Bundesamt für
Verfassungsschutz

Right-wing extremism on the internet

Risks of digital agitation and radicalisation

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Introduction

How does the internet drive right-wing extremist radicalisation? This brochure explores this question and describes key elements of right-wing extremist online activities. In three chapters, this brochure explains what internet platforms right-wing extremist actors use with what intention, what strategies these actors adopt to reach their goals and what role the internet plays in connection with (self-)radicalisation as well as propensity for violence and even right-wing terrorist attacks.

The first chapter highlights that right-wing extremists exploit social media platforms for many purposes. This is where they spread racist, antisemitic or anti-democratic propaganda, affirm each other in their ideology and form networks. They also recruit new followers, promote events and mobilise sympathisers. Such activities can be observed on various internet platforms, be it classic social networks such as Facebook, microblogging services like X (formerly Twitter) or gaming platforms such as Steam. The messenger service Telegram, in particular, has become a hub where actors of various right-wing extremist scenes come together. Another type of platform that continues to rise in importance for spreading right-wing extremist and violence-glorifying agitation are imageboards; among other things, attacks are announced there.

The second chapter sheds light on the various types of right-wing extremist online agitation. For their manipulation of opinions, right-wing extremists do not only use catchy statements and the associated symbols, but they partly adopt a subtle approach. By way of hidden messages in images and texts and by way of a

specific aesthetic, they merely allude to their ideology – for members of the scene, however, this is very easy to recognise. In terms of content, the agitation takes subtle forms too: In many cases, right-wing extremists do not express their messages in an explicit manner; instead, they address topics commonly discussed in society, carefully weaving in elements of right-wing extremist ideology. In doing so, right-wing extremists slowly but surely shift the limits of what is acceptable to say in the political and social discourse towards positions that are incompatible with the free democratic basic order. In addition, there is a strategic way of communication, which is, for instance, used by right-wing extremist influencers or trolls.

The third chapter explains how the digital infrastructure and the strategies of online agitation trigger dynamic processes that may possibly result in right-wing terrorist acts of violence. The internet serves as a space for radicalisation; with its many opportunities for networking, the internet is favourable for the forming of right-wing terrorist groups. Digital radicalisation does not necessarily have to take place within a group though. Instead, it may be the product of individual user behaviour that is, however, sometimes influenced by others. In both cases, this may at worst result in internet users committing attacks in the real world. Right-wing extremist attackers also use the digital space when it comes to both announcing and carrying out their attacks, as the cases in Halle an der Saale (Saxony-Anhalt) in 2019 and in Hanau (Hesse) in 2020 have shown. For example, right-wing extremists and terrorists publish document(s) accompanying their attacks on the internet or live stream their attacks online, intentionally addressing a right-wing extremist online community. This community in turn refers to these attacks in its content posted on social media, partly engaging in a cult around the attackers that may also inspire others to commit acts of violence.

A glossary of the most important terms, which are relevant in connection with extremists' use of the internet, can be found in the annex.

Chapter 1

What internet platforms do right-wing extremists use?

1.1 A variety of platforms

The global development of the internet becoming the key medium for communication gives right-wing extremists ever new opportunities for exploiting it. For quite some time, agitation and radicalisation have no longer been limited to static websites of political parties and organisations or to classic online forums, but there are diverse interactive social media platforms whose range of functions keeps increasing the "toolbox" of right-wing extremists. Individual actors and organisations of the scene upload ideologically charged interviews or collections of clips showing rallies to video platforms such as YouTube. Right-wing extremist music can easily be spread via video and music streaming ser-

vices, reaching a large potential audience. Right-wing extremists also use →*microblogging services* such as X to exert influence on social debates with their short messages. On social networks characterised by audio-visual content such as TikTok or Instagram, they present themselves as modern and approachable while at the same time spreading right-wing extremist ideologies – often in a subtle manner.

Most of the social media platforms are not deliberately designed as political platforms, but they are exploited by right-wing extremist individuals, groups and parties because of their features. For one thing, they serve them as a space for interaction, which they actively shape and use for exerting influence; for another, these platforms are some kind of →*echo chamber*, where right-wing extremists find an audience of like-minded people and where their own ideological views are reinforced. The concrete purposes for which right-wing extremists use social media platforms are manifold:

User profile on the audio-visual network TikTok

- (Day-to-day) communication within the scene
- Confirmation of their ideological way of thinking
- Mobilisation of their adherents
- Recruitment of new scene members
- Dissemination of propaganda and public influence
- Networking at national and international level
- Planning of attacks
- Dissemination of live streams of attacks
- Glorification of attackers

Depending on the purpose, the scene uses a variety of social media platforms. The various types of platforms each provide their own functions and thus offer specific advantages for right-wing extremist agitation. Social networks such as Facebook, for example, make it possible to reach large audiences and to disseminate right-wing extremist ideologies even within mainstream society. Furthermore, they are better suited to networking online than other platforms. Via social media, users can befriend each other, chat with each other, form public or private groups and establish close contacts despite physical distance. In addition to social networks, in particular conference services such as Discord or TeamSpeak and →*messenger services* such as WhatsApp or Threema enable their users to easily establish networks. However, they provide much fewer options for self-staging as their main feature is communication.

To instil their ideology in others, right-wing extremists have increasingly been using audio-visual platforms such as TikTok or Instagram, where content is primarily presented in formats including images, sound and videos. These platforms are in particular used by adolescents, thus providing direct access to this vulnerable target group. On these platforms, it is possible to present content in a modern form that is entertaining and enjoyable. In this way, right-wing extremist ideology quickly becomes an "easy-to-consume" product and is subliminally conveyed via lifestyle topics such as food, sports or nature.

The use of social media by right-wing extremists is not only determined by specific purposes of agitation but also by the extent to which a platform is subject to regulation and moderation. To avoid penal consequences, members of the scene prefer to use rather small, non-commercial platforms that allow unhindered, anonymous

or encrypted communication. This development may increase through the emergence of so-called decentralised platforms such as Mastodon or PeerTube. What is unique about them is that their servers do not fall within the area of responsibility of and are not controlled by a single operator, but different actors may each run their own server. The content uploaded to these platforms is only subject to the control of the owner of a specific server. This makes it possible for right-wing extremists to create their own digital spaces, where they can spread ideological content unhindered – content which may even be of criminal relevance.

1.2 Telegram as a hub where various actors meet

One striking example of an almost unmoderated and unregulated digital space is Telegram. Over time, the messenger service has become a hub for right-wing extremist actors and organisations and now is the main platform for communication of the right-wing extremist spectrum in Germany. It is a place where ideological content is spread unfiltered, where people are mobilised for right-wing extremist events and recruited for the scene. Racist, antisemitic, Islamophobic and violence-oriented statements and even abstract or concrete plans to kill people often go unchallenged or are supported by other users. Thus, Telegram is one of the digital spaces where →*echo chamber effects* emerge and take effect. Here, members of the scene form networks with mostly or even exclusively like-minded people and engage with groups and channels representing their own convictions and views. This may turn into a dynamic of individuals permanently affirming their own beliefs, which may consolidate or even reinforce their extremist attitudes.

What makes Telegram so attractive to right-wing extremists is that the service combines the functionalities of various types of platforms: Just as on social networks, users have their own profiles through which they can connect with each other in various ways and form groups. Similar to other messenger services, the possibilities for one-to-one or group communication are embedded into a clear instant messaging design. Furthermore, users can share content via channels like on microblogging ser-

vices, which gives them the possibility of reaching a large audience.

