



“We are Generation Terror!”: Youth-on-youth Radicalisation in Extreme-right Youth Groups

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Executive Summary

- Young people – politicised, active and highly connected – are no longer just passive consumers of online terrorist content by adult groomers but are themselves propaganda creators, group organisers, peer recruiters, extremist financiers and terrorist convicts.
- This process, called “youth-on-youth radicalisation”, emphasises the agency that young people have in a digital era in which the information hierarchy is increasingly flattened.
- Noting the formation of several new young extreme-right groups and a series of terrorist convictions across Western Europe, this paper takes first steps to investigate the specific nature of this emerging threat.
- Ten extreme-right youth groups from across Western Europe will be analysed to evidence the independence of extremist youth activism: Bastión Frontal, Eisenjugend, Junge Revolution, KS Nuoret, Sonnenkrieg Division, Blutkrieg Division, Feuerkrieg Division, Junge Tat, National Partisan Movement and The British Hand.
- All groups included have emerged since 2018, have an average membership age of under 25 and are associated with arrests for hate crimes, incitement to violence or acts of violence.
- These groups demonstrate racial nationalist ideologies with a youth-centric focus, often using unique framings that differentiate them from other, older groups.
- While the role of social media on young people’s lives is self-evident, an overview of the platforms to which young extreme-right groups are attracted and the nature of their external communications will be provided, emphasising the role of Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and Telegram.
- Instagram is a useful tool for young racial nationalists, providing them with a powerful opportunity to recruit, reach young audiences and present striking visual content.
- Young extremists use different platforms for different purposes, dedicating themselves to maintaining presence on mainstream platforms through second accounts and circumventing platforms’ content moderation algorithms. As such, they “funnel” users to accounts on platforms with increasingly extreme content and ecosystems.

- Offline presence continues to be a vital tool for the majority of extreme-right youth groups, who engage in fitness or martial arts and organise community service in order to foster an in-group identity. They incite against out-groups through expertly styled propaganda and aggressive, often racist rallies, protests and banner drops.
- The threat posed by extreme-right youth will be emphasised through exploration of incitement to violence and analysis of hate crimes and terrorist convictions.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction	3
<i>Definitions</i>	4
<i>Methodology</i>	5
<i>Ethical Considerations</i>	7
<i>Structure of the Report</i>	7
2 Extreme-right Youth Groups	9
3 Narratives and Ideology	15
<i>Youth-centrism</i>	16
<i>Conclusion</i>	21
4 Online Activities and Social Media	23
<i>Instagram</i>	23
<i>Twitter</i>	27
<i>TikTok</i>	29
<i>Telegram</i>	30
<i>Content Funnelling and Trends in Social Media Usage</i>	31
<i>Conclusions</i>	34
5 Offline Activities and Propaganda	35
<i>Strengthening In-group Identity</i>	36
<i>Incitement Against Out-groups</i>	43
<i>Conclusions</i>	49
6 “We are Generation Terror!”: The Threat from Extreme-right Youth Groups	51
<i>Incitement to Violence</i>	52
<i>Arrests, Hate Crimes and Terrorist Convictions</i>	56
<i>Conclusions</i>	59
7 Conclusions	61

1 Introduction

In October 2019, a 16-year-old boy was arrested in Newcastle, England, for encouraging terrorism and inviting support for a banned organisation.¹ The unnamed teenager, who called himself “Hitler” on social media platforms, had created his own neo-Nazi group, Blutkrieg Division. He created propaganda inciting terrorism against Jewish people, distributed flyers in his local area and attempted to recruit his peers.

In the same year, on the other side of the country, another 16-year-old boy was arrested for a similar offence.² He was found to be the UK head of the Feuerkrieg Division, a terrorist group now proscribed under the UK Terrorism Act 2000.³ As the group’s UK head, the boy oversaw the recruitment of new activists, created and disseminated propaganda and motivated his peers towards terrorist violence.

In recent years there has been an increased focus on the young age of extreme-right actors and, in particular, the grooming of young individuals online. In September 2021, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick stated that the number of terror suspects who are children had tripled in the last year.⁴ Discourse around the grooming of young people by extreme-right actors has been plentiful among media, police, practitioners and academics. In an October 2020 interview, Nigel Bromage, head of Exit UK, spoke of “faceless, core recruiters of the far-right” who “are experts at grooming children”,⁵ echoing Counter Terrorism Policing’s statement about “terrorist groomers exploiting the fact that vulnerable people have spent more time online.”⁶ Likewise, in a September 2020 report, Hope not Hate researcher Patrik Hermansson noted that the group has “increasingly noticed children and teenagers being drawn into the movement online. They are fed extreme literature and ideas by older members and ultimately exploited to expand the reach of far-right groups and to advance the often violent goals of the groups they join.”⁷ This has rightly also been a topic of significant concern among international organisations such as UNESCO⁸ and the Radicalisation Awareness Network at the European Commission.⁹

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- 1 Daniel de Simone, “Teen who called himself Hitler sentenced for terror offences”, *BBC News*, 30 March 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-56577064>.
 - 2 “UK’s youngest terror offender, boy, 16, sentenced”, *BBC News*, 8 February 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-55951628>.
 - 3 “Terrorism Act 2000”, GOV.UK, accessed 2 August 2021, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/contents>.
 - 4 Lizzie Dearden, “Children forming ‘new generation of extremists’ in UK as terror threat shifts”, Cressida Dick warns”, *The Independent*, 13 September 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/terror-threat-uk-children-cressida-dick-b1919154.html>.
 - 5 Grace MacAskill, “Brit kids groomed by sick far-right video games showing Muslims being beheaded”, *Mirror*, 3 October 2020, <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/brit-kids-groomed-sick-far-22787774>.
 - 6 “New stats reveal the number of children arrested for terrorism offences is highest since records began”, Counter Terrorism Policing, last modified 9 September 2021, <https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/new-stats-reveal-the-number-of-children-arrested-for-terrorism-offences-is-highest-since-records-began/>.
 - 7 Patrik Hermansson and David Lawrence, “Hitler Youths the rise of teenage far-right terrorists”, Hope not Hate, last modified September 2020, https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/HnH_Hitler-Youths-report_2020-09-v2.pdf.
 - 8 Seraphin Alava, Divina Frau-Meigs and Ghayda Hassan, “Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media: Mapping the Research”, *UNESCO*, last modified 2017, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260382>.
 - 9 Radicalisation Awareness Network, “RAN Young Issue Paper; Policy Recommendations”, last modified March 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_young_policy_recommendations_032018_en.pdf.

The focus on the grooming of young individuals, however, often ignores the agency that is increasingly awarded to young people across the political spectrum, from the school climate strikes to the attention garnered by Greta Thunberg. Even though there is evidence of the grooming of young digital users by older individuals, it is important not to disregard that it is often young people themselves who are responsible for bringing other young people into their movement. Across Europe there exist a number of racial nationalist organisations that identify as youth-centric movements and are run by and composed of young individuals. This highlights a trend of youth radicalisation, whereby it is often the youth actively recruiting other youth, rather than being passive victims of older groomers.

This paper emphasises the agency that young people possess, developing a theory of “youth-on-youth radicalisation”, whereby the youth are not only the victims of terrorist recruitment but also often the perpetrators of it. As will be explored, young people are organising and mobilising independently of older users of digital environments, often displaying similar ideologies and strategies, but also bringing innovations that enable them to reach out to their peer group in ways that other generations may not. This paper mirrors concerns on the vulnerability of young people to radicalisation and aims to build on existing research in order to expand understandings of the radicalisation of young users by modern extreme-right groups.

Definitions

This study uses the term “extreme right” broadly to categorise the ideology of the subjects discussed. The extreme right, as opposed to the radical right, is, generally speaking, anti-democratic and supportive of direct action, including violence, to achieve its goals.¹⁰ Within this bracket, this study will focus on racial nationalists. *Racial nationalism* is understood using a definition from Tore Bjørge and Jacob Aasland Ravndal, constructed using existing concepts established by Cas Mudde¹¹ and Benjamin Teitelbaum.¹² As such:

“Racial nationalists fight for a society based on ideas of racial purity and embrace totalitarian principles. They draw ideological inspiration from ideas derived from National Socialism, Fascism, Christian Identity, or varieties of white supremacy. Their worldview is typically based on anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, claiming that Jews promote immigration, egalitarianism, and racial mixing to destroy the white race.”¹³

These definitions exclude movements such as Generation Identity or Defence Leagues, focusing on small neo-fascist groups that have emerged across Western Europe over the past three years. It should be noted that, within this definition, the groups and individuals studied exhibited a diversity of extreme-right ideologies. This report does not claim that all included groups share the same ideology, mode of operation or views on and approach towards violence.

¹⁰ Tore Bjørge and Jacob Aasland Ravndal, “Extreme-Right Violence and Terrorism: Concepts, Patterns, and Responses”, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, last modified September 2019.

¹¹ Cas Mudde, “The Ideology of the Extreme Right”, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1992.

¹² Benjamin Teitelbaum, “Lions of the north: Sounds of the New Nordic Radical Nationalism”, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017.

¹³ Bjørge and Ravndal, “Extreme-Right Violence and Terrorism”.

Reaching a definition of radicalisation is a complicated task, with little agreement among researchers. However, many definitions contain a core element: radicalisation is the process of becoming more extreme, with the vast majority of academic models showing radicalisation as a progression over time.¹⁴ This study takes a cognitive approach to the concept of radicalisation, as opposed to a behavioural one, whereby the authors will examine the adoption of extremist ideas and will not exclusively focus on acts of terrorism and violence.¹⁵

“Extremism”, as defined by J M Berger using social identity theory, is a system of thinking whereby “people categorise themselves and others as members of competing social groups”.¹⁶ An “us vs them” narrative is thereby generated by perceived competition between the in-group and the out-group. The former is defined as groups of people who share a religious, racial or national identity; the latter as those people not belonging to the in-group.

Different theories about the process of radicalisation centre on different push and pull factors. This study understands that there is no universally applicable model of radicalisation and that differing theories do not necessarily contradict each other. Therefore, this research will be framed through sociological radicalisation processes, considering the role of ideology, social movement theory and group dynamics in order to understand the breadth of radicalisation strategies attempted by extreme-right youth groups.¹⁷

Methodology

In order to be included in this study, a group must:

- Exhibit racial nationalist ideology;
- Have been formed in 2018 or since;
- Be composed of an average membership age of under 25;
- Be located in a Western European country;
- Have been associated with incitement to violence, arrests or group bannings relating to hate crimes or violence, or have carried out violent acts.

This research does not seek to provide a comprehensive map of every group meeting the inclusion criteria but rather intends to provide an overarching analysis of the activities and ideologies of these groups through a representative sample. To this end, the ten groups named in Table 1 will be discussed. Many of these groups have only recently initiated their activism and therefore there is little English language analysis or reporting. All groups included are not official youth wings of extreme-right parties; nor do they claim to be youth divisions of broader racial nationalist groups. Instead, they have established themselves independently as youth groups.

¹⁴ Peter Neumann, “The trouble with radicalization”, *International Affairs* vol.89 no.4, 2013: p.874.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ J M Berger, “Extremism”, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 2018: p.24.

¹⁷ Marc Sageman, “Understanding Terror Networks”, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2011.

Table 1: Groups in this study

Bastión Frontal (Spain – Madrid, Seville, Extremadura, Valencia, Castilla la Mancha, Zaragoza)	Eisenjugend (Switzerland – Zurich)
Junge Revolution (Germany) and regional affiliate Nord Württemberg Sturm	Kansallissosialistinuoret (known as KS Nuoret) (Finland)
Sonnenkrieg Division (International)	Blutkrieg Division (United Kingdom – Newcastle)
Feuerkrieg Division (International)	Junge Tat (Switzerland)
National Partisan Movement (International)	The British Hand (UK)

This report aims to give an initial insight into this new generation of extreme-right youth groups. It should be noted that further groups were identified but have been excluded in service of a concise and representative study. Not all of the groups studied continue to be active at the time of writing, having been disbanded or proscribed by their respective governments. Despite the narrow inclusion criteria, there exists significant diversity between the groups studied, which is reflected in ideological differences, level of incitement to violence and membership numbers. The chosen groups provide a balance between transnational and more localised organisations, as well as a diversity in membership age, ranging from very young to older teenagers.

This research has been carried out using an open-source, non-participant qualitative approach. The researchers observed and collected information about groups and individuals using social media. To this end, only outward facing communications and activities will be discussed; the authors did not engage with or collect data from private group chats or accounts. Taking a top-down approach, this study focuses on the way young people seek to recruit and radicalise others into their movement. As such, the analysis centres on groups’ recruitment and radicalisation attempts, not on the success of such efforts. Furthermore, through a group-centric approach, the authors were able to draw conclusions about the activities and propaganda of organised young racial nationalist groups, rather than the individual motivations or ideological convictions of individual group members.

A final methodological note concerns the translation of foreign-language material. The authors are native and/or fluent speakers of English and Spanish. For ease of reading, all foreign material has been translated into English. This has been achieved through a variety of online translation tools chosen for their reliability, such as wordreference¹⁸ and linguee.¹⁹ It should be acknowledged that some nuances in translation of less familiar languages may have been omitted from analysis. As the authors were unable to translate the spoken content of all propaganda videos that did not have subtitles, some gaps in the examples provided may be present.

¹⁸ “WordReference.com”, WordReference, accessed October 2021, <http://www.wordreference.com>.

¹⁹ “Linguee”, Linguee, accessed October 2021, <https://www.linguee.com>.

Ethical Considerations

This report aims not to amplify or signpost young people to the included groups. The majority of groups in this study have been named or reported in local publications and therefore this research does not highlight information that is not otherwise available. One exception is Blutkrieg Division, which this report names for the first time, as the group was centred around one person who has since been convicted of terror offences and therefore is no longer active. Similarly, for groups that continue to be active, names of social media channels and accounts have been removed from all images.

A large amount of data was archived in this research, much of which included violent or racist images and propaganda. In keeping with recommendations seeking to reduce the amplification of extremist propaganda, images that are not already widely available have only been included when deemed necessary in order to evidence an argument.²⁰ The most violent and racist images have been omitted or in some cases described in written language in order to prevent their wider circulation.

A number of further ethical considerations have been taken, particularly in light of the young age of many subjects. This report will not name individuals associated with a group where they have not otherwise been publicly named and the authors have sought to approach the topic of extremist youth both robustly and sensitively. The authors name a number of groups that are not commonly discussed publicly in English-speaking research in order to draw attention to their racist activities and the threat they pose across Western Europe. However, it has been considered how to mitigate the elevation of such groups and ideologies, and the authors have sought to break down and undermine extremist narratives throughout the research.

It is vital to discuss the wellbeing of those undertaking this research openly. Both authors have had access to digital hygiene and mental health support throughout, in line with recent recommendations from Maura Conway²¹ and the move of the research community towards improving researcher safety. Due to the sensitive nature of the report and concerns for researcher safety, one author has chosen to remain anonymous. The security and wellbeing of researchers with protected characteristics should be continually revisited by the research community.

Structure of the Report

In pursuit of the central thesis of peer-to-peer radicalisation, this research will be split into five main chapters. First, a brief summary will be provided of each group, explaining their foundation, the age of their membership and their target recruitment audience, demonstrating the existence of youth-centred groups. Second, the influences of the groups' youth on their narratives and ideology will be explored. This will be followed by a third chapter focused on the groups' use of social media, once again evidencing the impact

20 Whitney Phillips, “The Oxygen of Amplification: Better Practices for Reporting on Extremists, Antagonists, and Manipulators Online”, *Data & Society*, 22 May 2018, <https://datasociety.net/library/oxygen-of-amplification/>.

21 Maura Conway, “Online Extremism and Terrorism Research Ethics: Researcher Safety, Informed Consent and the Need for Tailored Guidelines”, *Terrorism and Political Violence* vol.33 no.2: pp.367–80, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2021.1880235.

of their age on their platform choice and highlighting general trends. Fourth, the groups’ offline activities and propaganda will be explored, including the main tools used to recruit peers. A final chapter will discuss the threat posed by these groups, with a focus on arrests and convictions of their members. Overall, this will highlight the different activities of extreme-right youth groups and evidence both the impact of their youth on such activities and the strong level of agency these groups possess with regard to the recruitment and radicalisation of other young people.

2 Extreme-right Youth Groups

Despite the increasing threat of a nebulous and loosely affiliated online network of extremists, groups remain an important vector for radicalisation, in particular in Western Europe. As will now be explored, all groups in the sample are not only composed of but also run by young individuals. Despite the explicitness of such composition and the specific age requirements varying across groups, it is clear that all of these groups represent a collective of young people seeking to recruit and build a movement of young individuals.

