



Hate and Violent Extremism from an Online Sub-Culture

The Yom Kippur Terrorist Attack in Halle, Germany

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

NOT FOR FURTHER RELEASE



Consultation Notes

This version of the report is a draft for consultation with stakeholders prior to the release of the final report. All content, including findings and recommendations, are subject to further change as a result of the consultation process.

- We invite stakeholders with direct knowledge of the facts described in this report to bring any errors or omissions to our attention.
- We invite stakeholders and experts who disagree with a finding or recommendation to provide a brief counter argument. We will consider this and decide if the content ought to be revised. In case we decide not to revise our content, please indicate if you would be willing for your counter view to be included, and if so, what attribution you would like (your name, company / organisation name, anonymous etc)
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 - Welcome the contribution to the field without specifically endorsing the content
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<https://ohpi.org.au/islamophobia-on-the-internet-the-growth-of-online-hate-targeting-muslims/>

Feedback and statements are requested by December 12th. We aim to release the public report on December 19th.

The Online Sub-Culture of Hate and Violent Extremism: The Yom Kippur Terrorist Attack in Halle, Germany

By Andre Oboler, William Allington and Patrick Scolyer-Gray

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THE ONLINE HATE PREVENTION INSTITUTE

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Established in 2012, the Online Hate Prevention Institute (OHPI) is an Australian Charity on the Australian Government's Register of Harm Prevention Charities. We are a world leader in combating online hate and a critical partner who works with key stakeholders to improve the prevention, mitigation and response to online hate and extremism.

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We invite organisations and agencies interested in using our tools, engaging us for consultation, or in developing longer term partnerships to combat online hate and extremism to [contact us directly](#).

Our online reporting tools accommodate multiple languages and are exceptionally flexible, easy to configure to combat many different types of hate, and can be licensed at affordable prices. They are accessible to organisations of any size yet offer results powerful enough to support large NGOs and government-based human rights agencies. Under an existing arrangement, a limited number of free licenses are available for community organisations based in Victoria, Australia.

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Dedication

To those that were murdered in the 2019 terror attacks in Halle, El Paso, Poway, and Christchurch.

Jana Lange and Kevin S.

Jordan Anchondo, Jordan Anchondo, Arturo Benavides, Mario De Alba, Jessica Coca Garcia, Memo Garcia, Angie Englisbee, Leo Campos, Maribel Hernandez, Javier Amir Rodriguez, Ivan Manzano, David Johnson, Maria Flores, Raul Flores, Jorge Calvillo Garcia, Alexander Gerhard Hoffman, Luis Alfonzo Juarez, Maria Eugenia Legarreta Rothe, Elsa Libera Marquez, Maribel Loya, Gloria Irma Marquez, Margie Reckard, Sarah Esther Regaldo Moriel, Adolfo Cerros Hernandez, Teresa Sanchez, Angelina Sliva-Elisbee and Juan Velazquez.

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They will be remembered.



1 Executive Summary

A new form of terrorism emerged in 2019. Incubated by a globalised, toxic, anonymous online culture, incitement to hate now all too frequently leads to violent extremism that manifests offline, and has cost the lives of dozens of innocents, including children. Participants and spectators of this newly forged online culture encourage, support and celebrate the serious crimes that they commit, and revel in the chaos and destruction they inflict.

There have been four terrorist attacks in 2019 attributable to the rise to prominence of this new form of online extremism. Two attacks occurred in the United States, one in New Zealand, and most recently in Germany. The minority groups that have been the targets of these attacks have varied, but all have consistently been linked to an online culture based primarily on participatory platforms (i.e., forums such as reddit), but especially imageboards (image-based online discussion forums) such as 4chan and 8chan. Indeed, at the core of this toxicity and violence is a subculture borne out of the now notorious board '/pol/' (short for "politically Incorrect"). Originally a creation designed to quarantine the neo-Nazis that plagued 4chan, /pol/ has become a cultural force in and of itself, and is now a key driving force with substantial momentum, as well as influence that has spread across multiple boards and sites.

The attacks in Christchurch (New Zealand), Poway (California, USA), El Paso (Texas, USA) and Halle (Germany) each began with a post to an imageboard that announced that the attack was imminent, and provided links to both a manifesto and a livestream feed to watch the attack unfold.

This report opens with an introduction that establishes the links between the attacks, the image board community and /pol/ in particular. As we explain, this is a new source of extremism that has now already led to four deadly terrorist attacks and there is no reason to believe it will not result in further deadly attacks. We provide an introduction to and overview of this hateful online subculture, highlighting key issues that must be understood to tackle this threat. The report then introduces the Halle attack and provides an analysis of the attacker and the online elements of his attack. We look at the response on /pol/ and the spread of the attacker's material online. Next discuss the response by technology companies, GIFCT and the Australian Government (as we are an Australian charity) to limit the spread of this dangerous content. This is accompanied by a discussion of our observations of responses to the Christchurch Call. The report continues with a more detailed examination of the antisemitic themes that emerge from the attack, as well as a more in-depth look at /pol/, and the image board community.

Throughout this report, we offer recommendations for a range of stakeholders that can be implemented to improve the efficacy of dealing with this new form of terrorism. Although the management of these incidents are gradually improving, there remains a substantial gap between the promises for greater action which have been made publicly and the reality. It is in this gap where incitement festers, radicalisation processes proceed unabated, and the risk of further attacks grow. Any effective response will require the active participation, cooperation and investment of governments, technology companies, and civil society as partners with a shared interest in combating what has become a significant threat to our globalised societies.

2 Summary of Recommendations

The following sections summarise recommendations that appear with background explanation and context throughout this report.

2.1 Recommendations to Create a Partnership Between Industry and Government

Number	Page	Recommendation
19	45	Serious hate speech, that which makes threats of violence or incites either violence or hatred, should be immediately reported to authorities. Other forms of hate speech should be removed by the platform, but a log of the incident including the users account and IP address should be recorded. Users should be informed when a platform takes action against them and should be warned repeated breaches could lead to a report being issued to authorities. Where platform sanctions prove ineffective at altering behaviour, the history of breaches and IP address of the user should be referred to authorities.
20	45	Once a user has been referred to authorities, a summary of any further hate speech incidents involving that user should be notified to authorities periodically (e.g. monthly) by the referring platform.
21	45	Once a user has been referred to authorities, the authorities should seek to convert the IP address into details of the account holder and add it to the record. Where the account holder is a company, the company should be notified with a request to identify the specific user.
22	45	Where a company cannot provide information on the person who committed a breach of the law against serious or repeated hate speech, assistance should be provided. Where a company will not provide information on the person who committed a breach of the law against serious or repeated hate speech, the company itself should be liable to corporate fines.
23	45	Users referred to authorities by platforms for repeated breaches that do not involve incitement to hate or violence should initially be issued a warning, potentially after a discussion with authorities in which their actions are discussed. Further breaches should lead to escalating fines. If fines fail to provide a deterrent more serious measures including imprisonment should be available.
24	45	Legal exemptions should be provided for researchers from government agencies and departments, academia and civil society engaged in testing the effectiveness of both platform and government agency responses. Such exemptions may require prior approval of the research by one or more authorised people or agencies who are independent of the enforcement system.

2.2 Recommendations for Content Services

Number	Page	Recommendation
3	16	All services that allow users to upload or post content should have clearly visible mechanisms for reporting to the service provider any content that violates the terms of services.
18	43	All companies that allow hosting of user generated content should have a process to receive reports from the public related to material promoting terrorism and this process should ensure rapid review.

4	16	All services that allow users to upload or post content should allow content to be reported anonymous to the service provider and by anyone who can see the content. If content is visible without having an account, then it should be reportable without having an account.
5	16	To assisting with lawful counter terrorism investigations, all services that allow users to upload or post content should maintain logs for at least 24 hours. Where a user reports content, log details related to the original uploader / poster should be maintained for a further period of at least 7 days.
7	19	Livestreaming and video hosting sites should provide reporting options that allow the rapid identification, and a priority response, to reports of actual violence, extremism or unfolding crime.
8	19	Platforms should on a regular basis publish target response times and actual average response times to user reports that are made and classified into the category they use to capture details of violent extremist content.
11	35	When a violent extremist attack is livestreamed the platform that was used to stream the incident and / or host the initial video of the incident should provide transparency on exactly when the livestream and/or video was first reported to them and when exactly they acted to remove it.
12	35	Platforms should take all reasonable steps to facilitate and encourage the reporting of material depicting and promoting violent extremism, as well as all other reasonable steps to identify such material themselves. They should expeditiously remove such material once they become aware of it. Provided the above steps are taken, there should be a clear safe harbour protecting platforms from liability for material they are unaware they are hosting.
36	92	Hosting services that do not outright prohibit the use of their services to incite hate, should at a minimum ensure they don't serve content inciting hate to users in countries where such incitement is unlawful.

2.3 Recommendations for Suppliers to Content Services

Number	Page	Recommendation
1	14	Where an image board is hosted in country and the site, or a board within it, actively promotes hate speech which is unlawful in that country, the hosting provider once it is aware of this should take action to terminate the hosting.
2	14	Where a domain name is registered in a country, and the owner actively uses the site at that domain for the purpose of promoting hate speech which is unlawful in that country, the domain name should be terminate by the domain name registrar.
31	87	Decisions by technology companies not to do business with a site should be general enough that a change to the ownership, brand, domain name or IP address will not circumvent the ban.
33	88	All companies providing Internet infrastructure should have clear terms of service which prohibit the use of their service for inciting hate or violence. They should also give notice that the service may be terminate without notice for serious breaches of this rule. Companies may further wish to require that any customer they provide a service to includes a similar statement in its terms of service.

2.4 Recommendations for Law Makers

Number	Page	Recommendation
6	17	Laws and policies designed to prevent the spread of extremist material need to be flexible enough to cover content consisting of a link which directly or indirectly will lead to the material.
37	92	Governments should consider law reforms to create a system of sanctions that could be imposed on companies outside their jurisdiction who, after suitable notice, continue to provide unlawful content inciting hatred or violent extremism to users in that country in breach of the country's law. Such law reform could also create sanctions that impose penalties for any company within the country's jurisdiction who engaged in business with a company on the sanctions list.

2.5 Recommendations for Executive Government

Number	Page	Recommendation
34	89	Governments continue to contribute to the costs of security for Jewish communal institutions and provide additional support at times of increased risk such as during Yom Kippur.
32	88	Decisions by governments to restrict access to a site should be robust enough that a change to the ownership, brand, domain name or IP address of the banned site will not circumvent the restriction. Government may need to monitor and update identification details to enforce such restrictions.

2.6 Recommendations for Civil Society

Number	Page	Recommendation
17	43	Civil society organisations should redact or avoid naming hosting services that are making terrorist content available, but should confidentially report such content to key stakeholders in government, industry and civil society.
9	22	Those responding to antisemitic manifestations and incidents should make use of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's <i>Working Definition of Antisemitism</i> .

2.7 Recommendations for Australia

Number	Page	Recommendation
10	22	Australia should join with other IHRA member countries in formally adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's <i>Working Definition of Antisemitism</i> for domestic use.
25	50	The eSafety Commissioner should refer all unclassified Abhorrent Violent Material for classification by the Classification Board. This should become a standard part of the process when new Abhorrent Violent Material is identified.
26	50	The eSafety Commissioner should refer the manifesto documents from the terrorist attacks in Halle, Poway and El Paso to the Classification Board as was done in the case of Christchurch.

27	50	The eSafety Commissioner should announce when terrorist related material that has a risk of going viral has been given an RC rating and should advise the public to report any online copies to the eSafety Commissioner and not to share it.
28	50	In Australia consideration should be given to creating a civil penalty regime for sharing material classified RC that promotes terrorism. Suitable exemptions should apply for those acting reasonably and in good faith for the purpose of journalism, scientific research or law enforcement.
29	50	The Classification Board should restore the previous tool that allowed more detailed interrogation of Classification Board decisions, specifically, it should allow all decisions in a given period for a particular classification to be listed.
30	50	The Classification Board should ensure either the title or a useful description is provided for material which is given an RC classification. This is necessary as the public can't comply with a ban if the banned content cannot be identified.

2.8 Recommendations for Specific Companies or Organisations

Number	Page	Recommendation
13	40	Google should commit to supporting the Christchurch Call across all parts of the business without exception. This includes preventing Google's search engine being used to access material promoting terrorism.
14	42	Through the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), technology companies should provide a contact mechanism that is staffed 24/7 and available to assist any platform whose technology is abused to share manifestos or live streaming.
15	43	Access to the <i>Terrorist Content Analytics Platform</i> should be available to researchers after they are vetted to ensure they represent legitimate research efforts in government, academia or civil society.
16	43	The <i>Terrorist Content Analytics Platform</i> or a similar service should offer a tool for archiving and preserving online content for use by law enforcement and in legal proceedings. Adding content should be available to the public, but accessing archived content should be restricted to vetted people from government, academia and civil society.

2.9 Recommendations for the Public

Number	Page	Recommendation
38	96	The public are urged not to share content from terrorist attacks such as manifestos or videos. If seen, this content should be reported to the relevant authorities, in Australia this being the eSafety Commissioner.

The following recommendation was flagged as particularly controversial:

35	91	Content services should create mechanisms that enable them to restrict access to specific content on their service for users from countries where that content is illegal. This will ensure content services have the technical capacity to respect national sovereignty and comply with national laws. There may be exceptional circumstances where a content service refuses to comply with national laws, for
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		example, if the national laws conflict with customary international law, international treaties to protect human rights, or legal obligations in the content services own jurisdiction.
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This goes to the question of state sovereignty and the role of Internet technology as a disrupter. Foreign interference that undermines a government's power of control is justifiable in circumstances where the power is being used contrary to universal human rights. Other cases are more controversial as they may advance the interests of some states against the interests of others. Questions of cyber dissidents, whistle blowers and Smart Power come in to play.

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3 Introduction: Violent Extremism from a Toxic Online Culture

In 2019 we saw the rise of a new form of violent extremism. It manifests as deadly violence that targets minorities in the real world, but is the result of a toxic online sub-culture of hate created on the Internet, spread via the Internet and whose manifestations are designed for its own Internet based audience.

The attack on the synagogue in Halle was the fourth in a series of similar attacks. The first was an attack during Friday prayers on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand.¹ The second was an attack on a synagogue in Poway, near San Diego in the United States.² The third attack in a Walmart car park in El Paso, Texas in the United States, during which immigrants, specifically Mexicans and Hispanics more generally, were the primary target.³ This most recent attack in Halle was aimed primarily at the Jewish community, was planned at a time and location to maximize Jewish casualties, but women, Muslims, Christians, Communists, people of colour, police officers and “traitors” were also on the list of targets.

Though attacking a range of different targets, there is a direct connection between the attacks. The Poway attacker’s manifesto makes direct reference to Brenton Tarrant, the individual who carried out the attack in Christchurch. The Poway attacker writes in his manifesto that he “scorched a mosque in Escondido with gasoline a week after Brenton Tarrant’s sacrifice” and that he spray painted “For Brenton Tarrant -t. /pol/” in the mosque’s parking lot. He continues, “Tarrant was a catalyst for me personally. He showed me that it could be done.” The El Paso attacker’s manifesto also references the Christchurch attack opening with, “In general, I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto”. The Halle attack does not make a direct reference to the previous attacks but comes from the same online community and follows the same approach taken by the previous attackers.

The four attacks are examples of violent extremism resulting from online self-radicalised. This is made explicit in the Christchurch manifesto, in which the author writes, “From where did you receive/research/develop your beliefs? The internet, of course. You will not find the truth anywhere else.” This is, of course, an oversimplification. It was not simply a matter of searching the Internet which radicalised these individuals, but rather the experience of becoming embedded within a toxic and fully anonymous online community.

That community, originally created on 4Chan, is spread across a range of sites and platforms. It is a culture which has coordinated significant cyberbullying and harassment campaigns, encouraged people to commit suicide while streaming live, and which calls for race wars and genocide. What started as a culture of irony designed to shock new visitors and celebrate freedom of speech online, gradually shifted to the serious promotion of hate, incitement to violence and an ideology of right-wing extremism. It has become a culture where the response to a post announcing an intended terrorist attack is to wish the poster luck and a “high score”, that is, a higher number of casualties.

¹ Andre Oboler, New Zealand Terrorist Attack (Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2019) <<https://ohpi.org.au/new-zealand-terrorist-attack/>>.

² Andre Oboler, *San Diego Synagogue Attack* (Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2019) <<https://ohpi.org.au/san-diego-synagogue-attack/>>.

³ Queenie Wong and Richard Nieva, “El Paso massacre shines light on 8chan, a racist troll haven”, CNet, 6 August 2019 <<https://www.cnet.com/news/el-paso-shooting-shines-light-on-8chan-a-racist-troll-haven/>>.

Readily available equipment and online services have been used to livestreaming and then share videos of the attacks. The approach, first used in the Christchurch attack, is modelled on online gaming, particularly first-person shooters. It allows others to participate by either watching live or viewing and sharing videos of the attack once it concludes. This glorifies the attacker and gives them an audience for their “achievement”. The Halle attacker took this one step further with a page in the manifesto listing a range of game like “achievements” including “Chosen to die”, where the goal was to “Kill a jew” [sic], “Think of the children!” where the goal was to “Kill a kikelett” (a derogatory created in this sub-culture for a Jewish child), “Cultural Appropriation”, where the goal was to “Stab a muslim” [sic] and “Crossed out”, where the goal was to “Kill a Christian” [sic].

The attacks were all announced on image boards. The first three on the “politically incorrect” board /pol/ on 8chan. 8chan has since been forced offline and the Halle attack was announced on an image board called Meguca.org. They contain messages directed to those they see as their compatriots within this culture of hate. The attacker in Halle wrote in a document pointing to his livestream “Thank you for all the good time anon” and referenced 8chan specifically. The El Paso attacker posted on 8Chan referring to the readers as “brothers”. The Poway post begins, “It’s been real dudes. From the bottom of my heart thank you for everything. Keep up the infographic redpill threads”. The Poway manifesto says, “To the true anons out there (you know who you are). You are the product of /pol/—the product of unadulterated truth. You are my brothers and the best dudes out there”. The Christchurch post describes members of this sub-culture as “top blokes and the best bunch of cobbers a man could ask for” and begins with the words, “Well lads, it’s time to stop shitposting and time to make a real life effort post”.⁴ The attacks, with their livestream feeds promoted to the online community in /pol/ were seen by the attackers as a continuation of the online discussion, an ultimate contribution to a discussion with calls to be ever more hateful and more extreme.

The actions of the attacker were not meant to end the discussion, but to keep it going. The Christchurch post called on the online community to “do your part by spreading my message, making memes and shitposting as you usually do”. The Halle post called for a copy of the manifesto accessed through the Dark Web to be seeded, a call for those who download it to keep their clients open and host copies so others can more readily access it. The Poway post includes a list of songs the attacker planned to play, provided “in case they take down my livestream too soon”, which he describes as “very meme-able songs” saying “you should have no problem”. This is an indirect call to make and spread memes about the attack. In the last line of his post he declares “Meme magic is real” reinforcing this.

The manifestos posted along with the live streams sought to incite further attacks. The Christchurch manifesto gave as one reason for the attack, “To show the effect of direct action, lighting a path forward for those that wish to follow”. It also encouraged readers to “Make your plans, get training, form alliances, get equipped and then act” and to remove any doubt it adds, “the time for a political solution has long since passed” making it clear this is a call to use violence for a political purpose – the definition of terrorism. The Poway manifesto says “I have complete trust and certainty that all of you after reading this will begin planning your attack on the enemy—and you’ll attack again, and again, and again—until either we win, or we die. I know you will do this because you’re true anons.” The Halle manifesto directly called on readers to kill Jews, Muslims, Christians, Communists, people of colour and traitors.

⁴ Andre Oboler, New Zealand Terrorist Attack (Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2019) <<https://ohpi.org.au/new-zealand-terrorist-attack/#attacker>>.

The last page of one of the documents it jokingly offers a free cat-girl to those that become a “techno-barbarian” and in the fine print adds “You need to kill at least one jew to qualify”.

It isn’t just the attackers themselves. The first comment after the post about Poway reads “Based. Get the high score.” That form of encouragement to someone about to carry out an attack may reinforce their conviction that there is a crowd of supporters and that mass murder is seen as acceptable by the community they have identified with. That message is also seen by others, reinforcing the attackers call for further attacks and making it appear like there is a silent majority backing that call. This is a toxic subculture with the capacity to self-perpetuate its own growth: It is extremism that justifies, validates and supports itself in its efforts to incite further terrorism.

In this report, we begin with a focus on the attack in Halle, Germany. As in our past work, we will briefly outline the incident then examine the online post announcing the attack, the manifesto accompanying the attack, the technology used, the online response and the reaction of those responding to the attack and seeking to contain it. This will be followed by an in-depth discussion of the antisemitism present in attack and a more detailed discussion of the online community which has led to this extremism. Throughout the report we will provide recommendations for key stakeholders to help prevent the growth of such extremism in the future and to improve responses when incidents do occur.

4 The Halle Attack

On October 9, 2019, as Jews around the world gathered in synagogues for Yom Kippur prayers, the synagogue in Halle, Germany, became the target of a terrorist attack.

The attacker tried to force his way in with guns and explosives. He timed his attack for Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, the day with the highest synagogue attendance. It is also the day when security is at its highest. It was the security precautions which kept the attacker out and the community safe. From inside the community, called the police, barricaded the doors and watched the unfolding attack through the synagogue's CCTV monitors.

Unable to get in, the attacker diverted to nearby targets of opportunity. A woman walking past was shot in the back and killed. He drove off and when he spotted a kebab shop he muttered "that'll do" and proceeded to attack it. In the shop he executed a man by shooting him at point blank range. Like Christchurch, the attacker hung out on 8chan, posted a manifesto online and livestreamed his attack. He was arrested and is currently facing two counts of murder and nine counts of attempted murder.

4.1 The Attacker

Stephan Balliet is a 27 years old German.

He is a Holocaust denier. His live stream opens with him making a statement denying the Holocaust.

He is an antisemite. His attack was targeted at Jews, one part of his manifesto says "KILL ALL JEWS!" in size 60 font. Another part of his manifesto refers to Jews as kikes and makes use of an antisemitic conspiracy theory about Jewish power, he is obsessed with killing Jews saying, "If I fail and die but kill a single jew, it was worth it".

He is a white supremacist. His manifesto speaks about suppressed Whites, literally "supressed Whites" [sic] and "anti-Whites".

His is a misogynist. He [makes misogynistic comments](#) in the video before driving to the Synagogue. His manifesto repeatedly speaks about "white men" (rather than the "white race" or "white people"). He tells white men to "dedomesticate" themselves.

He appears to have been a regular on 8chan. One of the documents he uploaded refers specifically to 8chan and he wrote "Thank you for all the good time anon". In the video he describes himself as "Anon". This use of Anon (short for Anonymous) is the name users appear under in 4chan / 8chan and similar message boards.

He was part of the online subculture obsessed with Japanese culture. He refers to himself as a "weeb" (someone obsessed with Japanese culture) in the live feed. One of his manifesto document has the filename in Japanese characters and which contained anime.

The German newspaper Bild described him [as a Neo-Nazi](#). Germany's Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Christine Lambrecht, [described his actions](#) as a "right-wing extremist terrorist attack".

4.2 The Post Announcing the Attack

The attack was announced on the megusta.org imageboard. The original post was made at 11:57am (local time in Germany) on Wednesday 9th of October. The screen capture shown below shows a time

stamp of 12:57 pm as it was captured by a person in the next timezone and the boards adjust to display post times in local time for all users. An archived copy showing the correct local time has been viewed. The post was made just 6 minutes before the first emergency call.

The post reads (with some redactions):

*"For all of you, who live in no fun countries, this may be of interest.
Over the past years I built and tested different improvised weapons. I found that the
best gun to make is... All you need is a weekend worth of time and 50\$ for the
materials. Cartridges can be made from... most important of all It's reliable. All other
weapons I tested were not, ... a pain in the ass to build... 3D printed plastic lower and
will share the files with you. Besides the .stl and freecad files for... there is a small
guide and some pictures in it, all in all around 50mb.
Here in the link to the upload: ...
And here is the magnet link: ...
I would appreciate seeding, but only if your local ZOG won't van you for it.
Of course, there are dozens of improvised designs out there, so what's special with
mine? Simple, I prefer live testing: <https://www.twitch.tv/spilljuice>"*

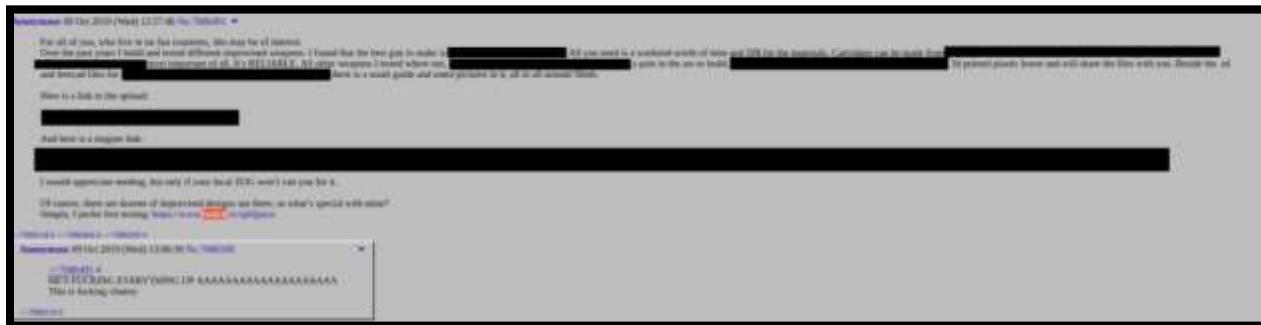


Figure 1 The original post

As shown, this was mostly about the improvised guns, though even here there is an antisemitic reference to ZOG and Jewish conspiracy theories.

Once copy of the files was uploaded to the surface web, the other copy was uploaded to the Dark Net. This is the fourth attack from the far right in the chans that follows this approach of a post to an image board with a manifesto and at least an attempt to live stream. The previous attacks were in [Christchurch](#) (New Zealand), [Poway](#) (USA), and [El Paso](#) (USA). This is the first time with this style of attack that we have seen the Dark Web used as an original upload location for the manifesto.

4.3 The Manifesto

The archive file that was uploaded contained three separate PDF files in addition to the .stl and freecad files for printing parts of the weapons. The first was created on October 1, 2019 and is named in Japanese characters which spell out manifesto. The second with a filename of "DoKumentation" was created on

October 2, 2019 and is described as "A short pre-action report". The third was created on October 6, 2019 and provides the live streaming details.

4.3.1 マニフェスト

The Japanese characters spell the Japanese word "Manifesuto" which in English is "manifest". The addition of two more characters would convert it to the noun manifesto (マニフェスト, 檄文).

The document opens with a title "Techno-Barbarism" displayed in the custom font [Moderne Fraktur](#), an [Old English style](#) of font created by another German in 1999. It is likely a reference to the tabletop game Warhammer 40,000 [in which](#) "Techno-barbarians is the name given to the warriors who battled over the ruins of Terra during the Age of Strife".

The subtitle describes the document as a "spiritual guide for discontent White Men" designed for the near future, four years from now. The message is short and in multiple different large sizes of font. First it calls on white men to "Dedomesticate yourself" then it directs them (in huge 60 point font) to "KILL ALL JEWS!". On the next page, almost as an afterthought, it adds to also kill Muslims, Christians, Communists, people of colour and traitors. It uses derogatory language for each group.

The inclusion of Christians is unusual but discussion on /pol/ from around 2017 showed some people promoting the idea that Christianity and White nationalism were mutually exclusive. The argument presented was that (1) Christ was Jewish [QED], (2) the loyalty of Christians is suspect as their loyalty would first be to Jesus and only after to their "race", and further, they would accept non-whites so long as they converted.

Some White nationalist groups have co-opted Norse mythology. We see this in one of the documents Balliet uploaded where he speaks of Valhalla, the place where worthy warriors go after they die in Norse mythology. In Melbourne, the far-right group "[Soldiers of Odin Australia](#)", an offshoot of a Finnish group, is an example of this connection. The groups are named after [Odin](#) a principle god, and specifically a war god, in Norse mythology.

Many white nationalist groups, however, consider themselves Christian. The [Christian Identity movement](#) is an example of this, as is the [Ku Klux Klan \(KKK\)](#). Much of the far right has adopted Christian crusader imagery in their promotion of hate against the Muslim community.

The third page is almost entirely blank, except for the comment "thank for reading" in regular sized font at the bottom of the page. Following the incitement to violent extremism the document ends with what looks like an advertisement with a large image, an offer and some fine print with conditions. The offer reads "Become a Techno-Barbarian TODAY and get a FREE* Cat-Girl". The fine print reads "*Disclaimer: You need to kill at least one jew to qualify. Alternatives include Fox-Girls and normal Waifus. She will always be loyal, so treat her good." The image features a Catgirl in a box labelled "Strategic Cat-girl Supplies" in Moderne Fraktur font (as used at the start of the document). The original image, which has been widely shared online over many years, instead has a parody of an Amazon logo with the word "Anyzon" in black above the curved orange arrow.

The image is of Yukino Yukinoshita but turned into a cat girl. The character is from the Japanese light novel series (and later anime television series) "Yahari Ore no Seishun Rabukome wa Machigatteiru" (literally: "My Youth Romantic Comedy Is Wrong, As I Expected") which was judged the best Japanese light novel by online polls in 2014, 2015 and 2016. In the series [Yukino Yukinoshita](#) is a 16/17 year old

student who was the founding president of the [Service Club](#), a student club for volunteers to help those in need. One of her quotes is "People fail because they don't understand the hard work necessary to be successful". Somewhat ironic given Balliet's attack was generally seen as a dismal failure by those he was trying to incite.

As mentioned, Yukino Yukinoshita is in this instance turned into a Catgirl. [Catgirls](#), also known as Neko or Nekomimi (literally "cat-ears" in Japanese), are characters in anime and manga who are girls with cat characteristics, often just the ears, but they may have other characteristics such as the eyes and tail of a cat. They are [popular on 4chan](#) and more broadly within parts of online culture. In some parts of online culture, particularly around the Chans (4chan / 8chan and others) the use of Catgirls can involve an element of gender based hate. This at one point led to ban and [significant debate](#) about the [appropriateness of Catgirls](#) on Reddit's socialism community, /r/socialism. When gendered based hate is in play, the misogyny reduces women to "pets" designed for the largely male audience to own and use.

The "advertisement" as a whole follows the misogynistic use of catgirls. In this instance not only is girl with cat like features presented as a pet, she is offered as a free giveaway. The message she will be "always be loyal" and should be "treated good" further promotes the idea of a pet.

4.3.2 Read This First

The file with the filename of "READ THIS FIRST" provided a short message "Thank you for all the good time anon" and a link which was labelled as the livestream.

The live streaming account name was spilljuice. According to [the dictionary](#), an archaic meaning of "spill" includes "kill" or "destroy". "Juice" is a pun on "Jews" popularised by the second ["Hipster Hitler" cartoon](#) from August 28th, 2010 which was spread in various forms online. The image of Hitler in the "I love juice" shirt is often used in isolation as a meme.



