A REPORT FROM THE GLOBAL PROJECT AGAINST HATE AND EXTREMISM

Generation Identity

INTERNATIONAL WHITE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT SPREADING ON TWITTER AND YOUTUBE

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The Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE) is a nonprofit organization devoted to building a diverse global community by exposing and countering racism, bigotry, and prejudice and promoting human rights that are central to flourishing, multicultural societies and democracies. We believe that white supremacy, hate, and far-right extremist movements are existential threats to societies and democracies around the globe. Extremists’ hateful propaganda and actions don’t stop at a country’s borders and neither can those who work to stop it.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IN JUNE 2020, THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT announced that white supremacist terrorism is “a serious challenge for the global community.” That same conclusion has been reached by other American government agencies including the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the National Counterterrorism Center, as well as foreign security organizations such as Europol. DHS has specifically pointed to the propaganda pushed by the international white supremacist network Generation Identity, the subject of this report, as motivating white supremacist violence.

At this point, it is well accepted that white supremacy is as significant a threat for generating mass casualty terrorist acts internationally as other forms of extremism. Yet, there is a double standard when it comes to how online platforms treat content produced by white supremacists compared to content by Islamic extremist groups like ISIS or Al-Qaeda. For the latter, deplatforming is the accepted and, actually, demanded strategy, one pushed by the American government, the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, and the major technology platforms.

Not so for white supremacist groups. Enforcement of bans on these groups and their acolytes is much more haphazard, despite their proliferation of propaganda such as the Great Replacement, which similarly inspires terrorism and argues that white people are being genocided in their home countries. Groups that push this idea, in particular Generation Identity (GI), are rampant on Twitter and YouTube even though such propaganda has inspired six mass attacks since October 2018. These included the mosque attacks in Christchurch, NZ, and attacks staged at two American synagogues, an El Paso Walmart, a synagogue in Halle, Germany, and two shisha bars in Hanau, Germany, where the shooter is believed to have been targeting Muslim immigrants.

It would be inconceivable for social media platforms to allow ISIS propaganda to spread and grow unchecked, but that is exactly what is happening with Identitarianism (the ideology that underpins Generation Identity). Research by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE) found 67 Twitter accounts for Generation Identity chapters in 14 countries with nearly 140,000 followers. Those numbers do not include the accounts of individual Identitarians, such as GI’s unofficial leader and head of the Austrian chapter Martin Sellner, who has nearly 40,000 followers on Twitter, or accounts for GI coordinated activity, like Defend Europe, which has 27,000 followers. GPAHE found 25 such accounts totaling more than 400,000 followers. (All data available on request.)

On YouTube, GPAHE found at least 12 countries represented by 31 GI chapters with about 86,000 subscribers. These numbers do not include the large Identitarian presence of individuals like Sellner who has 69,000 subscribers, the hundreds of videos posted.
by GI adherents, or the number of times Identitarian proponents have appeared on other channels. For example, Identitarians made frequent appearances on the American Renaissance channel (135,000 subscribers) until it was banned in June 2020. It is impossible to determine how quickly the material is proliferating because we have no comprehensive baseline data from prior years. However, even in the weeks leading up to publication, the accounts summarized in this report have gained followers.

This analysis certainly undercounts the number of Identitarian accounts thriving on Twitter and YouTube.

Disturbingly, these platforms push viewers toward similar content on Twitter and YouTube and toward even more extreme content on unregulated platforms such as Telegram. Because Identitarianism is very much a youth movement, Twitter and YouTube serve as important gateways to further radicalization of young white people, particularly males, into white supremacy. The growth in the number of white supremacists worldwide can be laid at the feet of tech companies who allow this material to thrive on their platforms.

It is time for this to end.

WHY DOES THIS CONTENT STAY UP?
The policies at Twitter and YouTube do not go far enough and allow for far too much interpretation to adequately battle a white supremacist threat that security agencies around the world have repeatedly said leads to mass violence.

For example, Twitter claims that “there is no place on Twitter for terrorist organizations or violent extremist groups and individuals who affiliate with and promote their illicit activities.” Their terrorism and violent extremism policy says that it is “informed by national and international terrorism designations.” Additionally, Twitter states it will “examine a group’s activities both on and off Twitter to determine whether they engage in and/or promote violence against civilians to advance a political, religious and/or social cause.”

Without an official international terrorism designation (something almost never applied to white supremacist groups which have, historically and wrongly, been seen as domestic formations regardless of their international nature), Twitter requires groups to meet three criteria before labeling them violent extremists. Two are highly subjective (have engaged in, or currently engage in, violence and/or the promotion of violence as a means to further their cause, and target civilians in their acts and/or promotion of violence). The third criteria is that the group considers itself to be extremist, which of course almost no groups do. That so many Identitarian groups are thriving on Twitter, even though their ideas have inspired terrorists (one of the GI chapters received a donation from the mass killer Brenton Tarrant) and despite members of Identitarian groups having been arrested for engaging in violence, means these policies are inadequate or not enforced.

