



# Far-Right Violent Extremism as a Failure of Status: Extremist Manifestos through the Lens of Ressentiment

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# Far-Right Violent Extremism as a Failure of Status: A New Approach to Extremist Manifestos through the Lens of Ressentiment

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## Abstract

This paper nuances existing understandings of terrorists' motivations by uncovering the emotional process of *ressentiment* in the manifestos of three far-right violent extremists. Through the application of Reinhard Wolf's framework of discourse analysis, it finds that *ressentiment* plays a significant role in self-legitimizing perpetrators' attacks, though the resented group is different than expected. Surprisingly, the object of the far-right extremist's *ressentiment* is the economic and political establishment, not the migrant community. Relevant to policymakers, the paper finds that while the extremist's grievances towards the resented group are all-encompassing (making negotiation futile), the processual quality of *ressentiment* leaves open the possibility for targeted intervention before the extremist has taken too many steps towards internalising this attitude.

**Keywords:** discourse, emotions, far-right, grievance, manifestos, resentment, violent extremism.

## Introduction

This paper applies burgeoning research on the central role of emotions in decision making to the challenging issue of far-right extremism. Given the political actor is guided by emotions first, then reason,<sup>1</sup> this paper asks: what emotional processes are at work in the perpetrators of violent extremism, such that they are motivated to carry out an attack? In other words, what combination of cognitions, somatic responses, and action tendencies enable perpetrators to justify acts of violent extremism? Determining anyone's emotional state is not an easy task, let alone that of terrorists. Perpetrators' public statements of intent (so-called "manifestos") nevertheless offer scholars an imperfect lens into their motivational drivers and, through discourse analysis, an insight into the emotions underpinning, guiding and self-legitimising their attacks.<sup>2</sup>

Emotions have long played an important though implicit role in international relations. Fear, for example, is central to the political realism of Thucydides, Hobbes and Waltz.<sup>3</sup> The liberal international order, meanwhile, is predicated on trust between states.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, only in the last two decades have scholars begun to place emotions squarely at the centre of political reasoning.<sup>5</sup> Contrary to the predominant view in Western philosophy since Plato – a view still propagated by many economists and international relations theorists today – emotions do not lie in a dichotomous relationship with rationality.<sup>6</sup> Instead, affective experience completely colours a person's decision-making process, both in changing the reward parameters for rational choice as well as the ability to make rational choices within those parameters.<sup>7</sup> The ability to decide is dependent on the ability to feel.<sup>8</sup>

This paper hypothesises that the emotional process of *ressentiment* plays a significant role in motivating far-right violent extremists to carry out an attack. Drawing upon Reinhard Wolf's categories of discursive analysis this paper examines three far-right extremists' manifestos for evidence of *ressentiment*:<sup>9</sup> Anders Behring Breivik's *2083: A Declaration of European Independence*, Brandon Tarrant's *The Great Replacement* and Patrick Crusius' *The Inconvenient Truth*.<sup>10</sup> The analysis identifies in each manifesto textual examples of the three "kinds of articulations" associated with *ressentiment*, namely, perpetrators' expressions of "distinct cognitions, bodily reactions and action tendencies."<sup>11</sup> Textual evidence for these articulations is

1 Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 52-59; Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 24, 103; Jonathan Evans and Keith Stanovich, "Dual-Process Theories of Higher Cognition: Advancing the Debate", *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 8 (2013): 223-241.

2 This paper seeks neither to justify violent extremism, nor suggest such acts are predestined by a particular emotional state. However, as emotions can explain our actions, it is important to understand whether *ressentiment* is an important motivating factor in violent extremism. Jon Elster, *Strong Feelings: Emotion, Addiction, and Human Behavior* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999): 165; Peter Goldie, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 37-49.

3 Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker, "Theorizing emotions in world politics", *International Theory* 6 no. 3 (2014): 494.

4 Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation, and Trust in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007).

5 Jonathan Mercer, "Rationality and Psychology in International Politics", *International Organization* 59 (2005): 77-106; Neta Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotions and Emotional Relationships", *International Security* 24 (2000): 116-36.

6 Robert Solomon, "The Philosophy of Emotions" in *Handbook of Emotions*, edited by M. Lewis and J. Haviland, New York: Guilford Press, 1993, 3-15; Howard Margolis, *Patterns and Cognition: A Theory of Judgement* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1987); Richard Lazarus, *Emotions and Adaptation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

7 Jon Elster, *Strong Feelings: Emotion, Addiction, and Human Behavior* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999): 165.

8 Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Putnam, 1994); Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 52-53.

9 Reinhard Wolf, "Political emotions as public processes: analyzing transnational resentiments in discourses", *Researching emotions in international relations: Methodological perspectives on the emotional turn*, eds. Maéva Clément and Eric Sangar (Cham: Springer, 2017): 231-254.

10 Anders Behring Breivik, *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* (2011); Brandon Tarrant, *The Great Replacement* (2019); Patrick Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth* (2019).

11 Wolf, "Political emotions as public processes", 237.

provided in the Manifestos Analysis.

These particular manifestos were selected because of their significance within the white extremism movement, both as a source of ideology and as inspiration for later attacks.<sup>12</sup> Their central tenet – that white European populations are being deliberately replaced through migration and the population growth of minority groups – has a long history in far-right circles. Recently this theory, however, has come to dominate not only violent extremist groups but also the language and ideologies of xenophobic, nativist groups and political parties globally.<sup>13</sup> While “The Great Replacement” theory has been explicitly referenced by some far-right politicians, perhaps of even more concern is its insidious incorporation within mainstream political vocabulary.<sup>14</sup> By identifying evidence of *ressentiment* in these perpetrators’ manifestos this paper seeks to demonstrate the centrality of emotions in far-right extremists’ self-rationalisation of their acts. It does this with the hope of improving deterrence and de-radicalisation efforts, and also of sparking a discussion about the risks of normalising *ressentiment* in political discourse.

There are obvious limits to a small-n research design, most notably the ability to extrapolate generalisable claims about far-right extremists, let alone terrorists more broadly. Focusing solely on the discourse in these perpetrators’ manifestos rather than, for example, their activity on social media prior to the attack, also rules out data points which might offer a more complex picture of their motivations. Moreover, while this analysis provides evidence of *ressentiment* across the three manifestos, its findings are insufficient to prove the emotion’s causal role in motivating terrorism. To increase the robustness of this study’s findings it would need to contrast *ressentiment*’s effect with emotions such as rage or despair, as well as with other contextual factors. A more detailed discussion of this paper’s limitations is covered in the penultimate section, Study Limitations and Future Application.

For understanding whether *ressentiment* is a significant factor in far-right extremists’ motivations, however, the study’s research design offers distinct advantages. For example, one of the main challenges in studying the effect of emotions is that their impact is difficult to observe. My design overcomes this issue by focusing on an emotion that is unusually identifiable due to *ressentiment* being characterised, among other things, by its public expression.<sup>15</sup> Social emotions leave distinct markers in their wake, since they are not a static state of being but rather are processual in nature (see methodology section *Ressentiment* and Discourse Analysis for more details).<sup>16</sup> This paper’s collection of granular qualitative data through textual analysis and its correspondingly thick description of the manifestos’ emotional content thus allows it to look for typical combinations of indicators that reveal a potential *ressentiment* process.

This approach offers inferential leverage in three ways: first, it provides analysis of the emotional process undergone by each extremist while holding constant critical factors, such as the attackers’ ideology, their act of terror, their method of publicising their views and the framework

12 Lizzie Dearden, “Revered as a saint by online extremists, how Christchurch shooter inspired copycat terrorists around the world,” *The Independent*, August 24, 2019. Accessed April 29, 2021. Graham Macklin, “The El Paso Terrorist Attack: The Chain Reaction of Global Right-Wing Terror,” *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 11 (December 2019): 1-9.

13 Jacob Davey and Julia Ebner, “‘The Great Replacement’: The Violent Consequences of Mainstreamed Extremism”, *Institute for Strategic Dialogue* (2019): 7. Michael Minkenberg, “The Rise of the Radical Right in Eastern Europe: Between Mainstreaming and Radicalization”, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 18 (2017): 27-35. Cas Mudde, *Radical Right Parties in Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

14 Examples of these include the former Austrian Vice Chancellor of the far-right Freedom Party, H.C. Strache on Facebook and in a subsequent interview (2016 and 2017), Alternative for Germany (AfD) politician Björn Höcke in an interview (2018), Dries Van Langenhove, frontrunner of the Belgian far-right populist party Vlaams Belang in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections, writing on social media (2019), and American politician Matt Gaetz in an interview and on social media (2020). Ebner and Davey, “The Great Replacement”, 17; Nikki Ramirez, “A racist conspiracy theory called the ‘great replacement’ has made its way from far-right media to the GOP”, *Business Insider*, September 7, 2020. Accessed April 29, 2021.

