



## Strategies for Addressing Global White Supremacists

*Introductory remarks provided by: Congressman Max Rose, Congressman Mark Walker, Congressman Josh Gottheimer, and Christopher K. Harnisch*

*Featuring panelists: Hagar Chemali, Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Danny Glaser*

*Moderated by: Mark Dubowitz*

**DUBOWITZ:** Hi, I'm Mark Dubowitz, I'm the CEO of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, and I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy, and thanks very much for joining us for this expert panel. As we continue to work offline, we're bringing you these virtual events. And this one in particular is focused on a critical threat that faces the United States and our allies – and that is the threat from white supremacists. It's an important issue, it's a bipartisan issue, and we're pleased to bring members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans to this event, as well as a member of the administration to talk about his work, specifically on designations of a critical white supremacist group. The event will feature first, Chairman Max Rose, he is the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism, then we'll hear remarks from the Ranking Member of that Subcommittee, Mark Walker, followed by Representative Josh Gottheimer, and closing out the remarks portion of the event, we're going to hear from Christopher Harnish, who is the Deputy Coordinator for Countering Violent Extremism at the U.S. State Department. And then we're going to jump into an expert panel with three top experts discussing the breadth and depth of the threat from transnational white supremacist movements, and really dig deeper into what the United States can do to counter this threat. So, thanks very much for joining us, and I'm pleased to introduce Chairman Max Rose.

**ROSE:** Good afternoon, and thank you so much for joining us today. Thank you to the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies for holding this hearing, and making this important issue such a priority. Thanks to our great moderator, Mark Dubowitz, the CEO of FDD, and to our extraordinary panelists, Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Danny Glaser, Hagar Chemali. And I'm also so proud to be joined virtually by ranking member Mark Walker, who's been a consistent partner working across the aisle on our Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism.

The need to confront the threat of global white supremacy is more important now than it has ever been. Around the world and here at home, hate is mobilizing online through small group meetings and in training camps dotted across the U.S. and Europe. Violence by white supremacist extremists in the United States has been increasingly linked to overseas groups, individuals, or movements.

Some individuals like the perpetrators of the 2019 attacks in El Paso, Texas and in Poway, California, they drew inspiration from white supremacist attacks abroad. Others are members of groups that have formed networks to communicate and train, and in several cases, they have carried out acts of violence in the United States. Some white supremacist extremists have traveled abroad to train in war zone environments. By one estimate, 17,000 individuals from 50 countries have traveled to battlefields in Ukraine to train and fight, including white supremacist extremists seeking training from neo-Nazi militant groups. That is more individuals than went to go train in Afghanistan and fight with the Mujahideen at the height of the Soviet Union's war there.

This isn't just happening though on the other side of the world. It's happening right here at home, and it is absolutely personal. White supremacist are putting up recruiting flyers across my district, and they've hung a banner across a highway. Neo-Nazis have identified me because of my work against them, and they've targeted me even, for being Jewish. But with your help, they absolutely will not win. Just last week I hosted a subcommittee forum on extremism, where we discussed the threat of extremist terrorist groups seeking to exploit opportunities presented by the coronavirus, and to perpetuate their hateful ideology, not just here at home, but across the world.

In recent weeks, we've seen pandemic-related violence across the country, from California to Florida and even right in New York City. This violence has been frequently motivated by antigovernment extremism, white supremacy, and conspiracy theories. This hate is mobilizing online, where the internet and permissive social media companies are

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allowing recruitment and organization to take place absolutely unhindered. As it has for jihadists, social media provides a rich opportunity for white identity terrorists to support one another across borders. Threats in the United States are becoming connected with global ones, and vice versa. There is nothing domestic about this domestic terrorist threat.

The United States has even, though, become a main exporter of white supremacist terrorist ideology worldwide. In many ways, we are the nexus of where this is originating from and getting pushed out across the globe. State and non-state actors are working together to build a global online white identity terrorist echo chamber, and they're including transnational terrorist manifestos and they're promoting violent content. This includes countries using troll farms to exacerbate fears of immigrants, Muslim, Jews, and other minorities in Western countries, as a way of destabilizing our democracy. White supremacists are traveling overseas for training and they even participate in armed conflicts, with the goal of bringing their war fighting experience back home.

It's interesting. We've seen this before. This is not new. Returning extremists from the Afghan Jihad and Syria and Iraq and elsewhere, they've built the nucleus and maintain the nucleus of the groups that carried out 9/11 and other attacks around the world. But we will not get caught unawares again. Together, ranking member Walker and I have put the threat of transnational white supremacist movements front and center.

So, here's what we've done so far. I've been a leader in calling for violent foreign white supremacist extremist groups to be designated as the foreign terrorist organizations that they are, so long as they meet the qualifying criteria. And if domestic white nationalist organizations have connections to them, then they should be charged with providing material support to those foreign terrorist organizations. Last September, I held a joint hearing with House Foreign Affairs Middle East, North Africa, and International Terrorists subcommittee entitled, "Meeting the Challenges of White Nationalist Terrorism at Home and Abroad." And together, with ranking member Walker, we held two subcommittee hearings on antisemitism, which focused substantially on transnational white supremacist extremists.

We're proud to have FDD experts testify there as well. There is an incredible connection between these white nationalist organizations and skyrocketing antisemitism. This year I introduced the Transnational White Supremist Extremism Review Act, directing the Homeland Security department to assess this terrorist threat posed by these foreign white supremacist extremist groups. And it passed committee. In March, we introduced the Recognizing Global Threats of Transnational White Supremacy Extremism Act to really focus on the ways in which the United States Department of State has to qualify foreign white supremacist extremist groups as foreign terrorist organizations.

And throughout this time, we have been consistent in calling on social media companies to take this threat absolutely seriously, and to remove this hateful content from their platforms. But this is not enough. This advocacy, this legislation is not enough. For one, we need the leading tech firms to actually fully fund and stand up the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism. GIFTCT, as they've noted it. They've talked the talk, but now we need them to walk the walk.

And I was, of course, encouraged when the Department of State designated the Russian Imperial Movement as a racially and ethnically motivated terrorism – a specially designated global terrorist group. This is just the first step though. This is, yes, the first time that a white supremacist group has officially been designated a terrorist organization. But there are dozens of other organizations that also are active overseas that are deserving of this designation.



