



Don't Look it Up

**Generation Identity,
Polarization, and
Social Media**

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Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst (General Intelligence and Security Service of the Netherlands) – AIVD

Alternative für Deutschland (An Alternative for Germany) – AfD

Forum voor Democratie (Democratic Forum) – FvD

Generation Identity – GI

Justice for Prosperity – JfP

Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom) – PVV

Rassemblement National (National Rally) – RN

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Why This Matters

The Justice for Prosperity Foundation (JfP) has undertaken this research to shed light on the narratives of Generation Identity and their persistent influence on youth groups, social media, and political discourse. This report aims to expose how these ideologies propagate and to empower the public to recognize and understand the mechanisms behind their spread. By focusing on the Dutch landscape, JfP seeks to contribute to a safer internet and a more resilient democratic society in the Netherlands.

Globally, LGBTIQ+ rights, gender equality, migrant rights, and sexual health and reproductive rights (SRHR) are under pressure, and this does not happen in isolation. Across the world, a backlash against these topics and democratic principles has intensified, as seen in the rise of electoral autocracies and authoritarianism. The resurgence of conservatism, nativism, nationalism, and traditionalism has led ultra-conservative extremists, populist politicians, and far-right ideologues to instrumentalize these topics to reshape the global understanding and safeguarding of human rights.

In the Netherlands, this trend resonates strongly within the narratives promoted by Generation Identity and similar movements. As Jan Willem Duyvendak discusses in his work on nativism, such groups capitalize on a sense of national identity that aligns with exclusionary values, which often target marginalized groups under the guise of 'protecting cultural heritage' (Duyvendak, 2011). Meanwhile, Ian Haney López's insights into "dog-whistle politics" reveal how far-right language manipulates public sentiment by framing exclusionary and extremist ideas in seemingly benign or coded terms (Haney López, 2015). These strategies allow ideologies that undermine democratic values to spread freely and subtly among youth and across digital platforms.

This trend expresses itself in different ways. For example, human rights language is used to position 'traditional family values' against SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights; the ambiguity of such narratives is used to erode norms of inclusion, democracy, and equality, leading to a regression in formal norms, policy, and legislation.

Such norm violations, through ambiguous provocations combined with leveraging democratic credentials, enable actors who employ these methods to reframe their provocations as 'allowed,' making it challenging to hold them accountable. This strategic ambiguity presents a significant obstacle to those defending norms of inclusion and equality, complicating efforts to counter such violations and create counter-narratives.

This report aims to break down these processes, offering an in-depth analysis of the narratives and strategies that enable such ideologies to thrive and highlighting the risks they pose to democratic and inclusive societies. By examining these dynamics, JfP hopes to foster greater public awareness and equip policymakers, civil society, and communities with the tools to recognize and counteract these narratives effectively.

The propagation of anti-democratic rhetoric and social polarization by far-right groups has gained momentum in recent years in the Netherlands, France, and Belgium. These groups leverage social media platforms to propagate their ideology, recruit new members, and widen their influence. This phenomenon is of particular concern as it remains largely under-researched – creating significant gaps in our understanding of the methods employed to spread divisive and extremist messages. Without a comprehensive grasp of these groups’ strategies and tactics, societies across Europe face heightened risks, as the spillover effect of virtual hate speech and harmful ideology can profoundly impact real-world interactions – thereby increasing social fragmentation and tensions.

The interconnectedness of far-right networks across multiple European countries further amplifies the complexity of this issue. These groups do not operate in isolation but often form transnational alliances, allowing hate speech and propaganda to flow seamlessly across borders. Furthermore, their influence extends beyond informal networks, seeping into the political sphere and, at times, reaching levels of government in these countries. This migration of extremist language from the fringes into the mainstream underscores the urgency of understanding these networks to mitigate the risks they pose to democratic structures and societal cohesion.

The primary aim of this report is to provide an analysis of the operation of the far-right group and movement Generation Identity (GI) – tracing its origins, ideology, and methods – to understand how it has influenced the spread of radicalization in Europe. Emerging in France in the early 2000s, GI became one of the most prominent far-right movements in Europe, and it gained traction in Belgium and the Netherlands. By examining GI as a case study, this report sheds light on the strategic techniques far-right groups use to recruit members and propagate extremist ideology, particularly through social media. These techniques include using specific language and symbolism and promoting combat sports, which appeal to younger audiences and further the group’s objectives by positioning their ideas as a lifestyle and a cause.

Understanding these methods is vital, as they reveal how groups such as GI intentionally blur the line between online rhetoric and real-world action, creating pathways from virtual hate speech to physical acts of hate and violence. Without a clear comprehension of the *modi operandi* societies risk leaving themselves vulnerable to the escalation of hate speech into hate crimes. This report underscores the need for continued research and investigation into the operational methods of far-right groups.

The first part of this report examines the founding of GI in France and explores its ideological foundation, goals, and initial methods of operation. In the second section, the report delves into the specific techniques GI uses to attract new members and expand its influence. The third part investigates the alarming trend of far-right ideologies moving from fringe groups into formal political discourse and, in some cases, political institutions. Finally, the fourth section presents JfP’s WhoDis methodology and its potential utilization to gain valuable insight into the dissemination of harmful rhetoric online causing polarization.

1. THE IDENTITARIAN WAY

1.1 Introduction

GI is a far-right, transnational, Identitarian activist and political movement that emerged in Europe in the early 2010s (initially in France) and whose ideology primarily focuses on preserving what it perceives as traditional white European culture and identity. In line with the broader Identitarian Movement – which contends that nations are defined by, and must therefore preserve their ethnicity and culture – GI asserts the necessity of maintaining the demographic and cultural dominance of white populations. This perspective is underpinned by the evocation of fears of cultural dilution and the belief that multiculturalism threatens a homogeneous national identity. The propagation of this and similar ideas results in a movement laden with racism, Islamophobia, and antisemitism (AIVD 2023). For Identitarians, this perceived, intentional demographic shift threatens the cultural and ethnic fabric of European societies and serves as a justification for their anti-globalist, anti-immigrant, and Islamophobic socio-political agendas.

1.2 Emergence

While the Identitarian Movement is not a new phenomenon – originating from the French neo-fascist Nouvelle Droite movement established in 1968 – contemporary Identitarian activism only emerged in the early 2000s following the September 11 terror attacks (Awad et al. 2022, 55; Finn, 2002). After the formation and collapse of various Identitarian groups in France, including *Unité Radicale* (which dissolved following the attempted assassination of Jacques Chirac on Bastille Day in 2002) the French Identitarian coalition *Bloc Identitaire* surfaced (Le Nouvel Obs, 2003; *Légifrance* 2002). Distancing itself from overt fascist politics, *Bloc Identitaire* instead focused on radical positions concerning Islam, immigration, and the defense of European civilization (Nissen 2022, 55). After distributing pork-based soups to homeless people in Muslim-majority areas, *Bloc Identitaire* and its youth wing, *Jeunesse Identitaire*, were accused of racism and xenophobia (Barelli 2005).

In 2012, the youth group *Génération Identitaire* emerged as the new youth wing of *Bloc Identitaire* – quickly establishing a presence in urban areas with significant student populations (Nissen 2022, 56). *Génération Identitaire* soon gained independence from *Bloc Identitaire*, expanding its influence into other European states, including Italy (*Generazione Identitaria*), Germany and Austria (*Identitäre Bewegung*), the Netherlands (*Identitair Verzet*), Belgium (*Schild en Vrienden*), Hungary (*Identitás Generáció*), and the UK and Ireland (*Generation Identity*).

At its inception, GI quickly garnered attention for its provocative public demonstrations and slick social media presence, targeting issues such as immigration and Islam with an anti-globalist, nativist message.

Martin Sellner, an Austrian nationalist activist, emerged as a prominent leader and spokesperson for GI, particularly for its Austrian branch. Sellner was crucial in expanding GI's influence beyond France, leveraging digital media to build an international following and connect with like-minded groups. Despite controversies surrounding his far-right ideology, Sellner became a public face for the movement, known for his articulate defenses of identitarianism and nationalist values. However, Sellner has recently faced increased scrutiny and legal challenges; while his social media presence continues, he is more limited in direct public activism (Nelsen 2020; Dearden 2020).

In 2021, French authorities banned Generation Identity, citing its promotion of hate and discrimination as grounds for dissolution. However, GI remains active as a movement, with local chapters and sympathizers across Europe and beyond continuing to share and evolve its ideology. Despite official recognition, GI's ideas circulate widely, repurposed by other far-right and nationalist groups (Erlanger 2021).

GI's rapid rise can be attributed to its sophisticated recruitment and radicalization strategies. Using non-political methods, GI often recruits young people through social events in bars, sports camps, and traditional celebrations. They disseminate harmful and polarising narratives, scapegoating particular groups – such as migrants, feminists, members of the LGBTQI+ community, and the 'global elites' – as a way to explain societal dysfunction. GI's expansion was exacerbated by key socio-political events of the 2010s, particularly the wave of Islamist terror attacks in Western Europe and the 2015–2016 European Migration Crisis. During this period, over one million refugees, primarily from Muslim-majority countries, entered the EU, fleeing war, poverty, and violence (Scimeca 2017). This unprecedented influx created socio-economic pressures and cultural tensions, which GI effectively leveraged to advance its anti-migrant, Islamophobic agenda.

GI's core activities include engaging ordinary white Europeans through street demonstrations, openly challenging state authorities, and organizing reactionary public events and advertising campaigns. Their protests and stunts often target migrants and migrant-support spaces, such as mosques and financial aid centers, further contributing to societal polarization by fostering an 'us versus them' mentality. This rhetoric constructs a division between 'white identity' and 'non-white identity' – thus fostering animosity and exclusion (Vice News 2023, DW 2021, France24 2021).

Despite an extensive record of criminal convictions, GI members – both former and current – maintain significant social media followings, thus accelerating the mainstreaming of extremist far-right ideologies. Notably, their mission is meta-political, as their primary objective is to influence the social and cultural spheres to generate political change. As one GI member stated, their goal is "to apply political pressure, to propose solutions to government, /but/ not to govern in their place" (Al Jazeera 2018).

GI's links to politicians have increased concern about their influence on European society and governance. These political connections, coupled with the infiltration of GI's harmful narratives

into the mainstream political discourse, have contributed to the normalization of racism and Islamophobia. This shift has impoverished political debate across Europe – reinforcing the belief that societal issues stem from the presence of Islam and non-European populations – rather than from domestic political and economic decision-making. The resulting scapegoating continues to deepen polarisation within communities, creating ‘justifications’ for racist sentiments and behavior (ibid).

While this report refers to “Generation Identity” (GI) in its English form to encompass all national chapters, its primary focus is on GI’s Dutch (Identitair Verzet), French (Génération Identitaire), and Belgian (Schild en Vrienden) chapters.

