

1 The Wolves are Coming to Fight

His heart pounded as he hid behind the steel fire door that led from the top floor of the housing complex up to the attic. It was early in the morning, and it would be one of those bright summer days with high blue skies. Birds were singing and he could hear the sound of people waking up in their apartments beneath and around him. Water going through the pipes; people showering, brewing coffee, making breakfast, doors opening, the elevator going up and down. He held the Glock close to his chin, using both hands; barrel pointing upwards, silencer on. Breathing slowly and deeply, listening for one of the doors to any of three apartments of the floor he was at to open. Normally, he never was in this part of the city of Malmö. Thirty-one-year-old Peter Mangs did not know any of the residents, nor did he want to. He only knew they had foreign-sounding surnames, one of them Muslim. He wanted their death, not their friendship.

Mangs heard the sound of a door opening. His heart skipped a beat. “Bingo!” he thought, as he raised his gun between the surprised eyes of the old man in front of him, “the Muslim.” Kooros Effatian was a retired customs officer born in Teheran who had fled his country to escape the Islamic Revolution. Mangs did not know that, neither did he ask. To him, the man was Muslim, and today he would die. “The lifeboat is full. We can have no more people in this country,” Mangs thought, paraphrasing Finnish eco-fascist Pentti Linkola.¹ The very “survival of the [white] gene-pool is threatened.” It was June 13, 2003, and the world would never be the same again. He was “programmed to solve all problems.” Mangs squeezed the trigger. “Give war a chance.”²

Dressed as a police officer, thirty-three-year-old Anders Behring Breivik got help carrying off his heavy bags, loaded with guns and ammo, as the ferry landed at Utøya island in idyllic Lake Tyri, northwest of Oslo. One and a half hours earlier, Breivik had detonated a homemade bomb at the government headquarters in downtown Oslo, killing eight people and wounding 209. He now killed the camp organizer and the

¹ Mangs, Interview, June 17, 2014; Linkola, 2011.

² Mangs, *German Philosophy*, n.d.

security guard on the wharf and walked toward the old main house on the island. He summoned the young adults assembled there for the yearly Labor Youth Utøya Summer Camp; “I came here to protect you.” As the boys and girls flocked around him, Breivik brought out his Ruger Mini-14 and Glock 34 and began shooting the youngsters, one by one, systematically, smiling, enjoying himself. Some teenagers ran off; others froze in panic, unable to move even when the killer stopped to reload his guns. Breivik recalls walking around the island, looking for kids hiding in the woods, behind rocks, down by the shores, or throwing themselves in the water, all the while listening to “Lux Aeterna” by Clint Mansell on his iPod, the evocative violin-led hymn played during the battle scenes in *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. It took an hour and a half. He killed sixty-nine youths that summer day, July 22, 2011, and wounded forty-one, including eighteen who were hospitalized in critical condition. Breivik was proud of himself. His only regret was that he did not kill more traitors to stop the ongoing genocide on the “indigenous (white) peoples of Europe,” as explained in his *2083: A Declaration of European Independence*, which he had mailed to select recipients earlier that morning.³

“Well lads,” twenty-eight-year-old Brenton Tarrant wrote on 8chan’s “pol” board, where a community of alt-right people gather, on March 15, 2019, “it’s time to stop shitposting and time to make a real-life effort post. I will carry out an attack against the invaders, and will even live stream the attack via Facebook. The Facebook link is below, by the time you read this I should be going live.”⁴ He mounted a camera on his helmet and drove down to the local Christchurch mosque to the tones of a Serbian song celebrating genocide on Muslims: “The wolves are coming to fight.”⁵ Cheering spectators sitting by their computers across the world followed Tarrant into the mosque from the perspective of a first-person-shooter video game, seeing the enlarged barrels of the shotgun and the people encountered and shot in the rooms and hallways of the building. Tarrant took fifty-one lives and wounded another fifty-six that day – men, women, and children.