15 Wolf, “Political emotions as public processes,” 232.

16 Wolf, “Political emotions as public processes,” 236.

through which the manifestos are analysed. Second, the approach offers within-case variation on the variable of interest for the paper, namely, differences in the discursive manifestation of *ressentiment*. Third, by using Wolf's framework for identifying *ressentiment*, the paper creates a replicable model for analysing the emotion's presence in other terrorists' publications. Indeed, as Pankaj Mishra has noted, the emotional attitude of *ressentiment* is also borne out by other extremists' written statements, such as those of the Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh.<sup>17</sup>

This paper acknowledges the moral dilemmas associated with studying extremist manifestos and seeks to minimise these through its research design. Some commentators argue against any kind of publication which might draw attention to the extremist's ideas, given the risk that it may radicalise others, harm those whom it antagonises and ultimately increase the attacker's celebrity status amongst the online in-crowd. The New Zealand government exemplifies this view in their response to the Christchurch attack. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and her government were swift to cooperate with social media platforms in shutting down all online versions of Tarrant's manifesto.<sup>18</sup> The attacker's name was barely mentioned in press reports, and Prime Minister Ardern refuses to reference his name in public statements. This silencing is intended to ensure he will have "no notoriety, no platform... and we have no cause to think about him, to see him or to hear from him again."<sup>19</sup>

While acknowledging the importance of not amplifying extremists' views, this paper nevertheless sees value in analysing their manifestos in order to shed light on their common elements and thereby improve preventative measures. As far as possible, this paper seeks to mediate and shed light on the propagandistic side to the manifestos' content. Moreover, all of the manifestos cited here are readily available on the internet to those who seek it; this paper is unlikely to expose sympathetic audiences to an ideology they are not already familiar with. Meanwhile, it is imperative that researchers and policymakers have an accurate perception of far-right extremists' motivations and beliefs, not least because the prevalence of far-right attacks is noticeably increasing in the West.<sup>20</sup> Omitting these manifestos from academic analyses will not prevent their circulation on the web but will hinder the development of counter-terrorism measures.

## What is a *Ressentiment*?

A *ressentiment* is a long-term disposition or "emotional attitude" directed at a hostile external object (alter), which the resenting person or group (ego) believes occupies an undeserved status.<sup>21</sup> Due to this affective quality, *ressentiments* are more stable and intense than "hot" emotions such as anger and hatred;<sup>22</sup> they are built over time, and eventually completely "colour" ego's perception of those resented.<sup>23</sup> While there are overlaps between the two concepts, "resentment" can be summarised as a response to failures of justice, while *ressentiment* arises from a failure of status.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Pankaj Mishra, *Age of Anger*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), 275.

<sup>18</sup> Henry Cooke, "PM Jacinda Ardern asks public to not share video or manifesto from Christchurch shootings suspect", *Stuff*, March 15, 2019. Accessed March 23, 2021.

<sup>19</sup> BBC, "Christchurch mosque attack: Brenton Tarrant sentenced to life without parole," 27 August 2020. Accessed March 23, 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism", *IEP Report*, November 2020: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2019-web.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Reinhard Wolf, "Political emotions as public processes", 234.

<sup>22</sup> Reinhard Wolf, "Political emotions as public processes", 234.

<sup>23</sup> Julian A. Oldmeadow and Susan T. Fiske, "Contentment to Resentment: Variation in Stereotype Content Across Status Systems", *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 12 no. 1 (2012): 324–329.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Brighi derives this distinction from Max Scheler's interpretation of Nietzsche's concept of *Ressentiment*. Elizabeth Brighi, "The Globalisation of Resentment: Failure, Denial, and Violence in World Politics", *Millennium Journal of International*



In his famous treatment of *ressentiment* as the origin of moral virtues, Nietzsche identifies a three-step process which “*ressentiment* man” undergoes.<sup>25</sup> Firstly, ego perceives his<sup>26</sup> inability to live the life of importance, supremacy and nobility he desires.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, believing himself to be completely unable to achieve this aspiration, he nevertheless retains his misplaced sense of supremacy.<sup>28</sup> Thirdly, the *ressentiment* man refuses to accept his powerlessness and instead directs his hatred toward his “victorious rivals,” namely, those whom he feels enjoy more power or prestige than they deserve.<sup>29</sup> Thus there is a discordant imbalance “between vulnerability and imagined vengeance on the one hand, and an aristocratic sense of honour on the other.”<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche’s emphasis on the “nobility” and “honour” associated with ego’s desire for revenge is pertinent to this paper’s analysis: the extremist perpetrator’s belief in his own noble cause is what fuels his revenge fantasies and enables his *ressentiment* to “grow to monstrous and uncanny proportions.”<sup>31</sup> Thus while *ressentiment* is a latent emotional attitude, it also entails an active and processual component. The resenting ego is aware that alter’s social position is too entrenched to be immediately corrected and is consequently constantly looking for an appropriate occasion to rectify the perceived status imbalance.<sup>32</sup>

This paper hypothesises that the extremist perpetrator, like *ressentiment* man, experiences “repressed vengeance” due to what he believes is a decline in his own noble status brought on by the demise of Western civilisation.<sup>33</sup> Unwilling to resign himself to impotence, the extremist directs his vindictiveness towards those who have displaced him on the status hierarchy: non-Europeans who have “invaded” his country through mass migration and population growth. The extremist perceives that current norms and values have engrained this amorphous, morally corrupt group’s power, and thus sees violence as the only way of correcting the status imbalance.

Through the application of Wolf’s framework of discourse analysis, this paper finds that *ressentiment* plays a significant role in self-legitimizing perpetrators’ attacks, though the resented group is different than hypothesised. Surprisingly, across the manifestos the object of the far-right extremist’s *ressentiment* is the economic and political establishment, not the migrant community.<sup>34</sup> While the authors of these manifestos believe multiculturalism is to blame for their status decline, the perpetrators hold elites (rather than migrants) morally culpable for this trend. Accusing them of orchestrating a conspiracy to destroy Western culture, the extremists describe the establishment making “a concerted and targeted effort against [their own] people”<sup>35</sup> to “invite” “an invasion” into their home country:<sup>36</sup> this “is nothing less than [a] deliberate plan.”<sup>37</sup>

By nuancing existing understandings of the object of white supremacist *ressentiment*, this paper offers important insights into the motivations behind these groups’ targeting of positions

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*Studies* 44 no. 3 (2016): 414-415. See also Max Scheler, *Ressentiment* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1994), 36.

25 Ibid, 54.

26 *Ressentiment* applies to all genders, however, considering this paper analyses the *ressentiments* of three male perpetrators I have chosen to use the masculine pronoun for consistency and efficiency.

27 This interpretation relies on William L Remley’s reading of Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1989), cited in Remley, “Nietzsche’s concept of resentment as the psychological structure for Sartre’s theory of anti-Semitism”, *Journal of European Studies* 46 no. 2 (2016): 147.

28 Remley, “Nietzsche’s concept of resentment as the psychological structure for Sartre’s theory of anti-Semitism”, 147.

29 Ibid; Wolf, “Political emotions as public processes”, 234.

30 Remley, “Nietzsche’s concept of resentment as the psychological structure for Sartre’s theory of anti-Semitism”, 147.

31 Friedrich Nietzsche quoted in Remley, “Nietzsche’s concept of resentment as the psychological structure for Sartre’s theory of anti-Semitism”, 147.

32 Scheler, *Ressentiment*, 29.

33 Remley, “Nietzsche’s concept of resentment as the psychological structure for Sartre’s theory of anti-Semitism”, 147.

34 The Establishment is a fluid concept referenced by all manifestos and will be analysed in more detail under the Manifestos Analysis section.

35 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 62.

36 Ibid. 3.

37 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 1225.

of authority. It has direct application to recent right-wing attacks on government, not least the successful storming of Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021 by far-right extremist and militia groups.<sup>38</sup> These findings also highlight the need for a more critical examination of far-right rhetoric's adoption by mainstream media today.<sup>39</sup> Relevant to policymakers, the paper finds that while the extremist's grievances towards the resented group are all-encompassing (making negotiation futile), the processual quality of *ressentiment* leaves open the possibility for targeted intervention before the extremist has taken too many steps towards internalising this attitude.

## Emotions and Extremism: the Case for *Ressentiment*

The “affective turn” in social and political theory has recently increased acknowledgement towards emotions' significant impact on international relations and political theory.<sup>40</sup> Foreign policy scholars such as Jonathan Mercer and Neta Crawford have sought to enhance existing rational actor models with findings from behavioural psychology about the centrality of emotions in political decision-making.<sup>41</sup> Emotions are important to the field of international relations because they undergird individual preferences, and, more importantly, they can become collective and political. It is through their public representation by individuals, as well as through re-representation by the media,<sup>42</sup> that emotions become socially diffused, thereby achieving what Andrew Ross calls a “circulation of affect.”<sup>43</sup>

The public and to varying extents performative nature of emotions is critical to studies of terrorism, given – for all its terminological debates – terrorism is largely agreed upon as an act of violence done to influence a specific audience.<sup>44</sup> Terrorism is a form of communication; as Neville Bolt notes, it is a “propaganda of the deed.”<sup>45</sup> As has now been fairly established in the literature, emotions are a central part to this performance: extreme violence provokes shock, fear and outrage spiralling out from its immediate victims to the media, politicians and the general public.<sup>46</sup> Triggering an emotional (over)reaction, as was perhaps best illustrated by the case of 9/11, is a central part to terrorists' calculations.<sup>47</sup>

The emotion of resentment and its “perverse and destructive form,”<sup>48</sup> *ressentiment*, though not new to the political sciences *per se*,<sup>49</sup> are being freshly examined in light of recent trends in modern society, including the elevation of victim narratives,<sup>50</sup> identity politics<sup>51</sup> and the “empire

38 NPR, “On Far-Right Websites, Plans to Storm the Capitol Were Made in Plain Site,” *NPR*, January 7, 2021. Accessed April 29, 2021; Mallory Simon and Sara Sidner, “Decoding the extremist symbols and groups at the Capitol Hill insurrection,” *CNN*, January 11, 2021. Accessed April 29, 2021.