YouTube’s policies are even less defined. Its hateful content policy states that, “Hate speech is not allowed on YouTube. We remove content promoting violence or hatred against individuals or groups based on any of the following attributes: age, caste, disability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, nationality, race, immigration status, sex/gender, sexual orientation, victims of a major violent event

IT WOULD BE INCONCEIVABLE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO ALLOW ISIS PROPAGANDA TO SPREAD AND GROW UNCHECKED, BUT THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH IDENTITARIANISM.
and their kin, and veteran status.” And its Violent Criminal Organizations policy, which references only crime and terrorism, not extremist organizations, states that, “Content intended to praise, promote, or aid violent criminal organizations is not allowed on YouTube. These organizations are not allowed to use YouTube for any purpose, including recruitment.”

Violations of both these policies result in a review that takes into account context. For example, if YouTube deems that content is close to hate speech, the video may be removed and/or some features may be limited. If content fully violates the policies, the creator will receive a warning. Three strikes for repeated behavior within a 90-day period results in termination; however, strikes expire every 90 days.

With policies that are clearly subjective and allow so many chances for extremists to keep their content up, it’s no wonder that YouTube is a favorite platform of the Identitarian movement and the young people who follow it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

GPAHE makes the following recommendations to tech companies, in particular Twitter and YouTube, to stop the proliferation of Identitarian and other white supremacist content:

- Twitter and YouTube should take immediate steps to deplatform all Identitarian material.
- Policies against hate speech and posting by violent extremist groups need to be clearly defined to include white supremacist propaganda and groups. These policies must be rigorously enforced.
- Deplatforming organized white supremacist groups must be prioritized, and white supremacy must be recognized as a driver of terrorism at the same level as Islamic extremism by the Global Internet Forum for Counter Terrorism and the major technology companies.
- Algorithms and search systems should never recommend white supremacist content, which can lead users down a rabbit hole of hate.
- Both AI systems and content reviewers must be trained to prioritize white supremacist material for removal.
- Identifying white supremacist and other hate content should not be outsourced to civil society and anti-racist activists. This is the responsibility of the platforms.
- There should be no monetization of white supremacist material through ads, and payment processors should not allow their products to be used by white supremacist groups.

GPAHE is a member of the Change the Terms coalition, which has a comprehensive set of recommended corporate policies and terms of service for Internet companies to reduce hateful activities online.

For more information on the Change the Terms coalition and its model policies see changetheterms.org and @changetheterms.
International White Nationalist Movement Spreading on Twitter and YouTube

THE SHOOTER IN THE MARCH 2019 TERRORIST ATTACKS on mosques in Christchurch, NZ, that left 51 people dead, was clear about his motive. In his manifesto, Brenton Tarrant wrote that he wanted to stop what he called the “Great Replacement,” a racist conspiracy theory he’d adopted that argues white people are slowly being genocided in their own home countries due to a plot by elites to displace white people with rising numbers of non-white immigrants.

This concept, originally put forth by France’s Renaud Camus, is now the bedrock idea propagated by the Identitarian movement, in particular Generation Identity (GI), a sprawling, multinational organization with chapters in at least 14 countries and allies in others, including the United States. The reach of Identitarian thinking is much wider than GI, with attendant think tanks, institutes, housing complexes, newspapers, clothing labels, individual supporters, and even bars and boxing clubs where activists congregate.

As Identitarian ideas have spread across the Western world, so too has violence by lone actors motivated to stop the supposedly impending white genocide. Since October 2018, there have been at least six mass attacks motivated by Great Replacement ideas. Besides Christchurch, attacks were staged at two American synagogues, an El Paso Walmart, a synagogue in Halle, Germany, and two shisha bars in Hanau, Germany, where the shooter is believed to have been targeting Muslim immigrants. These attacks left a total of 99 dead.

In September 2019, the American Department of Homeland Security (DHS) declared white supremacy as big a threat as ISIS or Al-Qaeda. DHS further warned that “white supremacist violent extremists have adopted an increasingly transnational outlook” that is driven by connecting with “like-minded individuals online.” DHS specified sharing of the “ethnic replacement” idea as particularly problematic. In June 2020, the U.S. State Department announced that white supremacist terrorism “remained a serious challenge for the global community.”

The Great Replacement also made an appearance during the August 2017 protests in Charlottesville, Virginia, where the unnerving chants of “Jews will not replace us” and “you will not replace us” could be heard as an ominous warning. The weekend left
an anti-racist protester dead and several others injured at the hands of white supremacists.

