

CJMU

'Counter-Jihad' Monitoring Unit



HOPE not hate
'Counter-Jihad'
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Going Mainstream

The mainstreaming of anti-Muslim prejudice in
Europe and North America

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

AMERICA

- Pre-Trump Mainstreaming
- The Trump Effect

EUROPE

- Eastern Europe
- Western and Central Europe

BRITAIN: FROM THE EDL TO BREXIT

- The rise and fall of the EDL
- What's left?
- Mainstreaming in the UK

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ABOUT HOPE NOT HATE

HOPE not hate (Hnh) uses research, education and public engagement to challenge mistrust and racism, and helps to build communities that are inclusive, celebrate shared identities and are resilient to hate.

CORE AREAS

- Robust research into hate groups
- Engagement with those who are attracted by fear and hate
- Through our political arm, challenge political parties which promote racism and intolerance, as well as engaging with other political parties to help them actively stand up to hate
- Public education about hate groups and constructive ways to challenge those groups
- Working with groups and communities that seek to proactively challenge hate
- Increasing awareness of, and encouraging engagement in, civic matters and the democratic process

BIOGRAPHY OF REPORT AUTHOR

Joe Mulhall is a Senior Researcher at HOPE not hate. He recently completed his PhD on the history of postwar British fascism at Royal Holloway, University of London. During his doctoral research he held a Research Assistantship at Harvard University. Prior to that he completed an MSc at the London School of Economics and Political Science and a BA at the University of Liverpool. He researches and publishes on fascism, racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia and Islamist extremism. He currently sits on the Board of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.





Introduction

Anti-Muslim hatred has gone mainstream. With the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States organised anti-Muslim activists – self-styled ‘counter-jihadists’(CJ) – have an ally in the White House.

Trump’s election and his subsequent selection of Cabinet officials and advisors has accelerated a process of mainstreaming of anti-Muslim sentiment that has been happening for some years. The result is that prominent anti-Muslim activists are now at the very centre of power and decision making in America.

Worryingly a similar process of mainstreaming is happening in Europe, too. This side of the Atlantic the picture is more complex with a combination of ‘counter-jihadists’ entering the mainstream in certain areas, while in others they have been shunned but some of their ideas have been adopted by mainstream politicians and commentators.

This mini report traces the journey of conspiratorial ‘counter-jihad’ activists and their ideas from a marginal and ignored, primarily internet-based political discourse, into the White House and the parliamentary chambers of Europe.

2017 will be a very important year for politics, with numerous key elections in Europe. These include France’s Presidential elections, where Marine Le Pen of the Front National is a main contender, as well as the Dutch general election where the anti-Muslim poster boy Geert Wilders and his Party For Freedom are expected to do very well, plus elections in Germany where the anti-Muslim populists of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) is hoping to continue its growth.

Importantly, this report also argues that it is possible and helpful to conceptualise ‘counter-jihadism’ as one part of a wider offensive against the western liberal progressive consensus, sharing key objectives with the traditional far right, the populist radical right and the so-called ‘Alt’/or New Right.

What do ‘counter-jihadists’ believe?

‘Counter-Jihadism’ is a broad alliance of organisations and individuals which believe that western civilisation is under attack from Islam. Some are more extreme than others but all generally agree that Islam is a supremacist religion and many see little difference between violent jihadists and ordinary Muslims who live their lives quite peacefully.

While there is absolutely nothing wrong with opposing jihadism or even criticising Islam, the term ‘counter-jihadist’ is one coined by anti-Muslim activists and actually describes a specific type of conspiratorial anti-Muslim prejudice.

Most ‘counter-jihadists’ believe that secular, liberal society is aiding Islam through mass immigration into Europe and policies of multiculturalism, which they believe squash any criticism of Islam. This conspiratorial notion of conscious and planned invasion is one of the key ideas that marks ‘counter-jihadism’ out from more general anti-Muslim sentiment.

Often activists articulate cultural nationalist ideas that spurn the narrow nationalism of the traditional far right in favour of continent-wide, or more specifically occident-wide, brotherhood.

A mythical, usually Christian, western culture and identity is said to be facing extinction at the hands

of Islamic invasion. It is for this reason that ‘counter-jihadists’ have often adopted imagery associated with the Crusades. ‘Counter-jihad’ street demonstrations, such as those organised by the English Defence League (EDL) in the UK, have often been replete with cross-emblazoned shields and images of armour-clad knights.

The white supremacist Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik, who killed 77 people in 2011, quoted from St. Bernard of Clairvaux’s In Praise of the New Knighthood in Latin in his infamous manifesto, A European Declaration of Independence. The idea of a civilisational clash between the Christian West and the Muslim East is also the reason that one of the most important CJ blogs, Gates of Vienna, takes its name from the 1529 Siege of Vienna by the Ottoman Empire, led by Suleiman the Magnificent.

Broadly speaking ‘counter-jihadists’ believe there is a clash of civilisations between Islam and the West. While ideas around the nature, inevitability and desirability of this clash vary greatly among activists many see some sort of conflict as inevitable, with a few, including some of the most prominent CJ bloggers and activists, believing that this is both necessary and desirable. At its most extreme fringes some argue that it will only be through civil war that new leaders will emerge and do what is required – expel Muslims from Europe and the West.



America

The election of Donald Trump is a huge landmark on the journey of anti-Muslim hatred from the margins into the mainstream. After many years of slowly and painstakingly edging their way out of the political wilderness, 'counter-jihadists' suddenly have an advocate in the White House who echoes their positions on Islam and Muslims. He even appoints likeminded people to positions of power that 10 years ago would have been unthinkable.

As Pamela Geller, the leading American 'counter-jihadist' put it in an article for Breitbart, 'finally, someone with a huge platform is calling out the enemedia (portmanteau of 'enemy' and 'media') and the dhimmi (a none Muslim living under Muslim law) press, and giving them the long overdue, much-needed middle finger they so richly deserve. Trump must win in order for this nation to survive.'

As the dust settled from Trump's victory, those who expected him to moderate his tone and jettison his more controversial positions regarding Muslims have been disappointed. Instead he has gathered around him a coterie of dubious advisors, some of whom are 'counter-jihadists' and activists of the organised anti-Muslim movement.