Figure 2 The second Hipster Hitler cartoon

The document goes on to sarcastically thank Mark Mann, described as an 8chan Board Owner, for making a donation of 0.1 bitcoin (around AU\$1,220). The attacker states he was at the time intending to target Muslims and had promised the board owner he wouldn't name him. After naming him the message continues by accuses him of being a "filthy jew" and says that he probably doesn't exist anyway and is likely from the CIA and trying to radicalise people and set them up. He concludes with further antisemitic stereotype.

Mark Mann is a Jewish employee of the internet service provider NT Technology, a company owned by Jim Watkins who also owns 8chan.⁵ The reference has been described as “almost certainly a cruel joke” but one which demonstrates the Halle attacker was “deeply familiar” with 8chan.⁶

4.3.3 DoKumentation

The file named "DoKumentation" opens with the title “a short pre-action report”. It is 11 pages long, the first 8 and 3/4 are a description of weapons, filming equipment and body armour. The next page and a quarter describe his objectives and plan. The last page is a list of “achievements” in the style of a video game.

4.3.3.1 *The equipment*

The first section details the weapons under sections named “on man”, “car guns” and “fallback weapons”. The weapons include six different guns, a sword, a knife and a range of explosives.

Except for the Smith-Carbine rifle (a gun patented in 1857 and used in the American civil war), the guns are improvised, that is, self-made, as is the ammunition. Balliet knew the weapons, particularly the guns, were very poor quality. He describes the range of most of his guns and the worst had a range of just 5 meters while the best had a range of 25 meters. To put this in perspective, the average 14 to 18 year old boy can [throw a ball](#) about 58 meters. The two people he killed were both killed at close range. He also described a range of other short comings in his weapons. One gun, made with a 3D printer, was likely to heat up and melt from repeated use. Another was highly likely to jam and would require significant time and tools to fix.

⁵ Robert Evans and Fredrick Brennan, “The State of California Could Have Stopped 8Chan: It Didn’t”, 4 November 2019 <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2019/11/04/the-state-of-california-could-have-stopped-8chan-it-didnt/>

⁶ Ibid.

Luty SMG 9mm Parabellum



The explosives are described as fragmentation grenades, pipe bombs, nail bombs, smoke grenade, breaching charge, anti-material charge and detonation caps. As stated earlier, thankfully neither the guns nor the explosives were able to destroy the wooden door which prevented him gaining access to his primary target, the synagogue and the people praying within.

This part of this manifesto document appears designed to facilitate actions by others. Descriptions vary with some more focused on how the ammunition will be stored / held, while others give detailed specifications of the materials, sizes, chemical ratios etc. for the guns and their ammunition. For the 3D printed gun, he writes that "Building instruction and .stl files are in the full upload." A 3D printer was also used for the stock of two guns and cartridges for one.

4.3.3.2 The Plan

This section, taking up a page, ends with "Tldr:" (short for "too long didn't read") and a 2.5 line summary which highlights how Balliet wants to "Go in and kill everything" but expects he will have to improvise, things will go wrong, and he will end up in a situation where he will "Drive away. Kill some more." Which is exactly what happened.

The summary ends "Repeat until all jews are dead or you prove the existence of Waifus in Valhalla, whatever comes first. Jej." This short ending has compresses the key ideas. (1) an antisemitic call not

only to kill Jews, but seek the complete annihilation of Jews. Something reminiscent of Hitler's final solution. (2) a reference to Waifus,⁷ a term from anime for the woman a character is fond of, (3) the reference to Valhalla refers to Norse mythology and is co-opted by far-right groups as part of white supremacy, (4) "Jej" is an ironically mistyped variation of "Kek", both being 4chan / 8chan version of "lol". Its use is a deliberate effort to link back to the chans.

The inclusion of a summary and an explicit expectation that people would not read a page about his plan (while there is no such summary of the previous and much longer discussion of weapons) again highlights where Balliet's interest lies, and it isn't in deep ideological discussions.

Some features from the detailed explanation of the plan:

- There is another instance of "jej" when he jokes that "For some reason (jej) the security measures are quite high" on the synagogue.
- He refers to Jews as rats, a well worn antisemitic trope, saying he may try "lure the rats out".
- He also again refers repeatedly to Jews as kikes, another antisemitic slur.
- He also uses the antisemitic trope of "ZOG" ("Zionist Occupied Government") claiming Jews are responsible for governments increasing Muslim immigration. This is a common far right conspiracy theory, and it goes back to older conspiracy theories of Jewish power more generally such as those found in the forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.
- He states that he chose to attack on Yom Kippur "because even 'non-religious' Jews are often visiting the synagogue on this date".
- He also states this synagogue was chosen as it was the closest place where a significant number of Jews could be found that was close to him.
- He originally considered attacking a mosque but decided the Jews were the greater enemy.
- The section ends with a chilling line that promotes and encourages "White men" to kill Jews, with the intention of exterminating them.

4.3.3.3 Achievements

The final page of this part of the manifesto is a list of "achievements". There are goals as might appear in a game in order to receive a reward or achievement badge. In this case, however, the goals all related to the planned terrorist attack. There were 26 different achievements lists.

Technical steps to carrying out the attack

- Upload the PDF
- Successfully livestream the attack

Murder particular targets

- Murder a Jew
- Murder 6 Jews
- Murder a Jewish woman
- Murder a Jewish child

⁷ Waifus, Dictionary.com, seen November 2 2019 <<https://www.dictionary.com/e/fictional-characters/waifu/>>

- Murder a Jew using a grenade
- Murder both a Jew and Muslim
- Murder 3 people of colour in a specified time period
- Murder a “traitor”
- Murder a police officer (literally “Kill a ZOG-bot”)
- Murder a communist
- Murder a Christian

Murder someone using a particular weapon

- Murder someone with a particular homemade gun x 4 different named guns
- Murder someone with a sword
- Murder someone with a knife
- Murder someone using the “secret weapon”
- Murder someone with a particular type of explosive x 2 different types

Serious harm

- Stab a Muslim

Property destruction

- Burn down a synagogue
- Burn down a mosque

Accidental harm

- Cause self-harm as a result of the homemade explosives

Each goal was given a title as well as a description. The names are a range of puns and racist memes. The goal to kill 6 Jews, for example, was labelled “Anudda Shoa” a reference to the Holocaust and the 6 million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis. The goal of killing a Jewish woman is titled “Gender Equality”, an ironic title given the rejection of feminism in particular and equality general by the attacker and this subculture.

4.4 Technology the Attacker Used

The post announcing the attack was originally made on the megusta.org imageboard. An archive file was created with 7-Zip, a free and open-source file archiver, which contained the three pdf files making up the manifesto as well as .stl and freecad files for 3D printing parts of the weapons. The archive file was uploaded to anonfile.com and the Dark Web by the attacker and the link to the archive was included in the original post. The live streaming was carried out via twitch.tv, a stream service for gamers which is owned by Amazon. The weapons and munitions were homemade and used technology in the form of a 3D printer for some of the components. These technologies will now be examined in further detail.

4.4.1 The Announcement: Meguca.org

Meguca.org is an image board loosely affiliated with 4chan's anime board.⁸ The name is based on a meme mocking the anime Puella Magi Madoka Magica.⁹ Its homepage declared, “[M]eguca.org has not received any gag orders and there's no Patriot Act here. Sucks to live in a third world police state like the US”.¹⁰ Its source code repository describes it as an “anonymous realtime imageboard focused on high performance, free speech and transparent moderation”.¹¹ A few days after the attack (at least from the 11th of October) the site went down.

In a series of posts in April 2017 the admin of /pol/ on Meguca discusses the site and the /pol/ boards rules.¹² The global rules across all boards only banned illegal content and spamming. The /pol/ board added rules against “disruption” – anything off topic or spammy, “degeneracy” - used in a similar sense to that of the Nazis themselves to refer to anything their ideology disagreed with e.g.

degenerate art,¹³ “cancer” - anything which can “kill” the thread/discussion,¹⁴ and “namefaggotry” - posted that are not made as “anonymous”.¹⁵ It described itself as “EXPLICITLY a natsoc board, anti-degenerate, anti-semitic, pro-white”. The board admin considered 8chan compromised and said “admitting you're from 4chan is a bannable offense”.

The admin stated users should “always maintain your opsec” (operational security) and banned “Any links posted to any non-anonymous social communities... for any reason other than raiding”. Raids, that is mass attacks, on other online sites were therefore explicitly encouraged. Rather arranging to meet in person via the board members were told to “Organize local” highlighting a desire for people to act beyond the online forum. In a post about “transparency” the admin says that “Meguca's servers are in Paris, DNS is cloud flare” and that the Admin is a “Lat” (Latvian). The idea of it being hosted in France

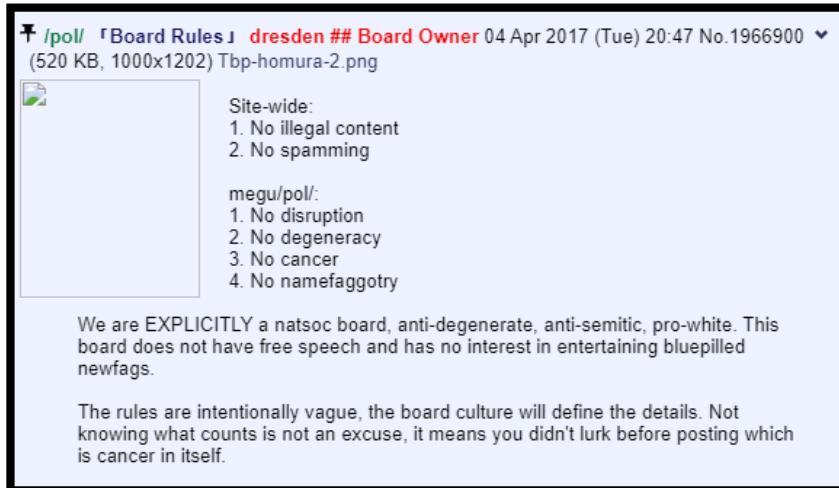


Figure 3 Introduction to the rules of /pol/ on Meguca

⁸ Ryan Broderick, “Far-Right Halle Shooter Allegedly Posted A Manifesto With Xbox-Like “Achievements” To Anime Message Board Before Livestreaming Attack”, BuzzFeed News, 11 October 11, 2019

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryanhatesthis/halle-germany-shooter-meguca-anime-manifesto>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <https://github.com/bakape/meguca>

¹² <https://web.archive.org/web/20170713104204/https://meguca.org/pol/1966900>

¹³ <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/d/degenerate-art>

¹⁴ Adrian Chen, “Here's What 5 Million Posts on 4chan Look Like”, Gawker, 12 July 2011

<https://gawker.com/5820505/heres-what-5-million-posts-on-4chan-look-like>

¹⁵ <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=namefag>

seems particularly strange given that country's strong laws against antisemitism and Holocaust denial.¹⁶ In another post they say that "IPs are stored for 7 days".

Just as 8chan was seen as more extreme than 4chan, Meguca set itself up, and its /pol/ board in particular, to be more extreme than 8chan and explicitly neo-Nazi. On this board there was no effort to even pretend the racism and neo-Nazism was satirical or in jest and there was no interest in attracting and converting new users. This was a community designed for extremism.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Where an image board is hosted in country and the site, or a board within it, actively promotes hate speech which is unlawful in that country, the hosting provider once it is aware of this should take action to terminate the hosting.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Where a domain name is registered in a country, and the owner actively uses the site at that domain for the purpose of promoting hate speech which is unlawful in that country, the domain name should be terminated by the domain name registrar.

4.4.2 The first Document Hosting Service: anonfile.com

The anonfile.com service is an anonymous file hosting service. Users can upload files of up to 20 GB to the service and are then provided with a unique URL that allows the files to be downloaded.¹⁷ The URL can then be shared with others to download the contents. There are no limits on the number of downloads, the bandwidth that can be used, or the length of time the file can be online.¹⁸

The service has a short statement on its *terms of use* with just 5 points.¹⁹ They are (in full):

§ General

It is strictly forbidden to spread viruses, trojans, corrupt and/or illegal material via AnonFile. Always check with your local laws before submitting content.

§ Availability

AnonFile can not guarantee full availability of the service, however, we do our best to keep the service as stable as possible. AnonFile disclaim all responsibility for loss of income due to downtime and/or data loss

§ Logging Downloads

We are strong advocates of privacy & do not log downloads.

§ Administrative measures

AnonFile administrators has the right to remove and/or permanently ban file content they find inappropriate.

§ Changes

¹⁶ Valery Engel, *White Papers of Hate 2012* (Book Club Knigovek, 2014) 266-268

<<https://tandis.odihr.pl/bitstream/20.500.12389/21854/1/07980.pdf>>

¹⁷ <https://anonfile.com>

¹⁸ <https://anonfile.com>; <https://anonfile.com/faq>

¹⁹ <https://anonfile.com/terms>

This user agreement is subject to change at any time, please review this agreement before you decide to use the service. You are technically bound to accept this agreement by accessing/using the service.

The terms of service claim they are “strong advocates of privacy” and for this reason “do not log downloads”. This makes the service particularly attractive for those engaging in illegal activity including terrorism. With this deliberate attempt to avoid keeping records, when law enforcement is authorised to access the system and investigate it, there would likely be little available evidence to assist them.

The terms of service do forbid the use of the service “to spread viruses, trojans, corrupt and/or illegal material”. Terrorism is not specifically mentioned but would come under “illegal material”. The ordering of the prohibitions suggests the platform views sharing means of technically disrupting other systems as a far greater wrong than spreading illegal material.

A link to report abuse is visible in the footer of each page. The footer reads: “Login - Register - Terms of Use - API - FAQ - Feedback - REPORT ABUSE”. The prominence given to report abuse is high which is positive. Far less positive is the abuse reporting process itself.

Despite the terms of service stating that the platform “are strong advocates of privacy”, as shown in Figure 4, the reporting page states “You must provide genuine information regarding who you are, who you represent and which file(s) this report concerns. Note: We strongly believe in transparency toward our users. Therefor, [sic] by filing a report you also agree on it being attached for public viewing along with the takedown message in order to inform our users.”²⁰ This denies users the ability to report content anonymously.

The arguments in favour of anonymous reporting of potential abuse are far stronger than arguments in favour of allowing anonymous hosting of files. This setup facilitates the spread of illegal content while inhibiting reporting of abuse.

²⁰ <https://anonfile.com/abuse>

Report Abuse

If you believe some of our users has violated our Terms of Service or your intellectual property rights, please file a report in the form below.

You must provide genuine information regarding who you are, who you represent and which file(s) this report concerns.

Note: We strongly believe in transparency toward our users. Therefor, by filing a report you also agree on it being attached for public viewing along with the takedown message in order to inform our users.

* English only.

* All Fields Required.

Reason for reporting:

Name:

E-mail:

Link to report:

Abuse Report Description:

Type the above characters:

Figure 4 Abuse reporting form on [anonfile.com](#)

RECOMMENDATION 3: All services that allow users to upload or post content should have clearly visible mechanisms for reporting to the service provider any content that violates the terms of services.

RECOMMENDATION 4: All services that allow users to upload or post content should allow content to be reported anonymous to the service provider and by anyone who can see the content. If content is visible without having an account, then it should be reportable without having an account.

RECOMMENDATION 5: To assisting with lawful counter terrorism investigations, all services that allow users to upload or post content should maintain logs for at least 24 hours. Where a user reports content, log details related to the original uploader / poster should be maintained for a further period of at least 7 days.

4.4.3 The second Document Hosting Service: The Dark Web

The attacker also uploaded the archive file with their manifesto documents and CAD files to the Dark Web. This is the first attack of this kind where the manifesto has been released on the Dark Web right from the start by the attacker, rather than being transferred to the Dark Web after it became harder to share through traditional websites and online services.

The Dark Web is a part of the Internet that can only be reached using specialised software such as The Onion Router (aka Tor). Content on the Dark Web is not indexed and the software used to access it has been designed to ensure the anonymity of both the server hosting content and the user who is requesting access to it.²¹ That includes ensuring the basic use of the service is anonymous, so a user requesting content doesn't know where the server is, and the server doesn't know who is requesting content from it. The servers operating in this way are known as *Tor hidden services* and they can be recognised by their address which ends in a “.onion” extension.²² The system was created to facilitate anonymous access to an uncensored Internet as a form of opposition to an increasing threat of Internet surveillance.²³

While designed to hide the location of the servers, which also makes it impossible to know what legal jurisdiction they are in, poor configuration can open vulnerabilities which can make it possible to unmask the server and trace its IP address.²⁴ Unmasking efforts in the past have included forcing servers to access a particular address, allowing the owner of that address to look up the Tor hidden service's IP address in their logs.²⁵ Another approach has been to examine security certificates that have been misconfigured and appear on the surface web, but listing Tor hidden service address.²⁶ There have also been scanners like PunkSPIDER which have scanned the Dark Web for vulnerabilities.²⁷ A range of other attacks designed to compromise anonymity in the Dark Web have also been reported by researchers and as with all areas of cybersecurity it is a cycles of finding and patching vulnerabilities. At times knowledge of certain vulnerabilities are kept secret to they can be exploited by law enforcement and other government agencies.

A shift to the Dark Web as the initial hosting point for extremist material will further complicate the removal of content, but will also cut down the accessibility and spread of the content. For the content to spread it will still be necessary to share an address hosting the content and these addresses can themselves be targeted for removal by governments and online platforms.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Laws and policies designed to prevent the spread of extremist material need to be flexible enough to cover content consisting of a link which directly or indirectly will lead to the material.

²¹ Joseph Cox, “This Researcher Is Hunting Down IP Addresses of Dark Web Sites”, Motherboard at Vice, 23 June 2015 <https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/9ak7xa/this-researcher-is-hunting-down-ip-addresses-of-dark-web-sites>

²² Ziyahan Albeniz, “Exposing the Public IPs of Tor Services Through SSL Certificates”, 27 November 2018 <<https://www.netsparker.com/blog/web-security/exposing-public-ips-tor-services-through-ssl-certificates/>>

²³ <https://www.torproject.org/about/history/>

²⁴ Joseph Cox, “This Researcher Is Hunting Down IP Addresses of Dark Web Sites”, Motherboard at Vice, 23 June 2015 <https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/9ak7xa/this-researcher-is-hunting-down-ip-addresses-of-dark-web-sites>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ziyahan Albeniz, “Exposing the Public IPs of Tor Services Through SSL Certificates”, 27 November 2018 <<https://www.netsparker.com/blog/web-security/exposing-public-ips-tor-services-through-ssl-certificates/>>

²⁷ Thomas Brewster, “Hackers Scan All Tor Hidden Services To Find Weaknesses In The ‘Dark Web’”, Forbes, 1 June 2015 <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/thomasbrewster/2015/06/01/dark-web-vulnerability-scan/#26ddd30c6d23>>

4.4.4 The Live Streaming and Video Hosting Service: Twitch

In this attack Twitch (Twitch.tv), a live streaming service owned by Amazon, was used to provide the broadcast. Twitch describes itself as "the world's leading live streaming platform for gamers". It was created as a gamer focused spin off of the live streaming service Justin.tv, which was shutdown in August 2014 when the company decided to focus on Twitch. Though still mostly used for broadcasting game play, with categories dedicated to different games and other themes, there is increasing popularity in the non-game "Just Chatting" and "IRL" categories. Prior to this attack the biggest problem Twitch had was preventing adult content which is against its community standards.²⁸

The attack was livestreamed on Twitch at <https://www.twitch.tv/spilljuice> for 35 minutes starting at 12:00 pm Central European Time (CET).²⁹ Three people watched the attack in this livestream.³⁰ There is a setting in Twitch which can cause a video to be automatically generated and posted when a livestreaming session ends. This setting was turned on in the attacker's account. The resulting video was seen by 333 people over the next 4 hours and 45 minutes since the livestream ended. The spread of the video greatly increased between 5:20 pm CET and 5:50 pm CET with 2200 additional visitors.³¹ At 5:50 pm CET the video was removed and the "spilljuice" channel were suspended.³²

The Twitch service has an extensive reporting function which allows livestreams, videos, clips, private messages, live chat, profile content, usernames, channel points and rewards as well as failure to moderate others to all be reported. It also provides a general option for anything else not covered.

In the case of livestreaming and videos the second stage of reporting offers a range of categories such as "Threats, harm, or endangerment of someone" and "hate speech, harassment, or abuse".

While generally well paired, the urgency required in a livestream of real-world violence is significantly higher than that required in the case of threats. Endangerment covers a wide range of problematic behaviour from

The screenshot shows a "Report" page with a black redacted section. The text reads: "We are going to ask you a few questions to help us investigate your report quickly and accurately." Below this is a question: "Where is the problem?" followed by a list of options with the first one selected: "In a live stream, video, or clip". Other options include: "In a whisper (private message)", "In a chat message or room", "In [REDACTED] isn't moderating their chat", "In [REDACTED]'s other content (profile, emotes, etc.)", "The username is inappropriate", "In [REDACTED]'s channel points or rewards", and "Somewhere else...". A purple "Next" button is at the bottom.

Figure 5 Step one in reporting on Twitch

²⁸ <https://www.thegamer.com/twitch-banned-korean-supermodels-theyll-back/>

²⁹ <https://twitter.com/Twitch/status/1182036266344271873>

³⁰ <https://twitter.com/Twitch/status/1185200174953455620>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

encouraging someone to commit suicide through to suggestions which carry a risk of relatively minor injury.

Overall the Twitch reporting system is extensive, mature and fit for purpose. Depending on the volume of reports in the “threats, harm, or endangerment of someone” category and the average speed at which Twitch can respond to them, there may be a need to introduce a new category for “Real world violence, extremism or crime”. This would allow faster responses in the case unfolding real world harm.

A further reporting step allows users to provide further details including links to videos if they wish.

Report [REDACTED]’s Video

What would you like to report?

- Threats, harm, or endangerment of someone
- Hate speech, harassment, or abuse
- There’s no streamer, or the streamer is inactive
- Their content is misclassified (wrong category or tags)
- Inappropriate or obscene content
- I’m concerned for their wellbeing
- Give me more options...

[Back](#) [Next](#)

RECOMMENDATION 7: Livestreaming and video hosting sites should provide reporting options that allow the rapid identification, and a priority response, to reports of actual violence, extremism or unfolding crime.

RECOMMENDATIONS 8: Platforms should on a regular basis publish target response times and actual average response times to user reports that are made and classified into the category they use to capture details of violent extremist content.

5 Antisemitism in the Halle Attack

The term antisemitism refers to the hatred of Jews, but its long history and many differing forms can at times make it difficult to identify or understand.

The term itself was coined by German Journalist Wilhelm Marr, who between 1879 and 1880 published two popular pamphlets which referred to “Jews” and “Jewishness” as “Semitismus”, and “Antisemitismus” as opposition to the Jewish people.³³ Marr himself was an antisemite, founding the *Antisemiten-Lega* or “League of Antisemites”, and based his beliefs on pseudoscientific theories of race that predated Nazi racial science.³⁴ While the term “Semitic” is used in linguistics for a broad group of

³³ Wilhelm Marr, *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum. Vom nicht confessionellen Standpunkt aus betrachtet*, 1879.

Wilhelm Marr, *Der Weg zum Siege des Germanenthums über das Judenthum*, 1880.

³⁴ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/wilhelm-marr>

languages,³⁵ the term antisemitic has always been exclusively about hatred of Jews.³⁶ The spelling without a hyphen, antisemitism and rather than anti-Semitism, is preferred by many scholars to avoid confusion or obfuscation.³⁷

While Marr was concerned with the race of Jews, anti-Jewish hatred well-predated him, and was often based on religious grounds during the Middle Ages. In Christian Europe, Jews were known as “Christ-Killers” for their alleged role in the death of Jesus Christ,³⁸ and even subject of fantastical accusations such as ‘blood libel’, which accused Jews of using the blood of Christian children in rituals.³⁹

In order to aid the understanding of antisemitism, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), an international inter-governmental organisation, adopted the *Working Definition of Antisemitism* on 26 May 2016.⁴⁰ The adoption was a unanimously decision by the then 31 member countries.⁴¹ Australia was an observer to IHRA at the time and joined the organisation as a full member in June 2018.⁴² Before discussing the specific manifestations of antisemitism in the Halle attack, we will introduce the *Working Definition of Antisemitism* in more detail.

5.1 The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

Since it was adopted in May 2016, the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism has received broad international support. A resolution of the European Parliament calls on member states and European institutions to adopt the definition,⁴³ and the definition has been formally adopted in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece (by the Ministry of Education), Hungary, Israel, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, Scotland, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom and the Netherlands. In the United States an almost identical definition is used by the State Department.

In Australia the definition is used in an annual report on antisemitic incidents compiled by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.⁴⁴ It has also been adopted by the Australian National Union of Students and a range of Students’ Unions.⁴⁵

³⁵ Patrick R. Bennett, *Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1998).

³⁶ Spelling of Antisemitism, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/spelling-antisemitism>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers: The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³⁹ Gavin I Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, (LA: University of California Press, 1996) p. 216.

⁴⁰ “Working Definition of Antisemitism”, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, adopted 26 May 2016
<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/node/196>

⁴¹ “Working Definition of Antisemitism” (press release), International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, 27 June 2016, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/stories/working-definition-antisemitism>

⁴² “Australia joins International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance”, Press Release from Australia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, 5 June 2019

[<https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2019/mp_mr_190605.aspx>](https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2019/mp_mr_190605.aspx)

⁴³ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-8-2017-0383_EN.html?redirect

⁴⁴ Julie Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism in Australia 2018* (Executive Council of Australian Jewry, 25 November 2018) <<http://www.ecaj.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/ECAJ-Antisemitism-Report-2018.pdf>>

⁴⁵ Gareth Milner, “First Week of University Tainted by Antisemitism and Discrimination”, AUJS, 5 March 2018
[<http://www.aujs.com.au/o_week_antisemitism_statement>](http://www.aujs.com.au/o_week_antisemitism_statement)

The core of the IHRA Working Definition explains:⁴⁶

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

It continues with several examples of different types of common manifestations of antisemitism, although makes it clear that antisemitism is not limited to these examples.⁴⁷ The examples provided are:⁴⁸

- *Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.*
- *Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.*
- *Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.*
- *Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).*
- *Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.*
- *Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.*
- *Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.*
- *Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.*
- *Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.*

⁴⁶ "Working Definition of Antisemitism", International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, adopted 26 May 2016 <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/node/196>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

- *Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.*
 - *Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.*
-

The definition highlights that “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic”, but that there are forms of antisemitism which manifest as a “targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity”. The definition also highlights how “Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for ‘why things go wrong.’”

Given the many forms antisemitism has taken throughout history, from racial to religious, political to personal, the IHRA’s Working Definition provides a helpful, accessible, and easy to understand aid to understanding the problem and classifying antisemitic manifestations. The fact it is based upon academic expertise and adopted in so many countries through democratic decision making further enhances its authority. The categories of common antisemitism outlined by the examples in the IHRA Working Definition will in this section of the report be applied to aspects of the Halle attack.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Those responding to antisemitic manifestations and incidents should make use of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s *Working Definition of Antisemitism*.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Australia should join with other IHRA member countries in formally adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s *Working Definition of Antisemitism* for domestic use.

5.2 Manifestations of Antisemitic in the Halle Attack

The antisemitic intent of the attack in Halle is clear and needs little explanation, however, a detailed consideration of the many antisemitic manifestations involved in the attack demonstrates the link between words and deeds, the link between hate speech and hate action. Understanding this link is important when it comes to recommendations and action to prevent further attacks. It may also have a bearing on the legal classification of certain expression as some expression may be considered part of the act of extremism rather than mere words.

5.2.1 The objective, location and timing of the attack

The objectives of the attack, as listed in the *Dokumentation* part of the manifest, was to “Kill as many anti-Whites as possible, jews preferred”. Under the core of the IHRA definition the words themselves are a “rhetorical manifestation” of antisemitism and the attempted attack was a “physical manifestation” of antisemitism, with both being directed against “individuals” “Jewish community institutions” and “religious facilities” as described in the core of the definition.

There is a further element of antisemitism in the objective. Jews are presented as the priority target within what the attacker called the “anti-whites”. This is the promotion of an antisemitic conspiracy theory about Jewish power and more specifically the conspiracy theory of “White Genocide” which says the Jews are behind a plot to “destroy the white race”.⁴⁹ The falls within the second of the examples in

⁴⁹ Julie Nathan, “As the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre shows, fears of ‘White Genocide’ are incitement to murder”, *ABC Religion and Ethics*, 29 October 2018 <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/white-genocide-is-incitement-to-murder/10442966>

the IHRA Working Definition which speaks of “stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective... especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy”.

In “The Plan” part of the manifesto a synagogue is listed as the first target and this targeted is chosen even after consideration is given to the high security and increased difficulty involved. The choice of target is justified in the manifesto over other potential targets, such as a “mosque or an antifa ‘culture center” because “It’s the nearest location with a high population of Jews, simple as that”.

The timing was also designed to maximize the potential for harm to Jews. The manifesto states, “the best day of action should be Jom Kippur, because even ‘non-religious’ jews are often visiting the synagogue on this date”. “Jom Kippur” is the German language spelling of Yom Kippur,⁵⁰ and not an ironic misspelling like “jej”. Yom Kippur, also known as the Day of Atonement, is the holiest day in Judaism and often observed by more secular Jews who often do not observe other religious holidays,⁵¹ as the manifesto noted.

The manifesto goes on to claim, “The only way to win is to cut off the head of the ZOG, which are the kikes”. This highlights how the choice of target was made with a deliberate and overriding aim of causing harm to “Jewish community institutes and religious facilities”, as per the core of the IHRA definition. It also repeats the second bullet point argument about “the power of Jews as a collective” and “the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy”, but this time goes further with a direct reference to “ZOG” (discussed in more detail shortly).

The final line of the plan section in the manifesto states, “if every White Man kills just one [jew], we win”. When this is taken alongside the objective to prove the viability of improvised weapons and to “increase the moral of other suppressed Whites”, it demonstrates an intent to directly inspire further killings of Jews in the name of a White nationalist ideolog. This is the first example of antisemitism in the Working Definition, “Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology”.

5.2.2 Racial slurs

A number of racial slurs are evident in the manifesto. They include “spilljuice”, “filthy jew”, “Kike”, and “Kikelett”. The use of slurs represents “rhetorical... manifestations of antisemitism... directed towards Jewish... individuals” as per the Working Definition and falls under the example of “Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews” as the racial slurs are connected to these ideas.

As explained, “spilljuice” is a combination of an archaic word meaning “kill” or “destroy” with a pun of “Jews” popularised by the Hipster Hitler cartoon. The slur “filthy Jew” or “dirty Jew” in an antisemitic slur which suggest a physically and/or moral undesirability.⁵² “Filthy Jew” was a theme in Nazi and Vichy propaganda.⁵³ Historically it is linked to an antisemitic claim that Jewish blood was dirty and would

⁵⁰ <https://en.bab.la/dictionary/english-german/yom-kippur>

⁵¹ “Yom Kippur”, Society for Humanistic Judaism, <https://shj.org/humanistic-jewish-life/about-the-holidays/yom-kippur/>, viewed 3 November 2019.

⁵² The top definition on urbandictionary.com for “Dirty Jew” claims there are Jews that lack a conscience or morals regarding business deals, which makes them “dirty”. elove, “Dirty Jew”, *Urban Dictionary*, 27 September 2012, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Dirty%20Jew>, viewed 3 November 2019.

