



# CREST PRIMER: THE COUNTER JIHAD MOVEMENT

A guide to the Counter Jihad Movement - a loose network of groups and individuals who believe that the West and Islam are at war.

10 MINUTE READ

GENERAL PUBLIC / MEDIA



## KEY POINTS

- The Counter Jihad Movement is a loose international network based on a shared set of beliefs which influences other organisations
- The movement is based on the belief that Islam and the West are at war
- The movement is not a monolith and includes a variety of opinions
- The movement is not a direct source of violence although it was widely seen as the inspiration for the 2011 Breivik attacks in Norway
- Narratives are also open to being appropriated by other elements in the extreme right space
- The movement contributes to broader cumulative extremism by reinforcing Islamist extremist narratives that see the West and Islam as at war

## WHO ARE THEY?

The Counter Jihad Movement is a loose international network with a shared ideology that sees 'Islam' and 'the West' as being at war. This ideology is spread and curated by a core of activists, mostly online. A number of international organisations have attempted to co-ordinate activities between groups although the movement remains diffuse. Ideas filter down from core activists to country specific groups more likely to take action. This includes influencing some elements of political parties such as the Dutch PVV, Belgian Vlaams Belang, Swedish Democrats and LibertyGB. Most visible however are street movements such as the

English (and related) Defence League(s) as well as more recently the Pegida movement.

The Counter Jihad Movement believes:

- In a homogenous, literalist and totalitarian Islam that is at war with the West.
- In a culturally unified West with a shared Judeo-Christian morality and liberal values.
- That Muslim immigration is a conscious attempt to impose Sharia law in the West: Islamisation.
- That Western leaders are too weak to counter Islamic aggression, or even are complicit with it.

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## IDEOLOGY

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The Counter Jihad Movement is not a monolith; it is a container for a range of views critical of, or hostile to, Islam and Muslims. There is little controversy over the name of the movement and many participants freely identify as being engaged in the counter jihad.

The movement has its own conspiracy theory underpinning the narrative set out in the book *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab Axis* by Bat Y'eor. However, it is not clear how important the Eurabia theory is in motivating activists in comparison to media reporting on, and propaganda by, Islamist extremist groups.

Notably, elements of Counter Jihad Movement beliefs are often a mirror for groups like ISIS. Shared claims include that:

- Islamist extremists have global reach and are capable of striking anywhere.
- Islamist extremism is the true embodiment of 'pure' Islam.
- Islam should be (or is) spread violently.
- Muslims cannot live peacefully in the West.

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## SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

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The Counter Jihad Movement does not engage directly in organised political violence. However, the use of highly militarised rhetoric (e.g. impending civil war) may be adopted or adapted by other groups or encourage lone actors. Anders Breivik included counter jihad material, in particular the works of essayist Fjordman, in the compendium he distributed before his 2011 attacks in Norway. Several key activists, including Robert Spencer and the blogger Fjordman, have subsequently worked to discredit Breivik and his actions, arguing that Breivik was either mentally ill or was more influenced by ethno-nationalist beliefs.

The movement may contribute to a wider spiral of cumulative extremism (also referred to as reciprocal radicalisation). Counter jihad activists magnify propaganda and the actions of violent and non-violent Islamist extremists to support their arguments. Counter jihad arguments in turn reinforce claims made by groups such as ISIS that Muslims are oppressed in Western societies.

The use of street demonstrations by groups such as the EDL and Pegida have previously resulted in violence, sometimes as a result of clashes with

counter demonstrators. A 2013 demonstration by the EDL in Birmingham eventually led to over fifty convictions for violent disorder. A February 2016 march by Leipzig Pegida offshoot Legida resulted in over two hundred arrests. The peaceful re-launch of Pegida UK in February 2016 with a silent march on the outskirts of Birmingham was designed to distance Pegida UK from the violent reputation of the EDL. The relationship between the Counter Jihad Movement and hate crime (including hate speech) is difficult to quantify, but counter jihad narratives likely contribute to the mood music of hate crime.

Counter jihad inspired actions have been targets for violent Islamist extremists e.g. the attempted attack on the EDL in Birmingham in June 2012 and the attack on a conference that included a Draw Muhammad Cartoon contest in Garland, Texas in 2015. A similar contest organised by Anne Marie Waters in London (Pegida UK) was cancelled amid security concerns.

Typically, extreme right groups face challenges from civil society such as widespread public condemnations and mobilisations against the