³ Breivik, Interview, June 19, 2014; Breivik, 2011, pp. 967, 1033f, 1121, 1130, 1353f.

⁴ Tarrant, Facebook Live stream, 2019b. ⁵ Tarrant, Facebook Live stream, 2019b.

Malmö, Sweden, 2003; Oslo, Norway, 2011; Christchurch, New Zealand, 2019. Three armed white men killing people whose names they did not know, yet who they defined as invaders, traitors, polluters. All three saw themselves as heroes risking their lives in defense of their nation, although their targets were all unarmed civilians. The neighbors, friends, and colleagues of Mangs, Breivik, and Tarrant were stupefied when hearing the news. They had found them polite and tidy, never having expressed extremist views. The investigations showed they all had adopted the same tactics described in white nationalist literature and known as *leaderless resistance*, and had learned to avoid advance detection by melting into the general population. Though they had never met, they saw themselves as part of the same “resistance,” sharing tactics, political views, references, myths, and visions. “Lone” perpetrators of this kind are not “alone” other than operationally.

Such performative acts of weaponized whiteness do not only target the individuals they happen to kill, but the communities of racialized others their victims were forced to represent by being killed. None of the killers knew their victims personally. They knew only what their victims represented to them: worthless life that had to die for valuable life to prosper. The murders were political, meant to amplify existing tensions in society, to ignite the apocalyptic race war through which the white nation would be born anew.

While years apart, the killings in Malmö, Oslo, and Christchurch were not isolated, but part of a series of lethal assaults similar in style and motivation perpetrated across the global North. In fact, this kind of political violence has been sufficiently commonplace to award the individual racist attacker their own epithet within the milieu of white radical nationalism: “lone wolf”, a metaphor loaded with romantic notions of the potency and lethality of the free-roaming outcast, suiting the hero politics idealized in the milieu.

It has become part of the pattern for perpetrators of lone wolf violence to explain their cause in writings and/or videoclips.⁶ Breivik saw July 22, 2011 as a “marketing operation” for his 1,571-page 2083 manifesto.⁷ Similarly,

⁶ Nilsson, forthcoming, 2021. ⁷ Breivik, 2011, p. 16.

Tarrant posted his own manifesto, *The Great Replacement*, minutes before the attack, a call to arms to stop the alleged genocide of white people worldwide.

Like Breivik, Tarrant calculated that the more shocking and appalling his violent attack, the greater the attention he would receive. Thus, in the section of *The Great Replacement* in which he interviews himself – another detail he took from Breivik – Tarrant asks himself, “Children are always innocent, do you not think you are a monster for killing an innocent?” “No,” he responds. “Children of invaders do not stay children, they become adults and reproduce, creating more invaders to replace your people.” In Tarrant’s mind, slaying children becomes the noble thing to do. “Any invader you kill, of any age, is one less enemy your children will have to face. Would you rather do the killing, or leave it to your children?”⁸

How did we get here? From where did white nationalists get the notion of an ongoing white genocide happening on their watch? How did they come to the conclusion that “resistance” against a perceived invasion and occupation of “white” territory should be launched by individual “lone wolves” performing ghastly massacres on noncombatants with whom they had no prior relation? How come slaughtering innocent children is construed as a heroic act that a perpetrator wants to broadcast to the world?

The answers will be sought by following the trail of the lone wolf in the political landscape of white nationalism. In so doing, I will proceed from the approach of “methodological empathy,” as developed by Roger Griffin within the field of Fascism Studies.⁹ In seeking to understand a Peter Mangs, an Anders Behring Breivik, or a Brenton Tarrant, it is not enough to run a LexisNexis search or to rely on intelligence reports, court proceedings, the accounts of their victims, or assessments by reporters and political opponents. To understand fascists, it is necessary to engage with them and the material they produce and are inspired by.

