Ethnic and Racial Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rers20

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To cite this article: Ed Pertwee (2020) Donald Trump, the anti-Muslim far right and the new conservative revolution, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 43:16, 211-230, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2020.1749688

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2020.1749688

Published online: 17 Apr 2020.

ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES
2020, VOL. 43, NO. 16, 211–230
https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2020.1749688

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Donald Trump, the anti-Muslim far right and the new conservative revolution

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the "counter-jihad", a transnational field of anti-Muslim political action that emerged in the mid-2000s, becoming a key tributary of the recent far-right insurgency and an important influence on the Trump presidency. The article draws on thematic analysis of content from counter-jihad websites and interviews with movement activists, sympathizers and opponents, in order to characterize the counter-jihad's organizational infrastructure and political discourse and to theorize its relationship to fascism and other far-right tendencies. Although the political discourses of the counter-jihad, Trumpian Republicanism and the avowedly racist "Alt-Right" are not identical, I argue that all three tendencies share a common, counterrevolutionary temporal structure. Consequently, like "classical" Italian Fascism and German National Socialism, they can be seen as historically and contextually-specific forms of "revolutionary conservatism".

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 9 November 2019; Accepted 26 March 2020

KEYWORDS Counter-jihad; far right; anti-Muslim; fascism; revolutionary conservatism; Donald Trump

Introduction

A tourist visiting London's Trafalgar Square on 9 June 2018 would have been greeted by a curious spectacle. A large crowd had congregated there, perhaps 10,000 strong, and it was in an ugly mood. Comprising supporters of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, a former leader of the anti-Muslim English Defence League (EDL) better known by the pseudonym "Tommy Robinson", the crowd carried placards bearing Robinson's image and occasionally broke into noisy chants of "Oh, Tommy, Tommy!". Following his jailing the previous month, for breaching reporting restrictions in a child sex abuse case, Lennon had become a cause célèbre in international far-right circles where he was seen as a courageous defender of free speech. The June demonstration was addressed by Geert Wilders of the Dutch Party for Freedom, the most successful single-issue anti-Islam party in Europe; the former

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United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) leadership candidate and current leader of the For Britain party, Anne Marie Waters; and former *Breitbart* London editor Raheem Kassam (Hope not Hate 2018a). The crowd included former EDL activists, UKIP and For Britain members, supporters of the "Football Lads Alliance", and activists from the "identitarian" movement, the nearest European analogue of the American "Alt-Right". The event turned violent when a few hundred demonstrators clashed with police, calling them "scum" and hurling bottles and traffic cones at police lines.

The international mobilization in support of Yaxley-Lennon during summer 2018 symbolized the coalescence of a new transatlantic far-right movement. On 8 July the Philadelphia-based Middle East Forum (MEF), a self-styled watchdog on "radical Islam", issued a press release claiming that it had provided funding and logistical support for the "Free Tommy" event and announcing another on 14 July (Middle East Forum 2018). The MEF sponsored the Arizona Congressman Paul Gosar, a pro-Trump Republican, to travel to London for the July rally where he shared a platform with Filip de Winter of Flemish Interest, Kent Ekeroth of the Sweden Democrats, Jérôme Rivière of the French National Rally (formerly the National Front), and Debbie Robinson of the anti-Muslim Q Society of Australia (Hope not Hate 2018b). Besides Gosar, other high-profile Americans to support Lennon included Donald Trump Jr. and former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon (Townsend 2018). Reportedly, Donald Trump's Ambassador for International Religious Freedom even raised Lennon's case with the British ambassador in Washington. Lennon also received vocal support from fringe North American figures like Gavin McInnes of the "Western chauvinist" fraternity the Proud Boys, and Ezra Levant of the Canadian *Rebel Media*, for whom Lennon worked after leaving the EDL. Moreover, around thirty-five percent of tweets using the #FreeTommy hashtag came from the US (Hermannson 2018).

These political alliances may seem puzzling. To be sure, many of those involved are often characterized as part of a "right-populist" insurgency that has become adept at mobilizing demotic anti-Muslim sentiment, partly by exploiting social media. However, digitized expressions of ideological sympathy are one thing; the material interlinkages, organizational infrastructure and mobilizing power on display at the London "Free Tommy" events quite another. Why would an influential and well-resourced advocacy group like the MEF, which seeks political respectability, invest time and resources in a street-level activist and convicted criminal, who is a marginal figure in UK domestic politics? Why would a serving US congressman fly five thousand miles to address a crowd of English football hooligans? Why would the Trump administration expend political capital lobbying British diplomats on Lennon's behalf?