⁵³ Margaret Anne Hutton, *Testimony from the Nazi Camps: French Women’s Voices* (Routledge, December 8, 2004) 313.

contaminate wells and as recently as 1892 this idea led to Jews being quarantined during outbreaks of typhus and cholera and banned by law from German public swimming pools.⁵⁴

The term Kike is a more recent antisemitic slur and one that emerged in the United States. It first appeared in print in 1919 in “The American Language: A Preliminary Inquiry into the Development of English in the United State” and is listed as one of the “common terms of disparagement” in American English,⁵⁵ and is described as a “characteristic Americanism”.⁵⁶ The term is thought to have originated with illiterate Jewish migrants on Ellis Island who refused to sign with a customary “x”, associating it with Christianity, and instead draw a circle, known as a *kikel* in Yiddish.⁵⁷ It is thought that immigration inspectors began referring to anyone who signed with a circle as a “Kikel” or “Kike”.⁵⁸ In this context a “Kikelett” in the attackers achievement list refers to a “little Jew”, specifically a Jewish child. In a recent court filing the Anti-Defamation League explained that the word kike “has no singular definition but, rather, encapsulates and invokes the full range of anti-Semitic stereotypes, including beliefs that Jews are cheap, untrustworthy, conniving, powerful, rich, grasping, and malevolent toward non-Jews.”⁵⁹

The variety of slurs used in the manifesto is an aspect of the antisemitic culture online. The results from the NCRI report on quantifying antisemitism online found that there was wide use of both classic antisemitic slurs and newly invented ones.⁶⁰

5.2.3 The Greedy Jew trope

In the READ THIS FIRST document, the attacker spends most of the document complaining about an individual called Mark, who he calls a “filthy Jew” while noting a donation of 0.1 bitcoin he, the attacker, received from this individual. The document asks, “why would a fucking jew give away money for free?”. This is a representation of the antisemitic stereotype that Jews are greedy, representing the second example of antisemitism provided in the IHRA definition.

This stereotype originated in the Middle Ages when Jews were forced out of many occupations and often into money-lending which Christians were forbidden by the church from engaging in. This gave rise to the stereotype of Jews being greedy or obsessed with money.⁶¹ This antisemitic trope is used again in the achievements list in the manifesto where one achievement is titled “2 Kikes 1 Shekel”, Shekel referring to the currency used in both ancient Israel and the modern state of Israel. The word association also seems to imply that 2 Jews would fight over 1 shekel, reinforcing the stereotype.

This stereotype is contradicted by examples of Jewish philanthropy throughout the world. The Hebrew word *Tzedakah* means charity is a significant concept in Judaism.⁶² Research into Jewish giving in

⁵⁴ Steven K. Baum, *Antisemitism Explained* (University Press of America, 2012) 79.

⁵⁵ , 115.

⁵⁶ Ibid 155.

⁵⁷ Geoffrey Hughes, *Encyclopedia of Swearing: Social History of Oaths, Profanity, Foul Language, and Ethnic Slurs in the English Speaking World* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, c2006).

⁵⁸ Ibid; This origin story is also related in the novel: Mordecai Richler, *Solomon Gursky was Here* (Random House, 1991) 172.

⁵⁹ <https://www.adl.org/media/13045/download>

⁶⁰ <https://ncri.io/2018/09/06/a-quantitative-approach-to-understanding-online-antisemitism-part-2-temporal-analysis/>

⁶¹ Derek Jonathan Penslar, *Shylock's children: economics and Jewish identity in modern Europe* (LA: University of California Press), p. 16.

⁶² Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Be A Jew* (New York: Basic Books, 1972). p. 48.

America highlighted how the average Jewish household donated US\$2,526 per year to charity, significantly more than the average Protestant household at US\$1,749 or the average Catholic household at US\$1,142.⁶³ In addition to this is the charity from foundations. North American Jewish grant-making institutions contributed an estimated \$9 billion to charity each year with about 75% of it going to non-Jewish causes.⁶⁴ Then there are the mega-donors. The Forbes 400 in 2016 had at least 33 Jews on it and only about 11% of their giving went to Jewish causes.⁶⁵

In Australia a number of the leading philanthropists in the country are Jewish and can be seen in the “Australian Philanthropy Top 350” list.⁶⁶ The list includes range of Jewish donors such as the Lowy Family, Besen Family, John Gandel and Pauline Gandel (Gandel Philanthropy), the Pratt Family (Pratt Foundation), Nora Goodridge (Goodridge Foundation), Smorgon Family, Hannah Cohen and family, Harry Triguboff, Bob Magid, David Gonski, Helen and Aron Kleinlehrer, and Penelope Seidler and the late Harry Seidler.⁶⁷ The list includes details of the recipients of the donations and while there are some Jewish causes lists, such as Jewish schools, most donations go to general causes in the fields such as higher education, the arts and medical research.

5.2.4 Holocaust denial

At the start of the attack in Halle the attack states in his video that the Holocaust “didn’t happen”. Denying the Holocaust is the fourth example of antisemitism listed in the Working Definition, specifically “Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).”

Some prominent Holocaust deniers have tried to claim their denial is mere “scepticism” of the Holocaust and is not antisemitic, yet they have promoted deliberate ignorance and misrepresentation of overwhelming evidence.⁶⁸ Their efforts seek to portray Jews as liars and delegitimise the suffering of the Jewish people during and as a result of the Holocaust.⁶⁹ This latter point reveals another antisemitic aspect to Holocaust denial, which is that it either explicitly or implicitly suggest the existence of a Jewish conspiracy large and deceitful enough to fabricate an entire genocide. This relates to the second example of antisemitism in the Working Definition, being a “demonizing... allegation about Jews... or the power of Jews as collective”.

⁶³ Hanna Shaul Bar Nissim, “American Jews and charitable giving: An enduring tradition”, The Conversation, 11 December 2017 <https://theconversation.com/american-jews-and-charitable-giving-an-enduring-tradition-87993>

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ <https://www.fundraisingresearch.com.au/top-donors.html>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Richard J. Evans, *Telling Lies About Hitler: The Holocaust, History and the David Irving Trial* (Verso, 2002), p. 151.

⁶⁹ Walter Reich, “Erasing the Holocaust”, *The New York Times*, July 11, 1993.

Holocaust denial was started by the Nazis themselves with organised disinformation campaigns even as the Holocaust was occurring.⁷⁰ Towards the end of the war Himmler order the destruction of records, the crematoria and evidence of the mass murders.⁷¹ An order written in his own hand in April 1945, to prevent the spread of testimony, directs that no prisoner "fall into the hands of the enemies alive".⁷² The denial continued after the Holocaust and occurred on both the political right and the political left.

Holocaust denial was quick to manifest on the early internet, with many prominent Holocaust denying organisations turning to the internet in the mid-1990s to gain prominence and financial support.⁷³ This included the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) and the Committee for the Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH), alongside personal websites compiling the writings of individual prominent deniers.⁷⁴ While this Holocaust denial movement declined in the early 2000s, its early rise on the internet means that its materials has had time to spread and can easily be distributed and recycled across the internet.

In the manifesto's achievements list there is an example of Holocaust denial and trivialisation. The achievement "Anudda Shoah" for killing 6 Jews is a reference to the well-known death toll of approximately 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust. The death toll of the Holocaust is often mocked by antisemites online, using phrases like "Muh Six Gorillion",⁷⁵ sometimes accompanied by the antisemitic meme of the Jew. The achievement uses this theme, mockingly imitating a person saying "Another Shoah", with "Shoah" being a Hebrew name for the Holocaust.

5.2.5 The ZOG Conspiracy Theory

As discussed previously, the acronym "ZOG", an abbreviation for "Zionist Occupied Government", is a common antisemitic trope in the Halle attack. It falls within the Working Definition's second example of conspiracy theories of "Jews controlling... government or other societal institutions". Zionist here simply means Jewish, though some use Israel and Jewish interchangeably seeing Israel as the manifestation of the Jewish collective. Where the allegation is made that it is Israel controlling world governments, under

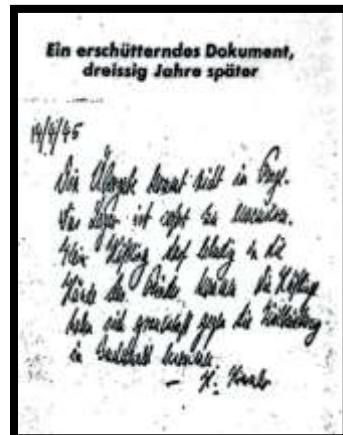


Figure 6 Order by Himmler stating that "Surrender is out of the question... No prisoner should fall into the hands of the enemies alive".



Figure 7 Example of the "Muh 6 Gorillion Holocaust denial alongside a merchant meme

⁷⁰ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/combating-holocaust-denial-origins-of-holocaust-denial>

⁷¹ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/a-brief-history-of-holocaust-denial>

⁷² Mira Ryczke Kimmelman, *Echoes from the Holocaust: A Memoir*, Page 89

⁷³ Nicholas Terry, "Holocaust denial in the age of web 2.0: Negationist discourse since the Irving-Lipstadt trial", in Paul Behrens, Olaf Jensen, Nicholas Terry, eds., *Holocaust and Genocide Denial: A Contextual Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 38.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ <https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/six-gorillion>

the Working Definition this could be seen as a form of antisemitic “targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity”, and not a “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country”.

The term was popularised by an article in *The New York Times* on 27 December 1984 which concerned robberies carried out by a white supremacist group called The Order. These robberies were carried out to fund a war against the United States Government, which the order called “ZOG” or “Zionist Occupation Government”.⁷⁶

In the attacker’s achievements list ZOG appears again, this time when speaks about killing a “ZOG-bot”, a term that has been used in conspiracy circles since at least 2008 to refer to police.⁷⁷ It is based on the idea the police are robots who will act as ordered by the Jews who the conspiracy theorists allege are controlling the government and its institutions. Given that the term “ZOG-bot” does not refer to Jews, this example demonstrates how, in the words of the Working Definition, a “rhetorical manifestation... directed towards... non-Jewish individuals” can still be a manifestation of antisemitism. In this case the term, while directed towards non-Jews, also promotes an antisemitic allegation about Jews.

In the post announcing the attack on meguka.org there is a line saying, “I would appreciate seeding, but only if your local ZOG won’t van you for it.” The reference to “van” in reference to the “party van” 4chan slang for police.⁷⁸ The use of van as a verb is a reference to being picked up by police and arrested. The idea the police would be acting under orders that come from Jews who are pulling the strings of government is explicit.

5.2.6 Redemptive Antisemitic Worldview

The beliefs expressed by the attacker converge to represent what can be described as a “redemptive” antisemitic worldview. The term “redemptive antisemitism” was coined by historian Saul Friedländer to describe antisemitic worldviews that could explain everything in the world and offer some kind of “redemption” for antisemites.⁷⁹ Redemptive antisemitic worldviews have existed in various forms throughout history, represented in the antisemitic text *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,⁸⁰ Nazi ideology, and the cultural Marxism conspiracy theory

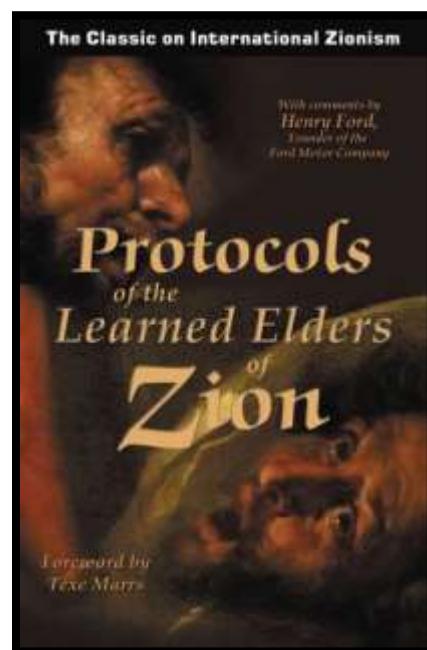


Figure 8 Modern example of the Protocols text.

⁷⁶ Brad Steiger, Sherry Steiger, *Conspiracies and Secret Societies: The Complete Dossier* (Mississippi: Visible Ink Press, 2013) p. 522.

⁷⁷ Dreglord, “Zogbot”, *Urban Dictionary*, 8 February 2008, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Zogbot>, viewed 3 November 2019.

⁷⁸ <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/4chan-party-van>

⁷⁹ Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: Volume 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (London: Orion Books, 1997), pp. 73-112.

⁸⁰ Currently available for purchase on Amazon and advertised with an explicitly antisemitic blurb, see: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Protocols-Learned-Elders-Zion-Henry-ebook/dp/B004U7FK00>

that claims the Jewish intellectualism masterminded a conspiracy to infiltrate and bring down Western cultural and social institutions.⁸¹

This worldview unites the various examples of antisemitism in the Halle attack. The Greedy Jew, Holocaust denial and ZOG conspiracy tropes converge into the idea of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy obsessed with gaining material wealth, through means such as falsifying the Holocaust, to fund their control over Western governments and their efforts to destroy the White race. This conspiracy theory, uniting all the Jews collectively into a target then provides a path to action and redemption for antisemites which the manifesto chillingly calls for when it says, “After all, if every White Man kills just one [Jew], we win.”

The redemptive antisemitic worldview also connects the other forms of discrimination displayed in the manifesto and attack. The achievements list includes goals for attacking Muslims, communists, “traitors” Christians, “ZOG-bots” and burning down a Mosque. However, antisemitism is the uniting factor and most significant form of discrimination in this worldview, as indicated by the decision to attack a synagogue rather than a “mosque or an antifa ‘culture center’, which are way less defended”.

In the worldview of the attacker, the Jews are responsible for all the ills in society, and even though he discriminates to these other targets, he portrays them as “golems”, referring to anthropomorphic beings made from substances like clay in Jewish folklore.⁸² However, this term is also synonymous in both Judaism and beyond for a mindless entity.⁸³ In this way, he alleges that all these other targets of discrimination are mindless enemies directed by the “Zionist Occupied Government”, and that to redeem the world, antisemites must “cut off the head of ZOG, which are the kikes”. This uniting factor is a unique quality to antisemitism, and represents the second and third examples of antisemitism in the Working Definition.

6 Responses to the Halle Attack

6.1 /pol/ and the Image Boards

6.1.1 Use of /pol/ to Spread the Manifesto and Video

4Chan's /pol/ board soon started a discussion on the attack. While not shared at the start of thread, it wasn't long before copies of the manifesto were being shared.

⁸¹ Samuel Moyn, “The Alt-Right’s Favorite Meme Is 100 Years Old”, *The New York Times*, 13 November 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/13/opinion/cultural-marxism-anti-semitism.html>, viewed 4 November 2019.

⁸² Moshe Idel, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (New York: State University of New York Press).

⁸³ Marilyn Cooper, “Jewish Word | Golem: A Mutable Monster”, *moment*, 17 July 2017, <https://momentmag.com/jewish-word-golem/>, viewed 4 November 2019.

Anonymous (ID: [REDACTED])

10/09/19(Wed)17:51:46 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Anonymous (ID: [REDACTED]) 10/09/19(Wed)17:51:46 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
At least post links, too.

https://[REDACTED]

https://[REDACTED]

https://[REDACTED]

read-this-first-[REDACTED]

dokumentation-[REDACTED]

manifesuto-pd-[REDACTED]

>>

One posted responded suggesting 4Chan should be shutdown and 8chan restored, but without /pol/. The poster writes, "Hey FBI, these guys are uploading manifestos to the terrorist website known as 4 chan. This site needs to be purged just like 8 chan and endchan were purged. Then maybe you could bring back 8 chan, just ban the /pol/ board."

Anonymous (ID: [REDACTED])

10/09/19(Wed)18:20:08 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Anonymous (ID: [REDACTED]) 10/09/19(Wed)18:20:08 [REDACTED]

>>
>>

Hey FBI, these guys are uploading manifestos to the terrorist website known as 4 chan. This site needs to be purged just like 8 chan and endchan were purged. Then maybe you could bring back 8 chan, just ban the /pol/ board.

The response from the poster who shared links to the manifesto documents was to draw a distinction between posting links that promote terrorist material and uploading a copy of the material. Such a distinction is of little consequence when it comes to making terrorist material available. It makes the mistake of trying to apply ideas learned from copyright law (where a link would not be a copy) to other fields where the crime will usefully be facilitating the spread of the material.

>>

Anonymous (ID: [REDACTED])

10/09/19(Wed)18:22:08 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Anonymous (ID: [REDACTED]) 10/09/19(Wed)18:22:08 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
>these guys are uploading manifestos to the terrorist website known as 4 chan
No, you retard. I'm just *linking* them. They're uploaded at [REDACTED]

Jesus Christ, people, learn how the fucking internet works!

Multiple copies of the manifesto were uploaded to multiple threads over the next 48 hours and beyond.

Anonymous (ID: [REDACTED])

10/10/19(Thu)10:11:27 [No.229367905](#)

File: [the face of a neet.jpg](#) (1.99 MB, 2448x3264)

1.99 MB

[1.99 MB JPG](#)

[REDACTED] Anonymous (ID: [REDACTED]) 10/10/19(Thu)10:11:27 [REDACTED]

How did this guy manage to build his own weapons, but was dumb enough to get stopped by a wooden door? I think if anyone would plan on doing this for months they would at least ensure that they can get in. It must be a false flag.

[https://\[REDACTED\]/read-this-first.pdf](https://[REDACTED]/read-this-first.pdf)

[https://\[REDACTED\]/dokumentation-\[REDACTED\].pdf](https://[REDACTED]/dokumentation-[REDACTED].pdf)

[https://\[REDACTED\]/manifesto-pdf.\[REDACTED\]](https://[REDACTED]/manifesto-pdf.[REDACTED])

>>

Links to the video were also shared, the most common being to bitchute.com but it was not the only source.

The general sentiment on /pol/ was against Balliet, not because he was attempting a horrific crime, but because of what was seen as his ineptness at killing people. As one posted noted, however, "Tally another 2 for /pol/'s bodycount". While the first post was not on 4chan, and 8chan is currently down, these deaths are still a part of the /pol/ culture which has encouraged such violent extremism.

Anonymous ID: [REDACTED] Thu 10 Oct 2019 00:11:52 No. [REDACTED] Report

Tally another 2 for /pol/'s bodycount

6.2 /Pol/ Fake News and Trolling

On Wednesday night some on /pol/ on 4Chan decided to use the tragic events to spread fake news and troll an unrelated person.

A threat with a link to a news article from the Washington Post was started with the added details that "Police report that a perpetrator of the attack on a synagogue in Halle has been arrested. The suspect is said to be Rainer W., known to the police, who had already been charged with incitement to hatred." The image used is of Rainer Winkler.

The screenshot shows a 4chan thread on the /pol/ board. The top navigation bar includes links for '4chan ID', 'Index', 'NSFW', 'Ghost', 'Gallery', and 'Stats'. A search bar is present at the top right. The main post is titled 'TERRORIST IN GERMANY WAS FOUND' by 'Anonymous' (ID: [REDACTED]) at 23:26:44 on Wednesday, October 9, 2019. The post contains a photo of a man with a mustache, wearing a black t-shirt with a Nazi eagle logo and the word 'LANDSER' on it. Below the photo is a link to a Washington Post article: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/shooting-near-synagogue-in-germany-leaves-at-least-two-people-dead-police-say/2019/10/09/08214514-ea89-11e9-9306-47cb0324fd44_story.html. The post also includes options to 'View', 'Reply', 'Original', and 'Report'. A reply from another anonymous user follows, with the text 'Police report that a perpetrator of the attack on a synagogue in Haale has been arrested. The suspect is said to be Rainer W., known to the police, who had already been charged with incitement to hatred.' and a link to the same Washington Post article. The reply is signed 'Anonymous' (ID: [REDACTED]) at 23:29:07 on the same day. The reply also includes options to 'View', 'Reply', 'Original', and 'Report'.

Winkler, who goes by the handle Drachenlord (Dragon Lord) is a German streamer, YouTuber and heavy metal fan. His [YouTube Channel](#) has over 11 million subscribers. He has been the subject of serious trolling. A female troll pretended to be interested in him, then when he proposed in a live stream, shot him down. He responded to the trolling and abuse by publishing his address and daring people to come try it in person. The result was the creation of a pilgrimage for trolls to visit him in groups. Some shouted abuse, some smashed windows, some threw eggs. In [August 2018 a mass pilgrimage](#) was called in which 10,000 people said they would attend. Local police declared a multi-day ban on public assemblies. As many as 800 people, mostly adolescent, defied the ban. They came from as far away as Northern Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It took the reallocation of special security forces from a German football championship match to restore order.

In this instance oe24TV started using the image of Winkler in coverage about the attack. This was quickly shared via Twitter and victory was claimed in the same 4Chan thread.



View Same Google iqdb SauceNAO Trace 1506257047808.jpg, 8KiB, 184x184

Anonymous ID: [REDACTED] Thu 10 Oct 2019 03:40:04 No. [REDACTED] Report

>> [REDACTED]

WE DID IT GUYS

>WE DID IT

https://twitter.com/Vivian_Veganer/status/1181958105409708032

https://twitter.com/Vivian_Veganer/status/1181958105409708032

This is not the first time /pol/ has tried to troll Winkler with fake news during a fatal attack. *Hope Not Hate* in the UK had reported how his images was [also used](#) during the Parkland shooting.

6.3 Misidentification of Kohlchan

The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at Kings College (UK) originally claimed that Balliet shared the documents [through Kohlchan](#), a German equivalent to 4Chan. An update to the

articles notes that the Centre later amended that claim and correctly pointing to the meguca.org imageboard as the source.

As of October 22, 2019 Kohlchan is still down with a notice stating that after analysis they have concluded this had nothing to do with them. They highlight how the incorrect information went viral through the mainstream media and also point to a news article which provides the correct information.

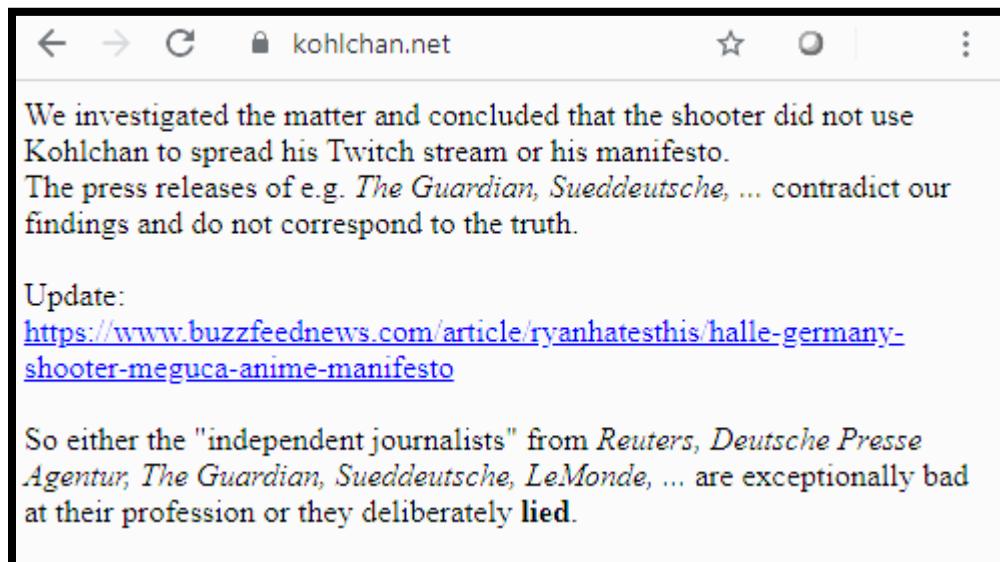


Figure 9 Kohlchan announcement

6.4 Response from the Technology sector

Concerns with the way social media platforms moderate user content has been a high profile issue since 2008 when Facebook was challenged first challenged over antisemitism,⁸⁴ and then specifically over Holocaust denial material.⁸⁵ After initial opposition, the complaints about Holocaust denial material eventually led to what is now the standard practice of geo-blocking content so that material prohibited by national laws in a country isn't shown to users whose IP addresses indicate they are visiting from that country.⁸⁶

Traditionally technology platforms have responded to incidents on their platforms individually and with little cooperation. Terms of service vary widely when it comes to prohibiting hate speech. Randi Zuckerberg, then Facebook's marketing director and spokesperson (and sister of founder Mark Zuckerberg) said it was "Facebook's policy to not remove groups that deny the Holocaust" back in

⁸⁴ Andre Oboler, 'Online Antisemitism 2.0. "Social Antisemitism on the Social Web"', *JCPA: Post-Holocaust and Antisemitism Series* (April 2008, No. 67) <<http://jcpa.org/article/online-antisemitism-2-0-social-antisemitism-on-the-social-web/>>

⁸⁵ Andre Oboler, "Facebook, Holocaust Denial, and Anti-Semitism 2.0", *JCPA: Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*, August 2009 <<http://jcpa.org/article/facebook-holocaust-denial-and-anti-semitism-2-0/>>

⁸⁶ Ibid.

2009,⁸⁷ a position she has continued to promote in recent year, long after leaving Facebook.⁸⁸ YouTube had taken a similar stand but reversed its policy in June 2019 saying it would now remove videos that deny “well-documented violent events” such as the Holocaust and school shootings.⁸⁹

Under increasing pressure from governments to do more to tackle extremism, technology companies have begun working more closely together in tackling terrorism since 2017. This pressure has significantly increased since the Christchurch attack in March 2019 and under the Christchurch Call which governments and technology companies have signed up to support. Halle marked the first time a more formal and systematic collective response was put into action. Data from that collective effort identified 36 visually-distinct videos across multiple platforms.⁹⁰ This section examines the response to the Halle incident by a range of technology platforms.

6.4.1 Twitch

Twitch's first public response to the Halle attack can be seen in series of tweets made at 1:30am Central European Time (CET) on October 9th, around 13.5 hours after the attack started. A further update with some corrections was provided in a series of tweets on October 17th. The times and dates in the images provided in this section reflect the local time in Melbourne, Australia, for each Tweet.

The [first tweet](#) expressed the company's shock and condolences for the victims. It was liked over 12,442 times and retweeted over 1,579 times.



Figure 10 Twitch's first tweet after the attack

⁸⁷ Michael Arrington, “Facebook Employees Speak Their Mind On Holocaust Denial”, TechCrunch, 16 June 2009, www.techcrunch.com/2009/06/15/facebook-employees-speak-their-mind-on-holocaust-denial.

⁸⁸ Laurie Segall, “Exclusive: Randi Zuckerberg responds to her brother's Holocaust comments”, CNN Business, 19 July 2018 <https://money.cnn.com/2018/07/19/technology/randi-mark-zuckerberg-facebook-holocaust/index.html>

⁸⁹ Reuters, “YouTube Bans Holocaust Denial Videos in Policy Reversal”, VOA, 7 June 2019

<https://www.voanews.com/silicon-valley-technology/youtube-bans-holocaust-denial-videos-policy-reversal>

⁹⁰ <https://gifct.org/press/gifct-statement-halle-shooting/>

The second tweet stated the company has a "zero-tolerance policy against hateful conduct, and any act of violence is taken extremely seriously".⁹¹ They state that they acted with urgency to remove the content and "will permanently suspend any accounts found to be posting or reposting content of this abhorrent act." That post received 4,594 likes and 398 retweets.

A later tweet from October 17th (CET) indicates that it was not until 5:50 pm CET, almost 6 hours after the live streaming of the attack started, that the video was in fact removed and the associated channel suspended.⁹² From the information provided in the fourth Tweet from October 9th,⁹³ it appears the delay in removal may have been a result of the video not being reported by other users until around the time it was removed.

Without known exactly when the video was first reported to Twitch, and therefore at what point they became official aware of the video on their platform, it is impossible to know how quick their response was and whether the claim that they "worked with urgency" is in fact accurate.

RECOMMENDATION 11: When a violent extremist attack is livestreamed the platform that was used to stream the incident and / or host the initial video of the incident should provide transparency on exactly when the livestream and/or video was first reported to them and when exactly they acted to remove it.

RECOMMENDATION 12: Platforms should take all reasonable steps to facilitate and encourage the reporting of material depicting and promoting violent extremism, as well as all other reasonable steps to identify such material themselves. They should expeditiously remove such material once they become aware of it. Provided the above steps are taken, there should be a clear safe harbour protecting platforms from liability for material they are unaware they are hosting.



Figure 11 Twitch's second tweet after the attack

⁹¹ <https://twitter.com/Twitch/status/1182000480349605889>

⁹² <https://twitter.com/Twitch/status/1185200174953455620>

⁹³ <https://twitter.com/Twitch/status/1182036268202381313>

The third gave the initial information suggesting around 5 people viewed the attack live and that the video lasted 35 minutes,⁹⁴ as mentioned this was later revised to 3 people having watched it live.⁹⁵

The fourth tweet noted that a video was automatically saved from the livestream that in the 30 minutes before it was flagged and removed by Twitch staff 2200 people had seen it.⁹⁶ Further details on this were provided on October 17th highlighting that in addition to the 2200 who saw it in the half an hour before it was removed, a further 333 had seen the video prior to this.⁹⁷

Twitch goes on to note that "This account was created about two months prior to streaming the shooting and had attempted to stream only once before."⁹⁸ Their investigation noted that the video was not appearing in any recommendations or directories, meaning that the viewers were not a result of internal promotion on Twitch but rather of external sharing of the link outside Twitch. They state, "our investigation suggests that people were coordinating and sharing the video via other online messaging services."⁹⁹

Twitch noted that they shared the harsh of the video with an "industry consortium" that works to prevent such content being spread. Later posts on the 18th of October named the consortium as GifCT. Twitch is not directly a GifCT member, but its parent company Amazon is one of the members.



