015

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>Minds was created to integrate crowdfunding, crypto-currency and rewards into a social network that was intended for Internet users who wanted greater transparency of data usage and less restrictions on content and speech.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>A message and content sharing site, which has a built-in monetisation function. It has encrypted chat messaging with private passwords and is designed as a response to the restrictions placed on Facebook.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>Minds messaging calls users to “Take back your Internet freedom”, and provides a censorship-free space for users to post and share messages and content that would otherwise be removed from mainstream platforms. Prominent US, UK and European far-right, alt-right and white supremacist influencers use the site. Paul Joseph Watson, the editor of conspiracy theory entertainment site Infowars, is one of the most active users with over 3 million views and 81,000 subscribers and has a following within the alt-right.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>A user on Minds suggests that white people are suffering the ‘3<sup>rd</sup> stage’ of a genocide. The #WhiteGenocide narrative of white supremacists is popular on Minds.</p> <div data-bbox="359 1256 1453 1973" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> </div>

(Source: Minds)

## Infogalactic

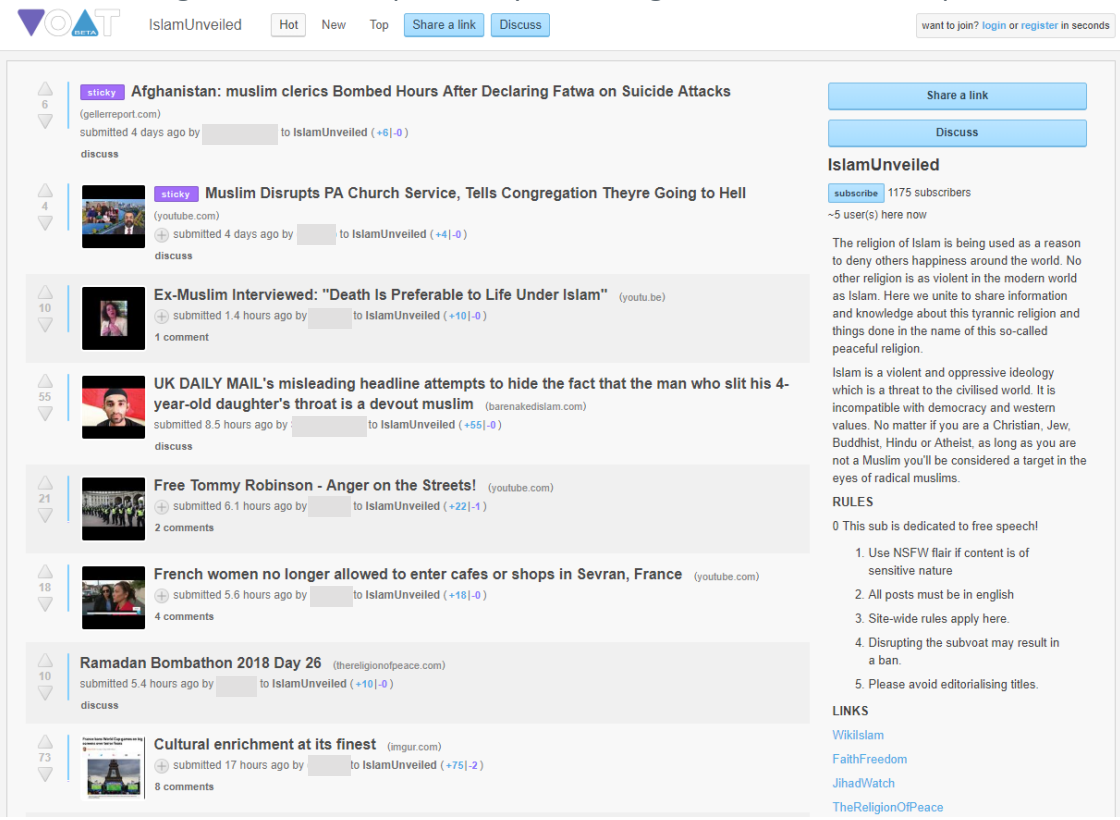
### Online encyclopaedia founded in 2015

