ISD | Powering solutions to extremism and polarisation

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A Safe Space to Hate: White Supremacist Mobilisation on Telegram

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ISD's digital analysis unit has been monitoring a network of 208 online channels distributing white supremacist content on the encrypted messaging platform Telegram. In an analysis of more than a million posts, this briefing unpacks how the platform is being used to glorify terrorism, call for violence, spread extremist ideological material and demonise minority groups.

WARNING: This report contains images and descriptions of posts that readers may find extremely upsetting. These include calls for (sexual) violence, the glorification of terrorism and the dehumanisation of minority communities.

Summary

In the past five years, terrorism from the extreme right has surged by 320%.[1] In 2019, high-profile attacks in New Zealand, the US, Germany and Norway were committed by individuals with little or no connection to extremist organisations or proscribed terrorist groups. Instead, evidence suggests that these individuals were connected to loose extreme right networks largely operating online. This points to a shift towards a post-organisational paradigm whereby online connection to extremist culture and ideology could be equally important for inspiring violence as connections to "on the ground" groups.

In understanding this post-organisational landscape it is essential to analyse the online ecosystems which provide a permissive space where violent and terrorist activity can be explicitly endorsed. The encrypted messaging platform Telegram — originally established to provide users living in authoritarian states with a means of secure communication — has become one of these spaces, and is now an important platform for white supremacist actors to propagate violent and extremist messages.[2]

Telegram has gained considerable attention as one of the key communication tools used by jihadist groups such as ISIS. A 2019 study by Georgetown University's Program on Extremism uncovered 636 Telegram pro-Islamic State channels that contained English-language propaganda.[3] The company has since taken action against ISIS, including a major operation with The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) in late 2019 to take down networks of ISIS-related channels.[4]

Telegram has limited content-moderation policies, only banning the promotion of violence on public channels and the sharing of illegal pornographic material.[5] As a result of these narrow content-moderation policies, Telegram has become an important platform on which white supremacist actors can gain momentum. This mobilisation covers a spectrum of activity, ranging from general ideological discussions to the promotion of political violence, the glorification of terrorist attacks, and even sharing guides which help individuals prepare for violence.

To better understand the scale and nature of this mobilisation and the risks posed by these communities, ISD has been monitoring 208 Telegram groups which promote white supremacist ideology, focused mainly on the US context, and analysing more than a million posts.[6]

This research highlights how, through its limited content-moderation policies, Telegram has become a safe space for white supremacists to share and discuss a range of explicit extremist material. Furthermore, it shows that many of these Telegram communities have become permissive environments where overt calls for violence and support for terrorism is widespread. Much of the content which we have identified appears to breach Telegram's Terms of Service which prohibit the promotion of violence, suggesting that the platform's current enforcement of its policies is ineffective.

Due to the highly egregious nature of violent and pro-terrorist content which we identified in this study, ISD believes that an "early warning system" which facilitates the semi-automated identification of high-risk content should be trialled in order to detect and mitigate calls for violence arising from these channels.

Key Findings

- **ISD researchers identified 208 Telegram channels used by white supremacists.** The messages shared within these channels range from general non-violent racist discussions to support for political violence, the glorification of terrorism and terrorist groups, and direct calls for violent attacks against minorities, political opponents and the state.

- **These channels are highly networked, and 21.2% of the content identified in this analysis was forwarded from another group.** In total we found that 205 out of the 208 channels we identified linked to one another, highlighting the densely interconnected nature of white supremacist communities on Telegram. In many instances, channels which were not explicitly violent still directed their followers to channels where endorsement of violence is commonplace. This suggests that racist but non-violent channels can act as gateways to communities which explicitly promote violence.

- **The largest of these channels had 11,578 members.** The size of these groups ranged from 67 to 11,578 members, and the average membership was 1,773.

- **These channels rely heavily on image and video content.** We identified that 20.7% of posts did not contain any text, indicating the key role played by images and videos on Telegram. On average, 40% of the posts made in a channel were images or videos. Our analysis of these channels largely focused on the written content they shared, but the prominence of image and video content on these channels has important implications for future research as well as potential content-moderation solutions.

- **ISD analysed 1,048,575 posts across 208 channels propagating white supremacist content and found support for terrorists and terrorist organisations in 125 (60.1%) of the channels monitored.** This content included the glorification of terrorist attacks and explicit calls for violence against minority communities and other groups deemed to be enemies.

- **We found reference to "boogaloo" — a slang term used to denote a second civil war — in 117 (56.3%) of the channels identified.** Although other research has highlighted how some "boogaloo" communities outwardly promote anti-government rather than explicitly racist rhetoric, this nevertheless suggests important crossover between well-armed militia movements and violence-endorsing white supremacist communities.[7]

- **Of the channels analysed, 183 (87.9%) contained explicit anti-minority slurs or presented minority communities in a hostile light.** An analysis of a sample of 200 posts discussing minority communities (but not containing explicit anti-minority slurs) revealed that all mentions of minority groups were framed in a hostile fashion or contained elements of supremacist "in-group/out-group" thinking. The channels in our analysis that did not contain explicit anti-minority slurs were largely used for the dissemination of image and video content and so were not included in our linguistic analysis.