Figure 12 Twitch's third tweet after the attack



Figure 14 Remainder of the October 9 tweets from Twitch

⁹⁴ <https://twitter.com/Twitch/status/1182036266344271873>

⁹⁵ <https://twitter.com/Twitch/status/1185200174953455620>

⁹⁶ <https://twitter.com/Twitch/status/1182036268202381313>

⁹⁷ <https://twitter.com/Twitch/status/1185200176006230016>

⁹⁸ <https://twitter.com/Twitch/status/1182036269519368193>

⁹⁹ <https://twitter.com/Twitch/status/1182036270710571009>

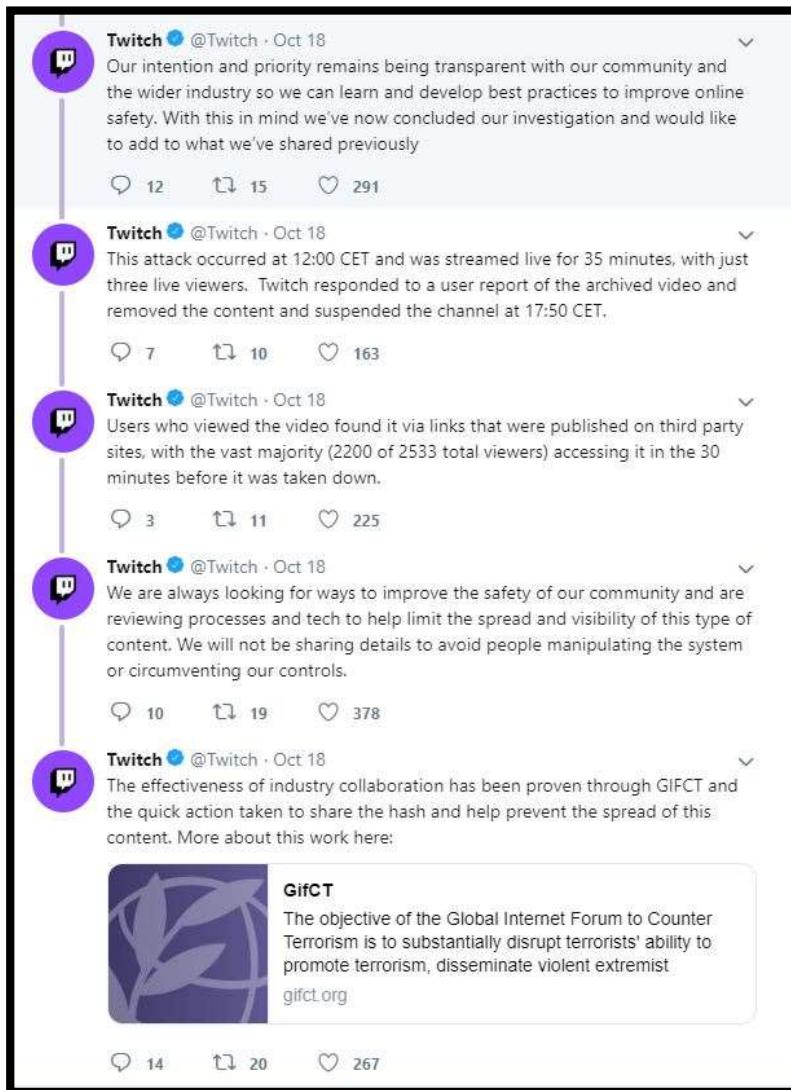


Figure 15 Twitch tweets from October 17 (CET)

6.4.2 Telegram

Copies of the video were distributed through the encrypted messenger app Telegram.¹⁰⁰ Prof. Megan Squire first reported the spread of the video to Telegram, noting that in public channels she monitored there were two primary sources, one for the long video and the other for a short version.¹⁰¹ These sources were in turn amplified by smaller public channels. 4 of the small channels only shared the long video while 5 shared both the long and short videos. She estimated the total audience was around 15,625 accounts, though there may be some overlap with people being in more than one of these channels.

¹⁰⁰ <https://heavy.com/news/2019/10/stephan-balliet/>

¹⁰¹ <https://twitter.com/MeganSquire0/status/1181980782417633280>

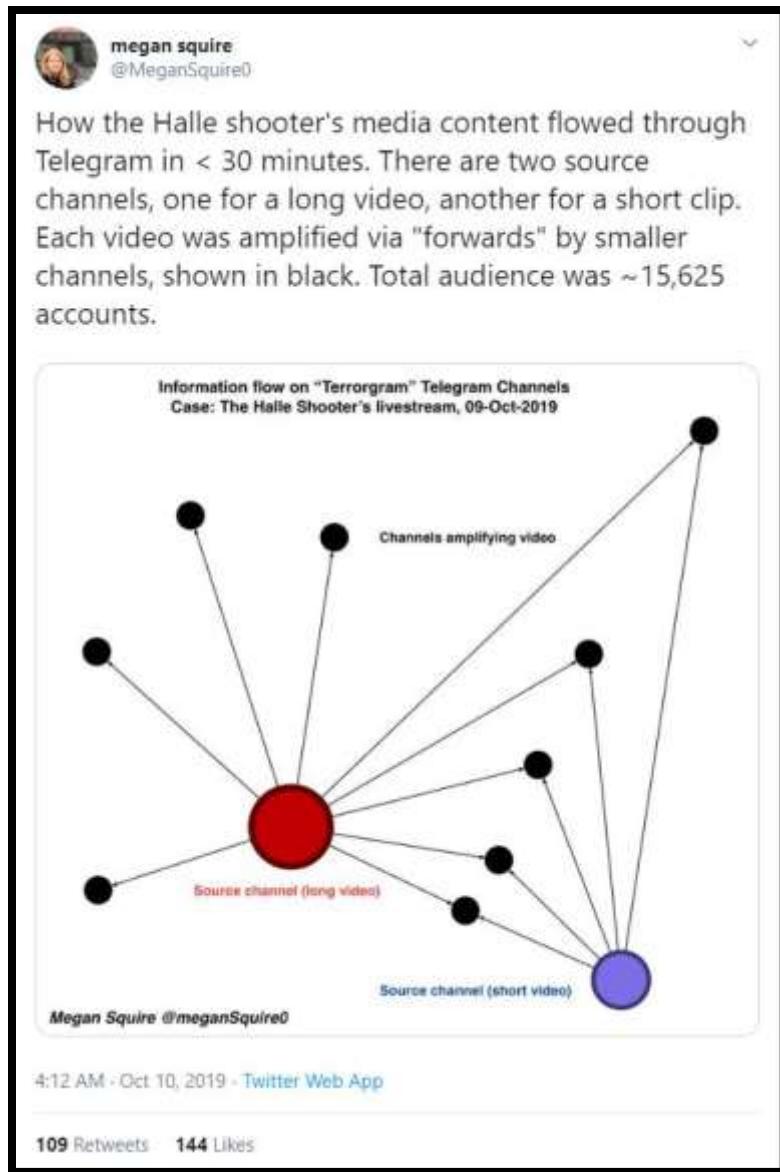


Figure 16 Prof. Megan Squire documents the spread to Telegram

Much of the discussion around Telegram and terrorism previously focused on government calls to compromise encryption, it is important to stress that this use of Telegram was in public groups which both researchers and law enforcement could monitor without the need to compromise encryption.

6.4.3 Google

Preliminary work we carried out after the attack identified copies of the three manifesto documents on a range of internet sites as well as two links allowing access to view the attackers video. Some of the manifestos were found by monitoring /pol/ and other sites, but others were found through a Google search. We contacted our liaison at Google to discuss this and were urged to file an online report.

In completing the form we noted:¹⁰²

the Christchurch Call and Google's Commitment to "Prioritising moderation of terrorist and violent extremist content, however identified". In light of this commitment, we urge Google to voluntarily remove links to this content rather than allowing this material advocating terrorism to remain online [until] formal government take down action occurs. We note this content related to a GIFCT Content Incident Protocol incident.

Google responded to our online submission three days after we made it. The response highlighted that, “Google aggregates and organizes information published on the web; we don't control the content found in the pages you've specified”. They went on to note that “in accordance with Google's practices concerning content removal, the following URLs will be removed shortly from Google's search results for Australia”. This only covered the links to the video, not the other links to copies of the manifesto. Google rejected one link, a blog post that included links to PDFs uploaded as blog content. One link Google correctly reject as by the time they looked at it the content has been removed. The remaining links, including the links to the uploaded files at the blog, google requested further information on.

While Australia's Abhorrent Violent Material laws only require a hosting or content services to remove Abhorrent Violent Material, not links to that material, the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) goes further and has provisions relating to “link services” such as search engines.

Link services can be issued a take-down notice by the eSafety Commissioner to remove their links to prohibited content so long as the service has an “Australian connection”.¹⁰³ The act defined “Australian connection” for content services and in a note states that “a link is an example of content”, meaning link services are content services for the purpose of deciding if they have an Australian connection. A service has an Australian connection if “any of the content provided by the content service is hosted in Australia”.¹⁰⁴ It's been known since 2010 that some of Google's content was being served from within Australia,¹⁰⁵ and since 2017 Google has also offered cloud serves hosting in Sydney.¹⁰⁶ Google is therefore has an Australian connection and can be subjected to take-down orders both for hosting prohibited content and for linking to it.

Google's distinction that they don't host the content they link to does not reduce their liability when they host links that point to prohibited content. We tried explaining this to Google and noted that the terrorist manifestos they were linking to would have to be classed as prohibited content if they were referred to the Classification Board.¹⁰⁷ In their response Google asked us to:¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Report to Google 25 October 2019

¹⁰³ *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) Sch 7 Pt 3 Div 5

¹⁰⁴ *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) Sch 7 s 3.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.itnews.com.au/news/found-google-australias-secret-data-network-168772>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.cio.com.au/article/620891/google-opens-sydney-cloud-region/>

¹⁰⁷ This is required under S 9A of the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* (Cth)

¹⁰⁸ Response from Google 28 October 2019

Please copy and paste, or clearly identify, the exact text or content you claim violates applicable law. Also, please explain the specific reasons why you believe the text or content violates or is illegal under applicable law. It would be helpful if you could cite the specific law(s) of your country you believe to be applicable to the content in question.

In our reply we highlighted that three of the links were to copies of the same document (the “DoKumentation” part of the manifesto) hosted in different places. We explained that the document contained “Terrorist instruction material on page 9” and cited a passage saying “Most grenades are filled with a simplified formula of [redacted] from the book [redacted] made as followed: [redacted]”. We gave the passage in full without the redactions. We then added “State objective of violence on page 9: ‘3. Kill as many anti-Whites as possible, jews preferred’” and “Incitement for others to copy this stated violence on page 10: ‘The only way to win is to cut off the head of ZOG, which are the kikes. If I fail and die but kill a single jew, it was worth it. After all, if every White Man kills just one, we win.’”

The response from Google also included some standard boiler plate which is perhaps not the best advice to be giving people in relation to content promoting terrorism:¹⁰⁹

Even if we eliminated the page from our search results, it would still exist on the web. We encourage you to resolve any disputes directly with the owner of the website in question. Please visit <https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/9109> to learn how to contact a site's webmaster and request a change.

More than two weeks after providing the information most of the links to the manifesto still appear in Google search results. The blog post is still there, but the links to content on it no longer appear in Google. On further examination, the blog post itself now had three deadlinks. The documents that were uploaded to the blog show up with error messages. An examination of the hosting provider shows the blog was using Cloudflare’s Content Delivery network. Given the recent statement by Cloudflare’s CEO,¹¹⁰ it appears likely it was action by Cloudflare to cease providing access to copies of these manifestos that has caused the files to vanish.

Google seeks to draw a distinction between hosting content and search saying the Christchurch Call does not apply to its search services. That position will be seen by many as a step backwards and we would urge all parts of Google to fully commit to combating terrorism. There should be no exceptions.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Google should commit to supporting the Christchurch Call across all parts of the business without exception. This includes preventing Google’s search engine being used to access material promoting terrorism.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Matthew Prince, “Terminating Service for 8Chan”, *Cloudflare Blog*, 5 August 2019
<https://blog.cloudflare.com/terminating-service-for-8chan/>

6.4.4 GifCT's Responsive Action

In July 2017 four of the largest technology companies, Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube, decided to work together in their efforts to tackle terrorism.¹¹¹ The collective effort was called the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GifCT) and while others have been invited to join the project, membership is "limited to companies operating internet platforms and service".¹¹²

During this incident GifCT for the first time activated its new Content Incident Protocol (CIP). A timeline of the action taken has been published to provide transparency and to help further improve the protocol.¹¹³

The first communications between the GifCT founding members (Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube) occurred at 5am Pacific Time which is 2pm in Germany. That's 2 hours after the incident started and around 1.5 hours after it stopped being live streamed. At this stage the communications were triggered because of eye witness accounts that the attacker was wearing video equipment and which made it likely there was a livestream, but the platform in use was unknown.

Four and quarter hours later, more than 6 hours after the attack started, GifCT became aware of the video circulating on non-GifCT platforms. 54 minutes after this they formally declared it a Content Incident Protocol event and for the first time activated the agreed protocols. Those protocols involved:

-
1. *Alerting all members of the GifCT that an active CIP was underway*
 2. *Uploading hashes of the attacker's video, its derivatives, and other related content into the shared GifCT hash database with a dedicated label to enable quick identification and ingestion by GifCT member companies*
 3. *Alerting the German government and Europol that an active CIP was underway*
 4. *Continuing communications among GifCT founding members to identify and address risks and needs during the active CIP*
 5. *Establishing the timing of a Situational Awareness Interval when GifCT would be able to share some detail of the CIP with impacted governments*
-

The CIP event ended 22 hours later when the volume of attempts to upload the content to member platforms had significantly reduced. GifCT noted how in this instance only "36 visually-distinct videos" edits of the video emerged, far less than occurred with Christchurch.¹¹⁴ In Christchurch there had been

¹¹¹ <https://gifct.org/about/>

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ <https://gifct.org/press/gifct-statement-halle-shooting/>

¹¹⁴ <https://gifct.org/press/gifct-statement-halle-shooting/>

more than 800 distinct edits of the attackers videos and Facebook alone had removed 1.5 million copies of it.

The GIFCT response is commendable, but being the first time there is room for further improvement. It is unclear how long Twitch knew about the content before GIFCT was notified. The provision of a 24/7 hotline for use by any technology company, whether or not they are member, and the promotion of this hotline within the sector may help to speed up responses in the future.

It also appears only the video was being tackled by GIFCT when the manifesto documents also deserve attention. Finding these documents is in many ways easier than finding different variants of the video. GIFCT should ensure manifesto material is included in its activities.

As content is more rapidly removed there will be a growing need for researchers from government, academia and civil society to be able to access terrorist material for research purposes. GIFCT is well placed to maintain an archive of such content and to accept, perhaps as associate members, researchers who after vetting could have access to that archive.

RECOMMENDATION 14: Through the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), technology companies should provide a contact mechanism that is staffed 24/7 and available to assist any platform whose technology is abused to share manifestos or live streaming.

6.4.5 The Tech Sectors Response in General

Tech Against Terrorism, a London based NGO, is an initiative launched by the United Nations Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (UN CTED) in April 2017. They aim to support the global technology sector in responding to terrorism and have a particular focus on supporting smaller technology platform. Following the attack provided analysis on the technology sectors response.

Tech Against Terrorism release an analysis on the tech sectors response on October 15th, 2019.¹¹⁵ The response includes both helpful details and some information that has since been disproven. Greater cooperation between technology platforms and civil society is needed to ensure analysis is accurate. The analysis provides a snapshot of what was thought in the week after the attack. Two items of outdated information are that the initial message was posted on Kohlchan, it was actually Meguca.org, and the claim Twitch removed the content within 30 minutes, while an initial Tweet from Twitch give this impression, it actually took closer to 6 hours for removal but most of the activity viewing it occurred in the final 30 minutes before removal.

In their briefing Tech Against Terrorism noted how many large and small platforms worked to prevent the spread of the content but state that the "response by smaller tech platforms and larger tech platforms to prevent virality are being undermined by both the mainstream media and fringe platforms." The also noted the use of both Twitter and Telegram

In their analysis, openly available through their website, Tech Against Terrorism list a range of services where at the time of writing copies of the manifesto and videos could be accessed. While direct links to the content were avoided, naming the platforms still had the unfortunate effect of increasing the risk of the terrorist content spreading. We recommend civil society organisations circulate such details

¹¹⁵ <https://www.techagainstterrorism.org/2019/10/15/analysis-what-can-we-learn-from-the-online-response-to-the-halle-terrorist-attack/>

confidentially to key stakeholders and avoid naming platforms until the content is no longer available there.

Tech Against Terrorist also mentioned the *Terrorist Content Analytics Platform (TCAP)* which they are developing with the support of Public Safety Canada to share data between platforms, academia, and data scientists. The system will also serve as an archive to help with the development of automated content classifiers. We welcome this development.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Access to the *Terrorist Content Analytics Platform* should be available to researchers after they are vetted to ensure they represent legitimate research efforts in government, academia or civil society.

RECOMMENDATION 16: The *Terrorist Content Analytics Platform* or a similar service should offer a tool for archiving and preserving online content for use by law enforcement and in legal proceedings. Adding content should be available to the public, but accessing archived content should be restricted to vetted people from government, academia and civil society.

RECOMMENDATION 17: Civil society organisations should redact or avoid naming hosting services that are making terrorist content available, but should confidentially report such content to key stakeholders in government, industry and civil society.

RECOMMENDATION 18: All companies that allow hosting of user generated content should have a process to receive reports from the public related to material promoting terrorism and this process should ensure rapid review.

6.5 Government Action

Germany has taken an international lead in tackling online hate speech over the last few years, and has proposed further law reform in response to the Halle attack. Australia has enacted world leading legislation to tackle the live streaming of abhorrent acts in response to the attack in Christchurch. In this section we examine how these countries responses to the online elements of the Halle attack.

6.5.1 Germany

Justice Minister Christine Lambrecht highlighted the connection between online incitement to hate and extremist violence saying, "What the disinhibition and unleashing of hatred in the net can lead to was shown again in the terrible attack on the Jewish community in Halle".¹¹⁶

Germany passed strong laws back in June 2017 requiring platforms to remove hate speech within 24 hours if its illegality was obvious and within 7 days when the determination was more difficult to make.¹¹⁷ Failure would leave companies facing fines of up to €50 million.¹¹⁸ While announcing the move in 2017 Justice Minister Heiko Maas said that "Death threats and insults, incitement to hate or

¹¹⁶ Kate Brady, "Germany announces plans to combat far-right extremism and online hate speech", DW, 30 October 2019 <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-announces-plans-to-combat-far-right-extremism-and-online-hate-speech/a-51049129>

¹¹⁷ AFP, "Germany imposes €50 million fines on social media firms that don't delete hate speech", The Local DE, 30 June 2017 <https://www.thelocal.de/20170630/germany-imposes>

¹¹⁸ AFP, "Germany imposes €50 million fines on social media firms that don't delete hate speech", The Local DE, 30 June 2017 <https://www.thelocal.de/20170630/germany-imposes>

(Holocaust denial) are not part of freedom of expression -- rather, they are attacks against other people's freedom" and "intended to intimidate and mute others".¹¹⁹

Following the Halle attack the Germany Government announced they would go further, creating new laws requiring platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to report incidents of hate speech and the IP address of those who post them to government authorities.¹²⁰ A spokes person for Germany's Data Protection Commission said it was "too early to say whether this is good or bad" but that, "there will certainly be questions to be asked regarding the ethics of private companies deeming what counts as a conspicuous post on social media."¹²¹

Companies make such judgements all the time when it comes to enforcing their own terms of service, the difference here is the involvement of the state and the possibility of a company's action leading to criminal sanctions. If a store has CCTV and someone commits a crime against the store, for example stealing, the store would have no difficulty in reporting the matter to police and handing over the CCTV footage. Similarly, if a customer was assaulted by another customer while in the store, the company would have no difficulty handing over CCTV footage to police. On the other hand, a customer swearing at another customer, even if captured on CCTV and potentially subject to a fine for disorderly conduct, would be unlikely to be reported. The question is simply where the line is drawn.

In Germany the line indicating hate speech is fairly clear given platforms are already under an obligation to identify and remove such content. The question is what level of hate speech should be reported. Rather than a blanket report of every incident, a move which would overwhelm state resources and essentially treat major and minor offenses the same, we recommend that "a combination of sanctions, training, and educative efforts should be put in place".¹²² As will all crime, the more serious incidents should be immediately reported to authorities. In the case of hate speech this involves threats of violence, incitement to hate and incitement to violence. In other cases, sanctions may start with penalties by a company, but once a company has exhausted its efforts at education and deterrence, the matter should escalate to one in which the power of the state intervenes.

A number of doctrinal principles have been considered in arriving at this conclusion.¹²³ The *principle of generality* suggest it is better to have laws that apply in all circumstances and are not specific to the online context.¹²⁴ The *principle of inclusion* suggests that it should not be possible to escape the law by acting online rather than in the real world.¹²⁵ The *principle of appropriate adaptation* says laws targeted at the Internet specifically are appropriate when there is an "impact on the nature of the conduct or its

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Kate Brady, "Germany announces plans to combat far-right extremism and online hate speech", DW, 30 October 2019 <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-announces-plans-to-combat-far-right-extremism-and-online-hate-speech/a-51049129>

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Pompeu Casanovas Romeu and Andre Oboler, "Behavioural Compliance and Law Enforcement in Online Hate Speech". *TERECOM 2018 Technologies for Regulatory Compliance: Proceedings of the 2nd Workshop on Technologies for Regulatory Compliance co-located with the 31st International Conference on Legal Knowledge and Information Systems (JURIX 2018)*. 125-134.

¹²³ Andre Oboler, "Legal Doctrines Applied to Online Hate Speech" (2014, July) *Computers and Law* 10 <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/ANZCompuLawJL/2014/4.pdf>

¹²⁴ Jonathan Clough, *Principles of Cybercrime* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) 15.

¹²⁵ Neal Kumar Katyal, 'Criminal law in cyberspace' (2001) 149 University of Pennsylvania Law Review 1003, 1005-7.

prevalence” as a result of harmful behaviour going online.¹²⁶ As a corollary to the principle of appropriate adaptation, the nature and prevalence of conduct online can at times make non-criminal responses in practice more effective than a criminal response.¹²⁷ The *principle of necessary criminalisation* holds that when responses short of the criminal law would be ‘ineffective, impractical or insufficient’, a criminal response is justified.¹²⁸ The conclusion then is that “the criminal law is needed as a final response to online hate speech”,¹²⁹ the end of an escalating series of responses. There is also a need for laws that enable technical solutions to overcome what would otherwise be technical barriers in applying the law.

RECOMMENDATION 19: Serious hate speech, that which makes threats of violence or incites either violence or hatred, should be immediately reported to authorities. Other forms of hate speech should be removed by the platform, but a log of the incident including the users account and IP address should be recorded. Users should be informed when a platform takes action against them and should be warned repeated breaches could lead to a report being issued to authorities. Where platform sanctions prove ineffective at altering behaviour, the history of breaches and IP address of the user should be referred to authorities.

RECOMMENDATION 20: Once a user has been referred to authorities, a summary of any further hate speech incidents involving that user should be notified to authorities periodically (e.g. monthly) by the referring platform.

RECOMMENDATION 21: Once a user has been referred to authorities, the authorities should seek to convert the IP address into details of the accountholder and add it to the record. Where the account holder is a company, the company should be notified with a request to identify the specific user.

RECOMMENDATION 22: Where a company cannot provide information on the person who committed a breach of the law against serious or repeated hate speech, assistance should be provided. Where a company will not provide information on the person who committed a breach of the law against serious or repeated hate speech, the company itself should be liable to corporate fines.

RECOMMENDATION 23: Users referred to authorities by platforms for repeated breaches that do not involve incitement to hate or violence should initially be issued a warning, potentially after a discussion with authorities in which their actions are discussed. Further breaches should lead to escalating fines. If fines fail to provide a deterrent more serious measures including imprisonment should be available.

RECOMMENDATION 24: Legal exemptions should be provided for researchers from government agencies and departments, academia and civil society engaged in testing the effectiveness of both platform and government agency responses. Such exemptions may require prior approval of the research by one or more authorised people or agencies who are independent of the enforcement system.

¹²⁶ Jonathan Clough, *Principles of Cybercrime* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) 16.

¹²⁷ Andre Oboler, “Legal Doctrines Applied to Online Hate Speech” (2014, July) *Computers and Law* 10 <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/ANZCompuLawJ/2014/4.pdf>

¹²⁸ Jonathan Clough, *Principles of Cybercrime* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) 16.

¹²⁹ Andre Oboler, “Legal Doctrines Applied to Online Hate Speech” (2014, July) *Computers and Law* 10 <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/ANZCompuLawJ/2014/4.pdf>

6.5.2 Australia

In Australia the response for online safety and regulation of content such as that associated with the Halle attack rests with the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. This is a government agency created in 2015, initially for the purpose of providing online safety for children.¹³⁰ The remit has been expanded a number of times since then and the current purpose of the office is “to help safeguard Australians at risk from online harms and to promote safer, more positive online experiences”.¹³¹ The overarching goal is preventing harm through awareness-raising, education and best practice guidance.¹³² The eSafety Commissioner has also been granted regulatory powers to prohibit material and order takedowns.

The eSafety Commissioner also has the power to issue a notice which affects the enforcement of new laws on Abhorrent Violent Material.¹³³ This is a category of prohibited content created in light of the Christchurch attack and includes sound, image and video, created by a person who is recording or livestreaming their conduct as they engage in a terrorist act, murder or other specified crimes.¹³⁴ The livestream and subsequent video of the Halle attack falls clearly within the definition of Abhorrent Violent Material and it is a criminal offence for content and hosting services to fail to expeditiously remove / cease hosting such content.¹³⁵ This law applies as long as the content can be accessed in Australia, regardless of whether it is actually hosted in Australia or not.¹³⁶ Failure to comply can result in a penalty of the greater of 50,000 penalty units (\$10.5 Million at present) or 10% of global profits for the month the failure occurred and the previous 11 months.¹³⁷ There is also the potential for jail time of up to 3 years or a fine of up to \$2.1 million for individuals.¹³⁸

The Halle Attack began at 10 pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time. Early the next morning the Office of the eSafety Commissioner was in contact with Facebook, Twitter, Amazon and Google and worked with them to understand the situation in relation to the services offered to Internet users in Australia.¹³⁹ They also assessed a range of sites which were likely to be used to further distribute the material to gauge the risk of viral distribution.¹⁴⁰ The eSafety Commissioner became aware of three items of Abhorrent Violent Material and issued notices against each of the content services and their relating hosting services, a total of 6 Abhorrent Violent Material notices, which resulted in several items being removed.¹⁴¹ In communications with OHPI the Office of the eSafety Commissioner expressed the view that the GIFT Content Incident Protocol “appeared to work well to suppress the virality of the content”.¹⁴²

¹³⁰ <https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are>

¹³¹ eSafety Strategy 2019-2022, Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 1

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-10/eSafety%20Strategy%20Plan.pdf>

¹³² eSafety Strategy 2019-2022, Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-10/eSafety%20Strategy%20Plan.pdf>

¹³³ Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) s 474.35

¹³⁴ Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) s 474.31 and s 474.32

¹³⁵ Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) s 474.34

¹³⁶ Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) s 474.34(2) and (3)

¹³⁷ Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) s 474.34(10)

¹³⁸ Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) s 474.34(9)

¹³⁹ Communications between OHPI and the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 30 October 2019.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

The eSafety Commissioner also has power to refer content to the Classification Board.¹⁴³ The work of the Classification Board will be familiar to people in the form of film classifications such as G, PG, M or MA 15+.¹⁴⁴ The Classification Board has the power to classify Internet material, but in practice uses it very rarely. Where content that is to be classified relates to a terrorist act, there is a requirement that it be given the classification of “RC” (Refused Classification).¹⁴⁵ In explaining the “RC” classification the Classification Board explains:¹⁴⁶

Material that is Refused Classification is commonly referred to as being ‘banned’. Films, computer games and publications that are classified RC cannot be sold, hired, advertised or legally imported in Australia. Material that is classified RC contains content that is very high in impact and falls outside generally accepted community standards.

Material with an RC classification is also “prohibited content” under Schedule 7 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth).¹⁴⁷ Australian residents, bodies corporate carrying on activities in Australia, and Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments,¹⁴⁸ are able to make a complaint to the eSafety Commissioner about material that can be accessed in Australia which is prohibited content, or content that would be prohibited if it were classified.¹⁴⁹ The eSafety Commissioner can carry out an investigation in response to a complaint, or on her own initiative.¹⁵⁰ If the eSafety Commissioner carries out an investigation and prohibited content is found on a hosting service with an Australian connection, the eSafety Commissioner must issue a final take-down notice to have the content removed.¹⁵¹

While the classification and prohibited content approach overlaps with the Abhorrent Violent Material approach in the case of a video like that produced by the attackers in Christchurch or Halle, the two approach have some differences. The Abhorrent Violent Material approach creates a liability that occurs without the need for notice to be given, but it is far narrower as it only applied to material that records or livestreams the attack itself. The classification approach can also be used for video material which may be used to glorify the attack, but which was not created by the attacker or an associate of theirs and therefore fails the test for being Abhorrent Violent Material. The Abhorrent Violent Material provisions also only apply to online services, while the classification approach has broader reach and also prohibits the sale, hire, advertising or import of the material in other formats (for example, as data on a physical device).

Perhaps most significantly, the classification approach can also apply to manifestos produced and published in advance of an attack, but which are clearly a part of the terrorist act. This can be seen in

¹⁴³ *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) Schedule 7, S 22(1)(g)

¹⁴⁴ <http://www.classification.gov.au/Guidelines/Pages/Guidelines.aspx>

¹⁴⁵ *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* (Cth) S 9A

¹⁴⁶ <http://www.classification.gov.au/Guidelines/Pages/RC.aspx>

¹⁴⁷ *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) Schedule 7, S 20(1)(a)

¹⁴⁸ *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) Schedule 7, S 41

¹⁴⁹ *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) Schedule 7, S 37(1)

¹⁵⁰ *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) Schedule 7, S 44.

¹⁵¹ *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) Schedule 7, S 47.

New Zealand's response to the Christchurch attack where the Government quickly classified the terrorist manifesto as "objectionable material",¹⁵² their equivalent of RC, and the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs explained that, "this means that it is also illegal to hold a copy, share / distribute it under NZ Law".¹⁵³

Australia took the same approach in response to Christchurch. The Annual Report of the Australian Classification Board for 2018-2019 shows that only two requests for classification were made in relation to Internet content, both at the request of the eSafety Commissioner, and both were given a RC classification.¹⁵⁴ The first item refused classification (Classification Number: 283834) matches the terrorist manifesto from the Christchurch attack. It is described by the Classification Board in the annual report as:¹⁵⁵

...a digital 87-page document, embedded within a PDF document... [which] described an ideological viewpoint, which was espoused to justify and encourage acts of terrorism against Muslim people. ...The Board was satisfied that the content promotes and incites in matters of crime or violence; and that it directly counsels, promotes, encourages and urges the doing of a terrorist act and directly praises the doing of a terrorist act in circumstances where there is substantial risk that such praise might have the effect of leading a person (regardless of his or her age or any mental impairment that the person might suffer) to engage in a terrorist act.

The second item (Classification Number 283833) matches the description of the video of the Christchurch attack created as a result of the live streaming on Facebook. It is described in the annual report as:¹⁵⁶

...a short film – in the form of a recording of what appeared to be a live action video stream – that depicted the lead-up to and the shooting of a number of individuals inside a mosque and the events immediately following the shooting. ...The Board was satisfied that the content depicted, expressed or otherwise dealt with matters of crime, violence, cruelty and revolting or abhorrent phenomena in such a way that it offended against the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults; and that it directly counselled, promoted, encouraged and urged, and that it directly provided instruction on the doing of a terrorist attack, and directly praised the doing of a terrorist act in circumstances where there was a substantial risk that such praise might have the effect of leading a person (regardless

¹⁵² <https://www.classificationoffice.govt.nz/news/latest-news/christchurch-attacks-press-releases/#christchurch-attack-publication-the-great-replacement-classified-objectionable>

¹⁵³ <https://www.dia.govt.nz/Response-to-the-Christchurch-terrorism-attack-video#manifesto>

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.classification.gov.au/About/AnnualReports/Documents/classification-annual-report-2018-19.pdf>

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

of his or her age or any mental impairment that the person might suffer) to engage in a terrorist act.

This classification approach has an additional declaratory benefit. By having the material classified as RC, and therefore prohibited content in Australia, a signal is sent to content providers. Some companies who are not bound by a country's laws will as a matter of their own corporate policies seek to prevent their services being used to share content that is illegal in a country to users in that country. If the declaration is not made, the company policies may not be triggered. Effective cooperation between government and industry requires content to be classified, even when the government lacks jurisdiction to take action.

In the case of Halle communications with the Office of the eSafety Commissioner stated that the video was handled as Abhorrent Violent Material, but was not referred for classification as there were no reports of the content being hosted in Australia.¹⁵⁷ It was also noted that under the Abhorrent Violent Material laws notices to remove content could be issued, including to overseas sites, without seeking classification.

