The Far-Right Leverages COVID-19 Pandemic to Gain Influence and Encourage Violence

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The raging COVID-19 ("Corona") pandemic has been leveraged by various elements to promote their agendas. One of the most active of those are far-right activists who preach white supremacy ideology, xenophobia, nationalism, anti-pluralism, anti-globalization and more. The most extreme faction of the above which includes, inter alia, neo-Nazis, calls itself “Acceleration” and believes that the western governments are corrupt and humanity, or at least that part that follows values such globalization, openness and pluralism is destined to extinct, mainly through destabilization of the current order and use of violence. In its stead, a new and pure society will emerge. These ideas have been quoted in manifestos posted by attackers who have perpetrated mass casualties’ attacks, such as the New Zealand attacker¹.

These days millions of people are required to practice social distancing which in many cases requires them to stay indoors, sometimes alone; flooded with negative emotions such as loneliness, anxiety, confusion, sometimes even anger. The currently reigning chaos and confusion² provide a platform for far-right activist to disseminate their message³. The latter are being disseminated on multiple social media networks from YouTube through Twitter, Facebook, Telegram and even on the dark net. It seems that they treat the Corona pandemic as a gift and an opportunity to capitalize on for the creation of a new world order, per their ideology. An analysis of far-right processes and messages points to several trends as follows:

i. Encouragement of Nationalism and Assigning Blame to Minorities

Nationalism has been on the rise in Europe and the U.S. even before the pandemic. On May 2019, Adama Dieng, the U.N. Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide said that there was a “new kind of far-right nationalism in Europe is reminiscent of the rise of the Nazis to power in the 1930s”. The Antisemitism report for 2018 advised that various surveys in different European countries showed that a growing number of the third generation in the world don’t feel the need to know and learn recent history. The social and economic crisis in France that led to the Yellow Vests protests

² McDonald-Gibson Charlotte, Right Now, People Are Pretty Fragile. How Coronavirus Creates the Perfect Breeding Ground for Online Extremism .TIME, March 26th, 2020
³ Ibid
enabled Antisemitic and anarchistic elements to incite for violence and voice Antisemitic messages. Even Brexit attests to the strengthening of nationalistic elements in the U.K.

Nationalism has been picking up steam since the beginning of the Corona outbreak. Far-right activists and movements claimed that their ideology that stressed the importance of closing borders and prohibiting immigration has been proven right. As proof they bring national border closures to contend with Corona. For example, a far-right internet forum claimed that “Corona is the best thing that could have happened to the world” because “borders are being closed all over”

![Image of Anti-Semetic Post](https://www.maariv.co.il/news/world/Article-696875)

Populist politicians as well as far-right ones send racist messages. For example, Victor Urban the Hungarian prime minister, told the heads of the EU that there was a connection between the pandemic and illegal because immigrants carried the virus with them. Therefore, per him, he tightened Hungary’s border security. Marin Le-Pen, leader of the French far-right, called to close the border with Italy “before it is too late”. Swiss right-wing leaders also called for a total border closure.

The U.N. Committee on Trade and Development cautioned that the slow down of global growth rate due to the Corona will eliminate $1 Tn of the global economy’s value. Further, the collapse of local economies will cause a recession in the world economy.

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4 Reuters, UN Adviser: The rise of the far-right in Europe is Similar to the rise of Nazism”, Ma’ariv, May 1st, 2019. 
https://www.maariv.co.il/news/world/Article-696875


7 Avrahami Zeev, “Common virus: this is how the Corona virus shakes the European economy”, YNET, February 29th, 2020, https://www.ynet.co.il/economy/article/MvUJ009hHVU

economies and rising unemployment in various countries may increase nationalism and racism while at the same time assigning the blame for the economic situation to minority groups.

II. Increased Radicalization

Radical elements encourage radicalization. They promote ideology, incite to xenophobia, against their governments and so forth, all to recruit new activists. Online posts show that far-right activists leverage frustration over the pandemic as a means to radicalize political views and revolutionary steps that will hasten the regime change⁹. For example, “you cannot get away from the global bullshit...only death and total destruction can bring an end to globalization....Corona is the hero. Only screams, blood, shooting, flames and the blinding stench of death can remove the ignorance...only a season of death and existence threatening violence will be good enough. China is a good start....I welcome the return of the hard and brutal reality....it is here and now and there’s nothing someone can do about it”.

