LGBTQ+ Victimization by Extremist Organizations: Charting a New Path for Research

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ABSTRACT Anti-LGBTQ+ narratives are deployed by extremist groups with contrasting ideologies, from Jihadis to right-wing extremists and QAnon to Incels (involuntary celibates). Using these different movements as case studies, this article highlights the convergence of ideologically conflicting extremist organizations around antiqueer sentiment. Given the enhanced vulnerability of LGBTQ+ populations, fueled by politically charged rhetoric, this article makes an appeal for more research to explore and analyze narratives through a scholarly lens and link queer issues to current debates in the study of terrorism and political violence. Research should focus on the experiences of queer populations within conflicts abroad and experiences of domestic extremism in the United States. Without adequate attention given to the experiences of LGBTQ+ victims, it is impossible to develop protocols for trauma-informed care for vulnerable populations.

In 2022, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) updated its terrorism advisory bulletin to include domestic threats directed against LGBTQ+, Jewish, and immigrant communities. Despite the growing consensus among decision makers and practitioners, relatively little research has focused on the victimization of LGBTQ+ populations by extremist groups, with the notable exception of a 2023 Anti-Defamation League (ADL) report. The ADL tracked violence against LGBTQ+ communities more generally, but there remains a dearth of empirical research evaluating the extent of anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric or how extremist groups leverage those narratives. Although political research on antidiscrimination policies emerged because of the HIV/AIDS crisis, terrorism studies lagged in considering the unique convergence of ideological groups apropos LGBTQ+ communities. Despite scholarly research highlighting the disproportionate effects of extremism and victimization against minority populations (Dmello 2021), most of the research on terrorism has focused on offenders and not victims (Gruenewald et al. 2024). This trend is evident in most data sets on terrorism, which focus on incident- or offender-level characteristics, on specific case studies, and on incidents rather than on how disparate ideological groups converge or intersect.

Anti-LGBTQ+ narratives are employed by extremist groups ranging from Islamic extremists and the far-right to QAnon conspiracy believers and Incels. By examining the experiences of queer victimization by extremist actors, we glean critical insights into the pervasive effects of discrimination, prejudice, and violence as well as the possibility of secondary radicalization by populations vulnerable to these messages. Additionally, we can develop strategies to enhance support systems, advocate for more inclusive policies, and foster greater empathy for victims. Countering the toxic narratives of misinformation regarding LGBTQ+ populations by right-wing

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political entrepreneurs or conspiracy theorists is crucial. Engaging security studies with this approach is necessary to move the field forward while advocating for at-risk populations.

POLITICIZATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBTQ+

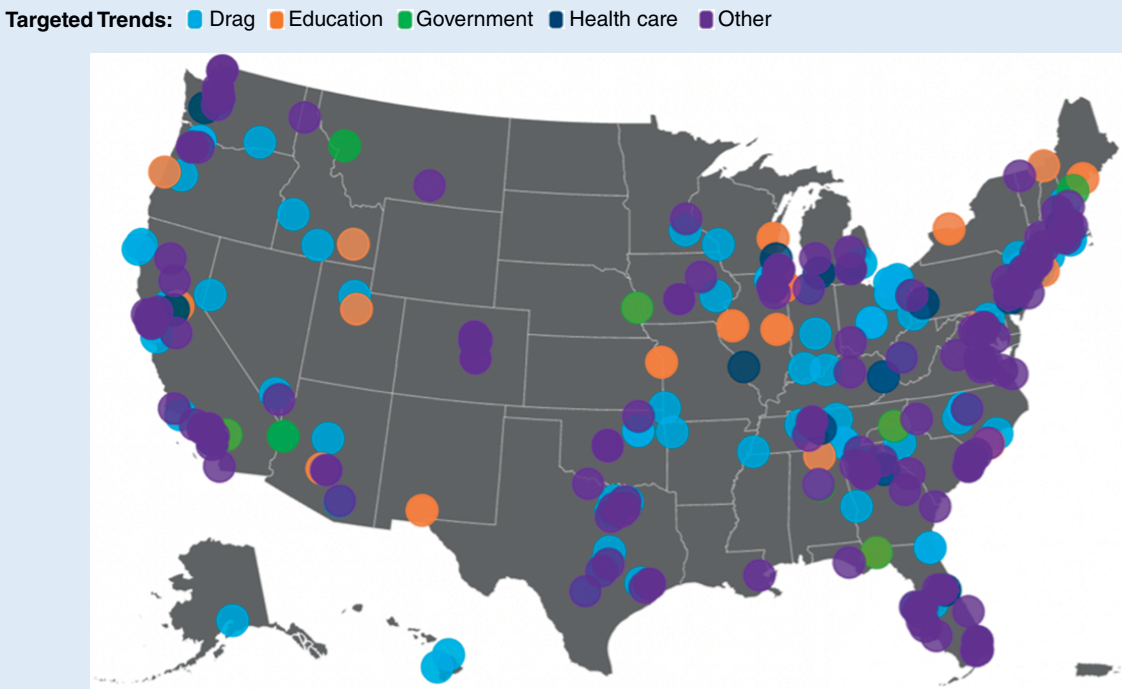
The LGBTQ+ population has been politicized by ideological factions that subvert discourse about human rights to weaponize it for political leverage. Justification of limits on queer rights vary, including rationalizations centered on religious doctrine (Human Dignity Trust 2023) or derived from historical and colonial precedent (Asal, Sommer, and Harwood 2013). LGBTQ+ issues have become a major focus for conservative politicians and influencers (such as Chaya Raichik of Libs of TikTok and, in September 2024, claims by former President Donald Trump that students were undergoing sexual reassignment surgery at school), resulting in increased rhetorical assaults on this population. In May 2023, the Human Rights Campaign (2023) reported that 520 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced at the state level, 70 of which passed into law targeting trans health care access, drag performances, and opposing inclusive curriculum. Although the politicization of LGBTQ+ rights correlated with areas associated with higher levels of far-right extremism (ADL, 2023; see figure 1) these antiqueer sentiments were present across almost all extremist groups. The Department of Homeland Security reported increased levels of real-world violence against the LGBTQ+ community (Margolin and Grant 2023). This is unsurprising given the vitriolic and discriminatory commentary by far-right leaders, such as Marjorie Taylor Greene (Kaplan 2022), Lauren Boebert (Breen 2023), and Donald Trump (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2024). This rhetoric from conservative elements energizes ideological extremists—catering to constituencies necessary for electoral victory in primaries. Militant entities often use social media as a mechanism for the rapid transmission of hate rhetoric toward marginalized populations, creating environments that could be called queerphobia (Brody et al. 2024; Pickles 2021).

Online rhetoric can and does lead to real-world violence, such as LGBTQ+ rights protests in North Hollywood (Owen, 2023). Lhant (2019) argues that the rights and protections for queer populations suffer at the whim of political vicissitudes. Similarly, research has found direct correlations across time between anti-transgender rhetoric, antitrans legislation, and violence against the trans community in the United States (Brightman et al. 2024).

These trends are not limited to the United States. Legislation in parts of Africa has targeted queer populations. Couched within the phrasing of *gender ideology*, the Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2023 in Uganda extended criminal sanctions for *same-sex* acts, including imposing the death penalty for *aggravated homosexuality*, with comparable laws in Ghana and Kenya (Shaw 2023). Much of the global anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric is amplified by Russia and the agents of Vladimir Putin (Moskalenko et. al., 2025), who signed legislation making "LGBTQ+ propaganda" illegal (Reuters 2024). The 2022 decree to protect "traditional values" reinforces the Kremlin's attempt to justify the invasion of Ukraine (Moskalenko and Romanova 2022). The political moves in recent years are situated within the broader framing of recognizing queer rights on the global level (Sommer and Asal 2014); LGBTQ+ population does not have official recognition within the United Nations, despite UN support, largely due to member states' statutory bylaws in their home countries (Lhant 2019). Republican politicians who called Uganda's anti-LGBTQ+ legislation *horrific*

Figure 1

ADL/GLAAD Heat Map of Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 boundaries, summitpost.org, ADL & GLAAD

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nevertheless argued in favor of canceling the Supreme Court's 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling, which legalized same-sex marriage (Fritze 2023).