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So, we have to continue making this a bipartisan priority going forward. I welcome having a group like FDD take this threat so seriously. I applaud them for their leadership. And in closing, thank you to all the panelists again, for tackling this issue head on. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

**WALKER:** Hello, I'm Congressman Mark Walker, the ranking member of the Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Subcommittee with the House Homeland Security Committee. I want to thank the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies for holding today's virtual event.

There is no doubt that there is a global rise in violent extremist ideologies. Last week, we were reminded of the continued threat posed by Islamic extremists. The FBI announced that they connected the terrorist who killed three and injured eight during the December 2019 attack at the Pensacola Naval Air Station directly with Al Qaeda in the Arabian peninsula.

Within a few days of that announcement, another individual who was similarly radicalized, opened fire at the gate outside of the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi, Texas injuring one. We must maintain our resolve to continue to counter Islamic extremism. At the same time, we have to ensure our counterterrorism tools are robust and flexible to address emerging and escalating threats.

We have seen a rise in racially motivated violent extremists across the globe. Earlier this year, the FBI announced that REMT threats within the United States is now on par with Islamist terror. The majority of 800 plus REMT cases within the FBI are linked to white supremacist individuals and groups.

In February, the FBI testified before my subcommittee on the threat of domestic terrorism and noted that joint terrorism task forces and FBI field offices have been directed to increase their focus on domestic terrorism, particularly REMT. This increased focus is proving successful as several attacks and plots have been disrupted, including the arrest of five members of Atomwaffen in February.

Prioritization of threats begins at the top. For the first time, the 2018 United States National Counterterrorism Strategy recognizes domestic terrorism as a threat and lays out a plan to utilize our counterterrorism toolkit to address this emerging threat. The Federal Government has several vital initiatives underway that build on the national strategy.

In September, 2019, the Department of Homeland Security released a strategy on countering both international and domestic terrorism, as well as targeted violence. The new DHS Office of Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention is tasked with coordinating DHS resources and capabilities to identify and counter the REMT threat in addition to the continued focus on foreign terrorist organizations.

DHS is building a new program to develop a community-based network to identify and prevent radicalization and to create off-ramps for individuals before they become violent. Additionally, DHS will be awarding \$10 million in grant funding this summer to law enforcement, academia and community groups to develop initiatives to counter both international and domestic terrorism.

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The State Department for the first time used the existing foreign terrorist organization designation process to target an overseas-based white supremacist group, the Russian Imperial Movement. This is an important step, but an area where we must also proceed with caution to ensure constitutional rights and civil liberties are protected.

In a discussion about terrorism, inevitably, turns to the exploitation of social media platforms to spread this propaganda and radicalize followers. While more must be done to counter this, I am concerned about the push to moderate content. There is hateful and violent content all reasonable people can agree is bad and should be removed. However, content moderation is inherently subjective and could easily turn into blocking different perspectives. The government needs to be very careful in this arena.

I want more attention and resources dedicated to building digital literacy, developing counter messaging initiatives and giving social media users greater ability to filter and block content on their own. Going forward, we need to focus on building the government's capacity to collect and analyze data on this threat, support efforts within the FBI and DHS to counter the threat and to ensure that we do not lose focus on the threat of international terrorism.

Just like with international terrorism, we need to seriously assess our ability to identify and disrupt REMT fundraising efforts and ensure all appropriate tools are being utilized.

I want to thank FDD and the participants for addressing the issue of global white supremacy. FDD has an impressive track record of thoughtful and educated assessments and recommendations on a variety of national security challenges facing the United States and the rest of the world. I look forward to working with you in the future to identify and implement additional recommendations to address this threat.

**GOTTHEIMER:** Hi, I'm Josh Gottheimer. Thank you so much to the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and your great CEO, Mark Dubowitz, for convening this important and timely event on confronting the threat of white supremacy. In recent years, we've seen both at home and abroad, a resurgence of white supremacist groups, domestic terrorists, and other extremists motivated by hateful ideologies and increasingly willing and prepared to carry out violent attacks to further their despicable agendas. From the shooting in Christchurch in New Zealand, to incidents in my home state of New Jersey, or in recent years, growing numbers of individuals with Neo-Nazis sympathies have been found stockpiling weapons, propaganda, and with paraphernalia. We've come to realize these are not simply isolated incidents, but a comprehensive challenge for law enforcement, policy makers and communities around the world.

For instance, the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness increased the threat posed by white supremacist extremists from moderate to high in 2020, putting homegrown extreme violent extremists as the most persistent, hostile actors in the entire state. These domestic extremists are also increasingly adopting the strategies of established foreign terrorist organizations, using methods of homegrown extremists around the world, following terrorist groups and ISIS inspired groups that we have seen over the years. This month, and as I'm sure you saw, the Anti-Defamation League reported a 73% increase in reporting antisemitic incidents in New Jersey in 2019. The most ever recorded in the state.

Of course, the rise in antisemitism and the growth of white supremacist extremism are deeply intertwined. Fortunately, there is a growing bipartisan recognition of the need to counter this alarming threat. In January, the National Security Subcommittee at the House Financial Services Committee, on which I serve, convened to hearing, which I

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worked on and helped lead, entitled “A Persistent and Evolving Threat: An Examination of the Financing of Domestic Terrorism and Extremism.” We’ve continued to focus on the need to cut off the flow of resources, to, and among domestic hate groups, as well as how U.S.-based individuals help finance international white supremacist groups abroad.

I’ve also worked very closely with members like Congressman Max Rose, Chair of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counter Terrorism, and other colleagues to urge the Secretary of State to designate international white supremacist groups as foreign terrorist organizations, as well as introducing a bipartisan resolution, H.Res.884, recognizing the global threat these trends and national white supremacist extremists present to America and urging the designation of these groups as terrorist organizations. Fortunately, this April, the administration designated one such group, Russian Imperial Movement, along with three of its leaders, as specially designated global terrorists for the first time in history. But we have much more to do. In Congress, we will continue working across the aisle to devise strong workable policy to counter this threat, and I look forward to hearing ideas from this panel and the ongoing work of groups like FDD and others as we examine the threat from every possible angle.

We’ve spent so much time as well this year dealing with standing up to social media companies who have allowed foreign terrorist organizations to utilize their platforms in a bipartisan way. We went after and encouraged groups like Twitter to take down the postings of foreign terrorist organizations, which was a direct violation of U.S. law. We must be vigilant, and I know you are a cop on the beat and will continue to be. I also know that working together, we can fight back against white supremacists, domestic terrorists, and other extremists and help prevent future attacks. Thank you again for having me, and may God bless you and may God continue to bless and watch over the United States of America.