Posts and messages accusing, on the one hand, Jews, Asians, Muslims and immigrants of spreading the virus and on the other express joy for any minority who dies of it, assist with radicalizing xenophobia. “Select” posts: “Muslims in every country started the spreading the Corona”, “even though Asians and blacks are the ones spitting and coughing, they are not being accused of spreading the virus but rather the whites”

Left: Muslims started the Corona jihad (Source: Twitter); Right: Whites are being accused of spreading Corona (Source: Telegram)

NYPD ravaged by Corona – SEEYA NIGGER (Source: Telegram)

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10 Ibid
Far-right movements are also using conspiracy theories accusing the government of spreading the pandemic to promote their agenda.

Upper screenshot: Corona is a government tactic to gain control (Source: Darknet)

Lower screenshot: Corona didn't appear naturally; the police is using it to arrest celebrities (Source: Darknet)

It should be noted, Stay-at-Home orders issued by governments increases the use and exposure to online platforms and social media. For example, in Seattle it was reported that the use of internet has grown by 40% since the Stay-at-Home order was issued. In Italy that metric grew by 30%\textsuperscript{11}. Far-right activists leverage this forced enclosure to disseminate propaganda and recruit new activists\textsuperscript{12}. For example, one of the far-right platforms the following was written that due to the Corona people are sitting at home surfing social media. “We should take this opportunity and share our knowledge”.


\textsuperscript{12} Ibid
“We should take this opportunity and share our knowledge” (Source: 4Chan)

Corona “will either wake up normies or kill them” (Source: 4Chan)

One of the methods the far-right uses to disseminate their propaganda is by publishing viewing recommendations for radical and neo-Nazi content

Viewing recommendations for neo-Nazi content (Source: Telegram)

The obvious synergy between staying idly at home and its accompanied “cabin fever” and radicalization and the wishes to act is clear from the following post. In it the writer claims that he was abandoned long ago by society and now that he had had a chance to sit home and think he
realized that he has a weapon on his hands – Corona. He decided to use it (by coughing and infecting people) to increase suffering in the world so that he would not suffer alone.

“I was given a weapon, something I could use to equalize the suffering in this world” (Source: 4Chan)

III. The Corona is a Divine Punishment for Society’s Sins

Much like jihadi organizations such as ISIS, that interpret the pandemic as a divine intervention to punish the infidels\(^\text{13}\), one can identify a similar concept within far-right circles. Per them, the punishment is imposed on humanity as a whole and they embrace it because this is the price we must pay to fix for the current world disorder – democratic values prevail and minorities like Jews and Blacks live freely in the world. The world has turned its back on god and listens to atheists, which is manifested via abominations such as abortions, killing of white people and phenomena like drag queens.

Corona is a biblical term (Corona spinea crown of thorns). It is a punishment for sins (Source: 4Chan)

Corona is a punishment from god. We deserve it for turning our backs on god. LGBT propaganda in schools, abortions, drag queens... (Source: 4Chan)

Upper screenshot: Corona is a divine punishment for letting gays, Jews, blacks live free in the world god gifted to us
(Source: 4Chan)

Lower screenshot: Corona is a divine punishment for accepting Judaism and democratic values (Source: 4Chan)

IV. Corona as an Opportunity for Far-Right Activists to Perpetrate Terror Attacks

Far-right activists leverage the pandemic and encourage their supporters to perpetrate attacks both in cyber-space and the real world. On March 23rd, 2020, the NYC branch of the FBI issued a warning saying that radical racist movements encourage activists who have contracted Corona to infect Jews
and law enforcement officers, by touch sneezing and coughing\textsuperscript{14}. On March 24\textsuperscript{th}, 2020, the DHS distributed a nation-wide memo to all law enforcement agencies cautioning them from white supremacists who may leverage the pandemic to attack critical infrastructure and minority places of worship\textsuperscript{15}. In cyber-space there is a barrage of messages calling all far-right supporters to use the opportunity to topple regimes that have been weakened by the pandemic and do so by mass infection of people that will lead to a collapse of global economy as well actively infecting people in places that are symbols of the regime (e.g. DC, Wall St.) and mass infection of minorities wherever they are\textsuperscript{16}.