The politicization of queerness creates opportunities for abuse in which an already marginalized population becomes further victimized. For example, Flores et al. (2022) found that members of the LGBTQ+ population are nine times more likely to be the victim of a violent hate crime than heterosexual and cisgender individuals. These trends mirror increasing victimization of other marginalized groups, such as attacks on Sikhs, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and African Americans (Li and Lartey, 2023) all of which have been increasing since 2016. Violence against the LGBTQ+ population includes the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting, allegedly inspired by the Islamic State (Kline and Cuevas 2018). Similarly, in November 2022, a white gunman engaged in a mass shooting at an LGBTQ+ nightclub in Colorado Springs on the eve of the Transgender Day of Remembrance (ADL 2022). Although queer victimization is a serious issue, virtually no research has identified the commonalities across extremist actors who target members of the LGBTQ+ community.

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LGBTQ+ AND EXTREMISM

Groups with little in common can converge on antipathy toward LGBTQ+ communities. This becomes apparent when one considers the role of social media in amplifying and exacerbating extremist rhetoric and moving people from radical intentions to radical actions (Moskalenko, 2021). Evidence shows that social media has expanded the capacity for malicious actors to exploit "identity politics" by leveraging strategic communications for political or financial gain. A significant body of work has emerged focusing on LGBTQ+ identity formation (Nguyen and Angelique 2017; Robertson 2018).

Although the targeting of LGBTQ+ populations by extremist actors remains understudied in the literature, researchers have examined queer targeting in conflict zones (e.g., Hagen et al. 2021). For example, Arnold (2023) uses the case of the Syrian Civil War to argue that in areas of conflict where queer rights are not recognized, the likelihood of violence prevention against the community are nonexistent—this is highly applicable to other areas where Islamic extremists target LGBTQ+ populations, such as in Iraq and Pakistan. Examining the conflicts of Northern Ireland, Duggan (2016) found that the British Government did little to curtail the moral and religious conservatism in the region that inculcated homophobia and anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment. This can lead to seemingly contradictory political posturing; for example, British radical-right figures have sought to appeal to the country's LGBTQ+ community through defender narratives (Foster and Kirke 2023), despite right-wing politics leading anti-LGBTQ+ legislative actions across the world. Connecting Northern Ireland with Arnold's (2023) framing, Bennett (2024) argues that LGBTQ+ security within conflicts is largely shaped by queer identity. Extending beyond areas of active conflict, it is likely that queer identity and the clash of that identity within the minority repression framework will influence targeting by extremist organizations. Below we explain the context of violence for two categories of extremism, Islamic and Far Right extremism, and provide each group's justification for targeting LGBTQ+ populations.

Islamic Extremism

Although we associate anti-LGBTQ+ campaigns with extremist groups like ISIS alluded to above, several conservative states in the MENA region routinely violate LGBTQ+ rights and privacy. There has been a pattern of digital targeting of mobile devices in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia so that the security forces can gather (or create) digital evidence to support the prosecution of (mostly) gay men (Rigot 2022). In 2016 Mahmoud Ishtiwi, a senior member of Hamas who commanded the Zeitoun battalion of its armed wing, the Izzedine al Qassam Brigades, was executed for "behavioral and moral violations"—that is, for being gay (Hadid and Waheidi 2016). In Gaza and the West Bank, sermons from the pulpit by preachers like Mohammed Saleem Ali affirm the goal of eliminating all LGBTQ+ members from a future Palestinian state, calling them abominations and vowing that "not one single homosexual will be allowed on the land of Jerusalem and Palestine" (Al Aqsa Live Broadcast 2022). This antipathy exists despite considerable support for Palestinian human rights by the LGBTQ+ and repudiation of Israeli "pink-washing" (Graham-Harrison 2024). In fact, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu raised the issue on the eve of his controversial congressional address, "The people who protest … Gays for Gaza [are an] absurdity… if you are gay in Gaza, you'll be shot in the back of the head" (Times of Israel, 2024).

Reports from Yemen in February 2023 recounted that the Houthis had sentenced 32 men, nine of whom were executed on January 23, 2024, following a mass trial based on charges of "sodomy" (HRW, 2024). In addition to the executions that took the form of stoning, beheading, and crucifixion, the Houthis imprisoned the remaining accused men for 10 years.