**HARNISCH:** Greetings from Foggy Bottom. Allow me to begin by thanking the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies for hosting this important discussion and tackling the issue of white supremacist terrorism. Let me also thank the members of Congress joining today’s conversation, all of whom have been important voices and strong leaders on this issue, as well as today’s panelists, each of whom is a seasoned expert in his or her own right, and has contributed deeply to the public discourse on this issue.

First and foremost, we must recognize the global threat from what we call racially, or ethnically, motivated terrorism or REMT, of which white supremacist terrorism is an important subset. Combating REMT and in particular white supremacist terrorism is a counter terrorism priority for the United States. The Trump Administration’s CT strategy highlights this threat, noting that the U.S. has faced a long history of threats from terrorists motivated by other forms of violent extremism, such as racially motivated terrorism.

About two months ago, a reflection of our commitment to this priority went on full display when the Trump Administration made history by becoming the first administration to designate a group of white supremacist terrorists and three of its leaders. To be clear, the designated group, the Russian Imperial Movement or RIM, is not merely a hate group. RIM provides paramilitary style training to white supremacists and neo-Nazis and plays a prominent role in trying to rally Europeans and Americans into a common front against its perceived enemies. The group provided training to two Swedish neo-Nazis, enabling them to conduct terrorist attacks in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Moreover, RIM is part of a growing transnational movement of racially or ethnically motivated terrorists that pose a threat to the U.S. Homeland and our partners abroad. In recent years, that threat has manifested itself in barbaric attacks in El Paso, Pittsburgh, and Christchurch, among other places leaving dozens of innocent civilians dead. Adherence



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to the movement subscribed to ethno-supremacist ideologies of hate that seek to ignite a race war and establish a white dominated society. The diffuse movement has key figures, but it's highly decentralized. It convenes on the dark web and encrypted message boards. It preys on vulnerable youth, recruiting through gaming apps and online forums for people with depression and autism. Groups affiliated with this movement are often well-financed, raising money through crowdsourcing, the sale of licit goods like mugs, music, and t-shirts, and criminal activity, including drug trafficking.

Compounding the threat is the challenge of white supremacists who travel overseas for training to gain combat experience in conflict zones. Just as many ISIS fighters will return home from the battlefields in Syria and Iraq, so too will these white supremacist fighters returned to their countries of origin, where they will recruit, organize, and operate. The parallels between today's violent white supremacist movement and the Islamist Jihadi movement of the last three decades are striking. However, one notable difference between these movements is that the majority of white supremacist foreign fighters hold passports issued by countries in the West and thus have ready access to the United States and some of our closest allies.

The threat posed by racially or ethnically motivated terrorists did not begin during the Trump Administration. In fact, 2015 experienced 135 REMT attacks across North America, Europe and Australia compared to 88 in 2017, the year President Trump took office. But the Trump Administration has taken unprecedented steps to counter this threat. The RIM designation resulted in the group and three of its leaders being denied access to the U.S. financial system, and generally prohibits U.S. persons from engaging in financial transactions with them. A secondary effect of that designation was that major social media companies, including Facebook and Twitter, voluntarily shut down RIM's accounts. One of the designated leaders of the group described that to a reporter as "a major blow."

Designations are a powerful tool that the State Department will continue to use to weaken terrorists of all stripes, but they are just one tool amongst many in arsenal of tools that we are bringing to this fight. The State Department has been expanding our research and analysis of REMT actors to understand the global connections, drivers and disinformation narratives that serve as recruitment calls. We are working through multilateral institutions to build local capacity against the REMT threat. We have also committed notable CVE resources to combat the radicalization recruitment of white supremacist terrorists. We have supported exchange programs where we have brought European municipal leaders, such as mayors and police chiefs, to the United States to exchange counter-terrorism ideas and best practices with leaders from U.S. cities that have dealt with terrorism. In a similar vein, we sponsor U.S. municipal leaders to go overseas for the same purpose. A few weeks after the Chabad of Poway synagogue attack outside of San Diego that left one dead and three injured, a delegation from San Diego and Anaheim went to the German cities of Bonn, Cologne and Dusseldorf to meet with local leaders there about countering terrorism.

We also work hand in hand with technology companies to ensure that social media platforms do not serve as a safe haven for white supremacist terrorists. We help build the capacity of partner governments to protect soft targets, such as synagogues and mosques. And we're working to constrain the travel of REMT actors so that they cannot recruit and train others unfettered. It's important to note that in our quest to root out white supremacist terrorism, we will never let the sanctity of our first amendment come into question. The State Department will never target groups or individuals based on speech, no matter how heinous and evil their speech may be. And we regularly push back against foreign partners who seek to combat REMT through increased online censorship. To the contrary, the State Department focuses our efforts on counter messaging.



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In this effort, we've partnered with CVE institutions to build online libraries of counter narratives, accessible to national and local government officials overseas. We've also sent former white supremacists on speaking tours in Europe to publicly counter white supremacist and neo-Nazi narratives. Along with the work that we're doing at the State Department to combat white supremacists abroad, our colleagues at the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security have also committed significant resources to protect the American people against this threat.

As the U.S. counter terrorism apparatus has focused increasing attention on REMT, we have not, and will not, take our eye off of Islamist terrorism. ISIS and Al Qaeda still pose the greatest threat to the United States and Iran backed terrorism threatens peace and stability around the world. We will continue to prioritize our efforts on these threats while also aggressively tackling REMT. As the threat of white supremacist terrorism evolves, we remain committed to addressing it and keeping the American people, our partners, and our way of life safe. Following last year's attack in El Paso, President Trump said, "In one voice, our nation must condemn racism, bigotry, and white supremacy." The State Department has taken important steps that fight terrorism inspired by such hateful ideologies and we will continue to do so with vigor. Thank you.

**DUBOWITZ:** Well, thank you to Chairman Rose, Ranking Member Walker, Representative Gottheimer, and Christopher Harnish for their insightful remarks on this threat of transnational white supremacist groups. And now we're going to jump into the panel of experts to really dig deeper into these threats. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross is the CEO of Valence Global, and he is a Senior Advisor to FDD on asymmetric warfare, and Daveed has spent years researching these transnational violent extremist groups, and offering actionable policy recommendations to the U.S. government. Hagar Chemali is the President and CEO of Greenwich Media Strategies, and she is a former spokesperson for the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, as well as the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. Danny Glaser is a Senior Advisor to FDD's Center on Economic and Financial Power, he is a former Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Terrorist Financing, and he also serves as a partner at K2 Fin. So, welcome to the three of you, wonderful to have you on this event.