While much press attention has rightly noted the manner in which Trump and his campaign have mainstreamed controversial and extreme anti-Muslim figures over the last year, this phenomenon is not new in America. Before exploring Trump's appointees, it is worth noting how over the last 10 years, well before the rise of Trump, 'counter-jihad' activists have slowly been boxing their way out of obscurity and garnering increasing levels of influence.



Pamela Geller, the leading American 'counter-jihadist'

PRE-TRUMP MAINSTREAMING

As far back as 2009 Robert Spencer, director of the anti-Muslim website, Jihad Watch, and co-founder of Stop Islamisation of America (SIOA) – who was later banned from entering the UK by the Home Office due to his extreme beliefs – was recruited by the FBI to facilitate training and his works were utilised during training sessions on Islam.

Similarly, disgraced former FBI agent John Guandolo, who is the founder of 'Understanding the Threat' and has stated that American Muslims 'do not have a First Amendment right to do anything', has provided training courses to law enforcement agencies across the country.

Likewise, the American 'counter-jihad' activist Stephen Coughlin worked as a contractor on the Joint Staff, J-2 (intelligence) for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon. He is now a Senior Fellow at Frank 'Obama is a Muslim' Gaffney's anti-Muslim Center For Security Policy (CSP) and recently addressed the anti-Muslim ACT! for America Conference in Washington D.C., where he laid out his conspiratorial theory that Muslims have adopted a Maoist insurgency model to conquer America and the West.

ACT! for America is the largest anti-Muslim pressure group in the USA with 300,000 members across 1000 branches. Its leader Brigitte Gabriel has addressed members of the United States Congress, the Pentagon, the Joint Forces Staff College, the U.S. Special Operations Command, the U.S. Asymmetric Warfare group and the FBI. ACT! also recently held its national conference in Congress with numerous Senators and Congressmen and women addressing the event, including Presidential hopeful Ted Cruz.

It seems that post-9/11 trauma was central to providing a pathway to legitimacy for anti-Muslim activists. In the aftermath of the tragic attacks it seems that the intelligence and law enforcement agencies were grasping around for any and all information on the threat posed by radical Islam. This desire for information resulted in extreme figures such as Spencer and Gabriel being brought in for short periods before being dropped in light of their extreme and marginal views. However, despite later being 'purged' by the FBI/ Pentagon their period as advisors and speakers has afforded them a lasting credibility which they have used to their advantage.



The Trump Effect

While the journey of 'counter-jihad' activists from the margins to the mainstream has been happening for some time, Trump's campaign and his subsequent election is unquestionably a game changer for the 'counter-jihad' movement in America.

DURING THE CAMPAIGN

In the wake of the San Bernardino shooting in December 2015, Donald Trump addressed a crowd at Charleston, South Carolina and infamously said: 'Donald J. Trump is calling for a complete and total shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on.'

This was a Presidential candidate calling for a discriminatory policy that would ban 1.6 billion people from entering America. His comments shocked the world and caused understandable upset and outrage among America's 3.3 million Muslims.

Since then he has obfuscated and the particulars of his policy have changed numerous times. He has mentioned only suspending immigration from countries compromised by terrorism, then a week after his election his advisor Kris Kobach suggested Trump's team were looking at a registry of Muslims, though Trump's communications team later denied this. More recently, in the wake of the terrorist attack at the Berlin Christmas market, Trump seemed to suggest he still believed in banning all Muslims. Once in office Trump issued an executive order that halted the entire US refugee programme for 120 days, indefinitely banned Syrian refugees, and banned immigration from seven Muslim majority countries.

While his exact policy regarding immigration and Muslims changed during his campaign the general tone throughout was consistently hostile towards Islam and its adherents. What is so worrying is that his anti-Muslim rhetoric was influenced by leading counter-jihad activists, who then used Trump to advance their long-held prejudices.

In a statement outlining his proposal to ban Muslims during his election campaign, Trump quoted discredited research about Muslims and their attitudes that was produced by Frank Gaffney's 'counter-jihad' think-tank the Centre for Security Policy (CSP). Founded in 1988 as a national security think tank, the Washington DC-based CSP campaigns against (the apparent) Islamisation of the United States and has played a prominent role in recent years in the organised anti-Muslim movement in the United States. Gaffney has been credited as the figure behind the idea of state and federal anti-Sharia laws.

Gaffney was also a key figure behind the 'Obama is a Muslim' conspiracy theory, writing an article in *The Washington Times* back in 2009 that was titled 'America's first Muslim president'. Famously, of course, Trump echoed this pernicious canard

A short history of 'counter-jihadism'

While 'counter-jihadism' is an anti-Muslim ideology adhered to by a diverse group of people (many of whom have nothing to do with each other) there is a core of connected activists and organisations that self-identify as the 'Counter-Jihad Movement' (CJM).'

The movement's roots can be traced back to the 1980s, though it crystallised in its modern form in wake of the 11 September attacks in 2001. The CJM was originally an internet-based political discourse, centred around blogs such as Atlas Shrugs, Gates of Vienna and Jihad Watch, respectively edited by Pamela L. Geller, Edward S. May and Robert B. Spencer. The movement's primary ideologues were writers such as Fjordman (aka Peder Nøstvold Jensen) and Bat Ye'or.

By the second half of that decade the disparate yet likeminded activists of the CJM began to formalise their networks with important meetings such as the Counter-Jihad Summits in 2007, first in Copenhagen and then in Brussels. Transnational organisations such as Stop Islamisation of Europe (SIOE) and the International Civil Liberties Alliance (ICLA) acted as offline forums for activism that had previously been confined to the internet. Then in 2009, the English Defence League was formed and its demonstrations became the most visible and famous manifestation of counter-jihad activism in Europe.

Today this first wave international counter-jihad organisations are all but defunct, with most having either disbanded or become inactive. Most attempts to organise across borders have failed with the Defence League network being a prime example and more recent attempts such as the international Pegida branches having followed suit.