Bastión Frontal (Spain)

Bastión Frontal was founded in May 2020 and is currently active in Madrid, Seville, Extremadura, Valencia, Zaragoza and Castilla la Mancha. This group gained particular notoriety following an antisemitic speech in February 2021 by reported Bastión Frontal member Isabel Medina Peralta, in which she stated, “it is our supreme obligation to fight for Spain and for a Spain now weak and liquidated by the enemy, who is always the same with different masks: the Jew.”²² Bastión Frontal, which describes itself as a “youth organisation”, is reported to be composed of people between 14 and 30 years old.²³ When describing its members, the group often refers to “revolutionary national youth”, as well as “nationalist and combative youth”.

Blutkrieg Division (Newcastle, UK)

Blutkrieg Division was a group created by a 16-year-old boy based in Newcastle, who has now been convicted for inciting support for National Action, encouraging terrorism and stirring up racial and religious hatred.²⁴ National Action was an extreme-right organisation that described itself as a “youth movement”²⁵ and was proscribed in the UK in 2016.²⁶ Blutkrieg Division, as explained by its founder, was inspired by National Action, given that “they appealed to the youth and spoke about the Jews as well as the Muslims”. Despite not having an explicit membership age, its 16-year-old founder did state that “this group is made specifically to attract youth [...] Generation Zyklon as some like to call it”.

22 Carmen Aguilera-Carnerero, “‘The Jew Is To Blame’: Young Neo-Fascists In Spain Spark Outrage”, Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, last modified 23 April 2021, <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2021/04/23/the-jew-is-to-blame-young-neo-fascists-in-spain-spark-outrage/>.

23 “La Fiscalía de Madrid denuncia al colectivo Bastión Frontal por un delito de odio contra los menas”, ABC, 10 February 2021, https://www.abc.es/espana/madrid/abci-fiscalia-madrid-denuncia-colectivo-bastion-frontal-delito-odio-contra-menas-202102101050_noticia.html.

24 De Simone, “Teen who called himself Hitler”.

25 “White Jihad”: Jack Renshaw’s journey from far right student to would-be terrorist”, *Community Security Trust*, last modified 2020, <https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/6/0/Jack%20Renshaw%20-%20White%20Jihad.pdf>.

26 Jessica Elgot, “Neo-Nazi group National Action banned by UK home secretary”, *The Guardian*, 12 December 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/12/neo-nazi-group-national-action-banned-by-uk-home-secretary>.

The British Hand (UK)

The British Hand was founded by a 15-year-old based in Derbyshire and operated largely online. This group’s Instagram account made its first post at the end of July 2020 and the group’s Telegram channel was subsequently created in August 2020. The three individuals arrested in connection to this group to date have been its 15-year-old founder, a 16-year-old boy from Kent and 18-year-old Matthew Cronjager.²⁷ According to a Hope not Hate investigation into the group, The British Hand had around 15 members, all of them young.²⁸

Eisenjugend (Switzerland)

Eisenjugend, which translates to Iron Youth, first appeared on Twitter in December 2019 and consequently on Telegram in January 2020.²⁹ This group considered itself to be the Swiss branch of the American neo-Nazi group Iron Youth³⁰ and was mostly active in the Winterthur region of Zurich.³¹ According to media reports, the head of the group was a 19-year-old student of Zurich Art School. Individuals arrested in connection with the group are reported to have all been between 18 and 20 years old.³²

Feuerkrieg Division

The Feuerkrieg Division is a transnational network created in October 2018 and currently active in a number of European countries including Estonia and the United Kingdom.³³ Despite accepting 16- to 35-year-olds into their movement, Feuerkrieg Division was run by very young individuals. Its founder and commander was discovered to be a 13-year-old boy based in Estonia³⁴ and its UK head was a boy who was just 13 years old when he committed his first terror offence.³⁵ As noted in Europol’s 2021 “Terrorism Situation and Trend report”, most of Feuerkrieg Division’s members were aged between 13 and 25 years old.³⁶ Individuals arrested in connection with the group in the UK have been between 17 and 23 years old.³⁷ This group temporarily ceased its activities in January 2020, having announced on its Telegram channel that it would be stopping all recruitment.³⁸

27 “Derbyshire boy’s racist group included terrorism plot member”, *BBC News*, 9 September 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-58504074>.

28 Patrik Hermansson, “The British Hand: new extreme right terror cell exposed”, Hope not Hate, last modified 27 September 2020, <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2020/09/27/british-hand/>.

29 Juri Mertens, “DIE EISENJUGEND VON WINTERTHUR – RASSEKRIEGER ALLEIN IM WALD”, *BellTower News*, 13 August 2020, <https://www.belltower.news/schweiz-die-eisenjugend-von-winterthur-rassekrieger-allein-im-wald-102465/>.

30 Kevin Brühlmann and Kurt Pelda, “Die Eisenjugend aus Winterthur und ihr Traum von der Apokalypse”, *Tages-Anzeiger*, 6 August 2020, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/die-eisenjugend-aus-winterthur-und-ihr-traum-von-der-apokalypse-906200087233>.

31 Hans Stutz, “How dangerous is the ‘iron youth’?”, *Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen*, 21 January 2021, <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/rechtsextremismus-wie-gefaehrlich-ist-die-eisenjugend>.

32 “Police arrest six right-wing extremists in two cantons”, *Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen*, 20 January 2021, <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/mitglieder-der-eisenjugend-polizei-verhaftet-sechs-rechtsextreme-in-zwei-kantonen>.

33 “Feuerkrieg Division (FKD),” Anti-Defamation League, accessed 1 July 2021, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/feuerkrieg-division-fkd>.

34 Daniel de Simone, “Neo-Nazi group led by 13-year-old boy to be banned”, *BBC News*, 13 July 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53392036>.

35 Lizzie Dearden, “UK’s youngest terror offender walks free from court after recruiting for neo-Nazi group”, *The Independent*, 8 February 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/neo-nazi-uk-fkd-youngest-terror-offender-b1799103.html>.

36 “European Union terrorism situation and trend report 2021”, Europol, last modified 22 June 2021, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2021-tesat>, p.82.

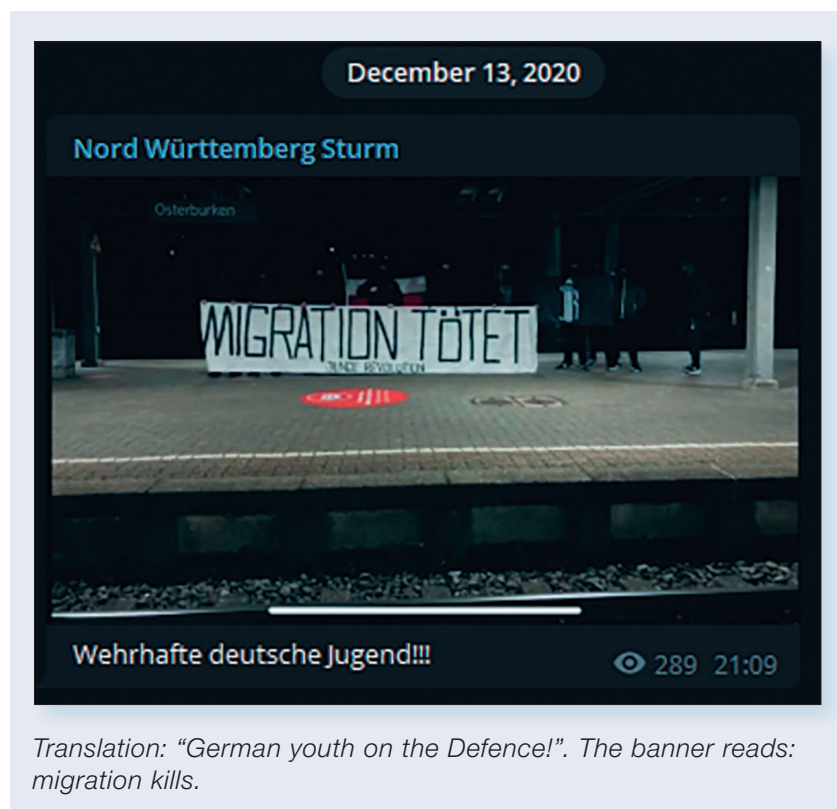
37 “Teen sentenced for right wing terrorism offences”, Warwickshire Police, last modified 6 November 2020, <https://www.warwickshire.police.uk/news/warwickshire/news/2020/november/teen-sentenced-for-right-wing-terrorism-offences>; “Newcastle man sentenced to 4 years for terrorism offences”, Counter Terrorism Policing, last modified 23 December 2020, <https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/newcastle-man-sentenced-to-4-years-for-terrorism-offences/>.

38 “Feuerkrieg Division Ceases ‘Recruitment Operations’”, *Medium*, 17 January 2020, <https://medium.com/americanodyssey/neo-nazi-group-feuerkrieg-division-ceases-recruitment-operations-telegram-abfaaa94b8a3>.

However, it appears to have restarted its activities around May 2021 and currently continues to be active, despite having been proscribed by the UK government in July 2020.³⁹

Junge Revolution

Junge Revolution, which translates as “Young Revolution”, is a group formed in 2019 by 19-year-old Sanny Kujath, a former member of far-right party “The Third Way”.⁴⁰ This group was initially conceived as a media project that, in its own words, was “run by young nationalists” and aimed “to give young people an insight into the national movement and scene”. Junge Revolution subsequently evolved into a group in 2020,⁴¹ which included the creation of its regional offshoot in southern Germany, Nord Württemberg Sturm,⁴² which, as shown below, has referred to its activists as “German youth on the defence”.



Junge Tat

Junge Tat, which translates as “Young Action”, published its first video in November 2020⁴³ and is reported to constitute an “adapted continuation” of Eisenjugend and “Nationalist Youth Switzerland”.⁴⁴ The connection between Junge Tat and Eisenjugend is particularly evident given that Junge Tat has on multiple instances referred to

³⁹ “Far-right terror group proscribed”, GOV.UK, last modified 17 July 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/far-right-terror-group-proscribed>.

⁴⁰ Timo Büchner, “Junge Tat and Junge Revolution”, *BellTower News*, 29 January 2021, <https://www.belltower.news/nazis-in-germany-and-switzerland-junge-tat-and-junge-revolution-111101/>

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Timo Büchner, “Jung, tatkräftig, revolutionär, vereint?”, *BellTower News*, 25 January 2021, <https://www.belltower.news/deutschland-und-schweiz-jung-tatkraeftig-revolutionaer-vereint-110711/>.

the arrested Eisenjugend activists as “our activists, friends and acquaintances”⁴⁵ and that Eisenjugend’s leader has been recognised in Junge Tat propaganda videos.⁴⁶ This group is also closely associated with Junge Revolution, with the two regularly sharing each other’s content. Junge Tat repeatedly refers to their activists as the “youth”, highlighting the young nature of their membership.

Kansallissosialistinuoret (KS Nuoret)

Kansallissosialistinuoret, which translates as “National Socialist Youth”, describes itself as “a network”, as opposed to a group, whose operations are “open to 13-25 year olds”.⁴⁷ This group, which was active in Finland across the country starting in the summer of 2019⁴⁸ is believed to have had around 50 members of its Telegram channel.

National Partisan Movement

The National Partisan Movement is an international network created in October 2020 that is mostly active in the United States and Sweden, but which also has a presence in the UK, as well as a number of other countries. The group’s founder and leader is a 15-year-old American boy who went by the online pseudonym Panther. The National Partisan Movement describes itself as a “Generation Z oriented movement” and is open to those aged between 14 and 18. As evidenced below, the group claims not to be “run by old men who do not have your best interests in mind”. It is “a group who specializes in white identity for the future, by the future”.



45 “Police arrest six right-wing extremists in two cantons” *Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen*.

46 Kevin Brühlmann, Leo Eiholzer and Kurt Pelda, “Hass gegen Juden’: Fünf junge Rechtsextreme verurteilt”, *Der Bund*, 8 April 2021, <https://www.derbund.ch/hass-gegen-juden-fuenf-junge-rechtsextreme-verurteilt-683247807189>.

47 “Partisaani haastatteli Kansallissosialistinuoria”, Partisaani, last modified 8 August 2020, <https://www.partisaani.com/news/activism/2020/08/08/partisaani-haastatteli-kansallissosialistinuoria/>.

48 “Pohjoismainen Vastarintaliike on kielletty Suomessa – oikeudenkäynnin historia ja mitä natsit tekevät nyt”, *Varis Antifasistinen Verkosto*, 13 October 2020, <https://varisverkosto.com/2020/10/pohjoismainen-vastarintaliike-on-kielletty-suomessa-oikeudenkaynnin-historia-ja-mita-natsit-tekevat-nyt/>.

Sonnenkrieg Division

Sonnenkrieg Division is an international network created in March 2018 that is reported to have had around a dozen members, mostly in the UK.⁴⁹ Sonnenkrieg Division, which was proscribed in the UK in February 2020,⁵⁰ was described by its leader as “Atomwaffen with less guns”.⁵¹ This group was headed by 21-year-old Andrew Dymock, in conjunction with 17-year-old Oskar Dunn-Koczorowski, who has been described as a key propagandist for the group.⁵² Despite not having an official membership age, all convicted individuals associated with the group have been between 17 and 21 years old.

In short, it is evident that all groups in this study are led by and composed of young individuals who, as will now be explored, are actively recruiting and radicalising other young users into their movement.

49 “Sonnenkrieg Division”, Counter Extremism Project, accessed 25 June 2021, <https://www.counterextremism.com/supremacy/sonnenkrieg-division>.

50 “Order to proscribe far-right terrorist group comes into force”, GOV.UK, last modified 28 February 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/order-to-proscribe-far-right-terrorist-group-comes-into-force>.

51 Daniel Sandford and Daniel De Simone, “British Neo-Nazis suggest Prince Harry should be shot”, *BBC News*, 5 December 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46460442>.

52 *ibid.*

3 Narratives and Ideology

Ideology is best understood as “a set of beliefs or principles”,⁵³ namely “a collective map to make sense of the world”.⁵⁴ As will be explored, while the ideologies of extreme-right youth groups often mirror those of the broader extreme-right ecosystem, in many cases there is evidence of the use of youth-specific narratives, discourse and collective action frames by these groups that play a role in consolidating a distinct in-group identity attractive to the youth and ensuring that messages resonate with this target audience. Researchers Holbrook and Horgan explain that “ideology can serve a variety of different purposes for those becoming involved in terrorism”.⁵⁵ Despite rarely being the sole or even principal motivating factor behind terrorist violence, ideology plays an important role in accentuating grievances, identifying a culprit and in some instances encouraging violence.⁵⁶ Furthermore, as proposed by Berger, extremism is best understood as “a spectrum of beliefs in which an in-group’s success is inseparable from negative acts against an out-group.”⁵⁷ As such, the consolidation of distinct in- and out-group identities plays a key role in individuals’ radicalisation.

The groups in this study display beliefs in line with the principles of racial nationalism. This includes in most instances a strong emphasis on conspiracy theories such as The Great Replacement, the belief that there is a deliberate attempt by governments, elites or in many cases Jews to bring immigrants (predominately Muslims) to the West in an attempt to erase the white race,⁵⁸ and Cultural Marxism, the conspiracy theory often associated with the extreme right that claims that elites, leftists or Jews are seeking to eliminate Western culture and morality by eroding Western values (including family values).⁵⁹ The groups in this study repeatedly demonise the out-group, in particular Jewish, Muslim, immigrant and LGBTQ+ communities. As explained by Giner-Sorolla, Leidner and Castano, such demonisation plays a key role in justifying violence against the out-group by excluding them from moral consideration and creating a moral mandate to act against them.⁶⁰ With very limited exceptions, all groups in the sample demonstrate antisemitic beliefs, demonising the Jewish community and often depicting them as the root of various problems. This includes promoting antisemitic conspiracy theories and occasionally inciting violence against the Jewish community. Islamophobia and xenophobia are also common: Muslims and immigrants are repeatedly accused of criminal

53 “Ideology”, Cambridge Dictionary, accessed 6 August 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ideology>.

54 Donald Holbrook and John Horgan, “Terrorism and Ideology: Cracking the Nut”, *Perspectives on Terrorism* vol.13 no.6, December 2019, <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2019/issue-6/01-holbrook-and-horgan.pdf>.

55 *ibid.*

56 *ibid.*

57 J M Berger, “Extremist Construction of Identity: How Escalating Demands for Legitimacy Shape and Define In-Group and Out-Group Dynamics”, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, last modified April 2017, DOI: 10.19165/2017.1.07.

58 Jacob Davery and Julia Ebner, “‘The Great Replacement’: The violent consequences of mainstreamed extremism”, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, last modified 2019, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Great-Replacement-The-Violent-Consequences-of-Mainstreamed-Extremism-by-ISD.pdf>.