39 Lis Power, “Fox News ‘invasion’ rhetoric by the numbers,” *Media Matters*, August 6, 2019. Accessed April 30.

40 Hutchison and Bleiker, “Theorizing emotions in world politics”.

41 Mercer, “Rationality and Psychology in International Politics”; Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotions and Emotional Relationships”.

42 Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 142.

43 Andrew Ross, *Mixed Emotions: Beyond Hatred in International Conflict*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014.

44 Martha Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes, and Consequences* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 35.

45 Neville Bolt, *The Violent Image*, (London: Hurst & Co, 2012).

46 Paul Saurette, “You dissin me? Humiliation and post 9/11 global politics,” *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 3 (2006): 495-522.

47 Ibid.

48 John Rawls quoted in Brighi, “The Globalisation of Resentment”, 414.

49 Sartre used Nietzsche's psychological structure of *ressentiment* man in his theory of anti-Semitism, noting the anti-Semite is paradoxically dependent on the Jew to sustain the life he has chosen. Remley, “Nietzsche's concept of resentment as the psychological structure for Sartre's theory of anti-Semitism”, 151.

50 Wendy Brown, “Wounded Attachments”, *Political Theory* 21 no. 3 (1993): 401-403.

51 Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: the demand for dignity and the politics of resentment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

of trauma.”<sup>52</sup> Some theorists have reflected on the role of resentment in ethnic violence,<sup>53</sup> while others note the emotion’s links with factors fuelling the rise of populism,<sup>54</sup> nationalism<sup>55</sup> and the far-right,<sup>56</sup> including the sense of failing to achieve Western society’s promise of equality and wealth amidst the rise of neoliberalism and secularisation.<sup>57</sup>

*Ressentiment* is predicated on the notion of unmet grievances, which are held on to and nursed until the *ressentiment* man derives a masochistic pleasure from his own victimhood.<sup>58</sup> Recent processual models of extremism cite “grievances” as an important precipitant of individual radicalisation and terrorist group formation.<sup>59</sup> As Martha Crenshaw notes in her seminal study, terrorists represent an extreme faction from within a broader social movement, which seek to redress perceived (real or imagined) grievances.<sup>60</sup> The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines a “grievance” as both a *cause* and a *feeling*: a “real or imagined cause for complaint, especially unfair treatment,” as well as “a feeling of resentment over something believed to be wrong or unfair.”<sup>61</sup> Terrorism literature tends to employ grievances in the former sense; Crenshaw’s suggestion that terrorism primarily arises from the perpetrator’s emotional perception of being the victim of injustice, rather than their objective circumstances, is a rare exception to this trend.<sup>62</sup> Many more scholars of terrorism, while not problematising the issue explicitly, use “grievances” as a catchall phrase to explain terrorists’ justification for violent extremism. References to “personal grievances,”<sup>63</sup> “political grievances,”<sup>64</sup> “economic grievances,”<sup>65</sup> “minority grievances,”<sup>66</sup> and “virtual grievances”<sup>67</sup> have been used to denote, among other things, a source of irresolvable tension between the insurgent and the state,<sup>68</sup> a bonding mechanism between terrorists and

52 Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

53 Roger Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

54 Bart Bonikowski, “Ethno-nationalist populism and the mobilization of collective resentment” *The British Journal of Sociology* 68 (2017): 181-213; Demertzis, N. “Emotions and populism” in Clarke, S., Hoggett, P. and Thompson, S. (eds) *Emotions, Politics and Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

55 Lauren Langman, “The Social Psychology of Nationalism: To Die for the Sake of Strangers” in Delanty, G., Kumar, K. and Delanty, G. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism* (London: SAGE, 2006): 66-83.

56 Joel Olsen, “Whiteness and the Polarization of American Politics”, *Political Research Quarterly* 61 no. 4 (2008): 704-718; Lars Rensmann, “Against Globalism’: Counter-cosmopolitan Discontent and Antisemitism in Mobilizations of European Extreme Right Parties” in *Politics and Resentment: Antisemitism and Counter-cosmopolitanism in the European Union*, eds. Lars Rensmann and Julius H. Schoeps (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2011): 117-146.

57 William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Mishra, *Age of Anger*.

58 Paul Hoggett, “*Ressentiment* and Grievance”, *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 34, no. 3 (2018): 393-407.

59 John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005), 84, 103; J.M. Berger, *Extremism*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018) 129-131; Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism*, 37; P. James Silver, John Horgan, and Paul Gill, “Foreshadowing Targeted Violence: Assessing Leakage of Intent by Public Mass Murderers”, *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* 38, (2018), 98.

60 Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism*, 37.

61 “Grievance” in Angus Stevenson and Christine A. Lindberg (eds.), *New Oxford American Dictionary (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*, (Oxford University Press, 2015). Accessed online.

62 Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism*, 38. A promising new study by Amilee Turner seeks to re-examine grievances from the perspective of micro-level sociopsychological theory, known as relative deprivation (i.e. terrorists’ perceptions), rather than employing macro-level data to measure absolute deprivation, as previous scholars have done. “Innovative Study to Examine Role of Grievances as Precursor to Extremism, Terrorism”, *The University of Kansas*, 31 August 2018. Accessed April 29, 2021.

63 Allison G. Smith, “How Radicalization to Terrorism Occurs in the United States: What Research Sponsored by the National Institute of Justice Tells us”, *National Institute of Justice*, June 2018, 8.

64 Brandon M. Boylan, “What drives ethnic terrorist campaigns? A view at the group level of analysis”, *Conflict Management*

65 James A. Piazza, “The determinants of domestic right-wing terrorism in the USA: Economic grievance, societal change and political resentment”, *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 34(1) (2017): 52-80.

66 Sambuddha Ghatak, Aaron Gold, Brandon C. Prins, “Domestic Terrorism in Democratic States: Understanding and Addressing Minority Grievances”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63(2) (2019): 439-467.

67 Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, 87.

68 Nicolas Johnston and Srinjoy Bose, “Violence, Power and Meaning: The Moral Logic of Terrorism”, *Global Policy* 11(3) (2020), 318.

local audiences,<sup>69</sup> and the motivating factor behind new terrorist recruits.<sup>70</sup>

Very few scholars are yet to analyse grievances in the context of how terrorists *feel*, let alone the more complex process of *ressentiment* and how it motivates extremists.<sup>71</sup> Lauren Langman's and Douglas Morris's conference paper, which notes Islamist terrorism's *ressentiment*-based claims of moral superiority towards the secular West, is one of the most notable exceptions to this general absence.<sup>72</sup> This gap is surprising considering the relatively substantial body of literature addressing the role of regular resentment in motivating jihadism and lone-actor terrorism associated with Al Qaeda and ISIS.<sup>73</sup> A number of reasons can potentially be attributed to the absence in scholarship: firstly, the over-emphasis on far-right attackers' psychological disorders;<sup>74</sup> secondly and consequentially, failing to take their stated motivations seriously;<sup>75</sup> thirdly, law enforcement's and the media's ongoing preoccupation with the "otherness" of Islamist terrorism since 9/11, which arguably shifts attention away from domestic far-right extremism.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, there is almost a complete absence of academic analysis of far-right manifestos, and no systematic study into the role of emotions within these texts.<sup>77</sup> Breivik's 2083 has received some attention, though this has mostly focussed on narrative structure and language, as opposed to its influence on the growing far-right movement.<sup>78</sup> Violent extremists' manifestos have received

69 Quan Li, "Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents?", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(2) (2005): 283.

70 B. Peter Rosendorff and Todd Sandler, "Too Much of a Good Thing?: The Proactive Response Dilemma", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(5) (2004), 658; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Human Rights, Terrorism and Counter-terrorism", *Fact Sheet No 32.*, 20; Jessica Stern, "From Radicalization to Extremism: What Have We Learned and What Can We Do About It?", *The Annals of the American Academy* 688 (2016): 105.

71 As far as I am aware, the only study relating *ressentiment* to today's far-right extremism is by Andrew Root. Root draws parallels between our culture and the *ressentiments* of the pre-WWII German youth movement, arguing that groups to the left and right of the political spectrum are increasingly characterised by their opposition of each other's "should-be reality". Root, "Pastoral leadership lessons from Bonhoeffer: The alt-right, the twitter mob, and *ressentiment*", *Dialog* 59, no. 2 (2020): 82-92. Studies linking *ressentiment* with terrorism include: Brighi, "The Globalisation of Resentment", 420; Lauren Langman and Douglas Morris, "Islamic Terrorism: From Retrenchment to Resentment and Beyond", *27<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Political Economy of World Systems*, (Riverside, CA: 2002), Susan Morrissey, "Terrorism and *Ressentiment* in Revolutionary Russia", *Past and Present* 246 (2020): 191-226; Elżbieta Pośuszna, "Inferiority and Violence: Islamist terrorism seen Against the Resentment Theory", *Toruńskie Studia Międzynarodowe (Torun International Studies)* 12 (169-179).

72 Langman and Morris, "Islamic Terrorism: From Retrenchment to Resentment and Beyond".

73 Annette Baier, "Violent Demonstrations", in *Violence, Terrorism, and Justice*, eds. Raymond Gillespie Frey and Christopher W. Morris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 33-58. Jon Elster, "Motivations and Beliefs in Suicide Missions", in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, ed. Diego Gambetta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 233-258; Slavoj Žižek, *On Violence* (New York: Picador, 2008), 85-104.

