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Dialogue

Beyond the Click

Ethical Media Choices in an Algorithm-Driven World

DR JULIA EBNER

CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT THE INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

LEADER OF THE VIOLENT EXTREMISM LAB AT THE CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL COHESION

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

International Developments



Facebook and Instagram get rid of fact checkers



YouTube to start bringing back creators banned for COVID-19 and election misinformation

YouTube will no longer take down false claims about U.S. elections



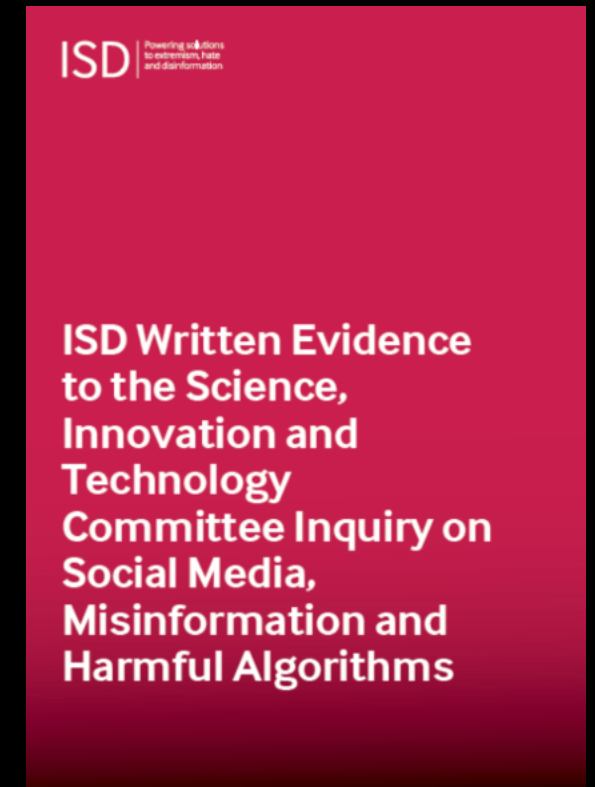
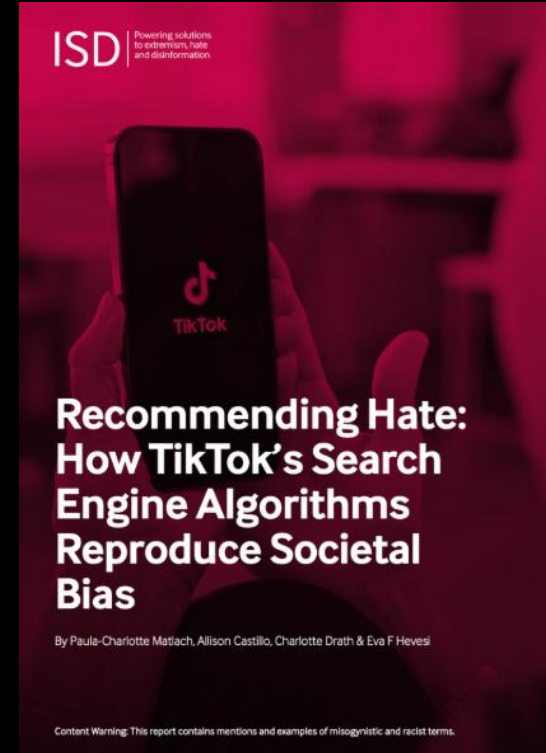
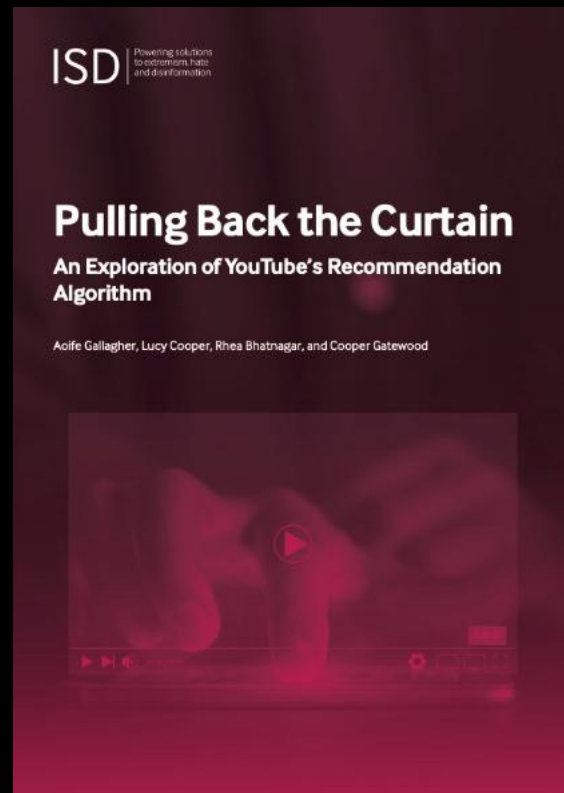
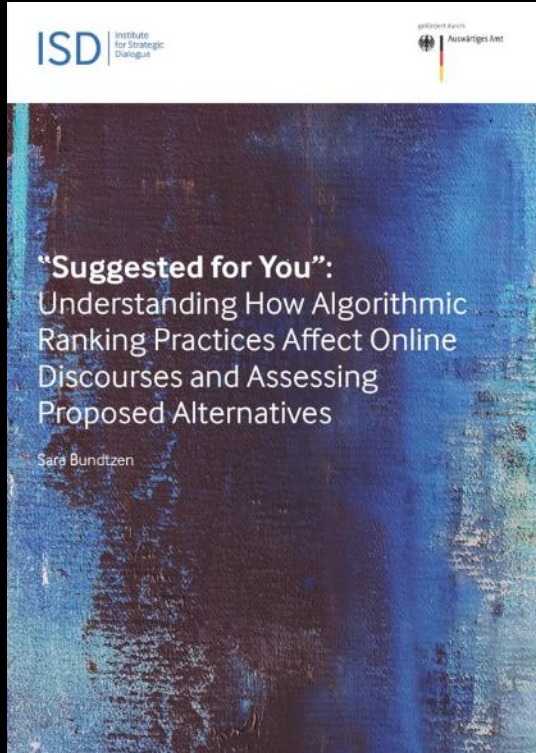
Musk's election falsehoods travel hundreds of times further on X than fact-checks from officials

Elon Musk's AI chatbot, Grok, started calling itself 'MechaHitler'

Trump vs. Europe: The Evolving Tech Regulation Conflict



The Algorithmic Playground: Amplification of Extremism



The Algorithmic Playground: Amplification of Addiction

Are YouTube Advertisers Inadvertently
Harvesting Data From Millions of Children?

