INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

Far-Right Nativism:

Its Geopolitical Effects and Its Future in North America and Europe



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The views expressed in this intelligence briefing are those of the authors and not reflective of an official policy or position of the New Lines Institute.

COVER: Sympathizers of the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement (Nordiska motstandsrorelsens) demonstrate in central Stockholm in November 2016 to protest against migrants. (JONATHAN NACKSTRAND/AFP via Getty Images)

Executive Summary

This report aims to provide a snapshot of far-right nativist movements in North America and Europe. Beyond comparing actors and their corresponding ideologies in national and continent-wide contexts, we shed further light on transatlantic links between and among nativist actors. We also more broadly provide insights into cross-border cooperation and influence, along with the factors constraining such activities, among various far-right actors trafficking in nativist discourse.

For the purposes of analytic simplicity and clarity, we operationally define nativism as anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim hatred (the two types of animus heavily overlap, but are not the same thing). A wide range of organizations and individuals are involved in promoting and sustaining nativist ideologies and movements.

In the United States, although they have attempted to be non-partisan, nativists have seen the most success — in terms of acceptance of beliefs, rhetoric, and policy preferences — among politically conservative actors. Anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant actors have steadily advanced into the political mainstream, reaching the peak of their influence and access to executive branch power during former President Donald Trump's administration.

In Canada, nativist movements appear to be far less institutionally robust and less influential in shaping mainstream public discourse and public policy influence. However, several key figures who have had global influence on the far right have come from Canada.

Nativism is on the rise in Europe, playing a significant role in politics in France, Germany, and Sweden. In other cases, such as in Hungary and Poland, nativist rhetoric receives direct support not only from the political establishment but also from the clergy.

While individuals, institutions, and ultimately influence flow in more than one direction, our survey of North American and European actors suggests certain trends. For example, U.S. nativist actors play an outsized role both within North America and across the Atlantic, with U.S. individuals and institutions exerting significant influence upon far-right activist scenes in Canada and Europe. Nevertheless, some Canadian and European nativists have exercised influence in U.S. politics and activist milieus.

Forecast

President Joseph Biden's victory in the U.S. 2020 election means that U.S. nativists lose access to executive branch power, and subsequent policy influence, at national and international levels for at least the next four years. Three potential shifts may result from this.

First, nascent real-world and narrative transatlantic links between North American and European anti-immigrant actors could either continue to grow or return to being domestically focused. If the former occurs, a likely significant cause is the role Hungary is playing in fostering influence among far-right nativists in Europe and the United States. If the latter happens, it will likely be because of the lack of institutional vehicles that can maintain cross-border links among anti-immigrant actors and such actors' ideological and operational tendency to confine themselves within sovereign borders.

Second, given their rapidly declining national-level influence, U.S. far-right nativists will fight at a federal level to slow down or halt reversals of Trump-era immigration policies. However, they will shift much of their attention to local and state advocacy.

Finally, key U.S. nativist actors have been increasingly engaging in anti-immigrant, anti-Afghan/anti-Muslim, and anti-China rhetoric. They have been enabled by the

global effects of COVID-19, the upcoming midterm elections, influxes of undocumented and asylum-seeking migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, refugees fleeing from the collapse of the Afghan government, and geopolitical saber rattling between Washington and Beijing. This has potentially negative consequences, both domestically (elevated risk of scapegoating and violence against immigrants, Afghans, Muslims, and Asian Americans) and internationally (nascent links expanding between U.S. and Japanese far-right actors who share similar geopolitical interests regarding China).

Nativism will continue to be an important ideological cornerstone and source of political mobilization for far-right actors in the United States. Although other issues appear to have absorbed the lion's share of the U.S. far right's attention at the moment, this could easily change. Therefore, Muslims and immigrants in the United States will continue to face a significant risk of violence from U.S. far-right actors motivated in part by nativist beliefs.

In Canada, there will continue to be an active nativist milieu, though it will have limited influence, largely due to the lack of a local institutional infrastructure robust enough to sustain a far-right political movement in an otherwise left-leaning national electorate. That said, it can also be persuasively argued that Canada has punched well above its weight class by being the country of origin for several highly influential far-right individuals, such as Lauren Southern, Stefan Molyneux, and Gavin McInnes, among others. From this perspective, Canada has exported far-right extremists to other parts of the world.

Hungary will continue to be a key center of far-right influence and activity. It, too, has punched above its weight class, but differently from Canada. Hungary's social capital among far-right extremists is predicated upon at least three factors. First, under Prime Minister Viktor Orban's authoritarian hand, it is often perceived as a "model" country where the movement's policy preferences have been successfully implemented. Second, it has been the host country to several conferences attended by anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and white nationalist extremists from around the world. Third, it has engaged in a decade-long lobbying campaign in the United States to court political and policy elites. While this campaign has targeted both sides of the U.S. political aisle, evidence suggests it has found substantially greater success in courting members of the political right rather than members of the political left.

The weakening of the EU because of the political effects of the 2015 mass influx of migrants entering Europe, Brexit, and the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to a growing atmosphere of resurgent European nativism. Furthermore, transatlantic ties between nativist actors will strengthen over the next couple of years.

The mainstreaming of far-right politics in European states creates a more permissive socio-political environment for far-right political violence. In some countries, such as Poland, Hungary, and other parts of Eastern Europe, state-enabled far-right historical revisionism on matters such as involvement in the Holocaust and World War II has furthered the mainstreaming of extremism. The risk of violence in Europe is further compounded by the phenomenon of far-right actors traveling to participate in the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. Historical examples from other conflict theaters like 1980s Afghanistan and 1990s Bosnia show that foreign fighters, with their training, networks, and combat experience, can organize and enable or enact violence in their countries of origin.

Finally, Russia has been providing support to far-right actors in North America and Europe for instrumental rather than ideological reasons. Given its track record of success, we expect that this kind of support, within a broader spectrum of influence operations, will continue for the foreseeable future.

Introduction

Until perhaps the mid-2010s, most geopolitical and security analysts would have generally regarded far-right movements as politically peripheral. However, that view has changed, and now many observers believe such actors will be influential for the foreseeable future. Although hardly monolithic, many far-right movements and actors hold nativist sentiments and ideological beliefs. Such nativism is often an important meeting point for otherwise disparate and often internally fractious elements of the far right.[1]

In 2012, Cas Mudde, a frequently cited expert on far-right extremism, published a landmark study comparing nativism in North American and European contexts.[2] Since then, there have been few policy-relevant publications undertaking a similar comparison. In this report, we pick up where Mudde's study left off. Our aim here is to provide a snapshot of nativist landscapes in North America and Europe, as well as be illustrative and analytical rather than exhaustively descriptive. Beyond undertaking a much-needed update by comparing actors and their corresponding ideologies in national and continent-wide regional contexts, we expand our focus to illuminate nativist actors' transatlantic links. We also more broadly give insights into cross-border cooperation and influence among various far-right actors trafficking in nativist discourse, as well as the constraints on such actions.

First we define key terms and concepts, outline our actor typology, and provide a brief overview of nativist actors and politics in select North American and European states. Second, we compare the dynamics of nativist political behaviors within regions and between regions. Finally, we offer tentative thoughts on the trajectories of nativist actors over the next several years.



About a hundred people participate on the March Against Sharia organized by ACT for America at Foley Square in New York City as part of similar events in cities across the nation in June 2017. (ERIK MCGREGOR / Getty Images)

Research Parameters

Why Nativism?

First, why are we discussing nativism? This publication is part of a larger project examining the geopolitical impact of far-right movements in United States and Europe. Mudde argued in 2019 that despite all of the public discussion about populism, the far-right political surge in Europe was driven by nativism, flatly stating, "While populism is a crucial part of the story, the real king is nationalism, or better put nativism, and he is here to stay."[3] Similarly, David Art, a political science professor at Tufts University, provocatively argued that, "Nativism — not populism — is the defining feature of both radical right parties in Western Europe and of radical right politicians … in the United States."[4]

Defining Key Terms/Concepts

Whenever we mention the term "nativism" or "nativists," we are specifically referring to far-right nativism/nativists. One of the most widely cited definitions of the term is by U.S. historian John Higham, who states, "Nativism, therefore, should be defined as intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., 'un-American') connections."[5] However, this definition appears to be U.S.-centric in its origins and also appears to be indistinguishable from the similar but distinct concept of xenophobia — a fear or hatred of anything that is perceived to be strange or foreign.

Instead, we adopt another scholarly definition, which states, "Nativism emphasizes a difference between natives and non-natives in societies, placing increasing value on the self-appointed [socially-constructed] 'native' population. It is characterized by an 'us' versus 'them' cleavage, in which 'them' are threatening immigrant groups or 'outsider' ethnic communities. As a form of prejudice, nativism makes a distinction based on origin and strongly values national identification."[6] Historian and political scientist Aitana Guia points out that while nativism necessarily implies xenophobia, the two are not synonymous. Consistent with our adopted definition, Guia points out, "Nativism turns xenophobia into a particular way of re-defining the 'nation' in the face of a constructed fundamental threat."[7]

In other words, whereas xenophobia is hatred/fear of the racial/religious/ethnic/sexual "other," nativism transforms that hatred/fear into a broader philosophy (and sometimes political movement) to (re)define who are "authentic" members of a nation and who are not.

Here, it is important to clarify that our definition of nativism does not include actors who may simply advocate for stricter border controls or generally tighter immigration policies. After all, establishing legal border entry parameters is fundamental to a state's security, sovereignty, and overall national interest.[8] (Still, simply invoking border security or state sovereignty does not automatically shield an actor from charges of nativism, especially if other evidence is identified that then warrants applying the label.)

In more operational terms, current nativist attitudes and political behaviors are composed of anxieties or hostility toward immigrants and Muslims. Although the two categories of people should not be automatically considered synonymous, we include Muslims in this operational understanding of nativism because anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim views and movements have become increasingly intertwined, especially after 9/11. Moreover, this fits into a conceptual understanding of nativism, like the one above, because even Muslims born in North American[9] and European[10] states are nevertheless frequently constructed as part of an out-group in "us" versus "them" discourses.

This publication uses "anti-Muslim hate," "anti-Muslim prejudice," and similar terms rather than



A member of the far-right group "Proud Boys" marches during the "End Domestic Terrorism" rally in Portland, Oregon, in 2019. (JOHN RUDOFF / AFP via Getty Images)

"Islamophobia." Here we define anti-Muslim hate and its cognate labels as a set of attitudes and behaviors that define, and then dehumanize or demonize, Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim (e.g., religiously observant Sikhs), casting them as an "other," and the processes that inform and give expression to those attitudes and behaviors.[11]

Finally we adopt Mudde's operational definition of "far-right," which is described as actors on the right end of the conventional left-right political spectrum "who are 'anti-system,' defined here as hostile to liberal democracy."[12] Mudde goes on to divide the far right into two broader sub-groups. The first is the extreme right, which "rejects the essence of democracy,

that is, popular sovereignty and majority rule."[13] The second is the radical right, which "accepts the essence of democracy, but opposes fundamental elements of liberal democracy, most notably minority rights, rule of law, and separation of powers."[14] Both sub-categories of the far right oppose liberal democracy, albeit in different ways: The radical right trusts popular sovereignty, as manifested in electoral processes, while the extreme right completely rejects it.

We are not concerned with those otherwise identified as libertarians or right-of-center conservatives. In practice, this distinction can become somewhat difficult, especially in some countries where far-right ideas and policies are increasingly embedded in mainstream discourse.[15] To address this challenge, where possible, we cite examples of actors who identify as conservative or otherwise on the right end of the conventional left-right political spectrum but reject the nativist beliefs that are central to our analysis.

Selection Criteria: Choosing Countries to Analyze

Our report focuses on national, regional, and transatlantic nativist trends in seven North American and European countries: the United States, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, Poland, France, Hungary, and Sweden. In addition to their geographic diversity, these locations were chosen for four reasons:

1. The "Overton Window" – the spectrum of ideas regarding public policy and social issues that the general public considers acceptable – on Islam and immigration has shifted steadily since 2000. While recognizing that each country has a much longer history with nativism, we focus on contemporary discourse in the context of countries that from 2000 onward were seen by political observers as "consolidated" democracies, or in a steady trajectory toward democratic consolidation.[16] Each of these countries' national conversations has steadily seen a mainstreaming of anti-Muslim and/or anti-immigrant rhetoric during this time.[17]
2. They are host to strong far-right political parties that have enjoyed substantial electoral success.
3. They are locations where substantial non-state violence motivated by far-right ideologies against Muslims and immigrants has occurred.
4. These states have highly restrictive governmental measures on immigration and/or the practice of Islam, and/or have strong far-right electoral actors who have attempted, successfully or not, to enact or preserve highly restrictive measures through legislative and/or executive policy means. This can include far-right actors who may not have enough legislative seats to directly pass a bill but can work in coalitions with and/or put pressure on other actors who may have the power to do so.

