



A World Between bin Laden and Breivik: Supremacist Ideologies Shaping the 21st Century

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From Austria, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland, and elsewhere on the European continent, right-wing political parties are on the rise. Nationalism, protectionism, isolationism, racism, xenophobia, and nativism are key features of their platforms. On June 23, 2016, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union—an outcome so unforeseen by former Prime Minister David Cameron that he brought the referendum onto himself voluntarily, and it killed his political career. In the United States, Donald J. Trump won the presidency by vowing to “Make America Great Again.” In France, Marine Le Pen may have already won, even before the election, as her Republican challenger, the right-wing François Fillon all but assures that the country will move right or hard-right. Anti-immigrant sentiment and Islamophobia is their binding thread. In Germany, Angela Merkel’s party came in third in her own home state behind a recently launched right-wing populist party, perhaps a harbinger of things to come.

The western order as we know it went from witnessing the “end of history” to a new beginning of it seemingly overnight. Who could have seen this coming a mere five years ago? One man did:

In the United States, the Tea party movement is one of the first physical, political manifestations which indicate that there is a great storm coming ...We are some of the founding fathers of the new world order. The conservative martyrs of today, both democratic and revolutionary, will be remembered and celebrated as the founding fathers when our cultural conservative world order has been established in the European world within 20-70 years.¹

These are the words of Anders Breivik. If the name is not instantly recognizable to you, perhaps that is part of the problem. Breivik penned these words in his manifesto sometime before 2011 when he [committed](#) the deadliest attack in Norway since World War II, killing 77 people. The manifesto, *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, is a 1,500+ page compendium that outlines his worldview and is a seminal text to examine in any effort toward understanding the ideological cesspool of the so-called “alt-right.”

The great storm is here and we now find ourselves caught in it without our umbrellas. When the sky will clear is uncertain; our only hope of navigating this tempest begins by truly understanding what we are up against. So consumed has the post-election discussion been with what President

¹ Anders Breivik, *2083 : A European Declaration of Independence* (Oslo, 2011)

<http://www.kevinislaughter.com/wp-content/uploads/2083++A+European+Declaration+of+Independence.pdf>

Trump will do that we have lost sight of the bigger picture: that the election of Trump is itself part of a global seismic event that may well have implications far beyond the borders of this land.

Inside the Mind of Breivik

I had first read the manifesto after the 2011 attack to better understand what drove him to commit these murders. Reading it again in recent weeks has given me a new perspective on the Trump campaign. Breivik saw the world through the lens of an epic battle between cultural conservatism and what he called cultural Marxism. Political correctness was a tool of the cultural Marxist elite to suppress their political opponents. Feminists, and minorities of all types, were seen as the leading causes and beneficiaries of this system. The media, in this worldview, was a key cultural Marxist institution.

So when Trump was railing against political correctness, slamming minorities, disparaging women, and so on, the response from most commentators in the media, even figures on the right end of the political spectrum, was to denounce it as unacceptable. That response actually reinforced the very ideology of the base to which Trump was dog-whistling. The candidacy and campaign strategy of Hillary Clinton, the first female major party nominee, relied heavily on mobilizing minority demographics, and this was fuel to Trump's "alt-right" fire. Trump is no buffoon, no boorish reactionary meandering aimlessly in a field he does not know. Trump knew precisely what he was doing and what he was—and was not—saying.

The goal of the ideology is restoration. For Breivik, this meant a return to a Europe for Europeans—white Europeans that is, free from brown and black immigrants—and a focus on the pride and prosperity of their own majoritarian ethnic groups which had been left behind by the Marxist cultural order. "Make America Great Again" falls squarely within the restoration theme, and Trump's focus of blaming societal ills on outsiders, be it for failures of economic security or national security, also fits Breivik's worldview.