The idea of white people being “replaced” was, by that time, proliferating on both sides of the Atlantic. American white supremacists who were in Charlottesville, such as Richard Spencer, had become steeped in Identitarianism, and European Identitarians — specifically Christoffer Dulny and Daniel Friberg — traveled to Charlottesville to be on hand with their American counterparts.4

The white supremacist killers in these attacks did not pick up their ideas of white genocide and the great replacement randomly. The Identitarian movement uses its massive online presence to spread its abhorrent anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant messaging, and to warn of a coming civil war while assiduously recruiting young people into its ranks and ideology. Identitarians’ real-world publicity stunts targeting Muslims and immigrants provide fuel for its online audience in the form of viral images, videos, music, and press coverage, all of which help draw more young people into its ranks.

It is particularly disturbing that a movement whose ideas are linked directly to terrorism and the building of an international white supremacist network conducts its online organizing in plain sight — on Twitter and YouTube platforms, among others. These mainstream accounts are then used to drive traffic to darker corners of the internet, where messaging is even more explicit and offers no pretense of acceptance of Muslims, refugees, and immigrants.

Research by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE) found 67 Twitter accounts for Generation Identitarian chapters in 14 countries with nearly 140,000 followers. Those numbers do not include the accounts of individual Identitarians, such as GI’s unofficial leader and head of the Austrian chapter Martin Sellner (who has nearly 40,000 followers on Twitter and 69,000 subscribers on...
Twitter and YouTube are allowing this material to proliferate at the same time that intelligence and law enforcement agencies are trying to curtail this dangerous movement and its violence-inspiring ideas.

The BvF likely took into consideration Identitarian connections to terrorism and violence when they upgraded their monitoring of this movement. The most glaring example of such a connection was disclosed in the wake of the Christchurch mosque massacres in March 2019. Investigators found that the shooter was steeped in Identitarian thinking and had emailed with Sellner, giving him a €1,500 donation the prior year. Perhaps the second best-known Identitarian after Sellner is his wife, Brittany Pettibone Sellner, an American. Pettibone Sellner is co-author (with her sister) of the *Hatred Day* young-adult book series and has a Twitter account with more than 150,000 followers, a YouTube channel with 137,000 subscribers, and a PayPal account to receive funds.

Undeterred by mass violence directly connected to Identitarian propaganda, and not long after the Christchurch attacks, Generation Identity Austria held a protest against the “Great Replacement” in Vienna, calling for “remigration” and “de-Islamization.”

It’s not just the German security services who have Identitarianism on their radar. In 2018, Sellner and his now wife Pettibone Sellner, were banned from visiting the UK on the grounds that their presence in the country was not conducive to the public
One year later, Sellner was permanently excluded from the UK on security grounds and denied a visa for a visit to the US to marry Pettibone. Dulny and Friberg were banned from traveling to the US after Charlottesville. And in June, Ukrainian security forces raided the homes of neo-Nazi followers of the Christchurch shooter.

In the US, the multiple recent mass attacks by white supremacists have forced a reckoning about which threats the country is most likely to face. In August 2019, the National Counter Terrorism Center quietly added white supremacist violence to its mandate. In recent months, federal law enforcement agencies, including DHS and the FBI, have stated they consider white supremacy as big a threat as Islamic extremism. In February 2020, the FBI announced that it now considered the risk of violence from such groups as “on the same footing” as threats posed to the country by foreign terrorist organizations such as ISIS and its sympathizers. In April, the State Department designated the Russian Imperial Movement (which offered training to American organizers of the Charlottesville riots) and members of its leadership as “Specially Designated Global Terrorists.” This is the first time in history that the State Department designated a white supremacist terrorist group in this manner.

Two years ago, Facebook took action against the Identitarian movement after several members of the Austrian chapter were investigated for potentially running a criminal organization (the investigation ended without charges). Facebook deplatformed the entire network citing violations of policy. Before being blocked, more than 120,000 people followed Generation Identity on Facebook. It should be noted that Facebook took action after a mass murder and the airing of the Christchurch shooting on Facebook Live. The payment processing platform Stripe banned Sellner in January 2020.

But not so for Twitter and YouTube. There, the Identitarian movement is thriving. Despite the security threat Identitarianism poses and the terror-inducing views they advance, these two major social media platforms remain prime recruiting grounds for this movement. Identitarian groups specifically target young people, using these mainstream accounts as a key part of a radicalization process that directs potential recruits from Twitter and YouTube toward more extreme material found on the movement’s Telegram and other more underground, unregulated channels. In effect, these mainstream platforms are the gateway for this dangerous movement to recruit and radicalize white youth worldwide into white supremacy.

THE ROOTS OF THE IDENTITARIAN MOVEMENT

The modern Identitarian movement was launched in France in 2012 with the founding of Generation Identitaire, an offshoot of the white nationalist Bloc Identitaire. There are now GI chapters in several countries.