North American Country Case Studies

Overview of Contemporary Nativism in the United States



The United States has a long history of organized nativism that stretches back as far as the late 1600s, during its colonial era.[18] Its most contemporary organized iteration can be traced to the late 1970s and early 1980s, when a coterie of key social movement groups espousing nativist rhetoric and policy preferences were founded by the late white nationalist John Tanton (the "Tanton network").[19] Considered by observers to be key components of the "anti-immigrant" movement, these organizations were at first mostly focused on opposing immigration from Mexico and other Latin American nation-states.[20] In the past 20 years, organized nativism grew to include other actors outside the Tanton network, and the movement expanded its issue area to include Muslims and most recently immigrants from Black-majority countries in Africa and the Caribbean.[21]

Anti-Muslim sentiment also has a lengthy history in the United States that goes back to the colonial era,[22] but its beginnings as an organized movement can be traced back to the mid-1990s.[23] Anti-Muslim activism did not grow and coalesce into a distinct organized movement until after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The physical devastation and mass psychological impact of the attacks created deep-seated fears about terrorism that not only led to the enactment of far-reaching counterterrorism legislation and policies primarily directed at Muslims[24] but also provided a fertile social climate that far-right actors exploited for political and financial gain.[25]

One of these groups, ACT for America (originally established as American Congress for Truth), was established in 2002[26] and quickly grew to be the largest formal U.S. organization dedicated to propagating anti-Muslim views, claiming hundreds of thousands of members and tens of local chapters across the country. Other organizations such as the Center for Security Policy, a hawkish foreign affairs think tank, pivoted from traditional Cold War and post-Cold War security issues to explicitly promoting anti-Muslim discourse and conspiracy narratives.[27]

There has been significant cross-pollination between anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim movements, with key social organizations in both movements incorporating new issues into their operations. For example, high-profile anti-immigrant organizations have published works that cast aspersions on Muslim immigrants[28] and invited individuals expressing anti-Muslim prejudice to speak at their policy events.[29] In 2018, ACT for America added opposition to "illegal immigration" and "sanctuary cities" to its core activities.[30]



Brigitte Gabriel, founder and president of ACT for America, speaks at the 2017 Values Voter Summit in Washington, D.C., in October 2017. (CHERISS MAY / Getty Images)

Anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim organizational actors engage in a range of activities. Some social movement organizations are policy advocacy groups and think tanks that present respectable and sanitized images of their nativist sentiments. They frequently produce publications of questionable rigor and quality,[31] engage media outlets to publicize their views,[32] and meet with elected officials to enact policy and legislative changes.[33] However, there are other groups and social movement actors unaffiliated with a particular group who engage in more extreme activities. These activities include conducting armed vigilante patrols of the U.S.-Mexico border,[34] armed protests outside of mosques,[35] and harassment of immigrants[36] and Muslims in local communities.[37] In some of the most extreme cases, they also include violent hate crimes[38] and ideologically motivated attacks against perceived enemies.[39]

In addition to what we would identify as "core" movement actors centrally organized around anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim beliefs, there are other far-right actors, peripheral to dedicated nativists, who are mobilized around other ideologies but nevertheless hold strong xenophobic attitudes. Notable examples include Christian nationalists,[40] white supremacists, anti-government extremists, and the crypto-fascist Proud Boys. (Anti-government extremists include a sub-movement called the Three Percenters, which prior New Lines Institute research has identified as strongly tied to a spectrum of anti-Muslim activities ranging from armed protests outside of Islamic faith-based institutions to planned terrorist attacks against heavily Muslim residential areas.)[41] Like actors principally organized around nativism, these peripheral actors are represented by a wide range of organizational structures and activities. But for them, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim beliefs are a secondary – albeit important – motive underwriting their political mobilization.[42] Like "core" nativists, several of these ideologically adjacent actors appear to have also been involved in politically motivated violence targeting Muslims and immigrants.[43]

> “In terms of policy impact, nativists appear to have reached the zenith of their influence during the Trump administration. That administration engaged core nativist groups on multiple occasions.”

Despite their extreme views and attempts to politically position themselves in a non-partisan manner[44] anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant actors have steadily made inroads into the political mainstream. Insofar as organized actors are concerned, it appears nativist discourse thus far has enjoyed its greatest acceptance among politically conservative actors.[45]

At the moment, it is no longer uncommon to see statements and policy platforms among more mainstream right-wing actors include language directly associated with far-right nativism.[46] In some more extreme cases, this includes hard-line legislators openly espousing rhetoric commonly identified with white nationalism, such as the “Great Replacement” conspiracy narrative.[47] This gradual entry into mainstream right-wing intellectual, media, policy, and political circles did not come without significant resistance from many high-profile conservatives[48] over the course of several decades. However, in recent years, many of these voices have been pushed to the periphery of U.S. right-wing politics.[49] This was enabled by a steady and broader realignment of the political right in U.S. politics also spanning several decades across multiple policy issues[50] but accelerated by the candidacy and presidency of Donald Trump.[51] Currently, among other things, this has resulted in the formation of dissenting entities[52] attempting to reclaim the mantle of conservatism. In other cases, certain actors have made a complete about-face and openly embraced nativist rhetoric and movement figures they once criticized.[53]

In terms of policy impact, nativists appear to have reached the zenith of their influence during the Trump administration. That administration engaged core nativist groups on multiple occasions,[54] had several individuals from these organizations serve as officials in government agencies,[55] and enacted several of the policy recommendations from these entities. They include the suspension and restriction of immigrants, refugees, and travelers from predominantly Muslim-majority countries (“Muslim Ban”); attempts to expand the physical barrier infrastructure separating the U.S.-Mexico land border (“building ‘The Wall’”); and decreasing overall levels of legal immigration into the United States through a variety of restrictive executive branch policy measures.[56]

With the departure of the Trump administration, some of the same people who sought to enact the above-mentioned restrictive policies and legislation are working to block any immigration policy changes sought by the Biden administration.[57] For example, former White House speechwriter Stephen Miller, who has been identified as the main architect of the Trump administration’s most hard-line policies impacting immigrants and Muslims (e.g., “The Wall” and “Muslim Ban”) and who allegedly has ties to white nationalists[58] recently formed an organization called the America First Legal Foundation. Among other things, the foundation has criticized Biden administration officials for taking steps to undo immigration enforcement and border security policies enacted under the Trump administration.[59] Another example is Mark Morgan, former acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement under the Trump administration.[60] Morgan joined the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a core Tanton network organization, shortly after leaving federal service.[61]

Trump himself has been enormously influential upon far-right actors in the United States. Again, while the steady and strong hard-line shift in right-wing politics cannot be reduced to Trump’s influence alone, his candidacy and later presidency did enable and accelerate the permeation of far-right ideas — including nativism — within mainstream conservatism.[62] Moreover, whether it was Trump’s intention or not, his rhetoric also frequently served as inspiration and justification

for far-right radicalization, armed mobilization, and violence during his presidency.[63] At its most extreme, this includes associations with terrorist attacks such as the 2019 El Paso mass shooting[64] as well as hate crimes against various ethnic and racial minorities.[65]

Individuals with otherwise politically liberal views exist within the organized nativist movement. However, previous attempts to inject anti-immigrant positions into otherwise liberal-favored causes have failed.[66] Anti-Muslim attitudes appear to have made comparatively greater inroads among politically liberal constituencies, in part because far-right actors have consistently attempted to co-opt the language of feminism, LGBTQ+ causes, and combating anti-Semitism for anti-Muslim ends.[67]

That said, while anti-Muslim sentiment has had substantial support across the political spectrum – albeit to varying degrees – since 9/11, beginning in 2015 there was a shift in U.S. public attitudes toward Muslims. Whereas negative opinions of Muslims were shared in significant numbers across the political spectrum, polling suggests majorities of Democrats and independents hold favorable views of Muslims, while Republicans do not.[68] However, this general finding comes with an important caveat: Experts suggest that the shift in views is largely mediated by partisanship and polarization associated with Trump's rhetoric[69] and proposed policies — particularly the "Muslim Ban."[70]

Overview of Contemporary Nativism in Canada



Compared to the United States, Canada's nativist movement appears to be less institutionally robust and concomitantly less influential in shaping public discourse and public policy. Canada's most organizationally sophisticated and prominent[71] immigrant restrictionist organization was the now-defunct Centre for Immigration Policy Reform (CIPR), founded in 2010.[72] However, the last evidence of organizational activity we identified was in 2015.[73] CIPR appears to have functioned in practice as both a think tank and a policy advocacy organization.[74] CIPR's justifications for lower immigration levels closely parallel those made by Tanton network organizations. The arguments include preservation of "culture," the environment, and demographics — the latter containing particularly strong racial undertones. We found only one currently active anti-immigration-focused entity: Immigration Watch Canada (IWC).[75] IWC is best described as a website, founded by unidentified individuals based in Vancouver, British Columbia, espousing heavily anti-immigrant and staunchly restrictionist views.[76]

The closest approximation to organizations directly engaged in real-world (rather than online) anti-immigrant activities are ACT for Canada and the Soldiers of Odin. The former is a Canadian spin-off of ACT for America, a policy advocacy organization that began in 2002 and initially focused on anti-Muslim politics and policies[77] but later expanded into anti-immigrant-linked activities.[78] Like its U.S. namesake, ACT for Canada has more recently expanded into anti-immigrant discourse, as well as broader far-right rhetoric about the "deep state" and the United Nations engaging in a conspiracy to subvert Canadian sovereignty.[79]

The Soldiers of Odin (SOO, also sometimes called "Sons of Odin" in Canada) are an anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim organization started in late 2015 in Finland by former neo-Nazi Mika Ranta in response to the influx of Syrian and Iraqi refugees entering Europe that year.[80] Although claiming to reject racism and other forms of bigotry, information gleaned from the group's social media posts, behavior from those claiming to be its supporters, and founder Ranta's white supremacist past belied these claims.[81] SOO chapters began to appear across Canada in 2016.[82] However, by 2017, several local Canadian chapters officially disavowed and disassociated themselves from their European counterparts after the latter's ties to white supremacy and bigotry were made public.[83] The decision was not unanimous, and several other local chapters decided to remain publicly associated with European affiliates.[84] Regardless, the group's various factions are widely associated with nativist sentiment and deeply embedded within the wider Canadian far-right context. Supporters of Canada's SOO groups have engaged in a range of street activities, such as protesting

Canadian Three Percenters

The Canadian Three Percenters are northern counterparts to a U.S.-origin militia extremist sub-movement that goes by the same name. Like their U.S. associates, Three Percenters are particularly notable for their firearms training and often show up to political assemblies with weapons. While their core ideology is fundamentally anti-government, like their U.S. counterparts, much of the Canadian Three Percenters' high-profile activities include surveilling mosques and engaging in explicit anti-Muslim rhetoric under the guise of raising public concerns about terrorism.

Source: VICE News

outside of[85] and baiting mosque congregations;[86] joining wider far-right opposition[87] to COVID 19-related public health measures;[88] and engaging in street brawls with anti-racist and anti-fascist counterprotesters.[89]

Another group actor is La Meute ("Wolf Pack"), which was founded in 2015 by two ex-members of the Canadian military.[90] Like SOO, La Meute holds anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant views. While its members have claimed to reject sexism and racism, defectors from the organization and experts cast doubt on this claim.[91] La Meute's activities appear to be mainly focused on recruiting from and mobilizing members of Canada's francophone community, particularly in Quebec province.[92] However, due to infighting, the group appears to have been in decline since 2019.[93]

The relative organizational weakness of the Canadian "core" nativist movement is bolstered somewhat by other far-right organizational actors for whom nativism is a secondary, albeit important, political motive. This includes extreme Quebecois ethno-nationalists[94] white nationalists/supremacists,[95] anti-government extremists, and the Proud Boys.[96] They also include cyber-based media outlets like Rebel Media and The Post Millennial, which both regularly promote far-right nativist talking points and have significant online followings in Canada and the United States.[97] (Gavin McInnes, founder of the aforementioned Proud Boys, was a former contributor to Rebel Media.)[98] At their most extreme, peripherally nativist actors have been directly associated with acts of attempted or successful ideologically motivated violence,[99] such as the far-right 2017 Quebec City terrorist attack against a local Muslim congregation.[100] Neo-Nazi Canadian military deserter Patrik Mathews was involved in a 2020 terrorist plot in Richmond, Virginia.[101]

These activities notwithstanding, Canadian nativist actors — ideologically core or peripheral — do not appear to enjoy the same level of mainstream political and policy influence their U.S. cohorts seem to have. For example, although some figures from the Conservative Party have previously made nativist statements[102] and/or had prior connections to anti-Muslim groups,[103] individuals espousing nativist views have been censured or expelled from the party. While arguably suboptimal for some observers,[104] a non-nativist cordon sanitaire within the Conservative Party appears to be functioning, at least for now.

Moreover, Canada lacks a politically influential figurehead similar to Trump. The closest example was former Conservative Party member and cabinet minister Maxime Bernier, who left the party in 2018 to form the People's Party of Canada.[105] However, in addition to internal resistance from the Conservative Party, Bernier also faced an uphill battle to garner support for his locally tailored brand of far-rightist politics in a largely left-leaning national electorate.[106] The People's Party of Canada platform and rhetoric were based on a mix of far-right populism and nativism. Bernier's brand of politics and policy preferences was effectively repudiated at the ballot box in 2019 and 2021, where consequences included him losing the parliamentary seat he had held since 2006.[107]

Finally, recent violence associated with some groups appears to have negatively affected them, at least superficially. Nearly three months after the Canadian government designated the Proud Boys a terrorist entity — due in large part to members' involvement in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol complex[108] — its Canadian branch announced it was shutting down.[109]

European Country Case Studies

Overview of Contemporary Nativism in Europe

Europe's long history of nativist politics goes back to the establishment of "historical nations."[110] The contemporary nativism as a sort of rebirth of nation-states can be traced back to as early as the de-colonization period after World War II that facilitated immigration from former colonial states to Europe. The subsequent influx of immigrants during this period gave far-right movements an issue to mobilize around and thus regain support after being tarnished from being ideologically associated with fascist Germany years earlier.

Nativism was given another boost in the years immediately preceding and following the end of the Cold War.[111] This included the political and economic transition of post-communist countries, the Yugoslav wars, the expansion of the European Union, the expansion of foreign influences in Europe, and the Ukrainian conflict. For the aim of presenting a diverse image of nativism in Europe, this report will explore the following short country case studies: Germany, the United Kingdom, Poland, France, Hungary, and Sweden.