So Daveed, let me ask you, you and your team at Valens Global played a role in the creation of the strategic framework for countering terrorism and targeted violence that DHS released in September 2019. You were involved in the drafting of it, threat assessment and formulation of policy responses contained that document and you've obviously worked on white supremacy militancy issues for many years, advising U.S. government agencies, tech companies. You worked as an analyst, a trainer. So, I think you have a pretty good sense of the nature and gravity of the threat. Help us frame the problem. Talk to us about what is the nature of the problem and also talk to us a little bit about the transnational element of this. We certainly heard that from the members of Congress and the State Department official about the transnational context in which these militant groups operate.

**GARTENSTEIN-ROSS:** Looking at it from a U.S. perspective, it's very clear that this is a growing problem. In recent years, white supremacist militants have claimed more lives than jihadist militants or any other militant group here in the United States. You've had a number of notorious attacks ranging from the El Paso Walmart attack, which occurred back in August of last year to a variety of synagogue attacks, both in Poway, California, and also the Tree of Life Synagogue attack in Pittsburgh. That attack on a Sikh temple back in 2012 by a white supremacist, which claimed a number of lives. And also, the notorious Dylann Roof attack at an African American church in South Carolina that caught national attention when he killed nine church goers. These are all emblematic of the problem that we confront.

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If you look at the transnational nature of it, going out to a broader scope, you have similar attacks occurring elsewhere in the world. In Canada to our North, you had a mosque attack in Quebec City. The New Zealand Christchurch attack that occurred with 51 mosque goers killed during Friday prayers. Similarly, Anders Breivik's attack back in Norway earlier last decade. And within these individual's manifestos, the transnationalism of the movement is reflected. Some of them like Dylann Roof, for example, it's just that what he wrote up prior to his attack isn't a manifesto, but it serves the same purpose. These guys like to articulate why they did what they did and they cite to each other. Anders Breivik and Dylann Roof were both cited as inspirations by Brenton Tarrant, who's the New Zealand attacker. He in turn was cited by John Ernest, who was the Poway attacker, and also cited by Patrick Crucis, who was the attacker at El Paso. And both of them were cited in turn by an attacker who back in August of last year, tried to attack a mosque in Europe, by Phillip Munshaus. That's part of the reflection of transnationalism. We could also see it in the way in which the movement is converging in multiple ways.

Some of these are in person, though less so during the pandemic, but you've had white power events, including a growing number throughout Europe. Some of them are music festivals. Sometimes they use other cultural aspects like mixed martial arts or MMA fights to draw people into the movement and to attract them. Obviously, the internet also is a big part of this with certain services being consistently used, not just by moving members, but also by attackers. Manifestos were frequently posted to 8Chan in the case of the Tree of Life synagogue attack. The fact that the attacker was going in was posted to Gab right before the attack occurred. And a third aspect of the transnationalism of the movement that I'd focus on is training. You have here in the U.S. some of these groups, including The Base, including Atomwaffen, have what is sometimes referred to by movement members as hate camps, which serve as training camps for members.

The Russian Imperial Movement, which was just designated by the State Department as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity, one of the reasons why it was designated was that it has a series of camps known as partisan camps, which attract movement members. For example, there were members of the Nordic Resistance Movement who trained there and subsequently carried out some attacks in Sweden, which was indicative of the way that the training could carry over into the physical realm. To me, that really helps to set the scene and then putting the strategic framework together for DHS, which you mentioned, one of the things that we wanted to do, and I think accomplished, was to really set the scene of this transnationalism of the movement and the way that the movement is currently evolving in the early 21st century.

**DUBOWITZ:** And Daveed help us understand this transnational movement? Because these groups are not all the same. If you were to sort of give us a taxonomy of the white supremacist movement, talk a little bit about the ideological elements, some of the distinctions between the various groups and obviously some of the common threads that you see throughout this global movement.

**GARTENSTEIN-ROSS:** Yeah, absolutely. The way we break them down is into probably five different categories. One of them is Neo-Nazi or National Socialist, and all of us are familiar with Nazi Germany. They see Nazi Germany as an inspiration and want to recreate the Third Reich or to usher in a Fourth Reich. You have another ideology, which is based on demographic anxieties. We refer to this as the Great Replacement or white genocide theory. Now, obviously demographic anxieties doesn't make one an extremist, that doesn't make one a militant, but the Great Replacement theory or the notion of white genocide is often mentioned in manifestos. Great Replacement is an idea that originates with a French theorist who himself doesn't advocate violence, his name is Renaud Camus, but Camus' work ends up



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getting referenced repeatedly in these manifestos such that that's one thing that we can draw out as being a common theme for some of the attackers.

A third distinct ideology is accelerationism. Accelerationism comes from a theorist named James Mason who published a series of obscure newsletters called *Siege* in the 1980s. And the idea there is that "the system," which is what he terms the current political order that we have, at some point will collapse and will bring in a race war. The race war, which some accelerationism proponents refer to as the Great Boogaloo is thought of as not just inevitable, but also a good thing, because that's what will lead to the ethnic cleansing of the United States and beyond. Some of the most high-profile groups in recent years, including Atomwaffen, which has carried out a number of prominent murders are driven by accelerationism ideas and the idea that anything they can do to cause the downfall of the system is a good thing. Incidentally these groups have been very quick to seize on the pandemic and at least look at how they could potentially exploit it with one individual who had been plotting to attack a hospital in Kansas being linked to the accelerationist movement.

A fourth distinct group, which is known more for street fighting than for terrorism is white power skinheads. The Hammer Skins are example of this movement and then a fifth and final one is white nationalist or white separatist movements, who, again, aren't inherently militant. You have different kinds of nationalism, you have black nationalism and other groups. And so, you'll have an intellectual edge to that movement, but also there are some militants who are driven by the idea of white nationalism, white separatism, and seek to use violence to create a white homeland. Right now, I see the accelerationist probably particularly in the current context as being the biggest immediate threat, even though they subscribe to a doctrine of leaderless resistance in general, which is an idea that came out of Louis Beam within the white supremacist movement, they tend to be a little bit more tightly organized, technologically adept, and has been able to carry out a number of killings in recent years.