Known for provocative anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant actions and a youthful, hipster style, the group’s first major public act was to occupy the largest mosque in Poitiers to denounce “the Islamization of France.” Also in 2012, the French branch of GI posted a slickly produced video on YouTube titled “A Declaration of War from The Generation of National Identity.” Featuring a series of young white people decrying multiculturalism and democracy, the video made clear the group’s racist and anti-immigrant views.

“We are the generation of ethnic fracture, total failure of coexistence and forced mixing of the races… our heritage is our land, our blood, our identity,” reads the video’s subtitles. It ends with “don’t
YOUTUBE RUNNING TRUMP AND BIDEN CAMPAIGN ADS ON EXTREMIST VIDEOS

In 2017, YouTube and Google for the first time lost millions in advertising dollars because they allowed major brand ads to appear with extremist and hateful content; both apologized and went to work reviewing their policies, pledging to provide a safer environment for their advertisers.1 In 2018, another investigative report, this one by CNN, revealed that more than 300 advertisers’ ads ran on channels that were still promoting extremist and hateful ideas, despite YouTube’s renewed commitment to limit the monetizing of hate and extremist content.2

Finally, in June 2019, YouTube changed its community guidelines to ban videos that “allege that a group is superior in order to justify discrimination, segregation or exclusion based on qualities like age, gender, race, caste, religion, sexual orientation or veteran status.” And in 2020, major brands went back to advertising on YouTube after collaborating on its brand safety protections.

The YouTube Partner Program which allows content creators to monetize their channels and videos has a specific approval process.3 To be monetized, YouTube must specifically approve a content creator’s channel and videos. To make that decision, YouTube uses algorithms and human oversight. Additionally, it requires that all creators follow its Community Guidelines in order to be eligible for advertisements on their content.4

YouTube’s advertiser guidelines assure advertisers that videos that do not meet its content policies, including its hateful content policies, will have limited or no ad access.5

Why then, in June 2020, can Donald Trump and Joe Biden campaign ads be found on extremist videos? In research conducted by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE), numerous campaign ads were found on European and American Identitarian movement content, including multiple ads from each presidential candidate. To be clear, this is neither campaign’s fault. The campaigns are paying YouTube for suitable ad placement; YouTube is then paying the extremist content creators when the ads run.

GPAHE viewed dozens of examples of ads on Identitarian content. The Identitarian movement, personified by Identity Evropa/American Identity Movement in the US and Generation Identity in Europe, adheres to the belief that white people are suffering a genocide in their own countries caused by non-white immigrants. The Great Replacement, as this theory is called, has specifically been labeled by the Department of Homeland Security as promoting white supremacist violence, which is as big a threat for mass terrorist acts as other forms of extremism. Violence inspired by this idea led to murders in Charlottesville, Virginia, and Christchurch, NZ. YouTube itself has a context disclaimer on Great Replacement content.

In one particularly egregious case, Trump and Biden ads appeared on the same video on the same channel. From a purely advertising standpoint, this indicates that YouTube’s ad placement algorithm needs work. From a content standpoint, the monetization of the video, titled “Generation Identitaire — A Declaration of War from the Youth of France (English subs),” violates YouTube’s own hateful content policy and its advertiser content guidelines, as well as fails to protect its advertisers from brand threat. One of the comments on the video reads, “Africans and Arabs, ESPECIALLY MUSLIMS, must be banned from Europe. Their

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1 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/google-faces-questions-over-videos-on-youtube-3km257v8d
3 https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1311592?hl=en&ref_topic=9153642
4 https://www.youtube.com/about/policies/#community-guidelines
5 https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/6162278?hl=en
behavior and cultures are destructive to Western Society...deport them post haste.”

Another example of YouTube failing to support its advertisers is the appearance of Trump and Biden campaign ads on Ruptly videos about extremist activity. While the content might be debated as news since Ruptly, a subsidiary of RT News, provides video content to mainstream news agencies across the globe, it is doubtful that either candidate would choose to advertise on these videos given their disclaimer reading “RT is funded in whole or in part by the Russian government.”

Again, GPAHE does not believe that the Trump or Biden campaigns requested that their ads appear on this controversial content. This is just another example of YouTube not following its own guidance. This time, it puts candidates for the American presidency at risk by making it look as though they endorse hateful ideas.

YouTube says it will limit the extremist content on its site and follow its own hate speech rules. And they say that they will work to prevent advertisers from appearing on objectionable and brand-threatening content. It’s well accepted that YouTube has much more work to do in this regard. The question is, will they? Will they protect the average viewer from hateful content and the average advertiser from potentially losing revenue or harming its brand?