Germany



Germany, with the Holocaust as part of its history, is an indispensable case study. With the fall of the Eastern Bloc and the reunification of Germany, several factors including economic crisis, immigration, and xenophobia led to the normalization of nativist politics. Parties and movements positioning themselves as populist and expressing far-right beliefs can also be considered nativist, since they largely object to immigration and Islam.[112]

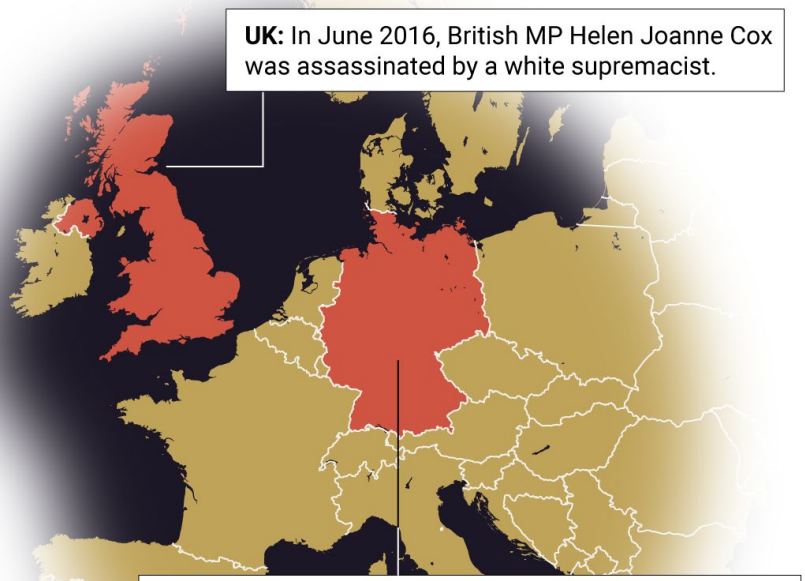
Significant far-right movements are the white nationalist Identitäre Bewegung (Identitarian Movement) and the anti-government-oriented, violence-prone Reichsbürgerbewegung (Reich Citizens' Movement), which is roughly akin to America's Sovereign Citizen movement.[113]

There are also several far-right parties in Germany. Perhaps the two most well-known at the moment are the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), and the more extreme National Democratic Party of Germany (Nationdemokratische Partei Deutschland). Of the two, the AfD has enjoyed considerably more electoral success, becoming the largest opposition party in the German national parliament (Bundestag) from 2017 to 2021.[114] However, it lost its main opposition status after the Sept. 26, 2021, national parliamentary elections. Despite the decline, it still received 10.3% of the national vote and emerged as the strongest party in the eastern states of Saxony and Thuringia.[115] Its parliamentary influence is likely to be constrained now as the fifth-largest party in the Bundestag, as well as "the fact that no one wants to partner with them, [meaning] they'll play no role whatsoever in the upcoming coalition negotiations."[116]

Yet results from the 2017 and 2021 national parliamentary elections show that nativist ideologies have become more influential. The AfD's rise in popularity is mainly due to its ability to draw support from the steady anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant public climate in Germany — itself largely a result of the influx of refugees and immigrants welcomed during the tenure of former Chancellor Angela Merkel. This led Germans to vote for a far-right political party in significant numbers for the first time since the end of World War II.[117]

Outside of electoral politics, one of the most publicly visible movements from this category was Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident (PEGIDA), formed in October 2014, which managed to quickly gain popular support by organizing regular demonstrations in the city of Dresden.[118] Although shortly after its founding the organization quickly grew to establish chapters in other countries, they were short-lived. PEGIDA's physical presence is largely centered in Dresden, though it has a smaller presence in a handful of other cities and municipalities.[119] PEGIDA reached a record number of

Assassination Attempts Against Pro-Immigrant/ Pro-Muslim Politicians in Europe



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25,000 protesters in Dresden in the days after the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack in 2015, although its popularity appears to have dropped significantly since then.[120] Nevertheless, PEGIDA appears to maintain a significant audience online both in Germany and around the world[121] and commemorated the seventh anniversary of its founding with a rally attended by about 1,000 people in Dresden on Oct. 17, 2021.[122]

Beyond social movements and electoral politics, Germany has also had to contend with the policy challenge of far-right political violence and terrorism. Some of these threats are mobilized more so by anti-government beliefs than by racism per se, such as the Reich Citizens' Movement[123] and far-right survivalists/preppers[124] — although some of these actors also hold white supremacist views.[125] One of the earliest contemporary examples of far-right violence in Germany was the 1980 Oktoberfest bombing in Munich, which killed 13 and wounded over 200 others.[126] There have been multiple recent incidents of such violence, several of which targeted immigrants, Muslims, and those perceived to be supporting them. These incidents include, but are not limited to:

- Two bombings, multiple bank robberies, and the killing of 10 people, mostly of immigrant backgrounds, by the three-person neo-Nazi terrorist cell called the National Socialist Underground from 2000 to 2007.[127]
- The 2009 anti-Muslim-motivated killing of Marwa El-Sherbini by an open supporter of the far-right National Democratic Party.[128]
- The non-fatal stabbing of Henriette Reker, a pro-immigration/ refugee candidate running for mayor of Cologne, by a far-right extremist in 2015. Reker was stabbed in the neck, survived the attack, and was elected mayor the next day.[129]
- The 2016 mass shooting at a shopping mall in Munich, which killed nine people and wounded 36 and which was motivated significantly by far-right beliefs and largely targeted customers of immigrant backgrounds.[130] The incident was committed on the fifth anniversary of Norwegian far-right extremist Anders Breivik's 2011 terrorist attacks.
- The 2019 assassination of politician Walter Lübcke,[131] who defended immigration policies, by two neo-Nazis.
- The 2019 Halle terror attack, which targeted a Jewish congregation praying at a local synagogue, passersby, and individuals at a nearby kebab restaurant. The attack was inspired in part by Breivik.[132]
- The February 2020 Hanau far-right motivated terrorist shooting spree, which killed nine people and wounded five others. The targets were patrons at two hookah bars in the city.[133]

United Kingdom



As the numbers of immigrants arriving in the U.K. from former colony states grew after World War II, so did racist and xenophobic reactions, dramatically manifested by British fascist Enoch Powell's 1968 "Rivers of Blood" speech — leading to legislation that "effectively racialized the basis of the immigration system."[134] These reactionary attitudes later spun off a mutated form of prejudice, anti-Muslim hate, largely triggered by the "Rushdie Affair" in the late 1980s, in which Islam/Muslims were portrayed as incompatible with free speech and liberal social values.[135]

While initial tensions and controversies around the "Rushdie Affair" eventually decreased, issues of immigration and anti-Muslim prejudice continued to simmer and increase again slowly as an issue for many voters over the course of two decades.[136] This trend coincided with another important change: In the last three decades, the U.K.'s main terrorism threat shifted from Irish Republican Army-related attacks to incidents of violence committed by extremists acting in the name of Islam.[137] As a result, questions about Muslim integration became a prominent issue of public discussion.

In the run up to and in the years following the 2016 Brexit referendum and the 2019 general elections, nativist ideologies became more visible in mainstream British politics. Although nativism was not the only factor that drove Brexit – other issues were at play – it was a significant undertone to the campaign to leave the EU. At its most extreme, this nativism violently manifested itself with the killing of politician Jo Cox (a left-wing, pro-immigration member of parliament), whose neo-Nazi killer, Thomas Mair, shouted "Britain First" as he stabbed her.[138]

It terms of electoral politics, far-right nationalist parties explicitly espousing nativist beliefs, such as the British National Party and the U.K. Independence Party, have been in decline since at least 2010-2015.[139] The largest such remaining party, the Brexit Party headed by populist Nigel Farage, remains a loud but marginal voice. This decline in support for the parties seen as traditionally right-wing is likely, in part, because the Conservative party has "largely co-opted much of the ideological space within Great Britain that had been the home of the right-wing extremist parties."[140] However, this has also pushed the Conservative Party as a whole further to the right.

Meanwhile, the main center-left party, Labour, had also shown signs of shifting rightward on immigration following its lack of electoral success in the early to mid-2010s.[141] So while far-right political parties appear to be largely on the decline, their ideas appear to have gained substantial mainstream currency and support, including among the country's largest electoral parties.

Outside of political parties, some of the most prominent far-right actors in the U.K. are the English Defence League, Generation Identity, Blood and Honour, and National Action.[142] Blood and Honour is a transnational neo-Nazi organization banned in several countries but currently legal in the U.K., while National Action is legally banned in the U.K. due to its extremism and history of violence.[143] Another illustration of the threat of far-right extremism is the record-high number of far-right perpetrators imprisoned.[144] Not all of these arrests were made as a result of violence; many were made for membership of a proscribed organization. Violence is on the rise, however; between 2017 and 2020, almost 30% of prevented attacks[145] were from the far right.

Although nativism and euroskepticism were substantial factors associated with Brexit, British authorities have since taken a tough stand on far-right extremists.[146] This includes the increased focus of security agencies on monitoring and preventing far-right extremist threats as well as the banning and arrest of leading members of far-right extremist groups.[147] However, the socio-political environment associated with Brexit and COVID-19 appears to be providing further opportunities for far-right recruitment and mobilization.[148] The tabloid media in the U.K. is hugely influential on public opinion, and its fixation on anti-immigrant stories and virulent nationalism is helping to ensure a disproportionate presence of nativist narratives and voices within the U.K.'s socio-political discourse. [149]

Poland



Since the fall of communism, Poland has had a rebirth of both religion and nationalism. With Poland caught between its historical enemies – Russia and Germany – Polish politics has in recent years taken a religious nationalist-informed approach to nativism.[150] The Catholic Church has a large influence in areas such as politics, state spending, and education. Poland is currently ruled by the conservative and right-wing populist Law and Justice party.[151] Results from the October 2019 national elections brought the far-right Confederation Liberty and Independence party into parliament. The party holds 11 seats in the Polish Parliament (Sejm), skewing the political majority heavily to the right.[152]

In this political setting, the Polish Constitutional Court banned abortions in 2020, sparking nationwide protests. In addition, the government has recently cracked down on LGBTQ+ rights.[153] Most recently, the ruling party has come into sharp conflict with the EU due to its direct assault on the independence of the Polish judiciary. In addition, other mainstream political actors who take up nativist rhetoric have gained popular support in local elections, which has led to a "normalization of far-right politics."[154]

In recent years, there has been an increase in public and political rhetoric espousing anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hate, homophobia, and historical revisionism. The rise of historical revisionism, the wholesale re-interpretation and rewriting of otherwise established historical accounts of significant events (e.g., involvement in the Holocaust), is widely present in Poland and other Eastern European countries — a cause and consequence of resurgent far-right activity. One of the most visible consequences of this revisionism is the outlawing of discussion of Polish involvement

Historical Revisionism in Europe

Europe has a long history of violence against the "other." The ideas of "right to land" and of "historical nations" are often closely associated with organized violence and expulsions. Although the historical and contemporary contexts associated with far-right nativism frequently differ by country, commonalities can nevertheless be identified.

The nostalgia for and glorification of historical events is used in contemporary nativist political narratives. For example, the 1683 Battle of Vienna, when the Ottoman Empire was defeated near Vienna, is often referred to when speaking of immigrants, Islam or even Turkey's EU membership. Nativist rhetoric argues that Islam was once defeated in Europe while now it silently occupies the continent. The fall of communism, terrorist attacks, and migrant and economic crises have given rise to more anti-Muslim bigotry, and this kind of rhetoric has become more attractive.

As in a majority of former communist countries in Europe, Poland and Hungary are deeply involved in historical revisionism regarding World War II. After half a century of Communist rule, wherein a state ideological version of history was promoted, the democratization of these countries brought the revival of national and religious identity. In many cases, local nationalist leaders who were also Nazi collaborators, mainly condemned by the post-war Communist regime, are being rehabilitated by the new democratic national governments. Poland enacted a law criminalizing any mention of Polish involvement in the Holocaust. On the other hand, in Hungary, historical revisionism and Holocaust denial can be considered part of the government's strategy in rewriting history. In both cases, the national victimhood in World War II is a key part of the country's identity, while Jewish victims and Hungarian and Polish collaborators are ignored or minimized.

Nostalgia for the "glorious" past, going however far back in history, seems to be a common dominator in all cases. Identical cases can be found in other countries throughout Eastern Europe. The rehabilitation of Nazi collaborators through public events is an attractive asset for far-right parties and movements.

Sources: Aitana Guia (Max Weber Program for Postdoctoral Studies), The Guardian, BBC News, Politico, Time, Tablet Magazine, Al Jazeera

in the Holocaust. Far-right movements such as the National-Radical Camp, All-Polish Youth and Pride, and Modernity take part in the yearly Independence March. While originally organized to commemorate the restoration of Poland's sovereignty from different empires, in recent years the march has been an important event for far-right actors, including foreign extremists such as Italy's Roberto Fiore and the U.K.'s Tommy Robinson.[155]

France



France is home to some of the most prominent and well-established nativist movements in Europe. These groups, which have existed for several decades,[156] base themselves on a narrative rooted in nostalgia for a glorious empire. These movements were fueled in significant part by the humiliating French military defeat during the Algerian war of independence from 1954 to 1962.[157] Algeria, a French colony since 1830, was valued for its land and its people as a source of cheap labor for France's colonial ambitions.[158] Reactions to increasing Algerian immigration to France after World War II, and especially after French colonial withdrawal from Algeria, gave rise to far-right populist nativism.[159]

Perhaps the best-known violence-prone group of the 1980s and 1990s was the French and European Nationalist Party, a far-right neo-Nazi militant organization whose members and supporters have a history of attacking people and property. Among the attacks associated with the group are two 1988 fire bombings of hostels catering to immigrant workers (one killed, 12 injured),[160] the 1990 desecration of a Jewish cemetery,[161] and the 2002 assassination attempt made on then-President Jacques Chirac by a far-right extremist and one-time member of the group.[162] More recently, though the threat is not on the same scale as that posed by violent Islamist actors, France has faced a growing danger of far-right terrorism that includes plots to attack immigrants, Muslims, and those perceived to be supportive of them. Some examples include:

- **May 2016:** A French far-right extremist was arrested at the Ukraine-Poland border while attempting to return to France while in possession of multiple firearms and explosive materials. Ukrainian authorities say they first became aware of the individual during his stay in eastern Ukraine, where he was trying to establish ties with Ukrainian troops under the guise of volunteering."[163]
- **July 2017:** A far-right extremist who said he wanted to kill "Muslims, Jews, Blacks, and homosexuals" was arrested for plotting to assassinate France's president on Bastille Day.[164]
- **June 2018:** Thirteen people belonging to the far-right group Action des Forces Operationnelles (Operational Forces Action) were arrested for plotting to kill Muslims.[165]
- **November 2018:** Six far-right extremists were arrested for attempting to assassinate President Emmanuel Macron.[166]
- **June 2019:** Five neo-Nazis plotting to attack Muslim and Jewish places of worship were arrested.[167]
- **October 2019:** A far-right extremist was arrested after non-fatally shooting two mosque congregants who were attempting to prevent him from burning down the house of worship.[168]

Beyond violent actors, into the realm of electoral politics, the National Rally (previously called National Front) – founded in 1972 – is France's best-established far-right political party. During the 2017 elections, its president, Marine Le Pen, was second place right after Macron, securing almost 24% of the vote.