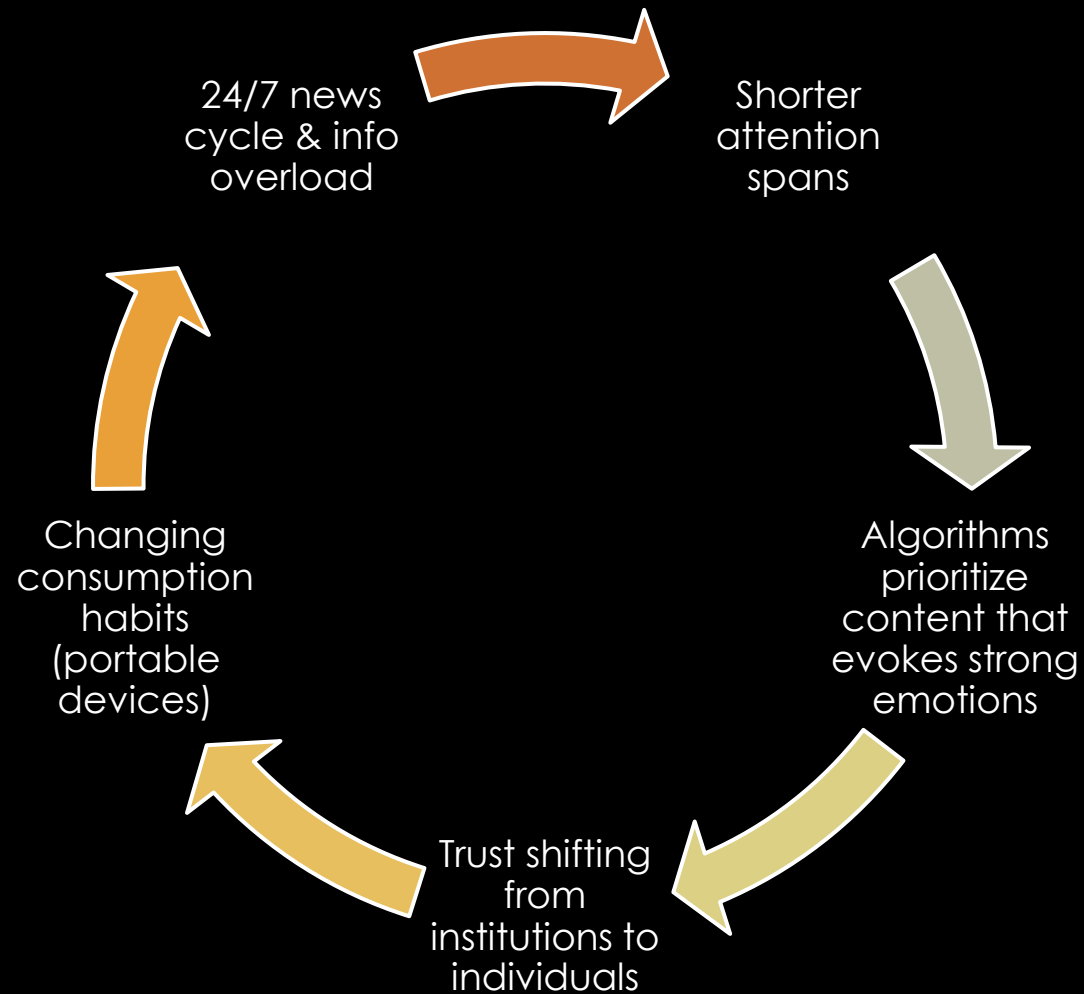


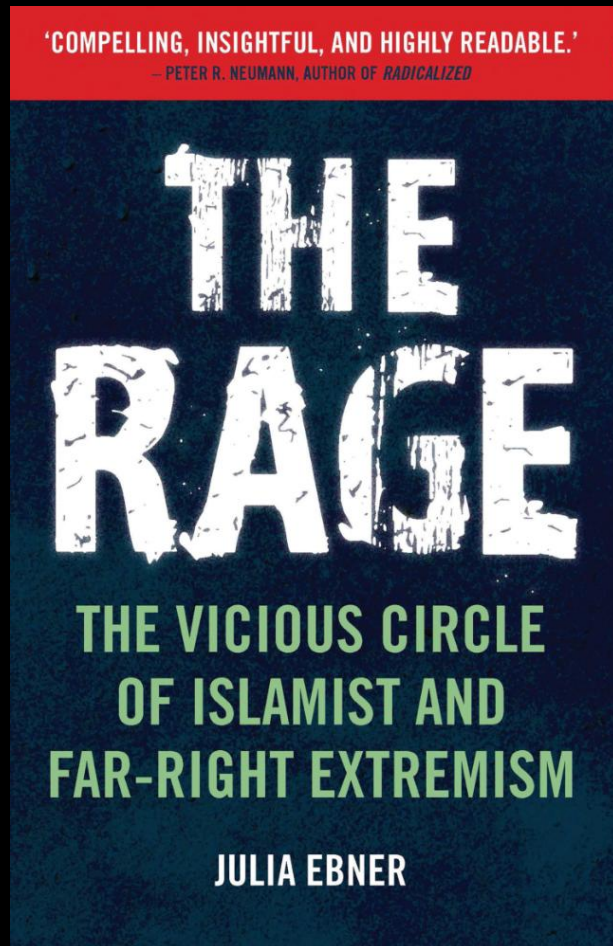
\$1.6 TRILLION

Ad Opacity & Inflated Impressions

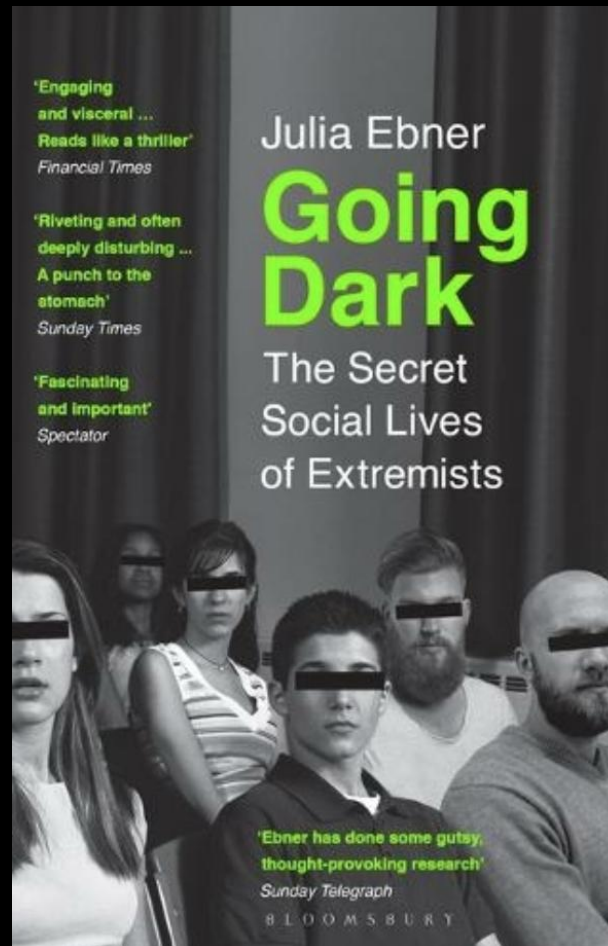


Challenges of Responsible Media Practices