74 For examples of journalists and politicians stressing the role of psychology behind lone-wolf terrorist attacks, see, respectively: Kamran Ahmed, "Terrorism or mental health problem? Let's not jump to conclusions", *The Guardian*, 27 June 2017. Accessed May 6, 2020; Spencer Kimball, "Trump says mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton are a 'mental illness problem'", *CNBC*, 4 August 2019. Accessed May 6, 2020. For a strong critique of the notion that there is a "terrorist profile" or "terrorist psychology", see Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, 47-79, 160. See also Benedict Carey, "What Experts Know About People Who Commit Mass Shootings," *The New York Times*, 5 August 2019. Accessed May 6, 2020.

75 Uri Friedman, "How Many Attacks Will It Take Until The White Supremacist Threat Is Taken Seriously?", *The Atlantic*, 4 August 2019. Accessed July 10, 2020.

76 A study of 893 attacks and foiled terror plots between 1994-2020 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) found that 57 percent of incidents were perpetrated by right-wing terrorists, compared with 15 percent by religious terrorists. Seth Jones, Katrina Doxsee and Nicholas Harrington, "The Escalating Terrorism Problem in the United States", *CSIS Briefs*, June 2020. Accessed July 25, 2020. See also the Anti-Defamation League, "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2017", *ADL Center on Extremism Report*, 2017, accessed 6 May 2020. The disparity between government efforts directed towards Islamic terrorism rather than white extremism has received increased attention in recent years. See, for example, Janet Reitman, "U.S. Law Enforcement Failed to See the Threat of White Nationalism. Now They Don't Know How to Stop It," *The New York Times*, 3 November 2018. Accessed May 6, 2020; Naved Bakali, "Challenging Terrorism as a Form of 'Otherness': Exploring the Parallels between Far-right and Muslim Religious Extremism", *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 5 no. 1 (2019): 102. Schmuck, Matthes, von Sikorski, Materne and Shah, "Are Unidentified Terrorist Suspects Always Muslims?" *Religion* 9 no. 10 (2018): 1-16.

77 Some scholars are beginning to address this gap. For a thematic analysis of right-wing manifestos, see Jacob Ware, "Testament to Murder: The Violent Far-Right's Increasing Use of Terrorist Manifestos" *ICCT Policy Brief*, March 2020: 1-22. See also J.M. Berger, "The Dangerous Spread of Extremist Manifestos," *Atlantic*, February 26, 2019. Accessed July 10, 2020; Cristina Ariza, "Are we witnessing the rise of a new terrorist trend?" *OpenDemocracy*, November 5, 2019. Accessed July 10, 2020.

78 Sveinung Sandberg, "Are self-narratives strategic or determined, unified or fragmented? Reading Breivik's manifesto in

more attention from the media, however, reporting has mostly focussed on rhetoric and meme culture,<sup>79</sup> debates on free speech<sup>80</sup> and the radical message boards where the manifestos were posted.<sup>81</sup> A study into the role of emotional processes in motivating violent extremism is thus long overdue. By discursively analysing how the process of *ressentiment* underpins three perpetrators' decision to enact violent extremism, this paper seeks to shed light on the role of emotions in motivating these acts.

## Ressentiment and Discourse Analysis

This paper applies Reinhard Wolf's categories of discourse analysis to three extremist manifestos in order to identify critical thought patterns connecting *ressentiment* with its manifestations in violent extremism.<sup>82</sup> Wolf's categories rely on *The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology's* definition of an "emotion" as:

*"a transient, neurophysiological response to a stimulus that excites a coordinated system of bodily and mental responses that inform us about our relationship to the stimulus and prepare us to deal with it in some way."*<sup>83</sup>

While the concept of an emotion is notoriously difficult to expound, this definition illustrates how emotions involve a somatic experience, thought processes which link the subject and stimulus, and an action impulse. Wolf identifies three categories of discursive evidence emerging from this definition, which can be used in uncovering the presence of political *ressentiments*: "distinct cognitions, bodily arousals, and action tendencies."<sup>84</sup> Each of these categories corresponds with a number of clear discursive markers, which are summarised in the table below. Emotions can be both "asocial" responses to stimuli or emerge from a distinctive social context.<sup>85</sup> Though as Wolf notes, *ressentiment* is an inherently public emotional attitude: it is not enough for ego to resent alter's high status, instead ego feels "a particular need to express, propagate and justify their negative views about alter."<sup>86</sup> These displays are intended to tarnish alter's moral status, thereby (hopefully) lowering their social status, while in the process winning allies to ego's cause. Ego's expression of this resentment also serves their subjective need to feel justified in their response to alter's high social/low moral status. Discourse analysis is therefore ideally suited to demonstrating the presence of *ressentiment*, as the emotion is likely to present itself in public

light of narrative criminology", *Acta Sociologica* 56, no. 1 (February 2013): 69-83; Mattias Gardell, "Crusader Dreams: Oslo 22/7, Islamophobia, and the Quest for a Monocultural Europe", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 1 (2014): 129-155.

79 Dearden, "Revered as a saint by online extremists, how Christchurch shooter inspired copycat terrorists around the world"; Kevin Roose, "A Mass Murder of, and for, the Internet", *The New York Times*, March 15, 2019. Accessed May 7, 2020; Jane Coaston, "The New Zealand shooter's manifesto shows how white nationalist rhetoric spreads", *Vox*, March 18, 2019. Accessed May 7, 2020.

80 Melissa Eddy and Aurelien Breeden, "The El Paso Shooting Revived the Free Speech Debate. Europe Has Limits", *The New York Times*, August 3 2019. Accessed May 7, 2020.

81 Drew Harwell, "Three mass shootings this year began with a hateful screed on 8chan. Its founder calls it a terrorist refuge in plain sight", *Washington Post*, August 4, 2019. Accessed May 7, 2020.

82 Wolf illustrates how discourse analysis can uncover instances of *ressentiments* with reference to statements made by Greek politicians in the 2015 Greek Sovereign Debt Crisis, which asserted that a "morally disqualified Germany" had relegated Greece to an inferior status. His framework is highly transferable to other public discourse. Wolf, "Political emotions as public processes", 240-241.

83 Matsumoto, D.R. (ed.) *The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 179 quoted in Wolf, "Political emotions as public processes", 233.

84 Wolf, "Political emotions as public processes", 237.

85 J. Mercer, "Feeling Like a State: Social Emotion and Identity", *International Theory*, 6 no. 3 (2014): 515-535; Eliot R. Smith and Diane M. Mackie, "Intergroup Emotions", *Handbook of Emotions*, eds. J. M. Haviland-Jones, L. F. Barrett, & M. Lewis: (New York: Guilford Press, 2008): 428-439.

86 Wolf, "Political emotions as public processes", 236.

expressions against the unfair status hierarchy.

This analysis is predicated on the assumption that *ressentiments* are characterised by their process quality.<sup>87</sup> They are not so much “states” as they are patterned responses to specific circumstances. As a result, discourse analysis identifies typical combinations of indicators to reveal a potential process. By discursively analysing three perpetrators’ manifestos this paper seeks to understand whether the process of *ressentiment* motivated their decision to enact violent extremism.

**Table 1:** Three kinds of discursive evidence for establishing the presence of *ressentiment*<sup>88</sup>

Distinct cognitions	Bodily reactions	Action tendencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Complaints about ‘unfair’ status shifts</b> or about unjust obstructions of ego’s social mobility</li> <li>• <b>Emphasis upon alter’s unworthiness</b> of its elevated status</li> <li>• <b>Negative stereotypes with reference to alter’s overall character</b> rather than to momentary political circumstances</li> <li>• <b>Evidence of ego’s awareness of its momentary impotence</b> to correct an ‘unfair’ hierarchy of status</li> <li>• <b>Justifications of retributive measures</b> taken against ‘unfair’ status change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Emotionally loaded terms</b> for describing status asymmetry (e.g. “outrageous”, “evil”, “vile”, “heinous”)</li> <li>• <b>Drastic metaphors</b> that convey the offensive character of the status asymmetry (e.g., “enslavement”, “subjugation”)</li> <li>• <b>Expressions of moral indignation</b> or disgust toward alter’s character (e.g., “oppressor”, “opportunist”, “monster”, “criminal”, “Satan”)</li> <li>• <b>Satisfaction expressed about minor setbacks</b> experienced by alter (<i>Schadenfreude</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Satisfaction expressed after retribution</b> or successful diminution of alter.<sup>89</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statements and <b>far-fetched accusations aimed at tarnishing the social or moral status</b> of alter</li> <li>• <b>Principled calls for rectifying “unfair” status hierarchies</b> regardless of the material costs</li> <li>• <b>Proposals for retributive actions</b> against symbols of alter’s elevated status</li> <li>• <b>Demands for an uncompromising stance in negotiations</b> that are based on the premise that alter does not “deserve” any accommodation<sup>90</sup></li> <li>• <b>Articulation of revenge fantasies</b> against alter</li> </ul>

87 Wolf, “Political emotions as public processes”, 236.

88 This table is a summary of Wolf’s “Indicators of Political Ressentiments in Discourse” in “Political emotions as public processes”, 236-239.

89 With regards to “bodily reactions,” Wolf acknowledges that “the first three types of indicators are of special importance, while the absence of the latter two does not rule the presence of *ressentiments*.” (Note 4) He makes this distinction because “alter may not yet have experienced status diminution.” This paper correspondingly does not examine the manifestos for evidence of the latter two indicators of bodily reactions, as they were published before the perpetrators carried out their attacks.