The law related to prohibited content covers not just the content itself, but also links to it. If in the course of an investigation the eSafety Commissioner is satisfied that an “end-users in Australia can access content using a link provided by a links service” and “the content is potential prohibited content” (that is content which is likely to be classified RC if referred to the Classifications Board) and “the links service has an Australian connection”, then “the Commissioner must” issue an “interim link-deletion notice” and “apply to the Classification Board” for the content to be classified.¹⁵⁸ As noted previously, Google appears to be a Link Service with an Australian Connection and also appears not to be removing links to the manifestos which are “potential prohibited content”. This suggests there may be a legal requirement for the content to be referred for classification and for Google to be directed to remove links to the content.

There is an alternative interpretation which suggest an “Australian Connection” does not exist unless the primary hosting location of the content, and not just servers to help with redistribution, are in Australia. If the intent of Parliament is to cast as wide a net as possible the term “Australian Connection” could be more clearly defined both in general and specifically for link services. There is a strong public policy argument that services which profit from advertising targeted at Australians, and which alter their content based on the fact a user is in Australia, should be subject to Australian laws on prohibited content. Complying with Australian law is a reasonable requirement for platforms targeting their product at the Australian market and profiting from doing so.

Based on a search of the classification board's RC decisions, since the Christchurch related classifications there have been no referrals of internet material to the Classifications Board. This mean the terrorist manifestos in Poway, El Paso and Halle have not as yet been refused classification in Australia.

During the course of this research the website of the Classification Board was updated and the online tool for reviewing classifications no longer allows users to easily request a list of all classification in a

¹⁵⁷ Communications between OHPI and the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 30 October 2019.

¹⁵⁸ Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (Cth) Schedule 7, S 62(2)

given date period by classification. This decreases government transparency. The classification of the Christchurch material was also obfuscated with the material listed as "ESAFETY CONTENT" 001 and 002. The manifesto was in fact listed as a film, not a document, in the record of the decision and made no reference to Christchurch. Neither did the video. There are grounds not to provide, for example, the titles of Internet materials, but some reasonable description to aid those checking the record is needed if the Rule of Law is to be upheld. The public can't be expected to avoid e.g. importing prohibited content if the declaration that it has been refused classification has been obfuscated. A descriptive title such "Christchurch attacker's manifesto" and "video of live stream of Christchurch attack" would give sufficient clarity.

RECOMMENDATION 25: The eSafety Commissioner should refer all unclassified Abhorrent Violent Material for classification by the Classification Board. This should become a standard part of the process when new Abhorrent Violent Material is identified.

RECOMMENDATION 26: The eSafety Commissioner should refer the manifesto documents from the terrorist attacks in Halle, Poway and El Paso to the Classification Board as was done in the case of Christchurch.

RECOMMENDATION 27: The eSafety Commissioner should announce when terrorist related material that has a risk of going viral has been given an RC rating and should advise the public to report any online copies to the eSafety Commissioner and not to share it.¹⁵⁹

RECOMMENDATION 28: In Australia consideration should be given to creating a civil penalty regime for sharing material classified RC that promotes terrorism. Suitable exemptions should apply for those acting reasonably and in good faith for the purpose of journalism, scientific research or law enforcement.

RECOMMENDATION 29: The Classification Board should restore the previous tool that allowed more detailed interrogation of Classification Board decisions, specifically, it should allow all decisions in a given period for a particular classification to be listed.

RECOMMENDATION 30: The Classification Board should ensure either the title or a useful description is provided for material which is given an RC classification. This is necessary as the public can't comply with a ban if the banned content cannot be identified.

6.6 Civil Society Action: Online Hate Prevention Institute

In addition to this in-depth report the Online Hate Prevention Institute completed a confidential report on November 24th which we shared with government and impacted technology companies. In that report we identified a range of sites hosting material related to the Halle attack. All of the material was accessible from Australia. It included a copy of the video, still available at this time, and multiple copies of the manifesto documents. It also highlighted how search results were aiding access to this material.

After discussion with one of our contacts at Google we were asked to complete a removal request form. We did so and Google responded 3 days later. As discussed in the Google section, this resulted in the removal of links to two copies of the video and a request for further information in relation to the

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.esafety.gov.au/report>

copies of the manifesto, which we provided. More than two weeks later we believe this ticket is still open and we have not heard back.

We have also been in contact with the Office of the eSafety Commissioner and have urged them to refer the manifestos to the Classifications Board. Should the content be classified RC, which is the only possible outcome if it is referred, it will make it much easier for Google to remove the search results.

This report, prior to being released publicly, is being shared with many of the impacted technology companies as well as other experts and stakeholders. Our aim as an organisation is always to lend our unique expertise and be a critical stakeholder working with governments, industry and civil society to reduce the risk of harm from online hate and extremism. We thank all of those who have engaged with us in this process.

7 A Culture Leading to Violent Extremism: The Image Boards and /pol/

Image boards are online discussion forums with a particular focus on the use of images. They are an early Internet technology and at the time added a significant new capability for Internet users, the ability to easily share and discuss images online. Another feature of these forums was the anonymity of their users. This was benefit to these forums given the illegal nature of much of the content that was being discussed and shared. The image board concept originated in Japan but spread around the world.

In recent years there has been a shift in the image board culture as people set their sights beyond the online world. This has given rise to Anonymous first as a hacktivist group, then a larger political movement. It has also given rise to the Alt-Right, a social and political movement that seeks to alter the values of society and which stands in direct opposition to modern values of equality and human rights. Most worryingly, it has given rise to a sub-culture which incites and revels in violent extremism. It has created a global culture where hate and extremism can grow and fester.

The section begins with an introduction to the Japanese origins of the image boards. We then move into a discussion of 4chan, 8chan and the culture of /pol/.

7.1 Image Board Origins

Ayashii World (Japanese: Ayashii Warudo - あやしいワールド, Literally: Strange World) is the predecessor of the image boards and the first to introduce the anonymous discussion board culture.¹⁶⁰ It is also credited with introducing verbal memes, ascii art, and the first visual meme of online culture - the giko-neko ASCII art cat with a speech bubble whose message could be altered.¹⁶¹

Masayuki Shiba first operated Ayashii World in 1995 (between approximately August and December) through a dial-in Bulletin Board Service run by Nifty-Serve, then Japan's largest internet service

¹⁶⁰ "4chan - A Timeline History of Chan Imageboards", Know Your Meme, 20 May 2016, seen 2 November 2019 <<https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1123439-4chan>>; "A small history of Ayashii World", 9 February 2013 seen 2 November 2019 <<http://ayashiiworldhistory.blogspot.com/2013/02/a-small-history-of-ayashii-world-1.html>>; "Complete History of 4chan", seen 2 November 2019 <http://tanassin.info/wiki/Complete_History_of_4chan>; "2ch Chronicle", seen 2 November 2019 <https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/2ch_Chronicle>.

¹⁶¹ Ndee "Jkid" Okeh, "The Protochannel and the First Channel -- Ayashii World and Amezou World – The Grandparents of the Western Imageboard Culture", *Yotsuba Society*, 21 March 2011 seen 2 November 2019 <<http://yotsubasociety.org/ayashii-and-amezou/>>.

provider.¹⁶² It operated on the “home party” service which allowed only an ID, title, name, and a post with a length of up to 20 lines of text to be displayed.¹⁶³

This first version of Ayashii World focused on the computer game Kasumigaseki (霞ヶ関). Released by an anonymous computer programmer in August 1995,¹⁶⁴ the game was based on the Sarin gas terrorist attack on the Tokyo subway that March, an attack which killed 12 people and injured 5,000.¹⁶⁵ Players completed for a high score in the game by selecting the locations to place 5 Sarin gas canisters with the aim of harming as many people as possible; 10 points were awarded per death and 1 point per injury.¹⁶⁶

After closing for a time, then a brief revival as a “home party”, in August 1996 the board moved to the Internet using a free BBS service from a company called Digital Eden.¹⁶⁷ In the BBS system the one internet provider both hosted the content and provided their paying customers with access to it, meaning there was no anonymity. In the new Internet based system the connectivity and the online service were separated. Further, identification became optional and “the contributors usually did not indicate their names in the name field, so that the community became an anonymous forum”.¹⁶⁸ Ayashii World discussed images, including illegal content such as child exploitation material, but the service itself was technically incapable of hosting images and instead in their posts users would provide links to images which were hosted elsewhere.¹⁶⁹ Ayashii hosted a number of boards, among them *gesu* (Literally: “scum”), which was used to plan attacks against other sites in a similar manner to /b/ which later emerged on 4Chan.¹⁷⁰

The first true image board, Licentious Notice Board (aka LNB), was created in August 1997.¹⁷¹ It allowed images to be displayed in posts. LNB was initially online at <http://cgi.osk.3web.ne.jp/~fujinami/NoticeBoard.cgi>,¹⁷² and posts promoting it on other forums presented it as a place where anything, including illegal content, could be posted (as shown in Figure 17 and Figure 19 which are translated in Figure 18 and Figure 20).¹⁷³ By 1998 a wide range of forums were

¹⁶² “A small history of Ayashii World”, 9 February 2013 seen 2 November 2019

<<http://ayashiiworldhistory.blogspot.com/2013/02/a-small-history-of-ayashii-world-1.html>>.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid; “Programmer Shocks Internet with Subway Nerve Gas Game”, 26 October 1995, seen 2 November 2019 <<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1995-10-26-9510270293-story.html>>.

¹⁶⁵ “Tokyo subways are attacked with sarin gas”, History.com, 27 July 2019 seen 2 November 2019

<<https://www.history.com>this-day-in-history/tokyo-subways-are-attacked-with-sarin-gas>>

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ “A small history of Ayashii World”, 9 February 2013 seen 2 November 2019

<<http://ayashiiworldhistory.blogspot.com/2013/02/a-small-history-of-ayashii-world-1.html>>.

¹⁶⁸ Muneo Kaigo and Isao Watanabe, ‘Ethos in Chaos? Reaction to Video Files Depicting Socially Harmful Images in the Channel 2 Japanese Internet Forum’ (2007) 12(4) *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 1248, 1251.

¹⁶⁹ “A small history of Ayashii World”, 9 February 2013 seen 2 November 2019

<<http://ayashiiworldhistory.blogspot.com/2013/02/a-small-history-of-ayashii-world-1.html>>.

¹⁷⁰ Ndee “Jkid” Okeh, “The Protochannel and the First Channel -- Ayashii World and Amezou World – The Grandparents of the Western Imageboard Culture”, *Yotsuba Society*, 21 March 2011 seen 2 November 2019 <<http://yotsubasociety.org/ayashii-and-amezou>>.

¹⁷¹ Ibid;

¹⁷² https://web.archive.org/web/20070907213600/http://history.amebbs.com/1997/1997_0805_n002main-ame.htm

¹⁷³ <https://museum.scenecritique.com/lib/tamon/uralog9.html>;
<https://museum.scenecritique.com/lib/tamon/uralog10.html>

running the imageboard.cgi script and displaying images rather than linking to them became the norm.¹⁷⁴

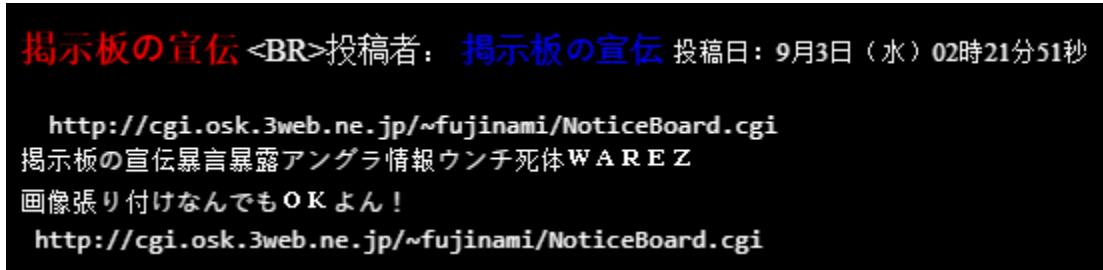


Figure 17 Original Japanese post promoting LNB on September 3, 1997



Figure 18 Google translate of a promotion post for LNB on September 3, 1997

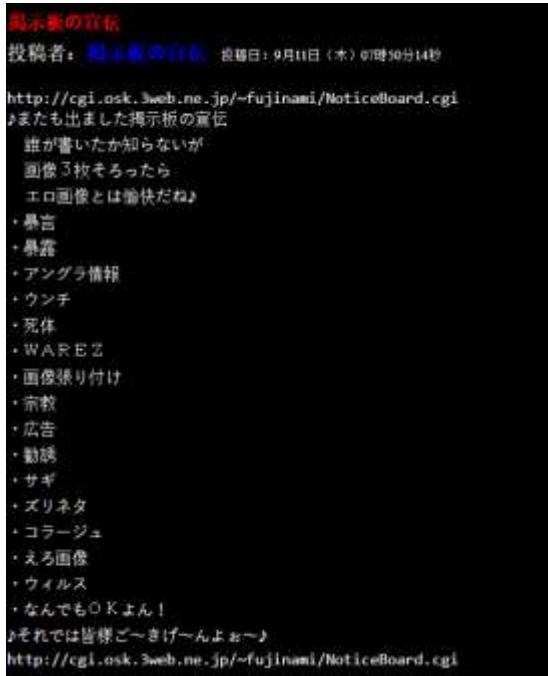


Figure 19 Original Japanese post promoting LNB on September 11, 1997

¹⁷⁴ ばるばら, “教科書には載らないニッポンのインターネットの歴史教科書 単行本” (2010) (Barubora, “Japan's Internet History Not Appearing in Textbooks”, (2010)) quoted and translated in “A small history of Ayashii World”, 9 February 2013 seen 2 November 2019 <<http://ayashiworldhistory.blogspot.com/2013/02/a-small-history-of-ayashii-world-1.html>>.



Figure 20 Google translate of a post promoting LNB on September 11, 1997

Ayashii World closed on 3 September 1998 in response to ongoing antagonism and the users divided among a range of other boards.¹⁷⁵ Amezou, created by Amezou-shi to host a collection of links pointing to these other boards, soon developed in its own forum.¹⁷⁶ It also introduced the style of conversation threading known as “floating threads” which is still used in image boards today.¹⁷⁷ In this style new threads appeared at the top of the list of topics, and within a thread new posts would appear at the bottom.¹⁷⁸ Amezou also introduced threads being bumped up the list of threads when they received a reply, unless users “sage” them to prevent this. It is described as the First Channel.¹⁷⁹

In 1999 trolls engaged in a significant campaign of vandalism against Amezou,¹⁸⁰ spamming it in a manner that cluttered the discussion threads making it unreadable.¹⁸¹ Violent threats were also made against the owner,¹⁸² and there were rumours they originated with the Yakuza, the Japanese crime syndicate.¹⁸³ Amezou-shi responded by closing the Amezou forum and calling on others to use his code and establish new image boards.¹⁸⁴

Hiroyuki Nishimura, a user of Amezou and at the time a student at the University of Central Arkansas, responded to the challenge.¹⁸⁵ On the 30 May 1999 using the code provided by Amezou he launch the image board Ni-Channeru (Literally: 2 Channel, or Channel 2) which drew in a significant part of the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Muneyuki Kaigo and Isao Watanabe, ‘Ethos in Chaos? Reaction to Video Files Depicting Socially Harmful Images in the Channel 2 Japanese Internet Forum’ (2007) 12(4) *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 1248, 1251.

¹⁷⁷ Ndee “Jkid” Okeh, “The Protochannel and the First Channel -- Ayashii World and Amezou World – The Grandparents of the Western Imageboard Culture”, *Yotsuba Society*, 21 March 2011 seen 2 November 2019 <<http://yotsubasociety.org/ayashii-and-amezou/>>.

¹⁷⁸ Muneyuki Kaigo and Isao Watanabe, ‘Ethos in Chaos? Reaction to Video Files Depicting Socially Harmful Images in the Channel 2 Japanese Internet Forum’ (2007) 12(4) *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 1248, 1251.

¹⁷⁹ http://tanasi.info/wiki/Complete_History_of_4chan

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ndee “Jkid” Okeh, “The Protochannel and the First Channel -- Ayashii World and Amezou World – The Grandparents of the Western Imageboard Culture”, *Yotsuba Society*, 21 March 2011 seen 2 November 2019 <<http://yotsubasociety.org/ayashii-and-amezou/>>.

¹⁸² Ibid

¹⁸³ “A small history of Ayashii World”, 9 February 2013 seen 2 November 2019

<<http://ayashiiworldhistory.blogspot.com/2013/02/a-small-history-of-ayashii-world-1.html>>.

¹⁸⁴ Ndee “Jkid” Okeh, “The Protochannel and the First Channel -- Ayashii World and Amezou World – The Grandparents of the Western Imageboard Culture”, *Yotsuba Society*, 21 March 2011 seen 2 November 2019 <<http://yotsubasociety.org/ayashii-and-amezou/>>.

¹⁸⁵ Ndee “Jkid” Okeh, “2ch History”, Aug 21, 2014 seen 2 November 2019

<<https://github.com/bibanon/bibanon/wiki/2ch-History>>

former Amezou audience.¹⁸⁶ It is named after the television station Channel 2 in the Kanto region of Japan, one of seven stations broadcast via VHF in the region, but is also a play on words as it was the second board for many after Amezou.¹⁸⁷

2channel soon “became not only the largest Japanese-language anonymous forum; but the definition of the Japanese Internet”.¹⁸⁸ One thing that set 2Channel apart is that despite still being a Japanese image board, it was hosted in the United States and was therefore beyond Japan’s stricter regulation of online content.¹⁸⁹ Post on 2channel included “racism and outright hatred toward society” through to criminal activity which ranges from leaked information on college entrance examinations to advertisements for murder.¹⁹⁰ Another use was to view “illegal or morally questionable violent content” given strict Japanese censorship of such content when it involves real people.¹⁹¹

A particular insight into 2channel can be seen in research into the forums response to the 27 October 2004 beheading of Japanese national Shoei Koda in Iraq by al-Qaida. 2channel users shared images and video of the beheading, spread of fake news about the incident, promoted clickbait posts with link they falsely claiming led to the video, and trolled new users to 2channel looking for the material and who were tricked into revealing their IP address.¹⁹² Empirical data over 5 threads and multiple days shown a high level of: anticipation of seeing the video, “banter” about Koda, neutral opinions and comments, information provision, and verification of information.¹⁹³ At the end of monitoring period, once the video and news of Koda’s death was verified, there was a high degree of anxiety/fear about the execution video, mourning over his death and discussions about terrorism, war and politics, as well as an extremely high level of traffic to download the video.¹⁹⁴ Debate in the forum led to further discussion about the sharing of the execution video itself and moderation by the user community to limit or stop the spread of the video. The authors of the study noted how “postings expressing remorse and attempting moderation swelled in frequency and ultimately predominated” while anti-social postings decreased in face of the large number of posts promoting moderation.¹⁹⁵ The results show that even in an anonymous Internet forum, positive social norms can be established and have social impact but in the absence of that social pressure anti-social behaviour can dominate.

By August 2001 traffic to 2channel had grown so large the site was struggling to cope.¹⁹⁶ Two different approaches were taken, one by a sub-community of coders who sought to increase the efficiency of the

¹⁸⁶ http://tanasiin.info/wiki/Complete_History_of_4chan; Muneo Kaigo and Isao Watanabe, ‘Ethos in Chaos? Reaction to Video Files Depicting Socially Harmful Images in the Channel 2 Japanese Internet Forum’ (2007) 12(4) *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 1248, 1251.

¹⁸⁷ Ndee “Jkid” Okeh, “2ch History”, Aug 21, 2014 seen 2 November 2019

<<https://github.com/bibanon/bibanon/wiki/2ch-History>>

¹⁸⁸ https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/2ch_Chronicle

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Muneo Kaigo and Isao Watanabe, ‘Ethos in Chaos? Reaction to Video Files Depicting Socially Harmful Images in the Channel 2 Japanese Internet Forum’ (2007) 12(4) *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 1248, 1254.

¹⁹¹ Ibid 1255.

¹⁹² Ibid 1259-1260.

¹⁹³ Ibid 1261.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 1262

¹⁹⁶ Ndee “Jkid” Okeh, “2ch History”, Aug 21, 2014 seen 2 November 2019

<<https://github.com/bibanon/bibanon/wiki/2ch-History>>

code which ultimately reduced the load associated with some scripts by 90%, and the other by those who sought to create a second image board to spread the load.¹⁹⁷ The original 2channel continued to operate, now alongside a new forum.¹⁹⁸

The new forum, also created by Hiroyuki Nishimura, was called Futaba channel (Literally: two leaves channel). It was established at 2chan.net and featured a graphic of a small plant with 2 leaves as its logo. For the first time in the channel boards, it also integrated the use of images.¹⁹⁹ It was Futaba which first created the board /b/ for posting random content.²⁰⁰

These Japanese boards all contributed to the creation of both the technology and the online culture that exists today. The desire to engage in anonymous discussion free of the need for cultural or political correctness is part of the DNA of the original Japanese boards and remains part of the culture across image boards in all languages today. The Japanese online sub-culture moved into the English-speaking world and indeed became a global sub-culture with the creation of 4chan and a range of successor image boards. These boards developed their own culture while maintaining an appreciation for the Japanese online sub-culture from which they had grown. The use of anonymity on the image boards to allow not only politically incorrect speech, but to enable illegal activity and the sharing material related to violent extremism has continued and spread with the image boards themselves.

7.2 The Rise of 4Chan

There were English language forums in the United States, but most required registration and email verification, lacking the anonymity of the Japanese boards.²⁰¹ They also lacked the “floating threads” which had been so successful on the Japanese boards. The features of the Japanese image boards were brought to the English language Internet audience with the creation of 4chan in 2003.

Founded by 15-year-old Christopher Poole in 2003, 4chan is an English language image board based on the code from the Japanese 2chan site. Its early growth was due to an exodus of users to 4chan from the forum ‘somethingawful.com’. Although originally intended for English-speaking fans of anime and other aspects of Japanese culture, 4chan’s scope rapidly expanded to encompass a wide range of topics.

By 2010 4chan was the 800th most popular Internet site globally according to Alexa and attracted around 8.2 million unique visitors a month.²⁰² By October 2016 it had climbed to the 573rd most popular site and was attracting 27 million unique monthly visitors.²⁰³ Today the site 27.7 million users,²⁰⁴ but has dropped to the 219,478 position in Alexa.²⁰⁵ According to statistics presented for potential advertisers,

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ In October 2017 2channel was rebranded 5chan and moved to 5chan.net.

https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/2ch_Chronicle

¹⁹⁹ http://tanassinn.info/wiki/Complete_History_of_4chan

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Muneo Kaigo and Isao Watanabe, ‘Ethos in Chaos? Reaction to Video Files Depicting Socially Harmful Images in the Channel 2 Japanese Internet Forum’ (2007) 12(4) *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 1248, 1252.

²⁰² Josh Horwitz, “Hate speech factory 4chan is dying, and Twitter and Reddit should be paying attention”, Quartz, 4 October 2016 <<https://qz.com/799632/hate-speech-factory-4chan-is-dying-and-twitter-twtr-and-reddit-should-be-paying-attention/>>.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ <http://www.4chan.org/advertise> 3 November 2019

²⁰⁵ <https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/4chan.com> see 3 November 2019

the site's average audience predominantly male (about 70%) and in the age range of 18-34.²⁰⁶ Australia makes up 5% of 4chan's audience and is the 4th largest source of visitors to the site by country after the USA (47%), UK (8%) and Canada (6%).²⁰⁷ Adjusted for population, of then 10 countries with the most visitors to 4chan Australian engagement (5.50%) is exceeded only by that of Sweden (5.54%) and significantly higher than the United States (3.98%).

4chan provided the foundation for a great deal of popular culture which spread across the Internet and occasionally offline, while at the same time maintaining a "culture of abuse". Among the positive contributions of 4chan to popular culture are the modern concept of a meme,²⁰⁸ LOLCats,²⁰⁹ and the Anonymous movement.²¹⁰ Negative contributions to online culture coming from 4Chan including encouraging suicides,²¹¹ coordinating extreme harassment,²¹² and initially hosting the misogyny that led to Gamergate.²¹³ 4chan has received sporadic bursts of high-profile media attention, usually for its negative impact.

4chan has always cultivated a "too toxic to endure" culture steeped in sarcasm and irony that users claim is intentionally designed to confuse and shock new visitors. This culture was deployed as a tool for excluding certain social groups from participation and establishing subcultural boundaries and signposting group identity. One of the boards within 4chan, however, took this to a new level. The /pol/ board was regularly presented as a "containment zone", a place within the 4chan community to quarantine behavior that was too toxic even for the rest of 4chan.

7.3 /pol/ the "Politically Incorrect" Board and its Evolving Antisemitism

The "politically incorrect" forum known for short as /pol/ can be found on 4chan, 8chan, and a range of other boards. The promotion of Nazism, racism, and xenophobia in general are popular themes on the board, and traditionally would continue only until someone started to take it seriously, before the mob would then turn on them. In recent years, however, that has changed.

/pol/-users are responsible for a range of actions that gained widespread media attention. They turned Microsoft's self-learning Twitter bot into a Hitler loving racist.²¹⁴ They manipulated the media into believing there was a boycott of Star Wars on the grounds of the cast being too racially diverse and not 'white enough'.²¹⁵ They spent years trolling cartoonist Ben Garrison, turning his political cartoons into pro-Nazi and antisemitic propaganda, and were involved in the efforts to turn an antisemitic image into

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ>

²⁰⁹ <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/lolcats>

²¹⁰ <https://resources.infosecinstitute.com/a-history-of-anonymous/>

²¹¹ <https://www.dailydot.com/news/4chan-stephen-house-fire-livestream/>

²¹² <https://gawker.com/5589721/the-art-of-trolling-inside-a-4chan-smear-campaign>

²¹³ <https://www.vox.com/2014/9/6/6111065/gamergate-explained-everybody-fighting>

²¹⁴ Abby Ohlheiser, "Trolls turned Tay, Microsoft's fun millennial AI bot, into a genocidal maniac", Washington Post, 26 March 2016 seen 2 November 2019 <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/03/24/the-internet-turned-tay-microsofts-fun-millennial-ai-bot-into-a-genocidal-maniac/>>; <https://splinternews.com/who-turned-microsofts-chatbot-racist-surprise-it-was-1793855848>

²¹⁵ https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/vv74ay/how-trolls-fooled-the-media-with-boycottstarwars

a part of everyday Internet culture.²¹⁶ They are responsible for the spread of extremist slogans such as “Gas the kikes. Race war now” to a range of other platforms.²¹⁷

While it used to be hard to know what was serious and what was a result of /pol/lacks (users of /pol/) trolling each other, the extreme views which started as a parody became an earnest belief within the /pol/ community. This normalisation of neo-Nazism on /pol/ was in part the results of a campaign by neo-Nazis from Stormfront who sought to convert the /pol/acks to their ideology.²¹⁸ The rise of the alt-right also had a significant impact and /pol/ has become ground zero for a movement of “red-pilling”.

The red-pill metaphor is a reference to a plot device featured in the 1999 film, *The Matrix*.²¹⁹ In the film the rebel leader Morpheus offers the main character, Neo, the choice of taking a red pill which will break him out of the artificial reality in which he is living and allow him to see the world as it is. Neo is also offered the choice of taking the blue pill, which will allow him to continue living in the false but comfortable reality that has been constructed for him. The term is frequently used across alt-right platforms as a means of distinguishing between a perceived informed minority (the red-pilled), and an ignorant majority (the blue-pilled). *Rolling Stone Magazine* explains how Andrew Oneschuk, who shot his two roommates at close range, had been convinced “through an intricate online world, that everything they’d ever learned was, essentially, a lie”.²²⁰ Starting on /pol/ but spreading through the Alt-Right more generally, the idea of being red-pilled or “woke”²²¹ is to reject the messages and values taught by society. The views that replace this are based on conspiracy theories, racism, misogyny and the promotion of white supremacy.

Antisemitism has always been present on 4chan and was a part of /pol/ since /pol/’s inception in 2011 [see Figure 5].²²² Afterall, what could be more politically incorrect than claiming to support Nazism? This initial promotion of antisemitism was an attempt to cause shock and use the anonymity of the online forum to defy the norms of offline society. There was no particular malice towards Jews, instead the focus was on jokes and pranks expressed ironically to troll others.

²¹⁶ <https://ohpi.org.au/the-antisemitic-meme-of-the-jew/>

²¹⁷ Janet Reitman, “All-American Nazis”, Rolling Stone Magazine, 2 May 2018
<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/all-american-nazis-628023/>

²¹⁸ Janet Reitman, “All-American Nazis”, Rolling Stone Magazine, 2 May 2018
<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/all-american-nazis-628023/>

²¹⁹ Nagle 2016, p. 68

²²⁰ Janet Reitman, “All-American Nazis”, Rolling Stone Magazine, 2 May 2018
<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/all-american-nazis-628023/>

²²¹ Warwick & Lewis 2017, p. 29

²²² https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:4chan_-pol_-logo.png#filehistory



Figure 21: The unofficial board logo/symbol for /pol/ underscores the recurring theme of Nazism on /pol/ boards.

An example of how Holocaust denial was originally promoted as a joke on 4chan was the “Dub the Dew” raid in 2012 where 4chan users manipulated an online poll used to name the new Mountain Dew drink.²²³ Users were encouraged to “get all the Hitler and gushing granny names into the top 20”, resulting in the name “Hitler did nothing wrong” being voted to the #1 spot, with a variety of vulgar but not antisemitic names making up the rest of the top ten. The juxtaposition of a Holocaust denial name with other vulgar, but not antisemitic names indicates the top name was chosen to maximise the controversy of the incident, rather than to actually promote the idea of Holocaust denial.

Over time /pol/ has been taken over by neo-Nazis and its culture has changed from one that was ironically racist, with antisemitism being a part of that, to one where violence against Jews is not just advocated, but live streamed for the /pol/ community’s entertainment.