Outside of political parties, several far-right movements, such as the Volontaires pour la France, Réseau Remora, and Génération Identitaire (Generation Identity), also have a significant public following.[169] The latter is particularly known for, among other things, occupying and storming mosques,[170] hosting pork sausage and wine parties,[171] and receiving a donation from Christchurch, New Zealand, terrorist attacker Brenton Tarrant.[172] These different types of actors have a common dominator of anti-immigrant, anti-corruption, and anti-Muslim rhetoric.

A number of prominent personalities, such as former Czech Republic President Václav Klaus and former French general Christian Piquemal, have gathered around the National Council of European Resistance, which claims to "work for the defence of European

civilization."[173] This organization was co-founded by French writer Renaud Camus, who coined the "Great Replacement" theory in his 2011 book "Le Grand Remplacement." In it, Camus claims the white European population is being demographically and culturally replaced by non-white African and Arab immigrants. The Great Replacement gained worldwide attention after the 2019 Christchurch massacre;[174] Tarrant's terrorist manifesto went by the same title.

Hungary



Initially seen as a democratic success story in the post-communist period, Hungary has in the last two decades seen a steep illiberal decline of its democratic institutions and processes. In 2020, Freedom House, the non-governmental organization famous for its annual index measuring the strength of democracy worldwide, no longer listed Hungary as a democratic country.[175] As discussed later in this report, Hungary has increasingly been viewed by other far-rightists as a haven and model country for the far right to emulate.

The right-wing FIDESZ party, also known as the Hungarian Civic Alliance, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban, has been in power since 2010. Originally a mainstream center-right party, under Orban's tenure it has drifted further to the right and become increasingly authoritarian. His use of anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-Semitic rhetoric has helped to keep Orban in power for the last two decades.[176] One study neatly summarizes the intimate connection between Orban and his allies' authoritarian stranglehold over the domestic media landscape on the one hand and promotion of nativist rhetoric on the other:

> *When Nepszabadsag Hungary's last independent daily [news outlet] suddenly closed after a hostile takeover by an Orban ally, the government achieved an almost complete hold on the country's media. Now, roughly 90% of Hungarian media is owned by the government or people close to Orban's regime.*
>
> *But, why is Orban intent on attacking the refugees?*
>
> *Observers … agree that Orban's initial decision to target refugees was simple political expediency. Eastern Europe's arch-conservative saw an opportunity to exploit refugees fleeing from Muslim-majority countries in order to boost his party's grip on power.*[177]

The two other significant far-right parties are the Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary),[178] and Mi Hazánk Mozgalom (Our Homeland Movement).[179] Outside of party politics, one of the most rapidly growing groups is the Magyar Gárda Mozgalom (Hungarian Guard Movement), which is the de facto paramilitary wing of the Jobbik party.[180] In recent years, Orban has pushed conspiracy theories about Jewish Hungarian-American billionaire philanthropist George Soros. This contributed to a hostile socio-political environment that eventually resulted in the physical relocation of several civil society organizations Soros supports, including Central European University's move from Budapest to Vienna.[181]

Finally, regarding non-state violent actors, Hungary experienced a substantial amount of far-right terrorism during the mid-to-late 2000s. The main targets of these attacks were Roma and political leftists. However, since the early 2010s, the country seems to

Anti-Roma Nativism in Europe

Another targeted group in both Poland and Hungary, but also in most of Eastern Europe, are the Romani people (also called "Roma"). Mob attacks and systematic discrimination targeting Roma increased in the region after the fall of communism in 1989. Preceding the current anti-Muslim climate in many parts of Europe, Romani people were the target of Europe's far right. Many Romani remain key targets of rhetorical and physical attacks in parts of Eastern Europe, although they are also subject to discrimination and violence in Western Europe. In addition, France enforced strict migration laws in order to shut down illegal Roma camps and deport Roma to Eastern European countries such as Romania and Bulgaria.

Sources: Cultural Survival, The Washington Post, Roma Rights Journal, The Conversation, L. Smith (Global Studies Law Review)

have had a substantial decline in far-right terrorist attacks, although notable (but rarer) acts of violence have continued to occur,[182] leading analysts to note that Hungary has maintained a robust extreme right scene that could nurture future non-state violent extremism.[183]

Sweden



Sweden is typically considered a refugee-friendly country, but far-right and nativist movements have gradually gained political ground there during the last decade. The 2015 mass influx of migrants in Europe, including Sweden, accelerated these developments and has deeply affected the country.[184] Sweden's record acceptance rate of refugees and rise in violent crime, including gang violence, for which immigrants are frequently blamed, has created an atmosphere in which nativism became attractive for voters.[185] During the 2018 general elections, the Swedish Democrats – a far-right political party with neo-Nazi roots – entered the mainstream, winning 12.9% of the votes and 49 seats in the Swedish Parliament.[186]

Often fueled by the effects of transnational far-right disinformation[187] and malevolent foreign influence operations,[188] nativist actors both inside and outside Sweden point to the country as an example of a multicultural dystopia in which Muslim immigrants have allegedly created "Shariah no-go zones."[189] Others, like former U.K. Independence Party and Brexit Party leader Farage, have linked immigrants and sexual violence; in 2017, Farage claimed that Malmo had become the "rape capital of Europe."[190] This celebratory demonization of Sweden's traditionally liberal policies arises out of a spiteful response to the general celebration of Swedish liberalism and its values. Every criminal case involving someone with a migrant background is seized upon as a case of the failure of the liberal idea of utopia.

Although there is widespread social and political resistance to the resurgence of Swedish far-right activity, the parliamentary gains made by the Swedish Democrats, among other factors, strongly suggest a nativist atmosphere is entering the mainstream — in significant part due to extremists' efforts to make their views palatable to a wider audience.[191] This coincides with attacks against minorities and other perceived enemies rising in recent years. Far-right political violence and terrorism have posed a greater challenge to public safety in Sweden more than in other Nordic countries,[192] though only two incidents resulting in four fatalities have occurred since 2015, according to data from the University of Oslo.[193]

Currently there are several violent groups, such as the Soldiers of Odin and the Nordic Resistance Movement (which also has branches in Norway and Denmark) that, although small in size, threaten public safety and security to varying degrees based on their histories of violence.[194] For example, on Jan. 5, 2017, two members of the Nordic Resistance Movement who had previously fought in eastern Ukraine with far-right paramilitaries conducted a non-fatal bombing attack against a makeshift asylum seekers' shelter in Gothenburg.[195]

Analyzing Nativist Actors in Continental and Transatlantic Contexts

Far-right extremism has long had international and transnational aspects to it. This includes U.S.-Canadian, pan-European, and transatlantic ties.

Several macro factors have enabled far-right relationship building across borders. Time, space, and the scope of this report do not permit an in-depth discussion of these factors, which have been covered extensively elsewhere.[196] Here, we briefly describe four key factors that provide a backdrop to this section: globalization, deindustralization, immigration, and Russian influence operations.

Globalization and the closely related issues of immigration and deindustrialization have contributed to perceptions, real or not, of socio-economic insecurity and cultural-demographic displacement that a wide range of far-right ideological entrepreneurs — from political parties[197] to armed militants[198] — have used to attract supporters to their causes.[199] At their most extreme, perceptions of socio-economic insecurity and cultural-demographic displacement have been used as a justification

for acts of ideologically motivated violence, such as the Christchurch, New Zealand, terrorist attack.[200]

Although often positioning themselves as its victims, members of the far right have also benefited from various aspects of globalization. For example, the ever-faster means of transportation (i.e., automobiles and commercial air travel) and communication (i.e., the internet) that underpin global interconnectivity have also been used by far-right actors to both physically and virtually network with otherwise disparate like-minded individuals, groups, and movements.[201]

Then there is the role of Russia. For the past several years, Moscow has played an important role in supporting far-right and far-left actors in North America and Europe as part of a broader set of influence operations designed to keep Moscow's targets strategically disoriented. These operations include a wide variety of electoral interference campaigns supporting parties and candidates favorable to Russia's interests in Central and Eastern Europe, the United States, France, Germany, and the U.K. that used a combination of "real-world" and digital influence tactics.[202] While the exact size and scope of these campaigns' impacts can be debated, it is undeniable that their overall effects have nevertheless been significant. We revisit the implications of Russian influence operations in the forecast section of this publication.

Throughout the rest of this section we focus on "real world" links between far-right North American and European nativist movements.

Nativism in a North American Continental Context

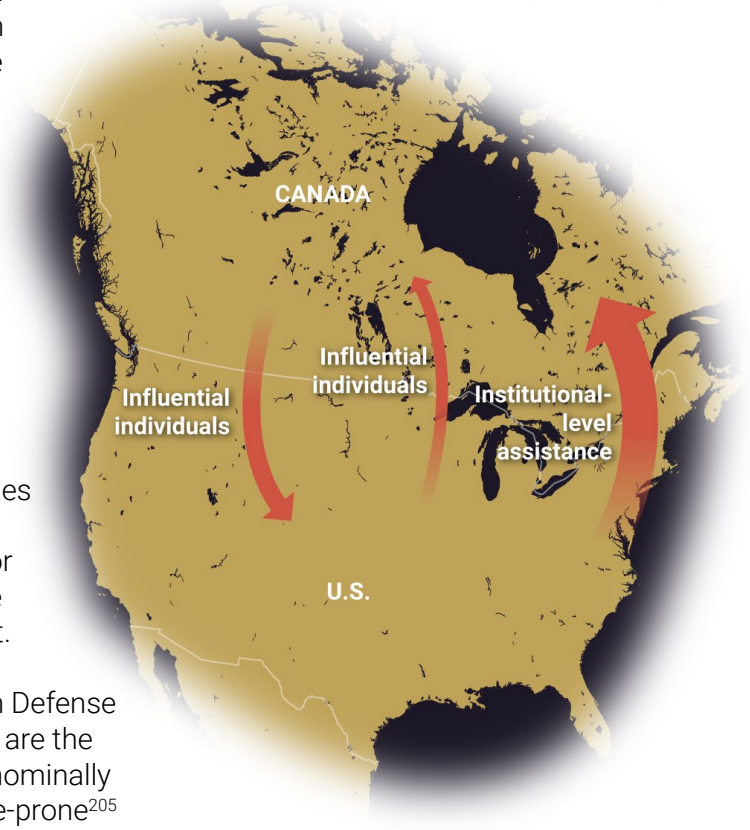
Some discrete groups and broader movements primarily or secondarily organized along nativist beliefs traverse national boundaries. Although it is a two-way flow, the predominant direction is from the United States into Canada, where groups from the former influence the latter more than vice versa. (For example, we are unaware of any nativist groups or movements that originated in Canada and then expanded into the United States.)

U.S. nativist influence into Canada comes in at least one of three forms. First, U.S. nativist influence manifests by establishing Canadian chapters of U.S.-origin actors. As early as the late 1910s to early 1930s, Canada had small but very active provincial chapters of the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist movement[203] that at the time was the predominant nativist movement in North America.[204] More contemporary examples are earlier-mentioned actors such as ACT for Canada and the Three Percenters movement. Another high-profile example is the Jewish Defense League-Canada. They are the Canada chapter of a nominally transnational, violence-prone[205] far-right organization originating in the U.S. that has openly supported various nativist events[206] and actors, like Soldiers of Odin.[207]

The second form of influence are groups that appear to be established organizationally independent of any U.S. entity, but whose ideology and activism are consistent with that of U.S. actors. The best example of this is the previously mentioned IWC, which appears to be Canada's only national-level entity dedicated primarily to anti-immigration beliefs.

As we noted earlier, IWC appears to function primarily as a website for anti-immigrant views. Although information from the website appears to have inspired individuals to engage in sporadic activism,[208] we did not identify evidence

U.S.–Canada Resource Flows



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suggesting IWC itself organizes any real-world activities. We were also unable to identify any evidence suggesting institutional ties with U.S.-based entities. However, its discourse closely parallels U.S.-style anti-immigrant rhetoric.[209] For example, like Tanton network organizations and other ideological fellow travelers, IWC claims that immigration imposes "cultural"/racial demographic and environmental degradation costs upon Canada.[210] Moreover, IWC openly provides links to several other extreme-right white nationalist and radical-right nativist actors,[211] including ones belonging to the U.S.-based Tanton network.[212]

The now-defunct CIPR made similar cultural and environmental-based arguments to justify its restrictionist positions.[213] CIPR also provided links to Tanton network organizations on its website.[214] However, unlike IWC, it did not directly link[215] to more explicit and extreme-right white nationalist sources.

The third form of influence is U.S. organizations sponsoring or otherwise supporting local activities in Canada. For example, the Middle East Forum, a U.S. think tank whose leadership has previously expressed support for working with European far-right political parties,[216] has been a consistent co-sponsor of an annual conference prominently featuring anti-Muslim rhetoric and speakers.[217] It has also provided an undisclosed amount of funding to the far-right media outlet Rebel Media.[218] Rebel Media also partnered with the Gatestone Institute, another far-right think tank promoting anti-Muslim views, to produce a dozen co-branded videos featuring U.S. and European anti-Muslim figures.[219]

Other Canadian organizations have previously organized events featuring high-profile anti-Muslim extremists and other nativists. For example, the JDL-Canada has previously invited Robert Spencer (not to be confused with the white nationalist Richard Spencer) and Pamela Geller to speak at events in Canada.[220] Spencer and Geller have been identified by think tanks[221] and the U.S.-based anti-hate watchdog Anti-Defamation League[222] as leading figures within the anti-Muslim movement.

That said, there are Canadian actors who are also involved in U.S.-based organizations and/or travel across the border to participate in events in the United States.

For example, Christine Douglass-Williams is a core blogger for the website and organization[223] Jihad Watch, run by Robert Spencer. She was also writer affiliated with the far-right Gatestone Institute think tank.[224] Another Canadian activist, Raheel Raza, who is president of the Council for Muslims Facing Tomorrow, co-founded an organization called Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights & Freedoms with the head of ACT for Canada, Valerie Price,[225] and has previously called for a moratorium on accepting any Muslim immigrants into Canada.[226] Raza also currently sits on the Board of Clarion Project,[227] an organization that has extensively promoted anti-Muslim conspiracy theories[228] and hysteria around national security issues.[229] She has previously been invited to speak at events in the United States, such as meeting with lawmakers at the Minnesota State Capitol[230] and testifying before a U.S. congressional subcommittee.[231] Raza has also attended past annual national conferences of ACT for America.[232]

It is important to note these are examples of individual, rather than cross-institutional, connections. Moreover, all the activity we identified involved individuals most closely associated with the anti-Muslim movement; we were unable to identify Canadian actors primarily motivated by anti-immigrant views.