However, the group most associated with LGBTQ+ discrimination remains ISIS. The Islamic State was notorious for its violence against civilians between 2014 and 2019. Neither Syria nor Iraq had ever been tolerant of the LGBTQ+ community; homosexuality was criminalized and punishable by up to three years in prison. When ISIS took control, they instituted corporal punishment and the death penalty (CNN 2015). During this period, ISIS meticulously documented beheadings in its online propaganda, matched by a campaign against the LGBTQ+ community on the ground. Dozens of videos were posted to their semiencrypted channels on Telegram and other social media platforms of civilians thrown off the tallest building to their deaths because of their sexual orientation.

> Notorious for their gruesome methods of killing, the Islamic State group reserves one of its most brutal for suspected homosexuals. Videos it has released show masked militants dangling men over the precipices of buildings by their legs to drop them head-first or

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> tossing them over the edge. At least 36 men in Syria and Iraq have been killed by IS militants on charges of sodomy, according to the New York-based Out Right Action International. (Mroue 2016)

Queer populations have traditionally been incompatible with fundamentalist Islam, which emphasizes heteronormative values. The Hadith most often cited by Jihadis, attributed to Anas ibn Maalik, is quoted as saying, "The Prophet said: "When a man mounts another man, the Throne (of Allah) shakes and the heavens would say: 'O Lord! Let us stone him', and the earth would say: 'O Lord! Let us swallow him.'"[1] There are seven verses in the Qur'an that refer to homosexuality and same-sex acts. Most are about Sodom and Gomorrah.

LGBTQ+ populations in countries observing Sharia Law face charges of debauchery, including the death penalty in Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan or multiyear imprisonment in Kuwait and Lebanon (Human Dignity Trust 2023). Globally, eleven countries have provisions authorizing the death penalty for members of the LGBTQ+ community (The Lancet 2023). Like with many religions, Islam views queerness as being inconsistent with divine teaching narratives that extremist supporters have used to further persecute LGBTQ+ individuals.

Given this context, it is unsurprising that extremist groups have engaged in LGBTQ+ persecution. Vidino and Meleagrou-Hitchens (2022) argue that jihadist groups adopt more extreme positions against LGBTQ+ populations to justify killing members of the community, although other scholars cite Islamic laws as sufficient justification (McCarthy 2016). For example, al-Qa'ida took credit for killing two LGBTQ+ rights activists in Bangladesh in 2016 (CNN 2016), a violent act that resulted in six individuals being sentenced to death (Mahmud 2021). In 2016, ISIS forced young children to watch as a gay man was thrown off a building and stoned to death (McCormick 2016). Reactions sparked an international outcry, including the Canadian government proposing a motion to declare the killings a genocide (Ward 2016).

In an analysis of jihadi propaganda, such as *Inspire* and *Dabiq*, Segal (2016) found that although anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric played a smaller role than antisemitism, homosexuality was equated with sin and immorality. For example, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's *Inspire* magazine stated, "Immorality and corruption have seeped deep into the roots of the Pakistani Army and it is not uncommon to find alcoholics, gamblers, adulterers, homosexuals, and drug traffickers amongst its lower and higher ranks" (cited by Segal 2016). The Pakistani government punishes homosexuality with the death penalty—grouping LGBTQ+ members with other illicit activities, such as alcoholism and gambling. ISIS policy was a mechanism to victimize an already vulnerable population and reinforce the conflict between queerness with fundamentalist Islam (Houseal et al. 2013) while bolstering ISIS's political objectives through information warfare (Di Pietro et al. 2021).

Far-Right White Nationalism

Far-right White Nationalist ideology is anchored by the 14 words, "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children" (Michael 2009). One of their fundamental viewpoints is that the white race must procreate and produce white children to avoid being replaced by non-Whites. Notions of purity and masculinity are embedded within main components of replacement theory (that whites are being replaced by immigrants and non-whites). It fixates on white birth rates, which are being statistically outpaced by racial minorities. Many on the far right blame this discrepancy on the legalization of same sex marriage. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ acceptance and popularity is blamed on Jews, both because of the historically influential presence of Jews in LGBTQ+ leadership and the normalization of the "gay lifestyle" by Hollywood—which the trope maintains is run by Jews. This tracks with anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes in Nazi Germany, seen as a response to the post–World War One licentiousness for which Jews were deemed responsible. "During the Weimar Republic, Berlin was a queer bohemia. The city was home to the Institute for Sexual Science, a famed sexology institute headed by Jewish physician Magnus Hirschfeld" (Compton 2017). During World War Two, LGBTQ+ communities were persecuted, forced to wear a pink triangle as identification (comparable to the yellow star that Jews were forced to wear), and German lesbians were raped (Huneke 2019). The community faced sterilization, castration, imprisonment, and deportation to concentration camps. In 1935, Nazis called for the expansion of Paragraph 175 of the German criminal code, which dealt with sexual relations between men. By 1937 homosexuality was framed as "depravity" and a "plague." Eventually, 100,000 German and Austrian men were arrested on charges of homosexuality and as many as 15 thousand German gays were killed (Heger 1980).