90 These manifestos are “uncompromising” in their “stance”, however, this attitude is not explicitly directed towards “negotiations” with alter. This may be because these manifestos were written by people who did not foresee having any opportunity to voice their opinions to alter, let alone negotiate with them (indeed, this is one of their central grievances). Consequently, and in the interest of keeping this paper as free from speculation as possible, I do not analyse the manifestos for evidence of this particular indicator.

# Manifestos Analysis

## Background to the manifestos

Each of the perpetrators' manifestos will be examined in detail below, however, it seems necessary at this point to provide a brief summary of each manifesto's context, structure and style.

Breivik's 1518-page "compendium," *2083*, was emailed on the morning of his attack to one thousand select "patriots" active in right-wing networks as part of a self-proclaimed "marketing operation."<sup>91</sup> Breivik explicitly requests in the introduction that readers translate and distribute his book to other like-minded individuals.<sup>92</sup> Breivik's manifesto has been seen as a turning point in the white extremist movement: as J.M. Berger notes, "that manifesto became the baton in a relay race of extremists, passed from one terrorist murderer to the next through online communities."<sup>93</sup> The text is broken into three parts: "Book 1" is a quasi-historical description of the reasons for Europe's current crises, while "Book 2" prophesies a "European Civil War" from 1950 to 2083; the year in which the war will come to an end and a new, monocultural, patriarchal Europe will emerge. The third and longest section, "Book 3", is part-terrorist manual, part-interview, and part-diary entry. The compendium is written in a didactic style from the first person perspective towards the reader, though Aage Borchgrevink has argued this second person could also be Breivik addressing himself in an internal monologue.<sup>94</sup> Regardless, the manifesto is an overtly public and instructional text designed to guide its readers through the self-education process which led to Breivik's radicalisation.<sup>95</sup> The manifesto was substantially plagiarised from other sources, including Ted Kaczynski (the "Unabomber") and the ultra-conservative American historian William Lind.<sup>96</sup> Meanwhile the compendium's subtitle, *A European Declaration of Independence*, and forty-five of its essays are taken from publications by Fjordman, a right-wing Norwegian blogger whom Breivik had never met.<sup>97</sup> Fjordman, the so-called "dark prophet of Norway," was forced out of anonymity by the attack and would go on to openly distance himself from Breivik, observing: "[Breivik] showed an extreme brutality that's completely incomprehensible, and he must have believed he was part of a computer game where he was the superhero."<sup>98</sup>

Tarrant's 2019 manifesto, *The Great Replacement*, specifically cites Breivik and his secret (likely fictional) order, the "Knights Justiciar," as his main source of inspiration.<sup>99</sup> Like Breivik, the Christchurch attack was accompanied by a public relations strategy: Tarrant uploaded his manifesto to the extreme right-wing board "Politically Incorrect" on the imageboard 8chan and on Twitter hours before the shooting. Building upon Breivik's propaganda efforts, the Australian filmed the attack via a helmet cam and livestreamed it on Facebook.<sup>100</sup> Similar to *2083*, Tarrant's manifesto contains a fictional interview, methods and strategies for future attacks, pseudo-history and a summary of his ideology. The document is shorter though – only 74 pages – and

91 Breivik, *2083: A Declaration of Independence*, 8.

92 Breivik, *2083: A Declaration of Independence*, 8. Breivik's Outlook had a 1,000 messages per day limit, which he only discovered on the morning of his planned attack. This meant far fewer people received his compendium on 22 July than the 8,000 he had originally intended. Aage Borchgrevink, *A Norwegian Tragedy: Anders Behring Breivik and the Massacre on Utoya*, trans. Guy Puzey (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013): 164-65.

93 J.M. Berger, "The Strategy of Violent White Supremacy is Evolving," *The Atlantic*, August 7, 2019. Accessed May 1, 2020. See also Weiyi Cai and Simone Landon, "Attacks by White Extremists Are Growing. So Are Their Connections," *The New York Times*, April 3 2019. Accessed May 5, 2020.

94 Borchgrevink, *A Norwegian Tragedy*, 162.

95 Berger, "The Dangerous Spread of Extremist Manifestos."

96 Borchgrevink, *A Norwegian Tragedy*, 21, 123.

97 *Ibid.*, 125-126.

98 Mia Shanley, "Norway killer's online idol steps out of shadows," *Reuters*, August 4, 2011. Accessed March 23, 2021.

99 Brandon Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 18.

100 Robert Evans, "Shitposting, Inspirational Terrorism and the Christchurch Mosque Massacre", *Bellingcat*, March 19 2019. Accessed May 5, 2020.

its design is more reader-friendly: the font size is larger, the headers are consistently formatted, and many pages are summarised in pithy capitalised one-liners, such as “CONSERVATISM IS DEAD. THANK GOD.”<sup>101</sup> Tarrant appears to have multiple audiences in mind: journalists looking to understand the motivations behind the attack, potential converts, and the online in-crowd. Tarrant throws in “ironic”, “low-quality” “traps” to distract unwitting readers and frustrate attempts at meaningful interpretation, such as Tarrant’s reference to far-right personality Candace Owens as the source of his radicalisation.<sup>102</sup> The manifesto is also littered with in-jokes and references to memes (joking at one point that the video game “Spyro the Dragon 3” taught him “ethno-nationalism”), which appear to be for the entertainment of his 8chan community.<sup>103</sup> This self-aware, tongue-in-cheek style is nevertheless underpinned by an urgent, angry sounding cry for others to follow in his footsteps.

Illustrating these extremists’ concentric circles of influence, Crusius’ manifesto, *The Inconvenient Truth*, identifies the Christchurch shooter as the main inspiration for his attack. Like Tarrant, Crusius announced the start of his rampage on 8chan’s /pol board and attached a four-page manifesto to the post.<sup>104</sup> Crusius’ manifesto is likewise overtly propagandistic in nature: he anticipates potential objections to his ideas before rebutting his accusers’ naiveté and mounting a kind of legal case in defence of his act of terror. For example, after claiming his attack to be an act of defence of the state of Texas, he argues “Some people will think this statement is hypocritical because of the nearly complete ethnic and cultural destruction brought to the Native Americans by our European ancestors, but this just reinforces my point. The natives didn’t take the invasion of Europeans seriously, and now what’s left is just a shadow of what was.”<sup>105</sup> Crusius’ manifesto is nevertheless comparatively modest to that of Breivik and Tarrant: he limits himself to a few paragraphs under various subheadings addressing the political and economic reasons for the attack, a guide to how he selected his guns, the reaction he hoped to provoke and “personal reasons and thoughts.”<sup>106</sup> The tone of the manifesto itself is also less angry, and more resigned: as he laments the environmental repercussions of American consumerism, Crusius acknowledges “I just want to say that I love the people of this country, but god damn most of y’all are just too stubborn to change your lifestyle.”<sup>107</sup> The manifesto was met with a mixed reception from 8chan users – one user referring to it as a “0 effort manifesto” while others lauded the shooter’s substantial body count. Crusius’ case is particularly indicative of the “self-referential nature”<sup>108</sup> of far-right extremism and the role of gamification in radicalising white supremacists.<sup>109</sup>

## Distinct Cognitions

Considering *ressentiments* are long-term emotional attitudes, their most readily identifiable “discursive indicators” are found in the “cognitive aspects of emotional processes.”<sup>110</sup> Since the

101 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 25.

102 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 18. Evans, “Shitposting, Inspirational Terrorism and the Christchurch Mosque Massacre”.

103 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 17.

104 Robert Evans, “The El Paso Shooting and the Gamification of Terror”, *Bellingcat*, 4 August 2019. Accessed 7 May 2020.

105 Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 1.

106 *Ibid.*, 3.

107 *Ibid.*, 2.

108 Graham Macklin, “The Christchurch Attacks: Livestream Terror in the Viral Video Age,” *CTC Sentinel* 12, no.6 (2019): 23; Macklin, “The El Paso Terrorist Attack: The Chain Reaction of Global Right-Wing Terror,” 1.

109 Gaming culture’s influence on extremist organisations’ recruitment tactics and methods of recording a terrorist attack has received increasing attention since the rise of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) and their particularly effective gamified propaganda. See for example Evans, “The El Paso Shooting and the Gamification of Terror”; Linda Schlegel, “Can You Hear Your Call of Duty: The Gamification of Radicalization and Extremist Violence,” *European Eye on Radicalization*, 17 March 2020. Accessed May 7, 2020.

110 Wolf, “Political emotions as public processes,” 237.



resenting person perceives a need for allies to help confront the (self-perceived) unfair but stable status hierarchy, they will articulate their grievances in the hope of legitimating and justifying their case. To establish the cognitive aspects of *ressentiments* scholars can thus analyse ego's expressed views on status and the moral qualities ascribed to alter.<sup>111</sup> Wolf recommends scholars be attentive to five distinctive "kinds of articulation," which illustrate these cognitions: complaints about "unfair" status shifts; an emphasis on alter's unworthiness; negative stereotypes concerning alter's character; ego's awareness of its momentary impotence to correct the hierarchy; justifications of retributive measures taken against "unfair" status changes.<sup>112</sup> This paper examines the manifestos for evidence of these articulations and compares their content below.