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>Infogalactic was created in response to the perceived bias of Wikipedia against right-wing and far-right views.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>Created in the same style and fashion as Wikipedia, the site provides community editors the opportunity to write their own perspectives on topics.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>The alt-right populate the site with entries written through the lens of the far-right ideology. The pages are a resource for alt-right supporters to re-affirm their views and fortify their ideological beliefs. Links for Infogalactic are regularly shared on more popular platforms such as Reddit and 4Chan, in an attempt to guide new audiences to the site.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>The article below discusses the Pizzagate scandal, where alt-right ‘journalists’ and ‘researchers’ sought to uncover a paedophile ring operating out of a pizza restaurant in Washington DC. The conspiracy included Hilary Clinton as a key figure profiting from the paedophile ring. In December 2016, a man visited the pizza restaurant with an assault rifle in an apparent attempt to uncover the truth. The Infogalactic article claims this was a false flag operation to deter any further investigation.</p>  <p>The screenshot shows the Infogalactic website interface for the article 'Pizzagate'. The page title is 'Pizzagate' and it is noted as being redirected from 'Pizza Gate'. The introductory text states: 'This is an Infogalactic original article. "PizzaGate" redirects here. For the pizza-throwing incident at a 2004 football match, see Battle of the Buffet. For the "official" corporate media perspective see Pizzagate conspiracy theory, a copy/pasted Wikipedia biased article intolerant of "fringe" independent media. Not to be confused with Pedogate.' The article begins with: 'Pizzagate is a crowdsourced investigation by independent researchers and commentators into an alleged connection between child sexual abuse and people closely associated with Hillary Clinton. The investigation began in October 2016 after Wikileaks released the Podesta emails, which contain 58,660 emails<sup>[1]</sup> from the Gmail account of John Podesta, who was the chairman of Clinton's 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. Investigators exchanged information online via Twitter, Gab, 4chan, Reddit, and Voat.<sup>[2][3]</sup>' A table of contents is visible, listing sections such as 'Investigation', 'Murder of Seth Rich', and 'Media reaction'. An image of the Comet Ping Pong pizzeria is also shown.</p>

(Source: Infogalactic)

## Voat

### Social network founded in 2015

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>Voat was created for the users of Reddit, 2chan, 4chan and 8chan who had seen their threads removed for harassment and abusive language/content.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>A messaging forum social network platform, which aggregates news and provides a platform for community members to submit multi-media content without limitations.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>Due to the lack of censorship enforced by the site, the platform has been used by the far-right in the US and UK to express violent views on minorities and promote their ideologies. The interface is similar to that of more popular messaging forums such as 4Chan, but has considerably less media attention and user activity.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>A popular thread on Voat is #IslamUnveiled that contains news stories (fake and true) that present Muslims as dangerous and violent, playing into popular ‘othering’ and ‘dehumanizing sub-narratives pushed by the far-right in the UK and Europe.</p>  <p>The screenshot shows a Voat thread titled "#IslamUnveiled" with a "Hot" tag. It features several posts with titles such as "Afghanistan: muslim clerics Bombed Hours After Declaring Fatwa on Suicide Attacks", "Muslim Disrupts PA Church Service, Tells Congregation Theyre Going to Hell", "Ex-Muslim Interviewed: 'Death Is Preferable to Life Under Islam'", "UK DAILY MAIL's misleading headline attempts to hide the fact that the man who slit his 4-year-old daughter's throat is a devout muslim", "Free Tommy Robinson - Anger on the Streets!", "French women no longer allowed to enter cafes or shops in Sevrans, France", "Ramadan Bombathon 2018 Day 26", and "Cultural enrichment at its finest". The right sidebar includes a "subscribe" button (1175 subscribers), a "Share a link" button, and a "Discuss" button. Below these are "RULES" and "LINKS" sections.</p>

(Source: Voat)