And will they pay attention to the fact that there are no borders on the internet? Hate and extremism thrive across the globe, and it’s the responsibility of companies to prevent their platforms from being used for the proliferation of hate and its progeny, violence.

As a final note, YouTube is not alone in monetizing hate. There are many examples across social media and technology platforms of abhorrent views, but in light of PayPal CEO Dan Schulman’s recent and generous public commitment to anti-racism, it should be noted that Brittany Pettibone Sellner and Ein Prozent/Laut Gedacht, which has more than 54,000 YouTube subscribers, both have active PayPal accounts with links from their YouTube channels.

think this is a manifesto, this is a declaration of war.” In its many postings, the video has had tens of thousands of views worldwide.

Identitarians are best known for their anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant publicity stunts, similar to the Poitiers mosque occupation. A classic example was staged by Italian members of GI who, in 2016, scaled a monument to the Italian opera composer Donizetti in Bergamo, stuck a poster on it with the inscription “Islam in Europe—2050,” then covered the statue with a niqab. That same year in Austria, adherents of that branch of GI covered a statue of the Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa with a giant burqa.

The movement is strongly opposed to Muslims and Islam and argues for a new Reconquest of Europe, or Reconquista, the 700-year period in which Christians violently expelled Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula. Followers complain of an “Islamization” of Europe through mass immigration, which they view as a threat to European culture and society. Among other things, Identitarians in France have called for freezing of legal immigration, reestablishment of borders, stopping the construction of new mosques, and outlawing of Islamist organizations. Identitarians also accuse their governments of importing terror by allowing Muslims to immigrate.

Identitarian thinking has metastasized across broad swaths of the West, becoming a worldwide movement that advances the idea that a global elite is conspiring to cause white people to be wiped out in their historic homelands, and that immigrants and refugees need to be repatriated to their countries of origin to stop the so-called Great Replacement. Pierre Vial, an intellectual prized by many Identitarians who runs an Identitarian-like cultural group called Land and People, says the Great Replacement is a “racial invasion of Europe” leading to “all the conditions of a racial war, which will be the war of the XXI century. A war that is under way.” He adds this will be a war “that we will wage in the name of a very simple reminder addressed at the invaders: the suitcase or the coffin.” A key German activist, Markus Willinger, has crudely said, “We don’t want Mehmed and Mustapha to become Europeans.”
In this context, violence shouldn’t be a surprise. Not only has there been terrorism connected to these ideas, but hate crimes against mosques and Muslims in European countries have also risen in recent years.23 As researchers at Hope Not Hate wrote in 2019, “Despite often preaching non-violence, there is nothing stopping Identitarianism’s followers believing violence is the only feasible response to this alarmist rhetoric.”24

PREPPING FOR VIOLENCE
GI adherents are preparing for violence, seeing a coming civil war as nearly inevitable. Every summer, members from across Europe attend military-style camps in rural France. Training videos online show followers boxing and practicing combat exercises. According to Alexander Durie, a journalist who spent time with the French branch of GI, camp videos he viewed had students lined up in military formation, wearing sky-blue uniforms carrying the group’s lambda logo.25 (Lambda is “L” in Greek and refers to the battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, where 300 Spartans fought to the death for their state.) In another video, trainees wore T-shirts with a quote from the classical Greek poet Homer: “From a fight, only cowards depart.”

Camp students are schooled in what are viewed as instructive moments of European history like the Reconquista, a forced removal of Muslims today’s Identitarians think they need to replay.26

This militancy is also central to GI’s online work. In a manual called “The Art of Red-Pilling,” step-by-step instructions for radicalizing potential recruits are provided. “You sow the soft red pill seeds and then you water them constantly. An honest question to start with, a news piece here, an email there, and in the evening an anecdote over beer,” reads the manual.28 It recommends taking advantage first of grievances over free speech, political correctness, or gender equality as a starting point, slowly drawing in young recruits before radicalizing them with racist ideas.

“We want complete militants,” a French GI leader told Durie.29

As his manifesto revealed, the Christchurch killer followed this path of Identitarian radicalization. He wrote that between April and May 2017, while traveling in Europe, he came to believe that his political goals could no longer be achieved democratically and that, rather, “violent, revolutionary solution is the only possible solution.” He came to accept the Great Replacement narrative, his manifesto leading off with, “It’s the birthrates. It’s the birthrates. It’s the birthrates.”30 He concluded, “Due to the threat of ethnic replacement and our own horribly low birth rates, we do not have 150 years or even 50...
years to achieve positions of power,” and he encour-
aged his readers to “not suffer under the delusion of
an effortless, riskless democratic victory. Prepare for
war, prepare for violence and prepare for risk, loss,
struggle, death.”31