Channel Identification and Classification

We started our identification process with 18 public Telegram channels associated with white supremacist mobilisation. These were discovered by searching Telegram for public channels named after hate groups and containing terminology associated with white supremacy. Of these, six are associated with the terrorism-endorsing hate group Atomwaffen Division,[8] and the remaining 12 more broadly with the glorification of terrorists.[9] Telegram channels often share material which links to ideologically related public channels, and using these 18 channels as content seeds we employed a "snowball" methodology to identify connected, ideologically similar public communities, which we then joined. Through the content, our seed-channels forwarded from like-minded channels, and the lists they collated of recommended channels, ISD researchers could identify and vet additional channels used by white supremacists.

Figure 1.
An example of an image linking to related channels.

Using this methodology, we identified 208 different channels, each with between 67 and 11,578 followers, expressing support for white supremacist ideology, and mainly focused on the US context. The average membership of these channels was 1,773.

While the channels and groups analysed all communicated in English, some were explicitly addressing a transnational membership, promoting like-minded groups in non-English speaking countries and commenting on issues and developments across the West. Within these, researchers identified two distinct categories of channels: discussion threads which enabled group chat within a community, and one-to-many content banks, which served as repositories for propaganda material and ideological content.

This research was focused on examining the risk posed by communities mobilising on Telegram. Based on qualitative analysis of the identified channels, we additionally coded groups which explicitly endorsed terrorist violence and content repositories which primarily contained tactical material geared towards violent mobilisation, including bomb-making instructions and gun-fighting tactics.

Through this analysis, we subdivided the channels in our list into:

- **49 pro-terrorist channels**: These channels promote groups who endorse politically motivated violence, or glorify individuals who have committed attacks.

- **7 tactical groups**: These groups serve as hubs for the sharing of tactical material including advice on how to prepare for terrorist attacks and insurrection, survive off-grid, and monitor political and ideological opponents.

- **74 general discussion groups**: These groups provide spaces for individuals to engage in general discussion around white supremacy. This includes the sharing of memes, "shitposting"[10] material, generalised racist and xenophobic conversation, and discussion of current affairs.

- **78 content banks**: These channels serve as one-to-many repositories of material. Often these channels collate material relating to particular topics, such as historical photographs of Nazis, racist memes, and white supremacist literature and podcasts for wider circulation.

Mapping the forwarding patterns of channels used by white supremacists

We identified that 222,654 (21.2%) pieces of content in our set were forwarded from other channels, highlighting the highly networked nature of white supremacist mobilisation on Telegram. Using the open-source network and visualisation software Gephi, ISD researchers visualised and analysed the forwarding patterns of the 208 channels used by white supremacists. It emerged that they share content from a dense network of channels, and that out of the 208 channels we identified, 205 were connected to this network.

In the network map in Figure 2, the large nodes in the centre are channels whose content is regularly shared throughout the network.

- The nodes are coloured by type: green nodes represent channels promoting pro-terrorist content (hereafter referred to as "pro-terrorist channels"); red nodes represent channels promoting white supremacist content (hereafter referred to as "white supremacist channels"), and purple indicates unknown channels that were not part of our list of 208 channels but whose content was forwarded from at least one of them.

- The size of the node is based on how often it forwarded content from another group or its content was forwarded by another group (the number of connections it has within the network).