59 Bill Berkowitz, “‘Cultural Marxism’ Catching On”, *Intelligence Report*, Southern Poverty Law Center, last modified 15 August 2003, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2003/cultural-marxism-catching>

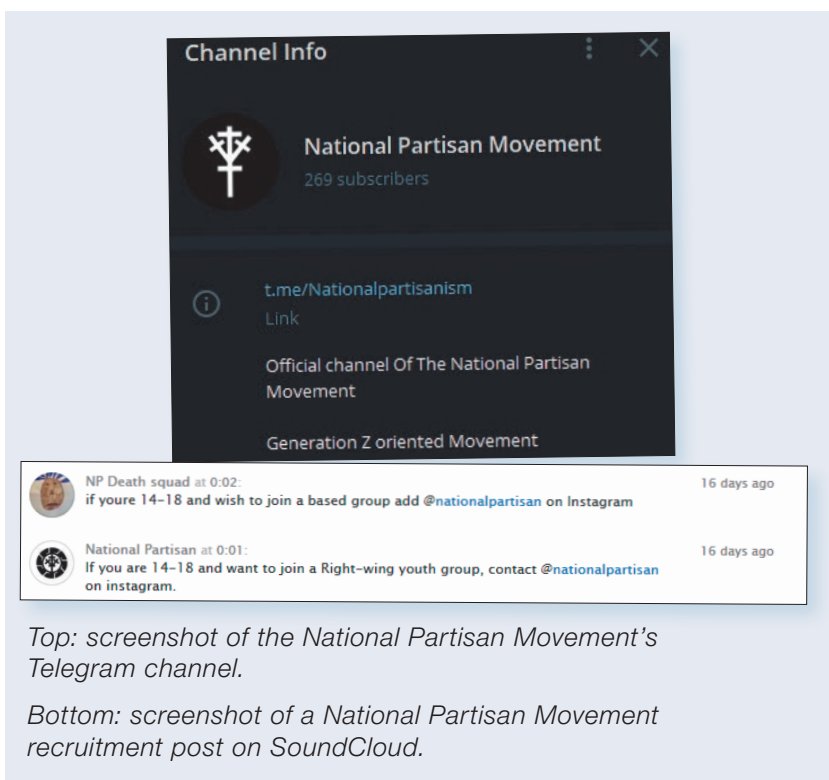
60 Roger Giner-Sorolla, Bernhard Leidner and Emanuele Castano, “Dehumanization, demonization and morality shifting: Paths to moral certainty in extremist violence”, in *Extremism and the Psychology of Uncertainty*, edd. Michael A Hogg and Danielle L Blaylock, Blackwell Publishing, 2012: pp.165–82.

activity, dehumanised and demonised; Bastión Frontal, for instance, claimed that “Islam is incompatible with our civilization” given the “demographic bomb” and that the imposition of Islam “will take place in a silent manner, through silent replacement”. Lastly, homophobia and, in particular, transphobia were also common subjects: the LGBTQ+ movement is repeatedly depicted by these groups as “degenerate”.

Youth-centrism

Benford and Snow suggest that resonance is a strong determinant of the effectiveness and mobilisation potential of a group’s framing, whereby the more central a group’s claims and beliefs are to the lives of those targeted for recruitment or mobilisation (among other factors), the greater the resonance and thus the greater the probability that such mobilisation takes place.⁶¹ Therefore, the youth profile of the groups in this study plays an important role in helping them to consolidate unique in-group identities centred on their youth, which differentiates them from other groupings. This also has an impact on their narratives, which often focus on the out-group’s attack on the youth.

A significant number of these groups’ names emphasise the centrality of this aspect to their in-group identity, including Kansallissosialist-inuoret (“National Socialist Youth”); Junge Tat (“Young Action”); Eisenjugend (“Iron Youth”); and Junge Revolution (“Young Revolution”). Likewise, the prominence of this aspect is also evident in their social media channel descriptions and slogans. Bastión Frontal’s Telegram channel’s description, for example, reads “youth organisation”, while the National Partisan Movement describes itself as a “Generation Z oriented movement” and “Right-wing youth group”.



Top: screenshot of the National Partisan Movement’s Telegram channel.

Bottom: screenshot of a National Partisan Movement recruitment post on SoundCloud.

61 Robert D Benford and David A Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment”, *Annual Review of Sociology* vol.26, 2000: pp.611–39.

Furthermore, as evidenced by the images below, a National Partisan Movement graffiti painted in Bolton in the United Kingdom in March 2021 included not only swastikas and the group’s logo but also a number of references to the youth, which further highlights the centrality of their youth to this group’s identity.



Graffiti painted in Bolton in March 2021.

Moreover, Junge Tat repeatedly refers to itself as “youth” or “young people” in its posts, echoing Bastión Frontal’s propaganda, which repeatedly describes the group as “Nationalist and combative youth”. This group also makes a number of references to the youth being the future, which mirrors National Partisan Movement propaganda. The prominence of their young age in these groups’ ideology, narratives and propaganda is key to enabling their messages to resonate with – and therefore mobilise – their peers.



Translation: YOUTH AGAINST VACCINATION! A successful day of action. The post will follow shortly.



Above, translation: *The future is ours.*

Left, translation: *Meeting of new militants Saturday 25th September. You can follow us on our Instagram account [redacted]. JOIN US AND FIGHT FOR YOUR FUTURE!*

The National Partisan Movement is particularly noteworthy in highlighting the age profile of members, therefore tailoring its recruitment and messaging to attract this target audience.



Furthermore, the age profile of members of these groups is also reflected in some of their narratives both with regards to their prognostic and diagnostic frames:⁶² namely, their analysis of what the issue is (that it is young people specifically who are under attack from the out-group) and their proposed solution (that young people take action).

For example, when discussing Cultural Marxism, Bastión Frontal explicitly and repeatedly depicts an attack not only on native Spaniards, but more specifically on Spanish youth, claiming that liberalism is “a weapon of the capitalist to destroy the national youth”. The tweet below, for instance, includes the image of a man with a pride flag, a female sign and an antifa logo attacking an individual with a Bastión Frontal flag, while in a separate tweet the group claims that “the system wants a weak, submissive and depersonalised youth”, implying that “identity politics, queer theory, transsexuality, the LGTBI lobby” are an attack on the Spanish youth in particular.

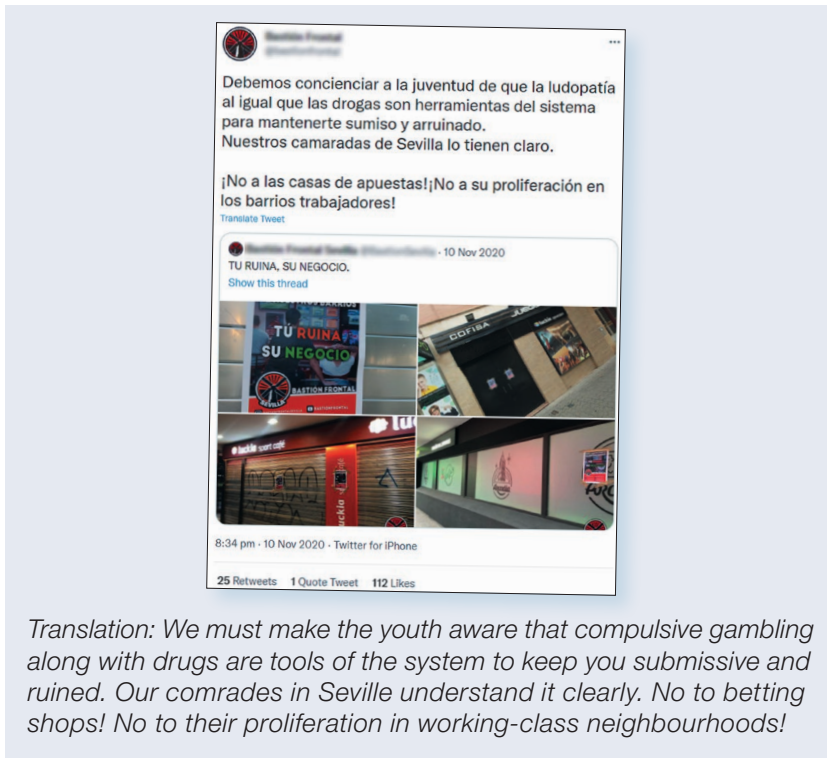


Left, translation: a mass of individuals without identity. Cultural liberalism is a cancer that we must cut out. It is a weapon of capitalism to destroy the national youth and perpetuate the system in power.

Right, translation: You thought that all this identity politics, queer theory, transsexuality, the LGTBI lobby would not end up affecting you. The system wants a weak, submissive and depersonalised youth. Destroying the family as the basic building block of a nation.

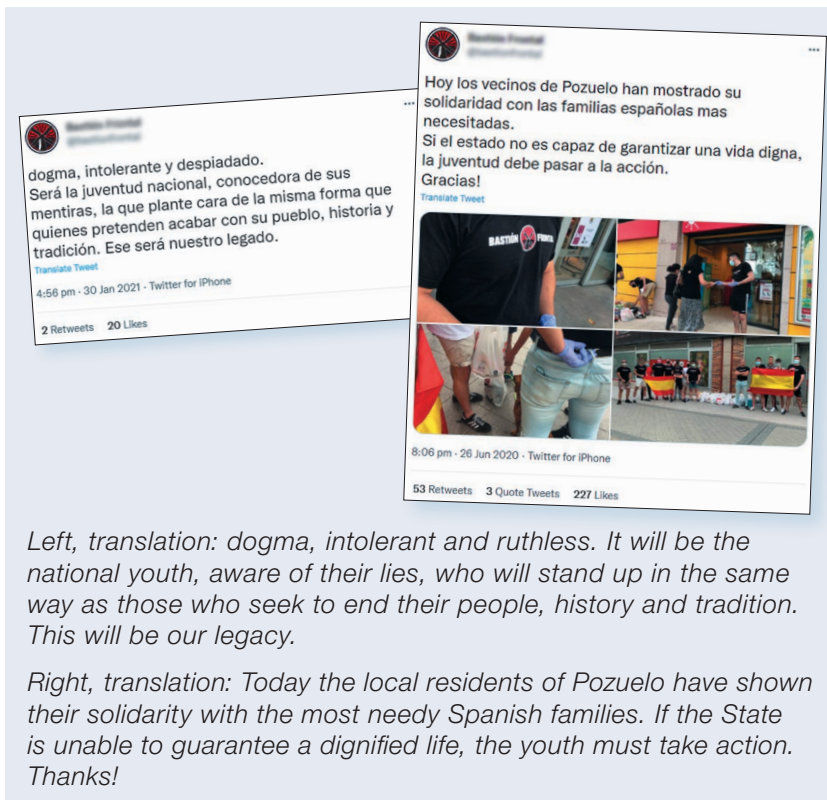
⁶² Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements”. As explained by the authors, “frames help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organise experience and guide action”.

This echoes the group’s messaging regarding drugs and gambling being tools of the system designed to ruin Spanish youth.



Translation: We must make the youth aware that compulsive gambling along with drugs are tools of the system to keep you submissive and ruined. Our comrades in Seville understand it clearly. No to betting shops! No to their proliferation in working-class neighbourhoods!

Furthermore, when discussing what it sees as the erasure of Western culture and civilisation, the group explicitly states that it is the youth who will stand up against the perpetrators and are “aware of their lies”; given that the state has failed to guarantee a dignified life for its citizens, it is the youth who need to take action.



Left, translation: dogma, intolerant and ruthless. It will be the national youth, aware of their lies, who will stand up in the same way as those who seek to end their people, history and tradition. This will be our legacy.

Right, translation: Today the local residents of Pozuelo have shown their solidarity with the most needy Spanish families. If the State is unable to guarantee a dignified life, the youth must take action. Thanks!

This echoes Junge Revolution and KS Nuoret messaging about the youth being the ones standing up for their people. This includes the former group explicitly suggesting that it is German youth who are defending their nation in the context of promoting the message that “immigration kills”, as well as the latter putting up banners and graffiti stating that it is young people who are fighting back.



Translation: White youths, fight back!

These youth-specific narratives play an important role in attracting other young people to their movement by increasing the resonance of these groups’ messages among young audiences, therefore maximising the success of their mobilisation, recruitment and radicalisation attempts.

Conclusion

While young racial nationalist groups’ ideologies mirror those of other racial nationalist groups, including common themes such as antisemitism, Islamophobia and xenophobia, their young age profile plays a significant role in these groups’ messaging and propaganda, which distinguishes them from other organisations and enables their messages to resonate with their target audience.

4 Online Activities and Social Media

Young extreme-right groups use social media to recruit, spread propaganda and raise awareness about their existence. As posited in the United Nations’ “Youth Civic Engagement” report, social media has been a key enabling mechanism in reducing “hierarchies of knowledge and power”,⁶³ thus allowing young people to create groups and grow their organisations. This is particularly pertinent today, as the coronavirus pandemic has limited the ability to interact in-person, therefore increasing the importance of the online sphere to enable these groups to create and develop their movements.

This section will evidence groups’ use of mainstream social media platforms, including Instagram, Twitter and TikTok, for recruiting other young people and discuss the impact of groups’ membership and target recruitment age on their platforms of choice. This will respond to a recognised need for comparative research of online spaces across not only social media platforms but also groups, countries and languages.⁶⁴ This chapter does not provide an exhaustive list of all the platforms in which these groups are present, but rather an overview of their usage of some of the most popular ones, followed by a discussion of some more general trends in the groups’ online activity, in particular that of “funnelling”, whereby groups use mainstream platforms to direct users to platforms where increasingly extreme content is permitted, while still adhering to mainstream platforms’ terms of use. Overall, this suggests the influence of these groups’ membership and target recruitment age on their choice of platform, as well as give an overview of how these groups are using different social media platforms to attempt to recruit and radicalise other young people.

Instagram

Instagram is a mainstream social media platform popular particularly among children and teenagers.⁶⁵ Instagram has been identified as being among the top platforms used by Generation Z in Germany and Switzerland,⁶⁶ and was the most popular social media platform among children in the UK and Spain between May 2019 and February 2020.⁶⁷ As such, it is unsurprising that Instagram was one of the most widely

63 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “United Youth: Youth Civic Engagement”, *United Nations*, New York, last modified 2016, https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/un_world_youth_report_youth_civic_engagement.pdf, p.92.

64 Maura Conway, “Determining the Role of the Internet in Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Six Suggestions for Progressing Research”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* vol.40 no.1: pp.77–98.

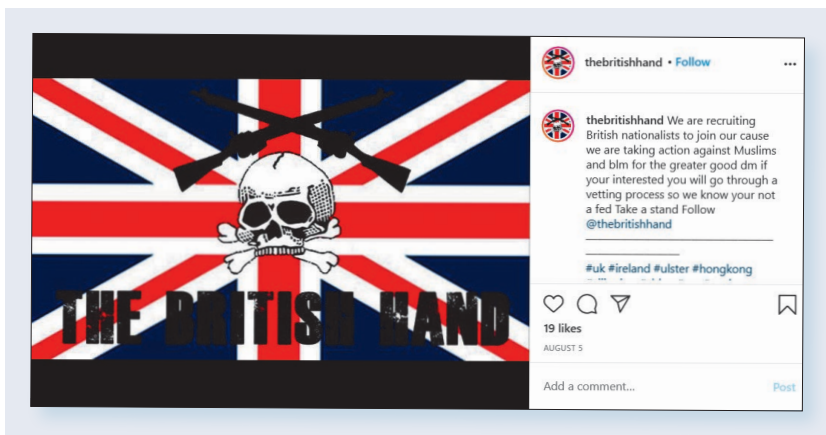
65 Katie Sehl, “Instagram Age Demographics” in “Instagram Demographics in 2021: Important User Stats for Marketers”, *Hootsuite*, last modified 27 January 2021, https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-demographics/#Instagram_age_demographics.

66 Lucy Siegel, “Social Media Trends in Europe: Old World, Young Tech”, last modified 6 October 2020, <https://prboutiques.com/social-media-trends-in-europe/>.

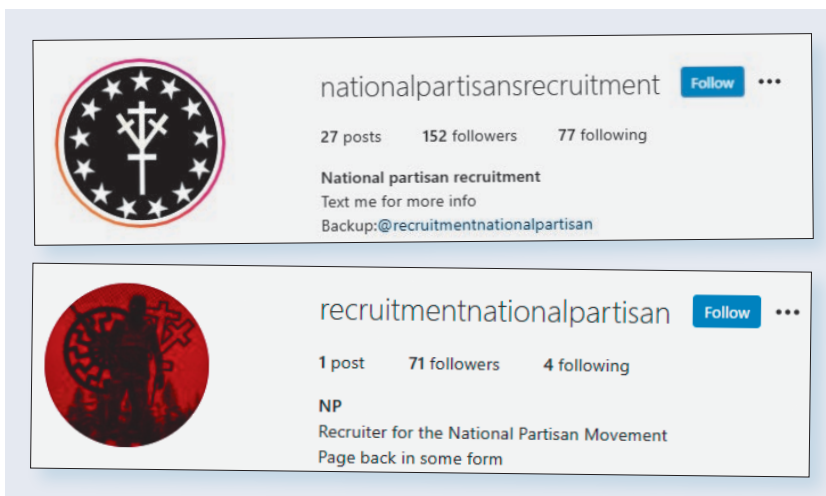
67 Sarah Perez, “Kids now spend nearly as much time watching TikTok as YouTube in US, UK and Spain”, last modified 4 June 2020, https://techcrunch.com/2020/06/04/kids-now-spend-nearly-as-much-time-watching-tiktok-as-youtube-in-u-s-u-k-and-spain/?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2x1LmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAEYI7ZyG43d6OGpS8_5WQqfVTUZPwCqf0Dul8rya1glscZV5-CXyXq09vGwRzRGz933UseJuO_PWv_4_pgeQVbWs66i2QbYMZGhU6zC0Dqxb_JPNRthfwrJ0Njg4vJUyYgCQswmlw9_Z0UFQDcgjPX4R8vh_Q6BuxrHd0fmpXys.

used platforms by the studied groups. This platform not only provides users with a powerful opportunity to reach out to large audiences composed of predominately young individuals who fit within these groups’ target recruitment age, but also, as a mainstream social media platform, it enables groups to promote their message among wider audiences than they are able to on more fringe platforms, such as Telegram.