Answering these questions requires an understanding of the political milieu from which Lennon emerged: a transnational field of anti-Muslim political action known as the "counter-jihad". The counter-jihad evolved during

the 2000s, initially outside the organizational spaces of neo-fascism and drawing on a distinct set of intellectual resources, including the "clash of civilizations" literature associated with the US Orientalists Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, and the "Eurabia" literature associated with the Swiss-Israeli conspiracy theorist Gisèle Littman ("Bat Ye'Or"). The political geography of the counter-jihad is primarily transatlantic, although its wider networks extend as far as Israel and Australia: essentially, it is a movement of the white diaspora. The variety of white nationalism cultivated within the counter-jihad was, at the time it first emerged, a novel one. For the Hitlerian philosophy of history as Darwinian struggle between different biological "races", in which the Jew was cast as the antitype of the Aryan, it substituted a culturalist melodrama of agonistic struggle between radically incommensurable "civilizations", in which "Islam" was cast as the youthful and virile antitype to the moribund husk of the "Judeo-Christian West". The influence of these ideas on far-right groups in Europe, North America and Australasia, and especially on Trumpian Republicanism, is difficult to overstate. Yet the counter-jihad remains underresearched despite its brief moment in the sun after the 2011 Oslo massacre, whose perpetrator, Anders Breivik, made extensive use of counter-jihadist texts in his "manifesto" (Gardell 2014).[1] This contrasts with the attention devoted to more recent and ephemeral tendencies such as the "Alt-Right", despite the latter lacking the counter-jihad's organizational infrastructure and influence on institutional politics.

This article locates the counter-jihad as a key tributary of the recent far-right insurgency, characterizes its organizational infrastructure and political discourse, and theorizes its relationship to other far-right tendencies. It draws on thematic analysis of content from ninety-seven websites identified as linked to the movement using an online social network analysis, together with eighteen semi-structured interviews with counter-jihad movement activists, sympathizers and opponents.[2] The article argues that the counter-jihad has shaped the contemporary far right through: its significant organizational infrastructure and ability to mobilize resources; its development of a new far-right metanarrative, which, in positing "Islam" as a transcendent threat to "Western values", is able to appeal to groups historically excluded by the far right, notably Jews and gays; and finally, its role as a bridge between Trumpian Republicanism and the far-right "fringe". In conclusion, it is argued that the synergies between the counter-jihad, Trumpian Republicanism and the Alt-Right stem from their common, counterrevolutionary temporal structure. Hence, like "classical" Italian Fascism and German National Socialism, they can all be seen as historically and contextually-specific forms of "revolutionary conservatism" in the formal sense of that term proposed by Peter Osborne: a species of ultra-reactionary politics which differs from "mainstream" conservatism insofar as "it understands that what it would 'conserve' is already lost (if

indeed it ever existed, which is doubtful), and hence must be created anew" (Osborne 1995, 164).[3]

The organizational infrastructure of the counter-jihad

The organizational infrastructure evident at the 2018 "Free Tommy" events has evolved since the mid-2000s, when the counter-jihad first emerged as a novel far-right tendency, distinct from neo-fascism. Its early organized manifestations in Europe included "Defence Leagues" and "Stop Islamization" groups in various countries, campaigns to "ban the burqa", and mobilizations against mosques and minarets, one of which achieved success in 2009 when Switzerland imposed a ban on minaret construction following a popular referendum (Bhatt 2012). The EDL, which Lennon led between 2009 and 2013, was the most important of this first wave of counter-jihad organizations, providing an early demonstration of the potential for anxieties about Islam to generate reactionary political alliances across ethnic and religious lines, and becoming an inspiration for mimetic "Defence Leagues" in countries such as Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Canada and Australia.

Drawing its support primarily from football hooligan "firms", the EDL expanded rapidly after its founding in summer 2009 through a series of provocative demonstrations in multi-ethnic cities like Birmingham, Leicester and Bradford. Whilst some activists, including Lennon, had been involved with the neo-fascist British National Party (BNP), the majority were political neophytes who disavowed racism and fascism (Busher 2016; Pilkington 2016). The EDL's novelty lay in its vocal support for Israel, its professed sympathy for groups historically excluded by the far right, such as Jews and gays, on the basis that they too were "victims" of Islam, and its appropriation of the political language of human rights. These themes were reflected in its Mission Statement, in which it claimed to be "a human rights organisation" set up to oppose

> forms of religiously-inspired intolerance and barbarity … including, but not limited to, the denigration and oppression of women, the molestation of young children, the committing of so-called honour killings, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and continued support for those responsible for terrorist atrocities. (English Defence League 2011)

The distance between the EDL and neo-fascism was symbolized by its LGBT and Jewish "divisions", which, despite their minuscule membership, were among the EDL's more active (Copsey 2010; Jackson 2011). The EDL briefly formed an electoral pact with the British Freedom Party, led by Paul Weston, which later became Liberty GB. At its peak, around 2011, the EDL could mobilize up to 3,000 supporters but it had already gone into sharp

decline before Lennon's departure in October 2013. There were efforts to establish a pan-European Defence League, between 2010 and 2012, but these proved unsuccessful.