## Gab

### Bulletin Board founded in 2016

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>Gab was created with the intention of providing a space for internet users who had been removed, or felt restricted, by mainstream sites stricter content policies.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>Users can read and write messages up to 300 characters long called “gabs” and share multimedia content.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>Gab provides groups and individuals who have been removed from Twitter to continue to promote their messages using a similar format and interface design. Fringe and populist politicians such as Anne Marie Waters and AfD members in Germany use the site. There is also an active alt-right, white supremacists and Identitarian user-base on Gab, who use it to develop communication and collaboration of the far-right between and across Europe and the US. Britain First’s Gab page has 900 followers, and the site was used by white supremacists in 2017 to coordinate the Charlotte’s Ville rally.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>A Gab user posts their take on how white nationalists are victims of a coordinated attempt to commit a genocide of white people, a popular trope of the extreme-right and white supremacists across Europe and the UK.</p> <div data-bbox="424 1252 1382 1973" data-label="Image"> <p>The image shows a screenshot of a post on the Gab social media platform. The post is titled "White Genocide 101:" and contains a numbered list of six points. The text of the points is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Why is it that EVERY white country is forced to be multicultural/multiracial?</li> <li>2) Why is it that EVERY white country is told to end its own race &amp; culture?</li> <li>3) No one asks that of ANY non-White country.</li> <li>4) Immigration/assimilation is FORCED upon ONLY White countries</li> <li>5) Anti-whites call themselves "anti-racists" but their actions lead to the elimination of only one race, the White race.</li> <li>6) The purpose of "anti-racism" is to genocide whit children.</li> </ol> <p>Below the list, the text reads: <b>ANTI-RACIST IS A CODEWORD FOR ANTI-WHITE!</b></p> <p>The post also includes a profile picture of a woman with braided hair, a timestamp of "3 hours", and interaction buttons for "30" likes, "1" comment, "25" reposts, and "Quote".</p> </div> <p>(Source: Gab.ai)</p>