1.3 Overview of Ideology and Theories

1.3.1 Great Replacement Theory

The so-called Great Replacement Theory is positioned at the heart of GI’s ideology. It is a conspiracy theory which argues that certain groups – most often ‘the left-wing elite’ – are systematically changing the demographic composition of Western countries by deliberately replacing white people with people from a different cultural or ethnic background (AIVD 2023). This theory can be traced back to the French writer Renaud Camus, who popularised the idea in his 2011 book, “Le Grand Remplacement” (Counter Extremism Project, n.d.). Camus’s text posits that high levels of immigration – particularly from Muslim-majority countries – are directly causing the displacement of native European populations. Following its publication, the Great Replacement Theory gained traction in far-right circles and has since been promoted by various individuals and groups with nationalist and anti-immigrant agendas.

One key element of the Great Replacement conspiracy is the claim that native populations do not produce enough children to support population growth. This idea also appears across Europe within organizations such as the Political Network for Values, which convenes yearly worldwide. At their annual conference in Budapest, Hungary, in 2021, a Declaration on the Demographic Renewal of Europe was signed by political leaders, including Viktor Orbán. This Declaration places family policy as a central national prerogative and emphasizes the need for it to be framed around the traditions and culture of each country (Redacción 2021). Importance is placed not only on the ‘indigenous population’s’ decline and its replacement by immigrant groups but also on the degradation of the family unit – for which they blame ‘gender politics’ and feminism.

In France, the widespread adoption of the Great Replacement Theory can be linked to several factors, among which is the ambiguity of national, ethnic statistics, which have been illegal to collect since the Second World War. As a result, the state does not possess/publish an accurate, up-to-date measurement of the ethnic makeup of the population in France – thus leading to the circulation of unofficial, exaggerated demographic statistics by and amongst far-right activists

(Benveniste and Pingaud 2016, 73). This, along with the European Migration Crisis, has supported GI's claims that the Great Replacement is real – supporting their advocacy against the 'Islamification of Europe' and 'validating' their promotion of Remigration, Localism, and traditional family values (Ekman 2022, 1128). These harmful ideas have been directly linked to the commission of both terror and hate crimes in multiple countries (Vice News, 2022).

1.3.2 Remigration

The term 'remigration' first appeared within an English text during the 1600s and has since been used by social scientists to describe the voluntary return of migrants to their country of origin. However, since the 1960s, the concept has been misappropriated by far-right Identitarian movements that advocate for the 'repatriation' (i.e., deportation) of non-ethnically European migrants from Europe to their country of origin – irrespective of the citizenship status of these 'migrants.' This re-conceptualization of remigration seems like an effort by the far-right to change the framing of existing vocabulary, manipulate the narratives involved, and advance their interests – a tactic of use and reframing of human rights language, which we previously described in relation to the global "anti-gender" movement in our 2023 report (Justice for Prosperity, 2023). By attaching undemocratic ideas to originally democratic concepts - i.e., the forced return of migrants to their country of origin vs. the voluntary return of migrants - these movements avoid using socially controversial terminology - i.e., deportation or anti-immigration - which might deter public support. The concept of *Remigration* – once a fringe ideology – has become increasingly present within the mainstream political discourse and narrative. GI's initial inclusion of the term in its ideology popularised the concept across Europe to such an extent that mainstream European politicians are now using it.

Along this same line, GI seeks to gain support for its call for remigration, arguing that not only native populations would benefit from it but also the migrants who would be 'returned' to their states of origin (RMX News 2023, Global Project Against Hate and Extremism 2023).

Both in the Netherlands and in France, GI argues that migration contributes to the erosion of a country's national culture and politics, thus threatening national identity. In their declaration of principles, Identitaire Verzet claims that migrants, who often live in separate neighborhoods away from the 'native' population, will naturally organize together and penetrate Dutch society with their own cultural norms and political beliefs. For Identitaire Verzet, this stands true even if migrants successfully integrate into Dutch society as individuals. They write: "where two cultures mix, elements are always lost, and these unique cultural elements are worth preserving" (Identitaire Verzet, n.d.). Therefore, to benefit and preserve both the Dutch and migrant cultures as separate and distinct, migration should be tightly restricted, and migrants should be sent 'home.'

Beyond this line of argumentation, GI also uses migrants, particularly Muslims, as scapegoats to explain domestic socio-economic problems. Within the context of the migrant crisis, GI narratives emphasize a fear that native populations are simultaneously becoming minorities and victims in

their own countries. This rhetoric ironically characterizes immigrants as colonizers, with GI using war-related terminology like ‘imperialism’, ‘colonialism’, ‘terrorists’, and ‘collaborators’ when referring to migrants and their allies, and advancing arguments that native European populations are suffering from a loss of identity, the theft of their communities, and disruption of their social structures. For example, Identitair Verzet writes that “Islamic imperialism” must be stopped, that “radical imams” are spewing hatred and calling for a war against Europe, and that Dutch citizens who support the accommodation of Muslims in society are “collaborating” with the common enemy of Muslim terrorists (ibid).

This narrative is often fuelled by assertions that immigrants are stealing jobs from European natives, are engaged in criminal activities, and are committing acts of violence and oppression against white people (ibid; FranceInfo 2021). In France, GI focuses on the threat of terrorism within the Muslim community, laying blame for French terrorist attacks on the entire Muslim population. Their argument asserts that while not all Muslims are terrorists, the potential for violence is higher within their community – thus rendering all Muslims inherently dangerous (Moreau 2023).

This effort by current and former GI members to twist negative narratives into positive ones has been successful, and the reconceptualized version of remigration and its supporting argumentation has found a mainstream political platform with the rise in popularity of extreme-right populist parties across Europe. For example, the founder of Jongeren Forum voor Democratie (JFvD), Freek Jansen, openly adopts alt-right ideological viewpoints, including the Great Replacement Theory, and has openly advocated for the remigration of 4.7 million bi-cultural Dutch people in the Tweede Kamer (du Pre 2021). He argues that their removal would ensure that crime would disappear and economic growth would flourish: “without immigrants /.../ we would not have to sacrifice our natural and agricultural land for surplus housing”, and “girls could walk alone on the street without any worries” (ibid). Germany’s right-wing, anti-globalist AfD stands as another notable example. Despite having been implicated in a controversy over its promotion of remigration in early 2024, as of April 2024, AfD ranked as the most popular party among Germans under 30 years of age, with 22% of Germans aged 14-29 indicating that they would vote for the AfD if federal elections were held today (Semonsen 2024).

Remigration is a harmful, divisive, and invalid ideology for a wide range of reasons. Firstly, the legal implications of using the remigration ideology contradict human rights and international law. A large proportion of the people whom the Identitarian movement has earmarked for ‘remigration’ were born in Europe and have never lived in their designated ‘countries of origin.’ Others were born in a foreign country but possess citizenship in a European country. Such discourse was heavily prevalent at the November 2023 Potsdam Conference, where there was a discussion on the removal of German citizens (including those born in Germany) who are perceived to hold an ethnic background different from white Germans. The event was attended by members of the Identitarian Movement, such as Martin Sneller, and members of the AfD.

Nevertheless, the discourse surrounding remigration is fragmented and is rudimentary in illustrating the wider or more practical implications of enforcing this policy – allowing Identitarians to “intentionally create confusion about their positions by contradicting themselves and cleaning up their image” (Justice for Prosperity 2023). Identitarians, furthermore, utilize a few isolated cases to generalize a whole population without contextualizing their statements. For instance, structural discrimination and poor socio-economic standing have been proven to stimulate criminal activity more than ethno-religious background (Henderson 2024, Newburn 2016) – yet such findings are omitted from GI’s rhetoric.

1.3.3 Feminism and Nationalism

The Nemesis Association advocates for ‘Identitarian women’, denouncing all forms of violence against women – whether encountered in their daily lives, workplace, or on the streets (Nemesis, n.d.). They highlight the detrimental impact of mass immigration on Western women’s rights, aiming to prompt public discourse on this issue and to bring feminist women to support remigration (ibid). Additionally, Nemesis seeks to promote the ‘European civilization,’ emphasizing it not as a factor that reduces women to objects but as a tool for their emancipation (ibid). This group is popular, amounting to 66k followers on Twitter, while its current leader, Alice Cordier, is often invited to speak on French national TV channels known for their far-right opinions. This group is also linked to GI, often posting pictures and collaborating with old GI leaders.

These groups can also take the shape of institutions engaged in defending historical values, patrimony, and the European identity, and also include the Institut Iliade, which organized a colloquium day dedicated to the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the death of a far-right Islamophobic and anti-Semitic historian. The colloquium was prohibited from taking place by the French Minister of the Interior (Le Parisien 2023).

2. THE MODI OPERANDI

2.1 Language and Symbolism

GI uses strategic, emotional, and coded language that emphasizes its core values and narratives and appeals to individuals seeking a sense of belonging and purpose. While its language avoids explicit references to violence, it relies heavily on historical and war-related terminology to promote fear and hostility toward outsiders and legitimize exclusionary ideologies (Kaati et al. 2021).

A key element of GI's rhetoric is its focus on masculinity – particularly through conservative ideals of 'manliness'. This includes an emphasis on strength, health, and narratives related to war and military tradition. Individuals who fail to conform to these standards are often labeled as 'degenerates' – underscoring a social hierarchy that devalues those not adhering to these prescribed gender norms (Blum 2017, d'Escufon 2023). GI's traditional values are further demonstrated by their strong defense of European culture, traditional gender roles, and military history. The movement extensively uses military and historical language, starting with its logo and the Lambda symbol, which references the Spartan shield.



Figure 1: GI's Lambda Symbol Logo

Similarly, the American Identity Movement (former Identity Evropa), which formally disbanded in 2020, had the so-called Dragon's Eye symbol as its logo. As Carl G. Liungman's Dictionary of Symbols (1991) noted, the symbol merges the triangle, symbolizing 'threat', with the 'Y' representing a choice between good and evil. Identity Evropa came up with the slogan "You will not replace us", and so the choice between good and evil as conveyed through the use of the Dragon's Eye represents the white Europeans as the 'good' and immigrants/non-white people as the 'evil' which must be prevented from replacing the 'good'.



Figure 2: American Identity Movement's Dragon's Eye Logo

The rhetoric employed by GI is thus laced with metaphors of battle, strength, and survival, and the framing of their cause as a vital ‘fight for the survival of Europe’. This is not merely portrayed as a political struggle but a moral duty to protect European civilization from perceived threats, including immigrants and those who do not align with their socially conservative ideals (Nissen 2020). The use of militaristic language helps to portray GI’s actions as noble and necessary, increasing the emotional appeal and commitment of their members.

GI also frequently adopts a lexicon with medieval connotations to evoke ideas of defense and fortification. This can be seen in the names of various far-right nationalist groups across France, such as La Citadelle (the Identitarian group in Lille) and Les Remparts (the Identitarian group in Lyon). Both names refer to defense mechanisms – La Citadelle evokes the sophisticated fortifications of Lille built under Louis XIV, and Les Remparts translates to “the fortifications,” – further reinforcing the narrative of defending Europe against outside threats (Global Project Against Hate and Extremism 2024).



Figure 3: La Citadelle’s Logo



Figure 4: Lyon’s Identity Branch Logo

By intertwining their language with militaristic and historical imagery, GI fosters a sense of urgency and the importance of their cause—thus galvanizing supporters through both fear and the promise of restoring traditional values. This linguistic approach helps to normalize exclusionary and far-right ideologies under the guise of defending national identity and European heritage.