\textbf{Upper screenshot:} a wish that Corona will visit Wall St., DC, Hollywood, synagogues and mosques (Source: 4Chan)\textbf{ Lower screenshot:} the pandemic may be the last chance to strike anti-white regimes while they are weak (Source: 4Chan)


\textsuperscript{16} On occasion these kinds of attacks may be referred to as “lone wolf” or Bio-Acceleration attacks.
A call for lone wolves to infect people with high population concentration like China to hasten the collapse of global economy (Source: Telegram)

Anonymous (ID: xndHMB+O) 03/05/20(Thu)13:51:13 No. 246632317
I think I have corona. Going to my local mosque to infect some muzzies

Anonymous (ID: xndHMB+O) 03/18/20(Wed)22:32:22 No. 346879186
>>246843919
>Be me
>Zoomer
>Milla
>21
>Non-smoker and non-vaper
>Healthy
>Spent last 4 weeks alone in an apartment
>Apartment is in a neighborhood with mostly black boomers (biggest group of people but not a majority and surprisingly no young blacks)
If I get corona-chann I'm going full bio-Accelerationist on these boomers and there is nothing that can stop me.

Anonymous (ID: MqDIIuX) 03/26/20(Thu)19:23:40 No. 250350444
>>250340941
Corona-chan is an ultimate weapon to kill non-white subhuman!!
I love Corona-chan

Upper screenshot: writer going to mosques to infect with Corona (Source: 4Chan)
Middle screenshot: “If I get Corona-chan I’m going full bio-Accelerationist” Source: 4Chan)
Lower screenshot: Corona is the ultimate weapon against non-white sub-humans (Source: 4Chan)

In addition to perpetrating physical attacks far-right movements are leveraging cyber-space, mainly Zoom, that has become millions’ communications application of choice to perpetrate Zoombombing, (i.e. breaking into discussions and presenting inappropriate and offensive content, including anti-Semitic and racist slurs), putting fear in organizations, worship centers and minority
For example, a white supremacy activist obtained the zoom login credentials for a Zoom conference call of Jewish students in Massachusetts, broke in and exposed a swastika tattoo on his chest. In another case, during a Torah lesson conducted via Zoom one of the participants presented as a background a photo of a boy holding Hitler’s Mein Kampf in his hand and shouted that Hitler didn’t do anything wrong while people in the background shouted heil Hitler.

As the phenomenon expanded cyber security experts as well as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) recommendations for safe use of Zoom which included: not sharing participants’ screens only the host’s; allowing a person into a conference only by using a password and generating a new password for each session; blocking entering the chat before the host; “muting” participants and more.  

Leaking details of a Jewish school Zoom call to frighten attendees (Darknet)

Similar vulnerabilities have been identified with Facebook. Facebook notified that like other organizations they were short staffed because of the pandemic therefore their response time to block inappropriate content has been extended. Far-right activists capitalized on that and have been calling for mass dissemination of their content on Facebook.

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In addition to immediate attacks to infect people it seems that far-right movements will use the Corona virus as a bioweapon. For example, one of the posts suggested that Corona patients would freeze their bodily fluids at -20 degrees Celsius and release it at the time and place of their choice to start a new pandemic.
In summation, a review of far-right content online shows that far-right activists regard the Corona virus as godsend. They regard it is a divine punishment for turning people backs on god. Per them, the virus will assist in exterminating the world as we know it and enable the formation of a replacement society based on nationalistic and xenophobic values. That said, two major trends in leveraging the Corona by far-right activists have been identified: (i) leveraging the fact that people are ordered to stay at home and suffer from “cabin fever” to deepen their influence, encourage radicalization and recruit new activists; (ii) leveraging the virus to encourage violence by attacking symbols of government and minorities (in their places of worship and elsewhere). These are being carried out in cyber-space, inter alia by Zoombombing and leveraging Facebook’s delayed timeline in blocking inappropriate content. Finally, one can expect that going forward the far-right will attempt to build an infrastructure for future bio terroristic attacks by preserving the virus and releasing it to start a new pandemic at the time and place of their choice.
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