Subsequently, Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West) emerged as the most important grassroots counter-jihad network in Europe. Starting in October 2014, Pegida supporters gathered every Monday night for an "evening stroll" in central Dresden, with the comparatively genteel style of these events enabling the group to attract support from lower middle-class burghers with no prior far-right connections (de Genova 2015; Dostal 2015). The demonstrations grew rapidly, from 350 participants at the first rally on 20 October, to an estimated 17,500 just before Christmas, before peaking at around 25,000 after the January 2015 terror attacks in Paris (Virchow 2016, 544). Mimetic mobilizations occurred on a smaller scale in Austria, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK (Berntzen and Weisskircher 2016), where an abortive Pegida group fronted by Lennon, Weston and Waters formed in late 2015. However, as with the earlier network of Defence Leagues, Pegida is more a political franchise than a formal organizational structure.

The North American counter-jihad evolved separately from its European counterpart during the early 2000s and the aftermath of 9/11, acquiring greater momentum during the Obama presidency, in the context of racialized anxieties about the nationality and faith of the country's first black president. Whereas the European wing has been dominated by loosely-organized street-protest movements, the North American counter-jihad is headed by professionalized and well-resourced advocacy groups. Arguably the most important is the Center for Security Policy (CSP), a Washington, D.C. "think tank" founded in 1988 by Frank Gaffney, a former official in the Reagan administration, who once described Obama as "America's first Muslim president". Whilst the Center claims to be concerned with various "challenges and opportunities likely to affect American security" (CSP 2017), in practice it is almost entirely focused on countering a phantasmal Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to infiltrate the US government. In February 2016 it launched a public counter-jihad campaign and website, counterjihad.com.

Other key US-based advocacy organizations include the David Horowitz Freedom Center (DHFC), founded in 1988 by former Trotskyite David Horowitz; the Middle East Forum (MEF), founded in 1990 by writer and historian Daniel Pipes, which recently supported the London "Free Tommy" events; and the Gatestone Institute, founded in 2012 by conservative activist and philanthropist Nina Rosenwald. Among the DHFC's many projects are *Jihad Watch*, the most popular counter-jihad blog; "Discover the Networks", a database of the US Left; and *FrontPage*, an online magazine edited by Jamie Glazov, whose internet TV show, *The Glazov Gang*, broadcasts interviews with leading counter-jihad figures. The MEF has provided financial support

to European counter-jihad activists, including Lennon and Wilders, through its "Legal Project"; surveils academics deemed sympathetic to Islam through its "Campus Watch" programme; and sponsors the blog *Islamist Watch*. Gatestone has played a key role in bringing together mainstream advocates for Israel with the anti-Muslim conspiracist fringe (Blumenthal 2012), sponsoring events with establishment conservatives like Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz and British Conservative peer Daniel Finkelstein, whilst its website carries writings by Bat Ye'Or and her Norwegian disciple, the blogger Peder Jensen ("Fjordman"), a key influence on Breivik.

The nearest grassroots equivalent to the European street movements is ACT for America, founded in 2007 by Brigitte Gabriel, a Lebanese Maronite Christian who came to prominence as a TV anchor for Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network. Presenting itself as "the NRA [National Rifle Association] of national security" (Act for America 2017), by 2016 ACT had an annual budget of over $1 million and claimed to have 300,000 members across the US (Noriega 2016), although these figures are disputed by civil rights groups (Piggott 2017). ACT's annual conference has been addressed by Texas Senator and 2016 Republican presidential contender Ted Cruz, and former Republican congressman Mike Pompeo, Trump's second Secretary of State. ACT has also provided the grassroots "muscle" for state-level anti-sharia initiatives, working closely with the lawyer David Yerushalmi, founder of the Society of Americans for National Existence and the American Freedom Law Centre, who is also in-house counsel at the CSP.

Other activist groups include the United West, a Florida-based organization dedicated to "defending and advancing Western Civilization against the kinetic and cultural onslaught of Shariah Islam" (The United West 2016), and the Clarion Project, which has been linked to the Jewish fundamentalist organization "Fire of the Torah", and whose film *Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West* was distributed to a staggering 28 million people in swing states before the 2008 presidential election (Goldberg 2008). Much of the funding for the US counter-jihad groups comes from a handful of right-wing philanthropic organizations, including the Richard Mellon Scaife Foundations, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the Newton D. & Rochelle F. Becker Foundations and Charitable Trust, the Russell Berrie Foundation, the Rosenwald Family Fund, the Alan and Hope Winters Family Foundation, the Fairbrook Foundation, and the Donors Capital Fund, the latter being a charitable giving vehicle through which a single anonymous $17 million donation was funnelled to the Clarion Project in 2008 to pay for the DVD distribution of *Obsession* (Duss et al. 2015).