A decisive factor in why Telegram is of particular relevance to the scene is its general popularity. The platform is broadly used not only within the right-wing extremist scene but also within mainstream society. Channels make it possible to reach an unlimited number of subscribers, to mobilise large numbers of people and to spread propaganda to large audiences. Through the repeated sharing of content in group or one-to-one chats, this content ultimately also finds its way to users outside the scene's echo chamber. Both in simple chat groups with up to 200 members and in "super groups" with up to 200,000 members, adherents of the scene can also exert influence on non-extremist discourses.

Channels on Telegram

In the end, Telegram with its one-to-one and group chats enables scene-internal communication that may even result in clandestine networking. Various relevant right-wing extremist actors and organisations advertise Telegram or inform each other about their Telegram presences. The actors often feel safe on Telegram because the operators of the platform promise their users a high degree of anonymity and end-to-end encryption for one-to-one chats. What makes the platform even more popular within the scene is that there are hardly any cases of account blockings (→*deplatforming*) and that right-wing extremist content is rarely subject to the control and moderation of the operators.

1.3 Alternative social media platforms as a refuge

Right-wing extremists who want to keep their activities in the digital space as anonymous and hidden as possible can continuously try to find new platforms. Market leaders such as Facebook, X and YouTube are increasingly subjecting the content published by right-wing extremists to regulation in the form of deplatforming: Individual contributions are removed and some users or groups are even excluded from the platform. Alternative platforms provide the scene with other options. These are often microblogging services such as GETTR or →*video platforms* such as BitChute, frei3 or Odysee.

They are similar to the established versions of the respective type of platform; however, the activities on the platforms are regulated and moderated to a much lesser degree. This way, hate and incitement to agitation can often be spread freely and there usually is no possibility for reporting right-wing extremist content. In many cases, the platform operators, administrators or moderators do not remove such content anyway, but rather tend to promote it.

User profile on the microblogging service Gab

One example of such an alternative social network is Minds. The operators present their network as a digital space that allegedly respects the "individual freedom" of its users. They promote their platform by claiming that the code of the platform is publicly available and that the content is end-to-end encrypted, promising their users that their activities on the platform are safe and that their data is protected. Furthermore, the operators emphasise that Minds is a political opponent of established social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram and thus refrains from "censoring" user content. This kind of self-description is typical of alternative platforms. The microblogging service GETTR also stresses that its content control is based on the principles of freedom of expression that hardly knows any limits and of "independent thinking" as well as on the rejection of "political censorship" and of the "deletion culture". The US microblogging service Truth Social uses similar arguments. In this way, alternative microblogging services misuse civil liberties as an excuse to tolerate content that in essence is degrading or violates other principles of the free democratic basic order. Content inciting hatred and anti-constitutional symbols are common on these platforms. Sometimes even concrete calls for murder are posted.

There are also alternative versions of video platforms, some examples are Odysee, WUWOX and Gegenstimme.tv. They also promote their services by promising their users that they will guarantee their "freedom". Furthermore, they provide particularly favourable conditions for right-wing extremists to spread their ideology: For one thing, they have the possibility of spreading deliberately offensive content without risking the blocking of their accounts on established video platforms that reach large audiences. For another, these platforms are used as a storage for back-up copies of right-wing extremist videos or even of whole channels in case the main accounts on the established video platforms are temporarily or permanently blocked. They also serve as some kind of vehicle platform, by means of which links to right-wing extremist videos are generated which can then be shared on social media platforms that reach larger audiences.

Despite the aforementioned advantages that the alternative platforms offer right-wing extremists, the established providers continue to be

of great relevance to the right-wing extremist scene because of the large audiences they can reach and the public attention they can attract. Completely switching to alternative providers would usually result in a significant loss in potential users. Therefore, alternative platforms often merely are an additional option.

1.4 Imageboards as breeding grounds

→*Imageboards* are internet forums for which no registration is needed; they have a simple design and are mostly unmoderated. Some examples are 4chan, Kohlchan or 8kun. Like all other types of platforms, imageboards usually are not per se right-wing extremist. Most imageboards cover leisure-related topics such as computer games, comic strips, sports or anime. However, right-wing extremism, hate and incitement to agitation, illegal pornography or videos showing torture and killings are often not filtered out and are only a few clicks away from harmless entertainment. Subboards intended for political discussions are a pool for right-wing extremist content; these are named "pol/politically incorrect" on various imageboards. These subboards are dominated by protagonists of the →*alt-right movement*. Day by day, they bluntly express their support for National Socialism and right-wing terrorism, often by using →*memes*

Banner of the imageboard Kohlchan

(see chapter 2.4). In a supposedly funny way, they convey messages that deny the Holocaust or show contempt for certain groups of people such as women, the LGBTQ community, people of Jewish or Muslim faith or people of colour. Many memes that were created on imageboards go viral on other social media platforms.

The right-wing extremist scene also uses imageboards for further purposes, e.g. to spread conspiracy theories that are influenced by right-wing extremism. There are subboards on which a considerable amount of content including such narratives is posted and whose names are designed to appeal to specific target groups. On the imageboard 8kun, for example, there is an area specifically addressing adherents of the German-speaking →*QAnon movement*. Imageboards are of interest to right-wing extremist online activists, too, as they use them to anonymously disseminate propaganda material. Over the last few years, imageboards have not least turned out to be echo chambers for right-wing terrorists: International right-wing terrorist attackers addressed certain parts of the imageboard subculture during their attacks, published document(s) accompanying their attacks or even live streamed their attacks. The perpetrator of the

Banner of the imageboard Endchan

2019 attack in Halle an der Saale reached out to the relevant imageboard community by means of texts and images. He called himself "Anon", thus using a self-designation common for users of imageboards. Hence, imageboards are also breeding grounds for extremist online subcultures like the →*attacker fan scene*, the alt-right or the QAnon movement.

1.5 Gaming as an adventure space

Right-wing extremists also exploit other online activities that are popular with mainstream society such as online gaming, for example by using the manifold opportunities for networking with others: Just as social media, gaming platforms such as Steam, gaming-related video platforms such as Twitch and gaming-related conference services such as Discord make it possible for right-wing extremists to get in contact with others. They communicate via user profiles that are right-wing extremist in nature, form gamer groups and spread propaganda among a mostly young audience. Some of them also organise esports tournaments or game design contests in order to increase their reach and to recruit new members. In addition, the gaming world offers right-wing extremists safe havens, as the example of the group Reconquista Germanica has shown: Via Discord, members of this right-wing extremist online network used to orchestrate →*shitstorms* and/or →*trolling activities* (see chapter 2.5).

Right-wing extremists also misuse online gaming for their own purposes by developing propaganda games such as "Heimat Defender: Rebellion" that are aimed at spreading right-wing extremist ideologies among their target group of gamers. "Heimat Defender: Rebellion", a platform game in the style of the 1980s, was published by the right-wing extremist association Ein Prozent e. V. in 2020 and conveys antisemitic stereotypes, among other things.