2.2 Social Media and Digital Footprint as a Medium of Radicalisation

Social media is crucial in far-right radicalization, including in GI’s activities. It serves a dual purpose – it allows individuals with similar ideologies to connect and exchange ideas while providing a platform for GI to propagate its narratives to a larger audience. Campaigns such as the

2017 Defend Europe initiative illustrate social media's effectiveness in amplifying GI's message. This campaign gained substantial visibility beyond its original audience through word of mouth, social media promotion, and traditional media coverage (Gregory 2019, Townsend 2017).

However, GI is cautious and committed to maintaining a low digital footprint to avoid traceability. Most of their actions and interactions are planned offline to minimize online visibility and reduce risk. This approach aligns with findings from the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service, which notes that right-wing extremism often involves a fluid mix of online and offline activity – with relationships between different groups and individuals characterized as loose and adaptable (AIVD, 2018). Therefore, GI's use of social media primarily attracts attention and new members, while further coordination occurs through encrypted communication channels.

GI relies on encrypted applications such as Telegram and platforms with more lenient policies to limit exposure to mainstream platforms that regulate hate speech. Until 2023, VKontakte – a Russian social media network – was a preferred medium for GI and similar groups, enabling them to evade restrictions on Facebook and other Western platforms (Makuch 2024). However, due to geopolitical developments such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, VKontakte is no longer accessible in countries such as The Netherlands, thus forcing GI to shift to other services like Telegram (Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, 2020). On Telegram, GI and similar movements organize themselves anonymously and covertly, often deleting and recreating accounts on platforms, which include TikTok and Instagram, to evade bans.

Despite these efforts to remain anonymous, GI still benefits from the broad reach and polarizing nature of platforms such as X (formerly Twitter). Polarisation is central to GI's strategy, as the movement thrives on confronting the perceived 'other pole'. Prominent GI members, such as Damien Rieu in France, are highly active on X, where they engage in heated debates with Muslim or foreign-born individuals, frequently leveraging inflammatory content to amplify the 'us versus them' narrative (@Damien.Rieu,n.d). This confrontational approach increases GI's message's visibility while fostering further polarization and radicalization among their followers.

Through these online activities, GI has maintained a strong digital presence while carefully navigating social media restrictions. Their skillful use of digital platforms allows them to reach new audiences, stoke fear, and propagate their exclusionary ideologies while minimizing their exposure to moderation efforts.

2.3 Case-study: Social Media's Role in the Dissemination of the Great Replacement Theory

2.3.1 The Spread of Great Replacement Theory in the Netherlands

In the Dutch political landscape, social media has fuelled the spread of the Great Replacement Theory, aligning with rising right-wing populism and amplifying debates over migration, national identity, and cultural preservation. Far-right politicians like Geert Wilders of the PVV and Thierry

Baudet of the FvD have mainstreamed replacement narratives, leveraging social media to spread anti-immigration and anti-Islamic rhetoric by invoking cultural nostalgia and presenting immigration as a threat to Dutch values. Bypassing traditional media, they engage directly with followers, framing migration as an existential threat, which resonates particularly with younger audiences susceptible to emotionally charged messaging. Growing mistrust in mainstream media reinforces this trend, leading alternative influencers to position themselves as “truth-tellers” in echo chambers where sensationalist narratives are legitimized.

Specific social media trends have furthered support for the Great Replacement Theory in the Netherlands. For example, memes like Facebook and Instagram simplify replacement narratives, portraying immigrants as a ‘threat’ to Dutch traditions, often invoking iconic symbols such as Sinterklaas celebrations and windmills. Viral hashtags like #EigenVolkEerst (Our People First) and #NederlandWeerVanOns (Netherlands Back to Us) have trended on X, encouraging nationalistic sentiments and creating online communities around shared opposition to immigration. TikTok has also seen an increase in videos warning about the “Islamization” of Dutch cities, with “before and after” footage that exaggerates demographic changes, often using misleading statistics.

Replacement theory narratives tap into concerns about preserving Dutch heritage, framing multiculturalism as incompatible with Dutch society and bolstering calls for restrictive immigration policies. This persistent presence on social media has normalized anti-immigration rhetoric, bringing replacement theory from the fringes to mainstream Dutch discourse and influencing public opinion, as even centrist politicians adopt stricter stances. During election cycles, these narratives impact policy debates on asylum, housing, and labor, as populist parties frame housing shortages and labor competition as exacerbated by immigration. The organizational power of social media has enabled far-right groups to mobilize, rally supporters, and pressure leaders to address their concerns. Consequently, social media’s amplification of replacement narratives dovetails with far-right political goals, embedding these ideas into Dutch public and policy discussions on migration and cultural preservation (de Keulenaar and Tuters 2023, Davey and Ebner 2019). More on the development of these narratives in the Netherlands can be found in Chapter 4 where analysis is shared from the WhoDis-methodology

2.3.2 The Spread of the Great Replacement Theory in Belgium

In Belgium, social media has played a crucial role in spreading the Great Replacement Theory, echoing the rise of right-wing populism and intensifying debates over migration, national identity, and cultural preservation. Far-right parties such as Vlaams Belang and nationalist figures like Filip Dewinter have used social media to mainstream replacement narratives, amplifying anti-immigration and anti-Islamic rhetoric that portrays migration as a direct threat to Belgian culture and identity, particularly within Flanders. Bypassing traditional media, these politicians connect directly with followers, framing migration as an existential danger to Belgium, especially to Flemish heritage, which resonates with younger and more politically disengaged audiences drawn

to emotionally charged, divisive messaging. This trend is compounded by growing mistrust in mainstream media, with alternative influencers positioning themselves as “truth-tellers” in online spaces where sensationalist replacement narratives circulate unchallenged.

In Belgium, specific social media trends have furthered support for the Great Replacement Theory. For instance, hashtags like #EigenVolkEerst (Our People First) and #StopIslamisering (Stop Islamization) trend on platforms like Twitter (X) and Facebook, fostering nationalist sentiments and forming online communities focused on opposing immigration. Meme culture on Instagram and Facebook presents replacement narratives in a simplified, often humorous format, portraying immigrants as a ‘threat’ to Flemish or Belgian traditions, invoking symbols like the Manneken Pis statue, waffles, and Flemish flags to rally support. Viral TikTok videos also emphasize this narrative, showing “before and after” images of Belgian neighborhoods, sometimes exaggerating the presence of mosques or cultural symbols associated with North African communities, to stoke fears of ‘Islamization’. These trends create an ecosystem where concerns over Belgian identity are linked to conspiracy-driven, anti-immigration messages.

Such narratives tap into deep-seated fears about preserving Belgian, and particularly Flemish, cultural heritage, depicting multiculturalism as incompatible with local values and intensifying calls for stricter immigration policies. This persistent presence on social media has normalized anti-immigration rhetoric, bringing replacement theory narratives from the far-right into mainstream Belgian discourse, where they influence public opinion and, in turn, pressure centrist politicians to adopt more restrictive stances on migration to align with public sentiment. During election periods, such narratives shape policy debates on housing, social benefits, and employment, with populist parties attributing issues like housing shortages and labour competition to immigration. Social media also enables far-right groups to organize online and mobilize offline, gathering support for protests and actions centred on replacement themes and putting pressure on political leaders to address these concerns.

In this way, social media’s amplification of the Great Replacement Theory in Belgium has dovetailed with the objectives of far-right political actors, embedding these ideas in Belgian public and policy discourse on migration, identity, and cultural preservation. The narrative has shifted from fringe conspiracies to influential elements of mainstream discussion, impacting both public attitudes and policy direction across the country (Ekman 2022).

2.3.3 The Spread of the Great Replacement Theory in France

In the French political landscape, social media has been instrumental in spreading the Great Replacement Theory, aligning with right-wing populism and intensifying debates around migration, national identity, and preserving French culture. Far-right figures like Marine Le Pen of the RN and Éric Zemmour have mainstreamed elements of the theory, using social media to amplify anti-immigration and anti-Islamic narratives that frame migration as a direct threat to French identity. Bypassing traditional media, they engage directly with followers and a growing

mistrust in mainstream media further fuels this trend, leading alternative influencers to position themselves as ‘truth-tellers’ in online echo chambers where sensationalist narratives are legitimized (France24, 2021).

Specific social media trends in France have furthered support for the Great Replacement Theory. For instance, popular hashtags like #Remigration (Return Migration) and #SauvonsLaFrance (Save France) have trended on platforms like Twitter (X), rallying nationalist sentiments and creating online communities centered on opposition to immigration. Meme culture, especially on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, has been used to simplify and propagate replacement narratives, presenting immigrants as a ‘threat’ to French traditions and symbolizing the theory through iconic French elements, such as baguettes, berets, and the Eiffel Tower. Viral TikTok videos further amplify this trend, showing “before and after” depictions of French neighborhoods to exaggerate demographic changes, often featuring images of mosques or cultural symbols associated with North African communities to reinforce the fear of ‘Islamization.’

These narratives tap into fears about the preservation of French heritage, portraying multiculturalism as incompatible with French values and intensifying calls for stricter immigration policies. This normalization of anti-immigration rhetoric has brought replacement theory narratives from the far-right into mainstream French discourse, influencing public opinion and even pressuring centrist politicians to adopt more restrictive stances on migration. During election cycles, such narratives shape policy debates around housing, employment, and social benefits, with populist parties framing issues like job competition and housing shortages as exacerbated by immigration. Social media has further enabled far-right groups to organize and mobilize online and offline, with rallies and protests centering on replacement theory themes and exerting pressure on political leaders to address these concerns. In this way, social media’s amplification of the Great Replacement Theory has dovetailed with far-right political objectives in France, embedding these ideas in the nation’s public and policy discussions on migration, identity, and cultural preservation.

2.4 Sports: Social Bonding and Combat Training

Right-wing extremist groups, particularly through the “Active Club” network, have increasingly used sports as a strategic means to recruit, radicalize, and foster support, particularly among youth. The Active Club network organizes activities such as martial arts, fitness, and soccer to create a sense of camaraderie and belonging, bonding members through shared physical challenges and instilling loyalty that makes them more open to extremist ideologies. These sports clubs appeal to vulnerable youth, especially those seeking structure or identity, who are drawn to activities promoting discipline and strength; through these interactions, new members are subtly exposed to narratives of racial purity and nationalism. Martial arts and combat sports are especially popular within this network, as they promote a warrior mentality while subtly preparing members for potential violence, which is framed as necessary to defend their race or nation. The Active Club network extends its reach by infiltrating broader athletic communities, participating in local events,

and using social media to appear as legitimate sports clubs, attracting followers who might not initially identify with their ideology.

Additionally, on social media, club members can be found wearing gear bearing coded white supremacist symbols or slogans, signaling affiliation and drawing interest from outsiders. On an international scale, these clubs network with like-minded groups through events, exchanging ideas and reinforcing their shared extremist culture. Furthermore, the network capitalizes on “alt-right fitness” trends online, promoting self-improvement through fitness while subtly embedding rhetoric on racial superiority and “strength in purity”. Through these activities, the Active Club network normalizes extremism within a fitness and sports context, allowing right-wing extremist to spread under the guise of health and empowerment, thereby expanding their influence across communities (Vice News 2023, OPB 2023, WUSF 2023).

