

Neo-Nazism After World War II: A Persistent Global Security Threat

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Abstract

Neo-Nazism, far from being a relic of the past, has evolved into a complex, transnational threat that undermines democratic institutions, fuels hate crimes, and exploits digital platforms for recruitment and radicalization. This Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) report provides a comprehensive analysis of the resurgence and transformation of neo-Nazi movements post-World War II, highlighting their global reach, adaptive strategies, and the challenges they pose to international security.

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1 Introduction

The post-World War II era witnessed the re-emergence of neo-Nazi ideologies, adapting to contemporary socio-political landscapes. These movements have leveraged globalization, technological advancements, and socio-economic grievances to expand their influence beyond traditional strongholds, posing significant challenges to global security and social cohesion.

2 Historical Evolution of Neo-Nazism

Following the fall of Nazi Germany, neo-Nazi groups began to surface, preserving and adapting fascist ideologies. The 1960s and 70s saw the formation of groups like the National Socialist Movement in the U.S. and the British National Front. The National Socialist Movement (NSM) in the United States was founded in 1974, initially as the National Socialist White People's Party, before adopting its current name [1, 2]. In the UK, the National Front (NF), a far-right and fascist political party, was founded in 1967 through the merger of smaller groups like the British National Party and the League of Empire Loyalists [3, 4, 5]. The digital age further facilitated the spread of neo-Nazi ideologies, with online forums and social media becoming breeding grounds for radicalization [6, 7, 8]. These platforms provide an unparalleled reach for disseminating propaganda, recruiting members, and organizing activities, often exploiting anonymity and global connectivity [6, 7, 9].

3 Organizational Structures and Key Groups

3.1 Atomwaffen Division (AWD)

Originating in the United States in 2015, Atomwaffen Division (AWD) is an international neo-Nazi terrorist organization known for its accelerationist ideology, advocating for societal collapse to establish a white ethnostate [10, 11]. The group explicitly promotes violence and terrorism to instigate a race war, drawing heavily from James Mason's "Siege" doctrine [10, 11, 12]. Despite reports of its disbandment, its ideology and offshoots, such as the National Socialist Order (NSO), continue to operate globally, with members implicated in numerous violent acts [10, 13].

3.2 Active Club Network

Founded by Robert Rundo, the Active Club Network is a decentralized web of white supremacist crews, inspired by Rundo's defunct Rise Above Movement (RAM) [14, 15, 16]. This network promotes combat training and a "white warrior spirit," with chapters established across the United States, Europe, Canada, and Australia [14, 15, 17]. Members engage in physical training, distribute white

supremacist propaganda, and participate in localized demonstrations and mixed martial arts events [14, 15].

3.3 National Action (UK)

National Action (NA) became the first far-right organization to be proscribed as a terrorist organization in the UK in December 2016 [18, 19]. The group glorified violence and openly espoused neo-Nazi ideology, inspiring similar extremist entities and continuing to influence far-right extremism within the UK [19].

3.4 National Socialist Underground (NSU)

The National Socialist Underground (NSU) was a German neo-Nazi terrorist group responsible for a series of racially motivated murders, bombings, and bank robberies across Germany between 2000 and 2007 [20, 21]. The clandestine nature of the NSU, whose existence remained largely undetected by authorities for years, highlighted significant failures in counter-extremism efforts and the lethal potential of such secretive organizations [21].

4 Digital Propaganda and Recruitment Tactics

Neo-Nazi groups extensively exploit digital platforms for propaganda dissemination and recruitment [7, 9, 22]. Social media algorithms can inadvertently amplify extremist content, guiding users toward more radicalized material through recommendation systems [23, 24]. Encrypted messaging applications such as Telegram have become preferred havens for neo-Nazis and other far-right extremists, facilitating covert communication, secure organization, and the spread of sensitive propaganda [15, 25, 26]. The use of memes, music, and gaming culture has also been instrumental in attracting younger demographics, normalizing extremist views and integrating them into online subcultures, often deceiving young people into engaging with right-wing content [7, 27, 28].