**DUBOWITZ:** Great. Well, I think that's very helpful in kind of framing the issue. And I want to talk a little bit about what the U.S. government is doing about this and can do about this. So, let me go to you, Danny and Hagar. You both recently wrote about this issue in the *Washington Post* highlighting the importance of sanctioning these white supremacy groups, particularly the transnational groups that are involved in violence is as Daveed has outlined and you both have spent a lot of time in the U.S. government and the U.S. Treasury department looking at, and really effectively countering, a number of violent extremist groups around the world, as well as rogue regimes. So, a few questions on that. Hagar, I want to start with you and then we'll go to Danny next. First, why do you think the issue is being treated differently than other extremist groups? And how did this issue play out during your time at Treasury?

**CHEMALI:** You mean the issue specific to white supremacy, right?

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah. Certainly, this issue has been with us for many, many years. These violent white supremacy groups have been causing havoc and violence in the United States and around the world. You saw that when you were at the U.S. Treasury department, we're now starting to see some changes with the recent designation by the State Department of the Russian Imperial Movement. So, tell us, why do you think in the past, or even why now are we not as focused on white supremacist movements as we are, for example, in violent jihadist movements?

**CHEMALI:** Well, I think there are a number of reasons, but I think one of the most important is probably cultural and having this perspective and understanding that these are in fact domestic terror groups. I find that in the U.S., in

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general, we've struggled, Congress has struggled, with the definition of domestic terrorism and what that means. As someone who worked in counter-terrorist financing, I find that odd because terrorism is terrorism. We have generally accepted definitions of what it is, killing innocents to achieve some kind of political, ideological, or religious goal. And so, the definition should not be all that difficult, but there does seem to be a difficulty in appreciating the threat posed by these groups and in categorizing them as terror groups, along with the other terror groups that Treasury and State Department and other government agencies go after.

So, I think a lot of it is a bit of a cultural shift. When I was at the Treasury Department and I left Treasury in 2015, I stayed in the U.S. government, but I left in 2015. At that point in time, we weren't talking about it a lot. It's not as they didn't exist, but we really weren't discussing these types of issues. What we've seen lately, and it's one of the things that Danny and I noticed when we were researching for the op-ed, were how many government agencies, experts, think tanks, advocates have come out with facts and statistics that have proven that this is the greatest threat that we face here in the United States, the greatest terror threat. But we're seeing that more and more now to be honest with you. And so, we've seen yearly reports now, but I would say that that's really in the last few years, and you've also seen an increase in that type of activity under the current administration.

I don't say that with a political goal here. It just is what it is. It's a fact. And so, given that, it feels a little bit like the machine is moving slowly to try and understand. I will say when Danny and I wrote that op-ed, the reactions that we got from both current and former Treasury officials were very positive. A lot of them were very excited about it. And some even told us that they hope to be working, those who are at Treasury now, that they hope to be working on this issue very soon. So, it does seem like it's floating in the air and that soon it will become the norm.

**GLASER:** So, Mark if I could –

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah, go ahead, Danny, please.

**GLASER:** If I could just add to what Hagar said. I think it sometimes takes us as a country and us as a society, a long time to awaken to a threat. And I don't know that that's necessarily a criticism. It might actually say some good things about our society that our first reaction isn't to go on the offensive. And even if you think about our efforts against what we would consider "traditional" terrorist organizations, jihadist organizations, it took us as a society really 9/11 to start taking that as seriously as we needed to take it. It took a direct attack and a mass casualty event for us as a society to really turn our attention and take an all of government approach to declare war on that threat and to go after those organizations in the way we really needed to.

We learned from that experience, we learned from our efforts against these groups, at least on the financial side, because we were called to duty at the Treasury Department that time to develop financial strategies, to attack these groups, to "bankrupt" these groups, which is normally a phrase I don't like to use, but to undermine their financial networks, undermine their capabilities.

And we learned from that and we developed that capability. And then we started to apply that in other national security cases, whether it was to target a rogue regime like Iran, or target or rogue regime like North Korea. And then even later than that, we use those same tools within the context of Venezuela and the context of Russia. We found out that we could be very sophisticated in the way we apply financial tools to undermine a threat, but we never really

## Strategies for Addressing Global White Supremacists

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thought, and again, it maybe say some good things about us that that's not how we think, but also we did not pay enough attention to the threat that was right under our nose, which is the white supremacist threat here at home and globally.

Now we see that, as Hagar says, now we see it. Now we see that this is an enormous threat and it's a growing threat. And so, it's time to take those lessons that we learned in the context of jihadist groups, that we've learned in the context of rogue regimes, that we've learned in the context of other national security priorities and make this a national security priority and do the same thing in the context of this national security priority that we've done in the context of many other national security priorities.

**DUBOWITZ:** And I think that's very helpful in understanding the context. Daveed, do you want to jump into that?

**GARTENSTEIN-ROSS:** Yeah, just a quick point on this, without disagreeing with the idea of looking for Treasury sanctions and other ways of squeezing these groups financially, I do want to point out one difference, which I think helps to account for the different treatment in white supremacist groups versus jihadist militant groups, which is post 9/11, you had this tremendously complex financial network that supported Al-Qaeda. You had charities like the Benevolence International Foundation, the al-Haramain foundation that served as front groups for AQ. Within the white supremacist's space, it's not clear that similar financial networks exist. Now they may. And the Russian Imperial Movement was a very clear case for designation because A, it was a foreign entity, which obviously for a designation like SDTG is necessary.

And secondly, it was trying to act internationally. Its training camps, for example, and it relied on the banking system for flows of money for people who wanted to take the partisan course. But you have them structured a little bit differently financially with some of the movements like accelerationist ones being a bit more diffused. So, I think even as we ramp up attention on the white supremacists side, which everyone here agrees that we should, I will put out that it will look, I think a lot different say five years from now than where the fight against jihadism on a financial side looked say in 2006.

One thing though that designations will, I think, accomplish very well is helping to forestall the white supremacist movement from developing into something like what the jihadist movement was circa 2001. I think along with the move to transnational lies the movement, there's also potentially a move to have more foreign money moving into it. In addition to some state sponsorship that I think we're seeing on the white supremacist's side. And so, designations can play, I think, a key role in both shutting down those groups, which they'll apply to, but also as a prophylactic against explosive movement growth based on financial inflows.

**GLASER:** I want to jump in, I'm sorry, Mark, but let me just say, because this is something I think about a lot and I agree there's nothing that Daveed said that I disagree with, but I do want to just emphasize there's not a model of jihadist group. So, there's all different kinds of jihadist groups that are organized in all sorts of different ways, whether Hamas is organized in one sort of way and ISIS in another way and Al-Qaeda in another way. And then you have even other groups that we've targeted and each one you have to design a special way of thinking about. You have to design sort of a special way of going after its organization, because at the end of the day, the financial network of the organization is the organization itself. And if you understand how it's finances work, you understand the organization. And Daveed, you very well might be right that this is going to be more complicated in the context of global white supremacist groups.