Bloomsbury Academic, 2018



Bloomsbury, 2020



Bonnier Books, 2023

Learnings from my Undercover Investigations

Identities

Claire Lafeuille

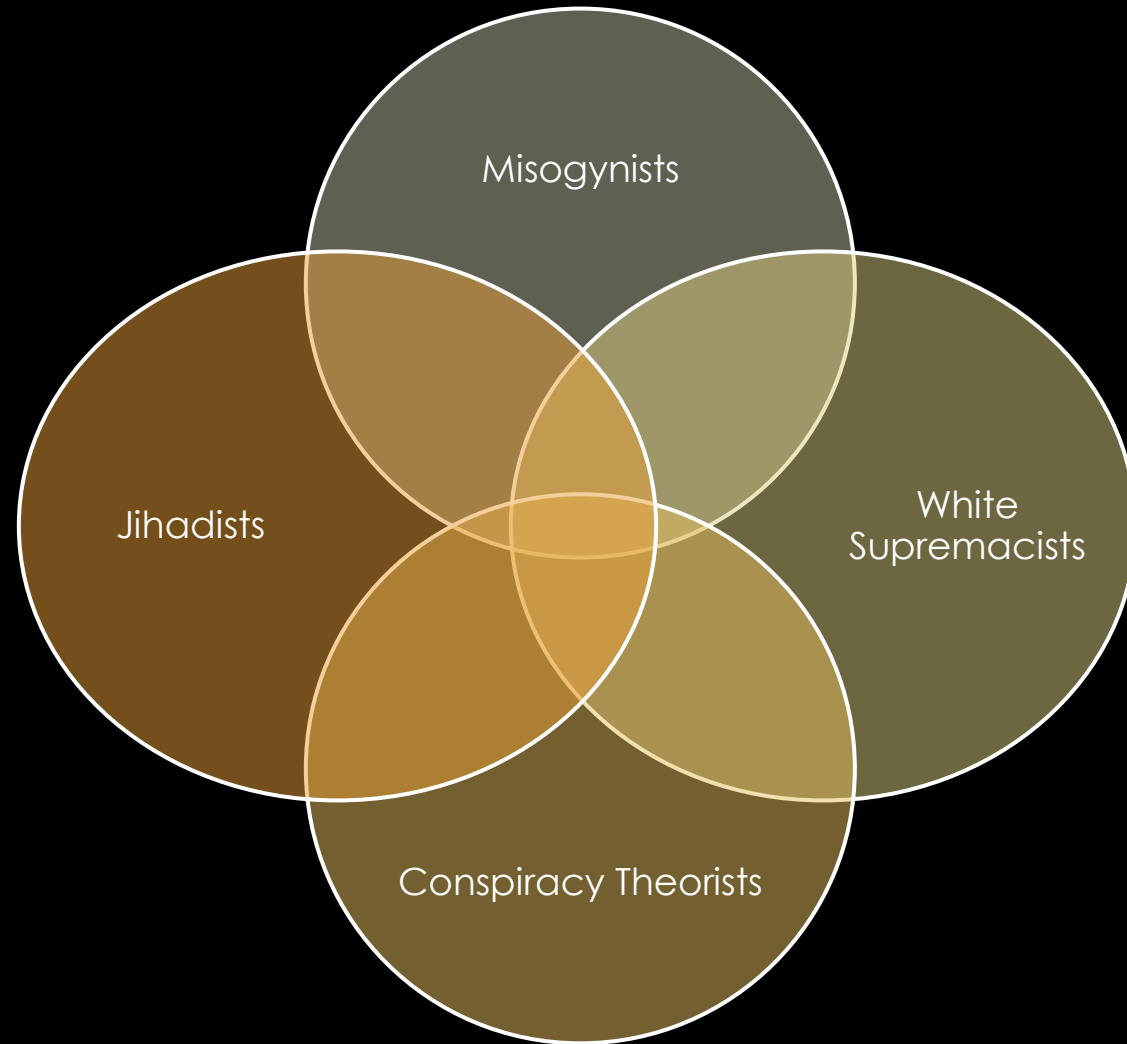


Alex Williamson

Maria Petrova (Mary)