5 Infiltration of Military and Law Enforcement

Instances of neo-Nazi and other white supremacist infiltration into military and law enforcement agencies have been documented, raising significant concerns about access to training, weapons, and intelligence [29, 30]. Such infiltration not only compromises internal security but also erodes public trust in these critical institutions [30, 31]. Reports from the U.S. Department of Defense and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) have highlighted the persistent threat of white supremacists and anti-government extremists active within military and law enforcement ranks, sometimes seeking to exploit their positions for extremist ends [29, 32, 33]. Policies are in place to address this, focusing on vetting processes and intervention by commanders [30, 32].

6 Case Studies: Global Incidents and Trends

6.1 Germany

On May 21, 2025, German police arrested five teenagers accused of forming a far-right militant group called the "Last Defence Wave" (or "Last Wave of Defense") [34, 35, 36]. This group allegedly aimed to destabilize Germany's democratic system through violent attacks, including arson and bombings, targeting migrants and political opponents [34, 35, 36]. The arrests underscore the persistent threat of youth radicalization within Germany's far-right extremist landscape [35].

6.2 United States

Despite the extradition and imprisonment of Robert Rundo, the founder of the Active Club Network, his decentralized "Active Clubs" continue to expand across the U.S. and internationally [14, 15, 16]. These clubs maintain an active presence, organizing combat training sessions, distributing white supremacist propaganda, and engaging in demonstrations, sometimes targeting LGBTQ+ events [14, 15].

6.3 Ukraine

The Azov movement in Ukraine, particularly its military component, the Azov Regiment (now the 12th Special Forces Azov Brigade of Ukraine's National Guard), has been a complex and controversial subject [37, 38]. While the regiment originated in 2014 with alleged links to far-right and ultra-nationalist groups and the use of controversial symbols, it has since been integrated into the Ukrainian National Guard and states it has distanced itself from its original political ideology [37, 38, 39]. Russian propaganda extensively uses the Azov Regiment's past to falsely label the Ukrainian government and military as "neo-Nazi" [37, 38, 39, 40]. Recently, in June 2024, the U.S. lifted its long-standing ban on providing weapons and training to the Azov Brigade, citing a vetting process that found no evidence of gross human rights violations, a move condemned by Russia [37].

7 Policy Responses and Countermeasures

Responses to neo-Nazi threats vary globally, with some countries proscribing groups and implementing counter-extremism strategies, while others face criticism for downplaying the threat [41]. Effective countermeasures require international cooperation, robust legal frameworks, and proactive community engagement [42]. There is a growing call for social media companies to be held more accountable for extremist content, with proposals for stricter content moderation, real-time data sharing with law enforcement (with safeguards), and even potential criminal liability for knowingly hosting terrorist incitement [9, 22, 24, 43].

Legal reforms are also being considered to address the evolving nature of online extremist threats [44].

8 Recommendations

1. **Enhanced Intelligence Sharing:** Foster international collaboration among intelligence agencies and law enforcement to monitor and counter the transnational activities of neo-Nazi groups.
2. **Digital Platform Accountability:** Implement and enforce stricter content moderation policies on social media and encrypted messaging platforms. This includes exploring mechanisms for real-time data sharing with authorities, balanced with privacy safeguards, and potentially imposing legal accountability on platforms that fail to address extremist content [24, 43].
3. **Community Engagement:** Develop and expand educational programs aimed at countering radicalization, promoting critical media literacy, and fostering social inclusion, particularly among vulnerable youth demographics.
4. **Institutional Vetting:** Strengthen and regularly review background checks and vetting processes within military and law enforcement agencies to identify and prevent the infiltration of individuals with extremist ideologies [30, 32].
5. **Legal Reforms:** Update and adapt legal frameworks to address the evolving nature of neo-Nazism threats, including specific provisions for online radicalization, hate speech dissemination, and digital recruitment tactics.

9 Conclusion

Neo-Nazism remains a dynamic and evolving threat, leveraging modern tools and adapting its strategies to propagate hate and violence across global networks. A multifaceted approach, combining enhanced intelligence sharing, robust legal and digital platform regulation, proactive community engagement, and diligent institutional vetting, is essential to effectively counter this persistent menace and safeguard democratic institutions and social cohesion.

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This document is part of an ongoing effort by Marie Landry's Spy Shop and Splymaster Enterprises to shed light on emerging security threats and promote informed policy responses.