This Element builds on four categories of material: first, ethnographic material produced during fieldwork among white nationalists, interviews with lone wolves, including Peter Mangs and Anders Behring Breivik, and conversations with people who see their deeds as heroic; second, material

⁸ Tarrant, 2019a, p. 22. ⁹ Griffin, 2008.

produced by lone wolves themselves, including their manifestos, books, statements, social media postings, live streams, and films, and the literature and people they refer to and were inspired by; third, court proceedings, police investigations, and testimonies; finally, secondary sources, including media reports and previous studies of white nationalism, fascism, and political violence.

Contested Concepts

Words are not innocent. The concepts we use open up the way we think about certain issues, and simultaneously close or obscure other ways of understanding that which we have before us. In what follows, I will discuss why and how I use certain key concepts in this Element: nation/nationalism/radical nationalism, fascism, accelerationism, and ethnopluralism.

The concept of “radical nationalism” is used to name a *political landscape* that encompasses a wide variety of overlapping and not infrequently competing political traditions, including national socialism, populist nativism, alt-right, deep right, fascism, eco-fascism, occult fascism, identitarianism, radical traditionalism, tribal socialism, and national bolshevism, all of which are open to different and instable interpretations that may spur further schismatic divisions.

While most radical nationalist movements tend to be small and transitory, the landscape itself is still there, kept alive by publications, political philosophies, artworks, music, and by the narratives and legends of triumph, challenges, and grievances, which revolve around the polyvalent notions of nation, tradition, and race.

Radical nationalist leaders frequently lay emphasis on the differences between their respective parties, philosophies, and approaches, such as highlighting the contrasts between competing national socialist parties, the distinctions between radical traditionalism and national bolshevism, and the dissimilarities between those who by principle or tactics participate in parliamentary elections and those who do not.

Irrespective of how important these distinctions are to diehards, who may even brand those of other factions traitors, scores of rank-and-file tour the landscape to visit its various sites, not least online; people in leading

positions suddenly break off to form new groups or switch alliances, and most sympathizers will probably spend most of their time unorganized, while generally sympathetic to important parts of the white nationalist landscape, if not of everything that goes on.

The *nations* for which they fight are not necessarily the same as the nations of the actually existing nation-states. A Swedish radical nationalist may fight to save a “nation” defined as Swedish and/or Nordic, European, Western, and White, or engage in a separatist project to carve out a piece of contemporary Sweden (e.g., Scania, Jämtland, Norrland) as an independent nation. While centering on the particular nation they hold uniquely theirs, radical nationalists may recognize, celebrate, and support each other across national borders, as illustrated by Narendra Modi and Donald Trump, Viktor Orbán and Benjamin Netanyahu, publicly embracing each other and forging transnational links of nationalist solidarity.

A nation may be founded on blood, territory, creed, divine intervention, or a combination thereof, but is always exclusionary, albeit to some extent open to accept outsiders under certain conditions. To a radical nationalist, the nation is of overarching importance, the very “root” of human existence. A human without a nation is a rootless being fleeting aimlessly in a sea of meaninglessness.

In nationalist imagination, a nation is a transhistoric entity of organic solidarity with a specific essence that nationalists hold uniquely theirs. More than the sum of its inherent qualities, the nation is something that nationalists “believe in” and bestow with certain “rights,” such as the rights of autonomy, prosperity, and self-determination in a territory of its own, typically called its “home” — objectives a radical nationalist is obliged to fight, kill, and die for.

A “nation” is an “imagined community,” involving feelings of solidarity with people of the same nation, despite the fact that we will never meet or know more than a fraction of those compatriots during our lifetime.¹⁰ The fact that we actually may identify with people who to us are anonymous and who may be living in places we have never heard of, or those who are dead or yet unborn, as long as they “belong” to the same “nation,” tells us not to

¹⁰ Andersen, 1991.

equate “imagined” with “unreal.” Nationalists produce the imagined nation by projecting it back into legendary or mythological time, often presented as a “golden age” of national greatness. “Born” during the golden age, the particular nation is endowed with certain inherent qualities, a personal history, and a “destiny” to be fulfilled in a glorious future if the current crisis nationalists typically thinks the nation suffers from is overcome.