Jennifer (Jen) Malo



Conquering the Hearts & Minds of the Next Generation

ISIS “Call of Jihad” Propaganda



Far-right Extremist Propaganda

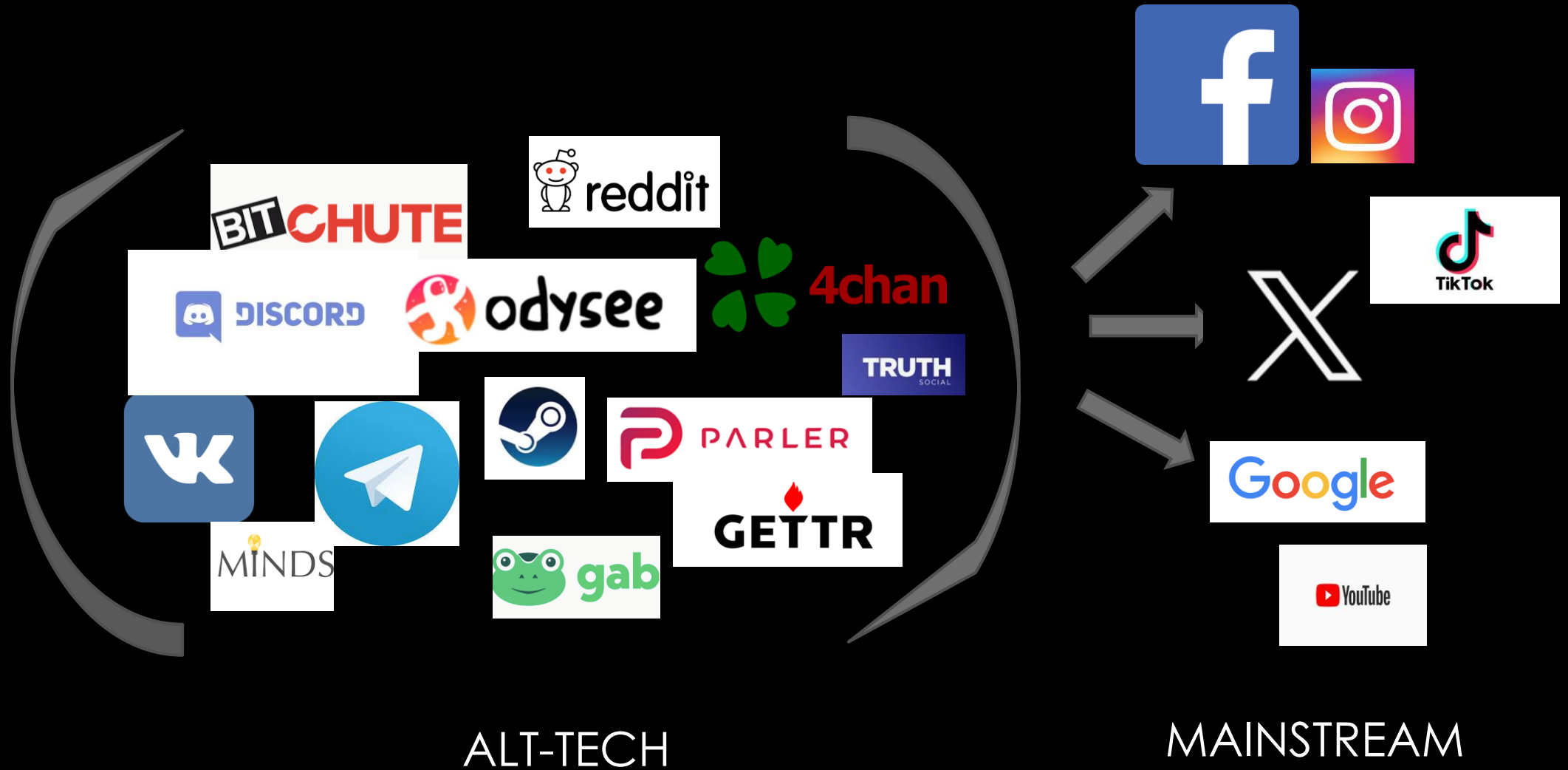


Alt-Salafi Propaganda using Pepe the Frog

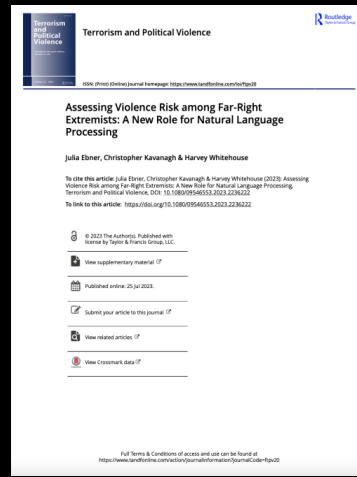
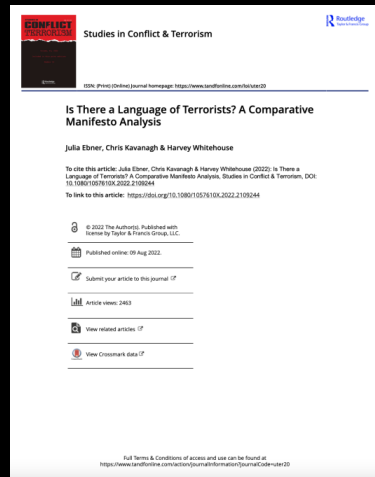