## PewTube

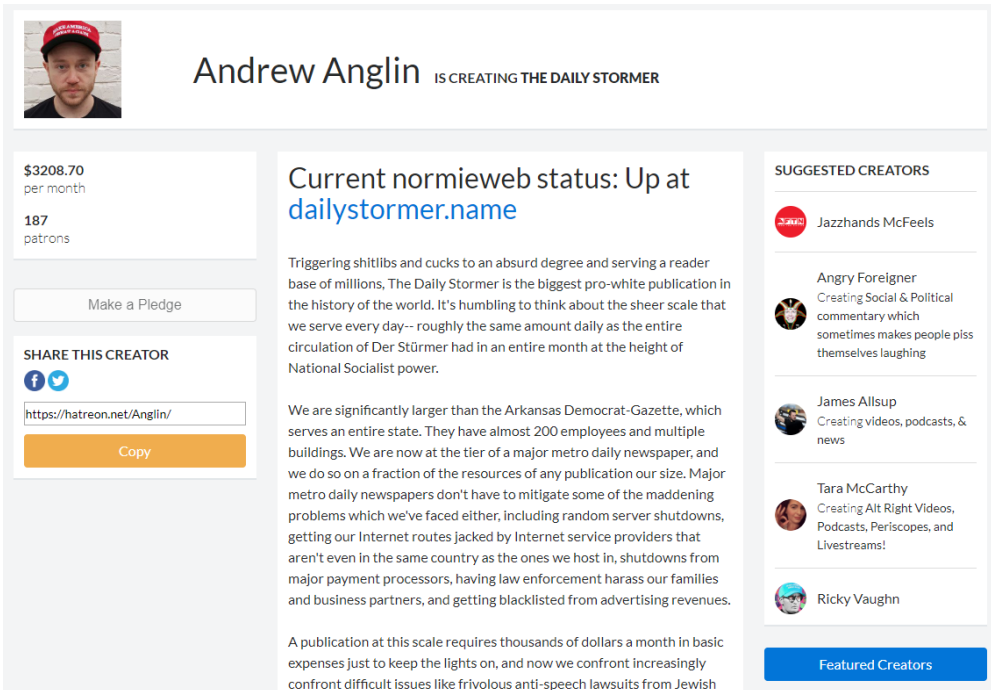
### Media Hosting site founded in 2017

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>PewTube was created by users who wanted to post content that was deemed offensive and in contravention of YouTube’s policies on hate speech and illegal content.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>Users can post videos on their profiles, livestream, upload audio recordings and monetise their pages through user bitcoin donations. The name derives from YouTube’s most popular vlogger PewDiePie.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>PewTube has over 22,000 channels and 50 million views, and presents itself as a ‘censorship free’ alternative to YouTube. Due to this, the site hosts numerous alt-right and white supremacist groups, with Britain First using the site from the UK as well as numerous far-right supporters and conspiracy theorists.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>PewTube hosts numerous videos of National Action, a designated terrorist organisation from the UK and whose videos are banned from YouTube.</p> <div data-bbox="384 1220 1423 1998">  <p>The screenshot shows a video player interface for a video titled "National Action Speech- A call to Action!". The video content depicts a large group of people at a public gathering, many holding flags and banners. The PewTube website navigation bar is visible at the top of the player, and a "Subscribe (5)" button is located below the video player.</p> </div> <p>(Source: PewTube)</p>



## Hatreon


### Crowdfunding site founded in 2017

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>Hatreon was created and launched for the use of people who had been removed or felt restricted by crowdfunding sites such as Patreon in the wake of the Charlotte’s Ville Rally.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>An invite-only crowdfunding website that provides opportunities for individuals and groups to request funds for online and offline activities, such as offline events or the management of a mainstream social media page.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>The site prides itself on being absent of hate speech ‘policing’ and hate speech restrictions and, as such, is used by numerous extreme voices and influencers within the US, UK and European far-right, alt-right and Identitarian movements.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>Hatreon hosts numerous alt-right influencers, who use it to secure funding from their supporters so they can continue to produce propaganda and on/offline content. Andrew Anglin, the creator of The Daily Stormer (a white supremacist website), receives \$3,208.70 a month from 187 users.</p> 

(Source: Hatreon)