ACTS OF HATE, HARASSMENT, AND TERROR
Though better known for their political stunts and
the terrorist acts inspired by their ideas, Identitarian
adherents have been involved in less publicized vio-
lent incidents. In the last year, Identitarians have
traveled to the Greek island of Lesbos to confront
refugees who fled there from Africa and the Middle
East. News reports have documented Identitarians
from France, Austria, the Netherlands, the UK, and
Greece attempting to stoke violence on the island.32
Some have pitched themselves as “Soldiers of the
Cross,” supposedly holding the line against immi-
grant invaders.33

Several aid groups on Lesbos announced in
recent months that they were suspending work and
evacuating personnel because of attacks on staff.
Douglas Herman, from the organization Refocus,
which teaches media skills to refugees, said “once
night falls, there are non-stop attacks on NGOs, on
workers, on people who are here as volunteers.”34
Herman told the AFP news agency that “fascist”
mobs were responsible for the violence.35 The Dutch
Boat Refugee Foundation, which provides medical
care in the Moria migrant camp on Lesbos, told AFP
that aid workers’ cars had been hit with steel pipes
by a “small group of right-wing extremists.”36

Last August, three French Identitarians were
sentenced to jail time and fined for flying a heli-
copter on the mountainous border between France
and Italy to deter migrants (the exact charge was
“exercising activities in conditions that could cre-
ate confusion with a public function”).37 Generation
Identity France was fined for this incident. A few
weeks before, around 100 GI adherents had, in the
same border region, erected a “symbolic border” and
unfurled a banner urging asylum seekers to go back
to “your homeland.”38 Anti-racist activists and some
leaders within the French government called for the
group to be banned after these incidents.39

There have been other troubling events involv-
ing Identitarians. According to Deutsche Welle,
in 2017, in the eastern German city of Halle where
Identitarians had set up a “housing project,” they
attacked two police officers with baseball bats and
pepper spray, apparently mistaking the officers for
left-wing extremists.40 In other cases, Identitarians
have been arrested in Germany and France for vio-
lence during protests or GI actions.41 In 2018, an Al
Jazeera investigation exposed French GI members
engaging in racist violence and advocating for ter-
rorist attacks against mosques.42

The largest coordinated action by Identitarians
happened in 2017 when GI activists from across
Europe disrupted NGOs working to save the lives of
migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranea,
including blocking an NGO ship in May 2017 in
Sicily.43

Later that year, several Identitarians joined an
effort to charter a ship in the Mediterranean to
interfere with more migrant boats. Called “Defend
Europe,” the boat action was praised by former
American Klansman David Duke, who encouraged
his more than 40,000 Twitter followers to donate
to the movement (today he has nearly 53,000 fol-
lowers).44 The action raised more than $158,000
on the now defunct American crowdfunding site
WeSearchr.45 Brittany Pettibone Sellner was the
public face of the effort, but many Identitarians from
all over Europe were involved.

The action failed and led very quickly to the
Identitarians abandoning the boat and having to be
rescued by the NGOs. Nonetheless, it galvanized the
international far right and demonstrated their capa-
bility to work cooperatively on a global scale.46

Prominent white nationalist figures in the US had
long been eyeing the European Identitarian move-
ment, and Defend Europe catalyzed their interest in
GI. Among other publicity, Defend Europe received
favorable mention from anti-Muslim Canadian blog-
ger Lauren Southern,47 the far-right Breitbart News
Network48 (once run by Trump campaign strate-
gist Steve Bannon), the leading American neo-Nazi
website, The Daily Stormer,49 and praise from white
nationalists Richard Spencer and Jared Taylor, who
said he was an Identitarian as early as 2015.

A few months after Defend Europe, in August
2017, prominent European Identitarians joined
American white nationalists on the ground during
the Charlottesville protests.

All indicators are that the Christchurch killer was
well aware of GI’s activities and rhetoric. An inscrip-
tion on one of his guns read, “Here’s your Migration
Compact!” As Hope Not Hate points out, this was likely a reference to a UN migration pact that GI campaigned against extensively in 2018.\textsuperscript{50} Tarrant’s manifesto also calls for violence against NGOs who have “ferr[jied] the invaders to European shores aboard their own vessels.” Campaigning and working against NGOs that try to protect migrants has been a signature tactic of GI.

**AMERICAN IDENTITARIANISM**

In the US, Identitarian thinking has been infused into a number of groups, most notably Identity Evropa (IE, now renamed American Identity Movement, AIM), which specifically patterned itself on the European movement. But many other Americans support Identitarianism.