Europe is now missing the transnational bodies that were designed to unify it and to all intents and purposes the CJM, in its original form, no longer really exists. However, while the European counter-jihad movement is not what it once was there are still hundreds of anti-Muslim organisations and websites that are still active and continue to push the conspiratorial anti-Muslim hatred that is the heart of counter-jihad ideology.

Unlike Europe, in America the movement has gone fully mainstream with key CJM activists and organisations entering the mainstream and major CJM organisations like ACT! for America having unprecedented access to policy makers.



and was involved in the so-called 'birther movement' that called for Obama's birth certificate to be released. It is also believed that Gaffney was behind Trump's comments about Muslims creating no-go zones in the US and the UK.

Another controversial anti-Muslim activist who advised Trump during his campaign was the lawyer and former inspector general of the US Department of Defense, Joseph Schmitz. Brought in to advise on foreign policy Schmitz is also linked to Gaffney's CSP, for whom he has written a number of articles and was a contributor to its conspiratorial report *Sharia: The Threat to America*. Schmitz also sits on the Advisory Board of the American Freedom Law Center (AFLC), which is run by the highly-controversial figure David Yerushalmi. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) described Yerushalmi as "an Arizona attorney with a record of anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant and anti-black bigotry", while the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) described him as an "anti-Muslim activist who is a leading proponent of the idea that the United States is threatened by the imposition of Muslim religious law".

Schmitz seems to disagree with both the SPLC and the ADL, stating: 'As they fight for our faith and freedoms, Robert Muise and David Yerushalmi of the American Freedom Law Center embody the American spirit of teamwork, integrity, and commitment to excellence. Indeed, their passion for preserving our nation's values is an everyday reminder that there is still hope for America.'

TRUMP'S TEAM

During Trump's election campaign many commentators predicted he would moderate his tone if he won and move back towards the mainstream, jettisoning his extreme and racist comments about Muslims and distancing himself from his more extreme advisors. Unfortunately, these predictions have proved overly optimistic and instead he has gathered around him a coterie of controversial advisors some of whom are 'counter-jihadists'.

Walid Phares – Advisor to Trump's Foreign Policy Team

Phares was named in the Centre for American Progress report *Fear, Inc* as one of the 'validators' that make up the Islamophobia network in America. Despite Fox News reporter Brian Kilmeade recently (and incorrectly) stating that Phares was a Muslim, he is actually a Maronite Christian who was once a 'top political official' for the mostly Christian Lebanese Front. The Front was responsible for the Sabra and Shatila massacres of Palestinians during the 1982 Lebanese civil war.

More recently Phares has promoted conspiratorial ideas regarding mainstream Muslim groups secretly being radical Islamist cells, stating: "...jihadists within the West pose as civil rights advocates" that patiently recruit until "[a]most all mosques, educational centers, and socioeconomic institutions fall into their hands."

Like Trump, Phares is not shy of using scare tactics when it comes to Islam and Muslims. In 2008 he stated that in the next four years: "Jihadists may recruit one million suicide bombers" and that by 2016, they would have 10 million.

A 2011 report *Manufacturing the Muslim Menace* claimed: "Phares is often very cautious in his characterization of Muslims, [yet] on the whole, his narrative distorts the nature of Islam, misstates the role of the overwhelming majority of Muslim Americans, and reinforces cultural stereotyping of Arabs and Islam."

While he is generally careful about what he says personally he is less concerned with the company he keeps and is involved with several of the most prominent counter-jihad people and organisations in America. Phares has links to Frank Gaffney's CSP and has appeared on Gaffney's radio show numerous times, as well as speaking at events organised by the Center. Back in 2010 he joined the infamous counter-jihad activist Robert Spencer on a panel to discuss 'Radical Islam: How and Why It Threatens America'.



Walid Phares



Michael T. Flynn



Rep. Mike Pompeo



A recent profile by the Center for New Community¹ has further shown how Phares sits on the board of advisors of America's largest anti-Muslim organisation, ACT! for America. Worryingly an email sent to activists by ACT! bragged that it now has 'a direct line to President-elect Trump through our allies such as [...] Walid Phares.' The profile also notes that he was reportedly a former board member of the anti-Muslim propagandist organisation, the Clarion Project, and a contributing editor to the anti-Muslim online publication Family Security Matters.

Michael T. Flynn – National Security Advisor

Flynn is a retired army lieutenant general who served as Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency from 2012 to 2014. A recent *Guardian* article described him as a 'conspiracy theorist and Islamophobe who hangs around the darker corners of the white nationalist internet.'

Last year Flynn tweeted, 'Fear of Muslims is RATIONAL'. Also at a meeting of the Dallas branch of ACT! for America he said:

Islam is a political ideology. It is a political ideology. It definitely hides behind this notion of it being a religion. And I have a very, very tough time because I don't see a lot of people screaming 'Jesus Christ' with hatchets or machetes or rifles shooting up clubs or hatcheting, literally axing families on a train, or like they just killed a couple of police officers with a machete. It's unbelievable. So we have a problem.

It's like cancer. You know, I've gone through cancer in my own life. So it's like cancer. And it's a like a malignant cancer, though, in this case. It has metastasized.

This meeting is by no means his only link with ACT! for America, as he also sits on its board of advisors and recently did a speaking tour of numerous ACT! chapters and addressed its national conference in Washington D.C. in September 2016.

A profile by the Center for New Community states that he has claimed to personally be 'at war with Islam, or a, or a component of Islam, for the last decade.'

He also has links with CSP, having spoken at a symposium it co-sponsored.

Rep. Mike Pompeo – Trump's Nominee for Director of the CIA

Pompeo is a conservative Republican congressman for Kansas who assumed office in 2011 after winning the 4th district as a Tea Party candidate.

The *ThinkProgress* news blog run by the Center for American Progress noted how in 2013 on the House floor Pompeo stated that American Muslim leaders were 'potentially complicit' in terrorist acts.

He has very close links with numerous prominent anti-Muslim organisations in America. According to the Centre for New Community he has spoken at ACT! for America national conference for the past three years and in 2016 he reserved an auditorium in the U.S. Capitol for ACT's legislative briefing.