Patriotic Alternative's Call of Duty Competition

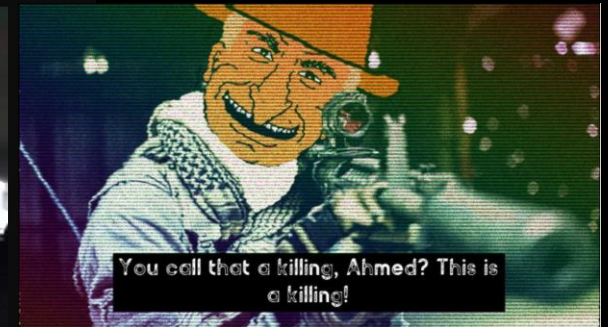
How Extremist Propaganda Spreads Online



The Stakes: Violence, Terror and Intimidation



Doxxing, Trolling and Threats



Assessing Violence Risk in Online Communities

Gamified Terrorism, Satire and Copycat Incidents

The Stakes: The Mainstreaming of Extremist Ideas

The Great Replacement

Alternative for Germany



White Lives Matter



Extreme Misogyny

Nick Fuentes



Andrew Tate



QAnon

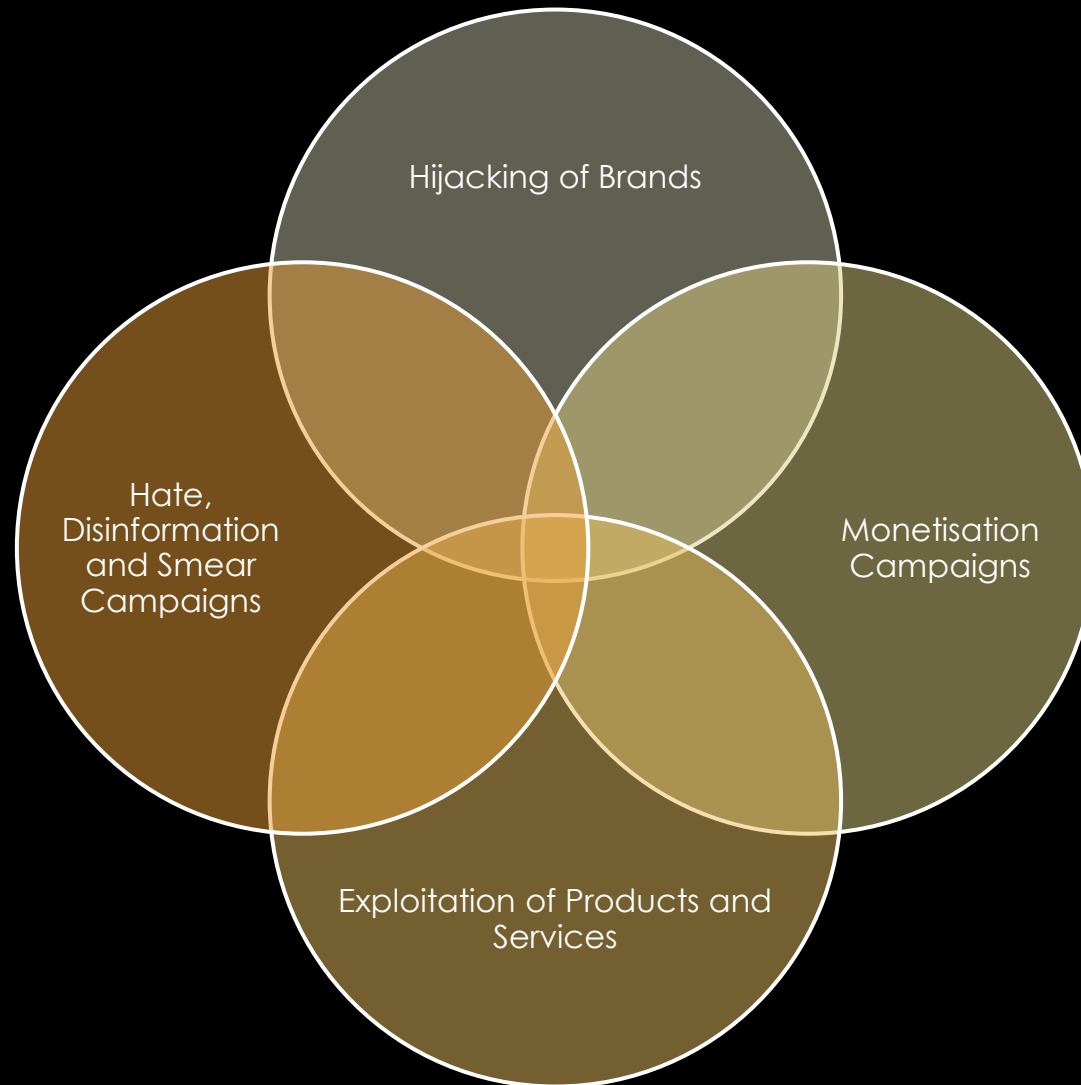
The Capitol Riots



Viral Conspiracy Theorists



Can Brands Avoid Politics?



Backlashes against Ad Campaigns



Hijacking of Brands

New Balance rejects 'shoes for white people' claim by extreme US site

© 16 November 2016



Papa John's actually had to say it doesn't want to be the official pizza of the "alt-right"

The Daily Stormer declared Papa John's the "alt-right's" official pizza, but the CEO wants nothing to do with them

By **MATTHEW ROZSA**
Staff Writer

PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 7, 2017 10:59AM (EST)



Hate, Disinformation and Smear Campaigns

Man ridiculed for cutting Nike logo off socks in protest at Colin Kaepernick advert, as conservatives rage

Conservatives also burned their shoes after the quarterback featured in the 30th anniversary "Just Do It" campaign

Peter Stubley • Tuesday 04 September 2018 13:26 BST • Comments

Bud Light loses top US beer spot after promotion with transgender influencer

Sales dropped by almost 25% on last year after brand featured Dylan Mulvaney in social media



Sales of Bud Light and Budweiser dropped 24.6% and 9.2%, respectively, for the four weeks ended 3 June from a year earlier. Photograph: Bud Light

FINANCIAL TIMES

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BlackRock Inc + Add to myFT

BlackRock steps up security for Larry Fink after 'anti-woke' backlash

Asset manager's chief has become a popular target for criticism over its ESG investing stance



Gillette faces backlash and boycott over '#MeToo advert'

15 January 2019



Success Stories

Nike sales defy Kaepernick ad campaign backlash

© 10 September 2018

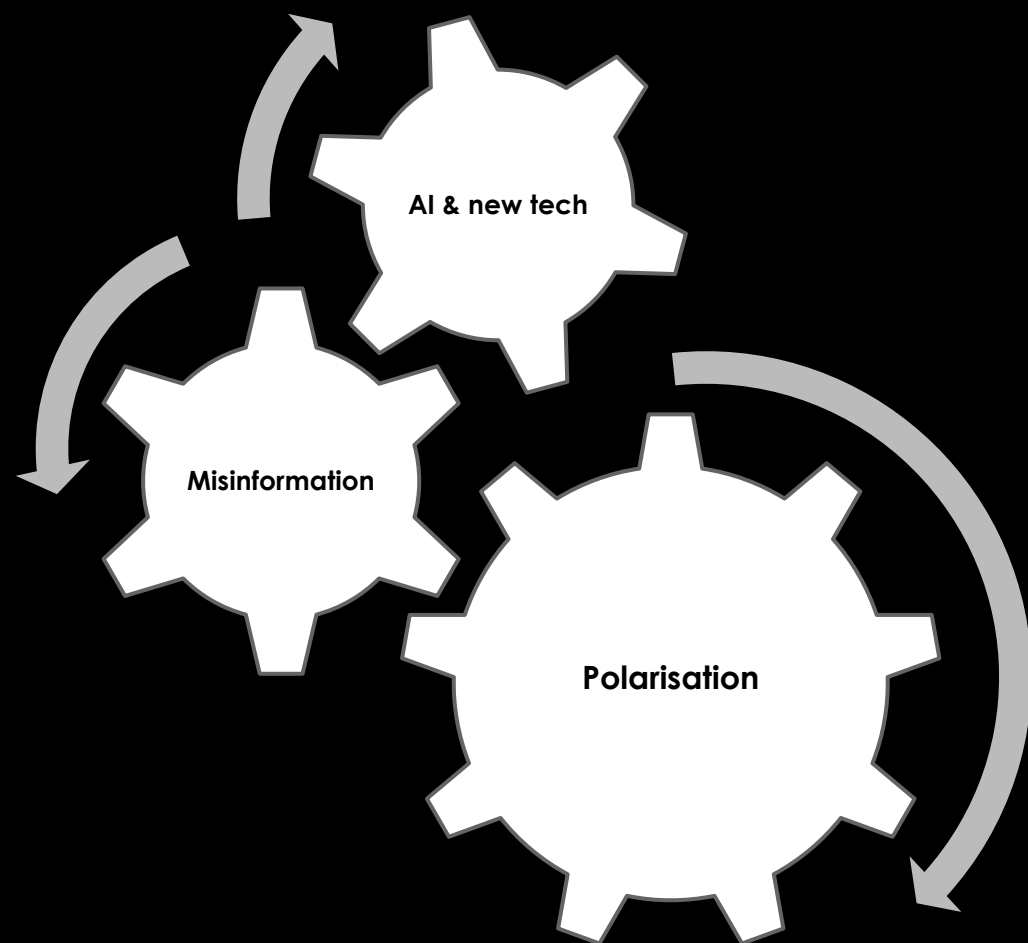


New Balance Rebukes White Supremacists for Adopting Its Sneakers as Hate Symbol

Neo-Nazis have supposedly swapped jackboots for a pair of comfortable New Balances walking sneakers.