- The centrality of a node indicates how many channels forwarded its content (how well it's connected in the network). If, for example, a channel has a high number of connections to one channel, it is peripheral. If, on the other hand, a channel's content is forwarded to many channels, it is more central.
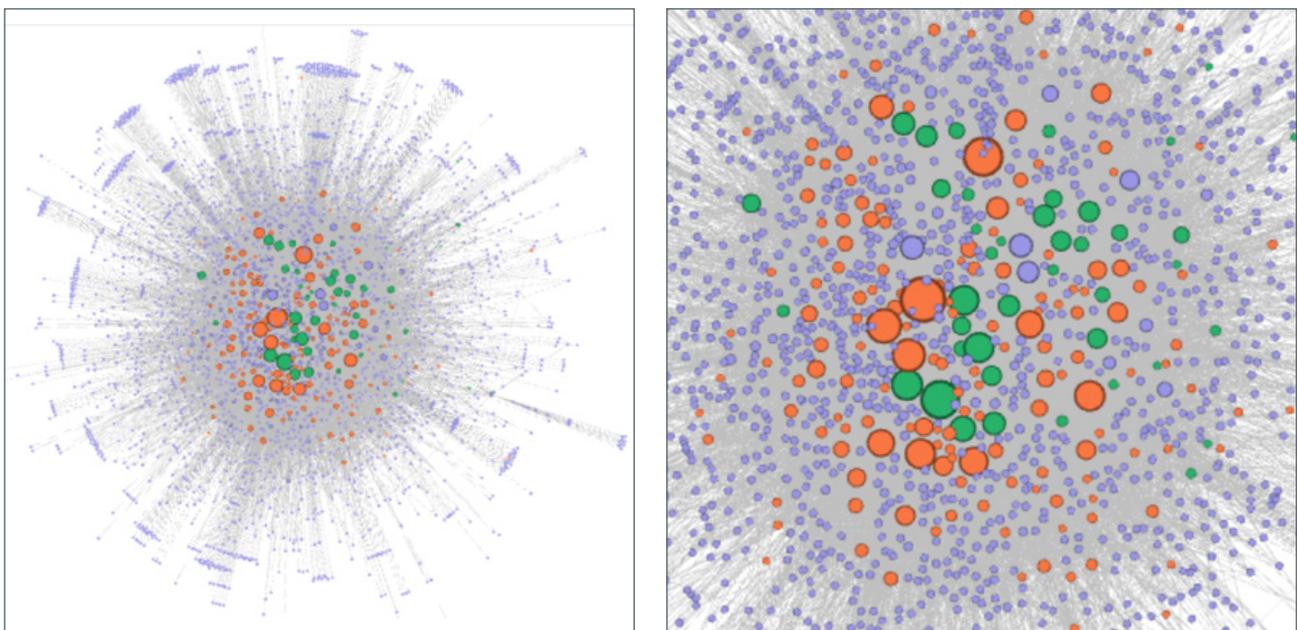

Figure 2.
A network of channels whose content was forward by channels promoting white supremacist content.

From the map, it becomes clear that there are multiple layers to the white supremacist network on Telegram. Almost all of our pro-terrorist channels are near the centre of the map and comparatively large, meaning this content is frequently shared by a large number of channels within the network. In a few exceptional cases, pro-terrorist channels (usually smaller content hubs) are in a more peripheral position. For example, a channel that stores Atomwaffen Division propaganda but whose content is only forwarded by one larger channel is located outside of the centre of the map.

Beyond these, there is a wide range of white supremacist channels that are peripheral to the network, representing channels that are not connected to as many of the initial channels within our list.

While some of the generalised white supremacist channels in our map are represented by bigger nodes, meaning this content was forwarded more often, the pro-terrorist channels tended to be more central to our map, meaning that this content was forwarded to a greater number of channels.

This network map demonstrates that channels openly supportive of terrorists do not exist in isolation; this content is shared by like-minded channels, as well as by white supremacist channels. While the latter may not openly advocate for violence, by directing their followers towards channels that do, they may facilitate their exposure to more extreme and violent content.

Qualitative Analysis of the Channels

After classifying the identified white supremacist channels according to their primary purpose, researchers aimed to develop a better understanding of the themes and narratives promoted within them through a qualitative analysis of the content being shared. The relatively unchecked mobilisation of extremist groups on Telegram means that analysis of these channels can provide unparalleled insights into the narratives, subcultures and strategies of contemporary white supremacists.

Defining terrorist content

A particularly striking feature of these channels was the widespread and explicit support for the use of politically and ideologically motivated violence, either through the promotion of groups associated with this violence, direct calls to violent action, or the sharing of instructional material helping people carry out attacks. The prevalence and variety of this type of content prompts broader consideration around conceptualisations of extreme right wing terrorism.

Internationally, there is considerably less alignment around far right terrorism than Islamist, posing challenges to classification and enforcement. While some of the groups discussed in our channels are proscribed terrorist organisations in some national contexts, such as the neo-Nazi political group Blood & Honour in Canada and extreme right terrorist group National Action in the UK, these movements are not proscribed in others, and many groups like Atomwaffen Division are currently not proscribed at all despite explicitly advocating for the use of terrorist tactics.[11]

These shortfalls in designation have prompted wider debates around when such content can be considered 'terrorist' in nature. In 2019, high-profile attacks were committed in New Zealand, the US, Germany and Norway by individuals espousing extreme right-wing views who had little or no connection with extremist organisations or proscribed terrorist groups, but who were connected to loose extreme right-wing networks online. This suggests a shift towards a post-organisational model whereby connection to extremist culture and ideology online could be equally important as connections to "on the ground" groups.

While the organisational power of groups such as Atomwaffen Division is still important, the network of accounts we identified points towards a wide range of relatively large terrorism-endorsing communities which are very easy for individuals to tap into without expressing formal affiliation to a movement or making formal contact with other affiliates. With this in mind, the channels and content discussed below have been labelled in this research as "pro-terrorist" when there is express support for politically motivated violence, violence-endorsing networks, or individuals who have committed attacks – even when there is no express affiliation to a proscribed organisation.