Firstly, complaints about "unfair" status shifts and obstructions to the perpetrator's mobility abound in all three manifestos. Breivik's central concern is that "indigenous Europeans" like himself are no longer at home in their own country due to "the Islamic invasion [...] of Europe through demographic warfare."<sup>113</sup> Not only are they becoming "extinct" through "demographical genocide on a mass scale" but "cultural conservatives" such as himself face "institutionalised persecution, discrimination... and/or mental/physical abuse" if they attempt any form of "self-defence" of "ethnic Christian European interests."<sup>114</sup> Tarrant builds on Breivik's grievance, noting that "[white Europeans] are rapidly becoming, not just a global minority, but a minority within their own lands."<sup>115</sup> As though this status shift were not enough, Tarrant bemoans, white Europeans are expected to "go gently" and to "embrace" the inevitable change in their fate.<sup>116</sup> The fact that Tarrant is Australian and not European is of little consequence to his sense of injustice: Tarrant identifies himself with this trans-national white community, which is as vaguely defined as the nature of the threat he personally faces. While Breivik and Tarrant lament the status shift at a global level, Crusius hones in on the personal implications of this supposed white replacement. His resentment towards the establishment emerges from believing he will not be able to achieve his dream job due to Hispanic immigrants over-populating Texas: "my whole life I have been preparing for a future that currently doesn't exist."<sup>117</sup> It is not clear what exactly this dream job is, or why over-population is to blame considering Crusius also recognises that immigration increases the total number of consumers (and therefore economic demand). The point he hopes to impart though is that his own status decline stands in a dichotomous relationship with the perceived nation-wide demographic shift.

Secondly, the manifestos describe the unworthiness of alter's elevated status. Surprisingly, it is the European political and economic establishment, and not the migrant community, against whom the perpetrators' *ressentiment* is directed. While they resent migrants for ethnically and culturally replacing white Europeans and Americans, the manifestos' authors primarily direct their anger towards those in power due to what they perceive to be cultural betrayal. It is the "spiritually bankrupt"<sup>118</sup> Western elite who are held morally culpable for white replacement: "these greed filled bastards"<sup>119</sup> are who encouraged immigration "to create the cheap labour, new consumers and tax base that the corporations and states need to thrive."<sup>120</sup> Alter's immorality is evidenced by them being entirely wilful in this operation, making "a concerted and targeted effort against-

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111 Ibid.

112 Ibid. 237-238.

113 Breivik, *2083: European Declaration of Independence*, 771.

114 Ibid. 772.

115 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 34.

116 Ibid. 2, 34.

117 Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 3.

118 Breivik, *2083: European Declaration of Independence*, 1219.

119 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 48.

120 Ibid. 3.

[their own] people”<sup>121</sup> to “invite” “an invasion” into their home country:<sup>122</sup> this “is nothing less than [a] deliberate plan.”<sup>123</sup> While only Breivik is explicitly anti-Semitic, the idea of political leaders orchestrating the rest of society’s demise – whether through multiculturalism, striking deals with corporations or starting a pandemic – has its origins in a frequently rebranded anti-Semitic conspiracy.<sup>124</sup> While it may seem surprising that all three perpetrators reserve less vitriol for non-whites than they do for the corrupt elites, this corresponds with the white supremacist belief that those who have the furthest to fall are “the traitors within our ranks.”<sup>125</sup>

Thirdly, alter’s character is thoroughly grounded in negative stereotypes. Breivik, for example, lumps together various complicit power groups as the “cultural Marxist/ multiculturalist/ suicidal humanist/capitalist globalist politicians.”<sup>126</sup> *The Great Replacement* is likewise awash with sweeping generalisations about the degenerate state; “a society of rampant nihilism, consumerism and individualism” created by “weak men”<sup>127</sup> with “no core beliefs, no purpose and no vision for the future.”<sup>128</sup> Crusius in similar fashion derides the “corrupt and broken state,” calling anyone who sympathises with migrants “shameless race mixers, massive polluters, haters of our collective values.”<sup>129</sup> There is no nuance to any of these categories; people are either “traitors,”<sup>130</sup> in denial of the reality of the current crises, or “awake” to “the objective truth.”<sup>131</sup>

Fourthly, all three perpetrators acknowledge awareness of their momentary impotence to correct the “unfair” hierarchy of status. Breivik attributes European leaders’ inability to self-correct to their “lack of cultural self-confidence”: “this irrational fear is preventing [them] from stopping our own national/cultural suicide.”<sup>132</sup> At an individual level, he feels as though the current system of “political correctness”<sup>133</sup> prevents him from exercising his political rights.<sup>134</sup> Tarrant describes a similar sense of impotence under the current political system, again feeling as though the government has failed in its duty to protect Europe from the “invasion”: “Why were we allowing the invaders to conquer us?”<sup>135</sup> For Crusius, it is “nearly impossible” to stop “America... rotting from the inside out” through “peaceful means” due to the government’s takeover from corporations.<sup>136</sup> For all three perpetrators, their impotence to challenge their self-perceived low status is intimately associated with a sense that their government no longer represents them.

Finally, *ressentiment* ego attempts to justify retributive actions against alter in an attempt to win followers. While they agree the establishment is to blame for white replacement, the three perpetrators diverge in their opinions about who retributive action should be taken against. Breivik believes violence should primarily be enacted against espousers of multiculturalism because reversing “the Islamic colonization of Western Europe” is only made possible by

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121 Ibid. 62.

122 Ibid. 3.

123 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 1225.

124 Steven Zipperstein, “The Conspiracy Theory to Rule Them All: What explains the strange, long life of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,” *The Atlantic*, August 25, 2020. Accessed March 24, 2021.

125 Tarrant, 71.

126 Ibid. 771.

127 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 34, 30.

128 Ibid. 34.

129 Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 4.

130 See particularly Breivik’s “Category A, B and C traitors”, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 930-932. See also Tarrant, 39, 48, 58; Crusius, 4.

131 Breivik, 25. Breivik refers to “the truth” in his manifesto almost 200 times. See for example 5, 8, 386. See also Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 34; Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 1.

132 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 4-5.

133 Ibid. 12-13.

134 Ibid. 773.

135 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 9.

136 Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 1.

“removing the political doctrines manifested through multiculturalism/ cultural Marxism.”<sup>137</sup> His calculated decision to target the Norwegian Labour Party’s annual summer camp, “where Norway’s governing caste was formed,” evidences this belief.<sup>138</sup> Tarrant and Crusius, on the other hand, deliberately attacked immigrant communities.<sup>139</sup> In *The Great Replacement* Tarrant justifies attacking a mosque by claiming it would cause Muslims to retaliate “and experience the eventual [political] backlash as a result.”<sup>140</sup> Crusius changes the emphasis slightly, arguing if the solution to the country’s current crises is “get[ing] rid of enough people,” then shootings act as an “incentive” for immigrants to “return to their home countries.”<sup>141</sup> All three shooters, however, viewed their attack as an act of “self-defence” of Western European culture, values and ethnic “purity” against the “demographic warfare” being waged by their own elites.<sup>142</sup> In Tarrant’s fictional interview a hypothetical reporter asks, “If you survived, did you intend to go to trial?” Tarrant replies: “Yes, and to plead not guilty. The attack was a partisan action against a [sic] occupying force, and I am a lawful, uniformed combatant.”<sup>143</sup> Crusius likewise calls his act “faultless”: “I am simply defending my country from cultural and ethnic replacement brought on by an invasion.”<sup>144</sup> By recasting their acts of violence as self-preservation, each manifesto compels readers to recognise the perpetrators as the real victims of injustice.

## Bodily Reactions

While distinct cognitions are relatively easy to substantiate through discursive evidence, the same cannot be said for identifying examples of bodily reactions involved in feeling *ressentiments*. Wolf notes the challenge of pinpointing corporeal sensations associated with an emotion such as *ressentiment*, which is developed over time, in contrast to “hot” emotive outbursts like rage or anger.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, scholars need to be aware of the difference between analysing discourse for evidence of actual emotions experienced by individuals, as opposed to what Todd Hall calls “insert[ing] claims about emotional states into discourse.”<sup>146</sup> This is particularly challenging in the context of analysing extremists’ manifestos, as the representation of their feelings may be consciously or subconsciously influenced by the text’s purpose as propaganda. Nevertheless, a number of factors make the search for bodily reactions involved in feeling *ressentiments* worthwhile. Most straightforwardly, the fact that all perpetrators expected to die in their attacks would indicate they believed their own manifesto sufficiently to act on their own advice.<sup>147</sup> In addition, just because the manifestos can be considered propaganda does not necessarily mean that its contents are inauthentic. As was noted earlier, the emotional attitude of *ressentiment* is characterised by its need to publicly justify and propagate its negative views about alter. Thus the propagandistic element of these manifestos’ bodily reactions is consistent with the authentic expression of *ressentiment*. While it is impossible to know for certain whether the perpetrators’ bodily reactions evidence the experience of *ressentiments*, three types of discursive evidence are useful for identifying their possible presence: emotionally loaded terms for describing the

137 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 5.

138 Borchgrevink, *A Norwegian Tragedy*, 47.

139 Tarrant targeted two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, killing 51 people. Crusius targeted Hispanics at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, killing 22 people.

140 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 5.

141 Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 2, 3.

142 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 816.

143 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 13.

144 Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 1.