Atlantic journalist Daniel Lambroso wrote in June 2020 about the American white supremacists he spent time with and their views on Identitarianism. In a visit to Richard Spencer’s apartment in Alexandria, Virginia, Lambroso reported those present “discussed the coming ‘Identitarian’ revolution.”\textsuperscript{51} Spencer’s US-based National Policy Institute, which is now mostly defunct, latched on to Identitarianism early. In 2014, the group attempted to hold a major conference in Budapest, Hungary, called the “European Identitarian Congress.” Due to advance publicity, however, the Hungarian

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**YOUTUBE AND TWITTER PROLIFERATING IDENTITARIAN CONTENT PUSHED BY GERMAN EIN PROZENT**

Identitarian content also finds its way online via individuals and affiliated organizations pushing anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant messages.

A June story in Coda\textsuperscript{1} described how Alexander “Malenki” Kleine, 28, a German member of the Identitarian movement and “an important influencer on Germany’s far-right scene,” along with his partner Phillip Thaler, produce a YouTube channel titled Laut Gedacht, meaning “Thinking out loud.” Laut Gedacht’s weekly videos regularly attract up to 200,000 views and push Identitarian messages among other topics, while supporting far-right figures such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

But this isn’t some two-man, self-financed operation. Laut Gedacht is backed by the German group Ein Prozent (short for One Percent for Our Country), which was founded in reaction to the refugee crisis in 2015 and aims to spread nationalist ideas to young Germans. Ein Prozent has massive reach and substantial funding. Again according to Coda, “almost 50,000 people gave an average sum of $22 to Ein Prozent in 2018, allowing it to spend $425,000 on ‘patriotic projects’ that year.” The group has held more than 80 right-wing cultural events across Germany and has more than 15,000 followers on Twitter.

Ein Prozent was co-founded by Götz Kubitschek, a former reserve officer in the German army, who served in Bosnia and was almost removed from the military for his involvement in extremist politics (his superior gave him a letter of discharge for participating in “right-wing extremist endeavors,” a decision overturned on appeal).\textsuperscript{2} The group’s other co-founders are Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider, a strong critic of the European Union, and Jürgen Elsässer, editor of the anti-Muslim Compact magazine, who is an admirer of Serbian hardliner Slobodan Milosevich and an outspoken supporter of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Kubitschek, the key leader of the group, is extremely close to the anti-Muslim political party Alternative for Germany (AfD) and has spoken at rallies put on by PEGIDA, another anti-Muslim group. In 2010, he took part in a memorial march

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\textsuperscript{1} https://www.codastory.com/disinformation/germany-far-right-youth/

\textsuperscript{2} https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/wir-sind-noch-im-training-der-kalte-blick-von-rechts-1.698581
for the victims of the Allied bombing in Dresden, an event consistently dominated by neo-Nazis. His publishing house, Antaios, put out the surprise bestseller, “Finis Germania,” or “The End of Germany,” a collection of essays denounced as “right-radical, anti-Semitic and revisionist” by Der Spiegel magazine.³

In 2019, Ein Prozent was banned from Facebook and Instagram for its links to the Identitarian movement. They sued Facebook, but the case was dismissed by a German court in June on the grounds that “social networks may exclude associations classified by [the networks] as ‘hate organizations.’”⁴ Facebook partly relied on the fact that Ein Prozent had financially supported the Austrian chapter of Generation Identity after Facebook listed the group as a hate organization. The court found that Facebook’s determination that Ein Prozent is “aimed at attacking people based on their ethnic origin or religious belief is justified.”

Projects backed by Ein Prozent include a youth magazine, music projects including the song “Europa” by a German rapper, and social media channels. It’s a slick operation with effective marketing that has nurtured networks of young influencers already well established in Germany’s far-right social media circles. The group funds Redpilled.de, which aggregates short films on topics such as violent crimes committed in Germany by immigrants, a number of which are made by Ein Prozent’s own in-house media operation.

Ein Prozent also connects Identitarians and other far-right nationalists across borders through its projects. For example, during summer academies held in Kubitschek’s hometown in Saxony, visitors have included Jack Donovan, an American activist in the anti-woman men’s rights movement,⁵ and Martin Sellner, leader of the Austrian chapter of Generation Identity.

Besides Twitter and YouTube, the group’s main platforms are its website and Telegram channel, where it had 7,000 subscribers as of June 2020. Banking isn’t a problem for the group as it has been for many racist groups in the US that have been banned from PayPal. The organization can accept funds through PayPal, Giropay, SEPA direct deposit, and Mollie’s SOFORT money transfer system as well as through credit-card donations.


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immigrants belong in their home countries) to the English-speaking world. This importing of far-right ideology continued, with key contemporary European Identitarian thinkers like Martin Semlitsch (aka Martin Lichtmesz) speaking at a 2017 conference of American Renaissance (AmRen). Fabrice Robert, one-time president of the Bloc Identitaire, spoke in 2013 at an AmRen conference. (Robert has 8,000 followers on Twitter.) AmRen’s head, Jared Taylor, told Pedro Zúquete that he saw himself as an Identitarian and advocates — often in speeches in Europe — for “a world brotherhood of Europeans.” (Twitter deplatformed Taylor and his organization in December 2017, and YouTube deplatformed American Renaissance in June 2020.)