Advertisement image of the computer game "Heimat Defender: Rebellion"

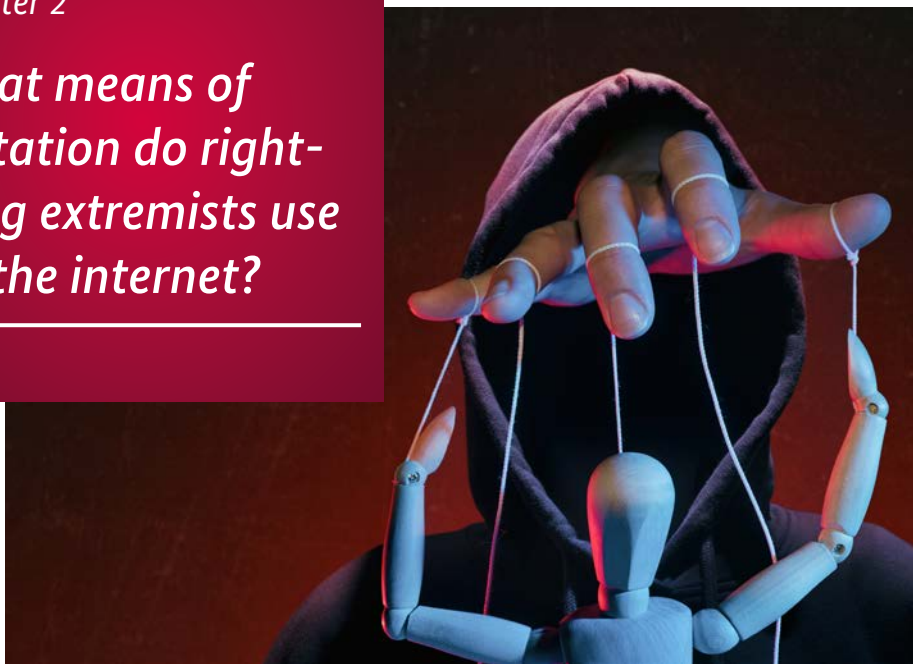
In addition, right-wing extremists use commercial games to form groups or "gamer clans" within the games. Gaming with others may thereby serve the purpose of disseminating ideologies, forming networks or recruiting new members. By means of what is known as →*modding*, private users programme and design their own features for commercial games (which are called →*mods*). They add components to games which they have created themselves, for example a changed outward appearance of the opponents or new game mechanics and environments. In this way, right-wing extremists add right-wing extremist content to commercial games that are per se innocuous. These mods are also exchanged on the websites of large gaming platforms, with the result that features for the re-enactment of the Auschwitz extermination camp can be found there through which the gamers can take the role of an SS officer and re-enact Holocaust scenarios. Some users also created weapons' designs for →*first-person shooter games* resembling those of the Christchurch attacker (New Zealand,

2019). Furthermore, there are mods for first-person shooter games that allow players to choose the right-wing terrorist group Atomwaffen Division as a group of characters. In this way, mods also make it possible to re-enact right-wing terrorist attacks and to act out one's own fantasies about having power over others and killing people.

First-person shooter mod of the Halle attack on Steam

Chapter 2

What means of agitation do right-wing extremists use on the internet?



2.1 Content-related agitation: Conspiracy narratives

The internet, where facts and authentically reproduced fiction often coexist on equal terms, is an ideal breeding ground for conspiracy narratives. Although they quickly spread via social networks and messenger services, they had already been popular before the rise of the internet. In fact, they have always been present in society. Right-wing extremists use common conspiracy narratives and adapt them to fit their agenda. Right-wing extremist agitation in the digital sphere is varied and ranges from the establishment of isolated narrative strands to the strategic cooperation of the online actors in spreading conspiracy ideologies.

At the start of every conspiracy narrative, there is usually a mistrust towards concrete individuals or groups that are perceived as powerful, exclusive or threatening. This mistrust then develops into the belief in a conspiracy which the followers of this conspiracy ideology intend to reveal. Conspiracy narratives work particularly well in uncertain times: They offer simple answers and supposed clarity in an increasingly complex, connected and globalised world by simply declaring that actual developments that are confusing and often ambivalent are the work of "dark forces". In this way, social and technological changes or threatening political situations are contextualised in a simplifying manner. The explanations offered by the conspiracy ideology stand in contrast to the rational social consensus, which is not accepted by the adherents of the conspiracy ideology. Those who believe in conspiracy narratives entirely reject alternative interpretations and explanations as well as any criticism of the conspiracy narratives or even attack such different perspectives. They regard those conspiracy narratives as the irrefutable basis for the consideration of any matter. Often, different conspiracy narratives are interwoven with each other so that their sphere of impact is expanded.

Conspiracy narratives often contain hostile stereotypes and are usually characterised by a Manichean world view: While the followers of the narrative see themselves as resistance fighters for the "good cause", anyone else is perceived as a malicious "puppet master" or at least as a "brainwashed" tag-along. This worldview regards complex phenomena and events as being part of a global and final struggle between good and evil. This may cause a certain pressure to act among those who believe in the conspiracy narrative. Even though conspiracy narratives are not a purely right-wing extremist phenomenon, members of this scene are very susceptible to them, and the essential features of these narratives correspond to those of the right-wing extremist ideology in that they create similar hostile stereotypes, stigmatise certain groups of individuals and thus foster a breeding ground for discrimination or even attacks.

The "Great Replacement" is an example of an explicitly right-wing extremist conspiracy narrative. The Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland (IBD / Identitarian Movement of Germany), among others, regularly nourishes this narrative and spreads it through flash mobs, videos, online flyers or →*hashtags*. The central aspect of this conspiracy narrative is the assumption that the original white population in Europe is systematically being replaced by migrants. According to this narrative, migration movements are thus not a consequence of wars and crises but they are attacks strategically planned by "elites" or "globalists" against the autochthonous (native) European peoples. In this context, the narrative of a "Jewish world conspiracy" is often used, with Jewish or supposedly Jewish public figures being presented as the alleged "puppet masters" behind this plot.

The example of the online subculture QAnon shows how susceptible right-wing extremists are to conspiracy narratives. The subculture's narratives have spread in the German-speaking area since 2018 via social networks, messenger services and imageboards. The content shared among QAnon followers is often antisemitic, anti-democratic and violence-oriented, but it does not correspond to classic neo-Nazi ideology.

Share pic of the QAnon movement

QAnon followers believe in the international conspiracy of a "paedophile elite". According to this conspiracy narrative, individuals belonging to this elite allegedly murder children on an industrial scale and supposedly want to establish a world-wide dictatorship using control technologies and "made-up" crises like the coronavirus pandemic. The YouTube videos of the right-wing

extremist attacker of Hanau, who shot 10 people dead and then killed himself on 19 February 2020, also contained such core narratives of the QAnon subculture.

2.2 Rhetoric agitation: Dog Whistling

In addition to content-related elements such as conspiracy narratives, right-wing extremists also use rhetoric means for their agitation. In this context, they often play with allusions and deliberately avoid the use of statements liable to prosecution. Messages are conveyed in a way that is comprehensible to the relevant scene without necessarily being identifiable as right-wing extremist content to outsiders. One of the preferred techniques they employ is →*Dog Whistling*, a communication technique used to convey content in such a way that only the target group can recognise and understand it. For right-wing extremists, this technique is an advantage since they can recognise each other by their coded messages while outsiders are not necessarily able to interpret these coded statements correctly. Furthermore, it is difficult to prove that statements coded in this way are right-wing extremist, which makes prosecution difficult too. Dog Whistling enables right-wing extremist online actors to take an extremist stance and, at the same time, to present themselves as supposedly moderate. In this way, right-wing extremist ideology can subtly and gradually infiltrate mainstream society ("Mainstreaming").

Right-wing extremist online actors particularly engage in Dog Whistling by using codes and slogans typical of the scene. One example is the acronym GTKRWN which stands for "Gas The Kikes – Race War Now" and thus openly calls for a "race war" and for genocide. The slogan originates from the American violent right-wing extremist scene. The acronym is mainly used by Alt-Right actors in the context of their scene-related communication.