Other terms used in the literature to connote what is here named radical nationalism include the “far right,” the “radical right,” “rightwing extremism,” the “extreme right,” and “rightwing radicalism.” Some scholars use these terms interchangeably; others seek to integrate them as distinct types in a typology. However, there is no consensus on which groups should be classified, how, and by which criteria. Is the far right more extreme than the radical or vice versa?

The confusion may be partly explained by the fact that the term *radical right* is American in origin, while *rightwing extremism* is European. The first was coined by scholars exploring McCarthyism and the anti-communist “crusades” of the 1950s; the second was used to understand postwar fascism and national socialism in Europe.¹¹ Both concepts expanded to include nativism and violent racism – such as the Ku Klux Klan in the USA, and militant anti-immigrant groups in Europe – crossed the Atlantic, and collided with each other in various ways.

Miroslav Mareš and Tore Bjørgo draw a distinction between the “extreme” and the “radical” right on the grounds that the former “accept or even condone violence,”¹² and Jens Rydgren argues that “rightwing extremism” is opposed to democracy, while the “radical right wing” is not necessarily so.¹³ In this article, these positions are part of the radical nationalist landscape, and the questions of violence and democracy are but a few of several issues debated in terms of principles, instruments, tactics, and timing.

Empirically, there is not much to justify the rightwing label (whether “extreme” or “radical”), as the discourses and agendas of the parties,

¹¹ Kaplan & Weinberg, 1998. ¹² Bjørgo & Mareš, 2019.

¹³ Rydgren, 2018; Cas Mudde, 2016, counted twenty-six different scholarly definitions of “rightwing extremism,” with fifty-eight different features.

movements, and lead voices in the landscape feature elements of both the right (e.g., tradition, nation, law and order, gender essentialism, moral conservatism) and the left (e.g., [white] workers' rights, women's rights, elderly people's rights, environmental concerns). Radical nationalism is typically anti-capitalist *and* anti-communist, as seen in its slogan "neither left, nor right, but forward."

An important constellation in the landscape is *fascism*, a term I use in its generic sense as defined by Roger Griffin to connote a revolutionary form of radical nationalism centred on a mythic core of national rebirth.¹⁴ "Myth" is used here in the tradition of the history of religions, where the concept signifies narratives, stories, and claims that are considered to convey truth in a meaningful way. To a fascist, the nation's mythic origins and historical greatness are unquestionable, and the vision of national rebirth is something that can and should be realized.

Radical nationalism is the broader term. Every fascist is per definition a radical nationalist, but not every radical nationalist is a fascist. Radical nationalism and fascism both seek to return the nation to its former glory, to "Make the Nation Great Again," as the slogan goes. A non-fascist radical nationalist may believe that it is possible to achieve this aim by reformist strategies only: put the nation first, build a wall, restrict immigration, and the like. To a fascist radical nationalist, nothing but systemic change will do; only revolution will secure the rebirth of the nation.

History has seen a variety of different fascisms developing in various times and places. Japanese fascism is not exactly the same as Romanian fascism, and the Italian fascism of the 2020s is not exactly the same as the Italian fascism of the 1920s. Like any other political philosophy, fascism transforms with time and changing contexts.

Obviously, fascism received a "knock-out blow" at the end of the Second World War and has since sought to overcome its "toxic legacies" and its wholesale discrediting in public opinion by regrouping, reorganizing, revising, reformulating, refashioning, and rebranding itself, aiming to creating for itself "another name, another face." As French fascist theorist Maurice Bardèche argued already in 1961: "With the form of a child we do

¹⁴ Griffin, 1992; 2018.

not recognize and the head of a young Medusa, the Order of Sparta will be reborn.”¹⁵

Fascism with a new face is sometimes labeled “neo-fascism.” However, what is considered “recent” is unstable and dependent on time. The articulations of fascism that were called “new” in the 1960s or 1980s may seem dated in the 2020s. That problem can hardly be solved by pasting on new prefixes as time goes by, which invite us to study “new neo-fascism,” “newer new neo-fascism,” and “really, really new neo-fascism.” To see fascism as a generic term is to acknowledge that fascism, much like socialism, liberalism, and conservatism, changes according to changing contexts and conditions.