Social media also plays a crucial role in this aspect of GI’s operation. The movement strategically uses social media platforms to attract individuals to its sports clubs and activities, creating a gateway for recruitment and indoctrination. Social media enables GI to broadcast messages framing these activities as vital components of ‘defending Europe’ from perceived external threats. Through visually engaging content, including action shots, event announcements, and symbols associated with strength and resilience, GI appeals to a sense of empowerment and camaraderie, especially among young Europeans. By presenting sports activities as part of a larger mission to ‘preserve European identity’, GI taps into nationalist sentiments, making these activities appear socially engaging and ideologically meaningful (ibid).

Far-right groups often use specific coded language in fitness circles to subtly promote extremist ideologies while avoiding explicit terms that might raise suspicion. Here are some common keywords and phrases that can be found used to spread far-right sentiments under the guise of fitness:

- *Kameraden* (Comrades): Commonly used to signal unity and shared purpose.
- *Trainen voor de strijd* (Training for the fight/struggle): Implies physical preparation for an ideological conflict.
- *Zelfverdediging* (Self-defense): Often a euphemism for combat training.
- *Krijgskunst* or *vechtsport* (Martial arts or combat sports): Phrasing used to describe physical training, often with militant undertones.
- *Patriottisme* (Patriotism): Often emphasized to invoke loyalty to perceived "traditional" values.
- *Nationale identiteit beschermen* (Protect national identity): Suggests a commitment to an exclusionary version of national pride.
- *Volksvijand* (Enemy of the people): Refers to those perceived as threats to their ideological views.

It seems these keywords provide a means for far-right groups to subtly weave ideological elements into fitness communities, using positive or aspirational language to attract followers who may be unaware of the underlying agenda.

Sports play a crucial role in GI's strategy towards young men, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting physical preparedness for 'defending the nation.' Sports activities, particularly combat sports, are tailored to appeal to young white men by emphasizing traditional masculine ideals of strength, fitness, and virility. These ideals mirror historical fascist movements and align with GI's broader narratives of 'manliness' and the perceived threat to white male dominance from other races (Grix and Harris 2016).

The emphasis on physical fitness serves both ideological and practical purposes. Fitness and combat training are presented as necessary for self-defense and for defending European nations against perceived threats, such as migrants and non-European populations. This focus on combat sports, alongside re-enactments of war scenarios with fake weapons, reinforces GI's militaristic framing, encouraging members to view themselves as soldiers in a fight for the survival of their race and culture.

Sports, however, are not just about physical training but also serve as a tool for building social bonds within GI. They offer an environment where individuals can form connections, share a sense of unity, and develop camaraderie based on shared ideologies and physical experiences. For instance, the French branch of GI previously hosted a "summer university" and training camps, which attracted not only French members but also participants from the Dutch and English branches (Dearden 2017, The New Arab 2019). Even after the banning of GI in France, such camps reportedly continued under the guise of charity projects – providing a platform for ideological and physical training (Le Point 2021).

These sports camps and gatherings have been replicated in other countries and include events such as Hungary's "autumn gathering" – which helped reinforce GI's message of unity and belonging across national chapters. GI fosters a tight-knit community through these activities, which is instrumental in the radicalization process. Sports camps offer participants a structured, immersive experience where they can strengthen their ideological commitment while bonding with fellow members – reinforcing a collective sense of purpose. This creates a powerful social dynamic, ensuring loyalty to the movement and making it more challenging for individuals to disengage.

2.5 Active Clubs

Although not officially related, we have found signs that active European clubs have links with GI. Various TikTok accounts have been identified as promoting "Active Club Dietsland", often based in certain geographical locations in the Netherlands and Flanders. A review of Active Club Dietsland's TikTok account in Limburg in November 2023 revealed that many of its followers were affiliated with GI. However, it is challenging to analyze such social media accounts and the

networks since they are often banned from the platforms and are then frequently deleted and reformed under different names to avoid enforcement and restrictions on hate speech by the concerned social media platforms.

The Active Club Global network had dramatic growth in 2023, forming 149 chapters across 21 countries, with 100 of those chapters located outside of the United States (Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, 2023). Active Clubs have been established in multiple locations across the Netherlands and France. The above-mentioned Active Club Dietsland, located in the Netherlands, is an outlet of the Active Club Global Network, which has different regional factions and promotes their ideology through combat sports.

The origin of the name derives from the concept of ‘Dietsland,’ as well as that of ‘Groot Nederland’ (Great Netherlands). It focuses on the idea of unifying the Netherlands and the province of Flanders in Belgium due to their shared Dutch language. It seems this ideology has been adopted by some in the far-right movement also due to the concept of Dietsland having links with Lebensraum – the concept within Nazi ideology propagating the establishment of a “living community” by conquering lands belonging to other peoples to populate them with ethnic Germans and expand Germany’s territory. In the Netherlands, Active Club Dietsland displays the Prince's Flag (*Prinsenvlag*) – a historical flag used by Prince William of Orange, but also associated with the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging (National-Socialist Movement) - Dutch collaborators with the Nazis during the Second World War.

As seen from a post of the Active Club Dietsland Telegram Group, in order to become members, candidates must be “*Blank, (Europees) van bloed, geest en ziel*”, translated to “White, (European) in blood, mind and soul”.

The following picture contains a message by Active Club Dietsland describing the criteria for becoming a member:

- White (European), in blood, spirit and soul
- Experience in a combat sport (MMA, kickboxing etc.)
- Experience with lifting or calisthenics
- Pro-white worldview and self-improving
- Happy to invest time

Bonus points:

- 185cm+
- 80 kilo +
- Non-smoker, non-drinker
- Creative



Figure 5: Photo Posted on Active Club Dietsland's Telegram Account

Source: Active Club Dietsland Telegram Account December 2023

2.6 Summary of Generation Identity's Modi Operandi

In conclusion, GI's various social influence strategies effectively attract individuals into their organization. GI's tactics, including targeted communication, language framing, and sports for social bonding, work together to build a sense of belonging among disaffected individuals. They skillfully exploit societal fears, particularly targeting white middle-class men who feel alienated by changes in modern society. GI fosters polarization and radicalization through these tactics by appealing to individuals' need for purpose and identity. Coded language, which emphasizes masculinity and war-like imagery combined with social media outreach, ensures that GI maintains both reach and discretion. Physical gatherings such as sports camps provide not only combat training but also a space for building transactional connections and reinforcing the group's collective identity. These various aspects of GI's strategy highlight its ability to adapt and evolve using various methods to ensure continued relevance and influence.

Social media is the crucial connective tissue that enables GI to unify and amplify its recruitment and influence strategies. Using platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, GI reaches a large, often younger audience, skillfully deploying visual media and targeted messaging to enhance its appeal and promote events. Social media also allows GI to frame its sports activities, training camps, and gatherings as exciting and purpose-driven, aligning them with a 'defending European identity' mission. This platform-based outreach enables GI to expand its influence rapidly across borders, targeting disaffected individuals in multiple countries who may feel aligned with GI's cultural and national preservation narrative.

Moreover, social media provides GI with an inexpensive, accessible, and far-reaching means to manage public perception, convey unity, and obscure the movement's radical elements. Through well-curated content, GI masks extremist narratives within seemingly benign or patriotic imagery, employing coded language and symbolism that resonates with targeted audiences without triggering moderation from the platforms. This enables GI to build and maintain a public-facing image that is cohesive yet ambiguous enough to evade scrutiny, making social media an indispensable tool in their ongoing strategy of recruitment, indoctrination, and normalization of far-right ideologies within mainstream and fringe digital spaces.

3. POLITICAL INFLUENCE

3.1 Introduction

Despite their reported criminal activities, alarming evidence linking GI to political parties across Europe has been reported. These ties have reportedly manifested at various levels and include shared ideologies, overlapping narratives, vocal public support for political parties by GI members, and even the employment of GI members by national political parties. Moreover, political representatives have been reported socializing in spaces owned and run by GI. While the ideological alignment between members of GI and national or European parliaments may not be surprising, the willingness of political figures to work alongside and associate with individuals known for their extremist and criminal activities is highly concerning.

In this following section, we explore the ideological overlaps between GI and some far-right political parties. It highlights the personal and professional connections between GI members and political representatives across the Netherlands, France, and Belgium. The findings lead to a critical question: Are our political representatives being influenced by violent extremists, and what does this mean for the future of European politics?

3.2 Political Context

In France, immigration has been a central issue in the political discourse for longer than in most European nations. This prominence is partly due to France's two-round, winner-takes-all electoral system, which has contributed to growing polarization between left- and right-wing ideologies. As a result, immigration-focused legislative changes have been prominent in shaping French political dynamics (Guiraudon 2001). A key moment in France's immigration debate occurred in 2010 when the country became the first in Europe to ban the burqa, igniting nationwide discussions about immigration, nationalism, and religious freedom (Robine 2010). The pressure from the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis, alongside the wave of terrorist attacks that killed over 230 people between 2015 and 2016, has further fuelled Islamophobic and anti-immigrant sentiments across the countr

y (ICMPD, n.d.). This increasing polarisation was evident during the 2022 French Presidential elections, where far-right rhetoric saw significant traction. The 2017 front-runners, Emmanuel Macron of Renaissance (27.9%) and Marine Le Pen of the National Rally (23.2%) were joined by populist newcomer Eric Zemmour of Reconquest (7.1%) – a controversial figure having criminal convictions for inciting racial hatred and inflammatory comments about immigrants. With these developments, radical right-wing parties garnered a collective 30% of the vote – thus signaling that far-right ideology had firmly entered the French political mainstream (Jacobin 2022, Green European Journal 2022).

In November 2023, Geert Wilders' far-right party, PVV, secured a dramatic victory in the Dutch General Election, gaining 37 seats out of 150, thus more than doubling their previous

representation. This result seems part of a broader trend of far-right electoral success across Europe. The rise of far-right political movements in the Netherlands can be traced back to the early 2000s with figures such as Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders, who publicly vilified Muslims and fostered anti-immigrant sentiment. Wilders, in particular, gained notoriety for comparing the Quran to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* at a rally in The Hague in 2014, where he also called for a reduction in Moroccan immigrants. Although criminally convicted for inciting discrimination, Wilders remains a powerful figure in Dutch politics, culminating in his 2023 electoral triumph.

GI and similar Identitarian Movements have not invented these far-right narratives but have skilfully harnessed the growing anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim sentiments in Europe. GI has successfully amplified and mainstreamed its exclusionary ideologies across the continent by leveraging relationships with political figures such as Wilders and capitalizing on events that stoke public fear or outrage.