This ideology is based on the notion that the *volk*, the ethnic community, is pure. It is supreme. Problems can only come from outsiders, so it follows that one must build walls. "Don't ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up," Breivik quotes Robert Frost in what can be understood as a succinct version of the ideology's critique of globalization. The walls are there to protect us; those who take them down do not understand the threats. The quote opens a section in the manifesto on the need to protect western women from the ravaging multicultural hordes. Feminism and the demand for equality between genders, according to him, opened the door to Islamization of the West.

Breivik saw himself as a modern-day crusader, a martyr for the cause of saving Christendom from Islamization. He viewed multiculturalists as race-traitors whose policies were advancing the demise of Europe. This is why, after he detonated a bomb that killed eight people in Oslo, he then

chose the youth camp of Norway's Labor Party as his target, where he murdered 69 more, most of whom were teenagers.

He wrote, "We should completely stop and if necessary ban Muslim immigration. This could be done in creative and indirect ways, such as banning immigration from nations with citizens known to be engaged in terrorist activities."

Sound familiar?

At the heart of Breivik's ideology is tribalism. Globalization and multiculturalism mean mixing, and that is unacceptable. Islam and Muslims are seen as the biggest threat. His manifesto is littered with quotes, citations, and writings of notorious American Islamophobes like Pamela Geller, Robert Spencer, David Horowitz, Frank Gaffney, and Walid Phares. This motley crew spews their toxicity in a variety of far-right forums and they have all appeared routinely in Breitbart News, pushing their Islam-is-the-enemy analysis. Breitbart has become the flagship clearinghouse for the radical and bigoted extremism of the so-called "alt-right," and the head of the Breitbart operation, Stephen Bannon, is now Donald Trump's chief strategist.

Muslims in the West today find themselves in a precarious position where growing political forces are telling them they do not belong. Here was Breivik's recommendation:

We need to create an environment where the practice of Islam is made difficult. Much of this can be done in non-discriminatory ways, by simply refusing to allow special pleading to Muslims. Do not allow the Islamic public call to prayer as it is offensive to other faiths. Boys and girls should take part in all sporting and social activities of the school and the community. The veil should be banned in all public institutions, thus contributing to breaking the traditional subjugation of women. Companies and public buildings should not be forced to build prayer rooms for Muslims. Enact laws to eliminate the abuse of family reunification laws. Do not permit major investments by Muslims in Western media or universities.²

In other words, take off your hijab and silence your adhan. Assimilate. Effectively abandon that which makes you Muslim, or face the consequences.

This is a position that is not unfamiliar to Jews, of course. A century and a half ago, as nationalism was the emerging political force reshaping the West, the Jewish question came to the fore. The "alt-right" of the day used Jews as the scapegoats for economic woes and pushed murderous anti-Semitism into power and catastrophe. Such extremists were called fascists and Nazis; using these terms now seems to be no longer politically correct.

Zionism's Congruence

² Ibid.

Today we have western societies that proclaim “Judeo-Christian” values and we also have the modern state of Israel. The bigoted modern-day fascists attack Muslims first while using anti-Semitic tropes to target Jews. Yet in the same spaces and often with the same voices, the fascists advocate powerfully and unapologetically *for* Israel.

How can a movement steeped in anti-Semitism also be vociferously pro-Israel? Breivik didn’t really have a problem squaring this circle, and neither does Breitbart. In this worldview, Israel is seen as the frontline of the battle against Islam. When the Cold War ended, Israel, whose tight relationship with the United States was heavily shaped by the US-Soviet contest in the Middle East, found itself in a position where its utility to the West was in decline. A new evil empire was needed. Bernard Lewis, [writing](#) in 1990 on “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” typifies this notion:

This is no less than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both. It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against that rival.

But seeing the world through the dichotomous lens put forward by Lewis in his first sentence all but assures that the warning in his second sentence will go unheeded.

Islamophobia, particularly and aggressively during the American “war on terror,” was routinely sewn into pro-Israel narratives. One need only to glance at the writings of the authors mentioned above to see it clearly or recall the reaction of Benjamin Netanyahu, then between stints as Israel’s prime minister, to the attacks on September 11, 2001. “It’s very good,” Netanyahu [told](#) the *New York Times*, because it would “strengthen the bond between our two peoples.”