Pompeo has also appeared on Frank Gaffney's 'Secure Freedom Radio' programme dozens of times and has been praised by the Center for Security Policy for campaigning against the Islamic Society of Wichita.

Other 'counter-jihad' linked individuals include:²

- **Stephen Miller – Senior Policy Advisor:** Linked to leading 'counter-jihad' activist David Horowitz.
- **Monica Crowley – Senior Director of Comms at National Security Council:** Has links with the Frank Gaffney and his Centre for Security Policy and the David Horowitz Freedom Center. She has since stood down following revelations of numerous incidents of plagiarism in her academic career.
- **Kellyanne Conway – Senior Advisor:** Her polling company has done work for anti-Muslim groups. She has links with Frank Gaffney and his Centre for Security Policy.
- **Katharine Gorka – DHS Landing Team:** Linked to Frank Gaffney and expressed support for an ACT! for America's legislative suggestion.

NOTES

¹ For the full report by the Center for New Community which profiles all Trump's controversial advisors please see: <http://imagine2050.newcomm.org/category/nativists-at-the-white-house/>

² For the full report by the Center for New Community which profiles all Trump's controversial advisors please see: <http://imagine2050.newcomm.org/category/nativists-at-the-white-house/>



Europe

INTRODUCTION

Unlike in America, European CJ organisations and activists generally remain marginal and controversial figures. There are of course some notable and worrying exceptions, such as Geert Wilders in the Netherlands. However, there is no doubt that the wave of bad press and attention that 'counter-jihadism' received in the wake of the deadly attacks by Anders Behring Breivik in Norway in 2011 retarded its expansion and limited the chances of key European activists becoming more mainstream figures.

However, in some European countries where CJ activists have been shunned their ideas have still managed to gain traction. Often we have seen CJ tropes and conspiratorial anti-Muslim views adopted by supposedly mainstream politicians and media outlets.

Over the last decade talk of a Muslim invasion and a threat to western civilisation has moved from social media and the blogs of political activists, to media-grabbing street demonstrations, and now into the parliamentary chambers of Europe. This worrying process of mainstreaming has been rapidly accelerated over the last few years by the refugee crisis and the spate of terrorist attacks that have shaken the Continent. No longer does one have to stand in a fenced off car park at an anti-Muslim street demonstration to hear of

a conspiratorial plot to flood Europe with Muslims, when markedly similar ideas are being articulated by politicians, journalists and even Prime Ministers of member states of the European Union.

The adoption of some CJ ideas by mainstream politicians is likely both a cause of and as a result of rising anti-Muslim sentiment across the continent. A report published in 2016 by the Pew Research Center showed that unfavourable views about Muslims seem to have surged in numerous European countries. The percentage of unfavourable views of Muslims in Hungary was 72%, 69% in Italy, 66% in Poland and on the rise in many other countries. In Greece the research found unfavourable views of Muslims had risen to 12%, 9% in the UK and 5% in France between 2015 and 2016.

These negative views are linked to the 2015 'migrant crisis' and the recent spate of tragic 'Islamist' terror attacks that have hit the continent in the last few years. In eight of 10 European countries surveyed by Pew more than 50% questioned said they felt that incoming refugees increased the likelihood of terrorism in their country.

Negative perceptions of Muslims are also likely affected by the reams of negative and prejudiced portrayals of Muslims by parts of the mainstream press, in 'fake news' (often shared on social media), and by right-wing and populist politicians.

EASTERN EUROPE

In Eastern Europe there are numerous worrying examples of prime ministers and presidents adopting hostile anti-Muslim rhetoric, much of which echoes strongly the conspiratorial assertions of the 'counter-jihadism'.

Generally, 'counter-jihadist' groups and activists have not entered the mainstream themselves and the movements remains relatively small (tiny/non-existent in some places) but with supposedly-mainstream politicians saying the same things there is little impetus or need for the movement to exist or grow.

Worryingly Trump has already invited a number of the most explicitly anti-Muslim leaders from Eastern Europe to the White House, raising concerns that transatlantic anti-Muslim alliances are being formed at the very highest levels of decision making.

■ SLOVAKIA

The Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico has said that: 'Mass migration of Muslim immigrants who would start to build mosques will not to be tolerated', and called for the 'restriction of the freedom of Muslims in Europe'. Last year Fico added: 'Islam has no place in this country'.

In December 2016 a law was passed that effectively bans Islam from gaining official status as a religion. Sponsored by the Slovak National Party (SNS), the Bill requires a religion to have at least 50,000 members to qualify for state subsidies and to run schools. As there are just between 2,000 and 5,000 Muslims in Slovakia the new law will marginalise them completely from public and official life.

Andrej Danko, the SNS Chairman, has said: 'We must do everything we can so that no mosque is built in the future.'



■ HUNGARY

The Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán has become a hero of the anti-Muslim movement because of his anti-Muslim and anti-refugee views. Back in late 2015 Tatjana Festerling of the German anti-Muslim street movement Pegida sang his praises at a demonstration in Dresden and the crowd chanted his name in adoration.

Over the last year Orbán's public statements regarding Islam and Muslims have often been indistinguishable from the ideas of 'counter-jihadists'. Of all the European leaders Orbán has gone the furthest in adopting CJ rhetoric and has even echoed their conspiratorial assertions.

Speaking to a Swiss magazine he claimed a left-wing plot was behind the migrant crisis. 'You cannot get around imagining that some kind of master plan is behind this,' he said. He then cited essays by 'the European left and radical American democrats' that envision the emergence of a transnational European super state.'

His statements about Muslims have been consistently hostile and extreme. In September 2016 he said: 'I don't even want to think about the integration of Muslim people in Europe. The most we could hope for is a peaceful life next to each other, which is called a parallel society' and 'I don't even want to envisage a Hungary which accepts migrants'.

Unsurprisingly Orbán has effectively endorsed Trump on several occasions and praised his anti-immigrant rhetoric. Both leaders favour building walls to keep immigrants and refugees out and Orbán has actually built such a barrier along the country's borders with Serbia and Croatia.

In October 2016 Orbán held a referendum on closing the door to refugees and more than 98% of participants voted against the admission of refugees to Hungary.