3.3 Transnationally-Shared Ideology

Anti-government activities under the umbrella of far-right ideology feed into growing support for far-right movements across Europe. In November 2023, police in Flanders arrested several individuals for planning an attack intended to instigate racial hatred within Belgium (De Standaard, 2023). These individuals were affiliated with "The Base" – an extremist group founded in North America that aims to create a "white ethnostate" (Struys 2023). Several individuals were also convicted for terrorism for their participation this group in 2021 in the Netherlands, and as recent as August this year, several men were arrested in three small towns for their membership of The Base – the neo-nazi group was deemed a terrorist organization by the EU this year (NOS, 2024). These incidents highlight a connection between the Netherlands and Dutch-speaking Belgium (Flanders) – particularly regarding ideology and the spread and influence of ideological networks. A specific concept prevalent within alt-right movements in the Netherlands and Belgium is a common belief in the concept of Dietsland, which refers to a vision of a pan-Dutch-speaking ethno-state.

Social media platforms allow groups like The Base to disseminate propaganda, recruit members, and coordinate activities beyond national borders by providing an accessible, often unregulated space. These online networks reinforce shared narratives and unify isolated extremists, creating cross-border ideological ties that can lead to real-world actions, as seen in Flanders and arrests in the Netherlands linked to The Base. This interconnected online landscape allows far-right ideologies to flourish, embedding narratives that exploit racial and cultural tensions across regions with similar cultural ties.

Despite this array of criminal activity which can be traced back to the Identitarian Movement and the subsequent banning of GI in France, prominent GI members continue to protest and engage in provocative behavior also transnationally. Most recently, GI leaders gathered in Brussels on 21

October 2023, now under the collective name of Action Radar Europe (ibid). This demonstrates that GI is attempting to reformulate itself, especially in anticipation of the success of the far-right political wing in the June 2024 European Parliamentary elections.

Within the Netherlands, the ideas of Identitair Verzet are no longer exclusive to far-right organizations but have now been adopted by prominent far-right political parties such as PVV and FvD. In France, too, Identitarian ideology pervades the manifestos of many mainstream political parties, including Le Pen's RN, Zemmour's Reconquête, Ciotti's Les Republicains, and even self-proclaimed centrist Emmanuel Macron's Renaissance Party.

The hijacking of isolated societal cases and their usage to spread the idea of 'anti-white racism' is emerging as a theme increasingly utilized to evoke support for the Identitarian Movement. In light of the death of 16-year-old Thomas, murdered in November 2023 in Crépol, in Drôme, the alt-right has exploited conflicting stories of this incident under the guise of emphasizing the occurrence of anti-white racism. In response, claims of legitimacy towards the concept of anti-white racism are gaining increasing occurrence amongst members affiliated with the French political establishment. The most high-profile member to legitimize this concept is Eduard Philippe, former French Prime Minister during Emmanuel Macron's first term as Prime Minister between 2017 and 2020 (Stainville and Torres, 2023).

3.4 Immigration/Remigration

In 2014, RN campaigned for an immediate reduction in immigration – calling for a ban on automatic immigration rights to join family, an end to the EU Schengen area, zero tolerance to illegal immigration, restricted rights to citizenship, the banning of dual-nationality for non-Europeans, the prioritization of French citizens for jobs and social housing, and the deportation of foreign criminals. The harmful narratives employed to defend these policies largely targeted Muslims and reflected those advanced by GI France through appeals to gender equality, the prevention of Islamist terrorism, and the preservation of the French cultural identity. Marine Le Pen, for instance, referred to the headscarf as an “Islamist uniform”, stating that “the migration crisis marks the beginning of the end of women's rights” (Breteau and Laurent 2016).

Zemmour's Reconquête furthers this line, openly endorsing the Great Replacement Theory. During the 2022 French election campaign, Zemmour pledged to “save France, so that our children and grandchildren do not know barbarism, so that our daughters are not veiled, that our sons are not subjugated /.../ So that we can preserve our way of life /.../ So that the French remain French.” (Lair 2021). Like GI, Zemmour links the Great Replacement to Islam, highlighting Islamization as the greatest national threat and campaigning for the ban of headscarves in public places, stricter controls on imams, and a ban on traditional Muslim names such as Muhammed.

These narratives similarly pervade Dutch politics. In their 2023 party program, PVV asserted that “the unlimited influx of asylum seekers” has to stop for three reasons: firstly, it threatens Dutch

culture and the Western way of life; secondly, it puts pressure on the welfare state, including education and healthcare systems which “cannot support the influx of additional foreigners”; and thirdly, that immigration is unaffordable, costing “the Dutch taxpayer 24 billion euros per year” (Partij voor de Vrijheid, n.d., 6). Using similar language to Identitair Verzet, the PVV specifically denounces the ‘Islamization’ of Dutch society, and posits that the Netherlands needs to be ‘reconquered’ (ibid, 3 6, 8, 13, 14).

In a slightly softer approach, FvD campaigned against “underprivileged immigrants and asylum seekers from non-Western countries” who erode the welfare state, degrade the quality of education and undermine the Dutch cultural identity, but was in favor of migration “aimed at strengthening the Dutch economy and society” where “cultural compatibility” with Dutch society is taken into account (Forum voor Democratie, n.d.). Reference to the Great Replacement Theory is not made as explicitly as in France or by Identitair Verzet, but is implied through specific political statements relating to the demographic makeup of the Netherlands. For example, FvD claims that the “continuation of /the current migration/ policy” would lead to 40% of the Dutch population becoming immigrants by 2050 (ibid.). FvD’s youth division (the JFvD, Jongeren Forum voor Democratie) is even less restrained in advocating for the Great Replacement and remigration and argues that “without immigrants /.../ we would not have to sacrifice our natural and agricultural land for surplus housing”, and that “girls could walk alone on the street without any worries” (Volkskrant 2021). In France and the Netherlands, immigration and remigration are central themes in far-right politics – heavily influenced by the ideologies promoted by GI and similar movements.

The AfD Remigration event in November 2023 in Germany (attended by Martin Sneller) represents that phenomenon. Similarly, after its success at the 2024 EP elections, Austria’s far-right Freedom Party called for the government to name an EU “remigration” commissioner (Euractiv, 2024). After winning the same elections, the EP’s far-right parliamentary groups considered using remigration as part of its political discourse (The Guardian, 2024). In the Netherlands, some new PVV cabinet ministers were reported to believe in the Great Replacement theory and have promoted it, something they deny doing (De Volkskrant, 2024).

These political parties across Europe share a focus on immigration as a threat to national identity, often using fear-mongering narratives that mirror those promoted by GI, intensifying xenophobia, and promoting exclusionary policies. They are also increasingly gaining support across Europe. This is demonstrated by the growing support of the far-right by young people under 35 years old in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and Germany. If only people under 35 voted in the last Dutch parliamentary election, Geert Wilders would have won 41 seats instead of 37 seats out of a total of 150 seats available (Politico 2023; DW 2023). In the 2022 French presidential runoff, Marine Le Pen won 39% of votes from people aged 18-24 and 49% of those aged 25-34. In Belgium, the far-right populist party, Vlaams Belang, has been polling at above 25% ahead of the regional, national and EU elections in June 2024. However, while youth, Gen-Z men backed such

far-right parties (with 32% voting for Vlaams Belang), only 9% of Gen-Z women did same (Cokelaere and Hartog 2024).

However, it is essential to note that many (if not all) of the concepts/ideas/theories employed by the far-right political parties mentioned above have originated and been publically disseminated by the strategic use of social media platforms by far-right groups such as GI. This pertains to RN's use of the Great Replacement narrative, to Vlaams Belang's incorporation of language that emphasizes Flemish identity – drawn on GI's ideas of 'cultural preservation', and to AfD's usage of terms that emphasize cultural purity and resistance to foreign influence, which align with GI's 'us versus them' narrative targeting non-European migrants. Across these countries, social media has played a crucial role in normalizing these ideas within public discourse, allowing them to transition from fringe groups to mainstream political rhetoric. Parties use platforms like TikTok and X (formerly Twitter) to appeal to younger audiences by packaging these ideas in accessible and appealing formats, further widening their impact and normalising far-right ideologies in the political mainstream (Vinocur and Vouru-Laffont 2023; Goujard, Braun and Scott 2024; Cokelaere and Haeck 2024)

3.5 Anti-EU Ideology

Apart from shared views on migration, the PVV and FvD also echo GI's anti-EU stance. Like Identitair Verzet, both parties view the EU as a burdensome institution eroding national sovereignty and call for a potential "Nexit" or the Netherlands' exit from the EU. This aligns with the Identitarian criticism of the EU as a globalist entity infringing upon member states' autonomy.

In France, similar Euroscepticism is evident in the ideology of both RN and Reconquête. Marine Le Pen, leading the RN, has consistently advocated for France to regain national control from the EU. In 2014, she proposed renegotiating EU treaties for France to reclaim its national sovereignty, control its borders, and possibly leave the Eurozone. By 2017, Le Pen called for a referendum on France's EU membership ("Frexit") – mirroring Brexit's push for national independence. Although Le Pen's RN garnered the most votes in the 2019 European Parliament elections, her stance softened after Brexit. She no longer advocates for Frexit but maintains opposition to the EU's economic influence (Cottin 2019).

Eric Zemmour's Reconquête also shares this Euro-scepticism, even though his 2022 campaign did not call for a French exit from the EU. Instead, Zemmour criticized the EU as an institution led by "abstract elites" and highlighted the importance of preventing further expansion (Basso 2022). He focused on restoring French legal primacy, renegotiating the Schengen agreements, and, if necessary, withdrawing from the European Convention on Human Rights. Like Le Pen, Zemmour's anti-globalist platform positioned the EU as a barrier to national sovereignty and cultural preservation, promoting a protectionist economic approach to shield France from global markets (ibid).

These Eurosceptic sentiments across the Netherlands and France showcase the far right's broader strategy of reclaiming national sovereignty. They frame the EU as a threat to autonomy and cultural identity, also in line with the Identitarian agenda.

3.6 Traditional Family Values

The concept of Traditional Family Values has become a prominent theme in the far-right discourse. It is used to promote a reactionary vision of a society where women are relegated to traditional, subordinate roles within the family unit. This emphasis coincides with broader demographic trends across the EU, where the average age at which women have their first child has steadily increased. At the same time, the Total Fertility Rate has declined over the past decade. These demographic shifts have been framed as part of a 'crisis' by far-right movements, and populist leaders such as Viktor Orbán in Hungary have capitalized on these concerns by pushing pro-natalist policies. In Hungary, for instance, the Minister for Family Affairs (at the time, Katalin Novak) has advocated for policies aimed at boosting fertility rates – such as financial incentives for large families – in an attempt to reverse these trends and promote national identity (DW 2020, Politico 2020).

3.7 Generation Identity's Ties with National Parliaments

Although GI members were officially expelled from the RN in 2018 as part of Marine Le Pen's broader effort to 'de-demonise' the party, evidence suggests this separation was not as clean as it appeared. Despite the official expulsion, GI members reportedly continued to attend RN events, and some even assumed official party roles. This lingering association highlights the ideological alignment between GI and RN, even as the latter attempted to present a more moderate image to the public (Al-Jazeera 2018).

When GI was banned by French authorities in 2021, Le Pen intensified her public condemnation of the group, vowing to expel any remaining party members with ties to the Identitarians. This move was part of her strategy to distance the RN from extremism and make the party more palatable to mainstream voters. In contrast, far-right rival Eric Zemmour openly denounced the ban on GI and welcomed former group members into his party, Reconquête. This signaled his endorsement of GI's ideology and created a new political home for ex-Identitarians, further blurring the lines between the Identitarian Movement and France's far-right political sphere (ibid).