7.3.1 Antisemitic Alterations to Ben Garrison Cartoons

Another source of antisemitic material on /pol/ took the form of pro-Nazi and antisemitic cartoons created by as a result of users altering libertarian cartoons created by cartoonist Ben Garrison. Where the original cartoons aimed at targets like big government, the banks and drug companies, the altered versions shifted the target to Jews. Garrison has been described as the Internet’s most trolled cartoonist,²²⁴ and was once described by the Alt-Right’s Milo Yiannopoulos as “probably the most trolled man in internet history”.²²⁵

The trolling of Ben Garrison started in 2011 and coincided with the decline of /b/’s position of cultural centrality on 4chan, and the creation of /pol/. Fake Ben Garrison cartoons were a part of the culture that emerged on /pol/ right from the start. Whenever a new cartoon was released by Garrison, 4chan-users would race each other to see who could alter the cartoon into something antisemitic. The collective investment in these endeavours by 4chan-users, as manifest in the countless threads

²²³ <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/events/dub-the-dew>

²²⁴ David Blumenstein, “The Internet’s Most Trolled Cartoonist”, The Nib, 2 June 2015 <<https://thenib.com/the-internet-s-most-trolled-cartoonist-91a92d9b7585>>;

²²⁵ Milo Yiannopoulos, “Trolls will save the world”, Breitbart, 20 August 2016 <https://www.breitbart.com/social-justice/2016/08/20/trolls-will-save-world/>

dedicated to the cause, tapped into a kind of cultural crucible. On 4chan, only the most memorable productions will endure over time, because all ‘inferior’ productions are almost immediately displaced and deleted in the wake of the exceptionally fast pace in which content is posted and subsequently deleted on 4chan (cite). Consequently, whatever antisemitic material was produced first had to successfully endure this subcultural trial by fire, and would typically resonate with a wide audience, and could then be spread to multiple online forums and image hosting sites. The spread of the altered cartoons produced on 4chan was so extensive that they displaced the originals in online searches for Ben Garrison cartoons.²²⁶

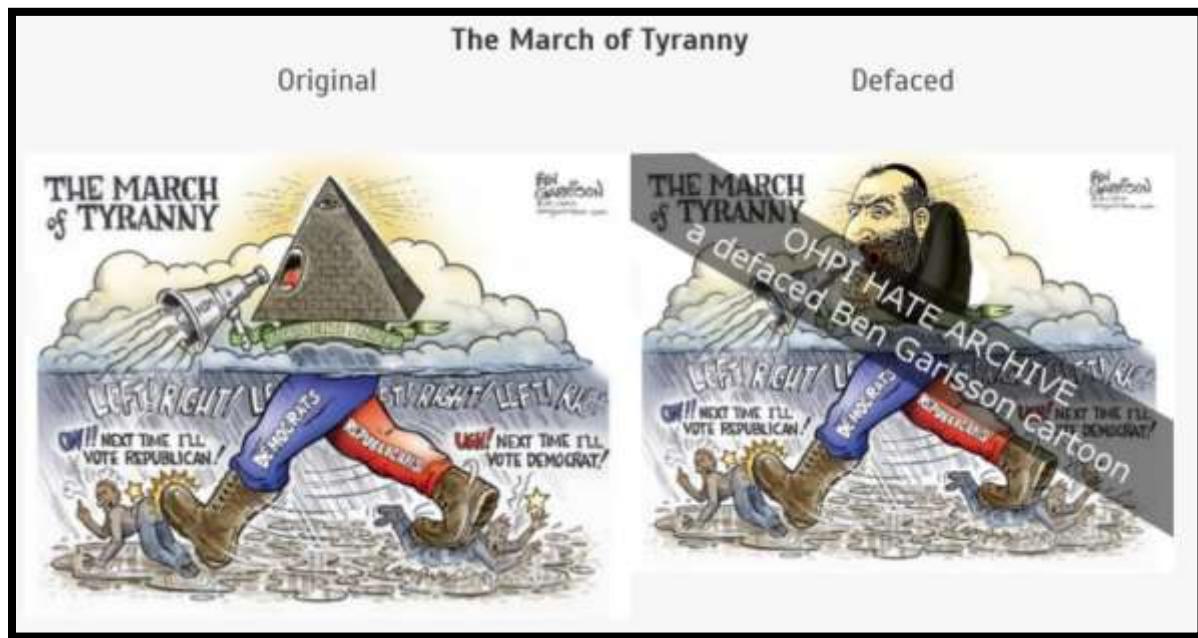


Figure 22 Original Ben Garrison cartoon [left] alongside a defaced version using the Antisemitic Meme of the Jew [right].

Garrison himself was also targeted, mostly by users on /pol/.²²⁷ His image was photoshopped into a Nazi uniform and paired with fake biographical details. He was given the nickname “Zyklon Ben”, after the Zyklon B gas used to murder Jews at Auschwitz,²²⁸ along a range of other names that sought to promote him as a hardcore Nazi. The “Zyklon Ben” name itself goes back as early as August 17 2011.²²⁹ A page dedicated to this entirely fictional Ben Garrison was created at Encyclopedia Dramatica in April 2013.²³⁰ Despite the significant harm they caused him many on /pol/ genuinely liked the original versions of his cartoons and regularly said so. A comment posted to Garrison’s blog in November 2016 says “/pol/ here, we miss having you around, Ben... It is all in good fun that the edits are made... This may seem odd, but for the most part /pol/ has great respect for you. You produce great cartoons with ideas that challenge the establishment. Don’t be bothered by the edits, ‘Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery’ right? And

²²⁶ <https://ohpi.org.au/4chans-pol-and-the-trouble-with-dean/>

²²⁷ <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/people/ben-garrison>

²²⁸ Emma Grey Ellis, “The Alt-Right Found Its Favorite Cartoonist—and Almost Ruined His Life”, Wired, 19 June 2017 <<https://www.wired.com/story/ben-garrison-alt-right-cartoonist/>>.

²²⁹

²³⁰ <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/people/ben-garrison> seen 4 November 2019.

come back and visit us again! Ave Zyklon Ben!”²³¹ The comment appears sincere, but also demonstrates a complete inability to understand why a person might object to being associated with Nazism. This can be seen in the idea altered copies of Ben’s work, with his name on it, which promote Nazism are seen as nothing more than fun. It can also been in the sign off, “Ave Zyklon Ben”, both respectful and entirely blind to harm of the “Zyklon Ben” invention on the real Ben Garrison.

Contemporaneous evidence shows the editing started at 4chon sometime between May and August 2011.²³² Encyclopedia Dramatica claims the first edits occurred on the 4chon.net’s Nazi board “/n/”.²³³ This information tallies with comments OHPI observed after releasing a report which covered Ben Garrison cartoons in 2014.²³⁴ Garrison became aware of the altered cartoons and responded in May 2011 with a blog post in which stating that someone was editing his cartoons by “adding in offensive Jewish stereotypes” while leaving his name on the images.²³⁵ He reassured any readers of his blog that his “target” was the “elite international banking system and the Federal Reserve. NOT Jews.”²³⁶ Garrison himself later stated that his wife found the source of the altered cartoons on 4Chan’s /b/.²³⁷ While /b/ was not the first to alter a Garrison cartoon, it was a source of the continued trolling, partly in response to his blog post.

Further information on the trolling of Ben Garrison can be seen in OHPI 2014 report,²³⁸ and has also been covered in subsequent briefings.²³⁹

7.3.2 The Antisemitism Meme of the Jew

One common theme of antisemitism is what we call the “Antisemitic Meme of the Jew” which /pol/ refers to as “The



Figure 23 Antisemitic Meme of the Jew

²³¹ <https://grrrgraphics.wordpress.com/grrrgraphics-disclaimer/>

²³² <https://web.archive.org/web/20141216074009/http://mpcdot.com/forums/topic/3026-ben-garrison-appreciation-thread/> - Original post 18 August 2011

²³³ https://encycopediadramatica.rs/Ben_Garrison/JIDF_Version, seen 4 November 2019.

²³⁴ Andre Oboler, *The Antisemitism Meme of the Jew* (Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2014) <<https://ohpi.org.au/the-antisemitic-meme-of-the-jew/>>

²³⁵ <https://grrrgraphics.wordpress.com/2011/05/22/grrr-alert/>

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Allum Bokhari, “Ben Garrison: How The Internet Made A Fake White Supremacist”, Breitbart, 22 December 2015 seen 3 November 2019 <<https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2015/12/22/ben-garrison-how-the-internet-made-a-fake-white-supremacist/>>

²³⁸ Andre Oboler, *The Antisemitism Meme of the Jew* (Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2014) <<https://ohpi.org.au/the-antisemitic-meme-of-the-jew/>>

²³⁹ <http://ohpi.org.au/ben-garrison-on-trolls/>

Happy Merchant” meme (see Figure 23).²⁴⁰ It is a cartoon stereotype of a Jewish man with a black beard, long hooked nose, hunched back, crooked teeth and hands being wrung in glee. Our report into this meme covers its racist origins, including its creation by a white supremacist cartoonist and its use online in neo-Nazi circles, as well as its popularisation by 4chan and an attempt to integrate it into mainstream online culture through the *Know Your Meme* website.²⁴¹ New investigative research has revealed the author to be Nick Bogus and has shown that the cartoon has been circulating online since at least 2001.²⁴²

The meme is known for featured in antisemitic comics strips and being edited for a range of different contexts online. A recent report by the Network Contagion Research Institute covers how /pol/ creates large quantities of merchant memes and disseminates them into other social media spaces.²⁴³

The image was integrated into the first edited Ben Garrison cartoon, and many subsequent ones. It has also infected other popular memes. Recent research “demonstrates numerous instances of the Happy Merchant infecting well-known and popular memes” with the authors noting how this infection “could serve, for instance, to make antisemitism more accessible and common”.²⁴⁴ Importantly this is not qualitative research, but a quantitative examination of the problem. An example of popular memes that have been infected with the antisemitic meme of the Jew and their spread through Twitter can be seen in Figure 24.

Through memes, and this one in particular in its many flavours, antisemitism is spread even by those who initially have very little antisemitic intent and see it as simply part of the online sub-culture. Over time, however, this exposure creates a normalisation and social acceptability of antisemitism which is known as the antisemitism 2.0 effect.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰ Andre Oboler, *The Antisemitism Meme of the Jew* (Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2014)

<<https://ohpi.org.au/the-antisemitic-meme-of-the-jew/>>

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Joseph Bernstein, “The Surprisingly Mainstream History Of The Internet's Favorite Anti-Semitic Image”, BuzzFeed News, 5 February 5, 2015 <<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/josephbernstein/the-surprisingly-mainstream-history-of-the-internets-favorite>>

²⁴³ <https://ncri.io/2018/09/06/a-quantitative-approach-to-understanding-online-antisemitism-part-3-meme-analysis/>

²⁴⁴ Joel Finkelstein, Savvas Zannettou, Barry Bradlyn, Jeremy Blackburn, “A Quantitative Approach to Understanding Online Antisemitism”, *arXiv e-prints*, September 2018, <https://arxiv.org/abs/1809.01644>, seen 3 November 2019.

²⁴⁵ Andre Oboler, ‘Online Antisemitism 2.0. “Social Antisemitism on the Social Web”’, *JCPA: Post-Holocaust and Antisemitism Series* (April 2008, No. 67) <<http://jcpa.org/article/online-antisemitism-2-0-social-antisemitism-on-the-social-web/>>

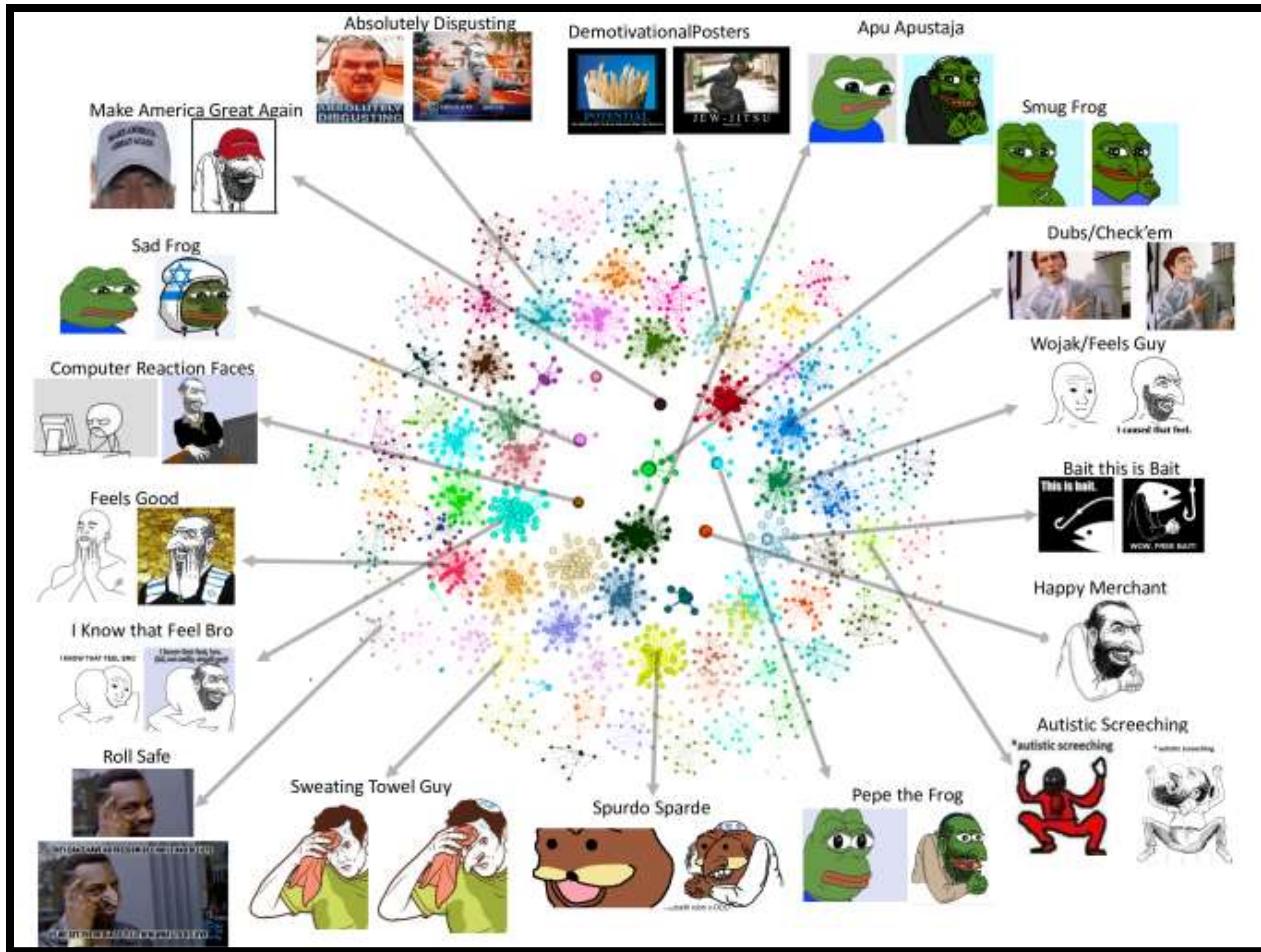


Figure 24 Penetration of the Antisemitic Meme of the Jew features into other meme templates²⁴⁶

7.3.3 A shift in /pol/'s antisemitism

There has been interest in /pol/ by neo-Nazis on Stormfront since at least July 2012.²⁴⁷ At that time the “almost completely unmoderated” nature of /pol/ was already noted as a plus for spreading neo-Nazi ideology.²⁴⁸ At this time there was push back on /pol/ to overt neo-Nazism.²⁴⁹

By January 2014, however, a long time stormfront user described /pol/ users as “strongly pro-WN [White Nationalism], pro-NS [National Socialism] or pro-libertarian” adding that “the whole culture of the board is ragingly anti-jew”,²⁵⁰ and that “there's a strong, almost overwhelming WN [White Nationalist] current on the /pol/ board”.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Image used with permission of the authors. Source: Joel Finkelstein, Savvas Zannettou, Barry Bradlyn, Jeremy Blackburn, “A Quantitative Approach to Understanding Online Antisemitism”, *arXiv e-prints*, September 2018, <https://arxiv.org/abs/1809.01644>

²⁴⁷ Post by returntrip, 17 July 2012 <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t900887/>

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Post by Blue Wolf, 24 January 2014 <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1019254-2/>

Some long-time users of both 4chan and Stormfront at this time felt “4chan members don’t genuinely believe in NS [National Socialism], separatism, or any WN [White Nationalism] ideology... most... Simply fancy the idea of acting ‘evil’ and ‘racist’”.²⁵² Others drew a distinction between /pol/ and 4chan more generally. One said 4chan was “a cesspool of corruption” (from a neo-Nazi perspective), but said “/pol/ on the other hand, has many people on there that are racially aware” but that it wasn’t contributing to the neo-Nazi cause beyond leading people to Stormfront.²⁵³ Others highlighted the difference between /b/ and /pol/ saying the former was “teenagers being racist for shock value” while the latter was “everything from promoting traditional values... to exposing Jews”.²⁵⁴ Another explained that “/pol/ has only recently become a European Nationalist site” that it was “expanding at an unprecedented rate in influencing other sites on the internet”.²⁵⁵ Another explained the influence of /pol/ explaining that, “/pol/ has made the notion of ridiculing Holocaust acceptable on the Internet with all the Ben ‘Zyklon B’ Garrison stuff and the like being funny as hell. You can now take more conservative stances without being bashed unreasonably, as well.”²⁵⁶

The infiltration by neo-Nazis from Stormfront did not go unnoticed. By February 2013 others on 4chan were already complaining about /pol/acks invading other boards and posting antisemitic and racist content that was completely off topic and simply disrupted other conversations. The post is about /pol/ but says refers to those from /pol/ not as /pol/acks, but as Stormniggers and Stormfags,²⁵⁷ derogatory terms for Stormfront users.

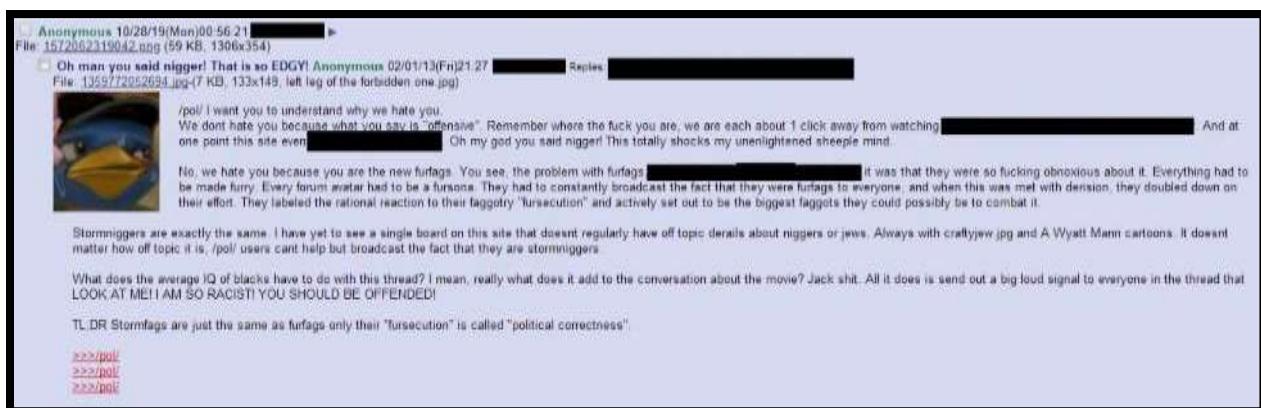


Figure 25 A 2013 post against /pol/ reposted in 2019

There were always Holocaust jokes, but as a result of the infiltration of neo-Nazis, Holocaust denial has become so regular on /pol/ a quick inspection immediately led to a post promoting a Holocaust denial documentary (see Figure 26). The post is titled “New Holocaust Documentary by Ryan Dawson” and provides a link to view the documentary. It is accompanied by a version of the Antisemitic Meme of the Jew.

²⁵² Post by Cyan Sky, 24 January 2014 <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1019254/>

²⁵³ Post by Remenersis, 5 February 2014 <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1019254-4/>

²⁵⁴ Post by Blue Wolf, 24 January 2014 <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1019254/>

²⁵⁵ Post by RedLightning, 23 August 2014, <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1019254-4/>

²⁵⁶ Post by Posen, 23 August 2014 <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1019254-4/>

²⁵⁷ <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=stormfag>



Figure 26 The Antisemitic Meme of the Jew used in a post promoting a 2019 Holocaust denial documentary on /pol/

The infiltration led to a significant cultural change between /pol/ and the traditional form of more casual antisemitism on 4chan. As a user on 4chan's QA recently explained (see Figure 27), on /b/ when people complained about antisemitic jokes they receive abuse or more jokes, on /pol/ the response is instead "text walls about how the Holocaust didn't happen". The poster explains, it "stops being humor when you put more effort into defending it than the people opposing it".

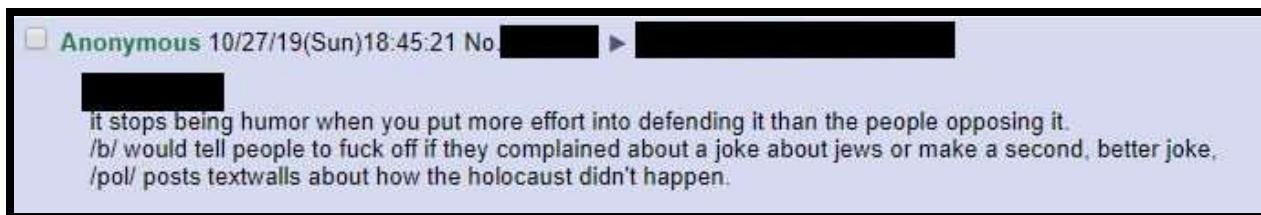


Figure 27 A QA poster on /pol/ going beyond humour

Even on QA, which usually sees very little infiltration from /pol/, a supporter of /pol/ quickly responded to this post by entered into a flame war and then a post saying their life would be "infinitely better when we can start killing you kikes in the streets". Comments like this directed at violence demonstrate the toxic culture which as emerged within /pol/ and signal a significant shift from the antisemitism of earlier years.



Figure 28 A QA response from a /pol/ supporter

There have been some threads on /pol/ seeking to push back against the takeover by neo-Nazis, but they have been largely unsuccessful. A thread in April 2018 asked "/pol/, can we kick out all the stormniggers and unironic racists? It's getting a bit too autistic here" (Figure 29).²⁵⁸ The poster later

²⁵⁸ <https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/167322687/>

explained, “There's a difference between ironic racism and screeching “OY VEY GAS THE KIKES 1488” about everything” (see Figure 30).²⁵⁹ Another user agreed saying it is felt a little too serious now, a third added “you realize that there is probably a reason it seems serious right?”.²⁶⁰ Other responses accuse the poster of being a Jew, various posts share antisemitic and pro-Nazi material. An Australian poster ridiculed the idea of changing the culture on /pol/ and the original poster replied, quite unironically, “Stormfront thought they could, and they pulled it off” (see Figure 32). Part of the shift to greater extremism, however, is demonstrated in this thread by an image post which simply depicts a Jew (represented by the Antisemitic Meme of the Jew) being killed execution style (see Figure 31).



Figure 29 /pol/ April 2018 asking to get rid of the neo-Nazis



Figure 30 /pol/ post highlighting concern

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.



Figure 31 /pol/ post executing a Jew

Anonymous ID:B1kbuMqR Mon 09 Apr 2018 15:57:55 No.167328150 Report
Quoted By: >>167328199
>>167326194
how much of a sad cunt do you have to be to think you can change the mindset of pol

Anonymous ID:xD6xwMNf Mon 09 Apr 2018 15:58:37 No.167328199 Report
>>167328150
Stormfront thought they could, and they pulled it off.

Figure 32 Stormfront changed the culture of /pol/

In another thread calling for the neo-Nazi's to be kicked off /pol/ in November 2018 (see Figure 33), the poster starts their message with a caricature of a post by a neo-Nazi.²⁶¹ Another user picks up one line in the impersonation that says "hurr durr I'm going to go out and shoot a bunch of kikes and niggers" and dismisses it saying "name one time this has happened" (see Figure 34). Since this post was made there have been 4 such incidents as documented in this report. 2019 has marked a significant shift in the nature of /pol/ and therefore in the way it needs to be treated.

²⁶¹ <https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/191950533/>

/pol/ - Politically Incorrect • 4chan  Index • **NSFW** Ghost Gallery Stats

Search or insert post number



4MB, 400x300, hitlers legacy.gif

[View Same](#) [Google](#) [iqdb](#) [SauceNAO](#) [Trace](#) [!\[\]\(ce8e14a07bb3e90be1cada336480e9f6_img.jpg\)](#)

Stormnigger Problem Anonymous ID:ZSOOTdoc [50 / 22 / 40]
 Sun 04 Nov 2018 11:01:32 No.191950533 
[View](#) [Reply](#) [Original](#) [Report](#)

Quoted By: >>191950690 >>191950865 >>191951027 >>191951705
 >>191952179 >>191952305 >>191952455 >>191952864
 >>191953852 >>191953939 >>191956006 >>191956889
 >>191957613 >>191957641 >>191960251

>be stormnigger
 >"hurr durr I'm going to go out and shoot a bunch of kikes and niggers—I mean there's going to be a ((0099099(falseflag009))))))00) set up by the ((999090((KIKES)))()())00P) soon, watch the news!"
 >"shoots up synagogue/church"

>"OH MY HITLER! I KNEW IT! STORMFRONT AND /POL/ ARE ALWAYS RIGHT! GAS THE KIKES RACEWAR NOW!"
 >"Hello, /pol/ I am that ethnicity you have been brainwashed by other stormniggers to hate. I do this cartoonishly stereotypical thing every day and am actively seeking to personally kill you, every member of your family, your non-existent descendants and your family pet because you're the most bestest special race in the entire universe: White."
 >"REEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE! FUCKING [SLUR FOR ETHNIC GROUP] I'M GOING TO GO SHOOT UP A SYNAGOGUE/CHURCH/ BUILD EXPLOSIVES IN MY GARAGE TO KILL YOU!"
 >Hey! Join my retarded faggot larp! IT'S NOT A FORCED MEME! IF YOU THINK IT'S STUPID AND GAY YOU'RE A FAGGOT (((99000((KIKE)))099900OPPP))) (((99990000008((SHILL)))009000pp090)
 >"cough" unite the right 2.0 "cough" iotbw 2.0 "cough" #frightpower "cough"
 >REEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE! THESE DIDN'T FAIL! FUCK OFF KIKE!
 It's time to kick the stormniggers out of /pol/.

Figure 33 Call to kick neo-Nazis off /pol/ in November 2018

Anonymous ID:Xyj863Yy Sun 04 Nov 2018 12:10:40 No.191957641 
[Report](#)

Quoted By: >>191958515

>>191950533

>>"hurr durr I'm going to go out and shoot a bunch of kikes and niggers

name one time this has happened

Figure 34 Dismissal of the idea of real violence

7.4 Gamergate and the Rise of 8chan

'Gamergate' is a catchall for a series of events that consisted mainly of the harassment of female video-game journalists, but also represents a watershed moment in a large-scale online cultural revanchist campaign against political correctness, identity politics and various other so-called 'liberal agendas'.²⁶² Gamergate represented a critical juncture that contributed significantly to the unification and

²⁶² (Nagle 2017; Massanari 2017; Lyons 2017a; Flisfender 2018)

galvanisation of previously disparate social groups that would eventually unite under the banner of the ‘alt-right’,²⁶³ as discussed in the next section of this report.

Gamergate began in 2014 with the harassment of Zoe Quinn, a video game developer, after her ex-boyfriend wrote a blog post that, once amplified by Adam Baldwin’s commentary on the matter via his considerable Twitter following, attracted mainstream public attention. It was claimed that Quinn had cheated on her boyfriend in order to advance her career in the videogame industry.²⁶⁴ This precipitated a series of attacks on Quinn, including ‘doxing’, the dissemination of personal information online for malicious purposes (e.g., Quinn’s home address, phone number, office address and phone number etc.), along with the theft of compromising photographs, the fabrication of compromising photographs, and countless death and rape threats.²⁶⁵ This pattern of behaviour, more or less enhanced, was replicated and levelled against numerous prominent female figures in the videogame industry.²⁶⁶ Accompanying the slew of increasingly severe harassment campaigns was a conspiratorial and enduring dialogue about ‘journalistic ethics’ that seriously considered the possibility of organised, systemic and endemic female manipulation of game reviewers.²⁶⁷

Initially 4chan was used as a key staging ground to launch many of these abusive, hateful endeavours that were carried out and clearly attributed by name to ‘Gamergate’. The violent misogynistic harassment campaigns of gamergate eventually attracted so much attention from mainstream media and federal law-enforcement agencies that 4chan’s administrators banned even *mentioning* Gamergate (doing so is still grounds for a permanent ban from 4chan).²⁶⁸ This resulted in the migration of 4chan-users to the then relatively new splinter-chan known as 8chan.²⁶⁹

8chan was created by Fredrick Brennan in October 2013,²⁷⁰ in response to an increase in moderator activity on 4chan to crackdown on illegal content. It closely mirrors (and in many ways outright copies) 4chan, but is an independent site under different management and promotes itself as a “free-speech-friendly 4chan alternative”.²⁷¹ Faced with censorship on 4chan, those involved in Gamergate shifted on mass to 8chan where the misogynistic conspiracy theories were there spearheaded and endured prominently long after the 4chan ban. In fact, the banning of discussion of Gamergate on 4chan, fed 8chan’s exhortations of liberal censorship.²⁷² The fracture between the chans established some measure of animosity between the platforms, but this was somewhat bridged by the subcultural continuity provided by /pol/ as a dominant and consistent voice across the platforms. With its roots in the conspiracy, bigotry and hate of Gamergate, 8chan grew both larger and increasingly insular and hostile.

²⁶³ (Lyons 2017a, p. 8; Hawley 2017, pp. 43-48; Neiwert 2017, p. 213-215)

²⁶⁴ Powell 2017, p. 169

²⁶⁵ Powell 2017, p. 169

²⁶⁶ Nagle, Angela. *Kill All Normies : Online Culture Wars From 4Chan And Tumblr To Trump And The Alt-Right*, John Hunt Publishing, 2017.

²⁶⁷ Chess & Shaw 2015, p. 210

²⁶⁸ (Nagle 2017, p. 20)

²⁶⁹ (Neiwert 2017, pp. 235-236)

²⁷⁰ Ethan Chiel, “Meet the man keeping 8chan, the world’s most vile website, alive”, Splinter, 18 April 2016

<https://splinternews.com/meet-the-man-keeping-8chan-the-worlds-most-vile-websit-1793856249>

²⁷¹ <https://www.dailymotion.com/layer8/8chan-pedophiles-child-porn-gamergate/>

²⁷² Scolyer-Gray 2019, p.

Unable to cover the costs to keep it running, Brennan sold 8chan to US military veteran Jim Watkins in October 2014,²⁷³ but continued to run the site until he quit in 2016.²⁷⁴

8chan became a dedicated forum for misogyny and discussions of perceived widespread misandry, but also expanded beyond the gendered politics of Gamergate to focus on violent extremism directed at a host of targets guided by the socio-political agendas of /pol/'s subculture that dominates the site. The culture in turn was able to become more extreme due to 8chan's more extreme position on free speech.²⁷⁵ From its creation until the time it was closed on 16 September 2019, the /pol/ board on 8chan hosted a total of 13,575,873 posts and would usually have between 2,500 and 3,000 unique visitors during a 72 hour period.²⁷⁶

8chan is now widely known for hosting a far more radicalized iteration of /pol/-culture that has attracted considerable notoriety for its connections to various violent crimes and terrorism, including playing a large role in the Christchurch shootings and subsequent attacks in Poway and El Paso. By early 2019 Brennan had cut all ties with 8chan and after the mass shooting he went on a media blitz calling for the site he founded to be shutdown.²⁷⁷

7.5 Harnessing the Culture for Real Politics: The Rise of the Alt-Right

The culture of what became known as the Alt-Right in part grew out of the online culture in places like 4chan and 8chan, and in particular out of /pol/. This was not a grassroots political movement that emerged from the online culture, but rather a deliberate effort by political actors seeking to start a new movement to coopt the online culture, methods and community infrastructure to feed their growth.

The Alt-Right offered to take the political fantasies of some and trolling of others within the /pol/ subculture, and related right-wing online cultures on platforms like reddit, straight into real world politics. There is an overlap between the Alt-Right and these online sub-cultures, but the Alt-Right also including overt white nationalist and neo-Nazis who are not necessarily connected to this online subculture. While using online platforms as a source of material and recruitment, the Alt-Right doesn't support the sub-cultural ethos of anonymity, instead seeking to take their views mainstream so they can be spoken about openly.²⁷⁸ They shifting their activities to personal accounts on mainstream platforms, and when they were kicked off those platforms, onto a collection of alternative platforms such as Gab and Voat.²⁷⁹ Unlike the chans, the Alt-Right has leaders with public profiles and often a thirst for media attention.