## Strategies for Addressing Global White Supremacists

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But I think that that's a proposition that's yet to be tested. The underlying ammunition in the financial fight against any of these groups, jihadist, white supremacist, other, is information, is intelligence. And I would suggest that we haven't prioritized collecting information about these groups, their finances, their organization, in the same way that we've prioritized collecting it about Al-Qaeda or other similar groups. And that maybe once we start learning more about how they're organized, we're going to find out that there really are opportunities to target them in ways that are going to really undermine their organization. So, it can't just be saying, "Oh, Treasury, go out there and go after their financial networks." Treasury needs to operate on the basis of information and intelligence. And that's something that really is still building and something that I think needs to be prioritized in a way that it hasn't been before.

**GARTENSTEIN ROSS:** Yeah. As you said, there's nothing we really disagree on. But to comment back on your non-disagreement with me, I'll say that I think all of us also agree that when we're looking at a strategy against any militant group or any terrorist movement, having a broad-based set of tools, and not just financial tools, is important. And so that's why I'm emphasizing the differences in the movement. And I strongly agree that as we dig in, there may be more to financial flows, or they may look a little bit more interesting than they appear on the surface. Obviously, even prior to the 9/11 attacks, some of the financial flows from charities, for example, were known. You'd have information, for example, linking Al-Haramain to the '98 East Africa embassy bombings that had come out prior to the 9/11 attacks. But we're in agreement all around with perhaps a slightly different view about what the financial contours will look like, but ultimately that's something that needs to be explored. And if we find better ways to cripple some of these groups through going after their finances, that'll be a big win.

**DUBOWITZ:** Well, listen, I'm very glad you took my advice not to be beholden to the moderator. And it's great that we've jumped into this controversy, if you can call it that. But what I want to do actually, is step back. And Danny, if you could talk about a kind of broader framework. I mean, what does it mean to launch a campaign at the U.S. Treasury Departments, right? You and Hagar wrote about this in your *Washington Post* piece, the need to build on the State Department designation, for example, of the Russian Imperial Movement and use Treasury tools in a global campaign against this violent extremist network. Talk to us a little bit about what that really means. What kind of authorities do you have that the State Department doesn't have? What does the State Department do that you at Treasury couldn't do? Just so that we hit some of the broad contours of what the authorities exist within the inner agency and then we can get back into the discussion and the partial disagreement about where the best authorities are and how effective they can be.

**GLASER:** Okay. Sure. And I don't even know that there's a partial disagreement, but look, in 2004, the Bush administration created a new office within the Treasury Department called the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence. I'm very proud to say that I was a part of the initial team that helped stand that office up and I remained a part of that organization through the rest of the Bush administration and then through the entirety of the Obama administration. And that office was created with the idea that there was an important role for the Treasury Department in national security that hadn't really been fully realized up until that point. That if there was a place within the Treasury Department, within the U.S. Finance Ministry that could harness all of the knowledge that Treasury has about the way the international financial system works, that harnesses all the information that not only the Treasury Department has access to, but the entire intelligence community has access to and law enforcement community has access to.

If it could take advantage of Treasury's connectivity with financial institutions and with banks and with other financial institutions and with foreign counterparts that do the same, and then take all of that and develop and implement strategies to deprive groups that are national security threats have access to the U.S. financial system and

## Strategies for Addressing Global White Supremacists

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*Featuring panelists: Hagar Chemali, Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Danny Glaser*

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to do act aggressively in terms of identifying their support networks and undermining those support networks, that we could give the United States a whole new set of tools to advance U.S. foreign policy and national security. That was the theory and the theory actually worked. We were quite successful in our little part of it. And as Daveed and you note, this is just a part of it. Obviously, there's so much that needs to happen from the Defense Department, from the State Department, from DHS, from the law enforcement community, from the intelligence community.

And always needs to be an all of government effort. But part of that government effort needs to involve the Treasury Department. And that's the part that I've been concerned has been missing. It was interesting to me on those fantastic opening statements from the congressmen, not one of them mentioned the word Treasury Department. It was heartbreaking to me, not one of them. They talked about DHS and they talked about State and they talked about law enforcement, not one said Treasury Department. And it's a shame because the Treasury Department has been so important over the last 10 years in addressing these other national security threats. So, I'm not saying it's at the exclusion of the others or to replace the others, or that it's more important than the others. In some cases it might be as important, some cases it might be less important, but it always needs to be part of it. And that's what's been missing.

And so what Treasury can do, once it has a target, take the Russian Imperial Movement, if that's the target, you would have to use Treasury authorities to target and those haven't been used yet. What then you could do is pursue what are called derivative designations. And this is something that Treasury is a unique Treasury authority. Treasury could use derivative designations to go after the individuals and entities that comprise the support networks of the Russian Imperial Movement because I guarantee you, there's very, very few bank accounts in the name Russian Imperial Movement. There's very, very few pieces of property owned by Russian Imperial Movement. What you need to do is then look at the next step. Can you target those?

And then you target the individuals and entities controlled by them, and eventually, and I'm oversimplifying this massively, but eventually you start to get to the point where you could really start to undermine a support network. As Daveed said, it remains to be seen how well developed these support networks are. And it's quite possible for many of these organizations, there's not something as well defined. And in those cases, the Treasury Department might not be as important. In other cases, there might be very important. So, it's about collecting the information, the law enforcement information, the intelligence that allows analysts, whether the Treasury Department or elsewhere on the government to map these out. And then you as all of government approach decide what's the right approach. Is it a law enforcement action? Is it continue to collect the intelligence?

Is it some sort of diplomatic approach to a particular country to ask them to crack down? Or is it the Treasury Department and using their tools or is it some combination of all of the above? And that's the way – again, and Hagar and I said in our piece, we know what a serious effort to undermine a group looks like because the United States does it all the time and it's pretty good at it, and we're starting to see it. And I think it's fantastic that the representative from the State Department was on and was quite committed to engaging in such an effort. But we were only seeing the very, very beginning of it. And it's still limited. And what I'm excited about is that we had a bipartisan group of speakers, and we had a member of the administration all on here saying that this is a priority. And now it's time to take that and actualize it and turn it into an actual operational plan.