The most influential far-right Canadian individuals affecting nativist trends in the United States do not appear to be from core groups or movements but rather from movements in which anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant animus play important but secondary ideological roles. For example, among the extreme right, Canadian white nationalists Lauren Southern and Stefan Molyneux had become extremely popular and influential in their respective alt-right and alt-lite social contexts.[233] (Southern and Molyneux did a joint speaking tour throughout Australia in July and August 2018.)[234] Southern has been described by The Atlantic as the "Alt-Right's most famous woman."[235] She had previously spoken in California in 2017 on at least two occasions, including once at a political assembly in Berkeley[236] and another where she was invited as the main speaker at an event on the campus of California Polytechnic State

> “Although he [Gavin McInnes] has previously claimed that watching the 9/11 attacks unfold from the roof of his Lower East Side residence made him “a nationalist” and ‘Western chauvinist,’ as early as 1999 he authored articles expressing strong race-baiting and anti-immigrant views.”

University.[237] Southern had abruptly halted her activism in the far-right social scene, citing extreme misogyny within the movement and a desire to raise her newborn child outside of media scrutiny.[238] She reappeared in public life a year later, eschewing her alt-right beliefs but also acting unrepentant about her former activism, effectively acting as though it never happened.[239] More recently, she has effectively positioned herself as a mainstream conservative media commentator.[240]

Molyneux, another far-right internet media personality, runs an online talk show with an audience of tens of thousands. He spoke in the United States as recently as 2019[241] at an annual “manosphere”[242] convention that has attracted other far-right personalities.[243] However, his audience appears to have declined recently. In the wake of his being banned from multiple online platforms — YouTube, PayPal, and Twitter — Molyneux’s audience size has declined substantially according to his own accounting of events.[244]

Perhaps the most high-profile far-right personality coming from Canada to influence U.S. political and social discourse is Gavin McInnes. McInnes was a co-founder of Vice Media and a former contributor to the far-right Canadian news commentary site Rebel Media. In 1999 McInnes moved to New York as part of his work with Vice. Although he has previously claimed that watching the 9/11 attacks unfold from the roof of his Lower East Side residence made him “a nationalist” and “Western chauvinist,” as early as 1999 he authored articles expressing strong race-baiting and anti-immigrant views.[245] By 2003, a New York Times article on Vice, which also discussed McInnes’ content at length, dryly noted, “He actually leans much further to the right than the Republican Party. His views are closer to a white supremacist’s.”[246] After leaving Vice in 2008, among other things, McInnes deepened his involvement in far-right activism and founded the crypto-fascist group Proud Boys in 2016.[247] The Proud Boys drew attention for their far-right ideology and propensity to engage in street fights with supporters of the far-left anti-fascist movement (“antifa”). McInnes quit the Proud Boys in 2018 shortly after members of the group got into a fight with antifa supporters outside the Metropolitan Republican Club in New York City and after the FBI labeled it an extremist organization.[248] After McInnes’ departure, the Proud Boys would continue to gain notoriety during a 2020 U.S. presidential debate when Trump asked its members to “stand back and stand by,”[249] as well as on Jan. 6, 2021, when several members were significantly involved in the violent insurrection on Capitol Hill.[250]

Nativism in a European Continental Context

This section describes some of the key actors who engage in activity crossing national borders within Europe. Pan-European nativism involves at least three major actor types: civil society organizations, political parties/politicians, and violent actors.

Civil Society Organizations

Within civil society organizations, there are three sub-categories of groups: street-focused, intellectually oriented, and faith-based organizations.

Street-Focused Groups

The mid-2000s saw an early version of organized anti-Muslim nativist actors, often collectively referred to by supporters as the “Counter-Jihad Movement” (CJM). The CJM at this time was composed of different actors such as street-focused “Defence Leagues” and “Stop Islamization” groups in various countries, as well as local campaigns to ban mosque/minaret constructions as well as

burqas, the traditionalist body and face-covering garment.[251]

One of the most publicly visible movements from this category, mentioned earlier in this report, is the German-founded PEGIDA, formed in October 2014. PEGIDA quickly gained popular support by organizing regular demonstrations.[252] The group managed to mobilize and expand its transnational and transatlantic connections by setting up branches in several European countries and Canada,[253] albeit with limited gains. PEGIDA was able to expand into other nation-states in part by tapping into the social networks and milieus where other CJM organizations had previously existed and gained limited success, such as the above-mentioned European "Defence Leagues" that were inspired by the original English chapter — itself founded by U.K. anti-Muslim extremist Tommy Robinson.[254]

However, analysts point out that rather than signaling failure, the sudden growth and contraction of the PEGIDA name "must be understood as the latest iteration of an anti-Islamic mobilization that has gained ground over the last decade. Even though the label PEGIDA might fade away after a brief spell of popularity, its rapid spread points to the potential of anti-Islamic forces in western Europe."[255] Although PEGIDA as a discrete organization in Germany appears to have declined from its initial surge of success, its ritualized form of street protest politics, mostly centered in the city of Dresden, has helped it to endure as an active organization for more than six years, even amid COVID-19.[256] On Oct. 17, 2021, PEGIDA celebrated the seventh anniversary of its founding with an assembly in Dresden attended by an estimated 1,000 people and included its founder Lutz Bachmann,[257] as well as the U.K.'s Robinson as a keynote speaker.[258]

Another street-focused group is the previously mentioned SOO (Soldiers of Odin), an anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim vigilante group formed in 2015 in Finland that quickly established several branches across Europe, as well as in the United States and Canada.[259] However, like PEGIDA, its meteoric rise was followed by an equally quick decline. While SOO maintains active chapters in some countries, experts believe them to be small in terms of current membership, and much lower relative to its earlier years when the group was ascendant.[260] It seems that, for the moment at least, these groups have not been able to replicate their limited local success at an international level.

Ideologically adjacent to the CJM street groups is Generation Identity, also a street-focused group, which originated in France in 2012. Organized around a type of white nationalist ideology known as Identitarianism, they claim to reject notions of biology-based racial superiority common among other white supremacist movements (like neo-Nazis), but they also reject the idea of cultural equality. They believe some cultures (i.e., European/Western) are superior to others (e.g., "Islamic") and therefore advocate for "ethno-pluralism," or the idea that cultures should remain separate and not mix. As such, while centrally organized around a culturally rather than biologically informed white nationalism like other white nationalist/supremacist ideologies, they also contain very strong nativist components. Therefore Identitarianism — which has supporters throughout Europe, the United States, and Canada — contain prominent anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant movement beliefs. One of the most high-profile conspiracy narratives associated with Identitarianism[261] is Camus' "Great Replacement" theory.

Intellectually Oriented Groups

A second sub-type of key actor among European nativists is intellectually oriented entities. One example, and perhaps the oldest, is the Research and Study Group for European Civilisation (GRECE), founded by Alain de Benoist and others in 1968.[262] De Benoist is a leading Identitarian and "European New Right" thinker and highly influential among contemporary European far-right ideologues, ideologies, and movements. Through GRECE, he espoused a more refined-sounding set of far-right racist beliefs in the form of Identitarianism that frequently co-opted left-wing terminology and concepts to frame his ideas. His writings have influenced several far-right figures, including the U.S. white nationalist Richard Spencer.

As an organization, GRECE published numerous books and periodicals — the latter most famously being Nouvelle École and Éléments — that were read by followers of far-right ideologies

throughout Europe and North America. Multiple far-right periodicals and institutions were modeled off GRECE.[263]

Another example is the International Free Press Society, the outgrowth of the Danish Free Press Society, led by Danish writer Lars Hedegaard.[264] Unlike the other CJM actors mentioned thus far, the International Free Press Society is not a street-oriented actor that engages in activities like vigilante neighborhood patrols or public assemblies. Instead, it presents itself as a more genteel and pseudo-intellectual aspect of anti-Muslim animus, and nativism more broadly, by positioning itself as the defender of free speech and regularly warning about the purported threat of "Islamization" to Western societies.[265] That said, it has ties to street-oriented actors who share its beliefs. For example, Tommy Robinson received the group's Sappho Freedom of Speech award in Copenhagen, Denmark, in early 2020.[266]

A third example of an intellectually oriented entity is L'Institut de Sciences Economiques et Sociales, Economiques et Politiques (Institute of Social, Economic and Political Sciences, also known as ISSEP).[267] This organization was established in 2018 by Marion Maréchal, niece of French far-right political figure Marine Le Pen.[268] Apart from familial ties between Maréchal and Le Pen, it is unclear what, if any, direct relationship exists between ISSEP and Le Pen's far-right political party Rassemblement National (National Rally). ISSEP is an institute of higher education[269] and political training academy and is part of Maréchal's long-term project to build the political infrastructure of the French far right.[270]

However, Maréchal's ambitions for ISSEP are not limited to France; she has previously stated her intent to "build alliances with like-minded schools throughout Europe, the U.S., Russia and China."[271] To facilitate fulfilling this goal, ISSEP has a "scientific council" of advisers whose responsibilities include "decid[ing] on agreements with international partner schools" and whose membership includes far-right figures from the U.K., including Raheem Kassam, and the U.S., including Paul Gottfried.[272] Kassam was an adviser to Farage, the far-right political figure. Gottfried is a far-right columnist and philosopher responsible for co-coining the phrase "Alternative Right" with Richard Spencer[273] and was the U.S. correspondent for Nouvelle École, the earlier-mentioned journal published by GRECE.[274]

Far-Right Violence in Other Parts of Europe Connected to the Ukraine Conflict

1 **Viktor Melin**, 23, **Anton Thulin**, 20, and co-conspirator **Jimmy Jonasson**, 50, are connected to three terrorist attacks in late 2016-early 2017 against refugee and left-wing targets in Sweden. Two bombs were detonated, injuring one, while a third bomb was defused. The men belonged to a breakaway violent cell connected to the above-ground neo-Nazi group, Nordic Resistance Movement. Prior to the attacks, Melin and Thulin had spent time training and fighting with a far-right pro-Russian group involved in the eastern Ukraine civil conflict.



2 **Gregoire Moutaux**, 25, was arrested at the Poland-Ukraine border after Ukrainian border officials discovered an arsenal of AK-47s, grenades, and rocket launchers. Moutaux is a far-right extremist who planned to carry out 15 terrorist attacks against the Euro 2016 soccer tournament, Muslim and Jewish houses of worship, and government buildings. He obtained the weapons after contacting far-right armed groups fighting in the eastern Ukraine civil conflict.

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Faith-Based Organizations

The third sub-type of non-political party civil society organizations are far-right faith-based organizations. The Dignitatis Humanae Institute, while a faith-based group, also overlaps with the intellectually oriented sub-category. It is a think tank with close ties to staunchly conservative and far-right elements of the Catholic Church, physically located in Italy but with supporters throughout Europe and North America.[275] They include British MEP Nirj Deva and Steve Bannon, a U.S. far-right figure and former White House chief strategist and senior counselor to Donald Trump during his presidency.[276] Bannon has been indicted by the U.S. Department of Justice for failure to comply with a U.S. congressional subpoena investigating the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol complex by far-right extremists.[277]

A second example is the Knights Templar International, a far-right Christian organization based in the U.K. but whose supporters have engaged in a range of activities across Europe. These activities include helping local armed far-right paramilitary groups in Bulgaria detaining immigrants entering the country without legal authorization and providing social media training to white nationalists and other extremists in Serbia.[278]

Other activities from religious actors share close similarities within a given region but remain operationally confined to each nation's borders. Given our publication's research parameters, here we point to the impact of far-right elements within the Catholic Church[279] in Hungary and Poland. (Although outside the scope of our report, it is important to acknowledge similar far-right elements and activities exist among the autocephalous Orthodox churches in other parts of Eastern Europe.)[280]

As part of the former Eastern Bloc, Hungary and Poland have gone through a significant nationalist and religious revival after the fall of the Iron Curtain.[281] One scholar describes this revival as follows:

> *When the communist parties that controlled the Eastern bloc countries fell along with the Soviet Union and new "democratic" movements embarked on the mission of writing new constitutions and establishing representative institutions, many countries adopted legislation that significantly liberalized the field of religious freedom. Initially, this liberalization allowed for traditional churches to revitalize and missionaries to enter the countries and start attracting converts. Within the space of a few years, however, many of these same countries began to re-regulate religion. Led by demands from traditional majority churches, governments adopted legislation that reestablished churches and imposed restrictions on missionary activity, international funding for religious groups, and proselytizing. In exchange for legal concessions in the field of religious liberty, churches have offered nationalist legitimacy and stability to regimes.*[282]

Within this context, it is not surprising that Eastern European far-right nativist trends observed today are often deeply enmeshed in clerical endorsement and historical revisionism (for more information on the latter, see the callout box on page 15). Certain members of the Catholic Church in Poland hold close connections with far-right groups that call for a "White Poland."[283] In addition, some elements of the Catholic Church helped organize October 2017 religious gatherings at certain points along Poland's borders to pray for the country's "salvation."[284] The event was also deliberately timed to commemorate the anniversary of the battle of Lepanto, when in 1571 a coalition of European states defeated the Ottoman Empire – which, as event organizers put it, "thus sav[ed] Europe from Islamization."[285]

Similarly some elements of the Catholic Church in Hungary maintain close relations with far-right populist actors.[286] In recent years, Orban's regime has pushed for more explicit rhetorical appeals to Christianity as a cultural identity in order to garner support from voters, especially in relation to the 2015 mass influx of migrants entering Europe.[287] Orban sees Hungary and himself as a frontier protector of European Christendom.[288] Rising anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim attitudes in Hungary and Poland have coincided with a rise in anti-Semitism and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric.[289]

This re-blending of faith, nationalist appeals, and state power is worth highlighting. The invocation of a muscular form of Christianity by many of these groups should be properly understood as more of a cultural signifier than a theological signifier.