While fascism is a revolutionary form of radical nationalism, there is no uniform fascist theory on how the revolution will be accomplished. Important to our purpose is a theory sometimes named *accelerationism*, which seeks to amplify the contradictions inherent to the system to see it destroy itself. “Stability and comfort are the enemies of revolutionary change,” Tarrant wrote, insisting that fascists should not favor policies that make life better for white people, but should instead aim at “supporting, attacking, vilifying, radicalizing and exaggerating all societal conflicts.”¹⁶

According to accelerationist fascism, the nation cannot be reborn or saved by seizing power and implementing policies to regain national greatness, in the manner Hitler and Mussolini once tried (and in which they ultimately failed). We are past the point of no return. To be born anew, the nation must first die. Total war will pave the way for national rebirth. The cleansing fire will not only consume the nation’s foes but the vast majority of ordinary white folks, who have proven their worthlessness by allowing the situation to come this far. “Strong men do not get ethnically replaced,” Tarrant wrote. “Weak men have created this situation and strong men are needed to fix it.”¹⁷

There is no way back to the Golden Age of national greatness; history cannot go backwards, only forwards, irrespective of whether time is linear or cyclic. Hence, the only meaningful thing a fascist may do is to accelerate the inevitable, hasten the onslaught of the approaching Ragnarök, and build

¹⁵ Griffin, 2017. ¹⁶ Tarrant, 2019a, p. 66. ¹⁷ Tarrant, 2019a, p. 30.

the new on the ruins of the old. Apocalyptic war will separate the wheat from the chaff and galvanize the seeds of the becoming New Man who will make up the nation that will arise anew out of the ashes of total destruction.

Increasingly important to white nationalism is *ethnopluralism*, a theory of racial difference and national belonging popularized in the European “new right” and prevalent in contemporary identitarian and alt-right discourse.¹⁸ Ethnopluralism connotes the idea that mankind may be divided into a mosaic of demarcated “varieties” (to use Carl Linnaeus’ word), named races, cultures, religions, or ethnicities, each bestowed with an inherited essence and certain unique features. Linking race and space, blood and soil, each variety is held to belong in a certain place of origin, called its home, and those who do not belong anywhere, such as the Roma, constitute a problem. As long as each kind stay in their proper place, they are considered pure, and to some extent valuable, at least in theory. However, if they move from their assigned place, they become out-of-place and thereby impure and threatening, according to the logic Mary Douglas theorized in *Purity and Danger*.¹⁹ Should people associated with a particular variety mix, live with, and crossbreed with people of another variety, then disharmony, unhappiness, and disorder will follow. Imperialism is therefore disastrous, and so is colonialism – unless the settler-colony exterminates all but its own kind from the conquered territory.

As the theory of “white supremacy” developed to legitimize white rule over nonwhite people in the colony, post-colony, and empire, it has lost ground in the landscape of white nationalism, in which separatism and “the right to differ” rather than colonialism and globalism sets the tone. Racial separatist Richard McCulloch rejects white supremacy as “immoral” as it violates the rights of other races by subjugating and exploiting them. All races have “the right to exist” as distinct forms of life, “free from domination, control or interference by other races.”²⁰

¹⁸ Bar-On, 2001; 2014; McCulloch, *The Racial Compact: A Call for Racial Rights, Preservation, and Independence*, n.d.

¹⁹ Douglas, 1966.

²⁰ McCulloch, *The Racial Compact: A Call for Racial Rights, Preservation, and Independence*, n.d.