Another example originates from the context of the QAnon movement: Its adherents often use the abbreviation "wwg1wga", which can also be found on scene-related platforms written

out as the slogan “Where we go one we go all”. The code is used in pictures, messenger group names, profile descriptions and as a hashtag and conjures up the group’s unity in line with its self-image of being a digital movement of resistance against the alleged world conspiracy.

A widespread code used by the entire right-wing extremist spectrum is →*Echoing*, also referred to as “triple parentheses”. This is not directly a term used by the scene but rather a way of playing with punctuation marks: By using three parentheses around a word, that word is marked as “Jewish”. For example, the sentence “You know (((who))) I mean ...” implies that the antisemitic author of the sentence refers to Jews.

Use of “echoing” on the imageboard 8kun.top

2.3 Aesthetic agitation: Vaporwave and Fashwave

Right-wing extremists also somewhat play with allusions when drawing on elements of established subcultures for their agitation. Right-wing extremists have always used features of subcultures in an effort to make themselves more attractive to members of these subcultures. In the 1980s and 1990s, for example, they adopted the fashion style of the skinhead scene, which originally was not influenced by neo-Nazism but merely was a form of expression of a British working-class youth and music scene. Such processes of appropriation now also take place online. Pursuing their ideological aims, right-wing extremists develop established online subcultures further and draw on existing elements of online pop culture in order to address potential new members without having to introduce them to a completely new culture. Among other things, right-wing extremist online actors use the visual style of various digital subcultures, adding elements of right-wing extremist ideology.

One example of a visual style that has been exploited is →*Vaporwave*, a music genre and style element which developed as a phenomenon of the online culture in the early 2010s.

Fashwave style

Vaporwave can be described as a digital genre that combines several aspects of the visual and musical style of the 1980s and 1990s. In many cases, it contains notions of a certain nostalgia. The right-wing extremist online scene has built on Vaporwave, creating its own digital right-wing extremist aesthetic, which is called →*Fashwave*. For example, the sun in a nostalgic Vaporwave-style sunset image is shown as the neo-Nazi symbol of the Black Sun while the design is maintained. It is no coincidence that

the images designed in the two styles are similar to each other; for outsiders, it is often hard to tell them apart. Exploiting the Fashwave aesthetic, right-wing extremists thus disseminate their propaganda and ideologies in a subtle way.

Image in the Fashwave style

Elements frequently used in images designed in the Fashwave style are intensive colours such as pink, violet and neon colours as well as "glitch effects" (colour shifts and image distortions). Allusions to consumer products from the past such as VHS tapes and black censor bars as well as colourful metallic writing are also included in these images, to which images of war memorials, soldiers of the Wehrmacht and pictures dating from the period of historical fascism or National Socialism are added. Images of idyllic landscapes as well as completely computer-generated landscapes (often on a neon-coloured grid or panoramas of highways, mountains or cities) are also typical of the Fashwave style. By use of AI-based software, it is easy to reproduce the style.

The term "Fashwave" does not only allude to the Vaporwave aesthetic: The first part of the word, "fash", refers to the fact that the term "fascism" is often abbreviated as "fash" within the right-wing extremist online scene. At the same time, the term "Fashwave" is an ironic pun as the syllable "fash" could also be the abbreviation of "fashion". Finally, the use of the abbreviation "fash" is to be interpreted as an allusion to the fact that uniforms and style elements of National Socialism are presented as being aesthetically pleasing.

2.4 Visual agitation: memes

Memes have become a part of everyday communication on social networks and messenger services. They include funny images, slogans, GIFs or videos with a humorous content; in a simple combination of images and text they can even convey rather complex messages. With the help of image-editing programmes or AI-based software, some internet users create memes, while others may re-create or re-combine them. When going viral, memes quickly reach a large number of internet users. Similar to subcultural slang and youth language, some memes serve specific online subcultures as a means of expression and they often contain specific inside jokes. In some cases, it is difficult for outsiders to decipher their meaning given that specific background knowledge is required to interpret them correctly.

Memes can be found on both alternative and established social media platforms and they are very popular within right-wing extremist online subcultures. Right-wing extremist actors use them to spread elements of their ideology on the internet under the guise of humour. Among others, the online network Reconquista Germanica also used memes to defame groups and individuals in a strategically organised way. Thus, memes are an online phenomenon which can in fact be considered an effective visual means used for right-wing extremist agitation. Furthermore, communication via memes on social networks and messenger services offers right-wing extremist online actors various advantages:

- Using memes, they can express their ideology without having to share punishable material.
- In case of an impending account blocking by the platform operators, the affected account users can hide behind the humorous context and the ambiguity of the memes shared.
- Through memes, complex parts of an ideology can be encoded into subtle hints.
- Through their context of irony and humour, memes offer the opportunity to shift the limits of what is so-

cially accepted further to the right. In this way, right-wing extremist ideas can be introduced to circles in which ideological convictions are not yet entrenched.

- By imparting right-wing extremist content through memes, online activists create an image for themselves of being modern, allegedly easy-going and non-conformist. This may in particular appeal to young people, encouraging them to spread this content online.

Variation of the "Moon Man" meme

Certain memes have become firmly established within the right-wing extremist online culture. One of them is the "Moon Man", which is a cartoon character with a half-moon-shaped white head and black sunglasses. Right-wing extremist online actors use this meme to express their racist and antisemitic views. The "Moon Man" is often shared in connection with the glorification of extreme violence related to right-wing terrorism or the mass murder of minorities in society.

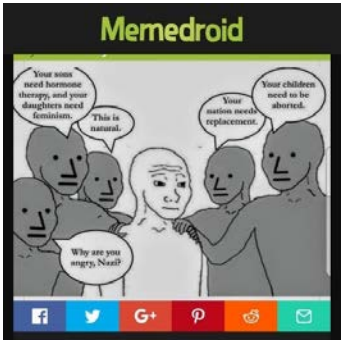
Another example is "Pepe the Frog", a cartoon frog with human traits which has become a mascot of right-wing extremist online subcultures. The originally unpolitical meme often (although not exclusively) appears in connection with right-wing populist or right-wing extremist content and serves both as a means of propaganda and a symbol of recognition.

"Honkler" in turn is a variation of "Pepe the Frog". This frog wears a coloured wig and clown's make-up. In many cases, this character is linked to the term "Clown World", a term describing the democratic and pluralistic society which allegedly can only be endured with cynical humour. The meme is to express contempt for a society that is perceived as "degenerated".

Variation of the "Pepe the Frog" meme

Another character that is frequently used in right-wing extremist memes is the "Happy Merchant", an antisemitic caricature. It is the stereotypical depiction of a male Jew, which is based on antisemitic characterisations of Jewish individuals: The character has a long nose, a full beard and smiles maliciously. The term "merchant" refers to the prejudice about Jews always having an affiliation with money. This caricature is often shared in connection with right-wing extremist conspiracy narratives, Holocaust denial or anti-Jewish propaganda.

In right-wing extremist memes, someone with democratic and liberal views is defamed as an "NPC" or "non-player character". This term originates from the world of gaming, where it is used for characters that are not controlled by a human player but by the computer. The meme suggests that "NPCs" have no opinion of their own, no agency nor aims and that they stupidly let themselves be manipulated by a political elite.