Unsurprisingly considering their ideological parallels Donald Trump has invited Orbán to the White House in 2017.

■ CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech President Miloš Zeman is the best example of supposedly mainstream politicians adopting counter-jihad and anti-Muslim ideas.

In late 2015 he took the shocking decision to speak at a large anti-Muslim demonstration organised by Martin Konvicka and his Bloc Against Islam. Thousands of Czech protesters were joined by a contingent from Pegida and Stephen Lennon (Tommy Robinson), founder and former leader of the EDL. The event was another landmark moment in the journey of 'counter-jihadism' from the margins to the mainstream in Europe.

Since then Zeman's rhetoric has regularly echoed 'counter-jihadist' ideas. In December 2015 he repeated a key CJ trope, stating: 'I am profoundly convinced that we are facing an organised invasion and not a spontaneous movement of refugees'.



Czech President
Miloš Zeman

He later added: 'I believe that the invasion is organised by the Muslim Brotherhood', saying on Czech radio that: 'It cannot declare war on Europe, it does not have enough forces for it, but it can prepare a growing migrant wave and gradually gain control of Europe as it has been happening in some West European cities that police are afraid to enter at night.'

Referencing the sexual assaults that took place on New Year's eve 2015/16 he has stated that Islamic 'culture' should not be allowed into Europe or 'it will end up like Cologne'. He added: 'The experience of western European countries which have ghettos and excluded localities shows that the integration of the Muslim community is practically impossible.'

Unsurprisingly considering their ideological parallels Donald Trump has invited Zeman to the White House in April 2017.

■ POLAND

During the 2015 migrant crisis Jaroslaw Kaczynski, former Prime Minister and a leading member of Poland's ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party, said: 'After recent events connected with acts of terror, [Poland] will not accept refugees because there is no mechanism that would ensure safety.'

Mr Kaczynski has also claimed that the refugees, most of which are Muslims, were bringing 'various parasites and protozoa' to Europe.

Current PM Beata Szydło, also of PiS agrees and has said: 'I say very clearly that I see no possibility at this time of immigrants coming to Poland'.



WESTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE

In western and central Europe there has been a rise in the number and size of explicitly anti-Muslim parties, as populist radical-right parties have risen and elevated anti-Muslim prejudice to the forefront of their political agendas.

2017 will be an important year for measuring just how far anti-Muslim politics has become mainstream, with a number of key elections where anti-Muslim parties and candidates are expected to do very well.

One of the main problems, especially in the wake of a number of tragic terrorist attacks, has been the normalisation of anti-Muslim views in the press and from mainstream politicians.

■ FRANCE

France will go to the polls in April for the first round of its presidential elections. At present the far-right populist leader of the Front National (FN), Marine Le Pen, leads the polls, though the favourite François Fillon is still expected to win in the second round. However, even if this is the case, a strong showing by Le Pen will be a worrying sign of the normalisation of anti-Muslim and populist politics in Europe.

Marine Le Pen has embarked on a modernisation process since taking over the leadership from her father in 2011, trying to detoxify the party's image from its far-right and antisemitic roots. In the most recent elections the FN came top in the first round of regional elections in late 2015.

Le Pen has long taken a hard line on Muslims and Islam with much of her rhetoric making only the smallest distinction between Islam and Islamist extremism. However, France been hit by a number of tragic terrorist attacks in recent years, perpetrated by Islamist extremists, and the result has been that many of Le Pen's views have been echoed by politicians from the main parties.

Le Pen has called for expulsion of 'foreigners who preach hatred on our soil' and to strip dual-nationality Muslims with extremist views of citizenship. Her ideas were endorsed by both the Socialist PM Manuel Valls and by President Francois Hollande. Similarly, Francois Fillon, the Republican party presidential party candidate, has described radical Islam as a 'totalitarianism like the Nazis'. Of course, denouncing radical Islam is perfectly acceptable and necessary but he added that Jews, Catholics and Protestants 'don't denounce the values of the Republic' thereby suggesting that Muslims do.

France was the first country in Europe to ban Islamic face veils such as the burka and niqab back in April 2011. The issue is a very complex one, centred on debates around the issue of France's staunch history of secularism vs. freedom of religion. The face veil ban hit the headlines again in 2016 when the Mayor of Cannes, David Lisnard, banned the burkini (a swimsuit that covers everything except the hands, feet and face), calling it 'the uniform of extremist Islamism'. While in keeping with France's staunch secularism the result shocked many, with pictures of Muslim women being forced by armed police to undress on the beach.



■ GERMANY

For many liberal progressives Germany and Angela Merkel has been a beacon of hope due to a humane and sympathetic refugee policy. However, Merkel's position has by no means been universally popular and a spate of sexual assaults and terrorist attacks have made many question her policy.

While Merkel has generally held firm, the last few years has seen the growth of a more organised anti-Muslim movement. The most famous is the German Patriotic Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes (Pegida - Patriotic Europeans against Islamisation of the Occident) which was formed in October 2014 in Dresden, Saxony, as a reaction to public concern about violent street clashes between supporters of the Kurdish PKK and Islamist extremists in the city.

Pegida's targets are Muslims, refugees, the media and mainstream politicians, and not least federal chancellor Angela Merkel. Among those addressing its rallies have been the populist Dutch politician Geert Wilders, the German Götz Kubitschek, the Turkish extremist author Akif Pirincci and Stephen Lennon (former leader of the anti-Muslim street movement, the English Defence League).

Until April 2015, when it had begun to falter, Pegida marched almost every Monday evening in Dresden. Starting with 300 people, the demonstrations grew to a peak of 25,000 in January 2015 and led to numerous unsuccessful attempts at replication across Germany.

However, while the 2015 migrant crisis breathed some life back into the movement – its two-year anniversary demonstration in October 2016 attracted between 5,000 and 8,500 people – it seems that the movement has already passed its peak.

Pegida's initial successes in Dresden spawned copycat groups around Germany and the rest of Europe, all of which have generally been unsuccessful. That said the Pegida name, or 'brand', has become internationally known and supplanted the Defence League movement as the go-to 'counter-jihad' street protest brand.