Vigilante Border Patrols In Europe



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As one analyst directly put it, "The concern is not with Christianity but with Christendom, understood [by far-rightists] as a civilisation inherently hostile to Islam."[290]

Political Parties/Politicians

The second type of major actors can be found in the governmental realm: political parties and politicians. While most nativist political parties' activities are confined to the national level, there is some cross-border activity. For example, the Hungarian Jobbik party spread contacts and tactics to other far-right movements and politicians in the region, including a Polish far-right mayor who hosted representatives of Jobbik in an anti-Roma campaign in 2014.[291] During the 2017 German national parliamentary elections, Brexit Party official Farage took part in the AfD's election campaign.[292]

However, other activities take place within or closely adjacent to supranational bodies. Within the European Parliament, the far-right parliamentary group Identity and Democracy was established after the 2019 European Parliament elections. Identity and Democracy comprises various far-right groups from all over the EU. Its aims are "creating jobs and growth, increasing security, tackling illegal immigration, as well as making the EU less bureaucratic."[293]

Gaining a foothold in the EU parliamentary bloc is extremely valuable for organizations such as Identity and Democracy, as it gives them legitimacy, access to funds, and networking opportunities at an institutional level. On Dec. 3-4, 2021, representatives of several far-right political parties convened in Warsaw to discuss uniting and building an alternative power base to center-right, centrist, center-left, and leftist parties in the European Parliament.[294] It remains to be seen what impact, if any, this meeting will have on far-right political party activity in Europe.

Beyond cross-border collaboration and activism within the supranational bodies, political parties can nevertheless have international effects, even while remaining operationally confined within their nation's borders. Brexit is an illustrative example. While the far-right Brexit Party overwhelmingly focused their political activities on the U.K. (with the notable exception of Farage's personal assistance to the AfD), the symbolic impact of Brexit, beyond its immediate material and legal effects, inspired and mobilized other far-right euroskeptic and nativist parties throughout Europe. Collectively, these and other otherwise domestically focused parties significantly affected Europe's political landscape, including the U.K. and at least 15 of 27 EU member states — including all European country cases mentioned in this publication. [295]

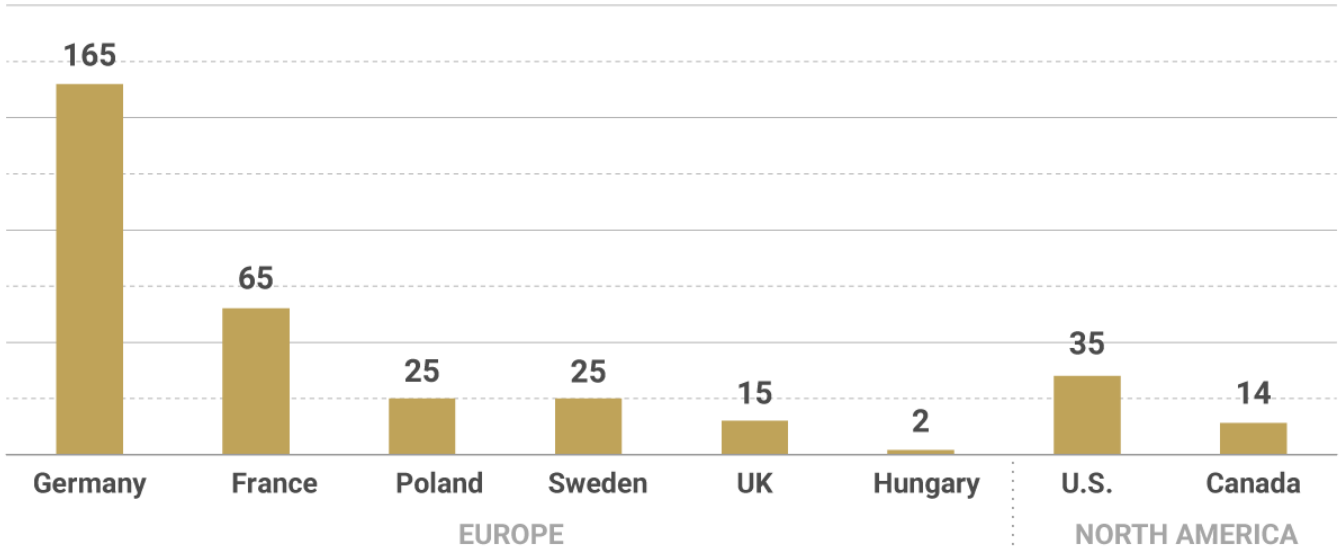
Violent Actors

Finally, there are those individuals and groups that are committed

Foreign fighters who went to the battlefront in Ukraine

Fighters came from approximately 55 countries, including the countries used as case studies in this report (shown below).

Estimates from 2014 to June 1, 2019



Note: More than 17,000 foreign fighters went to Ukraine during this period, with the overwhelming majority – 15,000 – coming from Russia.

Source: Soufan Center. (2019) White Supremacy Extremism: The Transnational Rise of the Violent White Supremacist Movement.

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to engaging in acts of politically motivated violence, including terrorism. The rising risk and actual incidence of far-right violence comes against the backdrop of the steady normalization and mainstreaming of nativist sentiment across Europe over at least two decades. Factors such as the 2015 migration crisis, high-profile incidents of Islamist violence (e.g., the beheading of French schoolteacher Samuel Paty), and harsh governmental responses to those incidents, such as in France and Austria,[296] have complicated the matter further.

While most far-right violence in Europe appears to be localized and concentrated in some countries more than others,[297] there are also some noticeable domestic trends that different countries appear to share despite the lack of cross-border operational ties between violent actors. For example, in recent years there have been multiple attacks against politicians who promote pro-immigration ideas and criticize far-right movements, such as the killings of Labour Party MP Jo Cox in the U.K. and CDU politician Walter Lübcke in Hesse, Germany, as well as the nonfatal stabbing of victorious Cologne, Germany, mayoral candidate Henriette Reker. Another important trend is the recent rise of far-right armed vigilante border patrols that operate similarly to American paramilitaries located on the U.S.-Mexico border. Although there is no evidence indicating any cross-border collaboration between different actors in different countries, European armed vigilante border patrol groups have been reported in Germany, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Hungary since 2016.[298] These groups appear to have emerged in response to widespread perceptions of crisis, rightly or wrongly, about mass influxes of unauthorized immigrants — particularly ones associated with being a threat — entering their country.[299]

Moreover, the 2014 war in Ukraine became a gathering point for various nativist organizations, including those with extreme-right ideologies. The role of foreign countries and foreign fighters in the war have additionally encouraged cooperation and radicalization of certain groups and individuals. As a previous New Lines report showed, former far-right foreign fighters who took part in the Yugoslav wars during the 1990s re-emerged as recruiters and ideologues in Ukraine in 2014.[300]

The conspirators in at least two cases — one interdicted plot and one implemented attack — can be directly tied to the eastern Ukraine theater as individuals who directly engaged in fighting or attempted to make direct connections with fighters on the battlefield.[301] These foreign fighters came from approximately 55 countries, including the countries used as case studies in this report.

Transatlantic Connections: Overview

As noted earlier, nativist actors are not limited by national boundaries. Connections are not limited to particular continents, either. In recent years, the number of transatlantic ties between nativist actors has grown.

The strength of these ties should not be overstated. On the whole, like Mudde's 2012 study,[302] our analysis suggests real-world nativist activism is largely confined to the national level and, to a lesser extent, the regional level. The ties that bind nativist actors across the Atlantic exist more so in the realm of shared narratives, beliefs, and tropes about Muslims and immigrants. Even while still predominantly characterized by national and, to a lesser extent, continent-wide activism, nativists frequently mobilize in local and regional contexts by invoking common political stories, tropes, and ideologies held by actors on both continents. In some of the most extreme cases, these narratives serve as important sources of inspiration and justification for acts of political violence, including mass-casualty terrorism.[303] It is outside the scope of this report to go into significant detail about these ideas; they have been extensively investigated in other scholarly and policy-relevant publications.[304] Suffice it to say here that nativists on both sides of the Atlantic typically believe that the continued entry and socio-political enfranchisement of immigrants and Muslims into Western nation-states represent existential threats — typically expressed in cultural, political, and demographic terms.[305]

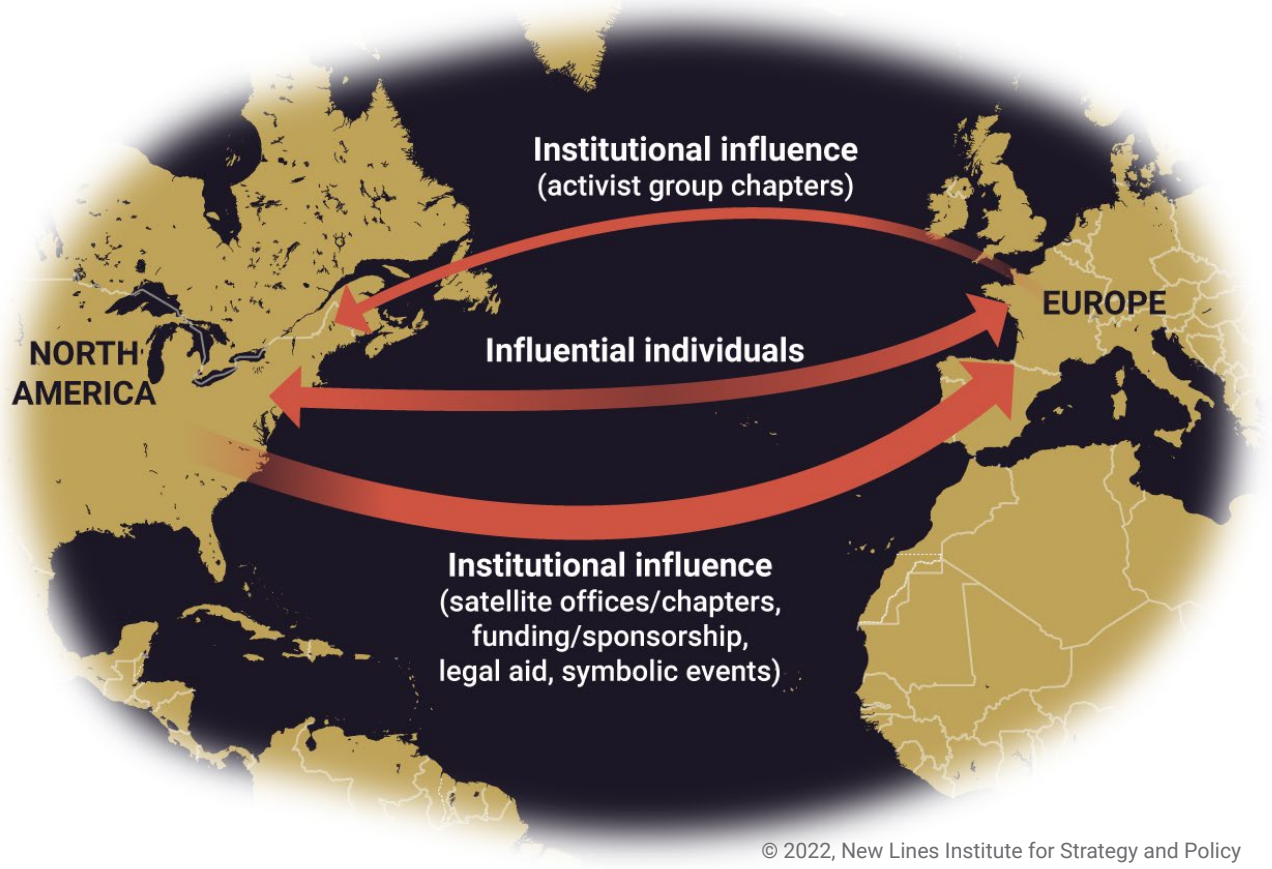
The real-world transatlantic connections of far-right nativists, to the extent they exist, were generally understudied until recently,[306] and their effects should not be underestimated, either. Extant research on transnational far-right activity suggests actors use these cross-border relationships to "share ideas and information, policy and praxis [putting theory into practice] … in the development of a strategic 'master frame' that they believe will allow them to overcome the limits of purely national activity in a globalised world."[307] In other words, transnational activities help otherwise localized actors learn new ideas and skills that not only help them domestically but also work toward a larger collective effort that transcends national borders based on a broadly shared political vision.

Our research regarding far-right nativism is consistent with this insight, though much of the focus here is limited to identifying what transatlantic links exist. Our research suggests far-right nativist transatlantic ties tend to involve high-profile individuals, mostly associated with the anti-Muslim movement, participating in specific events at the invitation of a particular local organization or actor. That said, some of these invitations come from actors that possess direct access to the highest levels of government and political power.[308] Moreover, there are notable cases of individuals associated with anti-immigrant movements participating in events across the Atlantic.

There are also cases of organization-based support for institutional and individual nativist actors on both sides of the Atlantic. U.S. conservative media commentator Tucker Carlson's August 2021 trip to Hungary and his coverage of Orban, and the effects Carlson's coverage had on right-wing U.S. politics, is one example.

Finally, it is important to be explicit about what has been implied thus far about these real-world and narrative links – namely, that the flows of actors and influence between Europe and North America is bi-directional.

Transatlantic Resource Flows



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North America to Europe: Institutional Activities

As noted in the introduction to this section, transatlantic links manifest in multiple ways. Institutional links from North America to Europe take at least four forms. The first two are U.S.-based organizations establishing a physical presence in Europe either as a local chapter or as a network of individuals officially affiliated with an organization but who do not constitute an office or other single satellite entity.