²⁷³ <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/who-owns-8chan-jim-watkins-life-2019-8?r=US&IR=T>

²⁷⁴ "Fred Brennan on the rise and fall of his website 8chan", 7:30 Report on the ABC, 30 Sep 2019 Transcript: <https://www.abc.net.au/7.30/fred-brennan-on-the-rise-and-fall-of-his-website/11561968>

²⁷⁵ Ethan Chiel, "Meet the man keeping 8chan, the world's most vile website, alive", Splinter, 18 April 2016 <https://splinternews.com/meet-the-man-keeping-8chan-the-worlds-most-vile-websit-1793856249>

²⁷⁶ Congressional Supplemental Inquiries of 8chan, Submission to the Committee on Homeland Security, 25 September 2019, Page 2 https://d5e10168-1d62-4e43-8269-5d58035f234e.filesusr.com/ugd/62f5a3_72d0c2b98ca3433c82baec24e08625e9.pdf?index=true

²⁷⁷ "Fred Brennan on the rise and fall of his website 8chan", 7:30 Report on the ABC, 30 Sep 2019 Transcript: <https://www.abc.net.au/7.30/fred-brennan-on-the-rise-and-fall-of-his-website/11561968>

²⁷⁸ <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/10/11/16424576/europe-alt-right-nationalism-racism-trump-brexit>

²⁷⁹ <https://medium.com/dfrlab/alt-right-and-alt-social-media-4fa23eb2fb1>

7.5.1 Political origins

The term Alt-Right, or Alternative Right, is a term coined in 2008 in the title of a keynote address for the inaugural meeting of the H.L. Mencken Club.²⁸⁰ The Club was created as a forum for an “intellectual right” which felt it was being “quarantined” by more traditional conservatives.²⁸¹ The leadership of the club included several notable academic racists.²⁸² Paleoconservative political philosopher Paul Gottfried was the founder of the club, white supremacist Richard Bertrand Spencer the master of ceremonies for the inaugural meeting and anti-immigration activist Peter Brimelow delivered the keynote address.²⁸³ Spencer and Gottfried have been variously credited with coining the term “Alt-Right” at this meeting.

In 2010 Spencer founded the National Policy Institute and its online magazine “Alternative Right” with Paul Gottfried and Peter Brimelow as senior contributing editors.²⁸⁴ His stated aim was “to forge a new intellectual right-wing that is independent and outside the ‘conservative’ establishment”.²⁸⁵ This saw a generational shift not only in leadership but also in audience.

7.5.2 Harnessing the Online Subculture

The Alternative Right’s supporters were, according to Spencer, those who recognized the “uselessness of mainstream conservatism”, and were comprised of a younger demographic, often recent college graduates.²⁸⁶ The Alternative Right continued to be linked to white supremacism,²⁸⁷ but the audience now came from online sources, mainly online forums like 4chan and similar communities on Reddit and Twitter.²⁸⁸ The /pol/ community was naturally aligned to the Alt-Right and the Alt-Right presented itself as the red-pilled true reality.

The Alt-Right, as it has been manifesting online, is a combination of the traditional far-right, those just in it “for the lulz” looking for amusement, those disillusioned with mainstream politics and those seeking to capitalize on their grasp of online culture. From the neo-Nazi elements, conspiracy theories of Jewish media control and media dishonesty are a staple of the Alt-Right and efforts targeting the media and particularly Jewish journalists led to a significant rise in antisemitism during the US election campaign.²⁸⁹ While seeking to undermine the mainstream media, the Alt-Right have also been creating “parallel media institutions”,²⁹⁰ promoting alternative news.²⁹¹

²⁸⁰ <http://forward.com/news/national/348372/meet-the-jewish-paleoconservative-who-coined-the-term-alternative-right/>

²⁸¹ <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2008/11/26/prominent-racists-attend-inaugural-hl-mencken-club-gathering>

²⁸² <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2008/11/26/prominent-racists-attend-inaugural-hl-mencken-club-gathering>

²⁸³ <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2010/03/15/paleocon-starts-new-extreme-right-magazine>

²⁸⁴ <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2010/03/15/paleocon-starts-new-extreme-right-magazine>

²⁸⁵ <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2010/03/15/paleocon-starts-new-extreme-right-magazine>

²⁸⁶ <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alternative-right>

²⁸⁷ <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alternative-right>

²⁸⁸ <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alternative-right>

²⁸⁹ <http://forward.com/news/352133/twitter-gives-online-hate-speech-its-biggest-platform-why/>

²⁹⁰ https://www.buzzfeed.com/charliewarzel/the-right-is-building-a-new-media-upside-down-to-tell-donald?utm_term=.afOXA5Yqb#.ntoL7RYmk

²⁹¹ <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/12/19/what-happens-when-youre-mistaken-for-americas-leading-conspiracy-theorist>

7.5.3 Campaigning for Trump

/pol/ and the Alt-Right got behind Donald Trump in the 2016 election. A key symbol of this support became the use of Pepe the Frog. The Pepe cartoon character was created by Matt Furie in 2004 and became an exceptionally popular basis for a vast array of 4chan-memes, and eventually became a popular symbol used by prominent figures in the emergent ‘alt-right’ movement. By 2016, Pepe the Frog had acquired considerable notoriety.

The use of Pepe the Frog by /pol/, however, came first and while it had a multitude of subcultural meanings attached to it, some of them were blatantly antisemitic. Examples of Pepe dressed as a Nazi can be found as early as 2014 (see Figure 35).²⁹² Nazi-related Pepe images also spread to platforms such as Twitter,²⁹³ and Tumblr (Figure 36).²⁹⁴



Figure 35 This Pepe in a Nazi uniform can be seen as early as 2014

²⁹² Uploaded to <https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/816541-feels-bad-man-sad-frog> 23 August 2014

²⁹³ Pepe in Nazi uniform on Twitter, July 12 2015 https://twitter.com/Xx_Senpai_xX/status/620088820948598784

²⁹⁴ <https://premiumpepes.tumblr.com/post/116983043126/super-rare-skinhead-pepe>



Figure 36 Skinhead Pepe on Tumblr in April 2015

The association between Trump and Pepe was started on /pol/ by a Malaysian called artist called Maldraw on July 22, 2015.²⁹⁵ The original image featured Pepe with Trump hair at the US Border with Mexico (see Figure 37). Nazi Pepe, however, continued to be a regular feature on /pol/ around September and early October 2015 as seen in Figure 38, Figure 39 and Figure 40.

²⁹⁵ <http://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/48390660#48392652>; <http://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/89025240/>; <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/events/nazi-pepe-controversy>

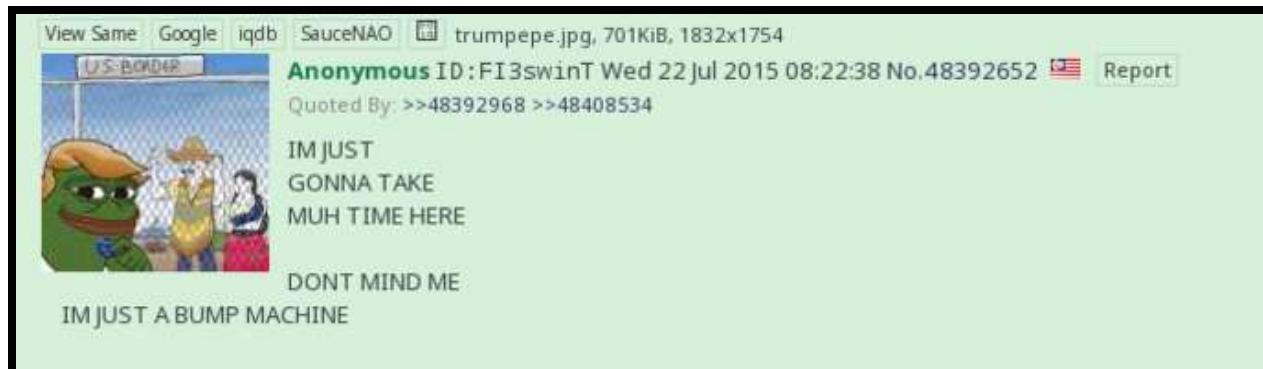


Figure 37 First appearance of Trump as Pepe



Figure 38 Pepe on /pol/ 3 September 2015



Figure 39 Pepe on /pol/ 5 October 2015



Figure 40 Pepe on /pol/ 5 October 2015

On the 13th of October 2015, Donald Trump re-tweeted a rendering of himself as Pepe the Frog along with the caption, “you can’t stump the trump” (Figure 41). This tweet created an indelible link between Trump and the emerging alt-right.²⁹⁶ Some scholars have suggested that Trump may not have understood the meaning or implications of his tweet, symbolically or otherwise.²⁹⁷ Regardless, from the perspective of many 4chan-users, Trump’s appropriation of Pepe signalled the gravity of 4chan’s cultural significance.



Figure 41 Candidate Trump retweeting an image of Pepe as President Trump

Although plausible that Trump was unaware of Pepe’s symbolic significance, the same cannot be said for others, who rapidly identified the meme as well as its associations with /pol/ and the alt-right.

²⁹⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/09/14/why-pepe-the-frogs-nazi-phase-doesnt-worry-his-creator/?utm_term=.afc8b7441709

²⁹⁷ Hawley (2017, p. 121)

Hillary Clinton attempted to make use of Trump's ties to Pepe and on the 12th of September 2016 published a full-page explainer on Pepe the Frog on her Campaign website (see Figure 42). Tweeted only days after Clinton posted a Pepe the Frog explainer on her Campaign website, the visibility of celebrities like Cher tweeting about the symbolic associations between Pepe and Nazism, as well as the alt-right (Figure 43), shows how this knowledge had entered mainstream awareness.

Donald Trump, Pepe the frog, and white supremacists: an explainer

That cartoon frog is more sinister than you might realize.

September 12, 2016 by Elizabeth Chan

Why is there a frog standing directly behind Trump?

That's Pepe. He's a symbol associated with white supremacy.

Wait. Really? White supremacy?

That's right.

Please explain.

Here's the short version: Pepe is a cartoon frog who began his internet life as an innocent meme enjoyed by teenagers and pop stars alike.

But in recent months, Pepe's been almost entirely co-opted by the white supremacists who call themselves the "alt-right." They've decided to take back Pepe by adding swastikas and other symbols of anti-semitism and white supremacy.

Figure 42 Clinton's pepe explainer from her website.



Figure 43 Cher tweeting on 16 September 2016 regarding the association between Pepe and neo-Nazism

The public response to Pepe was said to have "...delighted [4chan] denizens, who saw it as an example of 'meme magic' and a symbol of their significance" (Marwick & Lewis 2017, p. 22). It also increased Trump's interest in generating political capital by trolling mainstream politics. Trump implicitly endorsing politically incorrect trolling by using Pepe imagery as part of his more explicitly politically incorrect social media comments. This became part of a larger tactical effort creating a "spreadable spectacle" in which polarising views, populist rhetoric and extreme opinion were spread through the use of disinformation, appropriation of online culture and the mainstream media's willingness to perpetuate partisanship.²⁹⁸ /pol/ were ecstatic at Trump's eventual election win.²⁹⁹

Since the election, some close to both the Trump team and Spencer, like Charles C. Johnson, openly admit both to trolling and promoting conspiracy theories as a means of garnering votes.³⁰⁰ Milo Yiannopoulos, technology editor for Breitbart News and a key protagonist in the cyber-harassment campaign targeting women in the video game industry (Gamergate), as well as an anti-Islam campaigner, was another key figure in the Alt-Right.³⁰¹ The far-right website *The Daily Stormer* had a site banner which said it was the "The World's Most Visited Alt-Right Website".³⁰² Andrew Anglin who runs the site represents the neo-Nazi element in the Alt-Right and a link to the /pol/ base. He rejected a claim in the Washington Post that the Alt-Right's "goal is often offensiveness for the sake of offensiveness in the way that many young white men embrace" responding, "No it isn't. The goal is to ethnically cleanse White nations of non-Whites and establish an authoritarian government. Many people also believe that the Jews should be exterminated".³⁰³

7.5.4 Implosion

The Alt-Right was rapidly gaining steam until a National Policy Institute conference at the Ronald Reagan building in November 2016, just days after the election.³⁰⁴ At the event, after media were asked to leave, Spencer was caught on film raising his arm and proclaiming, "Hail Trump, hail our people, hail victory!" as several attendees responded with Nazi salutes.³⁰⁵ This open Nazism was the start of split in the Alt-Right,³⁰⁶ and the emergence of what became known as the "New Right",³⁰⁷ or as Richard Spencer and the Alt-Right call them, the "Alt-Lite".³⁰⁸ These are people who had been part of the Alt Right but rejected the overt association with white nationalism and neo-Nazism. As Lucian Wintrich explained, the term alt-right had been "adopted by libertarians, anti-globalists, classical conservatives, and pretty much

²⁹⁸ Paul Mihailidis, Samantha Viotty, "Spreadable Spectacle in Digital Culture: Civic Expression, Fake News, and the Role of Media Literacies in 'Post-Fact' Society" (2017) 61(4) *American Behavioral Scientist*.

²⁹⁹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/11/09/we-actually-elected-a-meme-as-president-how-4chan-celebrated-trumps-victory/?utm_term=.2f11f36c525e

³⁰⁰ <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/01/alt-right-trump-washington-dc-power-milo-214629>

³⁰¹ <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alternative-right>

³⁰² <http://www.dailydot.com/layer8/what-is-the-alt-right/>

³⁰³ <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/08/25/whose-alt-right-it-anyway>

³⁰⁴ <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/01/alt-right-trump-washington-dc-power-milo-214629>

³⁰⁵ <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/11/richard-spencer-speech-npi/508379/>

³⁰⁶ <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/01/alt-right-trump-washington-dc-power-milo-214629;>
<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-alt-right-branding-war-has-torn-the-movement-in-two>

³⁰⁷ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/alt-right-and-alt-lite-conservatives-plan-dueling-conservative-rallies-sunday-in-dc/2017/06/22/242d8de2-56bd-11e7-9fb4-fa6b3df7bb8a_story.html

³⁰⁸ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/alt-right-and-alt-lite-conservatives-plan-dueling-conservative-rallies-sunday-in-dc/2017/06/22/242d8de2-56bd-11e7-9fb4-fa6b3df7bb8a_story.html

everyone else who was sick of what had become of establishment conservatism” but when “Richard Spencer came along, throwing up Nazi salutes and claiming that he was the leader of the alt-right, he effectively made the term toxic” which caused others to “abandoned using it in droves”.³⁰⁹

The split became more evident in June 2017 with competing rallies in Washington DC. The “Freedom of Speech Rally” had been planned at the Lincoln Memorial, but after the Richard Spencer was announced as a surprise speaker, two other speakers, Jack Posobiec and Laura Loomer, pulled out and refused to share a platform with him.³¹⁰ Posobiec instead organised the “Rally Against Political Violence” to occur at the same time in front of the White House.³¹¹ The Alt-Lite, like the Alt-Right, embraces misogyny and xenophobia while opposing “the left” and “political correctness”.³¹² Where the Alt-Right promotes the supremacy of White Nationalism, the Alt-Lite, according to Gavin McInnes, promotes “civic nationalism” and the superiority of “Western values”.³¹³

The real implosion for the Alt-Right came with the *Unite the Right* rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, on the 11–12 of August 2017. The rally was organised by groups which included *The Daily Stormer* and the *National Policy Institute*.³¹⁴ The rally was intended to mark the shift of the Alt-Right from an online movement to political force in the national spotlight.³¹⁵ Hundreds of far-right activists attended along with a large counter protest.³¹⁶ Heather Heyer, a counter-demonstrator, was killed when a 22 year old a self-professed neo-Nazi drove his car into the crowd in what a judge described as “an act of terror”.³¹⁷ Heyer’s murder and the evidence of racism, hate and violence shocked America and led to a strong response with far-right protestors being identified, shunned by their families and in some cases fired from their jobs.³¹⁸ There was also a crackdown by social media companies making further organising more difficult.³¹⁹ The movement largely imploded.³²⁰

³⁰⁹ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-alt-right-branding-war-has-torn-the-movement-in-two>

³¹⁰ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-alt-right-branding-war-has-torn-the-movement-in-two>

³¹¹ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-alt-right-branding-war-has-torn-the-movement-in-two>

³¹² <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/from-alt-right-to-alt-lite-naming-the-hate>

³¹³ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-alt-right-branding-war-has-torn-the-movement-in-two>

³¹⁴ Dara Kerr, “White supremacist parties? Airbnb says not in my house”, Cnet, 9 August 2017

<<https://www.cnet.com/news/airbnb-says-no-white-supremacist-parties-in-my-house/>>;

³¹⁵ Christa Case Bryant and Patrik Jonsson, “Jason Kessler and the ‘alt-right’ implosion after Charlottesville”, 9 August 2018 seen 2 November 2019 <<https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2018/0809/Jason-Kessler-and-the-alt-right-implosion-after-Charlottesville>>.

³¹⁶ Cameron McWhirter, “A Year After Charlottesville, the Alt-Right Movement Frays”, The Wall Street Journal, 8 August 2018 <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-year-after-charlottesville-the-alt-right-movement-frays-1533720660>>.

³¹⁷ Gary Robertson, “Neo-Nazi gets second life sentence in murder of protester in Virginia”, Reuters, 15 July 2019 seen 3 November 2019 <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-virginia-protests/neo-nazi-gets-second-life-sentence-in-murder-of-protester-in-virginia-idUSKCN1UA0TV>>.

³¹⁸ Christa Case Bryant and Patrik Jonsson, “Jason Kessler and the ‘alt-right’ implosion after Charlottesville”, 9 August 2018 seen 2 November 2019 <<https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2018/0809/Jason-Kessler-and-the-alt-right-implosion-after-Charlottesville>>.

³¹⁹ Cameron McWhirter, “A Year After Charlottesville, the Alt-Right Movement Frays”, The Wall Street Journal, 8 August 2018 <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-year-after-charlottesville-the-alt-right-movement-frays-1533720660>>.

³²⁰ Christa Case Bryant and Patrik Jonsson, “Jason Kessler and the ‘alt-right’ implosion after Charlottesville”, 9 August 2018 seen 2 November 2019 <<https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2018/0809/Jason-Kessler-and-the-alt-right-implosion-after-Charlottesville>>; Cameron McWhirter, “A Year After Charlottesville, the Alt-Right

While there remains an overlap between people who would identify as Alt-Right or as neo-Nazis and some members of /pol/, the overlap is only partial. The Alt-Right took on a life of its own and shifted to other forums such as Gab, and while it struggles in the United States, evidence suggests it is growing in Europe.³²¹ The toxic culture on /pol/, meanwhile, is less coherent ideologically and more willing to encourage and celebrate violence for its own sake. The targeting of Christians in Halle in particular is inconsistent with the US style Alt-Right ideology. In /pol/ we see a culture in which the value of life is reduced and there is a presumption of a social acceptability to cause death for its own sake.

7.6 Terrorism on 8chan's /pol/

In 2019 /pol/ on 8chan was used three times to announce terrorist attacks and share the attacker's manifestos. In two of the attacks, links to livestreams on Facebook invited the /pol/ community to become an audience to the attack in real time. The attacks all had elements indicating a submergence in /pol/'s subculture. This raises questions about the responsibility of 8chan and /pol/ and whether the evidence of repeated serious harm is enough to justify action both in the United States and in other countries to prevent further harm. In this section the three attacks prior to Halle are discussed, but it should be remembered that the Halle attack also has references back to /pol/ on 8chan.

Movement Frays", The Wall Street Journal, 8 August 2018 <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-year-after-charlottesville-the-alt-right-movement-frays-1533720660>>.

³²¹ "How social media and tech fuel the far right, explained", TRT World, 4 September 2019 <<https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/how-social-media-and-tech-fuel-the-far-right-explained-29517>>.

7.6.1 Christchurch

On March 15th 2019, a terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, led to the death of 51 people. They were shot by a lone gunman who targeted two mosques during Friday prayers. The gunman, Brenton Harrison Tarrant, was an Australian citizen living in New Zealand.

The attack started with a post to /pol/ on 8chan (see Figure 44).³²² The post linked to a Facebook profile and said the poster would be live streaming an attack “against the invaders”. It said good bye in case he didn’t make it.

Given the high level of anonymity that usually exists, that combination of a link to a social media account, a threat of attack and a goodbye, should have triggered alarm bells for many, and should certainly have done so for any law enforcement officer who might have been monitoring the forums. However, since it was posted immediately before the attack, even if it were observed and action had been taken immediately, the exceptionally short notice limits the options afforded to any quick response counter-terrorism strategy.

The post provided links to a number of articles by Tarrant including his manifesto explaining his political motivations and seeking to answer any questions in case he didn’t survive. The attack, envisaged as a possible suicide attack, was designed to make him a martyr. He wanted his words to spread and become part of the cannon of far-right literature available online; The sort of literature that he himself had read, and the kind of material he had consumed on 8chan that had contributed to his radicalization.

A “board volunteer” for /pol/ (one of 5 moderators of the /pol/ board) removed the attackers post 2 hours and 49 minutes after it went up according to evidence given to Congress based on the server



Figure 44 Post on 8chan's /pol/ announcing the Christchurch attacks.

³²² <https://ohpi.org.au/new-zealand-terrorist-attack/>

logs.³²³ Little happened to 8chan after this first attack, despite the use of the platform to announce the attack and clear evidence of a connection to the online sub-culture, such as the reference to “stop shitposting” and “make a real life effort post”, in the message. The attack led to a significant international response including the creation of the Christchurch Call.

7.6.2 Poway

A little over a month after the mass casualties of Christchurch, on the 27th of April 2019, John Timothy Earnest entered a Synagogue in Poway California armed with an AR-15 type semi-automatic rifle, and opened fire.³²⁴ Earnest followed the same pattern of behavior seen in Christchurch. Earnest posted an announcement to 8chan’s /pol/ when his attack was imminent, along with links to a livestream on Facebook, an ‘open letter’ (manifesto) that he posted to two different sites, as well as a playlist Earnest thought featured “awesome tunes” that he appears to have intended to play during the attack over livestream [see Figure 24].

The screenshot shows a 8chan post from April 27, 2019, at 20:00:15. The post includes a password field, a link to global rules, and a link to the FAQ. The main content is an 'open letter' by 'ahem' Anonymous. It discusses the attack, mentions a Livestream link, and lists a playlist of songs. The post also includes several replies from other users.

File name: 24426db81e67b3d... jpg (90.68 KB, 760x136, 126:164, Browse the full size image... and the id.)
↳ "ahem" Anonymous 04/27/19 (Sat) 20:00:15 ID: 4e267a No. 13192921 [Watch Thread] [Show All Posts] ↳ 13192966
It's been real dudes. From the bottom of my heart thank you for everything. Keep up the infographic redpill threads. I've only been lurking for a year and a half, yet what I've learned here is priceless.
It's been an honor.
Livestream link is below as well as my open letter. Livestream will begin shortly.
https://www.facebook.com/john.earnest.96780
An open letter
Also, in case they take down my livestream too soon and you don't get to hear all the awesome tunes I had planned—here they are. Very meme-able songs—you should have no problem.
-Sleep John B by The Beach Boys
-Original Rockabilly Song
-Wings Run Theme from Halo Combat Evolved
-Warriors by Imagine Dragons
-The Last Stand by Sabaton
-Blow Me Away by Breaking Benjamin
Winged Hussars by Sabaton
Rose Tattoo by Dropkick Murphys
The Path (A New Beginning) from The Last of Us
Meme magic is real. May the LORD Christ be with you all.
Anonymous 04/27/19 (Sat) 20:04:34 ID: 7d87db No. 13192936
based
get the high score
Anonymous 04/27/19 (Sat) 20:05:31 ID: 2b1baed No. 13192938
-Moral spam
Anonymous 04/27/19 (Sat) 20:06:38 ID: 2b1baed No. 13192942

Figure 45 The Original Post (OP) made to 8chan immediately prior to the Poway shooting.

He shot and killed one woman and wounded the attending Rabbi, another man, and an 8-year-old girl. The assault was cut-short when Earnest’s weapon jammed after firing less than the 10-round capacity of one Smith & Wesson MP15 magazine, prompting a hasty retreat from the scene. Earnest was arrested soon after without incident, with police retrieving a combat utility vest outfitted with 5 spare fully loaded magazines. Clearly, Earnest had intended to carry out a much more deadly attack, considering he was armed with around 60 rounds in total. Earnest had also chosen the last day of Passover for his attack, indicating a conscious decision to find a time to attack when a larger than usual number of Jews were likely to be in attendance at the synagogue.

³²³ Congressional Supplemental Inquiries of 8chan, Submission to the Committee on Homeland Security, 25 September 2019, Page 3 https://d5e10168-1d62-4e43-8269-5d58035f234e.filesusr.com/ugd/62f5a3_72d0c2b98ca3433c82baec24e08625e9.pdf?index=true

³²⁴ <https://ohpi.org.au/san-diego-synagogue-attack/>

This foreshadows the logic behind the Halle attack, which was carried out on Yom Kippur, but this is only one of several linkages between the attacks, 8chan and /pol/. The reaction to the original post featured in the two reply-posts visible in Figure 45 includes several subcultural references attributable to the *chans and /pol/. “Based” is slang used on 4chan and 8chan to refer to things that are, put simply, ‘good’, but the term also has additional connotations, and is usually reserved as a means of ascribing (roughly) attributes of excellence to individuals. “Get the high score” is a cultural trope popular on platforms, including but not limited to the chans, that has found renewed significance and popularity on /pol/ and 8chan.

This phrase harks back to the niche interests (i.e., ‘high scores’ in *video games*) inscribed in the board cultures of the platforms from which /pol/ originates, and it is commonly used by /pol/-users to express affirmation or encouragement to achieve something to a high standard. Since chan culture has shifted away from sarcastic/ironic deployments of hate speech, and particularly given the context of 8chan, the use of the phrase here should be interpreted to mean ‘kill as many Jews as possible’. Additional references to videogames are scattered throughout the playlist in the original post, which includes music from the soundtracks of popular titles such as *Halo: Combat Evolved* and *The Last of Us*. The juxtaposition of videogame terminology and exhortations to commit mass murder is not accidental and reflects an increasingly entrenched devaluation of human life on /pol/ (i.e. a real murder is treated the same as a kill in a video game).

Much the same as with Christchurch, the Poway attack’s original post features many more distinctive subcultural markers that are readily traced to the idiosyncrasies of *chan and /pol/’s subcultures, with even more distributed throughout the post. The use of “greentext” in a reply-post as well as references to “meme magic” and “redpill threads” all clearly point to the attacker’s connection to /pol/’s subcultural productions. Indeed, the scepticism of other 8chan-users as exemplified in the reply-post “literal spam” reflects the additional problem presented by the ambiguity of fully-anonymous online spaces which have developed subcultural norms and expectations that promote a combination of suspicion, cynicism and scepticism.

A “board volunteer” for /pol/ (one of 5 moderators of the /pol/ board) removed the attackers post 12 minutes after it went up according to evidence given to Congress based on the server logs.³²⁵ A tweet at the time had claimed it was removed in under 10 minutes.³²⁶ This is a fast removal, but even so it allowed enough time for images of the post, along with the links it provided to the manifesto, to spread.

³²⁵ Congressional Supplemental Inquiries of 8chan, Submission to the Committee on Homeland Security, 25 September 2019, Page 3 https://d5e10168-1d62-4e43-8269-5d58035f234e.filesusr.com/ugd/62f5a3_72d0c2b98ca3433c82baec24e08625e9.pdf?index=true

³²⁶ <https://twitter.com/infinitechan/status/1122494322283167745>



Figure 46 8chan removal of Poway attackers post

The links in the post pointed to copies of the manifesto in PDF form at MediaFire and in text only form at Pastebin. The Online Hate Prevention Institute verified those links were still working around 20 hours after the attack and contacted the companies to request they remove the content. Mediafire took swift action and had already removed the file 4hours later when we first re-checked the link. Within 24 hours of our report being made they had followed up with us via e-mail to report on the actions they had taken. Pastebin was slower to respond and that copy remained live for around 50 hours after the attack. Pastebin did not meet its own goal of responding to complaints within 24 hours and took a few hours more than this to take action on our report. The delay allows the content to be viewed by far more people as shown in Figure 47.

Time since upload	21 hours	24 hours	50 hours
Reads on Paste Bin	53,118	63,500	75,950

Figure 47 Reads on Pastebin of Poway attacker's manifesto

At the time we stated that that countries such as Australia may need to consider blocking access to 8chan so long as it continues to “provide a forum for such radicalisation that leads to violence”.³²⁷ We also said that:

Blocking sites should be an absolute last resort, but sites running technology designed to make the job of police impossible, and with a track record of inciting and being part of deadly violent extremist attacks, cross that threshold. The effort to incite further attacks from people on /pol/, as stated in the manifesto, makes this a case of a clear and present danger.

8Chan may consider suspending /pol/ in order to avoid such government responses. Another option would be far greater cooperation with police, not just in the US, but internationally. That would require changes to the software to enable a far greater

³²⁷ <https://ohpi.org.au/san-diego-synagogue-attack/>

and longer term retention of data. Even so, greater moderation action against the hate that leads to extremism may well be needed.

7.6.3 El Paso, the closure of 8Chan and the Congressional Inquiry

On the 3rd of August 2019, Patrick Crusius shot and killed 22 people and wounded 26 others outside a Walmart in El Paso Texas. Following what has now become the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for violent online extremism borne out of 8chan and /pol/, he posted his manifesto to 8chan's /pol/ prior to commencing his assault.³²⁸ The location of the attack was chosen because of its proximity to Mexico and high numbers of Mexican tourists known to cross the border nearby, and despite being an 11 hour drive from Dallas where Crusius lived.

A “board volunteer” for /pol/ (one of 5 moderators of the /pol/ board) removed the attackers post 45 minutes after it went up according to evidence given to Congress based on the server logs.³²⁹

In the wake of the violence and public outrage (as well as a lawsuit brought against Watkins, Brennen and Matthew Prince, the CEO of CloudFlare), 8chan was pressured into shutting down³³⁰, and was driven off the surface web and ultimately offline when hosting providers and services such as Cloudflare ceased providing services to 8chan.³³¹ Watkins was also subpoenaed by the United States House Committee on Homeland Security on the 5th of September,³³² where he agreed to keep 8chan offline until “tools were developed to counter illegal content”.³³³

³²⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/aug/04/mass-shootings-el-paso-texas-dayton-ohio-8chan-far-right-website>

³²⁹ Congressional Supplemental Inquiries of 8chan, Submission to the Committee on Homeland Security, 25 September 2019, Page 3 https://d5e10168-1d62-4e43-8269-5d58035f234e.filesusr.com/ugd/62f5a3_72d0c2b98ca3433c82baec24e08625e9.pdf?index=true

³³⁰ Jessie Blackbourn, Nicola McGarrity & Kent Roach (2019) Understanding and responding to right wing terrorism, Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism, 14:3, 183-190, DOI: 10.1080/18335330.2019.1667014

³³¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/victims-family-sues-accused-el-paso-shooter-his-family-and-8chan-11572484530>

³³² <https://homeland.house.gov/news/press-releases/thompson-and-rogers-joint-statement-after-8chan-deposition>

³³³ <https://www.cnet.com/news/8chan-8kun-4chan-endchan-what-you-need-to-know-internet-forums/>



Figure 48 Crusius' OP, posted to 8chan shortly before he opened fire on a crowded Walmart, killing and wounding dozens.

