

EXTREMIST GROUPS AND ONLINE RADICALIZATION EFFORTS

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Common Themes (and Gaps) in Existing Research

Collective Action Problem

- Existing work links social movements' recruiting to the Collective Action Problem.
- This can include terrorism.
- Example: Anthony Oberschall, 2004
- Rational choices are not involved when terrorism is at the forefront.
- Irrational thought cultivates terrorist activities.
- Perpetrators of terrorism do not see it as high-risk, low-reward.
- The benefit of brotherhood and community extremist groups offer outweigh the implied cost of jailtime or death.

Importance of Belonging

- Terrorism and belonging
- Assumption that terrorists are "loners"
- Cases show the desire to belong and a desire for community as an essential part for terrorists seeking to join different groups with their shared values
- Example: "The continuous search for a sense of community and belonging makes online platforms appealing. They can offer support for the ideologies and broader beliefs with which individuals identify, providing a space that fosters the imagined extremist community to which the individual is attracted" (Sandboe and Milan, 2023:28).

Symbols and Mobilization

- Recruiters mobilize individuals by offering recognition to the seemingly "forgotten".
- Extremist groups will attempt to appeal to the oppressed and marginalized groups around the world
- Example: "ISIS deliberately appeals to disenfranchised Muslims, as well as potential converts around the world, to those as ISIS puts it 'Drowning in oceans of disgrace, being nursed on the milk of humiliation, and being ruled by the vilest of all people" (Stern, 2016: 107)
- When extremist groups recognize the marginalized, give them a voice, and something to fight for with a community behind them, potential recruits connect with fighting for the cause.
- Example: "Struggles to belong are particularly evident in minorities and other groups that have been historically excluded from mainstream culture" (Allen, 2021).

Gaps in Existing Research

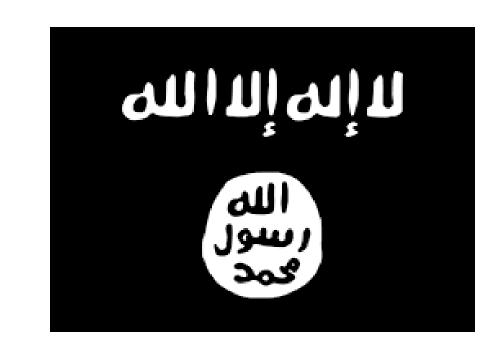
- Differences in symbols used
- How platforms interact with the users
- How rhetoric is different in different ideologies
- Focus on terrorist groups besides ISIS

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Do ideologically different extremist movements use similar online recruitment tactics?

How do these tactics call on symbols and belonging?





Methods

Observational Research

- By directly observing 4Chan propaganda, I was able to capture real-world interactions and dynamics as they unfolded naturally, without manipulating the setting.
- This approach allowed me to gather detailed, context-rich data that provided valuable insights into the community within 4Chan
- Especially effective in uncovering subtle patterns or behaviors that might have been overlooked in more controlled experimental settings.
- **Non-participant observe**r: 4Chan, being an anonymous site, allows for anyone to participate and observe without being known.

Data Collection

- All 4Chan screenshots are from the sub forum /pol/.
- Decided to go on site after important political events.
 - Visited site multiple times through the past months.
 - Specific times stood out the most.
 - August 19th: the first day of the DNC; during that day there were multiple propaganda pieces circulating
 - November 5th and 6th: my findings from that night were more about left vs. right but some concerning pieces and speech were circulated
- Data on ISIS
 - During my research regarding ISIS propaganda, I used secondary sources.
 - "Dawn of Glad Tidings", an ISIS Twitter-like propaganda machine, has been shut down.
- Due to ISIS's popularity during the height of other researchers' interest in online radicalization, there was no need to collect primary source material.

Results

- During polarizing political events, an increase in extremist propaganda was found
- Mainly propaganda about Jewish population and Neo-Nazism.

Anonymous (ID: (LmkP3N8)) © 08/19/24(Mon)09:41:11 No.478836619 >>478836949 >>478840651

Judaism is a communal schizophrenic narcissist ethnocult that only exists due to underhanded tribal nepotism and the extreme delusional high self esteem of the ethnocentric "in group" members. Their fictional fables of prophecy are fixated on and used to indoctrinate themselves and everyone under their influence.

For humanity to advance beyond the conflict between the neanderthal and homosapiens they must be disbanded and absolved, and any surviving members must be barred from holding public office of any kind, as well as prevented from any establishment of business that is to interact with non Jews. Otherwise humans will likely forever be subjugated to the highest neanderthal bloodline heritage presence among modern era populations.

8/19: Post condemning Judaism and the Jewish population



8/19: explicit post about "Making America White Again" through killing the Jewish population



11/6: Meme post about reading Mein Kampf

Anonymous (ID: **ulE7MR**) **\infty\$ 11/06/24(Wed)16:04:47 No.487455681 \\
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The CIA glowniggers and the elites will not let Trump do this. What will actually happen is that taxes get cut, spending gets partially cut and partially more money is printed, Trump will pretend to have a trade war with EU again but behind the closed doors the kikes will be scheming against Russia and China again.

Americans are using the same tactic that Soviets used in the WWII, deliberately made themselves look less developed than they are. This chaos is a means of kikes to get Russia and China to underestimate the west and overstate their influence. We will see if it works. All I know is that if Trump was actually a threat to american dominance in the world he would be quickly disposed of and not in an ear style from a 19 year old shooter, but a gang of masked glowniggers would attack from all sides, drag him in a van and nobody would ever see him again

11/6: Post using derogatory meaning for Jewish people to criticize the American government.

Implications and Further Questions

- The research for this project highlights the existence and effects of online propaganda or online extremist websites.
 - The amount and range of readily available extremist platforms is great.
 - There is more work to do on this topic.
- Further questions:
 - How does a country limit access to extremist sites?
 - Further research should include how to determine lone actors from group actors.
 - What policies or educational changes can curb extremist beliefs?
 - Due to 4Chan being completely anonymous, we do not know who the users are.
 - A more a psychoanalytical question that came up during research is how one gets to a place in seeking a community full of anonymity?
 - A specific research project could focus on the "Cult of Kek".
 - I came across it multiple times when researching. The origins, from what I can understand, start with the term "kek" which is the "lol" equivalent on 4Chan.
 - This may offer a better understanding of alt-right/alt-light extremism

Conclusions

Existing Views of 4Chan

- 4Chan users are considered "lone actors" due to the anonymity behind posting.
- Lone actors are individuals who carry out terrorist agendas by themselves.

Extremist Movement Online Recruitment Tactics

- Similar patterns online between 4Chan and ISIS
- An increase in hateful rhetoric during polarizing political events for both 4Chan and ISIS

Use of Symbols and Sense of Belonging

- With both 4Chan and ISIS, symbols used within posts offer a unique space for potential recruits to feel the sense of belonging.
- When polarizing political events take place, more users are posting on 4Chan.

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