During the late 2000s and early 2010s, European and North American counter-jihad groups began to form alliances. For instance, EDL activists attended a September 2010 protest in New York against the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque", sponsored by the Freedom Defense Initiative and

Stop Islamization of America, both fronted by the bloggers Robert Spencer (*Jihad Watch*) and Pamela Geller (*Atlas Shrugs*) (Booth 2010). The event was addressed by Wilders, with video addresses by George W. Bush's former ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, and the late Andrew Breitbart, founder of *Breitbart News*. These alliances between elements of the Christian and Jewish religious right in North America and secular far-right groups in Europe have not been without friction. When Geller, who is Jewish, publicly denounced the EDL after the head of its Jewish division, Roberta Moore, resigned in June 2011 citing the leadership's failure to contain the "Nazis within" (Geller 2011; Lipman 2011), a number of key movement figures wrote an open letter accusing Geller of driving "a completely needless wedge between the American and European wings of the international Counterjihad" (May et al. 2011).

The counter-jihad harnessed the power of the internet quickly and effectively during the 2000s. Blogs such as *Jihad Watch*, *Atlas Shrugs*, *Gates of Vienna*, *Fjordman*, and *Brussels Journal* were crucial to the development and dissemination of its ideology. When it formed in 2009, the EDL was one of the first far-right groups to eschew paper magazines and newsletters entirely in favour of online communication via its website and Facebook page, which had almost 100,000 followers at its peak (Cleland, Anderson, and Aldridge-Deacon 2018, 1542–43). Such was the importance of the latter in the organization of its protests that one scholar described the group as "a child of the Facebook revolution" (Copsey 2010). Breivik, who commented on *Gates of Vienna* in 2008 and on EDL message boards in 2011, wrote in his manifesto that online social networking sites "will be essential in the decades to come for consolidation/recruitment purposes", urging all "patriots" who were not yet on Facebook to "shape up and adapt" (Berwick 2011, 1267). By the late 2010s, some movement figureheads like Lennon and Geller boasted over a million social media followers.

During the late 2000s, several transnational counter-jihad organizations were established, sometimes as direct products of prior online interactions. One group, the International Civil Liberties Alliance, traces its origins to a 2006 comments thread on *Gates of Vienna*. It sponsored a series of international counter-jihad conferences between 2007 and 2013, which brought together key American and European activists to discuss movement strategy. At the 2010 conference in Zurich, a pseudonymous EDL representative gave a presentation entitled "The Anatomy of an EDL Demo":

> The presentation included organisational dynamics, deployment, logistics and transportation, the importance of having productive working relations with the police, the stewarding system, divisional structure, inclusivity of all those who have a stake in or interest in opposing sharia to create a diverse, varied and effective organisation, the networking and social possibilities that are created by demonstrations, opposition tactics, and the issue of merchandising and its relationship to the creation of group identity and organisational presence. ("Aeneas" 2010)

Other transnational organizations dating from this time include the International Free Press Society (IFPS), established by Danish writer Lars Hedegaard in 2009 and Stop Islamization of Nations, an umbrella organization for the American and European "Stop Islamization" groups. Whilst some organizations discussed here are now disbanded or in abeyance, the networks they fostered have endured.

The political discourse of the counter-jihad

This heterogeneous political coalition was drawn together by an apocalyptic narrative of Western crisis, decline and capitulation to Islamic conquest, and a conspiratorial narrative of left-liberal collusion with Muslims to bring about the "Islamization of the West". Significantly, as is evident from its key intellectual inspiration, the "Eurabia" literature, the capitulation is conceived as chiefly European and only secondarily American. This ultraconservative narrative of European vulnerability to Islamic subversion first took shape in the early-mid-2000s, in the context of the Iraq war protests, the assassination of Theo van Gogh and the death threats against Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the transport bombings in Madrid and London, the riots in the Parisian *banlieues*, and the Danish cartoons affair. Ye'Or's *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab Axis* (2005) is the canonical work of the genre (Bangstad 2013; Larsson 2012), but extemporizations on her basic theme can be found in the work of many conservative writers during the late 2000s and 2010s, such as Melanie Phillips, Mark Steyn, Bruce Bawer, Christopher Caldwell, Douglas Murray and, more recently, Alt-Right-linked figures such as Lauren Southern and Raheem Kassam.