Variation of the "NPC" meme

2.5 Strategic agitation: disinformation, hate postings, trolling, influencing

Means of agitation are aimed at instilling an ideology into the minds of others. This may take place within private one-to-one communication, but it may also take a more strategic form, i.e. there may be a deliberate plan aimed at exerting long-term influence on large groups of users. One of the most common means to achieve this is targeted disinformation, with right-wing extremist internet users purposefully spreading false, manipulated or deceiving content online. Furthermore, their strategic agitation may also take the form of hate postings. This term taken from everyday language refers to postings written in a brutal and extremely radical language, which may even be liable to prosecution. Right-wing extremist hate postings usually contain disparaging or degrading statements or may even be suited to incite the masses. They are mostly referring to characteristics of groups of individuals that right-wing extremists regard as enemies: Based on their sexual orientation, nationality, skin colour, ethnic origin or religion, entire groups of people such as Jews, migrants or transgender people are attacked. By means of such hate postings, right-wing extremists try to exert influence on how other internet users perceive these groups in an effort to change their political attitude.

In addition to disinformation and hate postings, right-wing extremists also employ a strategy called trolling. Trolling means systematically disturbing the communication within an online community, mostly through anonymous user accounts. This is done by stirring negative emotions within the community through ironic and provoking posts and through the reactions by other internet users to them. Trolling may be carried out by both isolated persons and coordinated groups, organised troll armies, troll factories or automated bots[1]. Their aim is to unsettle other community users, to exert influence on a specific debate or to bring about a shift in discourse – or they may even attempt to exert political influence. The more organised the trolling efforts of groups or troll armies are, the

1 This term is derived from "robot", a computer programme that executes specified tasks in an automated way. On social media bots are used, for example, to post vast numbers of contributions in comment sections.

more likely it is that this is such an attempt to exert influence.

"Hierarchy" of Reconquista Germanica

One example are the activities of the aforementioned right-wing extremist online network Reconquista Germanica: Acting within a strict hierarchy, members of the network carried out meticulously planned trolling attacks against political opponents, media houses and institutions on various social media platforms with the aim of influencing the outcome of the 2017 German general elections in favour of the party "Alternative für Deutschland" (AfD, classified as a suspected threat to democracy ["Verdachtsfall"]).

For this specific purpose, online strategies were collected in the "handbook for media guerrillas", explaining various rhetorical, aesthetical, tactical and strategical elements of trolling:

- For instance, it was recommended to attack "hostile" politicians, media houses, public figures, individuals or groups of civil society without making oneself liable to prosecution. At the same time, the "enemy" was to be provoked to the extreme.
- The "handbook" encouraged its readers to use rhetorical strategies of manipulation (e.g. using ambiguous terms, making absolute statements or deliberately provoking others through questions) and to prepare a repertoire of insults.
- Furthermore, it was recommended to organise "raids". This refers to taking over digital spaces on X, Facebook or YouTube in order to counter the prevailing dis-

course, e.g. to influence hashtag trends. Immediately before the German general elections, Reconquista Germanica managed to establish hashtags such as #TrauDichDeutschland (take courage, Germany), #nichtmeinekanzlerin (not my chancellor) or #merkelmussweg (Merkel has to go).

- The handbook also suggested using memes, stating that communication through images is simple and entertaining. Accordingly, provocative political memes were created in Discord groups and stored in meme databases.

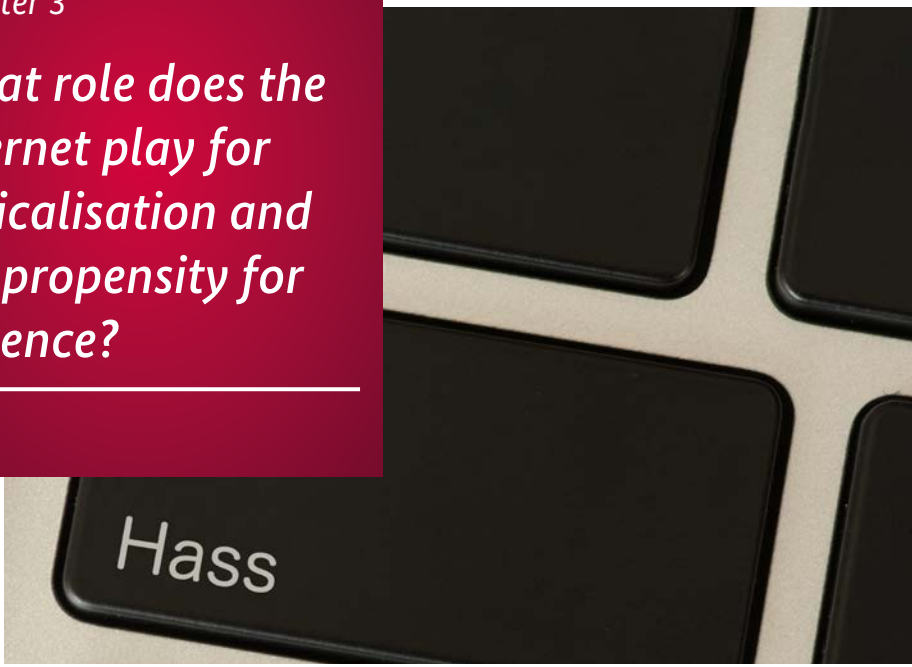
In addition to disinformation, hate postings and trolling, right-wing extremists also adopt the online marketing strategy typically used by influencers. →*Influencers* use the channels available to them to promote and market products or certain life styles. Similar to trolls, influencers may exert influence on public discourses through their wide reach; however, the online strategy of influencing differs greatly from trolling. Influencers typically have a positive and constructive exchange with their community. Their attempts to influence other people's opinions are usually more overt and they do not act anonymously. Rather, they put their own personality in the spotlight in order to provide their followers with content in an approachable and allegedly trustworthy way.

The agitation of right-wing extremist influencers often addresses topical issues. Right-wing extremist influencers present such content as one of many opinions. However, they in fact present their personal political viewpoints as truths, claiming that these are concealed by the established press that has been forced into line. They frequently quote reports by the public media, making polemic ideology-laden comments. Generally, right-wing extremist influencers do not act individually and independently, but they form networks and promote each other so as to increase their reach. In order to achieve this aim, they for instance tag content with the same hashtags so that the algorithms of the platforms automatically suggest similar content of other influencers to the users. In many cases, they use hashtags that are per se innocuous but that are affiliated with right-wing extremist world views such as #heimatliebe (love your home country),

#tradition or #volk (nation). The aim behind this is to introduce internet users to right-wing extremist ideologemes in a subtle way. Furthermore, right-wing extremists strategically use widespread unpolitical hashtags in order to increase their reach and to achieve that users identify themselves with them. Therefore, it is usually difficult to recognise these ideological aims at first glance. Accordingly, connections between influencers and the classic right-wing extremist spectrum are mostly not obvious either.

Chapter 3

What role does the internet play for radicalisation and the propensity for violence?



3.1 A radicalisation space for groups

The internet enables right-wing extremists to exert ideological influence on users and, with its digital infrastructure, offers them manifold possibilities for exchanging views among themselves. Hence, it also offers a platform for the establishment of right-wing terrorist groups and their planning. On the internet, right-wing extremist users get together in groupings that further radicalise in the virtual space and that may even prepare real-world actions and acts of violence.

The group Oldschool Society (OSS) was one example of radicalisation processes on the internet: This network established in the virtual space in 2014 openly presented itself on Facebook, while the internal communication took place via messenger

services like WhatsApp and Telegram. The constant discussions within their own echo chamber led to right-wing extremists affirming each other's ideological views, which resulted in their joint plan to violently drive people with a migrant background out of Germany. Among other things, the OSS planned to carry out explosives attacks on accommodation centres for asylum seekers. However, it was possible to prevent this from happening thanks to the investigations carried out by the security authorities. Several OSS members were sentenced to several years in prison for forming a terrorist organisation.