Trump’s pick for ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, is an entirely expected product of this narrative. A hardcore supporter of Israeli settlements who wants to move the US embassy to Jerusalem, Friedman believes Hillary Clinton aide Huma Abedin is tied to the Muslim Brotherhood. This is a favorite conspiracy theory among those in the Islamophobia industry.

But Zionism as an ideology also does not conflict with this way of thinking, and at times it actually conforms to the worldview of the so-called “alt-right.” It is a volk-based nationalism that defines the nation-state as a space reserved for the privilege and prosperity of one ethno-religious group; it does not hesitate to build walls, iron or otherwise, to achieve its aims. Where anti-Semitism says “Jews don’t belong here [the West],” Zionism responds “Jews belong here [Israel].” This may be a reactionary dialogue but it is not necessarily an adversarial one.

Liberal Zionism has always presented a contradiction, but context and conditions of space and time have made that contradiction less obvious and less urgent to confront, particularly for diaspora Jews. Today, as white supremacy makes its way to the White House—sounding the trumpet of anti-Semitism while riding a chariot of Islamophobia—it does so while the Israeli government offers a jubilant welcome. The contradiction becomes impossible to deny. As Israel marches

further toward unabashed tribalism, diaspora Jews look on with dismay, finding it harder to recognize how the reality of a volk nationalist state could ever fit into their liberal imagination.

Breivik, in his grand vision, wanted to remake the map of the Middle East in Israel's image. Various states would be carved up to create ethnically homogeneous cantons. There would be an Assyrian state, a Maronite state, and a state for various Christian denominations. Israel would be entirely Jewish since the West would support the deportation of "Muslim Syrians"—which is how he referred to Palestinians, not unlike the Newt Gingrich and Mike Huckabee types who claim Palestinians do not really exist. The Al-Aqsa mosque would be demolished and Jerusalem, in Breivik's plan, would be shared 50/50 between Christians and Jews. Even Zoroastrians got a state in his map. The Kurds, a distinct ethnic group long calling for statehood, were not so lucky; they received no state in Breivik's redrawing. They are Muslims after all.

The idea of carving up Christian states is not new in Lebanon. The creation and maintenance of such an enclave was one of the goals of Israeli policy from the late 1970s and throughout Israel's involvement in the Lebanese Civil War, as it allied with the South Lebanon Army and the Lebanese Forces (this was a continuation of an Israeli [policy](#) since the 1950s). During this time, Israel allowed Lebanese militias into Palestinian refugee camps in 1982 where they massacred thousands of Palestinians at Sabra and Shatila, provoking international outrage. Walid Phares was a leading ideologist for the Lebanese Forces, providing necessary justifications for the dirty work of the war on the basis that Christians were in an existential battle with Islam. Over the years, Phares has attempted to rebrand himself from an ideologist for militias that massacre civilians to a credible policy wonk. Welcomed in spaces on the right, he has failed to relinquish the dichotomous ideology while still advocating for policy. In a 1997 [paper](#) for a right-wing Israeli think tank on Israeli policy in Lebanon, he concludes that:

Despite the 1982 episode, the Christians of Lebanon are the only potential ally against the advance of the northern Arabo-Islamic threat against Israel. The only entity which can revive a credible Christian resistance, allied with Israel, is a nationalist group, based in the security zone. The only power in the world which can allow this historic and strategic change to occur is an Israeli government with a regional vision.

Walid Phares today advises Donald Trump on the Middle East. Meanwhile, [Israel looks to the north at Syria](#) and similarly may see partition along ethnic lines as the only possible outcome. A Middle East made in Israel's image may sound enticing to some, until they realize that the creation of Israel itself involved mass depopulation and displacement and produced a conflict that remains unresolved 70 years later.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is warmly welcoming these global shifts. In reaction to the Paris Peace Conference earlier this month, a conference that Brexit Britain distanced itself from and one that was opposed by the Israelis and Trump alike, Netanyahu [stated](#) just days before

the inauguration of Donald Trump, “this conference is among the last twitches of yesterday’s world. Tomorrow’s world will be different—and it is very near.”