145 Wolf, “Political emotions as public processes,” 238.

146 Todd Hall (2016) quoted in Wolf, “Political emotions as public processes,” 232.

147 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 9; Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 73; Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 4.

status asymmetry; expressions of moral indignation or disgust towards alter's character; drastic metaphors to convey the hierarchy's offensive nature.<sup>148</sup>

All manifestos rely on emotionally loaded terms to describe the status asymmetry between themselves and the elites complicit in "policies of extinction" against "indigenous Europeans."<sup>149</sup> This language is almost inseparable from their expressions of moral indignation towards alter's character. Through their powerful perversion of reality, the perpetrators construct themselves as the heroic victims of the social structure and depict the targets of their attack as sub-human or as an embodiment of all evil. Breivik's stark, religious language conveys the self-righteous, angry emotional arousal beneath his manifesto as he sets up a dichotomy between the noble defenders of Europe, namely, the "Knights Templar" (a secret order of armed resisters to which he claims to belong), and "our own elites, primarily Marxist, suicidal humanist and capitalist globalist politicians and journalists."<sup>150</sup> The knightly "martyrs" are characterised by "strength and honour [and] courage": theirs is a "journey of sacrifice" to redeem the "spiritually bankrupt nations" and restore "European cultures and Christendom in general through armed struggle."<sup>151</sup> Meanwhile, Breivik describes "the *Godless religion* of Marxism,<sup>152</sup> with its *evil* twin spawns Liberalism and Multiculturalism" as the source of Western civilisation's destruction: he accuses European elites of "*inverting morality*" so as to justify subjecting society to "their *unjust* oppression."<sup>153</sup> In comparison to Breivik's somewhat aloof tone, Tarrant's manifesto is littered with insights into his personal emotive response to comprehending Europe having "fallen so far." For example, upon encountering fields of crosses in France, Tarrant describes how, "in front of those dead soldiers lost in forgotten wars, my *despair* turned to *shame*, my shame to *guilt*, my guilt to *anger* and my anger to *rage*."<sup>154</sup> Tarrant offers this insight as a way of inviting readers along the journey towards action, like himself: "The spell broke, why don't I do something? Why not me?"<sup>155</sup> Tarrant's moral indignation towards those who "betray" Western civilisation is also apparent as he answers the hypothetical reporter's question "Did you personally hate muslims [sic]?: "The only muslim [sic] I truly hate is the convert," he states, before explaining further: "those from our own people that turn their backs on their heritage [...] and become *blood traitors* to their own race."<sup>156</sup> *The Inconvenient Truth*, being shorter and rather more self-effacing than the other two manifestos, betrays fewer of the author's bodily arousals. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note Crusius' reoccurring references to his state of "shame": he vents his hatred against "shameless race mixers" and the corporations "shamelessly overharvesting resources" while simultaneously feeling burdened by his own "shame" of "inaction" knowing he has the ability to "save our country from the brink of destruction."<sup>157</sup> Shame is a highly corporeal emotion – the reader can almost imagine Crusius writhing within himself as he feels the weight of knowing he has the ability to change the status quo.<sup>158</sup>

The perpetrators' bodily reactions to feeling *ressentiment* are also discursively evidenced by the use of drastic metaphors in conveying the (self-perceived) hierarchy's offensive nature. As has already been seen, all three perpetrators frequently refer to immigrants arriving in Europe as an

148 Wolf, "Political emotions as public processes," 238. See footnote 91 for why Wolf's remaining two indicators of bodily reactions (satisfaction expressed about minor setbacks experienced by alter, or after successful retribution), which Wolf considers to be less significant, were not included in this analysis.

149 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 476.

150 Ibid. 816, 478.

151 Ibid. 819-820.

152 Italics added. This is Breivik's catch-all term for "cultural relativism" and liberal democracy. Ibid, 398.

153 Italics added. Ibid. 399.

154 Italics added. Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 9.

155 Ibid. 9.

156 Italics added. Ibid. 12.

157 Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 3.

158 For more analysis on the role of shame in motivating violence, see James Gilligan, "Shame, guilt, and violence," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (2003): 1149-1180.

“invasion,” thereby evoking the imagery of war and pre-empting their need to defend.<sup>159</sup> Breivik also refers to Muslims as “wild animals,” who he argues are freely bringing about European “genocide” because “traitors... allowed these animals to enter our lands, and continue to facilitate them.”<sup>160</sup> In keeping with the naturalistic theme, Tarrant’s text is also rife with mixed metaphors describing how individuals such as himself can no longer escape Western civilisation’s contamination: “there is no sheltered meadow... there is not a single place left where the tendrils of replacement migration have not touched.”<sup>161</sup> Comparing immigrants to a “vipers [sic] nest”, he implores followers to “burn the nest and kill the vipers, no matter their age.”<sup>162</sup> Crusius similarly bewails how those without the means to “repel the millions of invaders” “have no choice but to sit by and watch their countries burn.”<sup>163</sup> The repetition of animalistic metaphors is no accident: the perpetrators intentionally dehumanise immigrants by depicting them as beastly, thereby making their complaint about Western society’s perceived decline more justifiable to their readers.

## Action Tendencies

Action tendencies emanate from ego’s desire to tilt the status hierarchy back in its favour. As such, Wolf encourages scholars to identify discursive evidence of these tendencies by looking for “links between negative representations of alter and demands for uncooperative policies.”<sup>164</sup> In the context of these manifestos, “uncooperative policies” are taken to their extreme by perpetrators calling for retributive violence against the multicultural norm. These include attempts to shift the public discourse such that the public “wake up”<sup>165</sup> to the reality of the elites’ corruption and the immigrant “invasion,” or through articulating future scenarios where the political and economic establishment are finally held accountable for their moral failure. The following analysis identifies examples in each manifesto of Wolf’s forms of discursive evidence for action tendencies: far-fetched statements aimed at tarnishing alter’s status; calls for rectifying the “unfair” status (regardless of costs) through retributive actions; articulation of revenge narratives.<sup>166</sup>

The *ressentiment* perpetrator makes far-fetched statements aimed at tarnishing the moral status of the elites, and to a lesser extent, migrants. At the centre of each of these statements is the common evocation of conspiracy theories about global elites. While the nature of the extremists’ grievances towards the establishment differs, the accusation remains the same: the seductively simple idea that complex global challenges are a deliberate plot by those “in power” against ordinary white people. Breivik believes in an intricate conspiracy between the “multiculturalists” and “Muslim states,” which involves a “deliberate plan to cause the indirect demographical genocide”<sup>167</sup> of European culture and ethnicity by creating “Eurabia.”<sup>168</sup> According to Breivik, this plot includes, “allowing systematical [sic] Islamic demographic warfare,” encouraging a low

159 See, for example, Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 816, Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 8, 9; Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 3, 4.

160 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 478.

161 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 46.

162 Ibid. 53.

163 Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 3.

164 Wolf, “Political emotions as public processes”, 239.

165 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 21.

166 Wolf, “Political emotions as public processes”, 239. Wolf’s list also includes a fifth indicator (demands for an uncompromising stance in negotiations with alter), which this paper does not draw upon. See footnote 92 for more details on this rationale.

167 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 1225.

168 Ibid. 42. “Eurabia” is a conspiracy coined in the early 2000s by Bat Ye’or (Gisele Littman), who argued that Western countries are slowly being brought under Islamic rule. Breivik cites this conspiracy extensively throughout the compendium. For a deeper analysis, see Liz Fekete, “The Muslim conspiracy theory and the Oslo massacre”, *Race & Class*, Vol. 53 no. 3 (December) 2011: 30–47.

birth rate<sup>169</sup> and “importing Muslim voters.”<sup>170</sup> Most of the compendium is devoted to expanding on this conspiracy, which is designed to lead the reader to believe that no-one, save Breivik and the Justiciar Knights, can be trusted. Tarrant and Crusius also attest to “the truth” that Western elites deliberately encourage “millions of invaders”<sup>171</sup> into their home countries, though they attribute this more directly to a sinister-sounding government “takeover”<sup>172</sup> by “corporate backed Capitalists.”<sup>173</sup> Tarrant lays out the situation simply: “Democracy is mob rule and the mob itself is ruled by our enemies.”<sup>174</sup> Likewise Crusius argues the government is unable to prevent the coming crises “since they are owned by corporations. Corporations that also like immigration because more people means a bigger market for their products.”<sup>175</sup> Crusius also builds on Breivik’s accusation that immigrant votes are being “imported”: he claims the Democrats are scheming “to enact a political coup by importing and then legalizing millions of new voters.”<sup>176</sup> These far-fetched statements go beyond tarnishing the moral status of those in power: each manifesto completely undermines the reader’s belief in the entire political system.

*Ressentiment* action tendencies are further indicated by the perpetrators’ calls for rectifying the “unfair” status hierarchy at all costs. Breivik’s vision of a restored Europe demands no less than a knight’s sacrifice of his life. By addressing the reader directly and invoking the glory of sacrifice, he tantalises sympathisers with the possibility of an honoured legacy: “They may physically kill a Justiciar Knight, but your name will be remembered for centuries. [...] Your sacrifice will be a great source of inspiration for generations...”<sup>177</sup> Tarrant is more direct in his call-to-action: “Do not suffer under the delusion of an effortless, riskless democratic victory. Prepare for war, prepare for violence and prepare for risk, loss, struggle, death.”<sup>178</sup> Just in case the reader is unsure if this call was intended for them, Tarrant includes multiple all-caps imperatives to act: “YOU WAIT FOR A SIGNAL, WHILE YOUR PEOPLE WAIT FOR YOU.”<sup>179</sup> Crusius likewise espouses the necessity of acting now to “save our country from the brink [of] destruction”: “This is just the beginning of the fight for America and Europe.”<sup>180</sup> This is not just a call in the abstract; all perpetrators reference the attack they are about to make as indicative of their own commitment to the cause.<sup>181</sup>

Finally, the *ressentiment* ego indicates action tendencies by articulating revenge fantasies against alter. Each perpetrator’s commitment to a restored Western civilisation could be interpreted as a revenge fantasy on an epic scale, as this vision necessitates a violent reversal of fortunes for the ruling elite. According to Breivik, the year 2083 will be marked by the “multiculturalist hegemony in Western Europe... shattered and lying in ruin”<sup>182</sup> while the Justiciar Knights act as “jury, judge and executioner” bringing all of Europe under “patriot” rule.<sup>183</sup> Breivik dreams of when his long list of “charges” brought against “the accused” will finally be enacted and “Categories A, B, C traitors” will reach their deserved end.<sup>184</sup> Tarrant likewise devotes significant space to fantasising various potential deaths for his “high profile enemies,” including Angela Merkel, Recep Erdogan

169 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 771-773.