Part of the group's troubles are the result of competition from the more politically adept and influential right-wing populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party. The party was founded in 2013 by Konrad Adam, Bernd Lucke and Alexander Gauland. Lucke quit the party in July 2015 claiming that it had become increasingly xenophobic.

The party's growth in recent years has been fast. In the 2013 federal elections it won 4.7% of the vote, while by 2014 it had won 7.1% and seven seats in European elections. By the end of 2016 it had gained representation in 10 of the 16 German state parliaments.

In 2016 the AfD adopted an explicitly anti-Islam policy calling for the banning of the face veil, the call to prayer and minarets. It was reported that at the conference in Stuttgart in April a delegate who called for dialogue with Muslims was booed. The





slogan 'Islam is not a part of Germany' was used.

It seems that the growth of the AfD has resulted in the centre ground shifting right on the issue of Islam and Muslims. In December 2016 Chancellor Merkel said that wearing the full-faced veil should be prohibited in Germany. At least half of Germany's 16 states have since banned teachers from wearing headscarves and in Hesse civil servants are included.

■ NETHERLANDS

In March 2017 there is to be a general election in the Netherlands to elect all 150 members of the House of Representatives. There is a real chance that Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom (PVV) could emerge as the largest party.

Wilders is the most successful explicitly 'counter-jihadist' politician in the world. His prominence in Dutch politics has secured his position as the main standard bearer across Europe of the 'counter-jihad' networks, and he is feted by campaigning organisations in North America.

Wilders' extreme views are very controversial and have caused widespread offence. He has called Islam the 'ideology of a retarded culture' and compared the Qur'an to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, labelling it the 'fascist Quran'. Despite claiming to be a champion of free speech he has called for the Qu'ran to be banned.

In addition, he has called for the rewriting of the Dutch constitution to provide for all immigration from Muslim countries to be halted, for paid repatriation of Muslim immigrants, and all Muslim 'criminals' to be stripped of Dutch citizenship and deported 'back where they came from'.

In 2008 Wilders commissioned the making of the controversial film *Fitna* that explored Quranic-inspired acts of terrorism. The film angered Muslims worldwide and triggered an international debate on free speech. In the spring of 2009 he launched the 'Facing Jihad World Tour', a series of screenings of *Fitna* to public officials and influential organisations around the world, including the United States Senate. As part of the tour he had planned to show the film in the Palace of Westminster but two days before the showing the-then Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, banned Wilders from entering the UK, labelling him an 'undesirable person'.

In July 2010, Wilders announced his plans to start an

international/pan-European anti-Islam movement called the International Freedom Alliance. It would initially cover France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States. Upon its conception it received support from René Stadtkewitz (Chairman, die Freiheit) and the Politically Incorrect (PI) blog and network. Wilders' goal was to establish an international alliance to end all immigration from Muslim countries to the West and a complete ban on Sharia Law.

Wilders has extensive links with other leading CJ activists around the world and attended the U.S. Republican Convention in America in Cleveland in 2016.

In December 2016 he was found guilty of inciting discrimination against Dutch Moroccans but was cleared of inciting hatred: the courts imposed no fine or sentence, stating that the criminal conviction was sufficient punishment.

■ SWITZERLAND

In 2016 it was made illegal to wear a face veil in public in the Tessin region following a referendum on the issue back in 2013.

Switzerland banned the building of minarets after a 2009 referendum was approved by 57.5% of participating voters. The referendum was in part the result of campaigning by the anti-immigrant Swiss People's Party, which won the biggest share of the vote in the 2015 national parliamentary elections.

■ AUSTRIA

In 2016 Austria came uncomfortably close to electing a far-right head of state when Norbert Hofer of the far-right Freedom Party received 46% of the vote. Though his loss to Van der Bellen of the Green party was celebrated by many as proof of Austria 'rejecting' the far right, the fact that a leader such as Hofer could receive such a large proportion of the vote was a deeply worrying sign.

Hofer has called for a ban on Muslim women wearing the face veil and during his campaign he promised to build a fence on Austria's southern border to 'stop the invasions of Muslims', leading to some dubbing him the 'Austrian Donald Trump'. Previously he has said that 'Islam is not part of our values'.



Britain: From the EDL to Brexit

At its height in the early years of this decade the English Defence League (EDL) was the most important and well known 'counter-jihad' group in Europe. Its regular demonstrations attracted thousands and made news around the world. However, today this once-largescale organised movement has more or less collapsed, leaving a plethora of tiny irrelevant CJ groups.

This has by no means heralded the end of anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK. Quite the contrary. Instead we have seen a normalisation of anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK and a rise in anti-Muslim hate crime. It is now clear that while groups such as the EDL and similar 'counter-jihadist' movements can *cause* anti-Muslim sentiment, they are the *result* of existing societal anti-Muslim feeling, the causes of which are much more diffuse and varied.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE EDL

The founder and leader of the EDL, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (Tommy Robinson), a convicted football hooligan from Luton, became a leading 'counter-jihadist' with important contacts across Europe and North America. Lennon was aided during this period by the millionaire businessman and IT consultant Alan Ayling (Alan Lake).

The peak for the EDL was its homecoming demonstration in Luton on 5 February 2011. The demonstration attracted 3,000 people, making it the largest anti-Muslim demonstration ever held in the UK.

Following this highpoint in Luton the EDL began to decline. Joel Buser convincingly argues that by the end of 2011 the EDL 'found them[selves] at a tactical impasse' with many activists being 'sceptical about the value of flash demonstrations, leafleting, organising petitions and undertaking legal challenges against proposed Islamic buildings'.



Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (center)

A plethora of other factors also contributed to its decline, including the failure to evolve tactically and the resulting repetitiveness of endless similar demonstrations meaning some activists lost interest. Also a crack down on violence, hooliganism and alcohol coupled with the police's decision to increasingly deny access to town centres and instead moving demonstrations to isolated car parks or periphery sites reduced the atmosphere and excitement of events. Internal schisms and splits also played an important role.

What followed was a downward spiral as ever-smaller demonstrations increased internal tensions and infighting. During the fallout many EDL activists broke away to form their own groups or quit the movement entirely.