The difference between propaganda and recruitment then and now revolves around the method, breadth, and speed of dissemination. According to one former Neo-Nazi, Angela King, "Technology has sped up the rate at which these groups are able to communicate and share information and plan. We used a copy machine to make white supremacist flyers and propaganda in the 1990s. Today, the same propaganda is created quickly in the form of digital memes and other media that can be shared widely across the internet" (Compton 2017).

Far-right ideologies coalesce within online spaces where themes of antifeminism, male supremacy, anti-LGBTQ+ content proliferate (Chan 2023). These online spaces are built around memes, gifs, and inside jokes that become "meta" as they become viral. Outsiders or newcomers may find it difficult to follow what individuals think amidst the "shitposting" and trolling behaviors (Moonshot 2020). As Hoffman et al. (2020) explain, it is precisely this type of trolling that creates "feedback loops" in which responses mask the seriousness of beliefs and intentions.

These online spaces are incredibly toxic and especially dangerous for Jewish, Person of Color (POC), and LGBTQ+ communities (Smith 2021). Aggression and violence are directed against these groups through hate speech, slurs, and threats of rape or death (Vickery and Everbach 2018). Such hostile actions targeting the LGBTQ+ and vulnerable communities invoke fear while reinforcing the misogynistic viewpoints of content consumers (Mantilla 2013). Another online behavior becoming increasingly common is *gendertrolling*, disseminating anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments for clicks and followers (Mantilla 2013). Even more disconcerting, online hate has resulted in physical danger as well as having personal information leaked—doxxing (Paananen and Reichl 2019).

When examining violent anti-LGBTQ+ hatred online, we need to understand how virtual spaces have allowed this type of extremism to thrive. Wijaya (2022) discusses the role of digital homophobia within the contemporary LGBTQ+ discourse. Similarly, *moral panic* has been leveraged as a framework for contextualizing anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric (Rodríguez and Murtagh, 2022). These trends are driven online by Russian malign actors (Moskalenko and Romanova, 2022;

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Parolari and Viggiani, 2018). Appealing to a populist anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment, the portrayal of LGBTQ+ individuals as a threat became integrated into Russian officially presented public self-image as a last bastion of morality, a country that defends traditional values against perceived Western moral decay (Strand and Svensson 2021). Notably, this messaging echoes one of the central ideas of Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden's influence campaigns that repeatedly painted the West as depraved and themselves (the House of Islam) as fighting a righteous battle to stop the depravity from corrupting the Muslim world (Lyons 2013). In the same context, Western values of tolerance and multiculturism are often referred to by the Russian media as *tolerasty* to rhyme it with *pederasty*, a derogatory term used in Russia to identify LGBTQ+ people (Moss 2017).

Previous research on terrorism demonstrated that anti-Semitism, violent misogyny, and anti-LGBTQ+ behaviors are predictive of radical actions (Asal, Sommer, and Harwood 2013; McCulloch et al. 2019). Within the scope of the ideology, researchers support the idea that in some cases violent masculinity targeting women is coded as terrorism if perpetrated because of their misogynist ideology (Vink et. al. 2023). Incel antagonism toward LGBTQ+ communities (despite the existence of *gaycels*) reflects anger toward lesbians who reject them, trans women who they feel fool them, and gay men who have augmented metrics for physical attractiveness (Moskalenko et al., 2022a, 2022b). Violent misogyny contributes to the process of radicalization and lowering personal inhibitions to move the individual from radical intentions to radical actions. Weaponized misogyny against women and LGBTQ+ communities are a bellwether for radicalization and because women are often the first in a long line of victims.