Our findings show the importance and urgency of a broader discussion at a national and international level around ways of addressing the post-organisational extreme right through a counter-terrorism apparatus, which is largely geared towards countering a group-based challenge and proscription-based approaches.

Terrorist and violence endorsing groups

ISD researchers identified a number of channels seemingly established to promote extreme right terrorist networks such as Atomwaffen Division and Feuerkrieg Division. Another group present on Telegram is the neo-Nazi and occult group Order of Nine Angels, which anti-racist advocacy group Hope Not Hate have called to be proscribed as a terrorist organisation for its violent activities.[12] In addition to this, researchers found propaganda material which promoted neo-Nazi paramilitary groups The Base, National Action (a terrorist organisation proscribed in the UK), and Blood and Honour (a terrorist organisation proscribed in Canada.)

Figure 3.
Content by the violent white supremacist groups National Action (far left), The Base (centre, left),
Feuerkrieg Division (centre, right) and Atomwaffen Division (far right)

Glorifying terrorism

Apart from organised terrorist groups and franchises, ISD researchers identified dozens of channels expressing support for, glorifying or sharing the videos and writings of known lone- actor terrorists. At times, these individual violent extremists are worshipped as "heroes" or "saints" of the movement.

One channel named after a high-profile white supremacist terrorist even collated a list of terrorist "saints" from around the world, listing their name, the date of their attack and the number of fatalities. The list extends back to the assassin of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, and includes most of the recent cases of high-profile extreme right lone-actor terrorists. The list has been regularly updated after attacks. In May 2020, it contained the names of 50 attackers from the US, UK, Germany, Sweden, New Zealand and Norway. Most of the attackers listed aimed to kill others because of their ethnic, racial or religious background, even though in some cases the attacks also targeted politicians, police officers, abortion doctors or civilians.

Figure 4.
Examples of content glorifying far-right terrorists.

While most individuals listed could be classified as far-right terrorists or racially motivated murderers, a number of outliers without obvious connections to the white supremacist movement are included. Most curious is the inclusion of the American preacher and cult leader Jim Jones, who ordered the mass suicide of 917 of his followers in Jonestown, Guyana in 1978. While the reference to Jones could be a macabre joke, it could also hint at a fascination with and worship of violence and mass killings that extends beyond ideological lines.

Another means of support identified for extreme-right terrorists across the Telegram channels were calls for followers to write letters to imprisoned white supremacist terrorists to boost their morale. Alongside violent extremists, channels also made less-frequent calls to write letters of support for the imprisoned German Holocaust denier Ursula Haverbeck.

Calls for violence

Beyond sharing propaganda of terrorist groups and the celebration of terrorists, some groups also actively called for violence. In most cases, these were general calls for violence against a specific group of people. ISD researchers identified calls for violence against a wide range of groups, including the LGBTQ+ community, police officers, journalists, those working in the tech sector, drug dealers, paedophiles and individuals working in the pornographic industry. In a number of instances, specific individuals were named as targets.[13]
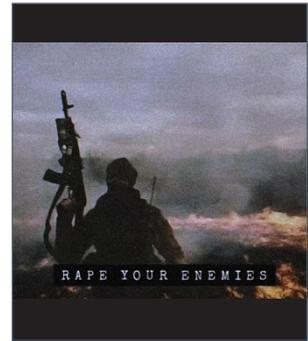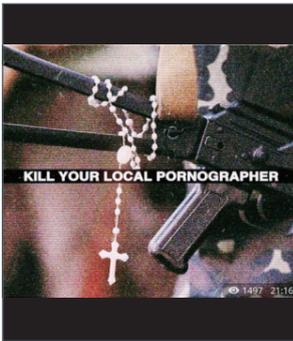
Figure 5.
Examples of calls for violence.

Figure 6.
An example of an image calling for the rape of political opponents

Certain channels are openly supportive of gendered violence, including rape and rape threats as a tactic of psychological warfare. This includes general calls to use rape as a weapon and the discussion of targeted rapes against political opponents. Calls for rape are explicitly justified in strategic terms. In one text shared via a post on Telegram, rape is described as "*an extremely effective tool against our many foes, as its general use as a threat or direct usage against an individual greatly reduces enemy morale, and strikes a nameless fear in their hearts.*" This highly concerning preoccupation with gender-based violence itself highlights the need for further research into the role misogyny has in violent white supremacist communities.

Tactical material
ISD researchers identified numerous tactical documents being shared which could provide useful intelligence to prospective terrorists or armed groups. These included links to bomb-making instructions, material on how to improvise and maintain firearms and other tactical equipment, and combat tips.

Figure 7.
Examples of material shared on tactical channels.