From Evil Empire to Holy Russian Empire

For decades throughout the Cold War, the Soviet Union served an important and defining purpose for political forces on the American right. As an enemy on the global scene it offered a way, through fear, to divert Americans who were economically disadvantaged by the policies of the right. Domestically, it helped define the boundaries between left and right; when the former sought to expand government's role in society, the latter yelled, “Socialism!”

In the 1980s, the United States allied with the mujahideen in Afghanistan to repel the Soviet Union from the country. The decade-long war of attrition played a big role in the Soviet collapse. For the United States this was about national interests and ideology. For the mujahideen it was the same; they wanted to liberate their country from foreign rule, but they also saw these foreigners as more than just occupiers—they saw them as godless heathen.

Fast forward a few decades and the Russians are once again embroiled in a predominantly Muslim country, Syria, where they intervened not in support of an uprising but in support of the regime to help put the uprising down. This time, they do so not as godless heathen but under the guise of protectors of religious minorities, including Christians. Much of the Russian narrative around Syria has been couched in ecumenical terms. Putin wants to be seen as acting not just in Russia’s interest in Syria, but as defender of the faith.

The “alt-right” in the United States has also been taking note of Putin’s Russian evolution for some time. Columnist Pat Buchanan [wrote](#) in 2014 that “in the culture war for the future of mankind, Putin is planting Russia’s flag firmly on the side of traditional Christianity.” As the United States was moving in the direction of multiculturalism, which included a tolerance for people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds and sexual and gender identities, Russia was moving distinctly in the opposite direction. Vladimir Putin has previously specifically identified this western multiculturalism as a threat to Russia, stating:

We must be proud of our history, and we have things to be proud of. Our entire, uncensored history must be a part of Russian identity ... Another serious challenge to Russia's identity is linked to events taking place in the world. Here there are both foreign policy and moral aspects. We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilisation. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious and even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan ... I am convinced that this opens a direct path to degradation and primitivism, resulting in a profound demographic and moral

crisis... One must respect every minority's right to be different, but the rights of the majority must not be put into question.³

On September 11, 2001, the United States was hit harder than at any moment since Pearl Harbor and the events of that day reoriented American national security priorities dramatically. In a world where, as George W. Bush [put it](#), “you are either with us or against us,” where does Russia lie? What we are seeing today is that more than ever before, Russia is “with us,” even if we are having our own internal crisis over what “us” even means.

In his inaugural address, Donald Trump made clear that the United States “will re-enforce old alliances and form new ones and unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the earth.”

The Bait of bin Laden

While Anders Breivik's name might be new to some, Osama bin Laden needs no introduction. The Al-Qaeda founder, killed by US forces in 2011, represents a different but equally reactionary and tribal ideology with the power to transform the world.

Today, transnational extremists calling themselves the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have taken over large swaths of territory between Iraq and Syria. Franchises have emerged in other parts of the Middle East and in North Africa. Spawned from Al-Qaeda and incubated in the chaos of the American war on Iraq, the Islamic State today represents a heinous brand of tribalism that envisions no coexistence with outsiders and uses brutality to enforce its belief system.

For bin Laden, there was no coexistence between Islam and the West. While Al-Qaeda and the ISIL have differences, it was not over this point but rather over how soon to establish the caliphate. In a 1998 [interview](#), Bin Laden spoke of the accomplishments of the mujahideen in Afghanistan and how, in his view, this led to the elimination of the Soviet Union. But what he had in store for America was worse:

... our battle against the Americans is far greater than our battle was against the Russians. Americans have committed unprecedented stupidity. They have attacked Islam and its most significant sacrosanct symbols We anticipate a black future for America. Instead of remaining United States, it shall end up separated states and shall have to carry the bodies of its sons back to America.⁴

The attacks on September 11, 2001 led to American land wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which continue in various forms today, as well as a “war on terror” that involves the United States bombing some seven different countries. Every drone victim, every torture victim, every

³ Speech by Vladimir Putin to [Valdai International Discussion Club](#), September 19th, 2013.