An example of the former is ACT for America establishing a local chapter in Vienna, Austria, headed at one time by high-profile anti-Muslim figure Elizabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff. Apart from her, it is unclear what the current membership size of the chapter is or whether it simply exists on paper.[309] Nevertheless, its prior activity has an important symbolic value for the larger ACT for America organization, being somewhat tangible evidence that helps bolster its otherwise questionable self-portrayal as an entity with a transnational reach.[310] Beyond symbolism, Sabaditsch-Wolff has been an important political actor who has worked extensively within the wider anti-Muslim movement for nearly a decade and half. She has substantial connections to various European think tanks, media outlets, opinion shapers, and politicians.[311] Another example is the Canada-based far-right media outlet, Rebel Media, which set up a U.K.-based satellite office, run by far-right anti-Muslim extremist Tommy Robinson. On Feb. 15, 2018, Rebel Media published a report by Robinson in which he gave favorable coverage to the far-right German nativist group actors PEGIDA and AfD.[312]

An example of the second form of institution-based links are the activities of the Gatestone Institute, a U.S.-based think tank. Alina Polyakova, an expert on far-right populism and Brookings Institution fellow, described Gatestone as

"putting out content that was clearly anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and was echoing some of the Russian disinformation propaganda."[313]

While there is some evidence to suggest the existence of an offshoot or subsidiary entity called "Gatestone Institute Europe," aside from passing references to it in certain writers' biographies[314] little is known about it and its current organizational structure and level of activity. As late as April 9, 2017, Gatestone's website listed a "Board of Governors" for "Gatestone Europe,"[315] though no such listing has been found on its website since then. It is likely that Gatestone's European entity, to whatever extent it currently exists, has minimal influence and may not operate beyond titular purposes.[316] In practice, Gatestone appears to employ a network of authors who consistently write for the organization and occasionally represent the organization at in-person events. Our analysis of information taken from Gatestone's website identified at least nine Europe-based authors who penned articles for the organization in 2020.[317]

The third type of institutional link is through financial[318] and legal assistance. The activities of the aforementioned Middle East Forum (MEF), run by the anti-Islamist figure Daniel Pipes, provides a clear example of these connections. Some forms of assistance go directly to other institutions. The "2013 Report on Activity and Impact" from the Stresemann Foundation, a right-wing think tank based in Germany, thanked MEF and Pipes for their sponsorship.[319] Felix Strüning, the managing director of the foundation and its magazine Citizen Times at the time, had given a favorable interview to Sabaditsch-Wolff in 2011[320] and presented alongside her at an Organization of Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) conference in 2013.[321] (The foundation would later engender controversy for its open affiliation with the far-right AfD political party,[322] which appears to continue to affect the organization to this day.[323]) A more recent example is MEF's financial sponsorship of the October 2016 "Dangerous Words 250" conference in Sweden, which was co-organized by, among others, the nativist group Danish Free Press Society.[324] In addition to Pipes, the conference also featured Gatestone Institute fellow Douglas Murray as part of its lineup of speakers.[325]

Other forms of assistance go to individuals who have become causes célèbres for nativists and other far-right actors. One of the more recent and high-profile examples was MEF's involvement in procuring financial, legal, and other political support for Tommy Robinson, the U.K.-based anti-Muslim far-right actor. Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, was arrested on May 25, 2018, after he was charged with violating a court order intended to protect the integrity of ongoing legal proceedings of a widely publicized child sex abuse ring.[326] On Aug. 1, 2018, MEF issued a press release stating:

The full resources of the Middle East Forum were activated to free Mr. Robinson. We:

1. *Conferred with his legal team and made funding available to them;*
2. *Funded, organized, and staffed the large "Free Tommy" London rallies on June 9 and July 14 (see The Times, The Guardian, and the Independent);*
3. *Funded travel by Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) to London to address the rally; and*
4. *Urged Sam Brownback, the State Department's ambassador for International Religious Freedom, to raise the issue with the U.K.'s ambassador.*[327]

The MEF and the David Horowitz Freedom Center, another organization promoting anti-Muslim views,[328] invited Robinson to speak in the United States shortly after his arrest. (He was subsequently denied a visa to enter the country.)[329] Legal issues stemming from his criminal charges eventually caught up with Robinson, and despite additional help purportedly provided by MEF,[330] he was sentenced to nine months in jail. More recently, MEF has disavowed Robinson entirely, noting in a statement to one media outlet, "In retrospect, MEF regrets funding the events supporting Mr[.] Robinson. Accordingly, we have cut all relations with him."[331]

The fourth and final type of link is hosting events of symbolic political significance. Perhaps the most notable examples are reports that a Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) — the largest and single most influential annual gathering of mainstream

> “The importance of a venue associated with a political brand name like CPAC’s being held in a country run by an increasingly authoritarian and far-right government that has become a de facto haven for other far-rightists cannot be understated.”

right-wing activists in the United States — will be held Budapest in March 2022.[332] Since 2017, CPAC has held several gatherings in foreign countries. CPAC officials quoted in one media report claim the event is “not ‘an official CPAC conference.’”[333] However, the same report, citing others familiar with the gathering and CPAC’s parent organization, the American Conservative Union (ACU), suggest this lack of an official relationship between the ACU and the Budapest event “was largely cosmetic.” — a claim ACU/CPAC officials declined to comment on.[334]

Regardless of what official relationship may or may not exist between ACU/CPAC and local Hungarian event organizers, the importance of a venue associated with a political brand name like CPAC’s being held in a country run by an increasingly authoritarian and far-right government that has become a de facto haven for other far-rightists[335] cannot be understated. It provides a highly symbolic example of how far-right ideas and figures are gaining wider social acceptability among mainstream right-wing political currents. Smaller and more extreme examples of such gatherings are 2014 and 2018 gatherings of white nationalists/supremacists and far-right extremists from across Europe and other parts of the world, both also hosted in Budapest.[336]

Europe to North America: Institutional Activities

One entity that established a real-world presence from Europe into North America was the German anti-Muslim group PEGIDA, which set up branches in Canada.[337] Much as it did in Europe, PEGIDA in Canada organized protests against Islam and immigrants. Although its membership has been consistently small, it managed to capture attention from media outlets as well as counterprotesters.[338] Another example is SOO Canada, which organized patrols in Quebec[339] and also managed to hold an event at a Royal Canadian Legion branch, a veterans’ organization.[340] When Maxime Bernier formed the populist far-right People’s Party of Canada, the signatories for the party’s establishment included Janice Bultje, a PEGIDA Canada official; Justin L. Smith, well-known member of SOO Canada; and Shaun Walker, former chairman of the National Alliance, a major U.S. neo-Nazi organization.[341] In recent years, the Canadian branches of both SOO and PEGIDA, while still active, have been in decline, suffering from multiple internal divisions.[342]

In the United States, Stop Islamization of America and American Freedom Defense Initiative were formed based on the Stop Islamization of Europe organization originating from Denmark with affiliates in a dozen other European countries.[343] Both of these organizations are led by the earlier-mentioned Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer, who have made careers of regularly disparaging Islam and Muslims. As noted earlier in this section and elsewhere in this report, SOO had established a rapid and visible presence in the United States, with activity in 42 states during its peak in early 2016.[344] However, as quickly as the group rose, it appears to have gone into steep decline, maintaining an active but significantly smaller presence.[345]

North America to Europe: Individual Activities

While institutions play an important role in real-world transatlantic nativism, activity from individuals is more common. Often, these are people who engage in activism without any organizational affiliation. However, we also include individuals engaging in nativist activism under some organizational aegis. We view their activities as “individual” as opposed to “institutional” because these are usually specific persons

attending/participating in an event or going on a speaking tour. This is distinct from activity such as an organizational sponsorship of an event, which can include things such as contributing funding, time, and/or logistical planning.

On April 14, 2007, an in-person transatlantic anti-Muslim movement gathering occurred, bringing together actors who hitherto were in contact with each other via the internet. The conference, referred to as the "UK and Scandinavia Counterjihad Summit" by its attendees,[346] was the first of at least 12 different transatlantic gatherings of anti-Muslim actors to take place between then and 2012.[347] We have not identified any "Counterjihad Summit"-type transatlantic gatherings since then. However, transatlantic meetings of anti-Muslim actors have continued through other convening mechanisms. As early as 2009, U.S. and European anti-Muslim movement actors have also used annual OSCE conferences to not only engage international policymakers, but also to network with other movement supporters and convene their own side events.[348] These OSCE-anchored activities continued until as late as 2017.[349]

In July 2018, Steve Bannon, former White House chief strategist, senior adviser to Trump, and chairman of the far-right media outlet Breitbart News, announced plans to build a Europe-wide organization that would promote far-right nationalism. Called "The Movement," the intent of the proposed organization was to build an organization that would promote far-right nationalism and nativism across the continent.[350] Despite initial fanfare and statements of encouragement from European far-right actors, The Movement ended up garnering little tangible support among Bannon's erstwhile allies (which might indicate that political figures might need to rely on more than nativism to succeed generally).[351] Bannon continued attempting to build an pan-European entity promoting far-right nationalism, this time through the Dignitatis Humanae Institute, a think tank with close ties to staunchly conservative elements of the Catholic Church. However, he hit another roadblock in March 2021, when an Italian administrative court blocked his and the institute's ability to use a local monastery as the site of his planned organization.[352]

From March 22-25, 2019, several high-profile figures within the wider U.S. nativist milieu participated in the 2019 Summit on Migration in Budapest. This event was notable for at least two reasons. First, it was a forum where high-profile figures deeply embedded within both the U.S. anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant movements participated in a transatlantic event.[353] While there has been substantial documentation and self-publicizing[354] of transatlantic connections/engagements between North American and European anti-Muslim actors, anti-immigrant actors' real-world activities hitherto appeared to be confined within their respective national borders. Second, the event was attended by government officials from Poland, Hungary, and the Trump administration — all of which have either proposed or enacted hard-line restrictionist measures on immigration.[355]

Then there is Tucker Carlson's August 2021 visit to Hungary, where he gave favorable coverage to Prime Minister Orban's authoritarian and nativist policies. As one analysis of the trip's impact notes:

> *Bringing Carlson to Budapest was meant to persuade Americans to pay attention to Orban's Hungary. The effort appeared to be successful: The following week, several Republican senators told Insider, an online news publication, that Carlson's broadcasts from Budapest had given them a favorable opinion of Orban.*[356]

As noted earlier, a gathering with ambiguous official connections to the Conservative Political Action Conference and its parent organization, the American Conservative Union, is planned to be held in Budapest in March 2022.

Europe to North America: Individual Activities

Although the institutional activities flowing from Europe into North America appear to have had limited impact, individuals' activities are much more visible. Various far-right forums and social media have provided a platform for easier connectivity between nativists on both sides of the Atlantic. A number of participants in the Charlottesville rally in 2017 had traveled from Europe.[357] These individuals can be divided into two main groups: politicians and activists.



French far-right politician Marion Maréchal (C) arrives for a June 2018 press conference for the first anniversary of the Institut de Sciences Sociales Economiques et Politiques (ISSEP) in Lyon, France. Also shown are Patrick Libbrecht (L), honorary president of ISSEP, and Patrick Louis (R), co-president of ISSEP. (PHILIPPE DESMAZES / AFP via Getty Images)

Among political figures, Geert Wilders, the far-right Dutch politician, is one of the best-known European nativists to visit the United States. A March 2017 investigation published by Foreign Policy magazine found Wilders made at least eight unique in-person trips to the United States between 2009 and July 2016.[358] (Several of these trips, according to the Foreign Policy investigation, were sponsored by key group actors promoting anti-Muslim animus and nativism, including the David Horowitz Freedom Center and the Gatestone Institute.)[359] Some of his U.S. activities include:

- Speaking at a screening, organized by anti-Muslim extremist Pamela Geller, of his anti-Muslim film "Fitna" at the U.S. Capitol in 2009;[360]
- Being hosted by far-right congressmen Louie Gohmert and Steve King in late April 2015, when he spoke again at the U.S. Capitol;[361] and
- Attending the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland.[362]

In 2018, European far-right figures Nigel Farage and former French parliamentarian Marion Maréchal (Marine Le Pen's niece, who at the time had the last name Maréchal-Le Pen) both attended the highly influential annual CPAC in the Washington, D.C., area.[363]

European activists also maintain connections with counterparts in the U.S. One prominent example is Elizabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff. As noted earlier, she has served as an important bridge between North American and European anti-Muslim actors. She has frequently traveled to the U.S. to speak to broadly express the idea that Europe is under siege from Muslims and that the U.S. must not go down that path. Her activities include a March 2017 meeting with Trump adviser and high-profile nativist Kris Kobach.[364]

Another example is Raheem Kassam, a far-right British political commentator and former adviser to Nigel Farage, himself a pro-Trump commentator and regular pundit on Fox News. Kassam maintains strong connections with North American far-right actors holding nativist views, including Steve Bannon. He was the editor-in-chief of Breitbart's London bureau while Bannon was CEO of the media outlet. Kassam contributed to Bannon's ultimately stalled attempt to create an organization that would unite various far-right European actors.[365] However, he joined the aforementioned ISSEP, established by French far-rightist Maréchal,[366] as a member of its "scientific board."[367] Kassam currently lives in the Washington, D.C., area, having moved there shortly after Donald Trump won the 2016 U.S. presidential election.[368] He also holds fellowship positions at organizations such as MEF and the Gatestone Institute.[369] Kassam is currently the editor of The National Pulse, a D.C.-based media outlet.[370]

Other examples of individual international networking can be seen in more formal, wide-reaching networking opportunities, such as Farage speaking at the 2017, 2019, and 2020 CPAC conferences,[371] and Marion Maréchal speaking at the 2018 CPAC conference.[372]

Forecast and Conclusion

The economic and public health impacts of COVID variants will continue to dampen real-world activities, including in-person engagements like conferences and speaking tours, for the next six to 12 months. The emergence of extra-virulent COVID variants, like the delta and omicron strains, have extended the life of the pandemic despite the development and ongoing global distribution of vaccines. As a result, countries have had to periodically reintroduce lockdown measures with new spikes in COVID infections. Until vaccination levels reach a critical mass in North America and Europe, travel restrictions will somewhat constrain national and cross-border activities. Cross-border and transatlantic links between nativists, particularly anti-Muslim movement actors, will continue to also be mediated via the internet.

However, transatlantic ties between nativist actors, particularly those most closely associated with the anti-Muslim movement, will likely re-strengthen over the next few years. Although European nativist political leaders will not have a welcoming reception with the current U.S. presidential administration, they will likely continue to find an audience among some actors engaged in political opposition to Biden. In addition, nativist organizations and individuals will continue to foster relationships and connections. Although the pandemic has moved this cooperation and activities almost entirely online for the moment, real-world cooperation can be expected to resume once the vaccination and travel possibilities are enabled.