Anti-minority content
Within the network of white supremacist channels analysed, unfiltered expressions of hate towards out-groups were commonplace. While antisemitism is particularly central for these channels, hateful expressions towards Black people, Muslims and LGBTQ communities also play a significant role. In a number of instances, channels were specifically established to target particular minority communities and served as hubs for the collation of material which ridicules, denigrates and calls for violence against these groups.
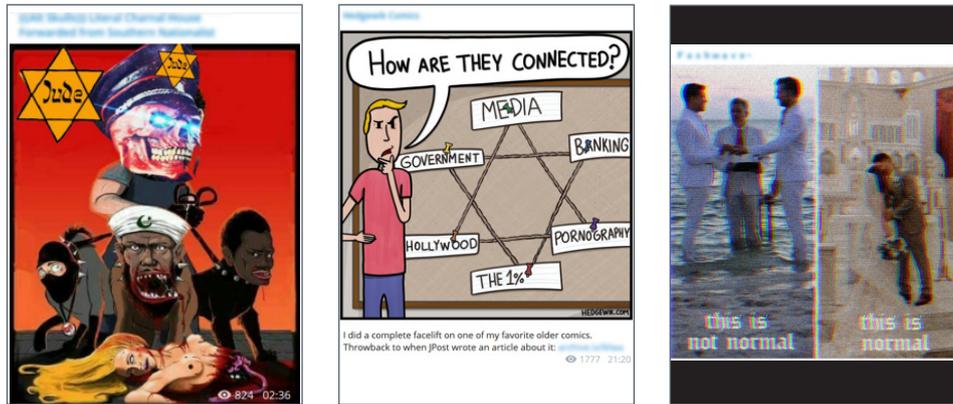
Figure 8.
Examples of antisemitic, anti-Muslim and anti-Black (left),
antisemitic (centre) and anti-LGBTQ content (right).

Quantitative Textual Analysis

The analysis above provides a qualitative assessment of the risk posed by white supremacist Telegram channels, which act as a hub to facilitate coordination and mobilisation by highly dangerous individuals and groups who in many instances endorse terrorist violence. To gain a sense of the proportion of such violent and hateful content, ISD conducted a keyword-based analysis of the text-based content within these channels based on the qualitative insights from our ethnographic research.

To achieve this, we extracted 1,048,575 posts from across the 208 white supremacist channels that we monitored between 5 October 2016 – 28 May 2020. Indicating the key role played by images and videos on Telegram, 217,707 (20.7%) of posts did not contain any text. The proportions of text-free posts differed between channels – ranging from 99% for certain content repositories focused on image or video content to 0.09% of posts in the case of some discussion groups. On average, 40% of posts made in channels contained no text and in 13 channels less than a quarter of comments contained text.

This finding has important implications, as it means that our keyword analysis only captures part of the relevant posts. Therefore, we complemented this with qualitative analysis of visual elements within these channels. In many instances, we identified content inciting violence that was presented in the format of memes, videos or images.

Topic-based analysis
We performed a narrative analysis of these 1,048,575 posts, identifying posts containing keywords related to the following categories:

- **Terrorist**: Mentions of organisations that advocate for politically and ideologically motivated violence (such as Atomwaffen Division and The Base) and individuals who have engaged in politically and ideologically motivated attacks.

- **Ideologues**: Mentions of ideologues who have helped inspire politically and ideologically motivated attacks.

- **Literature**: Mentions of documents and books that have been used to justify politically and ideologically motivated attacks.

- **Ideology**: Mentions of terms and concepts that are linked to violent white supremacist mobilisation.

- **Violence**: Mentions of terms associated with violent activity.

- **Boogaloo**: Mentions of terminology associated with "boogaloo" – a term used to reference a second civil war.

- **Anti-minority language**: Othering and hateful language used to target, denigrate and harass members of minority communities.

- **Minority communities**: General discussion about minority communities.

In total we were able to identify 123,712 posts containing language relating to the narratives outlined above, accounting for 14% of all posts made on these channels since 1 January 2020. See Figure 9.
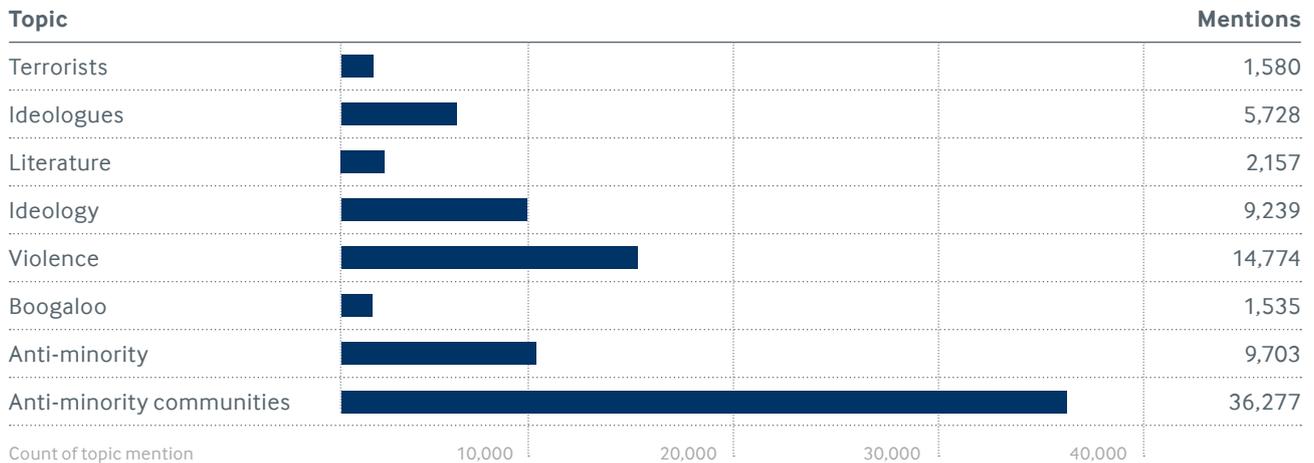
Topic		Mentions
Terrorists		1,580
Ideologues		5,728
Literature		2,157
Ideology		9,239
Violence		14,774
Boogaloo		1,535
Anti-minority		9,703
Anti-minority communities		36,277
Count of topic mention	10,000 20,000 30,000 40,000	