**DUBOWITZ:** So before I go to Daveed –



## Strategies for Addressing Global White Supremacists

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*Featuring panelists: Hagar Chemali, Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Danny Glaser*

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**CHEMALI:** And if I could –

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah. Hagar I was going to go to you, actually. First of all, please comment on that. And then I also want, Hagar, if you could talk a little bit about what could be done outside of government, because I originally come from the private sector, you're in the private sector now. We spend a lot of time in Washington talking about which government agencies should do what, but obviously this is not only a financial campaign by white supremacists, this is also an ideological campaign, which is greatly enabled and facilitated by social media firms, by leading technology firms. So, if you could talk also a little bit about what they can do to better address the white supremacist threat.

**CHEMALI:** Sure. Well first, Danny summed it up really, really, well. I only had one thing to add to it, which is that when we thought of this op-ed and that in and of itself has a bit of an interesting story. Danny had wanted to write on this issue nearly three years ago and had confided that in me. And it was when Secretary Mnuchin had said after the Unite the Rally protest that happened in Charlottesville. When that happened, Secretary Mnuchin had come out with a statement and in that statement, there was a sentence that we point to it in the op-ed that said that he would promise to use Treasury's authorities to fight terrorism domestically and internationally. And Danny saw that and since that point had wanted to write something.

And so fast forward three years when State Department sanctioned, as an FTO, the Russian Imperial Movement, and then the three leaders were also sanctioned. I went to Danny and I said, so we're seeing something here. And we saw a lot of self-congratulations and excitement and this level of commitment that does seem very genuine by the way. But both of us were in agreement that it couldn't stop just at that one press release. And that was our fear, was that it was stopping there, that we weren't seeing this campaign that Treasury leads and that the Treasury is used to leading and that they're uniquely positioned to lead. And it is for all the reasons he mentioned, in part, because of the prioritization of intelligence and collection and analysis to achieve a certain foreign policy goal or mission.

And it's the dedication of resources, but it's also that these groups by nature tend to be, and Daveed you highlighted this when you talked about other groups, they are obscure and it's not just naming someone and assuming that that group has a bank account. It's that they have financial conduits, they have front organizations or charities or different methods they use to raise, move and store funds. And so, Treasury is uniquely positioned to look into all of that and go after it. And you need that if you are actually going to be as genuine as you say, when you say that you want to go after this threat. So that was why we were so motivated to write this op-ed to begin with and we are seeing reactions, outside of Treasury as well, that are positive, that say, we've been asked, Danny and I have both been asked to explain the differences as to why Treasury needs to be involved, what the importance is for an SDTG designation and we've explained one of the most important aspects of that is the derivative designations that Danny alluded to.

To your second question about what we can do on the outside. I will say I've seen – the evolution of our social media it's, well, it's still evolving. I mean, that's really in the news right now, isn't it? And they themselves are learning. I am a believer and not everyone will be a believer in this, that our social media networks have a significant responsibility to ensure that there is no speech that incites violence on their platforms. And the comparison I often give, and some may disagree with me on this. I often say to people that if a bank is required to assert who its account holder is and where their funds come from and where they're sending their funds, and we know that they must do that, then why aren't social media networks required to identify the account holder they're working with and make sure that whatever they say or whatever they send across channels isn't nefarious, isn't for some kind of nefarious purpose.

## Strategies for Addressing Global White Supremacists

*Introductory remarks provided by: Congressman Max Rose, Congressman Mark Walker, Congressman Josh Gottheimer, and Christopher K. Harnisch*

*Featuring panelists: Hagar Chemali, Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Danny Glaser*

*Moderated by: Mark Dubowitz*

I do think that that culture is changing. And I find that as time goes on, it is less and less a partisan issue. I do think that there are a lot of people behind or who support the need to regulate these social media networks in some way, shape or form. But I think that there are going to be a lot of bumps in the road, because I think they're dealing with free speech, they have a lot that they're going to have to look into to do that.

One of the things I'll add before I kick it back to you, is that something I also heard from different friends at different think tanks, not FDD obviously, when Danny and I published the op-ed was that they loved the op-ed, they were really in favor of it loves the idea, but that they couldn't take the issue on because of civil liberties issues. And I thought it was really heartbroken to hear that, because, again, there needs to be this understanding that everybody has a role in this and, right? It's not just the government and it's not just the social media networks. There have to be as many voices as possible to say, "Wait a minute, this is wrong. There is a way to address this problem without infringing on civil liberties and we just have to get together to solve those issues together." I think I'll end it there, but I would say that those are the two groups outside the government that could have the biggest weight in changing things going forward.

**DUBOWITZ:** So Daveed let me ask you this. I mean, Hagar has raised the issue of civil liberties and obviously the issue of free speech. I know you've done a lot of work and a lot of thinking about the free speech issue in the context of violent extremism writ large, and obviously the United States, we want to defend people's rights to say things and use social media to spread their ideas even if we find those ideas obnoxious, toxic or potentially dangerous. And the question is, in terms of dealing with white supremacists and their very dangerous and noxious ideas, how do we draw those distinctions? I know you've done a lot of thinking about that in various contexts.

**GARTENSTEIN-ROSS:** Yeah. Those distinctions are always difficult to draw. Let's start with where Hagar is coming from and the concerns expressed to her by some think tank colleagues about civil liberties as a reason not to take the issue on. Obviously, I agree with her about taking the issue on. I think one thing that's important when you're in the nascent stages of an issue, here where you've seen some very tragic attacks. you haven't seen that galvanizing attack like a 9/11 or like another Oklahoma City type attack, but you've seen tragic attacks. So, we know that this is a very real problem and people are dying because of it. I think that here though, as we're looking at the nascent stages of a campaign to counter it, what I think we have a responsibility to do, those of us pushing for action, is to help to address those civil liberties concerns at the outset.

And I think that what all of us agree on because it's implicit in the idea of a designation is a group would not be designated because its ideas are noxious. It would not be designated on the basis of having views that are repugnant, rather it's that intersection between its ideas and violent action that gives the basis for a designation. And I think that's one of the concerns that's looming. Another concern is the domestic versus foreign, which I think is another issue, which I don't need to really delve into. But the way that tech platforms have come to deal with it, back, say, six years ago, they had a very civil liberties-oriented idea about what you post on the platform to the point of self-parody, right? At a time when ISIS was bragging about taking sex slaves, it was beheading Americans and others on camera. And it was engaged in a campaign of genocide against the Yazidis. You had this anonymous Twitter executive quoted in the media with that noxious phrase, "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" but he had said that with a straight face to a journalist, was quoted on that, and that was Twitter's policy in late 2014 when ISIS was using Twitter so effectively. But after the way that a group like ISIS could manipulate the platform and galvanize it, and not only caused people to die through those who they were able to draw over to the theater, but also broadcast war crimes over social media, because executing someone on camera, that's a war crime, and that started to change the view within social media companies.