The groups’ interest in using this platform for recruitment becomes evident when considering that, with few exceptions, the majority of these groups’ Instagram profiles are (or were) public, meaning anyone can see the content posted on them. As explained by Hope not Hate, in the case of The British Hand, the majority of the group’s members were recruited on Instagram.⁶⁸ This group produced and distributed a number of posters on the platform specifically aimed at attracting new members into their movement.



Likewise, the National Partisan Movement also had a number of explicit recruitment-focused profiles on the platform, as evidenced below.

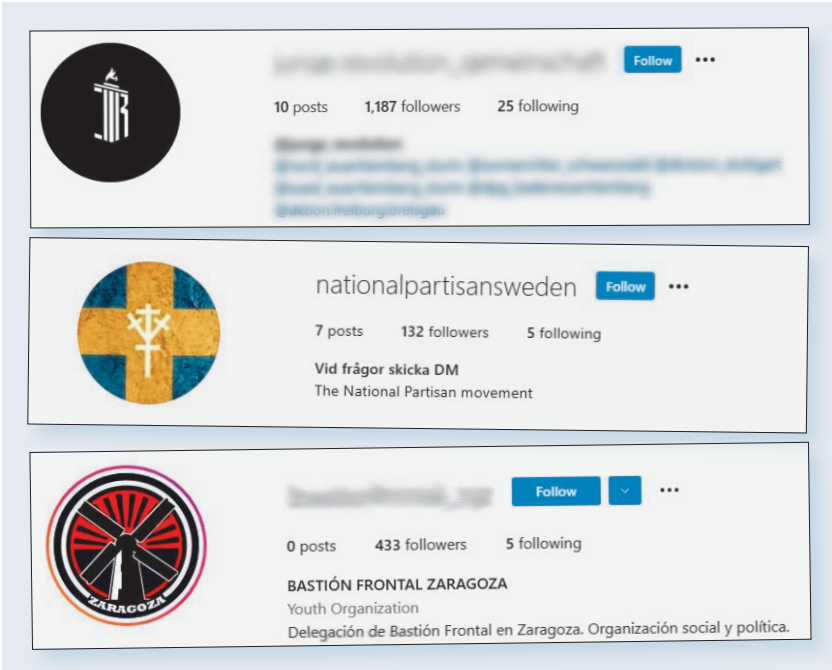


68 Hermansson, "The British Hand".

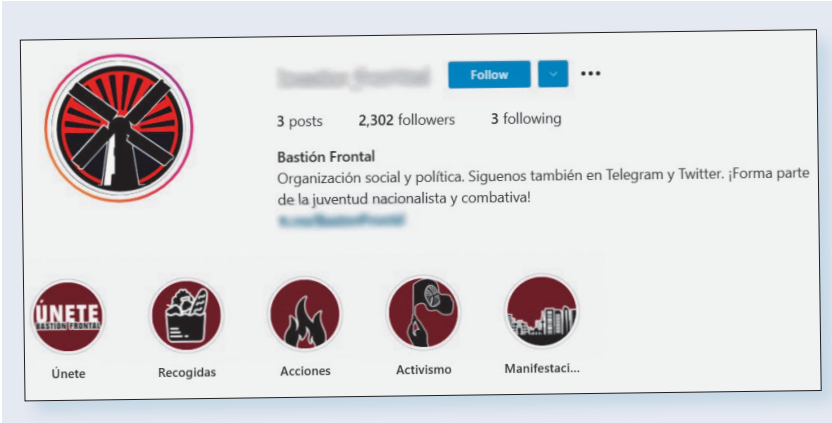
The centrality of Instagram to the recruitment efforts of these groups is clear when considering their interest in having a continued presence on the platform regardless of the number of times their accounts are suspended and their persistence in continuing to create new accounts. Groups will often set up second accounts in anticipation of the removal of a primary account for breaching the code of conduct, therefore reducing the impact of content moderation.



A further trend among some of the groups’ use of Instagram, which further evidences their recruitment-oriented interest in the platform, is their creation of targeted Instagram recruitment profiles for their different regional branches or for different countries in which they operate. This is the case for Bastión Frontal, which has separate accounts for its Seville, Zaragoza and Extremadura branches; for Junge Revolution, which has its “community” (“gemeinschaft”) profile on which it tagged different regional offshoots’ accounts; and for the National Partisan Movement, which also had targeted recruitment profiles for different countries. This allows groups to tailor their recruitment efforts to the youth in each area, therefore increasing the local resonance of their messages.



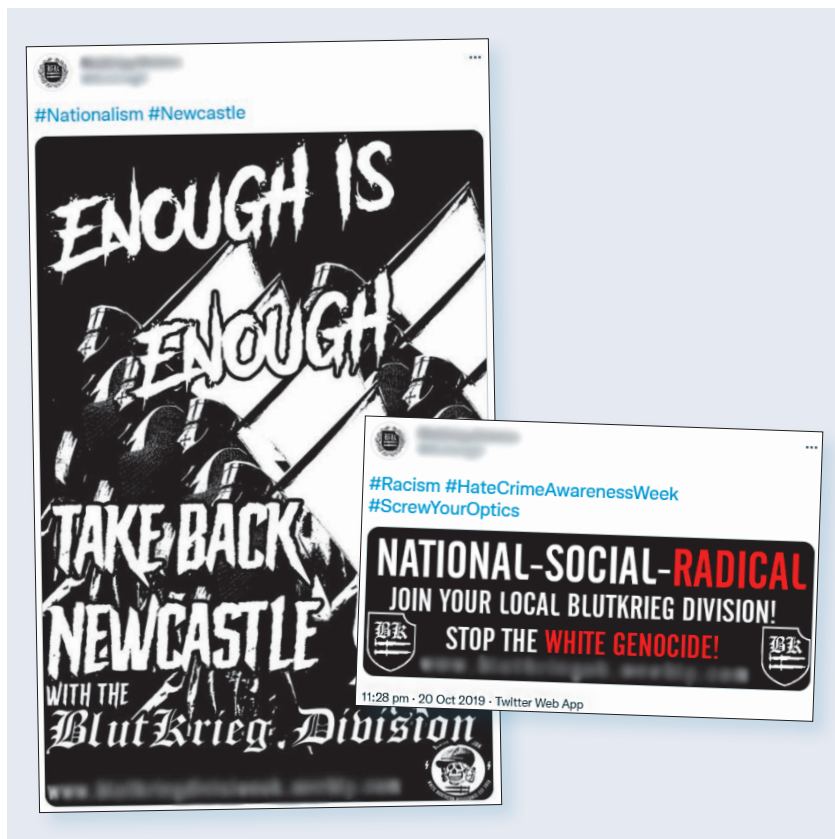
Furthermore, some of these groups also make use of Instagram Stories and its ‘Highlights’ functionality, whereby stories can be permanently saved within a user’s profile to provide potential supporters with a quick taste of the activities a group has engaged in and instructions on how to become a member. As shown below, Bastión Frontal, for example, highlights its recruitment information (*unete*, “join us”), their charity work (*recogidas*, “collections”), their stunts and banner drops (*acciones*, “actions”), their stickering (*activismo*, “activism”) and their protests (*manifestaciones*, “protests”).



Twitter

As a platform, Twitter was slightly less popular than Instagram among the sample, but still prolific among the young extreme-right groups in this study. This is possibly a result of the visual nature of much of the content produced by the groups, which lends itself more to visually focused platforms such as Instagram. Similarly to Instagram, Twitter, a mainstream social media platform with millions of users worldwide,⁶⁹ enables these groups to reach out to and radicalise much wider audiences than more peripheral platforms such as Telegram; it also enables them to reach out to young users, who in April 2021 composed 23.7% of Twitter users.⁷⁰

The majority of groups in this study made use of this platform for both recruitment and radicalisation purposes. Blutkrieg Division, for instance, shared a number of propaganda images on its account aimed at Newcastle youth, while Bastión Frontal regularly tweets posters and announcements aimed at new and potential recruits.



69 *ibid.*

70 "Distribution of Twitter users worldwide as of April 2021, by age group", Statista, last modified 7 September 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/283119/age-distribution-of-global-twitter-users>.

Similarly to its use of Instagram, Bastión Frontal has also created a number of accounts for its regional branches on Twitter, once again enabling it to tailor its message to local audiences and therefore increasing the resonance of its message. This includes having separate profiles for its Seville, Extremadura, Valencia and Zaragoza branch, as well as a nationwide profile used to spread ideology and promote posts by the regional accounts.



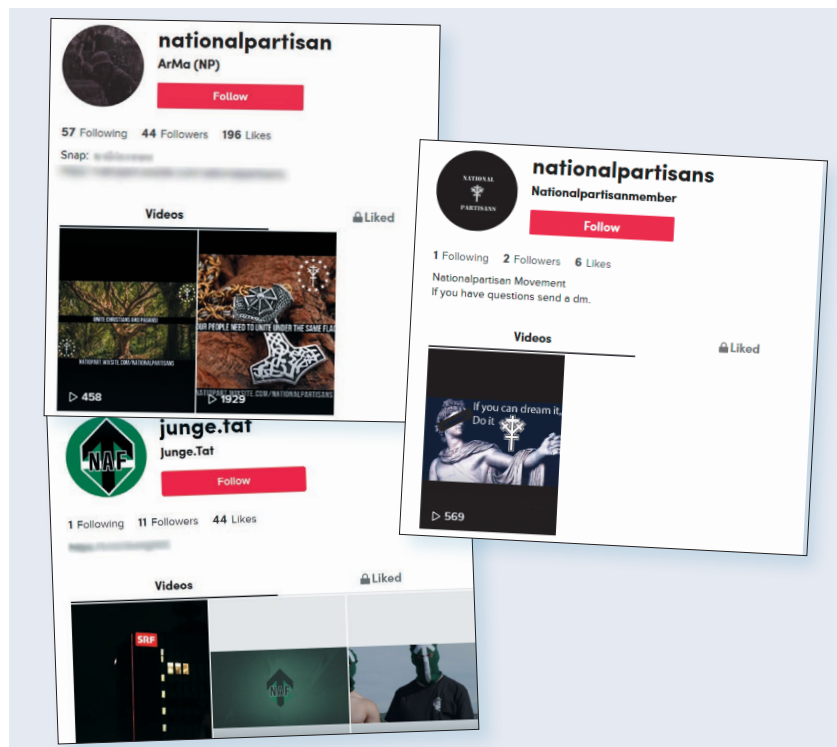
Top, translation: Meeting of new activists on the 30th and 31st. All power to the youth. Nobody will make us stop, we continue... Bastión Frontal Valencia!

Bottom, translation: Join us if you wish, go against us if you can. Join Bastión Frontal!. The poster reads: YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU, JOIN THE COMBATIVE YOUTH.

TikTok

TikTok is “the leading destination for short-form mobile video” content.⁷¹ It was created in 2016 and became the world’s fourth most downloaded app in 2018.⁷² This platform is particularly popular among teenagers, especially those under 19 years old.⁷³ According to Qustodio data, TikTok was the second most popular platform among children in the UK and Spain from May 2019 to February 2020, with 17.7% of children in the UK and 37.7% in Spain using the app.⁷⁴ Against this background, it is no surprise that a number of groups in this study were active on this platform. Both the National Partisan Movement and Junge Tat appear to have had TikTok profiles, although the National Partisan Movement’s accounts seem to have now been deleted or suspended. The former had two different profiles where it posted propaganda videos and images, while the latter had a single profile where it posted a number of propaganda videos. At the time of writing, both Junge Tat and Bastion Frontal continue to be active on the platform.

TikTok’s strong emphasis on algorithms and recommended content leaves it vulnerable to leading users down radicalisation pathways and actively pointing young people towards increasingly extremist content. Extremist users, often young people, use such systems to their advantage, where they “regularly try to make it onto other users’ For You page” – a viewer’s main video feed – “and go viral.”⁷⁵ Although algorithmic pathways are a concern across social media platforms, the emphasis of TikTok on content virality and replication is particularly emphasised in its business model,⁷⁶ and therefore constitutes a pronounced threat to young people being recommended extremist content.



71 “Our Mission”, TikTok, accessed June 2021, <https://www.tiktok.com/about?lang=en>.

72 “What is TikTok?”, *BBC News*, 9 February 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/technology-47160791>.

73 H Tankovska, “TikTok user ratio in the U.S. 2021, by age group”, Statista, last modified 15 April 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1095186/tiktok-us-users-age/>.

74 Perez, “Kids now spend nearly as much time watching TikTok as YouTube”.

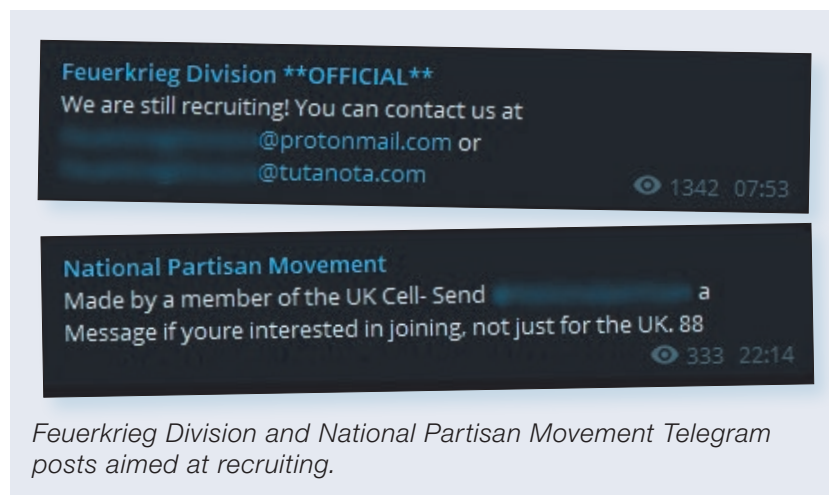
75 Ciaran O’Connor, “Hatescape: An In-Depth Analysis of Extremism and Hate Speech on TikTok”, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, p.6.

76 “How the TikTok Algorithm Works in 2021 (and How to Work With It)”, Hootsuite, 23 August 2021, <https://blog.hootsuite.com/tiktok-algorithm/>.

Telegram

Telegram describes itself as “a messaging app with a focus on speed and security”.⁷⁷ It is not a platform that is particularly popular among young people; rather, characterised by its often unresponsive or relaxed approach to extremist content, it has become a safe haven for the extreme right. Telegram is the platform where these groups share the majority of their content and propaganda, unlike other platforms where materials are sometimes posted on a more selective basis.

The groups in this study also appear to use Telegram for recruitment and radicalisation purposes. This is evident not only from the recruitment-focused propaganda and messaging posted by these groups on Telegram, but also by them sharing details on how to become a member in their channels.



Feuerkrieg Division and National Partisan Movement Telegram posts aimed at recruiting.

Importantly, as a result of its rules around privacy and free speech, this platform offers extreme-right actors a much more permanent space to host their content, in comparison to more mainstream platforms where terms of use strictly prohibit racist, discriminatory and extremist content.⁷⁸ Telegram is the place where these groups can continue to gain followers without fear of having their posts removed or their account suspended. This is reflected in groups’ efforts to redirect followers from different platforms on to their Telegram channels.

⁷⁷ “What is Telegram? What do I do here?”, Telegram, accessed June 2021, <https://telegram.org/faq#q-what-is-telegram-what-do-i-do-here>.

⁷⁸ “Hateful conduct policy”, Twitter, accessed June 2021, <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/hateful-conduct-policy>; “Terms of Use”, Instagram, accessed June 2021, <https://help.instagram.com/581066165581870>; “Hate Speech”, Facebook, accessed June 2021, https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards/hate_speech; “Community Guidelines”, TikTok, accessed June 2021, <https://www.tiktok.com/community-guidelines?lang=en#29>.



