

Briefing Series

on **Violent Political Extremism**

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NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE
FOR RESEARCH IN
VIOLENT ONLINE POLITICAL
EXTREMISM

HOW EXTREME IS THE EUROPEAN FAR RIGHT?

INVESTIGATING OVERLAPS IN THE
GERMAN FAR-RIGHT SCENE ON TWITTER

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Investigating the Far Right



- Not a homogeneous group – spectrum spanning varying degrees of extremism and activism, ranging from racial supremacy to cultural exclusion.
- Traditionally differentiate between *extreme* and *radical* right
- “the clear-cut boundaries between parties, movements and subcultural actors are increasingly becoming obsolete” (Fielitz and Laloire 2016)
- To what extent do these groups talk about the same issues in the same way, in spite of the apparent differences in tone and underlying ideologies?



Quantitative Study: Data & Method

- Exploratory study – data collected by VOX-Pol researchers
- 175 EU-based *extreme* right Twitter accounts
- 388,795 tweets collected between September 2015 - 2016 through the Twitter Streaming API
- English was the most prominent language (32.2%), followed by Spanish (16.9%) and German (15%)
- Reflects the countries represented in the sample - Spain (18.3%), followed by the UK and Germany (both 12.6%)
- Investigated top hashtags, hashtag co-occurrences, URLs, as well as a cursory insight into suspension rates

HASHTAG	COUNT
#whitegenocide	5300
#afd	2561
#merkel	1781
#brexit	1625
#alvde	1371
#islam	1217
#trump	1074
#antiwhite	1065
#isis	905
#maga	852
#eu	850

Hashtag Counts

HASHTAG 1	HASHTAG 2	COUNT
#antiwhite	#whitegenocide	565
#afd	#agh16 ²¹	354
#diversity	#whitegenocide	312
#altright	#whitegenocide	275
#trump	#whitegenocide	260
#afd	#cdu	235
#erdogan	#merkel	225
#cdu	#spd	224
#erdogan	#türkei	220
#afd	#spd	213
#whitegenocide	#whitepeople	191
#flüchtlinge (refugees)	#merkel	181
#brexit	#eu	174
#deutschland	#merkel	171
#cdu	#merkel	166
#brexit	#whitegenocide	165
#oberhausen	#refugeesnotwelcome	158
#afd	#pegida	147
#brexit	#voteleave	137
#ukip	#whitegenocide	136

Hashtag Co-occurences

URLs



- 34.7% of the tweets contained URLs
- Mainstream right-leaning and explicitly far-right news sites, such as *Mail Online, Die Welt, Daily Express, Breitbart, Russia Today (RT),* and *Sputnik News*
- Used to ‘substantiate’ the ‘evidence’ presented in the tweets – mostly concerning refugees and immigrants
- Websites and blogs centring around conspiracy theories and more underground far-right websites and forums (e.g. David Duke, Daily Stormer etc.)



COUNTRY	ACCOUNT SUSPENDED	ACCOUNT NO LONGER AVAILABLE	TWITTER HANDLE CHANGED
Austria	1/8	1/8	
Belgium	2/8		
Denmark	1/2		
Finland	3/5	1/5	
France	1/9	1/9	
Germany	7/22	2/22	1/22
Hungary	1/3		
Ireland	3/4		
Italy	1/10		
The Netherlands	1/4		
Poland	1/8	1/8	
Portugal			1/3
Slovenia	1/1		
Spain	9/32	4/32	6/32
Sweden	2/4		
Switzerland			1/1
UK	10/22	3/22	1/22
Unknown	6/14	3/14	1/14
Total % of complete dataset	27.43%	9.14%	6.29%

Suspension rates

General Themes & Questions

- Twitter used mostly to disseminate content related to Muslims, immigrants and current affairs, rather than to advocate violence
- Promote right-wing populist parties, figures, and themes, such as the AfD, Trump, and Brexit
- General theme of defending European culture, identity, and race through creating a narrative of white Nordic roots
- Many of the posts were explicitly anti-Semitic, with some also using the platform to deny the Holocaust
- Demonstrates that radical parties and issues are resonating with the more extreme right
- Is the relationship one-sided?