Therefore, Zemmour's stance on GI highlights the persistence of Identitarian influence in French politics, even as Le Pen publicly sought to distance herself from the group. This division between the RN and Reconquête demonstrates the complexities of far-right politics in France, where attempts to sanitize the image of certain parties coexist with the continued radicalization of others.

GI co-founder and spokesperson Damien Rieu exemplifies the complex overlap between the Identitarian Movement and far-right politics in France. Rieu joined the Front National Jeunesse (FNJ) at just 17 before leaving to co-found GI. Despite being sentenced to imprisonment for his

role in GI's notorious "Defend Europe" campaign in 2017, Rieu's political influence continued to grow. He later served as an aide to prominent RN figures such as Marion Maréchal (now a member of Reconquête), and was a parliamentary assistant to both Gilbert Collard and Philippe Olivier – two key RN members who eventually joined Reconquête. With a large following on social media platforms like YouTube and Twitter, totaling 242,000, Rieu played a visible role in rallying for Zemmour's Reconquête during the 2022 presidential campaign. This seamless transition between far-right political parties and the Identitarian Movement we believe illustrates the deep personal and ideological connections between GI and French far-right politics (ibid).

Another significant example is Aurelien Verhassel, the leader of GI's Lille chapter and manager of the La Citadelle bar – a well-known Identitarian hub. Verhassel's involvement with the RN was revealed in Al Jazeera's "Generation Hate" documentary, where he claimed to work secretly in political communications for the RN. To his account, this included editing speeches and handling communications for elected officials despite the RN's official disassociation from GI. Verhassel also claimed to have the power to secure party jobs for his peers. RN leader Marine Le Pen denied these claims, but personal text messages between Verhassel and RN spokesperson Sébastien Chenu suggest a closer relationship than Le Pen admitted. Following the documentary, Verhassel was sentenced to five months in prison for assaulting two North African youths, and GI distanced itself from him. Despite the shutdown of La Citadelle following GI's ban in 2021, the bar has since reopened. It remains active, portraying itself on Instagram as a hub for a "rooted & patriotic community" – a clear continuation of the Identitarian Movement's ideology.

These cases underline how the Identitarian Movement, even when officially disavowed, continues to infiltrate and influence far-right political circles in France (ibid).

4. Polarization and its Benefactors

Politics and extremist organizations sometimes mix because the same people are openly associated with them. However, as we described in this report—and we first introduced it in 2023 in relation to the “anti-gender” movement—these associations are often less visible because they happen below the surface, a tactic intentionally used by some actors. Even more challenging is when they appear to use the same language and narratives. Easily dismissed as a “coincidence,” a “misunderstanding,” or as “taken out of context,” Great Replacement Theory, nativist, nationalist, white supremacist, anti-Semitic, and anti-LGBTIQ+ ideas are mainstreamed through ambiguous language by entities with some democratic credentials, that seem to violate a slew of norms. Vitriolic, toxic, and even hate speech messages, conspiracy theories, and “alternative facts” are used by some intentionally, by others, without even knowing. Lines can be blurry, like a recent example from the Netherlands shows us.

On 1 September 2024, in a well known venue in Amsterdam the Rode Hoed (Red Hat), Nieuw Sociaal Contract (NSC) foreman Pieter Omtzigt, in a speech opening the new political year, the HJ Schoo-lezing, called “*Denken in Oplossingen*” (*Thinking in Solutions*), seemingly argued that a demographic decline in the Netherlands is related to mass immigration, by stating “economic, social, and geopolitical implications of rapid population decline in parts of the world that are hard to underestimate, while there is still massive population growth – especially in Africa and parts of the Middle East” (translation by JfP, “economische, sociale en geopolitieke implicaties van een snelle bevolkingskrimp in delen van de wereld die moeilijk zijn te onderschatten, terwijl nog steeds sprake is van een enorme bevolkingsgroei – vooral in Afrika en stukken van het Midden-Oosten.”) and “I’ll let you guess what that means in twenty, thirty years.” (‘Ik laat u raden wat dat betekent over twintig, dertig jaar.’). Omtzigt denied any racist intentions and subscription to the Great Replacement, and as a well known Christian social democrat with a track record of standing up for democracy, the rule of law, and the little guy, the upheaval and discussion it caused was quickly dismissed.

Were we listening to a dog whistle, or was this an honest intention badly worded and misconstrued? We believe that dog whistles are intentional for some actors (, and others have started buying into them without even knowing it. Norm violations are not reserved exclusively for far-right extremists. Such norm violations through ambiguous provocations combined with leveraging democratic credentials can help actors who employ these methods reframe their provocations as ‘allowed’ and make it difficult to sanction them. This leaves norm-defenders with a strategic dilemma in answering such violations, let alone developing the words to push back against them.

To learn more about how intentionally used narratives by actors that are openly accepting of such narratives like the Great Replacement and how it then reaches conversations online, JfP, with the

support of the SIDN fund (SIDN funds), developed the WhoDis methodology that supports tracing how polarizing language disseminates within our society. It can support finding both the origins of a trend and the key actors involved in spreading it with the intended aim of stoking division and fear. Here, a combination of AI tools, Natural Language Processing, and Large Language Models, and JfP’s research into anti-democratic and anti-rights actors and networks were used to analyze certain narratives and known actors across social media platforms, notably Facebook, X, Tiktok, and Instagram. Based on common language and words on particular topics, such as remigration, the methodology allowed tracing of the development of certain discussions, from where they seemed to start, how they grew, and what can be learned. This process was captured in a visualization tool to make it easier to understand the relationships between the narratives, the accounts that spread them, and the offline actors that use them (on their social media accounts).

Social media and even gaming platforms are so important for spreading the ideology of movements like GI that the WhoDis methodology was applied using the keyword “remigrate” (remigration in Dutch). A few insights into the analysis results are shown here.

Figure 5: WhoDis Tool’s Dashboard (keyword *remigratie*)

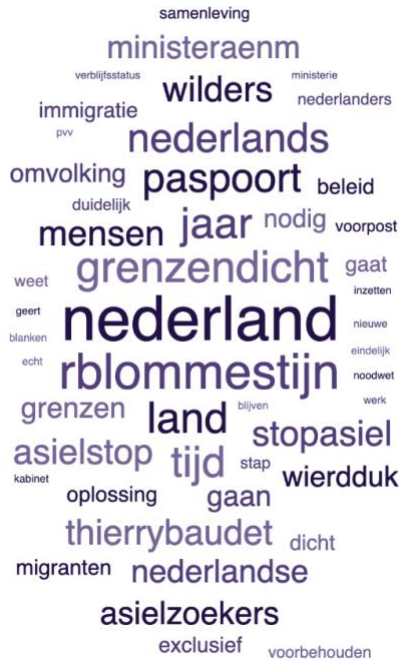
The image shows a web-based search interface for the WhoDis tool. It features several input fields and buttons. At the top left, there is a 'Title' field with the placeholder text 'Enter a title for your query'. Below it is a search input field containing the keyword 'remigratie' with a small 'x' icon to its right. To the right of the title field is a 'Select a source' dropdown menu. Below the search input is a 'Polarities' dropdown menu set to 'All polarities'. To the right of the search input is a date range selector with 'Since 01/01/2023' and 'Until 01/10/2024', each with a calendar icon. Below the search input is a 'Select a platform' dropdown menu with a list of social media platforms: Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter, each with a small 'x' icon to its right. Below the platform dropdown is a 'Select a language' dropdown menu set to 'All languages'. At the bottom left, there are two buttons: a dark purple 'Search' button and a white 'Save query' button.

The dashboard presents the possibility of requesting an analysis of the usage of a certain word over a particular period and through certain given platforms. In this case, the keyword chosen is “remigratie,” meaning remigration in Dutch. Subsequently, the dashboard offers the possibility to choose a polarity of the posts containing the word “remigration”, meaning to choose whether the posts have positive or negative implications. In this case we requested the dashboard to present both polarities. Then, it is possible to select the source of the posts, such as the account or accounts whose posts refer to remigration. In this example, we do not choose a specific source, meaning that all accounts that use the word will be part of the analysis. Followingly, the social media platform can be chosen; in this example, we use Twitter. However, the WhoDis tools also allow access to data from Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. The languages can also be chosen; in this

example, we chose “all languages,” which means that the languages selected are the 48 languages using the Latin alphabet. Finally, the data can also be chosen to analyze a specific period; in this example, we look at word usage from 1st January 2023 to 1st October 2024.

Figure 6: WhoDis Tool’s Wordcloud (keyword *remigratie*)

Top keywords



This feature permits an overview of the keywords mainly linked to the usage of the word “remigration”. Most of the tool's words are strongly linked to the far-right Dutch political world. Indeed, the most used word is “**Nederland**”, followed by **rblommestijn** which stands for Raisa Blommestijn’s X account, the owner of the Dutch broadcast Ongehoord Nederland. The main topics tackled by the program are issues typically raised by the far right, namely the growing political power of the EU, immigration, climate change, and preservation of traditional Dutch culture, such as preserving the Zwarte Pieten, a Dutch Christmas tradition often criticized for being racist. The following most used word is **Grenzendicht** which translates to “closing the border”, demonstrating that the demands to close the border are not limited to not being open to new migration but are also strongly associated with the demand to deport migrants currently living in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the names of popular Dutch far-right politicians such as Thierry Baudet or Geert Wilders seem to be linked to the concept of remigration. Another important word is “oplossing,” which translates to “solution”; this reflects how “remigratie” is often linked to the concept of solution. However, it is important to remember that all the words used do not necessarily have one meaning. Indeed, since the option “All Polarities” was chosen (see Fig5), the posts that refer to “remigration” can have positive or negative implications. For instance, when it comes to the link between the word “solution”

and “remigration”, the publications detected might perceive remigration as an effective or ineffective solution.