Content Funnelling and Trends in Social Media Usage

As explored above, the groups in question appear to have a strong interest in having a presence on mainstream sites, since these allow them to reach out to a wide range of potential recruits, in contrast to more fringe platforms such as Telegram. Not only is the reach of mainstream social media platforms vast in comparison to that of more peripheral sites, but it is also significantly more diverse, with Instagram and Twitter users, for instance, holding a wide variety of different views. As explained by Alexandra Beyersdorfer et al., having a presence on mainstream platforms allows groups to reach young people who might not be looking for political content.⁷⁹ In addition, platforms such as Instagram and TikTok give groups access to a wide pool of users within their target recruitment age. As such, groups often have a strong and persistent interest in maintaining a presence on these platforms, since they are crucial for reaching out both to young people who are perhaps less familiar with a group's message and to individuals within these groups' target recruitment age. This is reflected in some of these groups' persistence in creating new accounts on Instagram and Twitter no matter how many times their previous ones are suspended.

A common trend among a number of these extreme-right actors' online activities is what can be referred to as “content funnelling”, which involves using mainstream social media platforms, on which more moderate content is usually hosted, to redirect users to more peripheral platforms where extreme materials are shared. This is likely an attempt to attract more users and reduce the likelihood of account suspension. The National Partisan Movement is a good example of this, whereby the group only shared minimal amounts of problematic and hateful content on Instagram, in contrast with the contents of its Telegram group chat. Likewise, Bastión Frontal, as evidenced below, has posted on Twitter only a snippet of its latest propaganda video,

⁷⁹ Alexandra Beyersdörfer, Flemming Ipsen, Steffen Eisentraut, Michael Wörner-Schappert and Fabian Jellonek, “Network of Hatred: How right-wing extremists use social media to court young people”, *Jugendschutz*, February 2017, p.13.

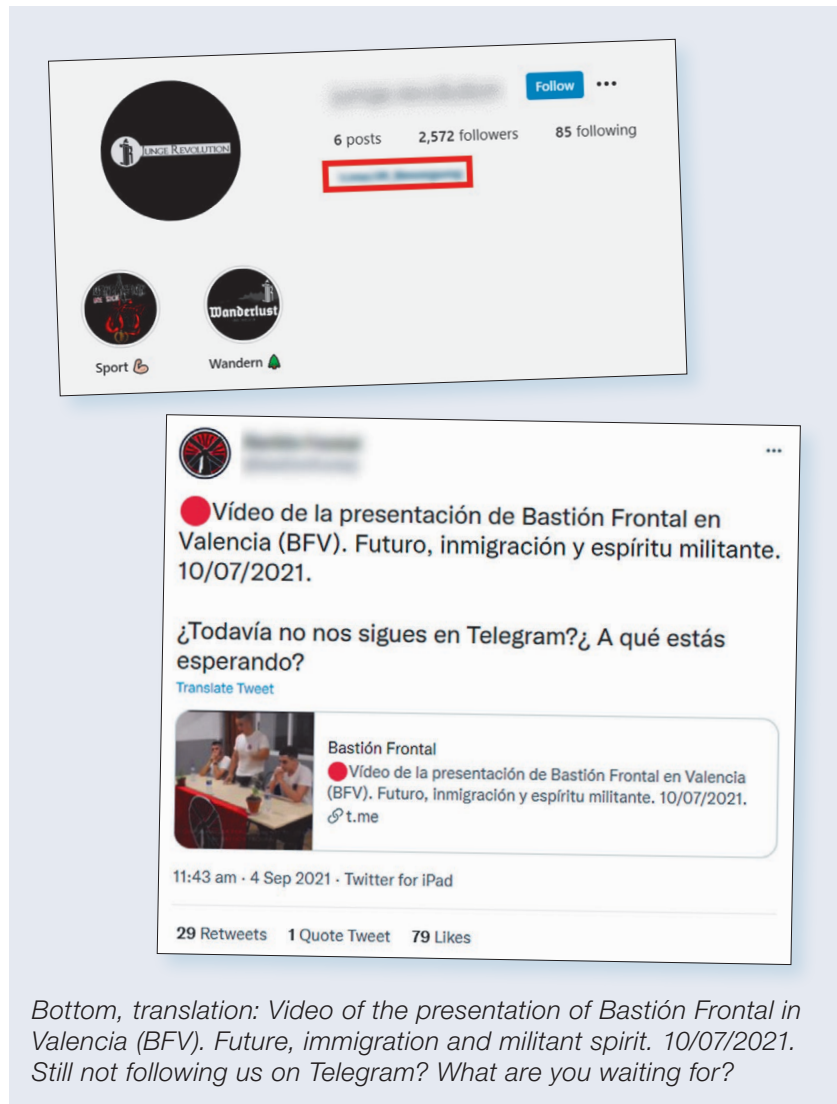
in which it claims that “death is our mission”, as opposed to the full video. The group urged users to access the full video on Telegram, explicitly stating that “due to censorship we must upload our most sensitive material to other less restrictive networks”. Similarly, Junge Tat also directs users to Telegram to read the full version of some of its posts, as opposed to sharing its messages directly on Twitter.



Top, translation: New video now available on our Telegram channel. Due to censorship we must upload our most sensitive material to other less restrictive networks. What are you waiting for? Follow us!

Bottom, translation: We are taking a clear stance against religious extremism from Islamist circles. Unfortunately, extremism can be found in many areas of our country. Full text on Telegram #JungeTat #Rechts #Islamismus #DefendSwitzerland #Schweiz.

Key to content funnelling processes is redirecting users to a group's other channels. This appears to be particularly prominent when it comes to groups using Instagram to redirect users to Telegram. As shown in the screenshots below, one way in which this is often done is by including a link in a group's Instagram or Twitter bio to their Telegram channel.

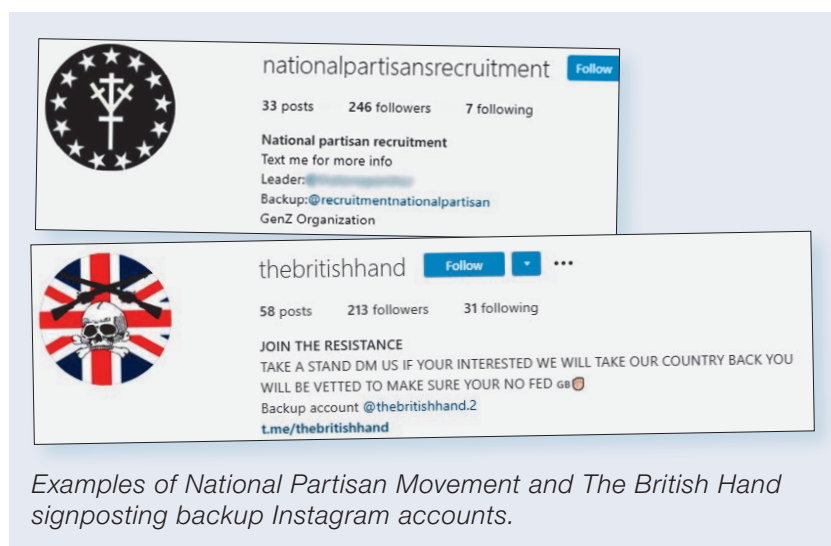


Bottom, translation: Video of the presentation of Bastión Frontal in Valencia (BFV). Future, immigration and militant spirit. 10/07/2021. Still not following us on Telegram? What are you waiting for?

Posting slightly more moderate materials on mainstream platforms while directing followers to more peripheral ones allows groups to appeal to wider audiences and minimise the removal of their posts and the suspension of their accounts. As such, the content posted by these groups on mainstream sites often does not contravene a given platform's terms of use, while the content posted by the same group on other platforms would. This is concerning, as it means groups are able to make use of platforms such as Instagram and Twitter to reach out to young individuals and recruit them while circumventing the companies' moderation algorithms. Content funnelling allows groups to attract individuals on mainstream sites popular among young people and redirect them to more extremist content hosted elsewhere, often on Telegram. This plays a role in enabling the radicalisation of new members through the consumption of increasingly radical, extreme and violent materials. Interestingly, this process was alluded to by Counter Terrorism Police in the UK in a statement regarding the proscription of Feuerkrieg Division.

In reference to both Feuerkrieg Division and similar groups, analysts at Counter Terrorism Policing stated that “the groups often use mainstream social media platform to post non-extreme information regarding popular or relatable topics, with the intention of engaging these younger audiences before encouraging them to migrate to less moderated platforms where they can share more graphic and extreme content.”⁸⁰

On a final note, it is also important to consider the creation of backup accounts through which groups often ensure they have a continued presence on mainstream platforms even if their main accounts are suspended. Backup accounts refer to secondary accounts that are often created with the awareness that the content posted on a main account will result in suspension. As evidenced below, extremist users often create multiple backups and signpost them in the biography section of their profiles. As such, by creating new backup accounts, extremist users can continue to have a presence on the platform and maintain a follower base regardless of the number of times accounts are suspended.



Examples of National Partisan Movement and The British Hand signposting backup Instagram accounts.

Conclusions

This research reaches a number of key findings. First, the groups in this study appear to be making use of mainstream social media platforms, in particular those popular among the youth, such as Instagram, TikTok and Twitter, for recruitment and radicalisation. Second, it has been shown that extreme-right youth groups value participation on mainstream social media platforms and are resilient to attempts to suspend or remove them. Lastly, there appears to be a pattern of “funneling”, whereby groups make use of their presence on mainstream platforms to redirect users to more peripheral sites, such as Telegram, where the most extreme content can be easily hosted, thus circumventing mainstream platform content regulations. Social media companies must recognise and address these emerging trends, which present an increasingly intricate challenge, and take a holistic approach to content moderation and removal.

⁸⁰ “Counter Terrorism Policing welcomes proscription of Neo-Nazi group Feuerkrieg Division”, National Police Chiefs’ Council, last modified 17 July 2020, <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/counter-terrorism-policing-welcomes-proscription-of-neo-nazi-group-feuerkrieg-division>.

5 Offline Activities and Propaganda

There has long existed an underlying assumption in the study of youth radicalisation that young people are groomed by older generations through carefully curated top-down propaganda. This study of youth propaganda redefines the direction of youth recruitment and radicalisation, finding that young people are no longer just the targets, but also the creators of extreme right propaganda and organisers of recruitment activities themselves. Rahma Sugihartati, Bagong Suyanto and Mun'im Sirry were correct to highlight this change of direction “from consumers to prosumers” in their interviews with young adults susceptible to jihadist radicalisation in Singapore, asserting that “young people, especially students, are no longer just passive audiences that merely consume radical content asymmetrically, but often also actively participate in producing radical content to be recirculated to other groups”.⁸¹ Similarly, Hope not Hate researcher Patrik Hermansson noted that “the fact that those suited to bring in young people to the far right are young people themselves has not been lost on the far right”.⁸²

This sentiment has been embraced by the creators of extremist propaganda, which is formulated with increased “spreadability”⁸³ and youth-centric graphics and motifs, therefore appealing to young people. Propaganda, defined as information or communications intended to promote a specific ideology or point of view,⁸⁴ is used by extremist groups to build connections with other proponents of similar ideological views, signal political affiliations more widely and allow like-minded individuals to find each other, radicalising potential supporters and drawing them towards the group.⁸⁵ Particularly among young people, the online and offline are increasingly blended, so that propagandistic videos merely constitute styled communications of offline activities, such as marches and banner drops. Therefore, it is increasingly relevant to consider the impact of offline activities and the ways in which they are communicated online jointly and singularly.

Activism is central to these groups’ ideologies and *raison d’être*: group activities are organised with similar aims and are often filmed in order to create propaganda. A document written by Bastión Frontal members laying out the core principles of the group states that a phrase with which it heavily identifies is “beauty is in action”, whereby “it is not enough to pay your dues and drop out of the project”, but significant activities are expected of each militant, ranging from small cost actions to “others which will certainly endanger your physical integrity”. The document

81 Rahma Sugihartati, Bagong Suyanto and Mun'im Sirry, “The Shift from Consumers to Prosumers: Susceptibility of Young Adults to Radicalization”, *Social Sciences* vol.9 no.40, 2020: p.5.

82 Patrik Hermansson, “Hitler Youths: The Rise of Teenage Far-Right Terrorists”, Hope not Hate, last modified September 2020, https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/HnH_Hitler-Youths-report_2020-09-v2.pdf, p.8.

83 Sugihartati, Suyanto and Sirry, “The Shift from Consumers to Prosumers”, p.5.

84 Christian Mull and Matthew Wallin, “Propaganda: A Tool of Strategic Influence”, American Security Project, September 2013, p.7; Akemi Takeoka Chatfield, Christopher G Reddick and Uuf Brajawidagda, “Tweeting Propaganda, Radicalisation and Recruitment: Islamic State Supporters Multi-Sided Twitter Networks”, *Proceedings of the 16th Annual Conference on Digital Government*, New York, May 2015: p.242; Tammy Castle, Lars Kristiansen and Lantz Shifflett, “White Racial Activism and Paper Terrorism: A Case Study in Far-Right Propaganda”, *Deviant Behaviour* vol.41 no.2, 2020: p.253, DOI: 10.1080/01639625.2018.1557380.

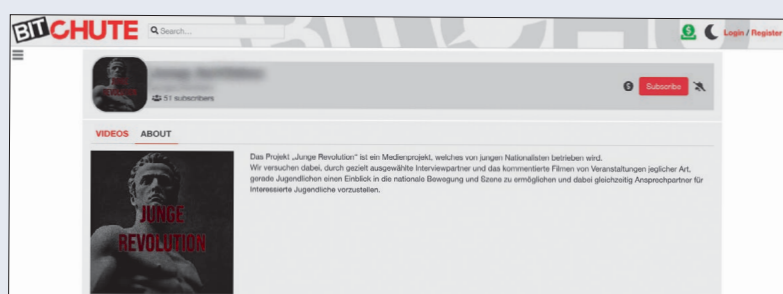
85 Cynthia Miller-Idriss, “Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right”, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2020: p.312.

states that “each militant must attend at least two Bastión Frontal activities per month”; failure to attend for more than two months will result in the “immediate expulsion of the militant in question”, demonstrating the extent to which the group’s identity is focused around real-world actions.

This section will consider the ways in which the groups’ activities and recruitment-focused propaganda is aimed at radicalising other young people. Two mechanisms for recruitment will be identified: first, fostering an in-group identity through fitness and martial arts and community service programmes; second, inciting against an out-group through propaganda and in rallies, protests and banner drops.

Strengthening In-group Identity

A first aim of youth group activist strategy is to strengthen an in-group identity, defined by Berger simply as “the people who ‘belong’”,⁸⁶ and promote that identity to potential adherents. Adolescence, a time of experimentation and identity formation, makes appeals to in-group identity particularly pertinent to vulnerable young people. Such propaganda is often carefully stylised, professionally edited and hyper-conscious of the target audiences; messages appear to appeal to vulnerable young people and act as a “gateway” into extremism.⁸⁷ Social Identity Theory acknowledges the “propensity of young people to be attracted to peer groups that might help them define themselves and improve self-esteem” at a time when teenagers are exploring identities, independence and belief systems.⁸⁸ Youth propaganda is therefore not only influenced by these psycho-social circumstances, but also usurps them in the target audience. To this end, Junge Revolution has described the goal of its “media project run by young people” to “give young people an insight into the national movement and scene through carefully selected interviews and the filming of all kinds of events with commentary and at the same time to provide contacts for interested young people”. The German group thereby recognises the curation and intention of its output, as well as that output’s recruitment potential.



Junge Revolution’s BitChute channel description. The description reads: Junge Revolution is a media project run by young nationalists. We try to give young people an insight into the national movement and scene through carefully selected interviews and the filming of all kinds of events with commentary and at the same time to provide contacts for interested young people”.

⁸⁶ J M Berger, “Extremism”, The MIT Press, 2018, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: p.51.

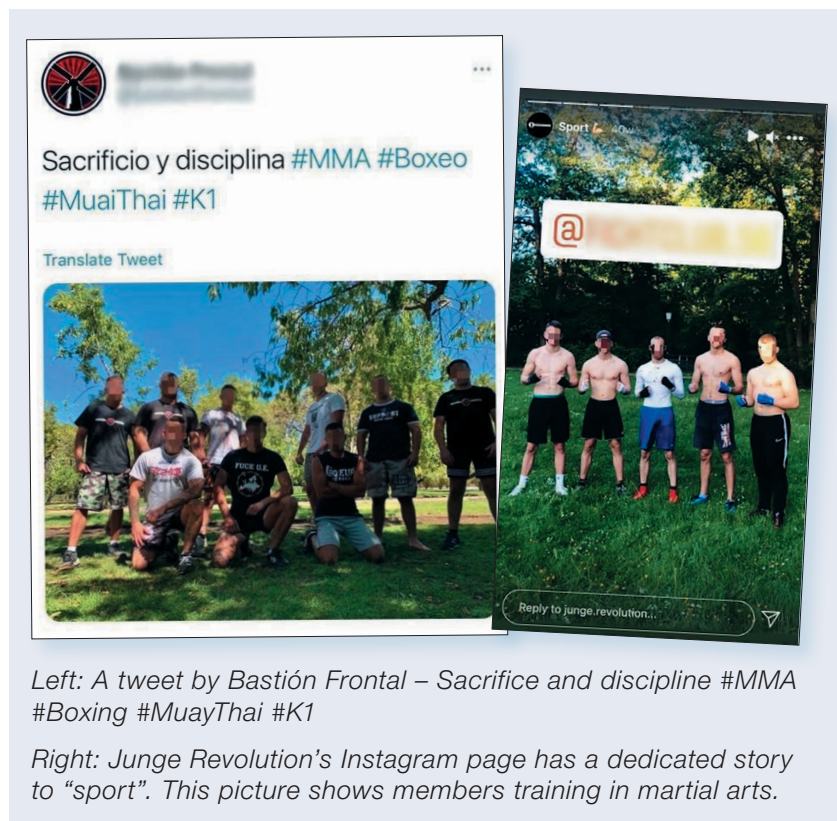
⁸⁷ Miller-Idriss, “Hate in the Homeland”, p.136.