Figure 9.
The number of posts containing anti-minority and violent narratives.

Anti-minority

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the category with the greatest volume of discussion was specific mentions of minority communities. An analysis of a sample of 200 posts discussing minority communities but not containing explicit anti-minority slurs revealed that all mentions of minority groups were framed in a hostile fashion or contained elements of "in-group/out-group" thinking, highlighting the explicit and overt racism present across these channels. Out of all channels examined, 183 (87.9%) contained mentions of minority communities or explicit anti-minority slurs. On closer examination, the channels which did not contain explicit anti-minority slurs or discussion of minority communities were found to primarily host image and video-based content. This was not captured by our text-based analysis, but was still closely related to extremist and anti-minority mobilisation.

The scale and widespread nature of this content is particularly important as it demonstrates how Telegram has become an essential hub for material that would breach the terms of use for other social media platforms – providing a safe space for overtly hateful communities to form.

Violent and terrorist content

Violent terminology was the second most prevalent category in our data-set, and was found in 179 channels (86% of the total). In many instances, this included a general discussion of violent activity, including a focus on violent acts committed by minorities which are used as justification of hateful and dehumanising discussion of whole communities. Approximately 10% of the content containing violent terminology contained direct calls for violence against individuals or groups of people, including at least one threat to an elected official.

Going beyond a simple keyword analysis in order to identify potentially concerning content, researchers also analysed how many channels contained combinations of different categories that could indicate readiness for violence. For example, 14 channels contained mentions of terrorism, violent terminology and anti-minority slurs while 52 channels contained mentions of terrorism and explicitly violent terminology. Further analysis of these channels could help to isolate concrete calls for violence.

We found explicit mentions of white supremacist terrorists and terrorist organisations in 125 (60%) of the channels we monitored. These mentions often contained links to manifesto documents published by individuals who had committed attacks, literature which expressly endorsed terrorist activity, and in some cases celebration of the anniversaries of high-profile attacks. This highlights how discussion of violent individuals and groups is spread beyond the 50 channels studied that ISD had identified as specifically serving to promote politically motivated violence, or glorify individuals who have committed attacks.

It should be noted that even in channels which glorify terrorists or acts of terrorism or promote ideologues or literature which have helped justify political violence, violent content is usually not the sole type of message shared. A further analysis was conducted to assess how many channels frequently shared violent content. In five channels, mention of terrorism occurred in more than 10% of posts, and in nine channels mention of extremist ideologues occurred in more than 10% of posts. Similarly, five channels were identified in which mentions of violence occurred in more than 10% of posts (in two cases these posts made up over 30% each). Even though channels which only occasionally use violent terminology or glorify terrorism (eg, on the anniversaries of attacks) should still be of concern, priority should be given to channels in which this content has a greater share of the overall output.

Discussions of civil war

In addition to an explicit discussion of terrorists and terrorist organisations, 117 out of the 208 channels analysed by ISD researchers for this project contain discussions around the "boogaloo", an online meme referring to a second US civil war.[14]

Discussion of "boogaloo" in the context of armed insurrection dates back to at least June 2018 and has become commonplace in libertarian and anti-government circles online in recent months. ISD research has traced the growth of the movement during the COVID-19 pandemic, identifying 200,000 posts that contained the word "boogaloo" across social media, with 52% on Twitter, 22% on Reddit, 12% on Tumblr and 11% on 4chan and Voat.[15]

There is some evidence of connections between white supremacist communities and these anti-government groups.[16] This included the sharing of instructional material which has been widely shared in "boogaloo" groups on Facebook and suggests that as a platform Telegram provides a network that can connect overtly racist and terrorist-supporting white supremacists with organised, armed anti-government militias.[17]

Figure 10.
A meme calling for "Boogaloo" supporters and accelerationist groups to join forces in armed conflict.