⁴ PBS Frontline, Interview with Bin Laden by ABC Reporter Jon Miller, May 1998.

Guantanamo prisoner, every Muslim living in the West who is told they do not belong serves as a propaganda point for Bin Laden's ideology. Ironically, the point that Breivik and Bin Laden can agree on is that Muslims don't belong in the West.

The American war in Iraq had devastating consequences for the region and the world, many of which we are just starting to learn about. In destroying the Iraqi state, the war created an incubator and a training space for Al-Qaeda in Iraq, which later became ISIL, all while handing the central government in Iraq to Iranian influence. This generated incentives for the use of dangerous sectarianism as a unifying and mobilizing vehicle for state actors locked in a power struggle in the region. And while there is no doubt that Syrians have very legitimate grievances against the brutal Assad regime, it is hard to imagine the current situation in Syria today had it not been for the war on Iraq. At the same time, the war on Iraq was the beginning of the end of the global order that many had imagined existing in the aftermath of the Cold War—one where American power reigned supreme and its ability to achieve objectives were limitless. The process of America “carrying the bodies of its sons” back home from a quagmire in the Middle East also had the effect of turning the public not just against the war but against internationalism in general. Why should America aimlessly nation-build abroad while the American nation itself badly needs building? Why trade? Why NATO? Such questions shed light on why Trump represents in part a reaction to Obama's multiculturalism and in part a reaction to George W. Bush's interventionism.

Meanwhile, refugee flows out of the Middle East and into Europe, first from Iraq and North Africa and then from Syria, fueled political reactions in European states that began to call for closing themselves off. Why accept immigration? Why stay with the EU?

Reactionaries in the Driver's Seat

In a 48-hour span in the waning days of 2016, [attackers killed](#) ten police officers and a Canadian tourist at a historic Crusader castle in Karak, Jordan. The Russian ambassador in Turkey was [assassinated](#) by a man screaming about Aleppo and reciting an anthem common among militant Islamists. In Zurich, [a mosque was shot up](#) injuring three. A man drove a bus through a [Christmas market in Berlin](#) killing 12 and wounding many others.

In response to the attack in Berlin, Donald Trump [stated](#) that “ISIS and other Islamist terrorists continually slaughter Christians in their communities and places of worship as part of their global jihad. These terrorists and their regional and worldwide networks must be eradicated from the face of the earth, a mission we will carry out with all freedom-loving partners.”

When Russia's ambassador to Turkey was assassinated, “Franz Ferdinand” (referring to the archduke of Austria-Hungary whose assassination led to the onset of World War I) became a trending topic on social media. Many commentators were quick to dismiss the similarities between the two events because of the non-analogous geopolitics. What they missed, however, is that the

global conflagration that events like this assassination propel forward are not purely like the interstate wars that shaped the last century but, rather, a clash of reactionaries on a global scale.

The prophecies of Breivik and Bin Laden have become mutually fulfilling. Never before have adherents and sympathizers to these ideologies been in positions of significant enough power to advance these ideological agendas as they are today. Donald Trump, with his rhetoric toward minorities and his pledges to ban Muslim immigrants and register Muslim Americans, is precisely the sort of reactionary political leader both ideologies want to see in power. The Islamic State must be salivating at the opportunity to attack America under Trump to bait him into another quagmire and, at minimum, into harsh and unwarranted treatment of Muslims in America.

The world we live in today is one increasingly defined by the ideologies of these two men, and the world we will see tomorrow may only be further defined by them. For Breivik, the revolution he sought would not be complete until 2083. The wars in Syria, and the refugees they have created, represent an unforeseen catalyst that has brought far-right politics to the fore in western states well ahead of his schedule.

What other unforeseen catalysts lie around the corner? This is impossible to predict, but one can be sure that the Bin Ladens and the Breiviks of the world are looking for them right now.