"Gruppe S." ("group S.", named after its leader Werner S.), founded in 2019, was another group established by individuals who had not personally known each other before but who had been networking online. Some of the group's members were initially active in private Facebook groups before switching to Telegram in the course of their radicalisation. Here, they anonymously communicated with each other in confidence in one-to-one chats and group chats and recruited new members. These recruitment processes all followed a pattern which is repeatedly used on Telegram more or less in the same way: First, populist theories or controversially disputed topical events were used to invite users into open groups, where the users' animosities were then stirred up. Subsequently, the most radical members were systematically contacted or invited into "pre-groups". By asking them targeted questions, their right-wing extremist attitude and their trustworthiness were verified before they were granted admission to secret chats (i.e. conspiratorial spaces). "Gruppe S." communicated through various secret chats of that kind. The group's final aim was to provoke a civil war through murders of politicians and people of Muslim faith.

Another example revolves around the protest movements against the measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. On the messenger service Telegram, a dynamic scene came into existence which was partly influenced by right-wing extremists as well as by actors from the field of anti-constitutional delegitimisation of the state. Some users expressed their approval of ideas of violence against or murder of people

from the fields of politics and science, spread antisemitic conspiracy theories and pursued activities that went far beyond legitimate protest. The members of the Telegram group "Dresden Offlinevernetzung" radicalised to such an extent that they discussed instructions for committing terrorist attacks, the procurement of explosives as well as plans to murder the Minister-President of Saxony. In December 2021 the police carried out law enforcement measures against members of the group, which subsequently dissolved. The superordinate group "Offlinevernetzung" has been inactive for the most part since 2022.

3.2 A booster for self-radicalisation

Radicalisation in the digital space does not only take place within concrete groups of individuals. At the heart of self-radicalisation is the single ideologically indoctrinated internet user. The internet gives the actors the (longed-for) feeling of being part of a community. Groups within messenger services and threads on imageboards in which extremist content is tolerated or even promoted create an environment where degrading and violence-oriented convictions or attitudes can be exchanged and unacceptable views are normalised. In such an environment, virtual "friendships" or approving likes lead to the timelines and inboxes of a user's social media account nearly automatically filling with right-wing extremist ideology. It is usually a deliberate decision to visit such digital spaces and to remain a part of them. Here, the users very consciously engage with right-wing extremist content. This can lead to their increasing identification with the ideology and their subsequent radicalisation.

However, self-radicalisation is not only the result of one's own decisions, but it can be reinforced by other actors: Through the strategic use of social media platforms, right-wing extremist groups, political parties and individuals expose numerous users to extremist content. That way, even users who are not yet part of the right-wing extremist spectrum are confronted with ideological content. The aim is to indirectly exert influence on them by continuously

confronting them with scene-related material. Sometimes, right-wing extremists also act much more aggressively and address users directly. Topics discussed in society such as migration or gender policy often serve as a starting point for such contact attempts. For example, right-wing extremist online actors use sharepics on Instagram or short messages on X to offer supposedly simple solutions to individual or social crises and to recruit new followers in this way.

The algorithms of the relevant internet platforms can also add to reinforcing the process of self-radicalisation by using the data collected to automatically determine whether and how content is shown in a newsfeed and which recommendations users receive. However, it is not the specific content that forms the basis for the filtering carried out by the algorithms but the behaviour of the relevant users. For example, such posts that receive many reactions from a user (i.e. views, likes, shares or comments) and are thus apparently met with interest are shown particularly often. In case of right-wing extremist content, further posts of that type are proposed to the user.

The combination of the self-determined decision to engage with right-wing extremist content and the external as well as technological affirmation is a promoting factor in users getting accustomed to the right-wing extremist ideology. In extreme cases, the radicalisation processes caused by this can lead to the desire to show one's right-wing extremist convictions by committing acts of violence in the real world. The 2019 attack in Halle (Saale) and the attack that took place in Hanau in 2020 are only two examples of how right-wing terrorist perpetrators operate.

3.3 An instrument for announcing and spreading information about attacks

The internet does not only play a significant role in (self-)radicalisation and thus also in the transformation of users into right-wing extremists and terrorists, but it is also important in the context of right-wing terrorist acts themselves. Right-wing extremist perpetrators have recently used the virtual space to upload manifesto-like claims of responsibility or even to live stream their attacks. Prior to their attacks, these perpetrators made use of social media platforms by publishing statements concerning their intentions to commit an attack or by announcing concrete attacks. This phenomenon of disclosing attack plans is referred to as "leakage". Studies[2] show that about half of the worldwide right-wing extremist lone perpetrators examined carried out some form of leakage, for example when talking to friends or family members or writing posts on imageboards or social media.

One example of a digital announcement of an attack motivated by right-wing extremism is the one published by the attacker of Pittsburgh (USA) who shot and killed eleven people during an attack on a synagogue in 2018. Already prior to his attack, he used the microblogging service Gab to spread his antisemitic hate messages. On this platform, he announced his attack as follows:

> *"I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I'm going in."*

Brenton Tarrant, the Christchurch attacker who attacked two mosques in 2019, killing 51 people, went beyond the mere announcement of the attack on social media by livestreaming parts of it on Facebook. Furthermore, a link to a manifesto-like document was shared on the microblogging service Twitter (now called X), on the imageboard 8chan and via email.

There has been no definite clarification as to whether the attacker shared the material himself; however, several accounts through which he may have spread the attack announcements

2 See e.g. Ellis, Clare/Pantucci, Raffaello, "Lone-Actor Terrorism. Policy Paper 4: 'Leakage' and Interaction with Authorities" of February 2016, Countering Lone-Actor Terrorism Series No. 8, at: https://static.rusi.org; accessed on 19 March 2024.

are classed as belonging to him. For example, there was a user account that published photographs of the weapon used in the attack on X under the attacker's name. In addition, a post was found on 8chan in which an anonymous user announced:

"I will carry out an attack on the invaders, and will even live stream the attack via facebook."

The 2019 right-wing terrorist attack on a synagogue in California (USA) that killed one person and injured three others followed a similar pattern. In that case too, the attacker tried to broadcast the attack live via Facebook. However, this failed. Already prior to the attack, the imageboard 8chan played a role for the intended public effect since an anonymous user had published a manifesto-like document there in advance which contained antisemitic and racist ideas.

During his attack on a mosque near Oslo (Norway) in 2019, another right-wing terrorist also used internet platforms to announce and carry out the attack. Even though the live stream on Facebook failed in that case too, a user published an announcement on the imageboard Endchan under the attacker's name and linked it with the relevant Facebook account. He referred to the New Zealand attacker Tarrant:

"My time is up, I was chosen by Saint Tarrant after all."

Social media platforms have also been instrumentalised in a similar way for attacks in Germany. The attacker of Halle (Saale) who shot two people dead in 2019 too published several documents on the imageboard Meguca only minutes before the attack. The documents "Dedomesticate yourself and KILL ALL JEWS" as well as "A short pre-action report" showed his consolidated right-wing extremist world of thought. Among other things, they contained descriptions of weapons and revealed goals the attacker had set himself with regard to his attack. He live streamed his attack online via the gaming-related video platform Twitch.

3.4 A source of inspiration for the gamification of attacks

Some attacks motivated by right-wing extremism seem like a re-enacted video game. The attacks and the way they are spread on the internet are sometimes characterised by the terminology and aesthetics of gaming culture. The phenomenon of integrating gaming-typical elements into contexts not related to gaming is also referred to as →*gamification*. Especially some right-wing terrorist attacks of the recent past were strongly gamified. For example, the perpetrator of Halle (Saale) addressed the document(s) accompanying his attack to a right-wing extremist online scene that rates attacks using "high scores" based on the number of people killed. This "high score" classification originates from the world of online gaming.