What to Expect from the Next 5 Years



Hyper-polarising topics

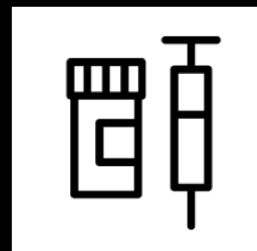
Feminism



Racial Justice



Science



Climate Change



LGBTQ Rights



Your Choice: Accelerating or Reducing Polarisation?



Social media is accelerating identity-based polarisation

“A new global gender divide is emerging”

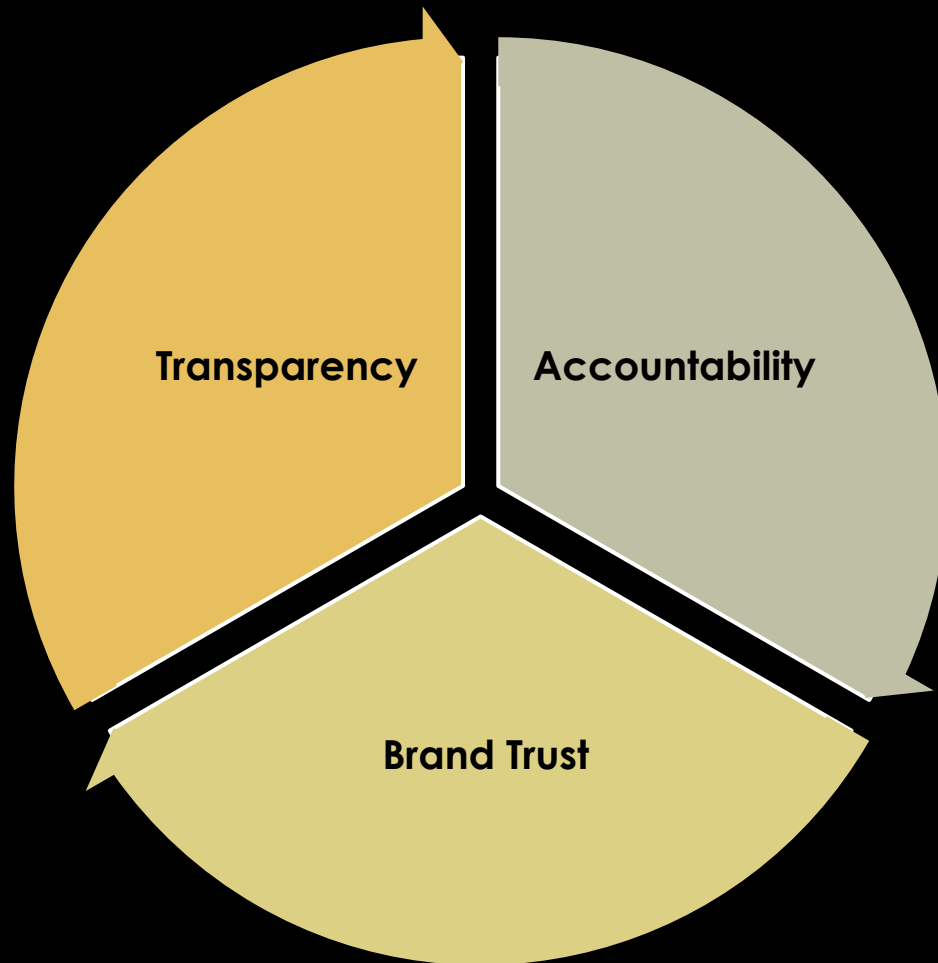
A wide ideology gap is opening up between young men and women in countries across the world

Political ideology of 18-29s (% liberal minus % conservative), by sex



Sources: Daniel Cox, Survey Center on American Life; Gallup Poll Social Series; FT analysis of General Social Surveys of Korea, Germany & US and the British Election Study. US data is respondent's stated ideology. Other countries show support for liberal and conservative parties. All figures are adjusted for time trend in the overall population. FT graphic: John Burn-Murdoch / @burnmurdoch © FT