The murder of off-duty soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich, south London, in May 2013 provided a brief moment of respite in this downward trajectory, but despite its best efforts to capitalise on this tragedy the EDL achieved little more than the swelling of social media accounts and a few larger demonstrations.

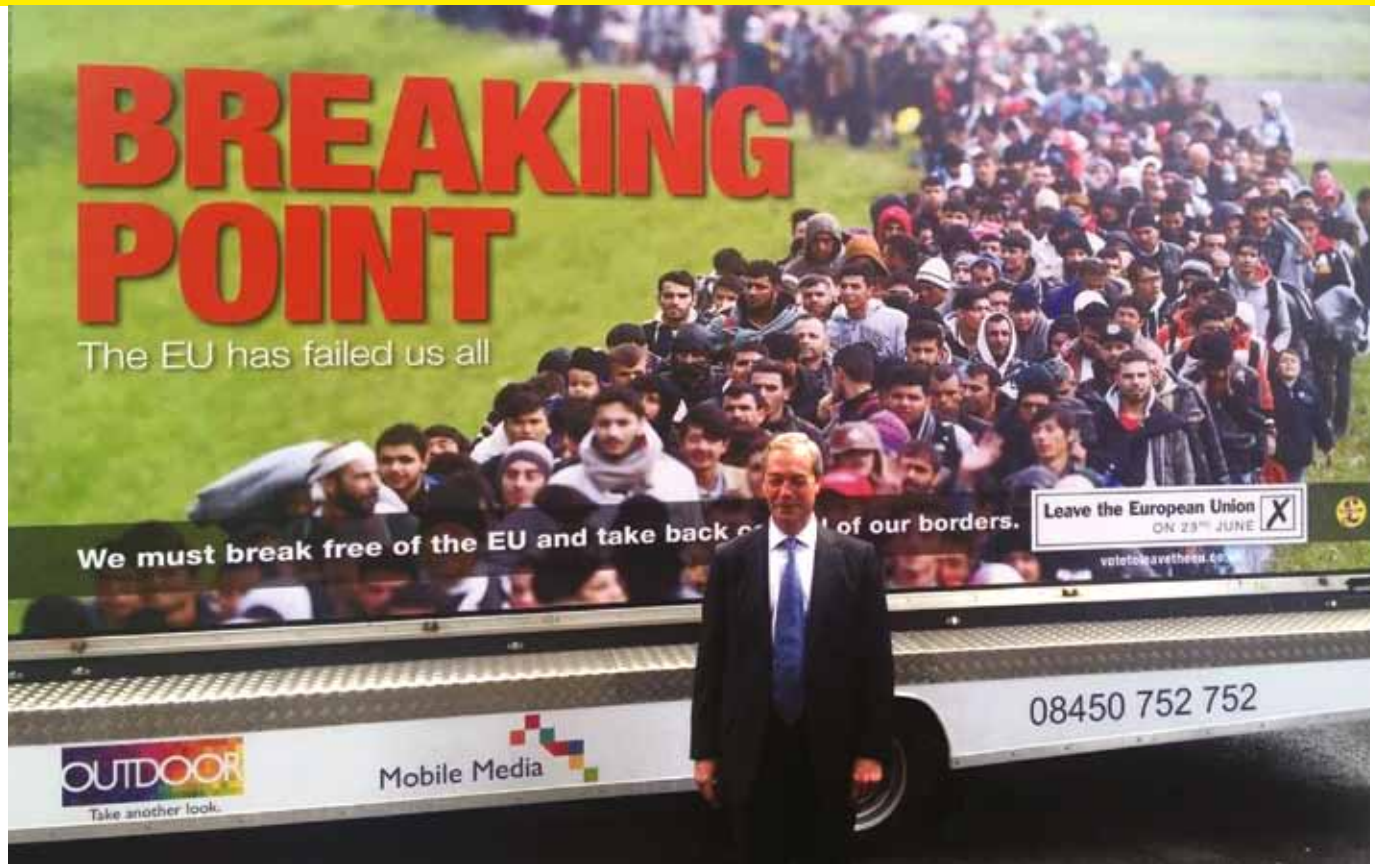
The final hammer blow came in October 2013 when Stephen Lennon and his cousin and deputy Kevin Carroll stood down as leaders. While the EDL has dragged on and continued to organise demonstrations it is a shadow of its former self and is no longer of any real importance. A plethora of EDL splinter groups still exist with many, such as the Infidel groups, morphing into more traditional far-right organisations with the adoption of antisemitism.

WHAT'S LEFT?

Britain First, a group led by former British National Party press officer Paul Golding, has supplanted the EDL as the premier counter-jihad street protest group. It is a far-right political party (with negligible success at the polls) that professes a 'Christian' outlook. It utilises controversial and provocative 'Christian patrols' and mosque invasions to garner media headlines, coupled with savvy online campaign, gaining a huge following on Facebook. However, the party has failed to convert this online success into offline activism and the group remains tiny in terms of real activists.

The only genuinely 'counter-jihad' political party in the UK is LibertyGB, which remains a political irrelevance despite triggering widespread outrage by deciding to run in the Batley and Spen by-election in October 2016 – a contest triggered by the murder of the incumbent MP Jo Cox by far-right activist Thomas Mair.

However, while LibertyGB has zero influence in the UK, its leader Paul Weston remains a well-known figure on the international 'counter-jihad' scene. He continues to write for the Gates of Vienna website and in March 2016 he embarked



on a speaking tour of North America which saw him meet with leading American activists, including Brigitte Gabriel and Frank Gaffney.

Increasingly the role of obscure European 'counter-jihad' activists such as Weston and Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff from Austria, is to go to America and preach the gospel of a fallen Europe, that of a continent conquered and destroyed by Islam. By playing into American 'counter-jihadists' existing prejudiced preconceptions about Europe and its abundance of 'no-go zones', figures who have little to no traction in Europe find themselves mixing in exalted circles in the USA.

To all intents and purposes the 'counter-jihad movement' in its traditional form no longer really exists in the UK, at least not in an organised or cohesive sense. That is not to say the activists have all disappeared and outlets such as Alan Lake's 4 Freedoms Forum are still active, and though the Law and Freedom Foundation is inactive, its founder Gavin 'mosquebuster' Boby continues to give speeches.