The German Far Right

Autonome Nationalisten (Autonomous Nationalists – AN)	Extreme Right
Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland (Identitarian Movement Germany – IBD)	New Right
Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany – AfD)	Right-Wing Populist



Theoretical Framework & Method

- Frame Analysis
 - How messages are constructed in order to attract supporters and motivate them for action
 - Two components: actual frame/message (core framing tasks) and resonance criteria
- Frame analysis supplemented with analysis of *visuals*, a *hermeneutic*, *intertextual* reading of posts and the consideration of narratives uttered in a minimalistic form (tropes)
- *Master Frames and Cycles of Protest* (Snow & Benford 1992)
- Biological racism → ethno-nationalism, identitarianism, and anti-establishment populism (Elgenius & Rydgren 2018)

Sample & Context



- AN, IBD, and AfD Twitter accounts
- 1 August to 30 October 2018
- State elections in Hesse and Bavaria
- Announcement by Angela Merkel concerning her withdrawal as leader of the CDU
- Debates surrounding the UN migration pact



Core Framing Tasks



Diagnostic Frame

- Problem – Germans/Europeans are at risk of dying out
- Source of the problem – foreigners, refugees, ‘mass migration’, mainstream parties, the Left, Chancellor Merkel, the ‘elite’, political correctness, homosexuals, NGOs, Islam
- Language
 - AN – ‘Volkstod’, ‘Überfremdung’
 - AfD & IBD – ‘elimination/demise’ of Germany, ‘Islamisation’
 - IBD – ‘great replacement’

Prognostic Frame



- End migration
- Deportation ('remigration' – IBD)
- Increase birth rates amongst Germans
- Vote for right-wing parties
 - AN –does not traditionally support parties, but recent support for the NPD, DDW, and even AfD



Motivational Frame



- Issues framed in apocalyptic terms
- ‘Defend’ Europe/German citizens (from invasion)
- Visuals, slogans, and captivating images utilising victims of (migrant) crime
- German children and pensioners ‘robbed’ of government money, which is going to refugees instead
- IBD perform stunts and upload professional edited versions



Problem, solution, motivation



AN Groß-Gerau
@AN_Gross_Gerau

Follow

#Heimat verteidigen - **#Überfremdung**
stoppen!!!
#CDU #SPD #Gruene #FDP #DieLinke
#Landtagswahl
#LTW18 #Hessen #Bayern
#LtwHessen #LtwBayern
#LtwHE18 #LtwBY18 #ltwhe #ltwby



11:16 pm - 9 Oct 2018



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Motivation



Identitäre Bewegung
@IBDeutschland

Follow

Während #Syrien seine Landsleute zur Rückkehr aufruft, tritt in #Deutschland heute (1.8.) die Neuregelung des #Familiennachzugs in Kraft: Auch „Flüchtlinge mit eingeschränktem Schutzstatus“ sollen ihre Angehörigen nach Deutschland holen dürfen.



Der heimliche Einmarsch: Neuregelung des Familiennachzugs tritt heute in K...
Der VOLKSAUSTAUSCH galoppiert! Im vergangenen Jahr stieg die Zahl der Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund in Deutschland um unglaubliche 4,4 Prozent...
compact-online.de



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Resonance Criteria



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Credibility



- Official statistics from the Federal Statistics Office, as well as the International Monetary Fund are used and misrepresented
- Mainstream press reports are also used to substantiate arguments – consistent re-posting
- AN – create their own kind of empirical credibility – refer to media sources internal to their own scene
- AfD – many academics within the party
- IBD – often quote and refer to academics and intellectuals, thus reinforcing the credibility of the articulators



Frame Twisting & Credibility

VOX
POL

**„Allahu Akbar!
Europa gehört uns!“**

2013 gab es erst einen einzigen Fall!

**2017 in Hessen
71 Ermittlungsverfahren gegen
islamistische Extremisten!**

**DER ISLAM
GEHÖRT NICHT ZU
DEUTSCHLAND**

**Am 28. Oktober
mit beiden Stimmen
AfD wählen!**

LANDESVBAND HESSEN
AfD



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Salience



- All 3 groups look towards nostalgia relating to family values and traditional gender roles
- The IBD seek to commemorate the past and the Battle of Vienna
- AN commemorates WWII
- Exploitation of the migrant 'crisis' and linking the issue to other perceived social, political, and economic grievances



Conclusions



- Themes are virtually the same, but in terms of design and marketing, the AfD is clearly ahead
- Twist frames, use hyperbole, and make extensive use of modern audio-visual repertoires
- Replacement of the biological racism master frame is only *cosmetic*, rather than *substantial*
- The combination of contemporary discursive innovations and of contemporary populist repertoires has in fact *resurrected and rebranded* an existing ideational potential, and has in effect united the far right



Thank you!

 @RAhmed105

 @DPisoiu