The conclusive differentiator between counter-jihadist and more mainstream conservative laments about Western decline is the former's decidedly conspiratorial framing, exemplified by one comment on *Gates of Vienna*:

> I … cannot believe that it is mere coincidence that merely all westerna (*sic*) nations are collapsing at the same time and for the same reason. This must be orchestrated. (online comment on May 2009)

Muslims are consequently joined in the "newest phase" of their unending, cosmic war against the West (May 2004) by a familiar right-wing demonology: the "liberal elite", the academy, the mass media, the EU and the "68 movement" in its various (anti-racist, feminist and other) forms, who aid and abet "Islamization". Together these internal and external enemies form the "Red-Green Axis" (Simpson 2019). Their occult project (the "stealth jihad") is advanced through the physical colonization of European territory and gradual annexation of parts of its major cities (Muslim-controlled "no-go zones"); the cultural subjugation of European populations and their transformation into second-class citizens ("dhimmitude"); the "fanatical fecundity" of Muslim populations in Europe (the "demographic timebomb"); and the

deliberate grooming of young white girls by predatory Muslim males (the "rape jihad").

Importantly, "Islamization" is not strictly coextensive with the presence of Muslims or visible symbols of "Islam", but functions as a metonym for broader processes of cultural and demographic change. Recurrent themes in the discourse of grassroots activists are of one's identity being "under attack", of feeling like "a foreigner in one's own country", and of cultural and demographic "inundation" (interview data, 2015–17). Asked to describe his party's main priorities, one activist with Liberty GB offered the following:

> Well, we're primarily concerned about the way in which Britain is changing, and there are a number of factors which we feel are changing it for the worse. Obviously mass immigration, which is not only eradicating British culture from parts of the country but actually eradicating communities, entire English communities are being wiped off the map due to mass immigration. The other issue is the way that the hard Left as represented in the Labour Party and other organizations have been very effective in downgrading and eroding British culture, eroding the sense of British identity, and basically denigrating everything that this country stands for. (Liberty GB official, 2015, interview with the author)

The threat against which the counter-jihad nominally defines itself figured almost as a footnote: "And then, of course, Islam". This response is typical in that its major preoccupations (immigration, national identity and political representation) are, at best, tangentially related to Islam and Muslims. Similarly, grassroots counter-jihad groups have not only directed their violence towards Muslims, but also towards Sikhs, Hindus, secular Asians and non-Muslim refugees. That the antagonisms around which the counter-jihad mobilizes are primarily ethnic and not religious is also evident in the language of "*English* Defence", "Patriotic *Europeanism*" and "*Western* chauvinism".

The figuration of Europe within the counter-jihadist geopolitical imaginary, as the frontline battlefield in a planetary "clash of civilizations" between the (white) "Western" and (non-white but especially) Muslim worlds, is key to understanding how the European and North American movements relate to one another. As one British anti-racist activist described it, American counter-jihadists view Europe as the "trenches of the war" and see grassroots movements like the EDL and Pegida as "kind of frontline foot-soldiers fighting the Islamization of Europe". This partly explains their different organizational forms and tactical repertoires: the Americans "don't need" street movements due to the perception that Islamization "hasn't got that far yet" in the US, and that there is still time to pursue policies and enact legislation that will curtail it (British anti-racist activist, 2016, interview with the author). Hence, while the main tactic of grassroots groups in Europe is disruptive protest, ACT engages in strategic campaigns to change what is taught about Islam in American schools, and to prohibit the use of sharia in state courthouses

(David Yerushalmi's "American Laws for American Courts" measures) on the basis that the "time to put up the block" is "before the train gets too far down the tracks" (Elliott 2011). But the view from five thousand miles across the Atlantic is emphatic: "Europe is lost, Europe is gone, it's a warzone" (British anti-racist activist, 2016, interview with the author).

Crucial to this narrative are a number of "travelling evangelists" who cross the Atlantic preaching the gospel of a fallen Europe. Often marginal figures in their own countries, they can be very influential within the wider network. For instance, Lars Hedegaard of the IFPS and Paul Weston of Liberty GB and Pegida UK took part in a panel event at the 2016 US Conservative Political Action Conference entitled "The Global Jihad Movement in America and the Counterjihad Campaign", sponsored by the CSP. There Hedegaard suggested that "Europe as we knew it is just a few years away from a complete breakdown", due to it "being inundated by millions of so-called refugees … who have proven to be impossible to integrate", resulting in "a system of parallel societies, enclaves where certain people live, enclaves where other types of people live", who "will not have much to do with each other except for intermittent low-level warfare". Agreeing, Weston added "I don't think it will be resolved peacefully":

> I think probably we are going to be looking at a civil war scenario in the same way that Yugoslavia broke up in the 1990s, and the civil war in Lebanon in the 1970s, I think this is the future of Europe … it's going to be cataclysmic.

The message these European speakers had for their American audience was simple: "do not let what has happened in Europe … happen to America" (CSP 2016).