MAINSTREAMING IN THE UK

In Britain there has not been a mirroring of the American mainstreaming that has seen CJ activists being brought into the mainstream. Most prominent British 'counter-jihadists' have been ostracised by politicians and the media.

Rather in Britain there has been a creeping process of normalisation of anti-Muslim rhetoric, with some mainstream media outlets and politicians adopting positions not dissimilar to those promoted by 'counter-jihadists'.

As with much of the rest of Europe the 2015 migrant crisis and the wave of terrorist attacks on the Continent contributed to wider anti-Muslim prejudice. However, in 2016 Britain also experienced a referendum on its membership of the European Union. While there were legitimate arguments on both sides of the debate there was often a toxic atmosphere when it came to discussions about immigration, much of which was centred on Muslim refugees.

The Conservative politician Michael Gove suggested that a migrant influx equivalent to the population of Scotland could arrive if Britain voted to Remain. In addition, he and now Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson focused on the issue of possible Turkish migration, with little likelihood that Turkey would be able to join the EU in any near future (even less likely now, following crackdowns by Turkish President Erdogan). Leave posters disingenuously stated: 'Turkey (population 76 million) Is Joining the EU'. Some in the Leave camp also claimed that these possible future migrants were a threat to national security because of supposed higher levels of criminality among Turkish people.

A recent report by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) criticised rising 'racist violence and hate speech' by both the press and politicians in the wake of the Brexit vote. ECRI chair Christian Ahlund said: 'It is no coincidence that racist violence is on the rise in the UK at the same time as we see worrying examples of intolerance and hate speech in the newspapers, online and even among politicians.'



The ECRI criticised former UKIP leader Nigel Farage for claiming there was 'public concern about immigration partly because people believe there are some Muslims who want to form a fifth column and kill us.'

UKIP has often been a key part of this process of mainstreaming of anti-Muslim ideas, with a raft of leading UKIP figures echoing 'counter-jihadist' rhetoric.

Writing in the *Midweek Sport* about the migrant crisis Paul Nuttall, now UKIP leader, articulated views indistinguishable from those made by 'counter-jihadists'. In essence he bemoaned a Muslim invasion that would take over Europe and, as 'counter-jihadists' do, argued that 'we are encouraging this influx through our bleeding liberal hearts.'

Gerard Batten, a London UKIP MEP, even called for 'an ideological crusade to convert European Muslims to Christianity.' In 2016 Michael Frost, a UKIP politician in Bristol, replied to an email from a Muslim by writing: 'I know that all Muslims are not terrorists but all the terrorists ARE muslims' and added that the 'vast majority of the 'real' British public don't trust your 'sort' and 'we don't want you in our civilised country.' Also, one-time UKIP leadership hopeful Lisa Duffy called for a 'total ban' on Muslim state schools and for the closure of existing ones. Nuttall has also called for a ban on the Muslim face veil.

These are just a few examples of the dozens available of prominent UKIP members articulating 'counter-jihadist'-like views.

Paul Nuttall,
UKIP leader





Part of a wider offensive

While the threat of 'counter-jihadism' and its conspiratorial anti-Muslim ideas have been manifest differently on both sides of the Atlantic, it is true to say that we have witnessed a shift from the margins to the mainstream in both.

In America this has meant the welcoming of extremist activists into positions of authority first in the wake of 9/11 and then with the help of Trump. In Europe we have seen the adoption of 'counter-jihadist' rhetoric and conspiratorial assertions by mainstream politicians in the wake of the 2015 migrant crisis and the spate of tragic terror attacks. Sadly, rather than 2016 being the highpoint of this phenomenon all indicators suggest that things are set to get even worse in 2017.

However, the rise of Trump and the journey of 'counter-jihadism' into the mainstream can be viewed as part of a wider international offensive against what can generally be called the liberal progressive consensus. In both America and much of Europe we are witnessing a revolt against a set of ideals most believed to be increasingly widely accepted, namely multiculturalism and the progress of rights for minority and persecuted communities.

While Trump is at present the most visible and important manifestation of this revolt it is possible, and helpful, to conceptualise his rise as part of a broader offensive against a perceived 'liberal elite' and their 'progressive' and 'politically correct' language and policies.

Many have drawn parallels between Trump's election and the rise of populist radical-right parties in Europe such as the Front National in France and Geert Wilders PVV in The Netherlands. While this is of course true, the populist radical right makes up just part of the phenomenon that currently poses a threat to western liberal democracy.

Broadly speaking the populist radical right make up just one of four movements engaged in this revolt, the others being 'counter-jihadism', the 'Alt'/New Right and the traditional far right.

It is worth noting that there is substantial crossover between the four groups and many draw ideas from more than one. For example, online platforms such as Breitbart have published 'counter-jihadists', the 'alt' right and the populist radical right, while politicians such as Geert Wilders could be defined as a populist radical right leader yet is also a poster boy for the 'counter-jihadists'. Also, there is crossover between all groupings and the traditional far right.

While these four groups are very varied, with a broad range of ideologies and priorities, they are united on a number of issues thus making them part of the broader offensive against the liberal progressive consensus. All are anti-multiculturalism and anti-liberal democracy. Most are anti-Muslim, anti-feminism, anti-minority rights, anti-lgbt+ rights and anti-left wing. Importantly, most groups conceptualise the current 'crisis' or 'threat' as a clash of civilisations, namely the 'West' versus Islam.

There are of course anomalies. Some antisemites on the far right claim to be pro-Muslim, while some anti-Muslim activists proclaim themselves as feminists. But broadly speaking, all four groups agree on a number of core tenets and are different manifestations of this wider revolt.

Together these groups pose a fundamental threat to the liberal progressive consensus and have the ability to halt, and possibly even reverse, the advancement towards more open, tolerant and equal societies.

The rise of this broad revolt threatens the safety and security of all ethnic minority communities, especially Muslims, and provides a genuine threat to multiculturalism and undermines societal cohesion. The advancement and growth of these four groupings, albeit to different extents in different places, has the potential to pose a fundamental threat to liberal democracy.