⁸⁸ Chris Tanti, Arthur A Stukas, Michael J Halloran and Margaret Foddy, “Social identity change: Shifts in social identity during adolescence”, *Journal of Adolescence* vol.34, 2011: pp.556–67, in Deborah Browne, “Children as agents of terrorism and political conflict” in *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism And Counterterrorism*, ed. Andrew Silke, Routledge, 2018: p.141.

Fitness

Fitness is important to many groups, the fascist doctrines of which demand physical strength. The document laying out the founding principles of Bastión Frontal offers various explanations of this focus. First, the document states that it “does not want fat or feminine people; physical rot is a consequence of the spiritual rot of the West”, thereby declaring physical fitness vital for building a strong group and embedding themes of masculinity into its defined ideal militant. Fitness is also vital in order that militants may “correctly carry out the nature of each proposed activity”; in the event of any attack on the group, militants must be “prepared to give ... a forceful response, so that any of our rivals’ plans for a second attack are nipped in the bud”.

Maintaining physical fitness takes various forms. Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) is common among a number of these groups, seen as the “perfect way to channel ideologies and narratives about national defence, military-style discipline, masculinity and physical fitness to mainstream markets”.⁸⁹ Bastión Frontal’s founding document specifies that “every militant will be expected to sign up for a gym which teaches a contact sport (boxing, muay thai, K1, MMA)” in order to “build a spirit of brotherhood and camaraderie”. They comment that “if you do not learn to punch, you will become your comrades’ punching bag”, as they “do not tolerate weakness”.



Left: A tweet by Bastión Frontal – Sacrifice and discipline #MMA #Boxing #MuayThai #K1

Right: Junge Revolution’s Instagram page has a dedicated story to “sport”. This picture shows members training in martial arts.

This activity serves to promote a stylised, hyper-traditional masculine figure, which often manifests through sentiments of brotherhood. Across the groups studied, the majority of members are men, which is reflected both in the characteristics of the group identity and in

89 Miller-Idriss, “Hate in the Homeland”, p.196.

the activities promoted by the group. Cynthia Miller-Idriss notes that the themes of solidarity and brotherhood, which are present in the portrayal of MMA classes, “reinforce ideals about masculinity”,⁹⁰ acting as a recruitment tool to young disaffected males in search of an in-group identity. MMA activities can also seek to intimidate out-groups through promotion of violence.

Through sport more widely, Bastión Frontal appears to have recognised the radicalising potential that groups of active young men could have on other young people, tweeting pictures of the group with its flag playing football and tug of war, with the caption “sport and brotherhood”.



A tweet posted by Bastión Frontal showing members posing at a sports tournament with the group's banner. The caption reads “SPORT AND BROTHERHOOD”.

Another common activity among some groups is hiking. Junge Revolution describes how it was able to launch its first event, a hike with 30 people, through a call on its Instagram page, from which it was able to build a “stable and healthy group here right from the start”. Group hikes serve to enhance camaraderie and have been an activity permitted throughout the coronavirus pandemic, thereby offering continued community-building opportunities. Connections to nature and the country's landscape may further promote far-right ecologism and nativism among a group and its members. Radicalising messaging targeted at young people searching for a community identity is achieved through the promotion of in-group bonding activities. Videos of hiking and camping trips are a key feature in various videos uploaded by Junge Tat, showing members in the mountains, in uniform, hiking and sitting around a campfire together. Similarly, a KS Nuoret video shows members hiking together through a forest; a Bastión Frontal video shows members hiking together with group flags. Research demonstrates that hiking is an important activity

90 *ibid.*, p.207.

for “in-group social bonding”,⁹¹ which justifies propagandists’ choice to portray images of group hikes and camping trips to promote the image of a given group socialising and making connections.



Screenshot taken from Junge Tat video uploaded to Telegram on 8 November 2020.

Some groups also unite around sports, such as a football tournament organised by Bastión Frontal, “because nationalist working class youth also need to have fun”. Football pitches and hiking trails, like MMA gyms, are “ready-made, physical spaces for socialisation”,⁹² where social bonds are created between group members, with the potential of carrying new recruits further along radicalisation pathways.



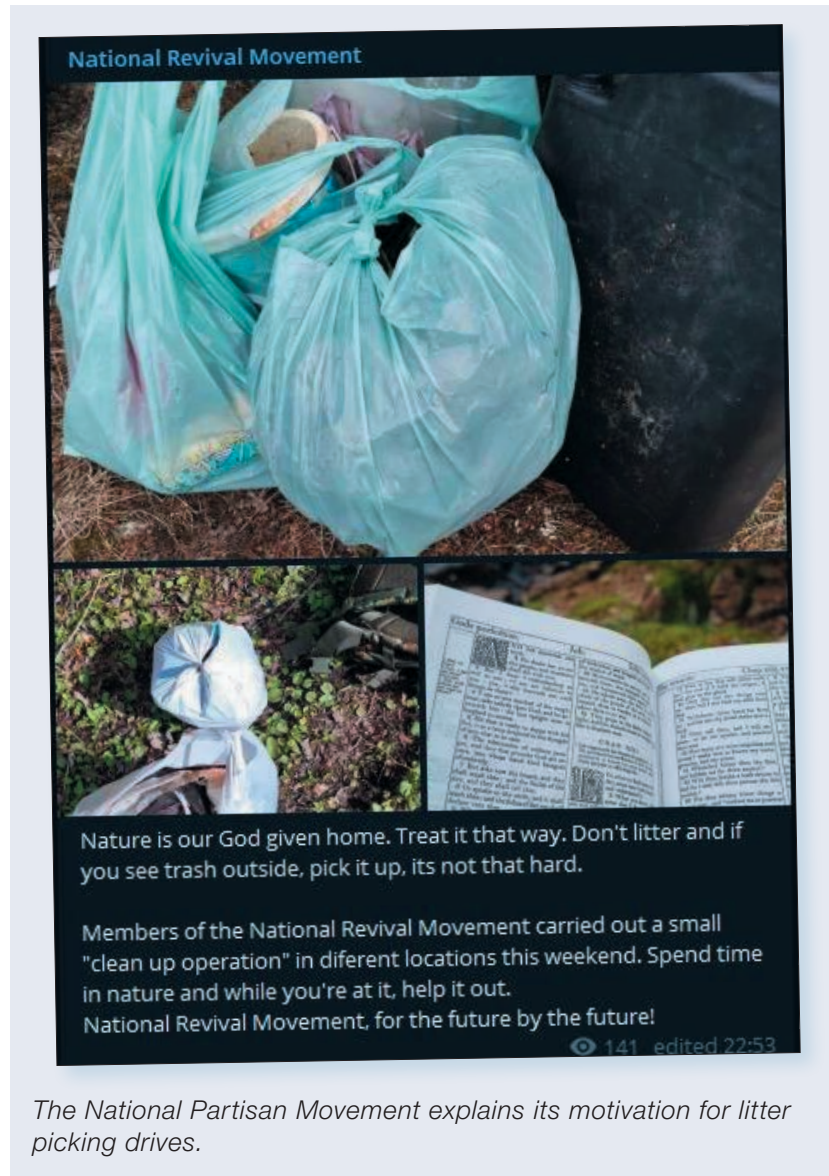
A poster from Bastión Frontal advertising their “five-a-side football tournament”

91 Ingeborg Nordbø and Nina K Prebensen, “Hiking as Mental and Physical Experience”, *Advances in Hospitality and Leisure* vol.11, November 2015: pp.169–86, p.176, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1745-354220150000011010>.

92 Miller-Idriss, “Hate in the Homeland”, p.207.

Community Service

A second activity central to a number of the groups studied in this research is community service. Examples of such social action initiatives include food drives for the local homeless population, litter picking, blood drives and collecting Christmas presents to give to children.



The National Partisan Movement explains its motivation for litter picking drives.

Enacting community service can serve multiple purposes. First, members are mobilised around positive actions, with low barriers to participation and a highly social element in which members see the direct, positive impact of their actions. These non-expensive actions function as the first step of a “foot in the door” strategy,⁹³ whereby subsequent second-step actions represent an escalation of commitment, which continues to the point where an individual is fully integrated into the group.⁹⁴

93 Seraphin Alava, Divina Frau-Meigs and Ghayda Hassan, “Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media: Mapping the Research”, UNESCO, last modified 2017, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260382>, p.25.

94 Charles A Kiesler, “The psychology of commitment; experiences linking behavior to belief”, Academic Press, New York, 1971; Barry M Staw, “Knee-deep in the big muddy: a study of escalating commitment to a chosen course of action”, *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* vol.16 no.1, June 1976: pp.27–44, DOI: 10.1016/0030-5073(76)90005-2.



Hoy ha tocado donar sangre.
#COVID19 #BastiónFrontal

Translate Tweet

12:30 · 15/07/2020 · Twitter for iPhone

50 Retweets 4 Quote Tweets 281 Likes

Top: a Bastión Frontal photo collage showing community service activities.

Bottom: a tweet by Bastión Frontal. Translation: Today we have donated blood.

Second, the apparent goodwill of the group is demonstrated to wider society, aiding public image perceptions. An extreme example of this is found in Feuerkrieg Division’s accelerationist action plan,⁹⁵ posted to its Telegram channel, by which, having attacked critical national infrastructure, the group would “offer supplies to civilians affected” in order to “prove the government can’t” care for the populace’s needs; the wider population would offer “their loyalty in return”, which would bring “supporters and resources”. As such, groups are often clearly aware of the image-cleaning and recruitment potential of such activities.

Third, some actions aim to highlight the perceived failures of the governing elite, attempting to demonstrate to the public that only racial nationalism can save it. Using a populist framing, groups see themselves, the youth, as doing the work that the governing elite has neglected to do.

A final community building activity is merchandising. Clothing and merchandise sales “do not only reflect youth identity, but [are] a mobilisation mechanism”,⁹⁶ whereby a group identity can be strengthened through the wearing of common brands or merchandise. In many propaganda videos of rallies, the groups walk, chant and dress in a uniform manner, clearly delineating the in-group members and promoting a strong and powerful in-group identity, appealing to other potential members. The wearing of uniforms acts as a gateway for those seeking belonging and a collective identity. This includes the military attire worn in Junge Tat’s hiking video, branded T-shirts worn by group members in videos from Junge Tat, Junge Revolution and Bastión Frontal, and the use of all-black pseudo-uniforms in videos and pictures from a range of the groups studied. In interviews with young people vulnerable to radicalisation in Germany, Miller-Idriss noted that wearing branded T-shirts or shirts from a brand known to market to the far right helps young people to think “maybe I’m not alone”.⁹⁷

Merchandising also plays a role in giving youth groups financial freedom and can be used to fund group activities, such as printing flyers or buying graffiti materials, especially as young people would not otherwise have access to significant funds independently of adults. Online shops, such as Versand der Deutschen Jugend, help multiple groups, including Junge Tat and Junge Revolution, to sell their merchandise. The shop is reportedly headquartered in a pub in Thuringia, Germany, owned by the neo-Nazi Tommy Frenck, and is run by Junge Revolution’s teenage founder Sanny Kujath.⁹⁸ Other groups, including Bastión Frontal, have sold T-shirts at casual events. Group clothing such as this can act as gateways to extremism by socialising young people towards specific values, offering a sense of purpose or identity, softening racist expressions, strengthening racist identification and mobilising action among young people.⁹⁹

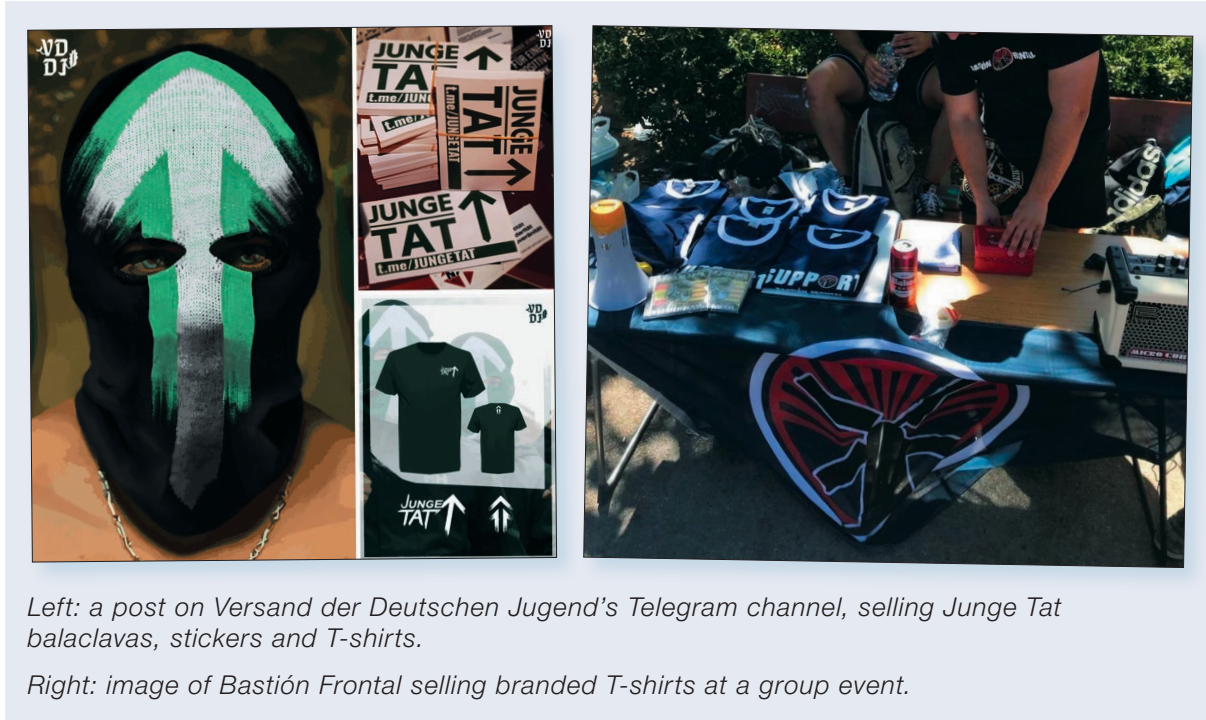
95 Accelerationism is a term adopted by the extreme right in reference to a desire to hasten the collapse of society by exploiting through violent and non-violent actions what they see as the contradictions inherent to the societal and political systems. This includes inflaming political and social tensions and creating chaos with the goal of bringing society closer to a “race war”, which the extreme right believes will result in a racially white-dominated future. Source: Jade Parker, “Accelerationism in America: Threat Perceptions”, Global Network on Extremism and Technology, last modified 4 February 2020, <https://gnet-research.org/2020/02/04/accelerationism-in-america-threat-perceptions/>.

96 Miller-Idriss, “Hate in the Homeland”, p.312.

97 *ibid.*, p.183.

98 Büchner, “Junge Tat and Junge Revolution”.

99 Miller-Idriss, “Hate in the Homeland”, p.183.



Left: a post on Versand der Deutschen Jugend’s Telegram channel, selling Junge Tat balaclavas, stickers and T-shirts.

Right: image of Bastión Frontal selling branded T-shirts at a group event.

Incitement Against Out-groups

A second recruitment message used by some of the studied extreme-right youth groups as part of propaganda comes in the form of inciting against the out-group. Adolescent characteristics associated with development include “general uncertainty, high vulnerability for risk behaviour ... heightened impulsivity”¹⁰⁰ and thrill-seeking.¹⁰¹ Emotions that are associated with these characteristics, such as frustration and anger, have been found to influence behaviour and action-readiness in radicalisation pathways.¹⁰² Such characteristics are often associated with vulnerability to radicalisation, suggesting that adolescents may be susceptible to radicalisation that uses messaging that incites against an out-group and capitalises on such behavioural vulnerabilities. Extreme-right youth groups appeal to vulnerable young people by promoting imagery of violence and rebellion, appealing to thrill-seekers and risk-takers. Youth propaganda is designed in such a way that its potential for success is increased, as extreme-right youth groups focus on specific push-and-pull factors faced by young people vulnerable to radicalisation.

Propaganda Style

Young people, who have an increased propensity to engage in risk-taking behaviours and be pressured by peers, are particularly “vulnerable to the group cohesiveness and bravado of extremist groups”.¹⁰³ Such vulnerabilities, combined with various developments in the adolescent brain, make it difficult for young people to

100 Daniel H Heinke and Mareike Persson, “Youth Specific Factors in Radicalisation”, p.59.

101 Colonel John M “Matt” Venhaus, “Why youth join al-Qaeda”, United States Institute of Peace, last modified May 2010, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/SR236Venhaus.pdf>.