This dystopian fantasy of European cultural and demographic submersion under a rising "green tide" is, in essence, a racially-coded attack on European social democracy. As Ned May ("Baron Bodissey"), editor of the influential counter-jihad blog *Gates of Vienna*, puts it: the "Jihad is just a symptom" – the real enemy "lies within" (May 2006). The "real enemy" is the secular leftist politics of multiculturalism, feminism and state welfare that allegedly enable "Islamization", which exist in European caricature to vindicate American conservative values of faith and freedom, and to exalt the US assimilationist "melting pot". Consequently, Eurabian evangelists can expect an enthusiastic reception from US conservatives when claiming, for instance, that Europe "is careening over the multicultural cliff" (May 2016a), that its welfare states will inevitably self-destruct due to their in-built tendency to attract "uninvited foreigners" who reap their benefits without contributing, or that European social democracy is destined to "go down in flames" (CSP 2016). Numerous obituaries for free speech in Europe likewise set up the US, with its quasi-absolutist commitment to free speech enshrined in the First Amendment, as a dramatic counterpoint to the restrictions on "hate

speech" that exist in many European legal systems. One US civil rights activist emphasized how emotive this issue is, arguing that for many Americans free speech is "sacrosanct … it's holy ground that should not ever be touched"; consequently, when European counter-jihad activists are prosecuted for "hate speech" or the like, their American sympathizers "essentially consider them as political prisoners and martyrs" (US civil rights activist, 2017, interview with the author). Yaxley-Lennon is only the most recent addition to the counter-jihadist martyrology, joining Wilders, Weston and Hedegaard, all of whom have faced legal action in their respective countries.

For European counter-jihadists, "Eurabia" is a melancholic lamentation for a mythic white, Christian European past (Aktürk 2012), whereas the US political right invokes it as a portent of America's future (Pilbeam 2011). Consequently, it serves as a powerful rhetorical weapon against domestic political opponents and liberal policies such as healthcare reform and refugee resettlement. That it also underwrites a potent narrative of American exceptionalism is evident from the response of Hedegaard and Weston's American interlocutor, the CSP's Jim Hanson: "Aren't you happy to be in America?":

> America … is the shining city on the hill … is *still* the exceptional nation. And we've done it better than it's ever been done because we've got a First Amendment … [W]hat happened to Europe does not have to happen here. (CSP 2016).

The effectiveness of this discourse depends on a ready supply of Europeans willing to corroborate these dire warnings about the consequences of social democracy, who receive moral, political and material support in return.

The counter-jihad, Trump and white nationalism

The 2016 US presidential election brought the far-right insurgency in Europe and North America into public consciousness. Media coverage of the election foregrounded the role within the Trump coalition of the "Alt-Right", characterized by George Hawley as an "atomized, amorphous, predominantly online, and mostly anonymous" movement of white nationalists, anti-feminists, autarkists and avowed neo-Nazis, united by a shared opposition to liberalism and egalitarianism (Hawley 2017, 3–5). Following Trump's victory, a flurry of books and reports appeared with titles like "The Alt-Right Comes to Washington" (Schreckinger 2017), and "Alt-Right: from 4chan to the White House" (Wendling 2018). This focus on the "alternative right" was justified in the sense that the 2016 election marked an inflection point when various heterodox right-wing tendencies (re-)emerged to challenge the US conservative movement from the right. However, any implication that the Alt-Right in the original sense of that term, a racial-separatist political project to bring about a white "ethno-state" in North America, had gained direct influence over administration policy is quite misleading. Rather, if any far-right

movement gained tangible political power as a result of Trump's election, it was the counter-jihad. During the Republican primaries, the CSP supplied advisors to the Trump and Cruz campaigns, while Bobby Jindal and Ben Carson warned of an Islamic "colonization" of Europe and a Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to infiltrate the US government. When Trump first proposed a total ban on Muslim immigration in December 2015, he justified the policy by citing a methodologically dubious survey of American Muslims conducted on behalf of the CSP (UGBI 2015).

The links between the Trump administration and US counter-jihad movement are too numerous to document here, so a few examples will have to suffice. Retired Lt. Gen. Mike Flynn, Trump's first national security advisor, was at the time of his appointment a sitting board member of ACT for America. Flynn's successor-but-one, John Bolton, is a former chair of the Gatestone Institute. Trump's former Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, has received awards from the CSP and DHFC. Mike Pompeo has spoken at ACT's annual conference and sponsored events for the group inside the Capitol building. Shortly after Trump's victory, ACT boasted to supporters that it had "a direct line to President-elect Trump through our allies such as … Mike Pompeo" (Center for New Community 2017). Steve Bannon, the former White House Chief Strategist, hosted Gaffney at least thirty-four times on his radio programme during his time as head of *Breitbart News* (UGBI 2017). Finally, Trump himself attended the launch of The United West in March 2011, where he posed for a photograph with Gaffney (May 2016b), while ACT's Brigitte Gabriel has been a guest at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort and visited the White House for a meeting with officials in March 2017.