In 2017, to capitalize on GI’s growing profile in the US, Sellner visited to meet with like-minded members of the far right during Milo Yiannopoulos’ failed “Free Speech Week” in Berkeley, California. During his visit, Sellner met with Lauren Southern and his soon-to-be-wife Brittany Pettibone. They agreed that America and Europe faced the same racial crisis and that their movements only differed in terms of “tactics.” Pettibone reportedly said, “We’ve mastered the online activism and you’ve mastered the in-real-life activism.”

This US Identitarian venture was soon offered support by a notable European partner in the form of Hungarian Arktos Media, a key publisher of “alt-right” and European New Right texts. Arktos in September 2017 partnered with Identity Evropa to “promote Identitarian literature with [US] students.”

IE/AIM leader Patrick Casey explicitly drew on GI as a model for his group. In a January 2018 post on his MakerSupport funding page, Casey explained how his organization planned “to depathologize ethnic/racial identity,” something he believed Generation Identity “has proven [...] can be done.” Casey viewed his movement as having created its own culture and online memes to appeal to a younger generation.

In June 2020, IE was in the headlines again for posing as an anti-fascist group on a fake Twitter account and suggesting that Black Lives Matter protesters engage in violence. The account advised them to “move into residential areas... the white hoods... and we take what’s ours.” That account was deleted.

ISIS VERSUS IDENTITARIANISM ONLINE

The treatment of white supremacy on Twitter and YouTube stands in great contrast to how these platforms have handled other forms of extremism that motivate terrorism, most notably Islamic extremist activity. Beginning around 2015, Twitter began a mass suspension of ISIS and similar accounts. In 2016, YouTube, Facebook, Microsoft, and Twitter launched a shared industry database of “hashes,” basically digital “fingerprints” of extremist imagery so as to be able to identify and curb the spread of terrorist content online. This work would ultimately become the joint tech company effort, Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT). In 2020, GIFCT became a nonprofit institution.

By 2018, Twitter had removed more than 1 million Islamic extremist terrorist accounts. YouTube took
similar deplatforming actions and, in 2017, began redirecting users searching for ISIS-type material to Islamic clerics denouncing the group.68

A study led by J. M. Berger and Jonathan Morgan, “The ISIS Twitter Census,” found that the deplatforming of ISIS accounts was successful.69 “The data we collected also suggests that the current rate of suspensions has also limited the ISIS network’s ability to grow and spread, a consideration almost universally ignored by critics of suspension tactics. The consequences of neglecting to weed a garden are obvious, even though weeds will always return.”70 Graphic online images of beheadings and other violence were also greatly reduced, the study found.71

The mass purge of ISIS and similar accounts did not encounter a political backlash or calls that the takedowns violated free speech principles. Indeed, the American government, most recently members of the Trump administration, argued for deplatforming.72 In other cases, many people, predominantly conservatives,73 have argued that deplatforming violates free speech rights.74 This was exemplified by the fury that erupted when Twitter labeled a June 2020 Trump tweet about mail-in ballots as “potentially misleading.”75

In September 2019, it was announced that GIFCT would become a standalone organization that will counter all forms of extremist content regardless of its ideological underpinnings. The question now is, with the US and other foreign government agencies arguing that Identitarian propaganda is inspiring terrorist violence, and with the rise of worldwide white supremacy as a terror-inducing ideology, will these social media platforms treat Identitarian and similar material as they have ISIS propaganda? Or will white supremacist groups continue to get a pass for inspiring terrorism online even though their propaganda does so in the same way ISIS propaganda does? Will this double standard remain? •

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Heidi Beirich is an international expert on American and European extremist movements, including the white supremacist, anti-immigrant, antisemitic and antigovernment movements. She is the author of numerous academic publications on extremism and was co-editor of Neo-Confederacy: A Critical Introduction (University of Texas Press). Prior to co-founding GPAHE, Beirich led the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Intelligence Project, the foremost organization tracking hate and extremism movements in the United States. Beirich holds M.A. degrees in political science and economics and a Ph.D. in political science from Purdue University.

WENDY VIA
CO-FOUNDER // CEO AND PRESIDENT

Wendy Via has an extensive background in strategic communications, public information campaigns, legislative outreach, storytelling, impact philanthropy, and research. She is an expert in influencing national narratives and actions around civil and human rights issues, including the exposition of racism and extremism in institutional systems. Prior to co-founding GPAHE, Via held an executive-level leadership position at the Southern Poverty Law Center and worked with organizations advancing women’s rights. She holds a B.A. in the Humanities from Auburn University, Montgomery.
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