102 Nele Schils & Antoinette Verhage, “Understanding How and Why Young People Enter Radical or Violent Extremist Groups”, *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* vol.11 no. 2, 2017: pp.1–17, p.3.

103 Deborah Browne, “Children as agents of terrorism and political conflict”, p.142.

“distinguish between youth counterculture and illegal resistance”,¹⁰⁴ Combined with shocking graphics, dramatic music and sharp editing, the urge to engage in rebellion is an effective mobiliser for young extremist groups. Proscribed British group National Action sought “to pioneer ... an aggressive form of campaigning on relevant and exciting social issues – putting out a message that is irreverent, extreme, and even exaggerated as opposed to promoting a political party.” The group detailed its perspective that “traditionally propaganda has always been softcore so as not to alienate the organisation from the public – but the only people who it actively reaches are going to be the softcore do-nothings [*sic*].” They explain how in employing “hardcore propaganda”, they sought to “reach the hardcore activists, the people we need to make this succeed”. Whether directly or indirectly, such strategies have been employed in other young racial nationalist groups.

A common visual theme, that of “fashwave”, can be identified across the majority of the studied groups’ propaganda. Fashwave, which emerged from the vaporwave trend, uses “early-internet themes, like vector art, pixel painting, bright neon and tropical landscapes” set against far-right symbols and iconographies.¹⁰⁵ A post on 4chan describes the imagery as “some kind of synthesis of traditional form and post-industrial disillusionment of the human condition, but in a way that embraces this existential pain in a surrealist fashion”.¹⁰⁶ Fashwave and other colourful motifs can be identified in eye-catching posters, such as those created by Blutkrieg Division and the National Partisan Movement’s Swedish branch. In videos, this effect is also evidenced where static is used to transition clips, such as in videos by Junge Tat and KS Nuoret.



Propaganda posters from Blutkrieg and the National Partisan Movement

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Jack Smith IV, “This is fashwave, the suicidal retro-futurist art of the alt-right”, *Mic*, 12 January 2018, <https://www.mic.com/articles/187379/this-is-fashwave-the-suicidal-retro-futurist-art-of-the-alt-right>; Jip Lemmens, “Putting the ‘Neon’ in ‘Neo-Nazi’”, *Eidolon*, 19 October 2017, <https://eidolon.pub/putting-the-neon-in-neo-nazi-4cea7c471a66n>.

¹⁰⁶ “Westhetica Thread”, 4chan, 23 March 2017, 0:15:37, no. 117854489, <https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/117854489/>, found in Smith IV, “This is fashwave”.

Dramatic background music, such as heavy rap, is intended to enhance the impact of the content on young people, given that music has a “low threshold access”, and therefore adds a sense of drama and thrill.¹⁰⁷ Videos by Junge Tat and Junge Revolution have used far-right rap from artist Komplott, whose messaging “conjures up a cast-iron, brave community and propagates steadfastness and fortitude”, such as the lyric “we were the youth that stands up, goes out, raises its fist / Even if they beat us green and blue”.¹⁰⁸ Through the use of far-right rappers and lyrics, music can also be used as a low-barrier conduit for extremist ideologies.

Professional filming and editing are designed to improve the viewer experience and compound the drama of such videos, increasing their likelihood of going viral. This is in line with the emphasis that youth groups place on their social media reach and the expertise that they have developed to achieve their goals. Overall, flashy visuals, dramatic music and slick editing contribute to the shock factor with which some videos attempt to radicalise and impress followers on a large scale, as well as intimidating out-groups. As Miller-Idriss notes, often “appearance is more important than ideas in getting people to listen”,¹⁰⁹ and these videos show clear recognition of such strategies, which are intended to catch the eye of potential recruits and draw them in.

As well as design, shock factor is also evident in the content of such videos. Videos by Junge Revolution, Nord Württemberg Sturm and Bastión Frontal feature figures dressed in black with faces either concealed or blurred out, marching in rallies, dropping banners or holding coloured flares, backed by either the chants of a crowd or high-tempo music. Such propaganda is designed to intimidate out-groups and recruit young people looking for an outlet for existing anger and thrill-seeking, regardless of pre-existing ideological motivations.



Junge Revolution video.

107 Beyersdörfer et al., “Network of Hatred”, p.15.

108 Büchner, “Junge Tat and Junge Revolution”.

109 Miller-Idriss, “Hate in the Homeland”, p.136.



Bastión Frontal video.

Recruitment of young people, rooted in appealing to rebellious instincts, also promotes anti-establishment ideologies. A Junge Tat video from November 2020 shows a group of young men dressed in black, wearing matching North Face jackets and balaclavas adorned with the group's symbol, and standing outside the offices of Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen (SRF) and TX Group, large Swiss media companies. A television, placed on the floor, shows logos of large corporations and media companies, including Pornhub, Netflix and Radio SRF, which is subsequently smashed by group members with a sledgehammer. As well as promoting anti-establishment, anti-capitalist and anti-media sentiment, the video encourages a sense of teenage rebellion, and as such reaches out to young people looking for an outlet to engage in youth countercultures. The very public nature of the rallies filmed in the videos aims to intimidate out-groups, symbolizes willingness to destroy the status-quo, and demonstrates the group's power and mobilisation potential, showing that the threat is in the streets and outside office buildings.



A Junge Tat video showing members smashing a TV outside the SRF offices.

Marches, Rallies and Banner Drops

Political activism is inherent to the day-to-day activism of the majority of the groups studied. Activism projects a group’s ideology, creates fear among out-group communities and reinforces an individual’s affiliation to the group, thereby cementing their radicalisation. As explained by Benford and Snow, one of the important determinants of the success of a group’s mobilisation attempts is the congruence between a group’s beliefs, claims and actions.¹¹⁰ As such, offline activities – in particular, those relating to political activism – play a central role in maximising the success of a group’s recruitment and radicalisation efforts.

Rallies and marches are a key feature in the majority of the groups in this study. Often accompanied by groups chants, flares and banners, rallies are an important mechanism for projecting power, inciting against a chosen out-group and motivating supporters. Such activities can be limited to one group or combined with other groups. A February rally held by Bastión Frontal and various other Spanish extreme-right groups to pay tribute to the División Azul (Blue Division), the military unit sent by Franco to fight for Hitler, attracted some 300 supporters. In central Madrid, the participants saluted Hitler, while Bastión Frontal member Isabel Medina Peralta pronounced on a loudspeaker that “the enemy is always going to be the same albeit wearing different masks: the Jew”. Peralta’s speech was lauded in far-right Telegram forums globally, receiving significant interest for her age and gender, and she was interviewed by various mainstream platforms, including La Razón¹¹¹ and El Español.¹¹² The ability of Bastión Frontal, in collaboration with other groups, to organise and execute an overtly neo-Nazi protest in broad daylight on the streets of a Western European capital city demonstrates the mobilisation potential of some of the groups studied.



Photo of Isabel Medina Peralta performing a Nazi salute at a rally in Madrid on 13 February 2021.¹¹³

110 Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements”, pp.619–20.

111 Andrés Bartolomé, “Isabel Medina Peralta: ‘he entregado mi vida al fascismo’”, *La Razón*, 16 February 2021, <https://www.larazon.es/espana/20210216/ufzghoyi3vey7fvuwbfddhvbjq.html>.

112 Marcos Ondarra, “Isabel Medina, la joven antisemita del homenaje a la División Azul: ‘Soy fascista y socialista’”, *El Español*, 17 February 2021, https://www.lespanol.com/espana/politica/20210217/isabel-medina-antisemita-homenaje-division-azul-socialista/559445489_0.html.

113 “‘The Jew is the culprit’, say neo-Nazis at Madrid march”, European Jewish Congress, last modified 15 February 2021, <https://eurojewcong.org/news/communities-news/spain/the-enemy-will-always-be-the-same-far-right-groups-honour-nazi-collaborators-in-madrid/>.

Banner drops are a common activity among subgroups of members, or for groups who do not have enough members to organise a rally. A further activity advocated by Junge Revolution in such circumstances is to “walk through the streets, alone or in pairs at night, with your bags full of information materials”, such as stickers or flyers. Flyers used range from information about joining the group to overtly neo-Nazi or accelerationist material. This is another example of a low-cost action, one that may be the first action a young activist is asked to perform. It serves to project the ideology and announce the activities and mobilising capabilities of a group to the local community; it can also be used to incite against an out-group, depending on the content of the flyer.



Top: pictures of a Feuerkrieg activist flyering his local area in The Netherlands, posted to Telegram.

Bottom: images of KS Nuoret members holding a banner and posting a sticker reading “The Holocaust is a lie”.

It is particularly noteworthy that a number of groups in this study, such as Eisenjugend¹¹⁴ and Bastión Frontal, have chosen universities as the target of their flyering efforts, which once again highlights the impact of their memberships' youth and their target recruitment age on these groups' activities.

Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the offline activities and propaganda of racial nationalist youth groups in several Western European countries. From community building to political activism, these groups offer multifaceted activities and complete lifestyles to their membership. Their ability to provide multiple hooks for radicalisation to potential new recruits often includes football tournaments for those searching for belonging, litter-picking to encourage low-threshold activism and political rallies to engage in more sophisticated expressions of ideology. As exemplified by Bastión Frontal's founding document, for group members, ideological adherence is not just an occasional online pastime but an all-encompassing lifestyle, built to set commitment to extremism in stone. The grassroots and youth-organised nature of these activities demonstrates how young people are reaching out to their peers, organising their own activities and radicalising one another offline.

114 Brühlmann and Pelda, “Die Eisenjugend aus Winterthur”.

6 “We are Generation Terror!”: The Threat from Extreme-right Youth Groups



A Feuerkrieg Division poster shared on Telegram

Cressida Dick, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, recently warned of a “new generation of extremists”, where children now constitute 13% of terror suspects, triple the proportion of the previous year.¹¹⁵ In this context, Counter Terrorism Policing in the UK warned that “the number of children arrested for terrorism offences is the highest since records began”.¹¹⁶ However, there have been few attempts to investigate the specific nature of the threat of far-right youth and the trends in these individuals’ violent activism. While it is clear that the nature of the terrorist threat is morphing, the implications of such changes are yet to be comprehensively researched.

This section considers the threat posed by extreme-right youth groups, including incitement to violence, hate crimes and arrests under terrorism legislation. The nature of these trends demonstrate the ways in which young people are radicalising each other to violence: encouraging their peers to commit violent acts through online

¹¹⁵ Dearden, “Children forming ‘new generation of extremists’”.

¹¹⁶ “New stats reveal the number of children arrested for terrorism offences is highest since records began”, Counter Terrorism Policing, last modified 9 September 2021, <https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/new-stats-reveal-the-number-of-children-arrested-for-terrorism-offences-is-highest-since-records-began/>.

interactions, creating and sharing violent propaganda and recruiting one another to groups that socialise young people towards plotting and preparing violence. The findings illustrate how the threat posed by extreme-right young actors is not merely a result of interactions with older groomers, but that young people often have the agency and capabilities to incite and plan violent acts of their own volition.

Incitement to Violence

With a keen focus on real world activism, combined with extreme-right ideologies and incitement against out-groups, many groups studied encourage their members to commit political violence and hate crimes. This occurs with varying levels of explicitness. Feuerkrieg Division and Sonnenkrieg Division both advocate terrorism and extreme violence against perceived opponents, encouraging members to “just fucking start making bombs and destroy the government” and “fucking annihilate them”. A significant proportion of the propaganda posted on Feuerkrieg Division’s Telegram channel features weapons and phrases such as “invoke terror, “embrace chaos”, “total war: defend Europe because no one else will” and “spew the street with the bodies of bureaucrats”. A majority of such propaganda incites against governments and Jewish people and is a realisation of accelerationist ideologies.

Other groups encourage street fighting and hate crimes, primarily against Muslim and migrant communities, urging followers to “get out on the street and defend your people”. Similarly, Junge Revolution urged followers to “join us and become active in the fight for our species”, posing in front of a Second World War memorial holding Nazi-era flags. Bastión Frontal incited in a video that “every attack [is] a conquest” and “death [is] a mission”. The vague nature of such calls to action allows followers to decide for themselves what activism may look like, while evading accusations from law enforcement of direct incitement to violence. However, in a more specific call to action, the National Partisan Movement urged supporters to “beat them ... if they come to your town, if they come to your neighbourhood, even if they come to your street, fight! Fight for your life! Like it depends on it!” The group demanded: “die trying”.



Frente a los menas y al silencio cómplice de los políticos que los amparan y medios de comunicación: ¡Sal a la calle, defiende tu barrio y a tu gente!

Translate Tweet

FRENTE A LOS MENAS Y AL SILENCIO CÓMPLICE DE MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN Y POLÍTICOS: ¡SAL A LA CALLE Y DEFIENDE A TU GENTE!

3:16 pm · 14 Oct 2020 · Twitter for iPad

186 Retweets 11 Quote Tweets 403 Likes

Translation: In the face of unaccompanied foreign minors and the complicit silence of the politicians who protect them and of the media: Go out into the streets, defend your neighbourhood and your people!

As shown by the imagery below, groups such as Sonnenkrieg Division and Feuerkrieg Division repeatedly encourage violence and attacks against different communities, including Muslim, Jewish and immigrant ones. These groups incite their followers to engage in acts of violence through both their messaging and their propaganda. This includes Feuerkrieg Division asking its followers to “start making bombs and destroy the government” and to “baptize the world in a bloodbath”, as well as Sonnenkrieg Division urging supporters to “rape the cops” and “behead modernity”.



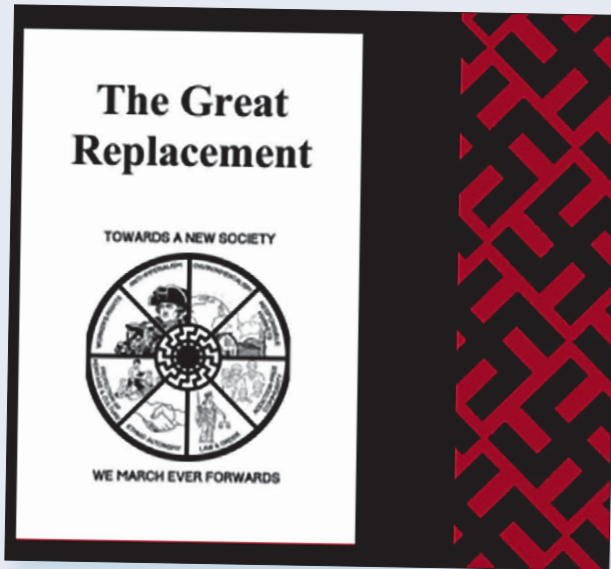
Feuerkrieg Division and Sonnenkrieg Division propaganda encouraging violence.

These groups’ incitement to violence often includes the glorification of far-right terrorists and of past attacks. Community Security Trust’s “Hate Fuel” report illustrates how “glorification of hatred and violence, and the veneration of martyrdom, have been defining features of fascism and Nazism since their earliest days”.¹¹⁷ In recent years, this has included the veneration of far-right attackers as “saints”, the creation of propaganda glorifying them or their actions and the distribution of manifestos or the livestreams of their attacks. As explained in “Hate Fuel”, this content creates an environment in which would-be attackers are “motivated by the promise of memorialisation, sanctification and celebration”.¹¹⁸ Feuerkrieg Division and Sonnenkrieg Division are two examples of groups that often refer to far-right terrorists as “saints”, encouraging others to commit similar actions. Likewise, Brenton Tarrant’s pre-attack manifesto has been shared by both Eisenjugend¹¹⁹ and KS Nuoret, among others, showing these groups’ support for his actions.

¹¹⁷ “Hate Fuel: The Hidden Online World Fuelling Far Right Terror”, Community Security Trust, last modified 2020, p.5.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.43.

¹¹⁹ Brühlmann and Pelda, “Die Eisenjugend aus Winterthur”.



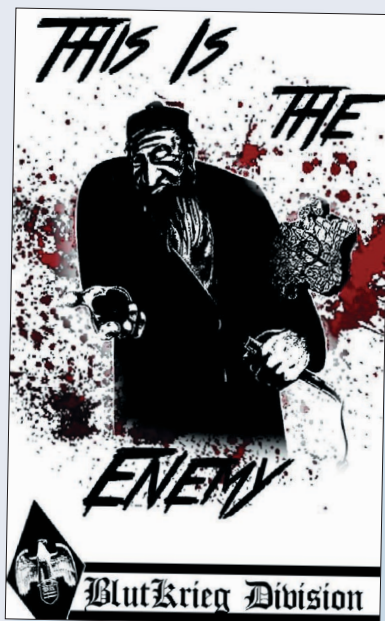
Left: screenshot of the KS Nuoret website where a PDF version of Tarrant's manifesto was uploaded for supporters to read.