Trump's speeches belong to the same discursive formation as the counter-jihadist prophecies of Western crisis and decline. In his inauguration address, Trump spoke in apocalyptic terms of "American carnage", of "rusted out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation", and of a nation blighted by "the crime and the gangs and the drugs", whilst also pledging to "unite the world against radical Islamic terrorism" which he vowed to "eradicate from the face of the Earth" (White House 2017a). The influence of counter-jihadist ideas on his presidency is evident in the language of the January 2017 executive order banning travel from seven Muslim-majority countries, which claims to exclude "those who would place violent ideologies over American law" (White House 2017b). As one journalist noted, the "Muslim ban" made little sense as counterterrorism policy, given that no immigrant from any of the seven countries had ever killed anyone in a terrorist attack on American soil, but it made considerable sense if you believed that the European half of Western civilization had been lost to Islamic colonization, and your aim was to prevent the US going the same way (Beauchamp 2017).

By the time Trump assumed office in early 2017, the counter-jihad had effectively been subsumed into a broader, translocal white nationalist

movement that sees Trump as its key political figurehead. Together with forms of right-populism, libertarianism, anti-feminism and conspiracism, the counter-jihad is now a key component of the "culturalist" wing of this movement, popularly referred to as the "Alt-Lite" to distinguish it from the avowedly racist and misogynist "Alt-Right". The influence of the counter-jihad is evident in the mobilization of the "Islamization" and "Eurabia" themes by far-right politicians and parties across Europe, including Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Czech President Miloš Zeman, former Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, and the Alternative for Germany (Brown 2019). It is also evident in the assimilation of counter-jihadist language by formerly distinct tendencies, such as anti-feminist "men's rights" activism. For the former *Breitbart* technology editor Milo Yiannopoulous, who came to prominence through the 2014 "Gamergate" campaign of organized harassment against female games developers and journalists, Islam now ranks alongside feminism as one of the two key problems facing America today (Mondon and Winter 2017, 2168–69). Similarly, the European "identitarian" movement blends the counter-jihadist narrative of "Islamization" with the explicitly racialized narrative of a "Great Replacement" of "indigenous" Europeans by "non-European migrants", a variation on the Alt-Right theme of "white genocide". Significantly, when the leading identitarian, the Austrian Martin Sellner, was barred from the UK in March 2018, Yaxley-Lennon stepped in to deliver his speech.

To the extent that clear blue water remains between the counter-jihad and the Alt-Right, this is largely because the counter-jihad includes strongly pro-Israeli tendencies that would find the anti-Semitism within the Alt-Right abhorrent. Conversely, for many Alt-Rightists, the counter-jihad is a "false friend" as one contributor to the white-nationalist *Counter-Currents* blog puts it, insofar as counter-jihadists conceive Western identity in civilizational terms, as an agglomeration of "abstract values (personal freedom, free markets, tolerance …)", rather than in strictly racial terms, as an "in-group … bound by DNA, religion, culture, language" (Lane 2016). Worse still, for the Alt-Right, counter-jihadists typically see these values as products of an enduring "Judeo-Christian tradition". Some white nationalists see the counter-jihad itself as part of the "world-Jewish conspiracy", emphasizing the Jewish backgrounds of leading activists and financiers such as Geller, Horowitz and Rosenwald, and the philo-Zionism of others like Lennon and Wilders. For instance, in 2012, former BNP leader Nick Griffin published an "exposé" of the EDL which portrayed it as a "Zionist" (*sic*) false flag operation, "using legitimate concerns about Islam to … try to split and distract the genuine nationalist movement" (Griffin 2013, 3).

However, the political distance between the "culturalist" and "racialist" wings of the contemporary far right masks a deeper philosophical affinity that can provide a basis for political cooperation. Their discursive *content* is

quite different, insofar as one seeks to redeem a sense of Western civilizational identity from the apocalyptic threat of "Islamization" whereas the other seeks to redeem a sense of white racial identity from the deracinating schemes of "world-Jewry", but their narrative structures are homologous. In September 2015, Frank Gaffney invited Jared Taylor, an avowed white nationalist and key Alt-Right figure, onto his radio show to discuss a recent article Taylor had written about the European migrant "crisis", entitled "Is This the Death of Europe?" (Taylor 2015). Taylor's narrative of European crisis and decline differed from Gaffney's only in being more explicitly racialized. Praising previous generations of Europeans who "fought Muslim invaders for 1,000 years – from 732 at the Battle of Poitiers to 1683 at the gates of Vienna", thereby guaranteeing the existence of Europe "as we know it", Taylor lamented the fact that today's "spineless" white Europeans "don't have the nerve" to turn back or kill the "endless waves" of non-whites crossing the Mediterranean (American Renaissance 2015). Gaffney later removed the interview from his website and disavowed Taylor's views on race, following criticism from civil rights groups (SPLC 2015). Yet Taylor's racial politics were already implicit in Gaffney's own description of the flow of refugees as an "invasion", a term that clearly implies an ethnic rather than civic conception of European identity, one that is hereditary and territorial rather than contractarian, or else why would legal migration and acquisition of citizenship by Muslims (or anyone else) amount to an "invasion"? These philosophical affinities have led some white nationalists to view the counter-jihad movement as a potential "recruitment pool" (Griffin 2013, 28), if only its activists can be convinced that "Islamization" is merely one facet of a wider Jewish plot to destroy the white race by promoting non-white immigration.