Figure 8: WhoDis Tool’s Summary of Most Frequent Actors Who Have Used the Keyword over the Assessed Period (keyword *remigratie*)

Actors in this query

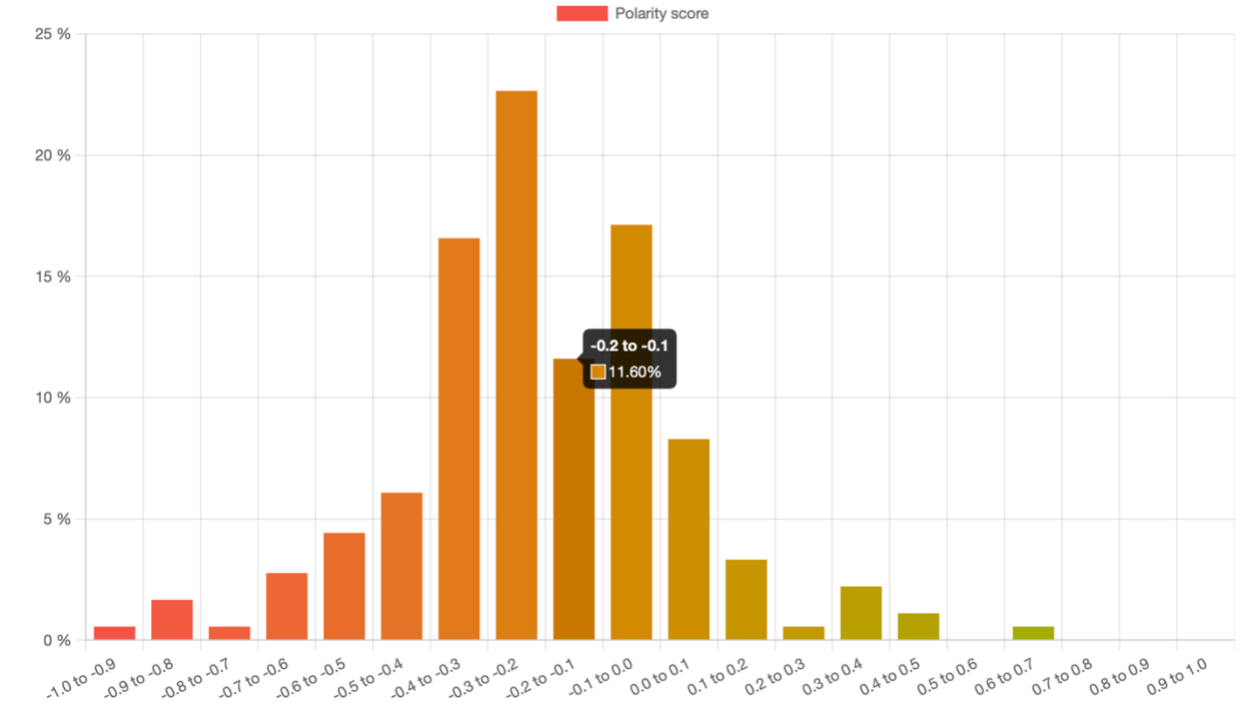
Username	Platform	Number of r...
thierrybaudet	twitter	8
De5december	twitter	7
RemcoHappyMan	twitter	4
zanoni_jeffrey	twitter	3
rblommestijn	twitter	2
ArendBols	twitter	2
Indigo_RebelX	twitter	2
Primallnsurgent	twitter	2
reeser572544	twitter	2
WappieRex	twitter	2

Rows per page: 10 ▾ 1-10 of 86 |< < > >|

This image Fig. 8 shows the users/actors who are the most prominent users of the word remigration. They are mainly far right dutch Political figures, such as Thierry Baudet, Jeffrey Zanoni and Raisa Blommestijn (@thierrybaudet, @rnlommestijn and @zanoni_jeffrey are the official accounts of these public figures). Additionally, there are also smaller personal accounts whose main tweets have far-right connotations. Such as @De5December, an account that focuses on defending and preserving the Zwarte Pieten tradition, which is celebrated on the 5th of December.

Figure 9: WhoDis Tool’s Visualisation of the Polarity of the Messages Containing the Keyword (keyword *remigratie*)

Polarities percentages (-1 - very negative, 1 - very positive)



This chart represents the polarity of messages referring to remigration. In other words, it analyzes to what extent a message containing the word “Remigration” has a positive or negative implication. The closer to -1, the more negative the message, and the closer to 1, the more positive the message.

The chart shows that 22,65%, the majority of the posts are mildly negative with a score of -0,3 to -0,2, and 16,57% of the posts have a score of -0.4 to -0.3. There are also mildly positive posts but less. Indeed, there are only 2.21% of scores ranking between 0,3-0,4. Additionally, 17,13,% of the polarity score is neutral with a score ranking from 0.0 to 0.1. The chart also notes that there is a minority of messages being extremely positive or negative. Indeed, only 0.55% of the posts have a high negative score or a high positive score.

Figure 10: WhoDis Tool's Visualisation of the Keyword Network Showing the Links Between the Keyword and Other Words and Phrases Associated with it within the Scraped Messages (keyword *remigratie*)

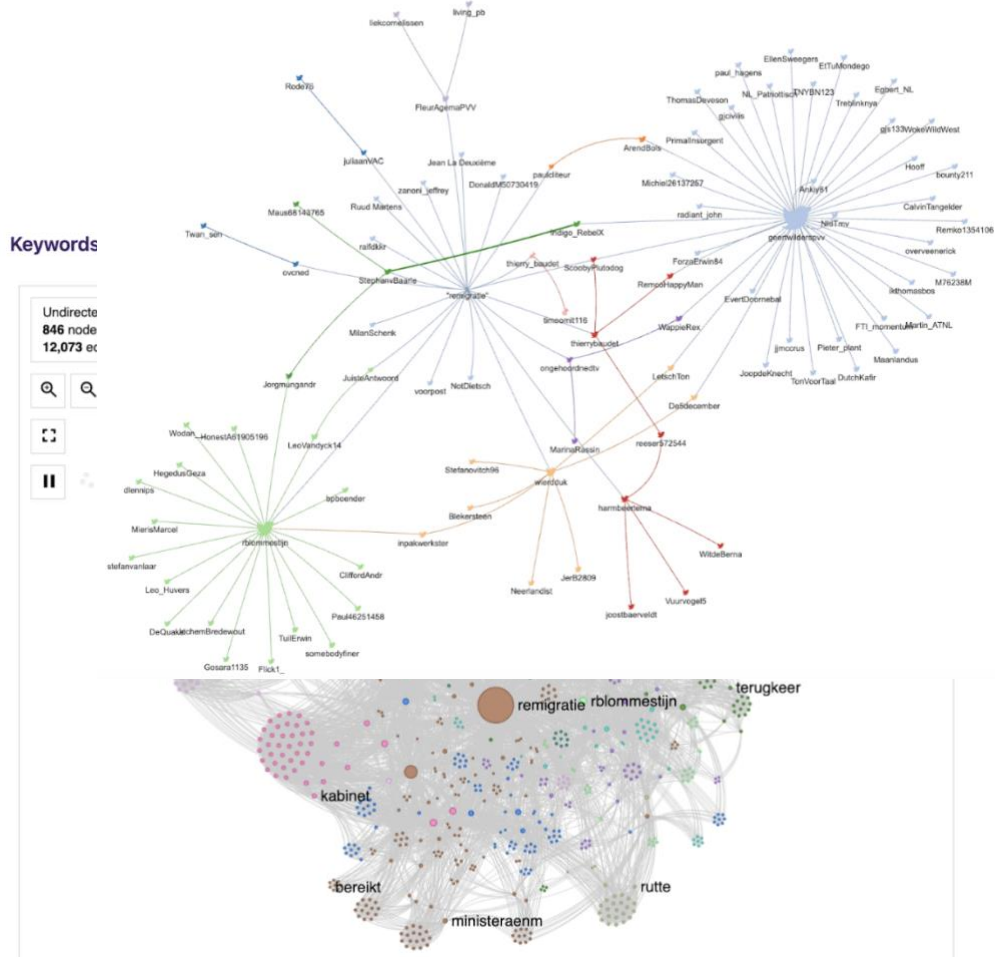


Figure 11: WhoDis Tool's Visualisation of the Keyword Network Showing the Links Between the Actors Sharing Messages Containing the Keyword (keyword *remigratie*)

Next, we present results of the search of the keyword Fatherland (*Vadersliefde*) in the WhoDis tool.

Title

Select a source

Since

Vaderlandsliefde

All polarities

Facebook

TikTok

Instagram

Twitter

Until

All languages

Figure 12: WhoDis Tool's Dashboard (keyword *Vadersliefde*)

Counts by platform

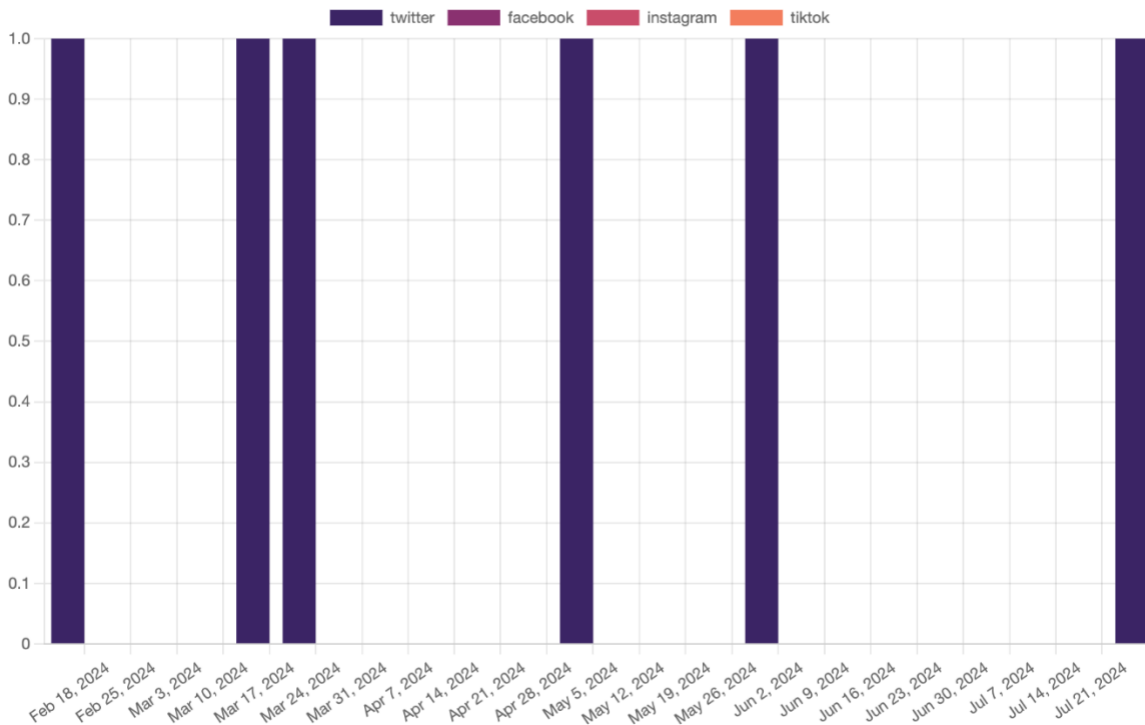


Figure 13: WhoDis Tool's Visualisation of Frequency of the Use of Keyword over Time and by Platforms (keyword *Vadersliefde*)

Earliest mention of "Vaterlandsliefde"

@geertwilderspvv Het omarmen van onze Joods Christelijke waarden en geloof is daarbij ook heel belangrijk. Erkennen, waarderen, eren en verdedigen van onze Vaderlandse geschiedenis en onze Vaderlandsliefde uitdragen. Laten zien dat we een zijn en geen angst hebben.