Right: screenshot of a post made by Blutkrieg Division's leader on Gab.



Furthermore, the individual account associated with Blutkrieg Division has posted in support for National Action, a proscribed terrorist organisation in the UK,¹²⁰ and its leader has encouraged the murder of politicians by calling for “another Jo Cox”.

Propaganda posters by Feuerkrieg Division and Blutkrieg Division, deliberately not included in this report due to the promotion of extreme

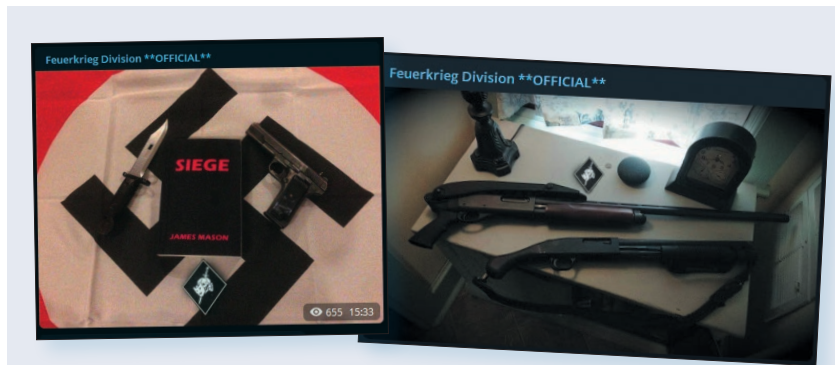


An antisemitic Blutkrieg Division propaganda poster.

¹²⁰ Jessica Elgot, “Neo-Nazis group National Action banned by UK home secretary”.

violence and the ethical implications involved in their distribution, include the constant and repeated encouragement of violence against the Jewish community. For example, posters promote a “Holocaust” and show a Jewish Star of David in a puddle of blood. One propaganda image, posted on the anniversary of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, shows a Google summary of the attack alongside the captions “today it happened” and “Bowers became a Saint”, referring to Robert Bowers who committed the attack.

Another element relating to groups’ incitement to violence is that of sharing images of weapons, including knives, machetes and guns. This is evident in both Feuerkrieg Division and National Partisan Movement propaganda, among others. While the latter has shared cartoon images of weapons in its propaganda, the former appears to have acquired knives and guns and has shared pictures of them online.



Above: screenshots of images shared by Feuerkrieg Division on its Telegram channel showing different weaponry alongside the group’s logo.

Below: National Partisan Movement propaganda showing the group’s logo, knives and skull masks.



Arrests, Hate Crimes and Terrorist Convictions

Various members and groups have been associated with violence and/or hate crimes. The police has reportedly investigated group members for materials inciting hatred, such as Junge Revolution’s “Migration kills” banner¹²¹ or written slogans by Bastión Frontal asking to “take back our neighbourhoods; deportation”,¹²² The Spanish group has been involved in a number of other police investigations into hate incidents, including in September 2021 for hate speech at a wider protest,¹²³ May 2021 following a protest at the Moroccan embassy,¹²⁴ April 2021 for breaching lockdown regulations,¹²⁵ February 2021 for hate speech at a fascist rally,¹²⁶ and November 2021 for anti-Moroccan speech.¹²⁷ These are only a few examples of hate speech and hate crime investigations associated with some of the groups studied.

While at the time of writing the investigations remain inconclusive, the willingness of some groups of young people to place themselves repeatedly in situations likely to end in arrest demonstrates contempt for law and order, and willingness to break the law.

Notably, weapons have been found during police searches of houses of individuals associated with some groups. The arrests on 20 January 2021 of six Swiss men aged between 18 and 20, described by a Junge Tat Telegram post as “activists, friends and acquaintances” of the group, and further connected to Eisenjugend, reportedly led to the confiscation of weapons.¹²⁸ The raids are thought to be linked to the Zoom bombing of an event run by the Liberal Jewish Community in Zurich on 17 January, during which masked figures disrupted the event with antisemitic and pornographic content.¹²⁹ Out of the six teenagers arrested, five were sentenced in early April for racial discrimination, offences against the weapons’ law and damage to property.¹³⁰ In the penal order, Zurich public prosecutor Umberto Pajarola wrote that the accused had spread “the ideology of National Socialism” and “discriminated against the groups of Jews and those of dark-skinned people” by “grossly degrading their human dignity and stirring up hatred against them”.¹³¹ Similarly, reports of a recent police raid of a party linked to Bastión Frontal describe how participants said “we are going to kill you” to the police.¹³² Upon entering the property, the police reportedly seized two large machetes, two knives and a modified 13cm metal tool.¹³³ Such events, when viewed alongside

121 Heilbronn, “POL-HN: Gemeinsame Pressemitteilung der Staatsanwaltschaft Mosbach und des Polizeipräsidiums Heilbronn vom 28.01.2021”, PressePortal, 28 January 2021, <https://www.presseportal.de/blaulicht/pm/110971/4824481>.

122 J J Gálvez, “La Fiscalía denuncia a un grupo fascista por acosar a jóvenes migrantes”, *El País*, 10 February 2021, <https://elpais.com/espana/2021-02-10/la-fiscalia-denuncia-a-un-grupo-fascista-por-acosar-a-jovenes-migrantes.html>.

123 Carlos Hidalgo, “Los neonazis de Chuca son los investigados por delito de odio contra los menas”, *ABC Madrid*, 21 September 2021, https://www.abc.es/espana/madrid/abci-neonazis-chueca-investigados-delito-odio-contra-menas-202109210048_noticia.html.

124 “La concentración frente a la Embajada de Marruecos en Madrid termina con cinco detenidos”, *Madrid Diario*, 19 May 2021, <https://www.madridiario.es/detenidas-cinco-personas-siete-agentes-atendidos-concentracion-embajada-marruecos>.

125 Miquel Ramos, “La policía detiene a varios neonazis de Bastión Frontal en una fiesta ilegal e incauta varias armas”, YouTube, 20 April 2021, 2:21, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Btpft6CKCU4>.

126 Rosalina Moreno, “La Fiscalía recurre el archivo de la causa por lanzar proclamas antisemitas en un homenaje a la División Azul”, *Confli Legal*, 27 May 2021, <https://confilegal.com/20210527-la-fiscalia-recurre-el-archivo-de-la-causa-por-lanzar-proclamas-antisemitas-en-un-homenaje-a-la-division-azul/>.

127 Manuel Marraco, “La Fiscalía denuncia por un delito de odio contra los inmigrantes morroquís a la falangista ya investigada por antisemitismo”, *El Mundo*, 8 November 2021, <https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2021/11/08/61890d7821efa0404c8b4597.html>.

128 Büchner, “Jung, tatkräftig, revolutionär, vereint”.

129 *ibid.*

130 Fabian Eberhard, “Er gehört zum harten Kern der Gruppe ‘Junge Tat’ Gewaltbereiter Neonazi dient bei der Militärpolizei”, *Blick*, 30 May 2021, <https://www.blick.ch/schweiz/er-gehört-zum-harten-kern-der-gruppe-junge-tat-gewaltbereiter-neonazi-dient-bei-der-militärpolizei-id16557341.html>.

131 *ibid.*

132 Miquel Ramos, “Los neo-Nazis detenidos en una fiesta amenazaron con matar a los policías si entraban en su local”, *La Marea*, 20 April 2021, <https://www.lamarea.com/2021/04/20/policia-detiene-varios-miembros-grupo-neonazi-bastion-frontal-fiesta-ilegal/>.

133 *ibid.*

Table 2: Terrorist Convictions

Name	Age at conviction	Group affiliation	Conviction [counts in brackets]
Andrew Dymock	24	Sonnenkrieg Division	Possessing terrorist material; terrorist fundraising [2]; encouraging terrorism [5]; publishing or distributing written material intending to stir up racial hatred on the ground of sexual orientation; disseminating terrorist publications [4]; possession of racially inflammatory material; publishing or distributing written material to stir up racial hatred.
Harry Vaughan	18	Sonnenkrieg Division	Possessing terrorist material [12]; encouraging terrorism; disseminating terrorist publications.
Jacek Tchorzewski	19	Sonnenkrieg Division	Possessing terrorist material [10].
Luke Hunter	23	Feuerkrieg Division	Encouraging terrorism [4]; disseminating terrorist publications [3].
Matthew Cronjager	18	The British Hand	Preparing an act of terrorism; disseminating a terrorist publication.
Michael Szewczuk	19	Sonnenkrieg Division	Encouraging terrorism [2]; possessing terrorist material [5].
Oskar Dunn-Koczorowski	18	Sonnenkrieg Division	Encouraging terrorism [2].
Paul Dunleavy	17	Feuerkrieg Division	Possessing a document useful to a terrorist [9]; preparing an act of terrorism.
Unnamed boy from Cornwall	16	Feuerkrieg Division	Disseminating a terrorist publication [2]; possessing terrorist material [10].
Unnamed boy from Derby	16	The British Hand	Disseminating a terrorist publication; encouraging terrorism.
Unnamed boy from Kent	16	The British Hand	Disseminating a terrorist publication.
Unnamed boy from Newcastle	16	Blutkrieg Division	Inviting support for a banned organisation [4]; encouraging terrorism [3]; stirring up racial and religious hatred [4].

the incitement to violence and high levels of offline activism already evidenced, demonstrate the significant potential for violence by some groups and their members.

Beyond hate crimes, members of some of the groups discussed in this study have been convicted of terrorism offences. Terrorism convictions of increasingly young individuals have been widely reported in the United Kingdom, such as the conviction of Jack Reed at the age of 17 for multiple offences, including attack planning.¹³⁴ This analysis focuses on terrorism convictions for individuals under the age of 25 who have been convicted under terrorism legislation and who have been linked in their conviction to a group included in this research, as laid out in Table 2.

¹³⁴ "Reporting Restricted (2020-01-07)", The Law Pages, accessed September 2021, <https://www.thelawpages.com/court-cases/Reporting-Restricted-27859-1.law>; Daniel de Simone, "Terror plot: Durham teenage neo-Nazi named as Jack Reed", *BBC News*, 11 January 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-55618747>.

One of the most common offences among the young convicts was possessing or collecting a record of information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism. At least half of those convicted were found with weapon-making manuals, including instructions for building bombs and automatic weapons, and guidance for knife-fighting skills. At least one individual was found with jihadist propaganda, an al-Qaeda training manual. A number of those convicted possessed a copy of James Mason’s *Siege*, a popular text among accelerationists, and two of those convicted possessed copies of the White Resistance Manual.

Encouragement of terrorism was also a common offence for which these young people were convicted, such as Szewczuk and Dunn-Koczorowski’s threats against “race traitor” Prince Harry for marrying a woman of colour. Two convicts, Paul Dunleavy and Matthew Cronjager, were sentenced for engaging in conduct in preparation for acts of terrorism, for which they received higher sentences. Perhaps due to the young age of those convicted, not all sentences were custodial and some contained rehabilitative efforts, with the Cornwall teenager serving a two-year non-custodial sentence, the Newcastle teenager serving a twelve-month intensive referral order and Dunn-Koczorowski serving an 18-month detention and training order.



Sonnenkrieg Division poster inciting violence against Prince Harry¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Matthew Collins, "Jailed neo-Nazi satanists were a legacy of National Action", HOPE not Hate, last modified 18 June 2019, <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2019/06/18/jailed-neo-nazi-satanists-legacy-national-action/>.

Of particular note, various individuals were connected to each other through group affiliation and presence in online forums. The unnamed Cornwall teenager was the founder and leader of the UK offshoot of Feuerkrieg Division and is attributed with recruiting Dunleavy to the organisation.¹³⁶ Similarly, the teenager from Newcastle also attempted to set up his own organisation, Blutkrieg Division, generating his own propaganda. Andrew Dymock was found to have set up Sonnenkrieg Division when removed from his role in the System Resistance Network. Other individuals, such as those involved in inciting against Prince Harry, were reported to have created their own propaganda using Sonnenkrieg Division branding.¹³⁷ This evidence supports the central thesis of this report: young people, highly organised and self-motivated, recruit and radicalise their peers.

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated the ways in which some young racial nationalists incite violence, mobilise against target out-groups on the streets and are led to commit terror offences. As evidenced, young terrorist offenders and racist individuals interact with one another, sharing propaganda, communicating in group chats and, on some occasions, plotting and inciting together. Many young racial nationalists, despite their age, have the agency and capacity not only to receive information and adopt new ideas, but themselves to create, share and innovate when inciting violence.

Such incitement to violence and the plots and acts planned by young people demonstrate that young racial nationalists cannot merely be disregarded as threats on the basis of their age. Young people, independent of older racial nationalists or extreme-right groomers, can constitute their own real and severe threat.

This research presents a new understanding of youth radicalisation, often viewed through the lens of online grooming. The offline and peer-to-peer element of youth radicalisation should influence the building of youth de-radicalisation and civic education programmes. Young people are not always helpless victims of shadowy online groomers, but are themselves recruiters and activists in extreme-right spaces.

¹³⁶ “Teenage neo-Nazi from Cornwall is UK’s youngest terror offender”, *BBC News*, 1 February 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-55891140>.

¹³⁷ Áine McGinty, “Far-right Chiswick teen convicted of encouraging terrorism”, *Chiswick Herald*, 19 June 2019, <https://chiswickherald.co.uk/farright-chiswick-teen-convicted-of-encouraging-terrorism-p10173-95.htm>.

7 Conclusions

As attention is increasingly drawn to the young age of convicted terrorists and racial nationalist groups, this study has provided a first insight into the unique nature of young extremists and the groups in which they operate.

Through analysis of a sample of racial nationalist youth groups, including their ideologies and activities both online and offline, this report has demonstrated the ways in which young people are operating independent extremist groups and recruiting their peers, in a process the authors have termed “youth-on-youth radicalisation”. This finding is indicative of the significant amount of agency that young people possess despite their age, which has often been neglected in previous studies of youth radicalisation. The continued importance of groups in how young extremists operate and organise has also been demonstrated.

Youth groups, radical and empowered, exhibit unique factors that allow them to speak to their peers. In particular, this report has identified youth-centric narratives among racial nationalist groups that adapt and repurpose existing ideologies, reframing them for specific target audiences. In addition, this report found that antisemitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia and transphobia are often central to these groups’ ideologies. Conspiracy theories, such as The Great Replacement and Cultural Marxism, are also central to their beliefs; both theories are often united under an umbrella of antisemitic conspiracies, where often dystopian depictions of reality are seen as the consequence of Jewish influence and power.

Racial nationalist groups have taken advantage of mainstream social media platforms to recruit and radicalise followers, and push their messages out to the masses. At the time of writing, a number of groups continue to have accounts on Twitter and Instagram, which they use to promote more palatable messaging and funnel potential recruits to increasingly radical accounts on alternative platforms, such as Telegram. They demonstrate awareness of how to circumvent content moderation policies, such as signposting users to a secondary account in the expectation that their primary account will be removed. Some have engaged in content funnelling, whereby groups use their accounts on mainstream social media platforms (where they sometimes post comparatively moderate content) to re-direct users to more peripheral sites that host increasingly extreme content. This allows groups to maintain a presence across mainstream platforms, bypassing companies’ moderation algorithms, while guiding followers down radicalisation pipelines and recruiting young people into their movements. Notably, the groups were more attracted to platforms popular with individuals of their generation – in particular, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter.

Offline, groups emphasise the importance of actions, not merely ideologies, and promote a range of activities. From group-bonding activities, such as MMA, sports, community service and hiking, to street rallies, banner drops and stickering neighbourhoods, members

are often strongly encouraged to build participation incrementally, thereby deepening affiliation with the group. Many researchers have drawn a direct correlation between the increasingly young age of violent extremists and digital ecosystems that transcend platform specificity, with particular focus on the increasing role that such ecosystems play in all areas of young peoples' lives. While increased online connectivity plays an important role in these processes, a significant number of groups studied in this research maintain a high level of offline activity, which is symbiotically integrated into existing social media strategies to offer a holistic recruitment approach. Their unique style of propaganda is designed to speak to youth-specific processes such as ideological development, a search for identity, thrill-seeking and youth rebellion. Through eye-catching posters and professionally produced exciting videos, youth groups have demonstrated understanding of virality on social media. Young people are not merely the consumers of such videos, but the producers, ideological directors, editors and sharers.

The agency that young racial nationalists have, in addition to social media and propaganda tools, and organisational and recruitment capacity, generates a concerning possibility of violence. A number of the groups studied have already been banned, with members arrested or cautioned for terrorism or hate-crime offences. Other individuals associated with these groups have been found to possess weapons and two individuals have been convicted of planning a terrorist attack. The increasingly young age of convicted terrorists, while shocking, does not render them less capable than adults at committing equally as serious acts. Researchers, law enforcement personnel and legislators must continually reassess the increasing threat posed by such actors.

Young people both are vulnerable to online grooming through manipulation by seasoned extreme-right extremists and, increasingly, are themselves the groomers, the propagandists, the recruiters, the plotters and the convicted perpetrators.



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