Conclusion

The counter-jihad, the Trumpian Republicans, and the avowed racists and misogynists of the Alt-Right converge on two things: first, a shared horror and dismay at the cultural and demographic changes for which the term "Islamization" is metonymous; and, second, inasmuch as "Islamization" is "just a symptom" and the real enemy "lies within", also a shared hatred of the "politics of '68", which stands accused of abetting these transformations. Insofar as they seek to reverse the progressive social changes brought about by "the '68 movement", all three tendencies are recognizably forms of "revolutionary conservatism", in Osborne's formal sense. From this perspective, it is not some shared ideological "essence" (typically defined as a form of nationalism) that unites these different tendencies and justifies their collective characterization as "far right".[4] Rather, it is their common, counterrevolutionary temporal structure, wherein a mythic past is mobilized to legitimate projects of cultural purification in the present. This counterrevolutionary temporal structure is

also what places all three tendencies in close proximity to "classical" Fascism and Nazism, despite important differences in their discursive content and mobilizing myths. Today, this counterrevolutionary temporal structure is inscribed in the Trumpian slogan "make America great again".

Recent attempts to situate emergent far-right tendencies in relation to their interwar antecedents have typically taken one of two forms: either downplaying ideological differences, such as orientations towards Jews and gays, and viewing new far-right tendencies as part of a historically continuous "fascist" tradition (e.g. Alessio and Meredith 2014); or, alternatively, emphasizing those differences and consequently placing new far-right tendencies under the wholly separate analytical framework of "right-populism" (e.g. Dostal 2015). In this context, it bears emphasis that the enemy in the Schmittian sense does not denote a specific, transhistorical racial or cultural substance: the enemy is simply "the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien" (Schmitt 2007, 27). Moreover, the external enemy has a very specific function in these philosophies: that of bringing about group unity through hostile polarization against a third party (Palaver 2007). The invocation of such an enemy is, by implication, typically symptomatic of an unresolved "endogenous" social conflict. Significant here is *Gates of Vienna*'s claim that the war being waged by the counter-jihadists is "a civil war *within* the West", fought by the representatives of "traditional Western culture" against "the forces of politically correct multicultural Marxism" (May 2006).

In the interwar European context, the apocalyptic threat of "Judaization" – a term that stood in for a variety of modernist afflictions such as liberalism, democracy, socialism and feminism – served to generate the affective energies necessary for a violent counterrevolution against the "Spirit of 1789". Today, in a context of growing demotic anti-Muslim sentiment, the apocalyptic threat of "Islamization" – the distinctive *mythos* of the counter-jihad – functions to generate the requisite affective energies for a colossal international counterrevolutionary assault on the "Spirit of '68" and the politics of the New Left.

Notes

1. See Bhatt (2012), Denes (2012) and Fekete (2012) for early analyses of the movement. See Ekman (2015) and Lee (2016) for more recent assessments.
2. In total, 418 web pages were analysed from 97 sites. Sites were identified using an online social network analysis, starting with self-identified counter-jihad websites and using web crawler software to map outbound links to other sites. Counter-jihadist interviewees were purposively selected for their roles in organizing or networking within counter-jihad circles. Non-counter-jihadist interviewees were purposively selected from anti-racist and civil rights communities for

their experience of monitoring or organizing against counter-jihad groups. For ethical reasons, all quotations have been anonymized.

3. See also Gilroy (1996) for a discussion of "revolutionary conservatism" as a generic term, shorn of its specifically interwar German associations.
4. A recent paper by Bjørgo and Ravndal (2019) typifies the ideational approach that currently dominates the literature, under the influence of Roger Griffin's (1993) conceptualisation of fascism as "palingenetic ultra-nationalism". According to this paper, the far right is united by a common ideological core of nationalism, which then takes different forms (cultural, ethnic and racial) in different far-right movements. It is difficult to see how this typology can accommodate forms of organized misogyny, such as "men's rights" groups with male-only but mixed-ethnicity memberships, whose ideologies revolve around masculinity rather than whiteness. The importance of such groups within the Alt-Right and related movements seems to confirm Kathleen Blee's (2018) warning about the dangers of treating gender as epiphenomenal to a politics fundamentally about nation and race.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Chetan Bhatt for numerous invaluable discussions, and the anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier draft.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council [grant number ES/S011528/1].

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