Evidence gathered by the Tech Transparency Project (TTP), which has been monitoring mobilisation by 125 "boogaloo" groups on Facebook, highlights that while some members on Facebook disavow racism there are other members of this community who advance extremist anti-minority rhetoric.[18] This is supported by research from the Southern Poverty Law Center which traces the history of "boogaloo" groups back to extremist communities online.[19] In at least one instance, TTP researchers also found evidence of an influential racist from the "boogaloo" community seeking to direct members of the group onto Telegram to escape content-moderation efforts by Facebook, suggesting that there is a conscious effort to bring militia groups into more explicitly supremacist networks.

In line with these findings, ISD identified channels containing references to both "boogaloo" and white supremacist ideologues (14 channels), white supremacist literature (35 channels), white supremacist ideology (59 channels) and anti-minority slurs (57 channels). Ten channels contained explicit references to both "boogaloo" and terrorism. Although occurring in relatively low volume, the crossover of discussion of "boogaloo" into violent white supremacist groups operating on Telegram identified in this analysis potentially highlights a bridge between the well-armed "boogaloo" community and ideologically motivated white supremacist accelerationists. This also demonstrates that the movement is

mobilising across platforms, building up alternative presences across the online-ecosystem that will absorb the shock of any removal made by single platforms.

In addition to drawing on wider narratives of a second civil war, calls for insurrectional violence by white supremacist Telegram channels often advocate for accelerating what they believe is the inevitable breakdown of western society through acts of violence and terrorism (known as accelerationism). These specific calls for violence often merge with calls for a race war or "RaHoWa" (Racial Holy War), drawing on long-established white supremacist tropes.

Outlook – Building the Analytical Infrastructure to Detect and Mitigate Threats

For this report, ISD researchers identified and analysed the content of 208 channels used by white supremacists on Telegram that mainly focus on the US context. The dangerous nature of content shared on Telegram coupled with the relatively open nature of the platform means that the risk posed by the platform as a hub for violent mobilisation should be carefully considered.

The scale of explicitly and transparently violent content encountered during the analysis is staggering. While most individuals who follow pro-terrorist channels or engage in white supremacist discussion groups on Telegram will not go on to commit acts of violence, the regular calls for violence made to audiences of thousands of users increase the risk that a minority of them eventually will. As governments become more aware of the risk posed by white supremacist violence, it is essential that novel resources and approaches are trialled which allow for the detection of concrete threats coming from these communities.

The scale of explicitly and transparently violent content regularly shared in these channels is beyond the capacity of researchers or civil society organisations monitoring them manually. To fill this gap, it will be key to build an analytical infrastructure for an early warning system to enable the semi-automated detection of material related to violent white supremacist mobilisation. By using a combination of ethnographic monitoring and machine learning technologies such as natural language processing, specific threats originating within white supremacist channels, especially against targeted individuals or soft targets such as community centres, religious institutions or activist groups, could be identified and mitigated. As automated analyses of user-generated content poses genuine concerns over privacy, data sharing and surveillance, these need to be sensitively managed with appropriate procedures and safeguards in place.

About the Authors

Jakob Guhl is a Coordinator at the ISD, where he mainly works with the digital research team. Jakob has co-authored research reports on the alternative online-ecosystem of the far-right, reciprocal radicalisation between far-right extremists and Islamists, coordinated trolling campaigns, hate speech, and disinformation campaigns targeting elections. He is a frequent commentator on German radio and broadcast channels, including Deutschlandfunk, Tagesthemen and Radio Eins. Jakob has been invited to present his research about online hate to the German Ministry of Justice and provided evidence to the German Minister of the Interior and Family Minister on how to strengthen prevention against right-wing extremism and antisemitism. His research has been cited in the New Republic, Die Welt, Die Zeit and The Guardian, among others. Additionally, he has published articles in the Journal for Deradicalisation, Demokratie gegen Menschenfeindlichkeit, Taz and co-authored an essay for an edited volume of the Munich Residence Theatre about the origins of contemporary political anger.

Jacob Davey is a Senior Research Manager at the ISD where he leads research on the extreme right-wing and hate groups. His work focuses on mapping extreme right-wing mobilisation globally, the development of new software for tracking hate speech online, and the intersection of hate and disinformation. His recent research outputs have looked at how extreme right-wing movements connect across borders, the mainstreaming of extremist ideology and conspiracy theories, disinformation campaigns and deradicalisation work. Jacob regularly advises senior policymakers and delivers lectures on extreme right ideology, and he has provided expert testimony to the UK Home Affairs Select Committee. Jacob's research has been featured in a range of publications and media outlets including the BBC, the Guardian, The Times, The New York Times, El Pais, Sky News, CNN and The Hill. Jacob is a fellow at the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right.

Footnotes

01   Institute for Economics & Peace, Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, November 2019, http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/11/GTI-2019web.pdf.