A written submission to Congress by Watkins' lawyer seeks to present 8chan as "careful and responsible" and claims it "has never tolerated illegal speech and has a consistent track record of working with law enforcement agencies when appropriate".³³⁴ The statement says "8chan has taken steps to improve its ability to identify illegal content and to act more quickly in doing so. To these ends, it hopes to be of continued assistance to law enforcement officers in times of need".³³⁵ It also claims "8chan is the only platform featuring a full commitment to free speech" and that only "a small minority of users post hateful and ignorant items".³³⁶

While stating that "we understand that the restriction of some speech is necessary",³³⁷ the 8chan submission makes it clear that this only applies to content which is unlawful in the United States. The United States is an exception internationally as the First Amendment to the United States Constitution has been held by the Supreme Court to also apply to hate speech. That means laws seeking to make hate speech illegal are in the United States unconstitutional. This does not prevent US companies from voluntarily creating and enforcing community standards under which hate speech is banned, but they cannot be forced to do by US law makers.

The US position is exceptional as can be seen in the reservation the United States lodged when ratifying the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* in 1994 (28 years after first signing the treaty):³³⁸

The Senate's advice and consent is subject to the following reservations: (1) That the Constitution and laws of the United States contain extensive protections of individual

³³⁴ *Congressional Primer on 8chan*, Committee on Homeland Security 8chan Inquiry, Submission to the Committee on Homeland Security, 4 September 2019, page 1. Accessible via <https://www.benjaminbarr.com/news-updates> with the submission at https://d5e10168-1d62-4e43-8269-5d58035f234e.filesusr.com/ugd/62f5a3_f869c81d6bcb495ebdd137776542fe11.pdf

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-2&chapter=4&clang=_en#EndDec

freedom of speech, expression and association. Accordingly, the United States does not accept any obligation under this Convention, in particular under articles 4 and 7, to restrict those rights, through the adoption of legislation or any other measures, to the extent that they are protected by the Constitution and laws of the United States.

The rejected article 4 says that state will “condemn all propaganda and all organizations which are based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race or group of persons of one colour or ethnic origin, or which attempt to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination in any form”.³³⁹ It also says states will make an offence punishable by law “all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, as well as all acts of violence or incitement to such acts”.³⁴⁰ This is what other countries have accepted, but the United States has rejected. Article 7, also rejected by the United States, is an obligation on states to combat prejudice leading to racial discrimination through education.

This view is in stark contrast to, for example, the Council of Europe who adopted the “Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems” in 2003.³⁴¹ The Additional Protocol commits states to pass legislation to criminalise “distributing, or otherwise making available, racist and xenophobic material to the public through a computer system”,³⁴² making threats against a person or group on the basis of “race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, as well as religion”.³⁴³

8chan is aware the US position is exceptional but made clear its position that it won’t limit speech unless it is unlawful in the United States. This is another way of saying it will intentionally do nothing to prevent the spread of hate speech and incitement to hate. The submission to congress explains:³⁴⁴

My company has no intention of deleting constitutionally protected hate speech. I feel the remedy for this type of speech is counter speech, and I'm certain that this is the view of the American justice system. This may be a contrary opinion to our friends in other countries. Those across the oceans may feel it necessary to stifle the voice of minority opinions. This is not what I intend to do.

³³⁹ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted and opened for signature and ratification by General Assembly resolution 2106 (XX) of 21 December 1965, entry into force 4 January 1969. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cerd.aspx>

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ <https://rm.coe.int/168008160f>

³⁴² Additional Protocol, Article 3.

³⁴³ Additional Protocol, Article 4.

³⁴⁴ Congressional Primer on 8chan, Committee on Homeland Security 8chan Inquiry, Submission to the Committee on Homeland Security, 4 September 2019, page 2. Accessible via <https://www.benjaminbarr.com/news-updates> with the submission at https://d5e10168-1d62-4e43-8269-5d58035f234e.filesusr.com/ugd/62f5a3_f869c81d6bcb495ebdd137776542fe11.pdf

This immediately limits the cooperation with law enforcement as much of what is unlawful in other countries, in efforts to prevent the spread of hate and violence, will be actively permitted and protected on 8chan. The submission to congress makes this intention explicit saying “Beyond minute categories of unprotected speech remain all sorts of uneducated, ill-informed, and conspiratorial opinions. These remain protected under the First Amendment and protected by 8chan”.³⁴⁵

7.6.4 Return as 8kun

Watkins announced the relaunch and rebranding of 8chan to 8kun with a video on October 7, 2019.³⁴⁶ The video features the new logo appearing out of an explosion and then morphing into a logo of a black flag waving in a thunderstorm. The video has been viewed 445,600 times and retweeted 6,900 times.

From the start this was not the creation of a new board, but rather the same 8chan with content and accounts migrated to the new service (see Figure 49 and Figure 50). The rebranding and technical changes allow 8chan to side step a range of efforts to control the flow of extremist materials, including a ban on 8chan which was imposed by Australia’s eSafety Commissioner.³⁴⁷



Figure 49 In a tweet 8chan board owners were invited to migrate to 8kun



Figure 50 8kun started by migrating content and accounts from 8chan

RECOMMENDATION 31: Decisions by technology companies not to do business with a site should be general enough that a change to the ownership, brand, domain name or IP address will not circumvent the ban.

³⁴⁵ Congressional Primer on 8chan, Committee on Homeland Security 8chan Inquiry, Submission to the Committee on Homeland Security, 4 September 2019, page 2. Accessible via <https://www.benjaminbarr.com/news-updates> with the submission at https://d5e10168-1d62-4e43-8269-5d58035f234e.filesusr.com/ugd/62f5a3_f869c81d6bcb495ebdd137776542fe11.pdf

³⁴⁶ <https://twitter.com/infinitechan/status/1181054604097642496>

³⁴⁷ <https://www.buzzfeed.com/cameronwilson/australias-internet-8chan-esafety-commissioner>

RECOMMENDATION 32: Decisions by governments to restrict access to a site should be robust enough that a change to the ownership, brand, domain name or IP address of the banned site will not circumvent the restriction. Government may need to monitor and update identification details to enforce such restrictions.

An ongoing battle has been wages between activists and 8chan in which companies providing the technology to keep 8chan online have been named and shamed in to dropping 8chan / 8kun, or failing that, have found their own service cut off from further upstream.³⁴⁸ These are voluntary actions by technology companies rather than a result of legislation. This demonstrate that companies may no longer be immune from criticism and boycotts if they provide the infrastructure that enables others to keep hate online.

RECOMMENDATION 33: All companies providing Internet infrastructure should have clear terms of service which prohibit the use of their service for inciting hate or violence. They should also give notice that the service may be terminate without notice for serious breaches of this rule. Companies may further wish to require that any customer they provide a service to includes a similar statement in its terms of service.

8 Responding to the Online Sub-Culture of Hate and Violent Extremism

8.1 Hardening Targets to Reduce Antisemitic Attacks

The Jewish community has been subject to many terrorist attacks from a range of ideologies over the years, including at a Jewish centre in Mumbai (India) in 2008,³⁴⁹ the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum shooting in Washington DC in 2009,³⁵⁰ a Jewish school in Toulouse (France) in 2012,³⁵¹ a kosher supermarket in Paris (France) in 2015,³⁵² the Great Synagogue in Copenhagen (Demark) in 2015,³⁵³ the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh (USA) in 2018,³⁵⁴ and the Poway Synagogue near San Diego (USA) earlier in 2019.³⁵⁵ As a result, Jewish communities around the world have developed security protocols,

³⁴⁸ Matt Binder, "Inside the fight to keep 8chan offline", 6 August 2019 <https://mashable.com/article/8chan-down/>; Robert Evans and Fredrick Brennan, "The State of California Could Have Stopped 8Chan: It Didn't", 4 November 2019 <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2019/11/04/the-state-of-california-could-have-stopped-8chan-it-didnt/>

³⁴⁹ "Mumbai Jewish centre targeted in 2008 terrorist attacks reopens", The Guardian, 26 August 2014 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/26/mumbai-jewish-centre-chabad-lubavitch-reopens>

³⁵⁰ "Guard Killed In Holocaust Museum Shooting", CBS News, 10 June 2009 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/guard-killed-in-holocaust-museum-shooting/>

³⁵¹ Tzvi Fleischer and Sharyn Mittelman, "Jihadism, Antisemitism and the truth about the Toulouse murders", ABC Religion and Ethics, 30 March 2012 <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/jihadism-antisemitism-and-the-truth-about-the-toulouse-murders/10100670>

³⁵² Andre Oboler, *Je Suis Humain: Responsible free speech in the shadow of the Charlie Hebdo murders*, (Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2015) <http://ohpi.org.au/jesuishumain/>

³⁵³ "Copenhagen shootings: Police kill 'gunman' after two attacks", BBC News, 15 February 2015 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31475803>

³⁵⁴ Chelsea Garbell, "After Tree of Life attack, don't tell Jews all hate crimes & bigoted attacks are the same", USA Today, 8 November 2018 <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/voices/2018/11/08/jews-anti-semitism-shooting-pittsburgh-europe-hate-crime-column/1890066002/>

³⁵⁵ Andre Oboler, "San Diego Synagogue Attack", Online Hate Prevention Institute, 28 April 2019 <https://ohpi.org.au/san-diego-synagogue-attack/>

and hardened their physical infrastructure, protecting their institutions and spaces with both guards and secure doors and barriers.

This was affective in Halle as the reinforced door proved an effective barrier and stopped the gunman entering the Synagogue and causing the high level of casualties that were seen in the synagogue in Poway and the mosque in Christchurch. The heavy security dissuaded the attacker from engaging in additional reconnaissance and limited his ability to gain useful intelligence to better plan the attack. He was unable to get through the door despite anticipating that it would be secured and despite his attempts to shoot it open.

This is not the first time that casualties have been reduced due to security. In the 2015 at on the Great Synagogue in Copenhagen a community volunteer on security duty, Dan Uzan, questioned the attacker when he approached the synagogue. This led to the attack being triggered outside the synagogue rather than inside. Dan tragically gave his life protecting his community, but he stopped what could have been a far more deadly attack on the community.

It is unfortunate that communities need to live within this sort of security, however, so long as these attacks and the incitement for such attacks remain regular occurrences, governments and other national bodies should provide or contribute to the costs of security. They should also provide additional support at times of increased risk, such as during Yom Kippur.

In Australia the Federal Government recently announced \$5.7 million to improve safety and security for Jewish schools and religious institutions in the state of NSW.³⁵⁶ The funding comes from a multi-round Safer Communities Fund and is part of \$41.9 million released in the current round.³⁵⁷ In the state of Victoria the government allocated \$3 million “towards making Jewish community centres safer and more secure” with funding being applied to “organisations and sites with the greatest need” as identified through a collaborative approach with the peak community body the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and its subsidiary the Community Security Group.³⁵⁸ This is an addition to a further million allocated to the security upgrades for a community centre which houses many of the Jewish communal organisations.³⁵⁹ The Halle attack demonstrates that proper physical security can save lives and we commend both the Federal and Victorian Government for the steps they have taken.

RECOMMENDATION 34: Governments continue to contribute to the costs of security for Jewish communal institutions and provide additional support at times of increased risk such as during Yom Kippur.

8.2 Taking Down the Online Infrastructure of Extremism

The Internet is a network of networks. For content to appear on the Internet it needs to physically reside on a hard drive inside a server. Space on the server may be rented from a company (a hosting provider) that owns and manages the server, or a person may host material on a computer they own themselves. To connect the material on the server to others on the internet, the physical computer with the material

³⁵⁶ “\$5.7 million federal security grants for Jewish schools and institutions within Wentworth”, J-Wire, 16 October 2019 <<http://www.jwire.com.au/5-7-million-federal-security-grants-for-jewish-schools-and-institutions-within-wentworth/>>

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/security-upgrades-for-the-jewish-community/>

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

needs to have a connection to the Internet. This means the hosting company (or individual who owns the computer) must be a customer of an Internet Service Provider (ISP). Even if the hosting company is itself an ISP, it must purchase bandwidth from a higher stream ISPs. Even in the case of large ISPs who run their own large networks using their own infrastructure such as cable and copper wires, at some point their network needs to connect to other networks, undersea cables or satellites. Beyond the hardware and wires, to exist on the surface web, a site also needs a domain name. These are purchased from domain name registrars who are licensed to sell domains under existing higher-level domains by the domain name owner. To sell a top-level domain (such as one ending in .com) a domain registrar must be accredited by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

This infrastructure means a site can be taken off the internet if:

- The company that owns the servers hosting the content terminates the account
- The company that supplies the internet connectivity to the servers terminates their service
- The company that supplies the domain name terminates its use

In the last two cases if a company that is directly providing such a service fails to take action, it can itself become the subject of termination by its supplier. While small companies might be more willing to profit from the spread of hate and care little for their reputation, the larger companies that supply them with services may susceptible to public pressure. This could take the form of adverse publicity or a direct consumer boycott. Even companies who do not deal directly with the public may be subjected to pressure when other businesses and government entities refuse to do business with them.

A problematic site, particularly a popular one, may also be protected through its use of a Content Delivery Network (CDN) service. A CDN service mirrors the content on a customer's site allowing it to be delivered from a cached copy on the CDN's servers rather than directly from the client's servers. This can prevent DDOS (distributed denial of service) attacks and the CDN can replicate the content as needed to cope with an increased load, while also taking action against spurious traffic. One effect of a CDN is that as the content is accessed on the CDN's server rather than the clients, a trace to see who is providing the connectivity will stop at the CDN. While CDNs play a powerful role in protecting sites, they also carry a heavy burden in ensuring such protection is only provided when it is ethical to do so.

This means it would be accessed on's servers rather than the clients. A

8.2.1 Lessons from Cloudflare's termination of 8chan

The first company to act against 8chan was Cloudflare, a Content Delivery Network, who on August 5th 2019 terminated their services to 8chan after the El Paso attack.³⁶⁰ The announcement by Cloudflare's CEO Matthew Prince notes that:³⁶¹

- "the suspected terrorist gunman appears to have been inspired by the forum website known as 8chan" and specifically by "largely unmoderated discussions on 8chan which glorified the previous massacre" in Christchurch
- the attacks in El Paso, Poway and Christchurch all involved posts to 8chan and that "8chan has repeatedly proven itself to be a cesspool of hate"

³⁶⁰ Matthew Prince, "Terminating Service for 8Chan", *Cloudflare Blog*, 5 August 2019

<https://blog.cloudflare.com/terminating-service-for-8chan/>

³⁶¹ Ibid.

- “they have proven themselves to be lawless and that lawlessness has caused multiple tragic deaths. Even if 8chan may not have violated the letter of the law in refusing to moderate their hate-filled community, they have created an environment that revels in violating its spirit”

He goes to explain, “We reluctantly tolerate content that we find reprehensible, but we draw the line at platforms that have demonstrated they directly inspire tragic events and are lawless by design. 8chan has crossed that line. It will therefore no longer be allowed to use our services.”³⁶²

The response from Matthew Prince continues noting that they only act very reluctantly and seldomly in this manner. He explains this is not a First Amendment issue as Cloudflare is “a private company and not bound by the First Amendment”. He explains “The only relevance of the First Amendment in this case and others is that it allows us to choose who we do and do not do business with; it does not obligate us to do business with everyone.”³⁶³ He commits to working not only with law enforcement, but also with governments and civil society. Highlighting the importance of the Rule of Law and the sovereign right of each country to determine what it permits and what it prohibits, Prince discusses the need for boundaries to be set on a country by country basis in a politically legitimate manner, rather than by companies.³⁶⁴

Questions around content are real societal issues that need politically legitimate solutions. We will continue to engage with lawmakers around the world as they set the boundaries of what is acceptable in their countries through due process of law. And we will comply with those boundaries when and where they are set.

He notes Europe’s lead in responding to the problem of online hate and extremism and the distinction and resulting differing obligations that apply between companies that “organize and promote content — like Facebook and YouTube — rather than those that are mere conduits for that content”.³⁶⁵ This distinction has arisen as the idea that a platform like Facebook or YouTube should have no liability as it is not a publisher has fallen away in the face of significant evidence over the control they companies have over the visibility or lack of visibility of content, and the way they manage this as part of their business model.

RECOMMENDATION 35: Content services should create mechanisms that enable them to restrict access to specific content on their service for users from countries where that content is illegal. This will ensure content services have the technical capacity to respect national sovereignty and comply with national laws. There may be exceptional circumstances where a content service refuses to comply with national laws, for example, if the national laws conflict with customary international law, international treaties to protect human rights, or legal obligations in the content services own jurisdiction.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

RECOMMENDATION 36: Hosting services that do not outright prohibit the use of their services to incite hate, should at a minimum ensure they don't serve content inciting hate to users in countries where such incitement is unlawful.

Prince notes that “the law may need additional remedies” when it comes to dealing with lawless platforms and suggests such law reform might “mean moving enforcement mechanisms further down the technical stack”.³⁶⁶ Such a move could mean creating legal liability for those who provide the infrastructure and connectivity to spread incitement to hate.

RECOMMENDATION 37: Governments should consider law reforms to create a system of sanctions that could be imposed on companies outside their jurisdiction who, after suitable notice, continue to provide unlawful content inciting hatred or violent extremism to users in that country in breach of the country's law. Such law reform could also create sanctions that impose penalties for any company within the country's jurisdiction who engaged in business with a company on the sanctions list.

8.2.2 The broader campaign to disconnect 8chan

The use of activism to name and shame companies whose provision of services supported the delivery of incitement to hate and extremism can be seen in the wider campaign to keep 8chan offline.³⁶⁷

Following its removal from Cloudflare, 8chan sought to move to a new Content Delivery Network called Bitmitigate, owned by domain registrar Epik.³⁶⁸ In an initial statement the CEO of Epik, Rob Monster, said they did not solicit the business and would evaluate whether to provide the service, but stated that their “philosophy is, if the customer is not breaking the law, they are protected under our umbrella of services”.³⁶⁹ The statement also appeared to suggest it would be sufficient for a company to act on “content which is illegal in the United States”.³⁷⁰ That would mean hate speech and incitement to hate would be permitted.

Epik rents some of its server space from a company called Voxility who soon found that their servers were now being used to host 8chan. Voxility’s business development VP Maria Sirbu explained what happened next: “As soon as we were notified of the content that Epik was hosting, we made the decision to totally ban them”.³⁷¹ She noted that, “This is the second situation we’ve had with the reseller and this is not tolerable” explaining that it was unlikely Voxility would resume services to Epik. The removal of service to Epik also took down the Daily Stormer which Epik was supporting.³⁷²

³⁶⁶ Matthew Prince, “Terminating Service for 8Chan”, *Cloudflare Blog*, 5 August 2019

<https://blog.cloudflare.com/terminating-service-for-8chan/>

³⁶⁷ Matt Binder, “Inside the fight to keep 8chan offline”, 6 August 2019 <https://mashable.com/article/8chan-down/>

³⁶⁸ Matt Binder, “Inside the fight to keep 8chan offline”, 6 August 2019 <https://mashable.com/article/8chan-down/>

³⁶⁹ Andrew Allemann, “Epik CEO Rob Monster statement on 8chan”, Domain Name Wire, 5 August 2019

<https://domainnamewire.com/2019/08/05/epik-ceo-rob-monster-statement-on-8chan/>

³⁷⁰ Andrew Allemann, “Epik CEO Rob Monster statement on 8chan”, Domain Name Wire, 5 August 2019

<https://domainnamewire.com/2019/08/05/epik-ceo-rob-monster-statement-on-8chan/>

³⁷¹ Adi Robertson, “8chan goes dark after hardware provider discontinues service”, The Verge, 5 August 2019

<https://www.theverge.com/2019/8/5/20754943/8chan-epik-offline-voxility-service-cutoff-hate-speech-ban>

³⁷² Paul Roberts, “‘A slippery slope’: Eastside web firm waffles on hosting online forum linked to El Paso shooter”, Seattle Times, 6 August 2019 <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/technology/a-slippery-slope-eastside-web-firm-waffles-on-hosting-online-forum-linked-to-el-paso-shooter/>

Soon after Epik reversed course.³⁷³ In deciding not to provide services for 8chan, Epik said, “In cases whereby Epik identifies a particular publisher as being under-equipped to properly enforce its own Terms of Service, Epik reserves the right to deny service” and that in this case the decision was “largely due to the concern of inadequate enforcement and the elevated possibility of violent radicalization on the platform”.³⁷⁴

Evidence 8chan provided to Congress, documented earlier in this report, shows the moderation was in fact relatively fast on 8chan. The time from the post being made until it was removed was 2 hour and 49 minutes for the Christchurch attack, 12 minutes for Poway and 45 minutes for El Paso.³⁷⁵ For comparison, Facebook first received a report of the Christchurch livestream video 29 minutes after the livestream started (and 12 minutes after it ended),³⁷⁶ and at least one copy of the video remained on Facebook for at least 6 hours while a copy remained on YouTube for at least 3 hours.³⁷⁷ The manifesto from Poway remained on Pastebin for 50 hours and on Mediafire for at least 20 hours.³⁷⁸ The real issue then is that 8chan creates an “elevated possibility of violent radicalization on the platform”. This speaks to the culture of 8chan and 8chan’s /pol/ in particular.

The terminated service was not the hosting of the underlying 8chan site, just the Content Delivery Network service. Once it went down it was possible to find the address for the underlying 8chan server and the company providing them with that service. That turned out to be provided by a company called Centauri Communications.³⁷⁹ A campaign was mounted against Centauri Communications who were supposed to be suspected by the Californian Secretary of State from doing business in that state.³⁸⁰ While there was interest from a member of Congress in tackling this, there was also concern about potential reprisals and in particular the risk of swatting occurring.³⁸¹ The fear further highlights why /pol/ has the characteristics of terrorism. The servers were eventually moved interstate to a company called VanWaTech set up by the founder of BitMitigate Nick Lim.³⁸²

³⁷³ Paul Roberts, “Seattle-area internet firm decides not to host extremist 8chan website linked to El Paso shootings”, Seattle Times, 8 August 2019 <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/technology/seattle-area-internet-firm-decides-not-to-host-extremist-8chan-website-linked-to-el-paso-shootings/>

³⁷⁴ Rob Monster, “Epik draws line on Acceptable Use”, Epik Blog, 6 August 2019 <https://epik.com/blog/epik-draws-line-on-acceptable-use.html>

³⁷⁵ Congressional Supplemental Inquiries of 8chan, Submission to the Committee on Homeland Security, 25 September 2019, Page 3 https://d5e10168-1d62-4e43-8269-5d58035f234e.filesusr.com/ugd/62f5a3_72d0c2b98ca3433c82baec24e08625e9.pdf?index=true

³⁷⁶ Alex Hern, “Facebook and YouTube defend response to Christchurch videos”, The Guardian, 19 March 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/19/facebook-and-youtube-defend-response-to-christchurch-videos>

³⁷⁷ Alex Hern and Jim Waterson, “Social media firms fight to delete Christchurch shooting footage”, The Guardian, 15 March 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/15/video-of-christchurch-attack-runs-on-social-media-and-news-sites>

³⁷⁸ <https://ohpi.org.au/san-diego-synagogue-attack/>

³⁷⁹ Matt Binder, “Inside the fight to keep 8chan offline”, 6 August 2019 <https://mashable.com/article/8chan-down/>

³⁸⁰ Robert Evans and Fredrick Brennan, “The State of California Could Have Stopped 8Chan: It Didn’t”, 4 November 2019 <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2019/11/04/the-state-of-california-could-have-stopped-8chan-it-didnt/>

³⁸¹ Ibid

³⁸² Ibid.

Another focus of the campaign is PayPal who are still providing financial services to collect donations for N.T. Technology, the company that ran 8chan and now 8kun (see Figure 51).³⁸³ Given PayPal's block on fundraising for WikiLeaks,³⁸⁴ it seems strange they continue to provide financial services to a platform that supports hosting incitement to hate and a culture which has led to multiple terrorist attacks.

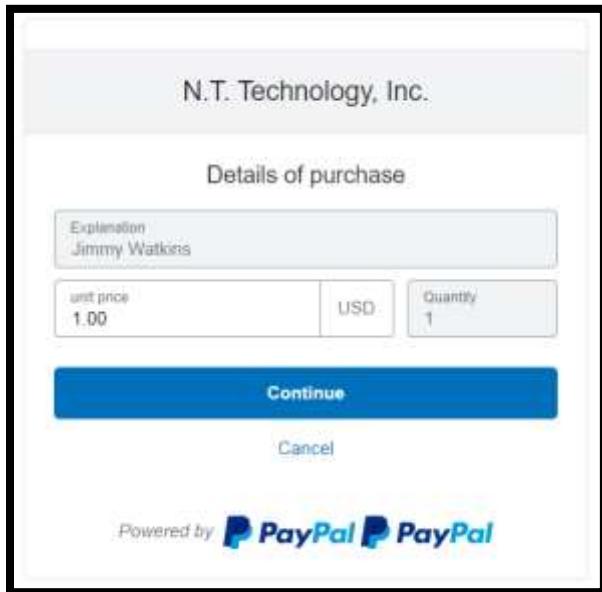


Figure 51 Paypal donations to N.T. Technology Inc

The campaign to name and shame can produce results. It is in fact a form of counter speech with people and companies expressing their dislike by steering clear of companies that are facilitating the spread of hate. While helpful in the absence of legal remedies, as Associate Professor Chris Demaske from the University of Washington-Tacoma has noted, this is leaving the decision making to companies and "at the end of the day, their job is to make money" and "not to promote democracy" which means policy will be driven by commercial and not civil imperatives.³⁸⁵

8.3 Tackling the toxic culture

The toxic culture on /pol/ which has resulted in multiple terrorist attacks is due to a combination of anonymity, hate speech as a cultural norm, a shared political ideology (the red pill ideology) and a willingness to engage in and to support criminal and even violent action that promotes the cause.

Some in the /pol/ community are no doubt hardcore activists. Others are in it just for the thrill of being part of the unfolding train wreck; part of something that will make the news. Given their anonymity and the likely lack of any repercussions for them, they keep encouraging and egging on others to see what might happen. There is a game like culture with wins and high scores. The effort to spread fake news to

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Kevin Poulsen, "PayPal Freezes WikiLeaks Account", Wired, 4 December 2010

<https://www.wired.com/2010/12/paypal-wikileaks/>

³⁸⁵ Paul Roberts, "Seattle-area internet firm decides not to host extremist 8chan website linked to El Paso shootings", Seattle Times, 8 August 2019 <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/technology/seattle-area-internet-firm-decides-not-to-host-extremist-8chan-website-linked-to-el-paso-shootings/>

get the attack pinned on Rainer Winkler (Drachenlord) in the hours immediately after the attack highlight not only a lack of empathy and basic human dignity, but an outright reveling in cruelty.

The idea of /pol/ as a “containment zone” for this poor behaviour doesn’t work. It allows the toxicity to concentrate. It establishes a new normal and, in the words of one poster, then allows that culture to “infected” other boards. Despite being anonymous, /pol/acks can move between /pol/ boards on different servers and reconnect with the community. The fact there are no lasting accounts and nothing to register or configure actually makes this easier and more resistance to the closure of a particular platform like 8chan.

It isn't all bad as many on the various image boards are against the toxic culture. If there were a way to agree community standards democratically, the result might strengthen community standards and force the hate to leave. This is a technical challenge in an anonymous forum. It is also a political challenge as the Image boards are not run as democracies. Some who are there to troll and participate in causing chaos in society will leave if the culture improves on one board and will seek to join or create another. If image boards that will stand against the toxic culture, as 4chan did in gamergate, can be separated from those that tolerate the toxic culture, the problem is already reduced. If image boards that tolerate a toxic culture can be regularly disrupted through the loss of their suppliers, block imposed by state authorities or blocks at the ISP level, it will create an incentive for their owners to stamp out the toxic culture on their board. For those that won't work to stamp it out, the disrupt to community will cause a drop off in participation and send a signal that the culture is unacceptable. There will still be individual bad actors, but their ability to coordinate, feed off each other and increase the intensity will be reduced. This disruption can still be effective in limiting growth and reducing harm. Where a board or forum's moderators are indifferent to illegal activity there should be legal penalties.

Professional disruption efforts aimed at undermining hateful narratives and changing board sentiment and content can be used, but there are significant challenges to this approach. The users on /pol/ assume this is already happening and often jump at shadows. They dismiss the views of anyone being even remotely moderate, usually by accusing them of being a Jew. The push back can still create resistance and derail a downwards spiral. It can, however, be halted by those with administrator rights who may act to preserve the culture.

Where there is support from board administrators, identifying users responsible for outsized influences of toxicity on /pol/ boards and selectively (and discretely) blocking them from the platform with IP based bans could be effective. At minimum it will disrupt them and increase their effort of participation, making it more likely they head to another platform.

While /pol/ increases the toxicity to dangerous levels, it reflects discontent in segments of society. As with other fascist movements, it is those disillusioned with society who are more likely to join. Blaming minorities is always presented as an easier solution than the work required to solve societal problems. A more proactive and informed political discussion, in /pol/ on the issues impacting people in the community could help to reduce hostilities.

In the end reducing the toxicity is something that needs to come from the image board community itself, but suitable pressure needs to be created on board owners who foster this toxicity. Suitable support needs to be provided to efforts within the image board community to speak out against

increases in toxicity. There need to be consequences and those consequences need to be triggered much earlier in the process. Once someone is announcing an imminent attack, it is too late.

In the fact of an attack, everyone needs to their part and they should make it known they are doing this. Links sharing terrorist videos or manifestos should be report to authorities and where it is safe to do so, for example when posting anonymously, posts sharing this content should get a reply stating it has been reported. This will help establish a community standard against sharing such content as well as actively getting it removed.

RECOMMENDATION 38: The public are urged not to share content from terrorist attacks such as manifestos or videos. If seen, this content should be reported to the relevant authorities, in Australia this being the eSafety Commissioner.

8.4 Future Work

While the specific image board culture is the focus of this report, there is a wider online culture which can either permit and encourage or prohibit and discourage the spread of incitement to hate and violence.

The Online Hate Prevention Institute has developed tools for the public to report online antisemitism, categorised to reflect the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism, but which are able to be configured to cover other forms of hate as well. The latest version of the tool is able to be embedded in the website of other organisations and configured to meet their needs, both in terms of the types of hate that can be reported and the language of the user interface.

The next step is a range of projects in partnership with organisations around the world to enable others to empower their community to report online hate while also facilitating empirical reports on the problem. There is also a training program to teach grassroots communities to identify, report and more generally respond to a range of different forms of hate speech. Subject to support from both donors and partner organisations we hope to roll this program out for both antisemitism and others types of hate through 2020. Our past Empirical report on Antisemitism³⁸⁶ and Islamophobia³⁸⁷ give an idea of what is possible.

We invite potential partners, sponsors and donors for this larger campaign to contact us through our website: <https://ohpi.org.au/contact-us/>

³⁸⁶ <https://ohpi.org.au/measuring-antisemitism/>

³⁸⁷ <https://ohpi.org.au/anti-muslim-hate-interim-report/>