Sustainable Success Beyond the Outrage Game

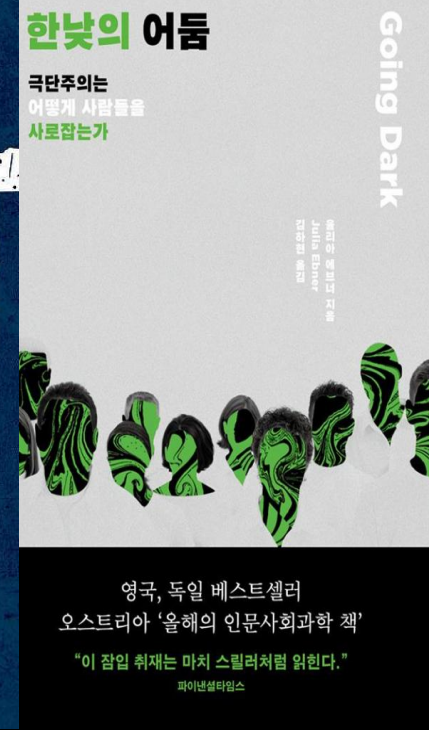
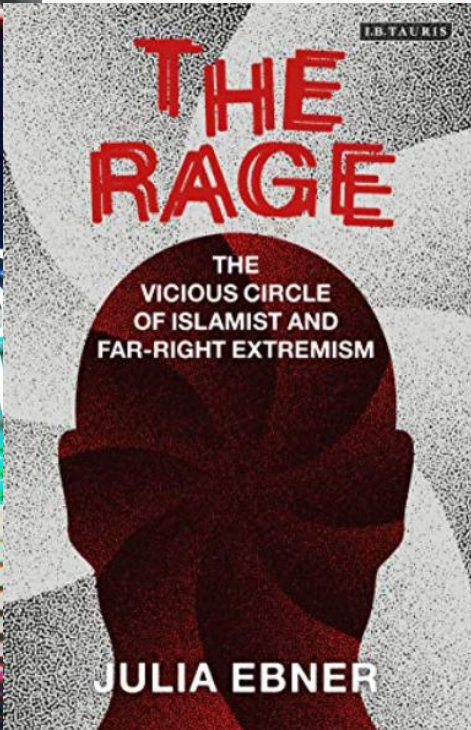
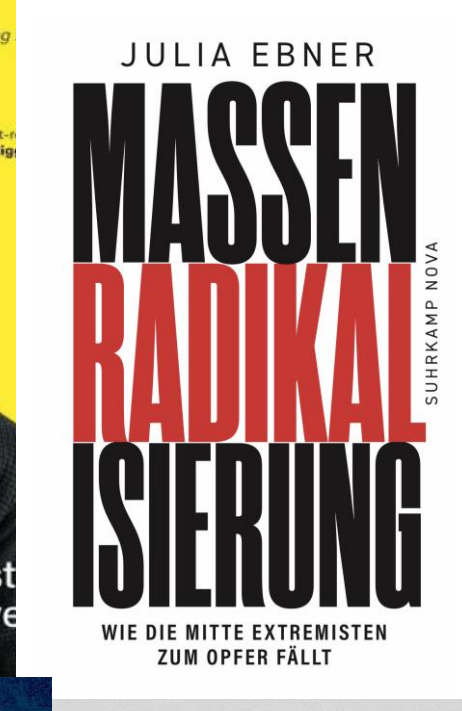
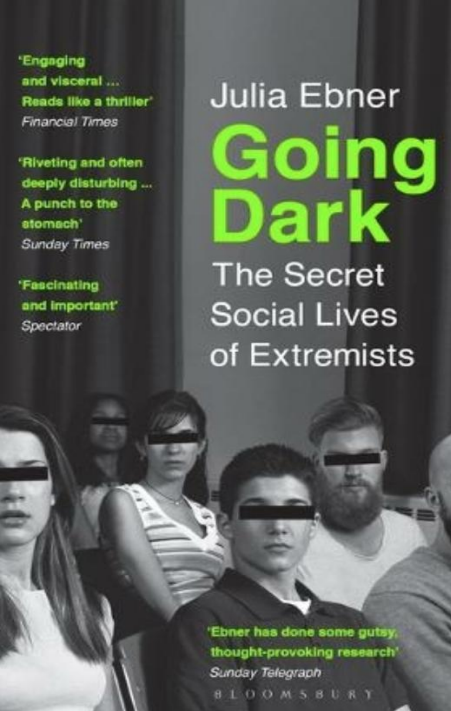


The Business Case for Trust

- ❖ Consumers believe it's important to appear in 'trustworthy' environments
- ❖ Ads in trusted environments have proven to drive positive results for businesses

→ **Choose trusted and ethical partners**

→ **Demand complete transparency across the full life cycle of all ads**



The Online Ecosystem of the German Far-Right

Jakob Guhl, Julia Ebner and Jan Rau

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The Boom Before the Ban: QAnon and Facebook

Ciaran O'Connor, Cooper Gatewood,
Kendrick McDonald and Sarah Brandt

The Extreme Right on Discord

Gaming and Extremism Series

Aoife Gallagher, Ciaran O'Connor, Pierre Vaux,
Elise Thomas, Jacob Davey

'THE GREAT REPLACEMENT':

THE VIOLENT CONSEQUENCES
OF MAINSTREAMED EXTREMISM

Jacob Davey and Julia Ebner

Recommending Hate: How TikTok's Search Engine Algorithms Reproduce Societal Bias

By Paula-Charlotte Matlach, Allison Castillo, Charlotte Drath & Eva F Hevesi

Content Warning: This report contains mentions and examples of misogynistic and racist terms.

The Extreme Right on Twitch

Gaming and Extremism Series

Ciaran O'Connor

The Boom Before the Ban: QAnon and Facebook

Ciaran O'Connor, Cooper Gatewood,
Kendrick McDonald and Sarah Brandt

Pulling Back the Curtain

An Exploration of YouTube's Recommendation
Algorithm

Aoife Gallagher, Lucy Cooper, Rhea Bhatnagar, and Cooper Gatewood



"Suggested for You":
Understanding How Algorithmic
Ranking Practices Affect Online
Discourses and Assessing
Proposed Alternatives

Sara Bundtzen

Hosting the 'Holohoax': A Snapshot of Holocaust Denial Across Social Media

Jakob Guhl and Jacob Davey

**ISD Written Evidence
to the Science,
Innovation and
Technology
Committee Inquiry on
Social Media,
Misinformation and
Harmful Algorithms**

CONFLICT
TERRORISM

Studies in Conflict & Terrorism

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Is There a Language of Terrorists? A Comparative Manifesto Analysis

Julia Ebner, Chris Kavanagh & Harvey Whitehouse

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CREST Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats

The Dynamics Of Violence Escalation And Inhibition During 'Hot Periods' Of Anti-Minority And Far-Right Activism: Towards An Assessment Framework

FULL REPORT
FEBRUARY 2022

Joel Busher
Gareth Harris
Julia Ebner

Zsófia Hacsek
Graham Macklin

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and Counter
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Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism

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Measuring socio-psychological drivers of extreme violence in online terrorist manifestos: an alternative linguistic risk assessment model

Julia Ebner, Christopher Kavanagh & Harvey Whitehouse

To cite this article: Julia Ebner, Christopher Kavanagh & Harvey Whitehouse (2023): Measuring socio-psychological drivers of extreme violence in online terrorist manifestos: an alternative linguistic risk assessment model, *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, DOI: 10.1080/18335330.2023.2246982

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PERSPECTIVES ON TERRORISM

Volume 16, Issue 6

The QAnon Security Threat: A Linguistic Fusion-Based Violence Risk Assessment

by Julia Ebner, Christopher Kavanagh, and Harvey Whitehouse

Abstract

This study compares the narrative and language of QAnon groups in the encrypted messaging apps Telegram and Discord to those observed in the manifestos of terrorists. Drawing on our systematic linguistic analysis of fifteen terrorist manifestos that were published in the past decade, we developed a coding scheme which traces the narratives and linguistic markers that occur in the written communication of perpetrators of political violence. In this pilot study we apply our new coding scheme to QAnon content to assess the scale and nature of violence-associated narratives within the movement. Based on 200,000 messages that we collected from the online QAnon group "Great Awakening Community" on the gaming chat application Discord, we quantitatively examine to what degree they carry the trademarks of violent terrorist manifestos that are not found in non-violent texts. We then compared the results for the Great Awakening Community to content from both a non-violent and a violent-terrorist control group. To complement our computational assessment of QAnon narrative and linguistic patterns we share ethnographic observations from ten QAnon Telegram and Discord groups with English, German, and French speaking audiences. Past research has found that identity fusion in combination with a range of mediating and moderating variables is a strong predictor of violence in groups, and this is further supported by our terrorist manifesto analysis. Our study of QAnon messages found a high prevalence of linguistic identity fusion indicators along with external threat narratives, violence-condoning group norms as well as demonizing, dehumanizing, and derogatory vocabulary applied to the out-group, especially when compared to the non-violent control group. The aim of this piece of research is twofold: (1) It seeks to evaluate the national security threat posed by the QAnon movement, and (2) it aims to provide a test of a novel linguistic toolkit aimed at helping to assess the risk of violence in online communication channels.