In one of his documents, the attacker moreover defined "achievements", i.e. goals to be reached just like in the world of online gaming. That way, the actual killing of people is trivialised and the attacks become a "playful" challenge. This might motivate potential copycat attackers within a right-wing extremist online community. In addition, the attacker of Halle (Saale) filmed his attack using a helmet camera so that the video looked like an excerpt from a first-person shooter game.

The phenomenon of gamified terrorism had already occurred before. The 2019 right-wing terrorist attack of Christchurch included typical elements from the world of online gaming too. The attacker personalised his equipment and clothing just like gamers usually do when they customise their gaming avatar. He inscribed his weapon with numerous terms linked to the military field and to right-wing extremism and used patches and pendants with right-wing extremist symbols. Moreover, he live streamed his attack from a first-person shooter perspective by using a helmet camera. The high number of people killed (51 casualties) leads to the assumption that the attacker strove to shoot as many people as possible and to "beat the high score" – just like in a video game. In the "high score" lists on imageboards where at-

tacks are rated in an inhuman manner based on the number of victims, he ranks among the top positions.

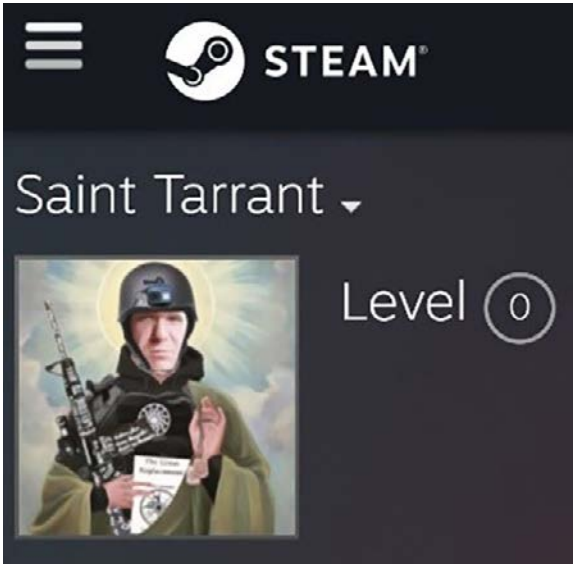
Despite these links between online gaming and right-wing extremism, the gaming scene should definitely not come under general suspicion. Even playing first-person shooter games during one's free time does not automatically lower the threshold to actually perpetrating acts of violence. Rather, right-wing extremists deliberately address a specific community. They take up the diction and mindset of a wide-spread online culture, also to boost (self-)radicalisation processes among violence-prone right-wing extremists from the gaming scene. In extreme cases, the integration of right-wing terrorism into a gaming context can inspire individuals to commit further acts. Especially the associated "high score" cult may motivate violence-prone right-wing extremists to kill more people than previous attackers and to be what they consider "more successful".

3.5 A place to worship attackers

Today, right-wing extremist attackers systematically self-promote their attacks to address specific online subcultures. On the internet, there is a kind of fan scene that not only engages with content related to these attacks in an approving manner but virtually celebrates it. This online subculture of the attacker fan scene inspired by right-wing terrorism sometimes engages in downright cultic forms of worship of the perpetrators. On messenger services, social networks or gaming platforms, users name themselves after attackers or use names linked to attackers. On numerous platforms, there are accounts named after the attacker of Oslo and Utøya (Norway, 2011) or the members of the German right-wing terrorist group Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund (NSU, National Socialist Underground).

The profile pictures of these users show photographs of right-wing terrorists or pictures and memes linked to perpetrators who, sometimes in

a sarcastic manner and sometimes seriously, are referred to as “Saints”. Accordingly, attackers are also depicted in the style of Christian icons. Such depictions designed by the users themselves or generated by AI are then spread on social media. Some imageboards dedicate entire forums or subboards to right-wing terrorist attackers where relevant material can be found.



Glorification of the Christchurch attacker Brenton Tarrant on Steam

The Christchurch attacker Brenton Tarrant is glorified particularly strongly within the scene, including by other attackers who venerate him as an iconic hero, refer to his attack and call him “Saint Tarrant”. Relevant memes and other pictures stylise him as an idol and “martyr”. To this day, his document(s) accompanying the attack is shared on subboards of the imageboards or on other platforms nearly every day. The same is true for posts glorifying his attack. On the dark web imageboard NeinChan, there even was a subboard specifically dedicated to him. Here, users discussed his terrorist attack or his detention conditions. This special significance is explained with his terrorist attack whose supposed success due to the high number of victims sets him apart from other attackers in the eyes of the right-wing extremist online actors.

Glorification of the Christchurch attacker Brenton Tarrant on NeinChan

Conclusion

The internet has become the main space for right-wing extremist (self-) radicalisation. Right-wing extremists of all spectrums aggressively use all types of online platforms such as messengers, social networks, imageboards or gaming platforms for their purposes. In emotionally charged and fast-paced virtual echo chambers, they frequently offer simple answers to complex questions.

The entire bandwidth of right-wing extremist content is available online at any time and can easily be accessed. Users can comfortably consume and adopt the ideology propagated. In this way, (self-)radicalisation processes are initiated and reinforced. This digital spread of the right-wing extremist ideology may take any form between subtle and aggressive and may even include live streams of right-wing terrorist attacks. In the worst case, this may motivate individual users to plan and carry out actual acts of violence of their own.

Social media do not trigger (self-)radicalisation processes all by themselves, but these processes are the result of a complex combination of various factors. The digital world with its numerous communication platforms is only one among many important factors of influence and requires a reaction by the whole of society.

In this context, the security agencies' investigations are very important. For example, in the framework of its statutory tasks, BfV continuously strives to detect and monitor right-wing extremist networks and radicalised individuals on the internet. Particular emphasis is put on the identification of protagonists acting anonymously on the internet. In the context of these investigations, BfV closely cooperates with national and international

partner agencies and continuously analyses right-wing extremist online subcultures, communication patterns and anti-constitutional conspiracy narratives.

In addition to a strict prosecution of criminal offences committed on the internet, fighting right-wing extremist online radicalisation requires an effective self-regulation of the operators of large internet platforms. They alone can enforce their own community guidelines, delete hate postings or block the authors of such postings. It is also their duty to assist in state measures against hate and incitement to agitation on the internet. Last but not least, the commitment of civil society and thus of the online community is indispensable too.

In case you encounter right-wing extremism on the internet, please take action! Many internet platforms offer possibilities to easily report violations against the conditions of use. Right-wing extremist content can also be transmitted to civil society reporting offices.

Especially if you learn about recruitment attempts or content that points to right-wing extremist acts of violence or even terrorist attacks being planned or content that promotes this, please do not hesitate to support the security agencies in their fight against right-wing extremism and terrorism. In case of direct threats, please contact the police directly.

On www.verfassungsschutz.de, you can learn about the different options to contact BfV and you can find further information, for example about "Wendepunkt" ("turning point"), the exit programme for right-wing extremists. BfV is happy to provide information and advice to those wishing to leave the scene as well as to their family, friends and colleagues. These conversations are confidential and without obligation.