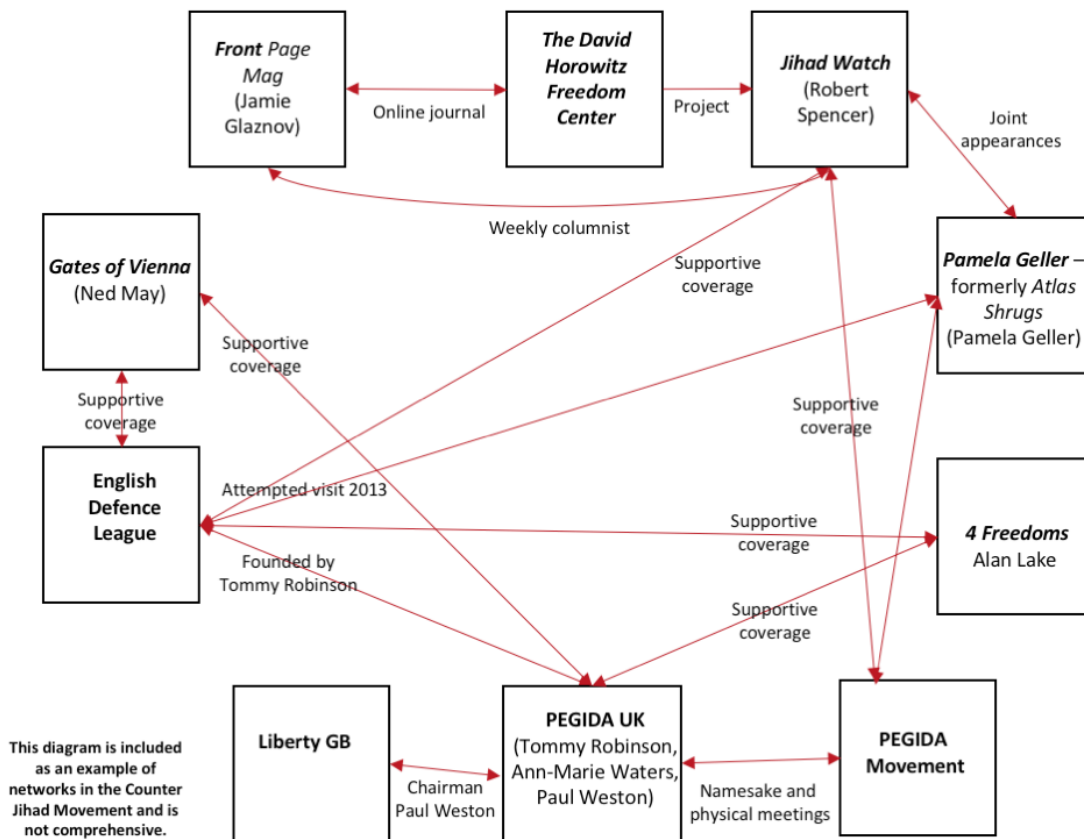
# CIVIC RESISTANCE

National Front and BNP. This has also largely been the pattern with counter jihad linked groups like the EDL and Pegida. However, a number of factors align to make the counter jihad less likely to generate civic resistance:

- The counter jihad narrative is difficult to characterise as openly fascist, Nazi or extreme. The lack of overt anti-Semitism and involvement of prominent Jewish activists further clouds the issue, as does the use of rights based narratives like support for sexual and religious minorities as well as the rights of women.
- The Counter Jihad Movement often partially aligns with mainstream narratives produced by both the media and the government in form of counter terrorism policy.

- The counter jihad narrative also aligns with the positions of (relatively) mainstream figures including US Presidential candidate Donald Trump and Czech President Milos Zeman.
- As the movement is so diffuse, and the space it occupies so politicised, there is a great deal of ambiguity over the extent to which some figures can legitimately be labelled as counter jihad. Melanie Phillips, an author and columnist as well as a fierce critic of Islam was included in a 2015 report on the counter jihad by campaign group Hope not Hate. This decision was fiercely criticised by Phillips writing in the *Jewish Chronicle*.

## UK COUNTER JIHAD RELATIONSHIPS



## KEY WEBSITES

A table showing some of the key websites in the Counter Jihad Movement.

SITE	ACTIVIST	NOTES
Gates of Vienna www.gatesofvienna.net	Ned May (AKA Baron Bodissey)	News and essays written by various contributors. Also hosts contributions from Paul Weston (Liberty GB) and Norwegian essayist Fjordman among others.
Pamela Geller www.pamelageller.com	Pamela Geller	Formerly known as Atlas Shrugs. Republishes material from Geller's media and activist work.
Jihad Watch www.jihadwatch.com	Robert Spencer	Connected to the David Horowitz Freedom Centre. Mainly hosts the writing and media work of Robert Spencer.
Frontpage Mag www.frontpagemag.com	Jamie Glazov	A site hosting the work of multiple authors. The 'online journal' of the David Horowitz Freedom Centre. Glazov also runs the internet TV show Glazov's Gang.
4 Freedoms Library www.4freedoms.com	Reportedly Alan Ayling (AKA Alan Lake)	A website with counter jihad resources from multiple sources.
The Religion of Peace (TROP) www.thereligionofpeace.com	Glen Roberts	A website tracking attacks carried out by 'Islamic terrorists' as well as ideological analysis.
Politically Incorrect www.pi-news.org	Stefan Herre	In German with a condensed English language version.
Brussels Journal www.brusselsjournal.com	Paul Belien	European-focused site run by a Flemish journalist.
Sharia Watch www.shariawatch.org.uk	Anne-Marie Waters	UK based website with a focus on Sharia Law. Launched in the House of Lords.
Vlad Tepes www.vladtepesblog.com	Unknown	Canadian blog which includes reproductions of the writings of Fjordman.

## FURTHER READING

Matt Carr. (2006). You are now entering Eurabia. *Race & Class*, 48(1), 1–22.

Mattias Gardell. (2014). Crusader Dreams: Oslo 22/7, Islamophobia, and the Quest for a Monocultural Europe. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26(1), 129–155.

Paul Jackson. (2013). The License to Hate: Peder Jensen's Fascist Rhetoric in Anders Breivik's Manifesto 2083: A European Declaration of Independence. *Democracy and Security*, 9(3), 247–269.

Benjamin Lee. (2015). A day in the "Swamp": Understanding discourse in the online counter-Jihad nebula. *Democracy and Security*, 11(3), 248–274.

### CREDITS

Images by Benjamin Lee, 2016

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