Scholars have found a positive correlation between fragile masculinity and political aggression (DiMuccio and Knowles 2021; Stanaland, Gaither, and Gassman-Pines 2023), including support for masculine values, such as toughness and strength in contrast to how gay and trans men are depicted. Online content that presents a threat to masculinity is more likely to radicalize men who score high on precarious manhood (Moskalenko and Romanova 2022; Moskalenko, Romanova, and Bloom 2025; Strand and Svensson 2021). One study on the psychological mechanisms of fragile masculinity differentiated between an external desire or societal obligation to be masculine and an internal desire to be masculine (Stanaland, Gaither, and Gassman-Pines 2023). The same research argued that the two routes resulted in different reactions to threat: men who were extrinsically motivated to be masculine reacted with externalized compensatory responses (i.e., aggression, sexism), but men who were intrinsically motivated reacted to threats via internalized responses (i.e., anxiety, shame, and self-harm; Stanaland, Gaither, and Gassman-Pines 2023).

One of the common themes has been Russian sources spreading anti-LGBTQ+ messaging to justify war in Ukraine, increase support for Putin's authoritarian leadership (Moskalenko and Romanova 2022), and provide Russian soldiers a sense of superiority over their "emasculated" enemies (Froyum, 2007). Russian disinformation has also been central in amplifying QAnon conspiracy theories that have integrated anti-LGBTQ+ narratives as part of their campaign against "child grooming" (Bloom and Moskalenko 2021). QAnon conspiracy theorists targeted LGBTQ + communities, pushed for book banning, and inoculated youth against permissive and liberal attitudes toward same-gender relationships. QAnon links homosexuality to Satanism, Communism, and pedophilia (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

QAnon Propaganda Correlating Queerness with Global Child Trafficking Pedophiles Cabal



Source: Telegram

Russian propaganda connects the war in Ukraine to promoting LGBTQ+ rights. According to Russian propaganda, NATO trained mosquitoes in Ukrainian biological labs to spread a gay virus that would selectively infect only ethnic Russians. Russian supermarkets sell a specialized mosquito repellent—designed to protect against the gay virus (*New York Times* 2022; see Figures 3 and 4 below). The Russian propaganda would be laughable if it was not so dangerous. In an online survey of Russians in Russia, beliefs in Russian propaganda conspiratorial narratives correlated with a greater willingness to engage in radical violent action (Moskalenko and Yahiiaiev 2023).

Although this article presents the United States and Russia as case studies, far-right targeting of the LGTBQ+ community can be seen around the world. For example, when spreading false narratives about an LGBTQ+ contagion that targets children, former Brazilian president Bolsonaro claimed that members of the opposition Workers' Party distributed a "gay kit" to a 6-year-old child with the intention to convert the child into LGBTQ+ (Perini-Santos 2020). And more recently, disinformation inciting violence and hatred against LGBTQ+ has spread around the EU (RFI International, 2023). The European Commission has identified several anti-LGBTQ disinformation narratives associated with foreign influence, including LGBTQ+ as colonialism by the West; LGBTQ+ as a threat to child safety: pedophilia and sex education promoting unnatural sexuality; and "negative othering" (Strand and Svensson 2021).

ENTREATY FOR FUTURE WORK

In this article, we highlight Islamic extremism and the far right, to illustrate how they justify targeting LGBTQ+ communities. Given mass casualty events such as the Pulse nightclub shooting in

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Orlando (Kline and Cuevas 2018), it is more important than ever for security studies to focus on the victimization of queer communities. As political rhetoric centers on global LGBTQ+ rights and status, it is likely that attacks will increase, especially in polarized contexts of the 2024 presidential election. LGBTQ+ rights have served as a major wedge issue that emerged as an early theme in the Republican primaries and proved persuasive among white women voters. LGBTQ+ votes went disproportionately to Kamala Harris (86%) but were insufficient to offset the upsurge in Republican votes (LGBTQ Nation, 2024). The role of foreign influence from Russia will continue to reinforce negative stereotypes. The intersectionality of attacks on the queer community with other demographics, such as race and religion (Li and Lartey 2023), only further reinforces the salience for methodologically rigorous research in this space.