User "Ari62IL" · Twitter · 18/02/2024 20:27:52

Figure 16: WhoDis Tool's Tracing of the Earliest Mention of the Keyword (keyword *Vadersliefde*)

Polarities percentages (-1 - very negative, 1 - very positive)

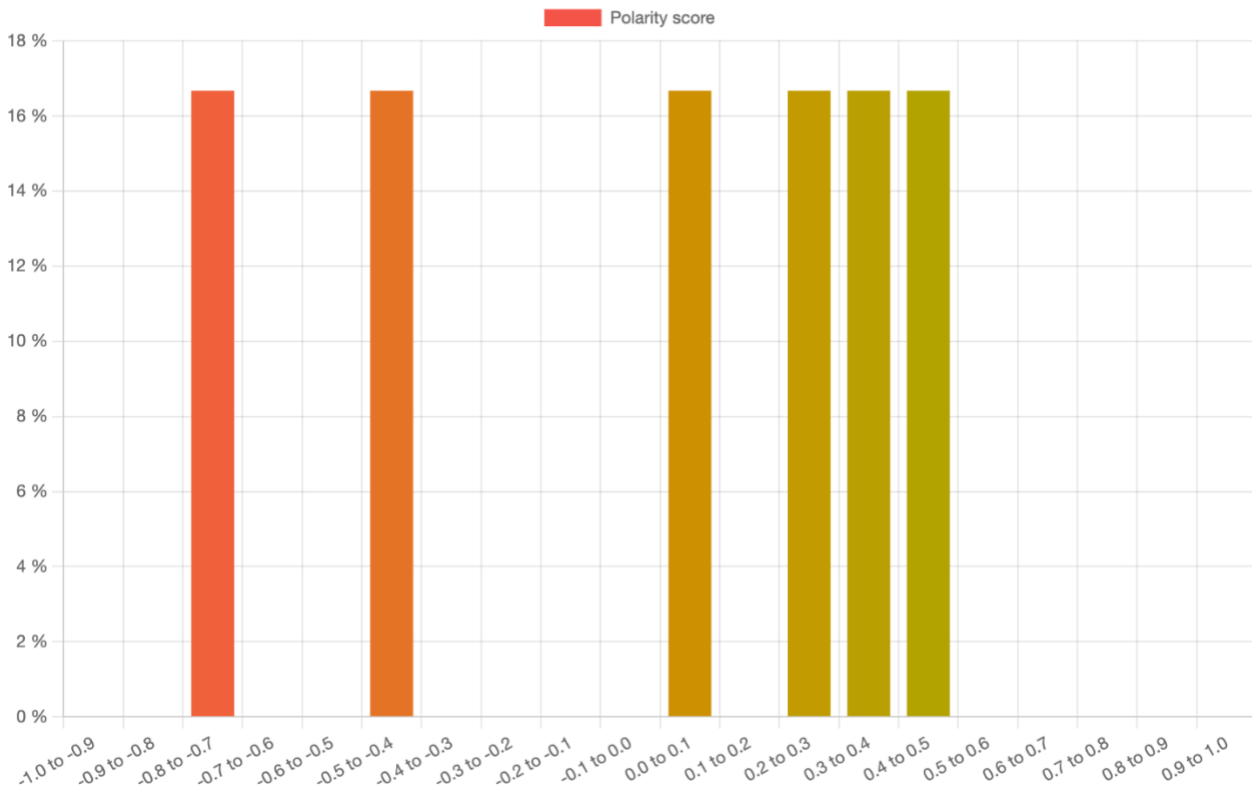


Figure 17: WhoDis Tool's Visualisation of the Polarity of the Messages Containing the Keyword (keyword *Vadersliefde*)

Keywords network

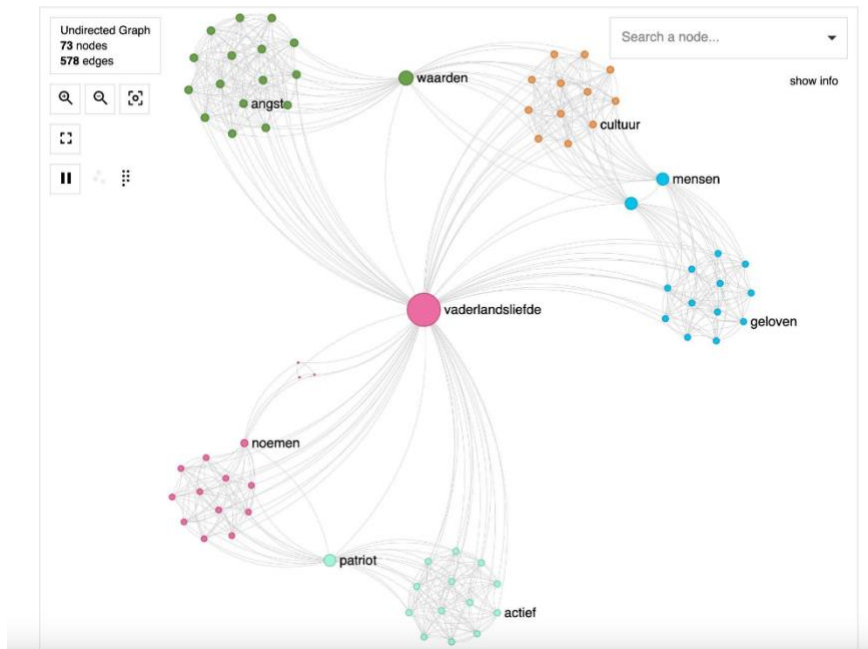


Figure 18: WhoDis Tool's Visualisation of the Keyword Network Showing the Links Between the Actors Sharing Messages Containing the Keyword (*keyword Vaderliefde*)

Actors network

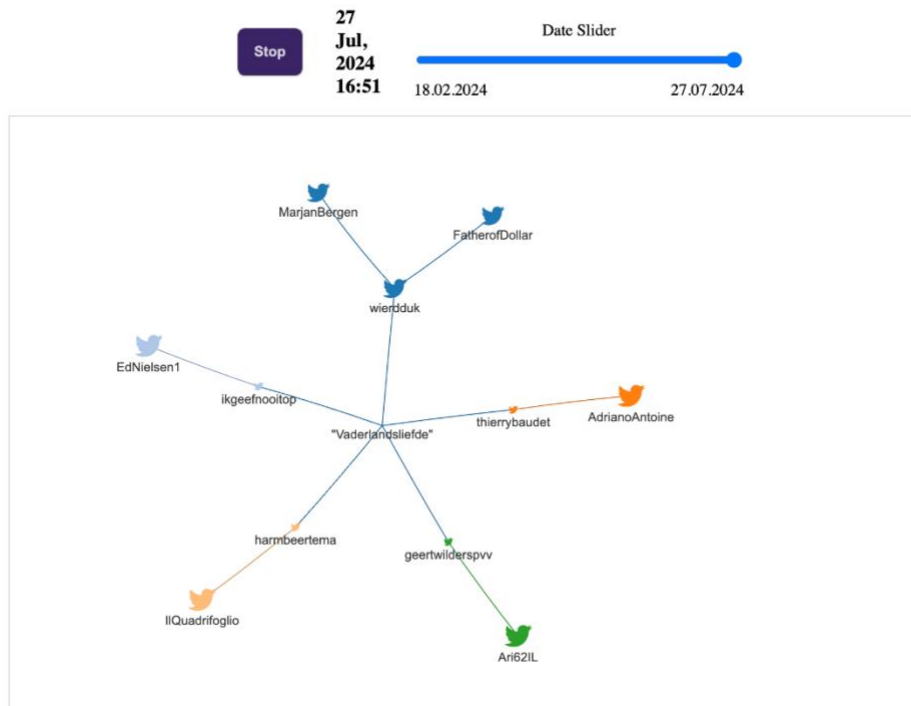


Figure 19: WhoDis Tool's Visualisation of the Keyword and Platform Network Where Posts Containing the Keyword Have Been Shared (*keyword Vaderliefde*)

CONCLUSION

This report provided an overview of the nature and aims of far-right groups and how they operate across multiple cities and several European countries – emphasizing their interconnectedness. Our findings indicate while GI had evolved following the dissolution of the Identitarian Movement, GI is dispersed into multiple formal and informal groups, which collectively form a broader international network. Despite their decentralization, these groups share several common goals – primarily the promotion of anti-immigration sentiment, the glorification of the white European race, and the prioritization of the national over the shared European identity. Some of the sub/smaller groups associated with the broader ideology advocated by GI manifest in various forms and can include sports groups, student organizations, political associations, summer camps, and feminist groups. They often collaborate – organizing events and meetings across borders. Recently, some key figures within GI/the former Identitarian Movement have coalesced together, establishing a larger transnational network called Action Radar.

GI advances its narrative through populist rhetoric characterized by an ‘us versus them’ dichotomy – exploiting negative emotions which foster fear of the ‘other’. The group emphasizes what it perceives as a threat to the survival of the European identity posed by immigration, often referencing the so-called Great Replacement theory, which highlights the ‘non-white colonization’ of Europe and its ramifications. Additionally, war-like vocabulary is frequently employed to underscore the importance of ‘defending Europe’ against this perceived ‘colonization.’ Within their ideology, the ‘preparation’ for the defense of Europe takes various forms – from engaging in physical activities such as sports to committing hate crimes and engaging in more covert actions – such as promoting national traditions, values, and cultural heritage.

Despite being linked to illegal activities and the commission of hate crimes, far-right groups such as GI remain influential in both national and European political spheres. Several candidates in EP elections have been found to maintain strong connections with these extremist organizations. While they may not be directly involved, many politicians have been reported to attend organized events by these groups regularly or have established networks with them. Moreover, certain members of the EP have accredited parliamentary assistants directly affiliated with far-right organizations.

The strategic use of social media for propaganda and radicalization has played a crucial role in GI’s operation and expansion. Through targeted content, GI has harnessed social media platforms to reinforce its interconnected network and amplify its populist narratives, thus extending its reach far beyond physical borders. By leveraging widely accessible platforms, GI disseminates ideologies such as the Great Replacement theory, employing war-like rhetoric to incite followers to ‘defend’ Europe against perceived colonization – ultimately framing immigration as a battle for cultural survival.

Furthermore, social media serves as a powerful recruitment tool, especially among younger audiences, by showcasing engaging visuals and symbolic language and appealing to a ‘strong’ European identity through sports, cultural events, and ideological gatherings. Social media enables GI to convey a lifestyle and community that intertwine physical fitness, nationalism, and traditional values, making the movement more accessible and attractive to potential recruits.

By casting immigrant communities as threatening the survival of the European civilization, GI manipulates fears to rally individuals around its ideology, even as it simultaneously blames feminist and LGBTQI+ movements for eroding traditional family values. This social media strategy has allowed GI’s complex and often contradictory narratives to gain substantial traction across a wide demographic, highlighting the importance of understanding the digital pathways through which these groups disseminate radical ideologies and mobilize real-world action.

JfP, however, can support researchers and the general public in their quest to understand the moduli of extremist groups like GI. By analyzing patterns, narrative trends, and online and offline behaviors, the WhoDis-methodology can reveal how hate speech and radicalization strategies spread and resonate within online spaces. This insight empowers both researchers and the public by identifying pathways through which extremist ideology risks shifting from the virtual to the real world, leading to socio-political polarization and even hate crimes. Through WhoDis, stakeholders can monitor and intercept this harmful progression – ultimately equipping societies to counteract digital propaganda and preserve social cohesion.

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[news/generation-identity-far-right-group-training-camps-europe-uk-recruits-military-white-nationalist-refugees-a8046641.html](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/26/france-generation-identity-far-right-group-training-camps-europe-uk-recruits-military-white-nationalist-refugees-a8046641.html).

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