Canada will continue to have an active nativist milieu – though one with limited influence – for the next several years. Despite national scandals that have affected the electability of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's administration, Canada's national electorate largely leans leftward. Canada's largest right-leaning party, the Conservative Party, has either censured or expelled individuals for nativist rhetoric, while political actors who ran on platforms of far-right populism, like Maxime Bernier, were effectively repudiated at the polls in 2019 and 2021. Nativist actors themselves appear to be institutionally weak. Currently, there is no real-world organization in Canada that is primarily dedicated to anti-immigrant perspectives and policies. The anti-Muslim movement has greater organizational capacity, but its influence is constrained by several factors, such as associations with white supremacists and intra-organizational/movement fractures. To some extent, anti-Muslim movement actors are also buoyed by support from U.S. organizations. However their real-world activities may quickly face greater constraints should concerns about the rapid spread of the omicron COVID variant force reinstituting lockdowns and border closures. Finally, the institutional weakness of Canada's wider nativist movement is facing a strengthening collection of civil society organizations that conduct research and organize in opposition to far-right extremism.[373]

That said, analysts interested in monitoring North American, transatlantic, and global far-right trends, including far-right nativism, should continue to closely monitor developments in Canada. Although it lacks a robust institutional landscape vis-à-vis other countries, including its neighbor to the south, Canada is the country of origin for Lauren Southern, Stefan Molyneux, and Gavin McInnes, among other influential far-right individuals. In this sense, Canada has exported far-right extremists to other parts of the world.

Hungary will likely continue to develop itself as a key transatlantic far-right nativist center of activity. Relative to its economic and population size, Hungary is another country that appears to be punching well above its weight class in terms of influence among the far right. However, rather than being an exporter of key far-right figures, Hungary has developed social capital among far-right extremists that is predicated upon at least two factors. First, it is often perceived as a "model" country where the movement's policy preferences have been successfully implemented under Orban's authoritarian hand. Second, it has hosted several high-visibility political figures[374] and events associated with anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and white nationalist movements from around the world. Thus, while it has been influential among some European far-rightists for several years,[375] Hungary has also steadily gained political currency among high-profile U.S. mainstream

> “ Amid this shift, there is a strong possibility that nativist policy advocacy will become enmeshed with other growing legislative trends ... ”

conservatives and far-right individuals and movements.

This growing influence on the U.S. far right is also due to a third factor: the results of a decade-long lobbying campaign by Orban and his associates to gain influence among mainstream political and policy elites in the United States. Though these efforts have targeted both sides of the ideological aisle, evidence suggests success has been much greater on the political right than the political left.[376] Examples of success include visits by high-profile figures like Tucker Carlson and Jeff Sessions, along with several other notable individuals on the mainstream right in the U.S., to Budapest.[377]

Biden's victory in the U.S. 2020 election means that U.S. nativists will lose access to executive branch power, and subsequent policy influence, at national and international levels for at least the next four years. As result, we are likely to see three significant shifts among U.S. nativist actors:

First, it is unclear if the transatlantic links between North American and European anti-immigrant actors will continue to grow or return to being confined to national borders. As noted earlier, apart from some nascent evidence, we identified little transatlantic cooperation among North American and European anti-immigrant actors. Steve Bannon's failure to successfully launch a cross-border far-right nationalist organization, which could serve as an institutional vehicle for transatlantic anti-immigrant networking and partnership, makes this prospect even less likely. (Marion Maréchal's ISSEP might fill this institutional gap in the future, but it appears for now to be mainly focused on its endogenous organizational growth and impact on domestic French politics.) That said, in September 2021, Jeff Sessions — who has a long history of attending and speaking at events hosted by U.S. anti-immigrant groups[378] — spoke on a panel about immigration hosted by the Danube Institute,[379] a Hungarian government-funded think tank.[380] Meanwhile, anti-Muslim actors, as noted earlier, will maintain their national and international links online if real-world conditions steadily improve, eventually allowing further cross-border travel.

Second, domestically, U.S. nativists will attempt to offset the loss of federal-level influence in two ways. First, they will attempt to preserve policy changes made under the Trump administration through political pressure and legal challenges at the federal level.[381] Second, they will refocus much of their attention toward local and state advocacy. Amid this shift, there is a strong possibility that nativist policy advocacy will become enmeshed with other growing legislative trends, such as efforts to propose state laws placing greater restrictions on voting.[382] We premise this judgement on previous years of U.S. state-level legislative behavior — namely, that many lawmakers who proposed bills that would disproportionately impact immigrants and Muslims (e.g., local police enforcing federal immigration laws and "anti-shariah" initiatives) also proposed bills effectively making it more difficult for minorities to legally cast a ballot (e.g., stricter voter identification and voter roll purge laws).[383]

Finally, key U.S. nativist actors, enabled in large part by the global impacts of COVID-19, have been increasingly engaging in anti-China rhetoric.[384] While this probably does not represent a wholesale shift from anti-immigrant and/or anti-Muslim positions toward anti-China ones, it may suggest a reshuffling of some attention, resource allocation, and reframing among U.S. nativist actors to make themselves relevant to the increasing attention to the emerging great power competition between Washington and Beijing.[385] Two corollary possibilities flow from this observation. Domestically, the increasing geopolitical saber rattling between the U.S. and China presents an opportunity for

nativists and their political fellow travelers to advance a kind of chauvinistic nationalism that will make negative attitudes against Asian Americans more socially acceptable.[386] This will also raise the risk of hate crimes and violence against Asian Americans.[387]

Internationally, this could facilitate growing ties between far-right actors in North America and other parts of East Asia, such as Japan.[388] While it is still too early to predict how far this latter trend may develop, there are already signs of nascent links between U.S. actors expressing nativist rhetoric and Japanese far-right actors. For example, between July 8, 2020, and Nov. 30, 2021, the Center for Security Policy has republished, with permission, 20 articles produced by the Japan Institute for National Fundamentals, a far-right Japanese think tank that, among other things, has expressed historical revisionism regarding Japan's modern imperial period, such as the denial of war crimes like sex slavery of Chinese and Korean women (euphemistically referred to as "comfort women" by denialists).[389]

Nativism will continue to be an important ideological cornerstone and source of political mobilization for far-right actors in the United States. To whatever extent the aforementioned shifts may occur, they will also be constrained by other factors. At the moment, it appears as though other issues, such as Black Lives Matter, antifa, anti-COVID organizing, and general opposition to the Biden administration have absorbed much of the attention and counter-mobilizing energies of the far right.

However, other variables could redirect far-right actors' attention back toward nativism. For example, less than two months after the presidential inauguration, the Biden administration was already contending with escalating numbers of unauthorized immigrant children attempting to enter the United States.[390] While experts point out that these rising numbers are the result of releasing of built-up pressures — such as backlogs of unprocessed asylum seekers and the slow re-opening of the U.S.-Mexico border — as well as climate change-induced migration[391] — some political actors are using this situation to construct a crisis narrative that nativists can exploit to promote their views.[392]

To a lesser extent, nativists have sought to exploit the plight of Afghan refugees fleeing from the recent Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. As a result, some analysts believe that places such as asylum housing centers, diaspora communities of Afghans, and Islamic houses of worship may be at an elevated risk of a far-right ideologically motivated attack.[393]

In terms of anti-Muslim prejudice, polling suggests Americans' favorable sentiments toward Muslims have substantially risen over the past several years. Yet the same data also suggests that those shifts, which occurred primarily among political liberals and independents, were mediated by opposition to Trump's perceived nativist rhetoric and policies. With Trump gone from public office, we may see some increases in reported anti-Muslim attitudes among liberals and independents. The potential political vulnerability of U.S. Muslims, which nativists may seek to exploit in furtherance of their objectives, was underscored by one political operative, who told Politico, "It's no secret that when you look at the polling, there are significant numbers of Democratic voters and Republican voters who have fairly strong [anti-Muslim] tendencies."[394]

In the meantime, we do not believe that deep gains made by nativists — anti-Muslim or anti-immigrant actors — among mainstream conservatives will abate anytime soon. Considering Trump's enduring popularity among those on the right end of the political spectrum, absent some factor(s) inducing a tectonic political shift, he and his style of nativist-infused firebrand politics are likely to exert considerable influence on mainstream right-wing actors for the foreseeable future.

Muslims and immigrants in the United States will continue to face a significant risk of violence from U.S. far-right actors motivated in part by nativist beliefs. The insurrection at the U.S. Capitol complex on Jan. 6, 2021, demonstrated that far-right actors pose a significant threat to the public safety and national security of the United States.

Many of the actors who participated in the riot were supporters of groups and movements that, among other things, espouse nativist hatred, such as the America First, Proud

Boys, Oath Keepers, and the Three Percenters.[395] At the moment, the operational tempo and political momentum behind these groups appears to have stalled. Scores of individuals have been arrested, and several groups appear to be fracturing (e.g., the Proud Boys and the QAnon movement). The Three Percenters-Original, one of the largest organizational factions of the wider Three Percenter movement, has shut down entirely.[396] Finally, these actors lost an important de facto figurehead in Trump, who left office on Jan. 20, 2021.

Yet the underlying conditions for violent mobilization remain. Trump, while out of public office, is not out of public life. As noted earlier, his confrontational, nativist-infused style of politics continues to hold sway among many individuals, including key political figures on the right at local, state, and national levels. In this context, all other things being equal, he will continue to inspire mainstream and far-right actors, including violent ones. Millions of individuals continue to believe one of the key narratives inspiring the Jan. 6 insurrection — unsubstantiated allegations of widespread voter fraud and "stolen" elections. This could provide an entry point for recruitment by violent far-right actors. Moreover, even developments that seem to weaken far-right actors, like fractures among groups/movements, have unpredictable outcomes. Relative to other factions in the Three Percenter and militia movements, the Three Percenters-Original was more measured in its rhetoric and behaviors.[397] While some may exit the movement entirely, others may simply join other factions, including ones that are more extreme in their speech and activities.



Protesters in Milton Keynes, England, demonstrate against COVID-19 restrictions. (MARTIN POPE / Getty Images)

Finally, as noted earlier, while the attention of far-right actors appears to be absorbed by other issues at the moment, things can easily change. For example, as previously mentioned, nativists have attempted to exploit the attention surrounding the recent influx of Afghan refugees fleeing Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. Again, variables are (re)emerging that could facilitate shifts in actors' attention and make Muslims and immigrants attractive targets of scapegoating and violence.

The weakening of the EU due to the 2015 mass influx of migrants and the effects of Brexit, as well as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, will create a favorable atmosphere to sustain European nativism. The 2015 migrant influx into European Union states has been an important factor in catalyzing the spread of nativist movements and politics in Europe. As stated in a report by Cas Mudde, although there is no direct correlation between migration and radical right voting, it has been "translated into a political issue."[398] This was followed by the 2016 U.K. referendum to leave the EU ("Brexit"), which was supported by far-right euroskeptic political parties and other actors that also openly embrace nativism and hard-line nationalism. While Brexit may not have had a "domino effect," triggering the disintegration of the EU as an institution, it did further provide far-right nativists in other parts of Europe with a sense of added political momentum.[399] Nevertheless the chaotic effects of Brexit on the U.K., along with various domestic constraints, appears to have cooled vocal support from members of the far right for similar "exits" in other European states, leading them to shift their attention elsewhere.[400]

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to border closures and lockdowns, also led to some medical nationalism. The once-popular rhetoric of unity and cooperation among EU members eroded when purchases of masks and vaccines came into question.[401] This led to a handful of leaders in Europe, including some far-right populists, to turn to China and Russia for aid.[402] Moreover, a recent empirical study of 31 European far-right populist parties suggests that, unlike frequently cited examples such as Donald Trump, Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, the U.K.'s Boris Johnson, and India's Narendra Modi, levels of popular support for European far-right actors on balance have seen little impact from COVID-19.[403] At minimum, absent any politically seismic event(s), European far-right actors will continue to play an influential role in mainstream discourse and electoral politics.

The mainstreaming of far-right nativism across Europe, along with armed conflict in Ukraine, will continue to provide a more permissive climate for far-right violence. Data from the University of Oslo suggests the rise in European far-right populism and nativism has coincided with a sharp growth in far-right violence across the continent, though this growth is concentrated in some countries more than others.[404] The mainstreaming of once-fringe views that disparage and dehumanize groups of people has made the idea of violence against those same groups much more socially acceptable and therefore more likely to occur.[405] The challenge is compounded in certain states like Hungary and Poland, where far-right historical revisionism enjoys widespread socio-political acceptance. The threat of violence also extends to high-profile political figures, mentioned earlier, that have been attacked and/or assassinated by far-right extremists for supporting Muslims and immigrants.

The risk of violence is further elevated by the presence of ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine, which has attracted a small but not insignificant contingent of far-right foreign fighters from countries across Europe and North America. Not unlike what Afghanistan in the 1980s did for networks of violent Islamist extremists or what the 1992-1995 Bosnian war did for networks of both violent Islamist and violent far-right extremists, armed conflict in eastern Ukraine may provide an opportunity for far-right extremists to train, network, and gain combat experience with each other. These foreign fighters can then return to their countries of origin, where they can employ their acquired skills and contacts to organize networks of supporters capable of carrying out violence locally.[406] Again, there have been at least two terrorist incidents/interdictions with direct connections to the battlefield in eastern Ukraine.[407]

Finally, Russia will continue to support far-right actors who engage in nativist rhetoric with the aim of weakening Western Europe, the United States, and Canada by polarizing the political atmosphere and society. To be clear, Russia's relationship with these actors is instrumental, not ideological. (After all, Russia has supported both far-right and far-left actors in North America and Europe.)[408] Their interest in these actors is simply to sow and exacerbate divisions within societies that Russia can leverage to advance its policy goals.[409] Several significant far-right political parties in the U.K., Austria, Italy, France, Hungary, and Germany have well-established connections with Russia.[410] Other nativist actors are also connected with Russia. In Hungary, far-right militants accused of violence purportedly received direct support from Russia,[411] while in Sweden, agents on behalf of Russia are heavily involved in nurturing far-right digital media outlets spreading mass disinformation about immigrants and Muslims.[412] Given their past successes sowing mass division and doubt, the Russians are likely to continue using a wide spectrum of influence operations in the absence of scaled-up effective countermeasures. ☐



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