Although a better understanding of how marginalized communities are targeted by extremist actors is beneficial, developing a framework to more effectively protect vulnerable populations is essential, as there are consequences for security studies and public health more broadly. For example, research has shown that targeting queer rights has resulted in higher levels of discrimination and decreased mental health across several populations (Haas and Lannutti 2024). The stripping of LGBTQ+ rights within the political space combined with the violent victimization of members of the community catalyzes the traumatic effect on queer populations. Declining mental health directly affects the health care enterprise and poses risks for self-harm if not treated. This risk should be of particular concern given trends that show the LGBTQ+ community is at greater risk for self-harm and suicidal ideation in general, not accounting specifically for recent hostility and targeting (see Marchi et al. 2022). Yet research has shown that the LGBTQ+ villainization exists not only in propaganda but also within the academic discourse (Farmer, Salter, and Woodlock 2024), suggesting a need for precision in language to prevent further victimization.

Figure 4

Mosquito Repellent Designed to Protect against the Gay Virus Engineered by NATO



Source: V Kontakt.

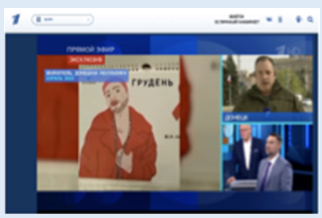
As extremism, particularly far-right violence, is increasingly embedded within local communities rather than perpetrated on battlefields in distant lands (see Dmello, Perliger, and Sweeney 2022), the task of protecting at-risk communities falls largely on law enforcement. In their research examining stakeholder input on police and prosecutorial reform to better address anti-LGBTQ hate crimes, Palmer and Kutateladze (2022) found seven dimensions: "(1) hate crime detection, (2) interagency coordination, (3) victim engagement, (4) communication and awareness building, (5) training of law enforcement practitioners, (6) data and research, and (7) changes to the hate crime statute."

Early identification of the areas where competing ideologies converge can help prevent victimization of marginalized groups more effectively; this approach applies not just to LGBTQ+ communities but can be extended to other minority and/or ostracized groups.

Figure 3

Russian Propaganda Linking Ukraine War with Promoting LGBTQ Conversion

Russia's 1st Channel reports on "discovered" LGBTQ conversion centers in occupied Ukraine



Tweeted by Ru Embassy in the UK



Source: Telegram (original collection by authors)

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We assert that the same tenets are necessary for protecting this population from violent extremism, with the addition that law enforcement must be cognizant of ideological overlap between competing categories of potential offenders that can exacerbate underlying risk for marginalized populations. Thus, early identification of the areas where competing ideologies converge can help prevent victimization of marginalized groups more effectively; this approach applies not just to LGBTQ+ communities but can be extended to other minority and/or ostracized groups.

This article offers a review of anti-LGBTQ+ narratives that crosscut extremist groups who share little else in common. Although these entities *should* have radically different ideologies, their objectives, motivations, and targeting preferences unite around anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric—endangering the queer community. From a counterterrorism perspective, research has shown that groups coalescing around shared values or beliefs such as a common enemy can lead to "fused extremism" (Koch, Nahon, and Moghadam 2024), which can further complicate prevention efforts. This coalescence does not necessarily mean that individual membership swapping between groups will manifest; however, this framing suggests that within a given space, the risks posed to marginalized communities become heightened because they are likely simultaneously the target of multiple different entities, some of which are monitored by different law enforcement and/or intelligence agencies from others. Consequently, this creates a fusion of risk around converging extremist ideologies perpetrated by subscribers to those beliefs. The authors seek to encourage more research on this subject as well as better integration of queer theory into the study of radicalization and terrorism more broadly. This has both theoretical as well as policy outcomes, as protecting these communities increasingly falls on law enforcement who might fail to appreciate how and why disparate groups target LGBTQ+ communities. A stronger theoretical approach in extremism and radicalization research can produce a new framework for understanding LGBTQ+ victimization and support for victims centered around trauma-informed policy1.

This article offers a review of anti-LGBTQ+ narratives that crosscut extremist groups who share little else in common. Although these entities should *have radically different ideologies, their objectives, motivations, and targeting preferences unite around anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric—endangering the queer community.*

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research. ■

NOTES

1. There are questions regarding the chain of transmission (*isnad*) of this hadith. Consequently, although it is taken as doctrine, many LGBTQ+ activists dispute the "righteousness" of this specific Hadith.

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