170 Ibid. 773.

171 Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 3

172 Ibid. 1.

173 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 34.

174 Ibid. 20.

175 Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 2.

176 Ibid. 1.

177 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 940

178 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 21.

179 Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 46, 51.

180 Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 5.

181 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 1379; Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 73; Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 5.

182 Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 1412.

183 Ibid. 820.

184 Ibid. 770.

and Sadiq Khan: “TATP packages strapped to drones, an EFP in a motorcycle saddle bags, convoy ambush rammings [sic] with cement trucks. Any method that gives these traitors their sure reward...”<sup>185</sup> Crusius’ revenge fantasies are comparatively subdued. He only makes half-hearted threats against his enemies: “Corporate America doesn’t need to be destroyed, but just shown that they are on the wrong side of history”<sup>186</sup> and offers his followers the advice to not become too aspirational in their revenge goals: “don’t attack heavily guarded areas to fulfil your super soldier COD fantasy. Attack low security targets.”<sup>187</sup> Nevertheless Crusius, like Breivik and Tarrant, still views his own rampage as a physical act of revenge against the status quo: “I am honored to head the fight to reclaim my country from destruction.”<sup>188</sup>

## Study Limitations and Future Application

This paper has sought to shed new light on the motivations of far-right extremists by examining the role of emotions in self-justifying their attacks. Given decisions are impossible to separate from emotions, this paper has asked: what emotional processes are at work in the perpetrators of violent extremism, such that they are motivated to carry out an attack? Complementing recent scholarship on terrorism’s processual quality, this paper suggests that the extremist’s emotional attitude of *ressentiment* underpins their passage through escalating stages of radicalisation.<sup>189</sup> As these manifestos’ discursive indicators of *ressentiment* illustrate, the far-right extremist perceives a status imbalance between the idealised noble status in society he – as a white man of European descent – believes he deserves, and the marginalised status he perceives he is now accorded. Taking violent action against those to blame for this new social hierarchy – the extremist justifies to himself – is the only means by which to reverse the new multicultural norm.

There are important limitations to the analysis put forward in this study. Firstly, the small sample size limits the generalisability of its claims. Subsequent studies should increase the number of manifestos analysed and also include publications from non-right-wing extremists, in order to ascertain whether these findings are applicable to terrorists more broadly. Potential future studies could also incorporate discourse from a greater variety of sources, including social media sites and interviews with extremists. Secondly, while this analysis provides consistent evidence of *ressentiment* across the three manifestos, it is not sufficient to prove the emotion’s causal role in motivating terrorism. To increase the robustness of this study’s findings it would need to contrast *ressentiment*’s effect with emotions such as rage or despair, as well as with other contextual factors.

Thirdly, *ressentiment* is not unique to extremists, as clearly not everyone who experiences *ressentiment* goes on to commit terrorism. Evidence of *ressentiment* in these manifestos should therefore neither be interpreted as a justification nor a deterministic explanation for these perpetrators’ attacks. Yet, just because non-extremists also possess the capacity for *ressentiment* does not mean that the emotion should be excluded from analysis when seeking to understand terrorists’ motivations. There is a difference between emotional determinism (which is not what this paper is arguing) and emotions as an intrinsic aspect of human decision-making, which shapes

<sup>185</sup> Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 39.

<sup>186</sup> Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 3.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

<sup>189</sup> See Berger, *Extremism*; Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*; Tore Bjorgo and John Horgan, *Leaving Terrorism Behind* (London: Routledge, 2009); and Alex Schmid, “Root Causes of Terrorism: Some Conceptual Notes, a Set of Indicators, and a Model”, *Democracy and Security* 1 (2005): 127–36.

an actor's judgement and reward parameters.<sup>190</sup> The very fact that elements of *ressentiment* are echoed by mainstream political parties – elements such as dissatisfaction with one's identity group's social status, or a call to “drain the swamp” – is itself all the more reason to take this emotional attitude seriously. Precisely because *ressentiment* is so prevalent, policymakers and researchers should be familiar with its discursive manifestation, and be prepared to respond with counter-arguments and narratives.

Finally, terrorist manifestos must be treated with some scepticism due to their propagandistic nature. In a pattern common to lone offenders in the United States, all three extremists studied here intended their manifestos for viewing by others.<sup>191</sup> An analysis such as the one contained in this paper risks amplifying these terrorists' views, as well as reading into their paper an emotion that has been fabricated by the author. This study has sought to mitigate the first of these challenges by providing an interpretative lens through which the manifestos are viewed, thereby working to disarm their propagandistic effect. With regards to the second challenge, the paper offers a number of reasons for considering these manifestos to be worthy of study. Firstly, it is important to recall that determining whether anyone feels the sensations associated with a particular emotion will always be mediated by that person's representation of themselves. As Hutchison and Bleiker rightly explain, “representations are in some sense all we have when it comes to understanding emotions.”<sup>192</sup> Extremists' manifestos should thus be considered a useful (but not the only) source of representation for understanding how they feel. Secondly, the perpetrators' belief in their own propaganda is supported by their willingness to die in their attacks, which indicates a level of congruence between their stated motivations and actions.<sup>193</sup> Thirdly, the emotional attitude of *ressentiment* is characterised by its need to publicly justify and propagate its negative views about alter. In a sense, public expressions of *ressentiment* always contain an element of propaganda on the part of ego. Thus the propagandistic element of these manifestos is consistent with *ressentiment's* authentic expression. Finally, it is evident that in the case of Breivik and Tarrant, the extremists' attacks were planned over a period of many months.<sup>194</sup> Crusius' timeframe is less clear, though he claims that his beliefs had not changed for several years.<sup>195</sup> This suggests that the publications are more than just a snapshot of their emotions at a point in time, but rather usefully capture their attitude over a process of increasing radicalisation.

## Conclusion

This paper adds depth to existing understandings of terrorists' motivations by applying an independent and replicable framework of analysis to the discovery of emotional attitudes in extremists' texts. Understanding how far-right extremists feel and therefore think is critical for the development of counter-terrorism practices: it assists with identifying the root emotions leading to radicalisation, adds depth to understanding terrorists' grievances and helps anticipate the target of an attack.

This paper contains important implications for policymakers and researchers. Firstly, it is clear that *ressentiment* is an all-encompassing mindset, which makes it impossible for ego to exist without diminishing alter. The longer *ressentiment* has festered – such as in an online ecosystem

<sup>190</sup> Elster, *Strong Feelings: Emotion, Addiction, and Human Behavior*.

<sup>191</sup> Macklin, “The El Paso Terrorist Attack”.

<sup>192</sup> Hutchison and Bleiker, “Theorizing emotions in world politics”.

<sup>193</sup> Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 9; Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 73; Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 4.

<sup>194</sup> Breivik, 2083: *European Declaration of Independence*, 4; Tarrant, *The Great Replacement*, 11.

<sup>195</sup> Crusius, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 4.



that feeds on controversial claims – the harder it will be to coax the extremist into moderation. Provided this paper’s findings are accurate, it suggests that any government attempt to negotiate with extremists on political terms is futile. Much like a “total spoiler”, the *ressentiment* extremist possesses political goals which are incapable of compromise.<sup>196</sup> Assuming that placatory policies such as restrictions on migration will reduce the far-right extremist’s actions belies the entrenched nature of their emotional-political point of view.

Secondly, since *ressentiment* is characterised by a three-step, process quality, there remains a possibility for targeted intervention before the extremist has taken too many steps along the path to internalising their radicalising beliefs. Prime Minister Ardern’s “Wellbeing Budget”, which devoted NZ\$455 million towards mental health services in the wake of the Christchurch attack, is illustrative of a possible emotions-centred approach to targeting root causes of extremism.<sup>197</sup> Finally, examining instances of *ressentiment*, both in everyday politics and in the minds of those committing political violence, scratches at the surface of an even deeper issue: how can society satisfy the human need for recognition<sup>198</sup> in such a way that one’s identity is not defined in opposition to another’s?

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196 Stephen John Stedman, “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes”, *International Security* 22(2) (1997): 5-53.

197 New Zealand Treasury, “The Wellbeing Budget”, *Budget 2019*, 30 May 2019.

198 Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: the politics of recognition*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 26.

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## About the Author

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### Sophie Kaldor

Sophie Kaldor is currently completing a Masters of Global Affairs at Yale University's Jackson Institute concentrating on the role of emotions, discourse and narratives in international security. She begins her PhD in International Relations at the London School of Economics in September, 2021, where her research will focus on how truth claims are wielded as a form of geopolitical power. During her studies, Sophie has worked for London-based think tank the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, for Yale student start-up Hillhouse Analytics and as a research assistant to Professor Zoe Chance and Henry A. Kissinger Fellow Claire Yorke. Prior to Yale, Sophie worked as a risk analyst for global risk advisory firm Aon helping clients mitigate asset and liability risks through insurance transfer solutions. Her B.A. (Languages) (Honours) is from the University Sydney, where her joint thesis in English and German literature won the University Medal.



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