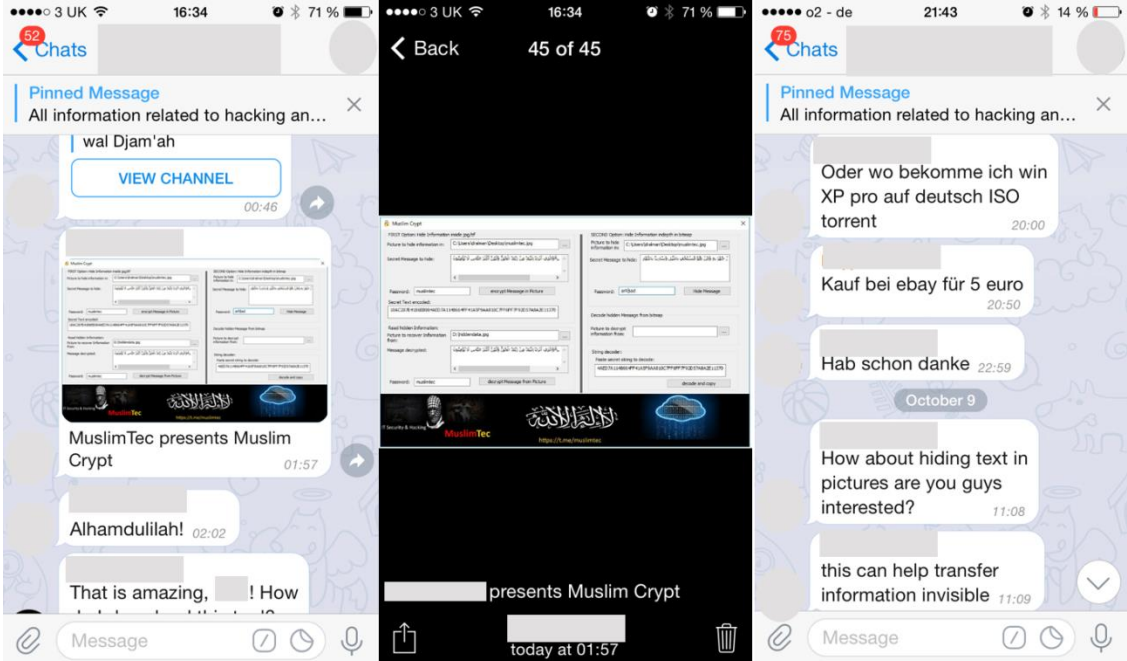
## BitChute

### Video Hosting site founded in 2017

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>Created specifically to host videos and content that were being censored by YouTube, it also hosts general entertainment content.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>A peer-to-peer content sharing platform where users can upload and share videos, in much the same interface and approach as YouTube.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>The site claims it was created in response to Internet censorship and, as such, has attracted far-right and conspiracy theory content creators. It has a smaller user base than PewTube but numerous alt-right and far-right influencers in the UK and US have established profiles on the site.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>Anti-immigrant organisation ‘Defend Europe’, set up by Identitarians from across Europe, showcase their PR stunts on BitChute. In one video, they film their attempts to stop illegal immigrants from entering Europe via the Alps, complete with helicopter shots and an interview with German Identitarian Martin Sellner. One comment on this video states: “Stop calling them immigrants. They are an invading army.”</p>  <p>(Source: BitChute)</p>

## MuslimCrypt

### Image Encryption founded in 2018

<p><b>Origin</b></p>	<p>MuslimCrypt was created by Islamist Jihadists to share information online between group members without being detected by surveillance agencies.</p>
<p><b>Function</b></p>	<p>Uses steganography to send discreet messages through images online.</p>
<p><b>Usage</b></p>	<p>Jihadist groups can use this tool to send instructions, information and propaganda to each other without the text source being detected or read by others. It is, as yet, unclear as to how effective or widespread the use of this tool is for jihadists. It is likely that it is used by very few individuals.</p>
<p><b>Extremist Example</b></p>	<p>On Telegram, the tool was advertised within a group called MuslimTec where users were encouraged to use the tool as to share private messages and information.</p>  <p>(Source: Telegram app)</p>

## Recommendations for Civil Society

Delivering counter-messaging campaigns to these more exclusive platforms carries a risk to the campaign and campaigner. ISD recommends using these platforms primarily for research, to ensure that any counter-messaging campaigns distributed on mainstream platforms are informed by the latest narratives and underlying sub-narratives being used by extremist groups to sew hate and gain support. As such, ISD suggests **four recommendations** for civil society:

- 1.** Remain alert to external links being shared on mainstream social media platforms that are directing vulnerable audiences towards extremist content on alternative sites. If you do find links that concern you, inform the OCCI so that we can inform ISD's online researchers. Caution should be taken when following external links shared by malicious users online, as there is an increased potential for them to contain malware.
- 2.** Sub-cultures that promote bigoted, prejudiced and extremist perspectives can often be found on these alternative platforms. Researching their activities by studying the content they produce, the narratives they promote, the links they share and the language they use can allow us to better understand the motivations and push/pull factors that may lead people into participating in these 'communities'.
- 3.** If creating a campaign that addresses one of the broad appeal discussions that the far-right in the UK have co-opted (e.g., freedom of speech), incorporate some campaign content that outlines the true tactics and agenda of far-right influencers within that discussion. Diminishing the influence of the far-right in the UK to persuade new audiences that they are 'defending' free speech is becoming of greater urgency and relevance.
- 4.** Creating anonymised accounts on the alternative platforms that are not extremist in origin can be valuable for additional observational research. This may be especially pertinent if your target audience is operating in threads, chatrooms and blogs that require a log-in. However, caution should be taken when creating accounts on platforms made for the explicit purpose of hosting extremist content/users. Aside from risk to the campaigner should your username, email and password be released by the site, there are also ethical considerations if anonymously infiltrating online communities for the purpose of research and a need to consider the psychological stress being placed on the researcher who must view and read malicious and extremist content.

**If your organisation is interested in conducting research on these alternative platforms, please contact the OCCI Help Desk ([uk@occi-support.org](mailto:uk@occi-support.org)) so we can provide advice and guidance.**