02   Slate, Telegram Was Built for Democracy Activists. White Nationalists Love It (8 August 2019), https://slate.com/technology/2019/08/telegram-white-nationalists-el-paso-shooting-facebook.html. [accessed on 24 June 2020].

03   Program on Extremism, George Washington University, Encrypted Extremism: Inside the English-speaking Islamic State Ecosystem on Telegram (June 2019), https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/EncryptedExtremism.pdf.

04   Europol, Europol and Telegram take on terrorist propaganda online (25 November 2019), https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/europol-and-telegram-take-terrorist-propaganda-online. [accessed on 24 June 2020]

05   Telegram Terms of Service. Available online at: https://telegram.org/tos.

06   For the purpose of this research, we define white supremacy as: "The belief in the superiority of whites over non-whites, and that white people should be politically and socially dominant over non-white people. This can extend to a belief in the need for violence against, or even the genocide of, non-white people."

07   Bellingcat, The Boogaloo movement is not what you think (27 May 2020), https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2020/05/27/the-boogaloo-movement-is-not-what-you-think/. [accessed on 24 June 2020].

08   Politico, State pushes to list white supremacist group as terrorist org (9 March 2020), https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/09/state-department-white-supremacist-group-124500. [accessed on 24 June 2020].

09   Please note it is our policy not to directly link to extremist content or channels. Should it be required for academic or journalistic purposes, a full list of the channels studied in this work will be provided upon request.

10   "Shitposting" can be defined as regularly posting something nonsensical, surreal, and ironic online – often in order to bait people into a reaction.

11   Home Office, Proscribed Terrorist Organisations (February 2020), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/869496/20200228_Proscription.pdf; Government of Canada, Listed terrorist entities, https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrt/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-en.aspx.

12   Hope Not Hate, State of Hate 2020. Far Right Terror goes Global, https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/state-of-hate-2020-final.pdf.

13   For content flagged by researchers as concerning, ISD conducts a risk assessment and in cases in which there appears to be a tangible threat, the content will be brought to the attention of law enforcement and other relevant parties.

14   Know your meme, https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/boogaloo.

15   ISD, COVID-19 disinformation briefing no. 2, https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Covid-Briefing-2.pdf.

16   ADL, The Boogaloo: Extremists' New Slang Term for A Coming Civil War (26 November 2019), https://www.adl.org/blog/the-boogaloo-extremists-new-slang-term-for-a-coming-civil-war. [accessed on 24 June 2020].

17   Bellingcat, The Boogaloo Movement Is Not What You Think (27 May 2020), https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2020/05/27/the-boogaloo-movement-is-not-what-you-think/. [accessed on 24 June 2020].

18   Tech Transparency Project, Extremists Are Using Facebook to Organize for Civil War Amid Coronavirus (22 April 2020), https://www.techtransparencyproject.org/articles/extremists-are-using-facebook-to-organize-for-civil-war-amid-coronavirus. [accessed on 24 June 2020].

19   SPLC, The "Boogaloo" Started as a Racist Meme (5 June 2020), https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/06/05/boogaloo-started-racist-meme. [accessed on 24 June 2020].

About ISD

We are a global team of data analysts, researchers, innovators, policy-experts, practitioners and activists - powering solutions to extremism, hate and polarisation.

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) is an independent nonprofit organisation dedicated to safeguarding human rights and reversing the rising global tide of hate, extremism and polarisation. We combine sector-leading expertise in global extremist movements with advanced digital analysis of disinformation and weaponised hate to deliver innovative, tailor-made policy and operational responses to these threats.

Over the past decade, we have watched hate groups and extremist movements deploy increasingly sophisticated international propaganda, influence and recruitment operations, skillfully leveraging digital technology, and often boosted by hostile state actors. Alongside an exponential spike in violence (conflict, hate crime, terrorism), societies around the world are being polarised. At ballot boxes, populists have made significant gains and authoritarian nationalism is on the rise.

If left unchecked, these trends will existentially threaten open, free and cohesive civic culture, undermine democratic institutions and put our communities at risk. Progress on the major global challenges of our time — climate change, migration, equality, public health — threatens to be derailed.

We can and must turn the tide. Help us build the infrastructure to safeguard democracy and human rights in the digital age.

ISD draws on fifteen years of anthropological research, leading expertise in global extremist movements, state-of-the-art digital analysis and a track record of trust and delivery in over 30 countries around the world to:

- Support central and local governments in designing and delivering evidence-based policies and programmes in response to hate, extremism, terrorism, polarisation and disinformation

- Empower youth, practitioners and community influencers through innovative education, technology and communications programmes.

- Advise governments and tech companies on policies and strategies to mitigate the online harms we face today and achieve a 'Good Web' that reflects our liberal democratic values

Only in collaboration with all of these groups can we hope to outcompete the extremist mobilization of our time and build safe, free and resilient societies for generations to come. All of ISD's programmes are delivered with the support of donations and grants.

ISD | Powering solutions to extremism and polarisation