Glossary of terms

→ ***Alternative video platforms***
Alternative video platforms are used to avoid established providers like YouTube or Twitch. Due to increasing limitations caused by the blocking of content and →*deplatforming* on established video platforms, alternative options are growing in importance to right-wing extremist actors too. In particular, the following video platforms can be named as examples: BitChute, Frei3, Gegenstimme.tv and Odysee.
→ ***Page 13***

→ ***Alt-right movement***
Alt-right is the term for an international and sometimes right-wing extremist online subculture strongly influenced by relevant US culture. This subculture also has an influence in Germany. Content of the alt-right online subculture often has links to mainstream pop culture, for example to films, music, TV shows or to the gaming and imageboard culture.
→ ***Page 15***

→ ***Attacker fan scene***

The attacker fan scene is a violence-oriented online subculture whose actors use social media platforms to glorify attackers of various kinds. The circle of users is composed mainly of anonymous individuals acting on their own who sometimes engage in cult-like veneration of solo perpetrators of killing sprees and of right-wing extremist terrorists. For example, users rank attackers according to the number of the victims they killed and depict them as saints.

→ ***Page 17***

→ ***Deplatforming***

The term deplatforming refers to the exclusion of certain users or groups from an internet platform by the platform operator.

→ ***Page 12***

→ ***Dog Whistling***

This term originates from the concept of dog whistles because these emit sounds in a range that dogs can hear but humans cannot. Dog Whistling refers to a communication technique of transmitting content in such a way that it can only be understood by a specific target group.

→ ***Page 23***

→ ***Echoing***

Echoing (also referred to as "triple parentheses") refers to a specific way of highlighting words within text postings. By using three parentheses around a word, that word is marked as "Jewish". For example, the sentence "You know (((who))) I mean ..." implies that the antisemitic author of the sentence refers to Jews.

→ ***Page 24***

→ ***Echo chamber/Echo chamber effect***

The echo chamber effect refers to the development of an information bubble (echo chamber) surrounding users which they wittingly or unwittingly create themselves through their behaviour. Through the (un)conscious interaction with groups, channels or like-minded individuals, the users enter echo chambers that correspond to or reinforce their own convictions and views.

→ ***Page 9***

→ ***First-person shooter games***

First-person shooter games are a category of computer games in which the player acts in a virtual 3D gaming world and fights against other gamers or against computer-run players using a variety of weapons.

→ ***Page 18***

→ ***Fashwave***

Fashwave refers to a style sometimes used by German right-wing extremists for their visual and musical online propaganda. It is based on elements of digital design and music styles of retro pop culture to which right-wing extremist codes are added.

→ ***Page 25***

→ ***Gamification***

Gamification is the integration of elements typical of gaming into contexts not related to gaming.

→ ***Page 40***

→ ***Hashtag***

A hashtag is a keyword marked by a number sign (#) on social networks so that postings with specific content can be found.

→ ***Page 22***

→ ***Imageboard***

An imageboard (also referred to as Chan) is a functional forum with a simple design where image or text posts can be published and discussed anonymously without a previous registration. Every imageboard has topic-related subboards where posts can be shown as discussion threads. The latest post is always pinned at the very top. Some examples of imageboards frequently used by right-wing extremists are:

- 4chan: the biggest imageboard and the most popular one worldwide.
- 8kun: one of the biggest imageboards and among the most popular imageboards worldwide.
- Kohlchan: mainly German-language imageboard and the successor of Krautchan. On several subboards, the anonymous users call each other “Bernd”.
- Neinchan: a small, exclusively right-wing extremist imageboard on the darknet.

→ ***Page 15***

→ ***Influencer***

Influencers are disseminators with many followers, especially on commercial mainstream platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram or Tel-

egram, who use their channels to promote and market products or certain life styles.

→ *Page 32*

→ ***Memes***

Memes are digital images of fun, slogans or videos. They are used to spread humorous or satirical messages on the internet through a simple combination of pictures and text. Memes are part of online culture and not per se right-wing extremist. However, they can be exploited by extremists. Right-wing extremists use memes such as Pepe the Frog, Happy Merchant or Remove Kebab to spread messages of hate and ideologemes in a modern scene and youth language. Through combinations of pictures and text that appear humorous but are unmistakable to insiders, they convey right-wing extremist ideologemes, often without sharing material that is liable to prosecution.

→ *Page 15*

→ ***Messenger services***

Messenger services allow their users to communicate via one-to-one or group chats. These chats generally take place in written form, although they are often complemented by audio-visual formats like voice messages, images, GIFs or videos.

→ *Page 10*

→ ***Microblogging services***

Microblogging refers to the publication of short text messages (similar to telephone text messages), for example on a microblogging service like X. In addition to the known services, the following alternative microblogging services are frequently used and important to right-wing extremism:

- Gab: a microblogging service that is similar to X in terms of design and functioning.
- GETTR: a US microblogging service from the political circles of Donald Trump that came into existence as an alternative platform to X which is very similar in terms of design and functioning.

→ *Page 9*

→ ***Modding/mods***

The term modding refers to the programming and design of gaming content of one's own ("mods") in order to modify an existing commercial game. In this context, private users add components to games which they

have created themselves, for example a changed outward appearance of the opponents or new game mechanics.
→ ***Page 18***

→ ***QAnon movement***
The QAnon movement is a conspiracy-ideological movement mainly based in the virtual world. Despite its diversity, QAnon offers its followers ideological anchors on which numerous ramifications are based. Their core thesis is that a conspiratorial sect of paedophile democrats, through their deep-state network, are in control not only of the USA, but of the entire world.
→ ***Page 16***

→ ***Shitstorm***
A shitstorm is a sudden appearance of large quantities of critical statements against individuals or organisations.
→ ***Page 17***

→ ***Trolling***
Trolling is a digital form of action that is used to systematically disturb the communication within an online community, mostly through anonymous user accounts. To this end, negative emotions are stirred within the community through ironic and provoking posts. This may be carried out by individual persons, coordinated groups, organised troll armies, troll factories or automated bots. The ultimate aim is to unsettle users, to exert influence on a specific debate or to bring about a shift in discourse.
→ ***Page 17***

→ ***Vaporwave***
The digital music and design style Vaporwave was developed as part of the internet culture in the 2010s. It nostalgically refers to the 1980s and 1990s and uses design elements, music as well as pop and media aesthetics from these decades. Typical Vaporwave elements include neon colours, early computer graphics, interferences in images that are reminiscent of VHS tapes or synthesizer sounds.

The design elements of this retro pop culture are sometimes exploited by right-wing extremists for their graphical or audio-visual online propaganda; in this case, the phenomenon is referred to as →*Fashwave*.
→ ***Page 25***

Notes

Publication data

Published by
Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz
Public Relations
Merianstraße 100
50765 Cologne
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Phone: +49 (0)228 99 792-0
Fax: +49 (0)228 99 10 792-2915

Layout and Production
Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz
Media Design and Printing
ServiceCenter I

Date of information
January 2025 (B-0030)

Image credits

p. 8: hocus-focus on iStock | p. 9: www.tiktok.com | p. 12: Telegram channels of: Identitaere-Deutschland, freiesachsen, DerDritteWeg, CompactMagazin | p. 13: www.gab.com | p. 16: www.kohlchan.net | p. 17: www.endchan.net | p. 18: www.steamdb.info | p. 19: BfV screenshot from the game | p. 20: SvetaZi on iStock | p. 22: Telegram channel of QAnonDeutschland | p. 24: www.8kun.top | p. 25: www.i.warosu.org | p. 26: www.i.warosu.org | p. 28: www.mlpol.net | p. 29: www.twitter.com/The_Natural_Law | p. 30: www.fr.memedroid.com | p. 31: www.twitter.com/discord-spies | p. 34: Stadtratte on iStock | p. 42: www.steamcommunity.com | p. 43: vvadkyuldkwon6za.onion | p. 46: patpitchaya on iStock


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