Keywords: QAnon, terrorism, radicalisation, manifestos, lone-offender attacks, identity fusion, social media

Introduction

QAnon has made headlines in recent years for its links to the storming of both the U.S. Capitol on 6 January 2021 [1], and the German Reichstag a few months earlier on 27 August 2020. [2] In both assaults on democratic institutions the flags, banners, and T-shirts carried by the rioters featured prominent QAnon slogans such as WGWGWA ("where we go one, we go all") and QAnon symbols, such as the letter Q.[3] According to a 2021 analysis by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), at least 61 QAnon adherents participated in the Capitol insurrection.[4] QAnon connections were also detected in a series of violent plots and threats against political representatives in North America, Europe, and Australia.[5] As of September 2021, 101 QAnon followers had committed crimes in the U.S. alone, according to START's data. [6] Its adherents have also inspired election-related violence, anti-vaccine protests, and pro-Russia demonstrations across the world.[7]

A May 2019 report by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) highlighted the growing role of anti-government extremism, including conspiracy theory extremists such as QAnon, in criminal activity, including acts of violence.[8] Likewise, the Norwegian Police Security Service flagged the rising threat from anti-government extremism, partly fueled by foreign state-sponsored disinformation campaigns, in its National Threat Assessment for 2022.[9] Nonetheless, many governments have been hesitant to label QAnon as a violent extremist threat to national security, as the advocates, followers, and sympathizers are a diverse group and do not necessarily share a distinct and clearly defined belief system. Moreover, in the past few years, policymakers and law enforcement agencies have tended to focus terrorism prevention efforts on ji-

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December 2022

PROJECT IMMERSIVE DEMOCRACY

Part of the European Metaverse Research Network

Decentralized autonomous organisations (DAOs) in the metaverse: the future of extremist organisation?

Julia Ebner | September 2023

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julia Ebner is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), where she has led projects on online extremism, disinformation, and hate speech. Based on her research, she has given evidence to numerous governments, intelligence agencies, and tech firms, and advised international organisations such as the UN, OSCE, Europol, and NATO. Ebner's first book, *The Rage: The Vicious Circle of Islamist and Far-Right Extremism*, won the Bruno-Kreisky Award for Political Book of the Year 2018 and has been disseminated as teaching material across Germany by the Federal Agency for Civic Education. Her second bestselling book, *Going Dark: The Secret Social Lives of Extremists*, was awarded the Wissenschaftsbuch des Jahres 2020 Prize (Science Book of the Year 2020) by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education as well as the Caspar Erben Prize 2022. Her new book, *Going Mainstream: How Extremists Are Taking Over*, was published in June 2023. Julia has just completed her DPhil in Anthropology at the University of Oxford.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from Web 2.0 to Web 3.0 is likely to leverage the latest technological advances including AI, machine learning and blockchain technology. This might not only bring about a new interplay of the physical, virtual and augmented reality but could also fundamentally change the ways in which corporate entities, social communities and political movements organise themselves.

Decentralisation is a key property of the Metaverse. Policies, legal contracts and financial transactions that were traditionally the domain of governments, courts and banks might be replaced with smart contracts and financial transactions in blockchain. Cryptocurrencies can be used as a new medium of exchange outside of established banking systems, while non-fungible tokens (NFT) might serve as unique digital identifiers to certify ownership and authenticity. Taken together, these new forms of self-governance could lead to the explosion of so-called Decentralized Autonomous Organisations (DAOs) in the Metaverse.

Decentralized Autonomous Organisations (DAOs) are digital entities that are collaboratively governed without central leadership and operate based on blockchain (Lentzsch, 2016). As such, DAOs allow internet users to establish their own organisational structures, which no longer require the involvement of a third party in financial transactions and rulemaking. DAOs allow online communities to simplify their transactions and use a community-based approach to establish rules (World Economic Forum, 2023). However, as this study will explore, they might also give rise to new threats emerging from decentralised extremist mobilisation, pose a risk to minority rights, challenge the rule of law, and disrupt institutions that are currently considered fundamental pillars of our democratic systems.

1

www.immersive-democracy.eu

Terrorism
and
Political
Violence

Terrorism and Political Violence

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Assessing Violence Risk among Far-Right Extremists: A New Role for Natural Language Processing

Julia Ebner, Christopher Kavanagh & Harvey Whitehouse

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Q&A

EMAIL: JULIA.EBNER@MAGD.OX.AC.UK

CALLEVA PROJECT “WHEN DESPOTS BECOME DEADLY: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INSTITUTIONALISED EXTREMISM IN AUTOCRATIC STATES”

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

DO HEADS OF STATE WHO ENGAGE IN EXTREME FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THEIR OWN POPULATIONS OR FOREIGN POPULATIONS INADVERTENTLY GIVE AWAY THEIR INTENTIONS IN WHAT THEY SAY?

COULD THE RISK OF WARS AND SEEMINGLY IRRATIONAL (E.G. HIGH RISK OR COSTLY) ACTS OF AGGRESSION, RESULTING IN GENOCIDES AND OTHER ATROCITIES, BE PREDICTED BASED ON THE SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL DRIVERS THAT LEADERS UNINTENTIONALLY REVEAL VIA THEIR SPEECHES?

Supported by:



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Investigators: Prof. Harvey Whitehouse and Dr Julia Ebner



The aim of our Calleva project is to establish an evidence-based psycholinguistic framework that can assess the risk that despotic leaders of autocratic states will resort to violent forms of repression domestically or hawkish foreign policies when the use of violence in these contexts carries high risk to self and group.

The project will use a mixed methods approach, coupling qualitative text analysis with quantitative natural language processing (NLP) analysis.