

# ADVISORY NETWORK ON TERRORISM AND PROPAGANDA WORKSHOP: “DEFINING THE GLOBAL RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST MOVEMENT”

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[News Article](#)



Right-wing extremism and [terrorism](#) are of increasing concern to EU Member States, the European Union and Europol. An efficient response to the threat must be based on a thorough understanding of the actors and dynamics that drive violent right-wing extremism. For this purpose, more than 100 participants from national agencies, EU institutions and agencies and international organisations gathered at Europol in a closed workshop to learn from leading experts in the field about online dimensions of right-wing extremism and terrorism. The speakers were selected and invited by the [ECTC Advisory Network on terrorism and propaganda](#).

## SPEAKERS AND ABSTRACTS:

Matthew Feldman

Radical right narratives and how (not) to counter them

Based on work currently carried out by the [Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right \(CARR\)](#) [↗](#) for one of the major social media platforms, this presentation will cover topical scholarship on radical right narratives and messaging. ‘Best practice’ in developing radical right counter-narratives is presented – formulated in the context of another CARR project in partnership with the EU – including what to avoid (such as an inappropriate ‘messenger’ for different types of audience). Finally, the importance of deradicalisation and counter-narratives will be placed in relief, covering the

central terroristic threat posed by the radical right in Europe and beyond today, namely self-directed (or so-called 'lone wolf') actors motivated by 'left-hand path' Satanism, violent misogyny, Great Replacement conspiracies or other new narratives taken up by the radical right over the last decade.

Professor Matthew Feldman is a specialist on fascist ideology and the far-right in Europe and the USA. An Emeritus Professor in the History of Modern Ideas at [Teesside University](#) [↗](#), he led Britain's first unit dedicated to analysis of radical right extremism, the Centre for Fascist, Anti-fascist and Post-fascist Studies, and prior to that, directed the Radicalism and New Media Group at the [University of Northampton](#) [↗](#).

### **Cynthia Miller-Idriss**

#### **Symbols, codes and gestures in far-right extremism**

The codes, symbols and hand gestures that far-right extremist groups and individuals use to communicate with each other and send messages to outsiders have rapidly evolved. This presentation traces the recent history of these transformations and reviews key categories of symbols, signs, gestures and codes that are used to communicate, celebrate violence and encourage action. It includes a discussion of modified historical symbols and codes, including alphanumeric codes and creative adaptations of banned symbols, co-opted logos and characters and categories of symbols related to key thematic areas, such as geographic homelands, symbols of death and global appropriations of unrelated nationalist, rebel or freedom fighter movements. The role of social media and online modes of communication in the rapid evolution and spread of far-right extremist symbols and codes is also analysed.

Dr Cynthia Miller-Idriss is Professor of Education and Sociology at the [American University in Washington, DC](#) [↗](#), and Senior Fellow and Director of Outreach at the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) in the United Kingdom. She leads the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL) in the Center for University Excellence at American University. Dr Miller-Idriss has spent two decades researching radical and extreme youth culture in Europe and the U.S., most recently through a focus on how clothing, style and symbols act as a gateway into white supremacist extremism.

### **Daniel Köhler**

#### **The internationalisation of far-right terror? History and examples of international far-right networks**

The talk discusses international far-right terror networks using historical developments of transnational collaboration between groups but also the international spread of key narratives and strategic/tactical concepts. With a focus on Germany, the talk demonstrates how the violent extreme right has always been highly international after the end of the Second World War. Divisions of many international right-wing extremist organisations have been created in Germany as well, such as for example the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Brotherhood or Hammerskin Nation. Recent examples are German divisions of the U.S.-based group Atomwaffen Division. Furthermore, narratives and strategic concepts, such as, for example, the Great Replacement conspiracy theory, have become a standard reference after the New Zealand terror attack. Economic, ideological and militant networks

are described to show how essential international collaboration is for the extreme right.

## **Maura Conway**

### **Principal platforms and technologies of the global right-wing extremism ecosystem**

The right-wing extremist Internet scene is not restricted to a single type of online space, but is instead a patchwork of different types of platforms and spaces, of which well-known social media platforms are just one component. Though not unfamiliar with websites and online forums – some of which remain important nodes in the contemporary ecology, as do major social media platforms – the newer generation of right-wing extremists are generating their own content on a variety of fringe platforms and increasingly also utilising a range of other technologies for their purposes. This presentation addresses the principal platforms and technologies of the global right-wing extremist ecology, both mainstream and fringe. The latter are of broadly two sorts: first, dedicated right-wing extremist platforms and, second, general platforms with dedicated right-wing extremist boards or boards that have been colonised by right-wing extremists. A selection of relatively new and highly accessible communication ‘applications’ are another component of this scene. Many of these fit into the category of so-called ‘dark social’, which refers not to the ‘dark’ nature of the content, but to the difficulties of tracking content shared via, for example, messaging apps and other forms of encrypted chat. The online spaces and apps to be discussed include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Gab, Reddit, 4Chan, 8Chan, Telegram, Discord and Twitch.

Dr Maura Conway is Professor of International Security in the School of Law and Government at [Dublin City University \(DCU\)](#) [🔗](#) in Dublin, Ireland, and Coordinator of [VOX-Pol](#) [🔗](#), an EU-funded project on violent online political extremism. Prof Conway’s principal research interests are in the area of terrorism and the Internet, including cyberterrorism, the functioning and effectiveness of violent political extremist online content and violent online radicalisation.

## **Bharath Ganesh**

### **The populist radical right online: laundering white backlash and right-wing extremism**

This talk explores how populist radical right and right-wing extremist actors use digital media to mainstream racist forms of white identity politics. While the populist radical right cannot be equated with the extreme right, there are deep synergies between both movements. Both are grounded in a white identity politics that centres on a racist and sexist backlash against equality, diversity and gender justice. Both sets of actors are committed to the restoration of racial and gender hierarchies that have been challenged in the last six decades. The presentation argues that populist radical right cultures are particularly effective in using digital media to mask and launder this aspiration for a return to structures of racial and gender dominance in the veneer of claims for equality for those that feel “left behind”. To demonstrate this in practice, findings from a study of extreme right Twitter users and their followers in the United States and the United Kingdom are presented. This talk suggests the prevalence of similar practices across North American and Western European democracies, pointing out key lessons learned for policymakers and law enforcement.

Dr Bharath Ganesh is an Assistant Professor of Media Studies at the [University of Groningen](#) [🔗](#),

Netherlands. His research focuses on new media, political communication and cultures of hate and intolerance online using computational and qualitative methods. Before joining University of Groningen, Bharath was a postdoctoral researcher at the [Oxford Internet Institute \(OII\)](#) [↗](#), where he contributed to research on far-right extremism and regulation of extremist content on social media platforms for the VOX-Pol Network. He also contributed to research on Russian disinformation practices in the United States with the Computational Propaganda Project at the OII.

## Lisa Kaati

Dehumanisation, hate speech and violence in right-wing extremist environments

This presentation provides an insight into how radical nationalist ideologies are expressed within a number of different digital environments – both environments with a clear ideological profile, and some free speech environments that tend to attract individuals who sympathise with radical nationalist views. Based on examples, it is shown how hate speech and dehumanisation are used to assign traits to groups and individuals making them legitimate targets of violence and that there is a culture of glorification of terrorists and assailants.

Dr Lisa Kaati is a senior researcher at the [Swedish Defence Research Agency](#) [↗](#), where she is the head of the Data science group. Her research interests are digital environments and phenomena. During the last four years, she has been member of a Swedish government commission, where she studies violent extremism in digital environments from a Swedish perspective.

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