## Strategies for Addressing Global White Supremacists

*Introductory remarks provided by: Congressman Max Rose, Congressman Mark Walker, Congressman Josh Gottheimer, and Christopher K. Harnisch*

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I think there's not a clear, bright line distinction as to what's acceptable and what's not. Facebook has a policy for example, of what they call dangerous organizations, which for the jihadist groups and white supremacist groups that we're talking about, though not for nonviolent manifestations like white nationalist groups, most of them would be prescribed as dangerous organizations with those that have ideas that one may disagree with, but that aren't inherently violent ideas falling on the, "Okay, they can stay inside of the line."

A few points here. One is that I think the biggest criticism of social media company would be the current construction of their terms of service because organizations are pulled down when they fall within these categories for violating terms of service. I think the terms of service is not the problem so much as under vigilance in enforcing their terms of service. There's a second thing, which is, if you talk to people at social media companies back in say 2011, they'd say there's so much material being posted. You have just an enormous amount of material posted, say to YouTube, every single second, and back in say 2011, they were very good at using basically algorithms to identify, say, pornography being uploaded onto their site, but we're much less good at being able to identify militant material that's being loaded onto their site.

Since then companies have gotten much better at identifying militant material. Again, the percentages will differ depending on who you talk to. And many people would question the claims, but if you listen to say Facebook execs talking about it, they'd say that 80% of militant material that violates their terms of service is pulled down within an hour or so. However, the volume of material makes it problematic, even if it is that effective, and again, many people would question that it is. So, I think the first thing that we could push for is enforcement of terms of service.

I think a second thing that's very important is the ability to use social media, to carry out direct harm, both harassment campaigns, but moreover doxing, something that is a sad fact of 21st century life. Now it's possible to take action to make yourself as dox-proof as possible, something which I highly recommend to anybody with any degree of public profile working on controversial issues. But I think that's an area also where social media companies need to be very vigilant because free speech isn't just about saying anything you want, but also being safe in your ability to speak freely. And some of the harassment or threats that online platforms facilitate, can legitimately interfere with people's ability to speak. That's a problem, and that's the thing I'd like to see social media companies getting more aggressive about addressing.

Though to credit my friends and colleagues at these companies, these are clearly areas that they are thinking about, and they're areas where anybody you talk to, you'll see the complexity that's at play in these issues. And so, I appreciate that and would like to see them further flesh out how they can play a strongly proactive role without limiting people's ability to speak freely on controversial issues.

**DUBOWITZ:** So, Danny, I want to go to you because you, and Hagar and Daveed as well, have really talked about some of the parallels with ISIS, and obviously you led a at a Treasury the counter-ISIS campaign to dry up financing for ISIS, which was a very successful campaign. And you saw, as we all did, that Syria really had become a magnet for recruitment and foreign fighters flowing in. The Syria conflict clearly had emboldened ISIS, and it really took an all of government effort involving Treasury, and State, and DOD, and other government agencies to go after ISIS in Syria.

Talk a little bit about that campaign, the lessons learned from that campaign as it applies to white supremacist groups, and then Daveed, I want to go back to you because I think at least in my reading, it sounds like the Ukraine

## Strategies for Addressing Global White Supremacists

*Introductory remarks provided by: Congressman Max Rose, Congressman Mark Walker, Congressman Josh Gottheimer, and Christopher K. Harnisch*

*Featuring panelists: Hagar Chemali, Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Danny Glaser*

*Moderated by: Mark Dubowitz*

conflict has really played a similar role as a magnet for white supremacist groups, I want to understand that in a little bit more detail, why has it, and what are the various groups, how do they fall out in terms of the various divisions and sides in the Ukraine conflict, and why has the Ukraine really been the Syria for white supremacy groups in terms of their growth and proliferation? So, Danny first to you, in terms of the counter ISIS campaign, lessons learned for a counter white supremacist campaign.

**GLASER:** It's a good question. It's a great question, Mark, and I hadn't actually thought about it in exactly that way until you just posed the question the way you did, but I think that there's some similarities, strong similarities and strong differences, between what we saw with ISIS and some of the things that we're now seeing generally with respect to global white supremacist groups. The most important aspect of really is a difference. When you're talking about the main thrust of our financial campaign against ISIS, it was when ISIS controlled a huge chunk of territory that had banks in that territory, that had huge amount of cash in that territory, that had natural resources in that territory, and ISIS was deriving an enormous amount of money, an enormous amount of funding from its control of that territory.

It would extract wealth from that territory the way any government extracts wealth from the territory that it controls. And we were able to devise a campaign in this case, interestingly, working very closely with the Defense Department and the military to court to try to cordon, and working very closely, frankly, with our allies in Iraq, to try to cordon that territory off and isolate that territory from the financial system in a way that we couldn't even do with al-Qaeda, or we couldn't even do with Hezbollah, but in this case, because it was a quasi-state, we were able to think of it in those terms and targeted the way we would target a state, and try to deprive it of its ability to benefit from those advantages that it had. It was very vulnerable to that, and that was a huge advantage for us. You have nothing like that. You have nothing like that with the case of, thank God, with the case of a white supremacist groups.

Now there's other aspects of it though that are more similar, and that is when you look at ISIS as a global movement, particularly since they've been thrown out by military means of the territory that they control, it is a much less organized movement. It is a much less organized group, and a lot of the ways that we think about going after these groups that are more inspired by ISIS than actually partisan sort of central command and control structure may provide some clues as to how we could think about white supremacists' movements.

Then one final aspect of ISIS is in certain ways ISIS is a brand. So you would have local groups around the world that wanted to be part of that ISIS brand, whether those groups were in West Africa or North Africa or Southeast Asia, they became part of ISIS, and that didn't necessarily involve any sort of structural integration, as much as assuming the ISIS brand and assuming a general allegiance to a less-centralized organization, and we were very interested in that, and we were very interested in understanding how finances flowed between these different elements of the brand, these different franchises within the brand. And that was a vulnerability and a weakness, it's something that we targeted.

I do think there's lessons to be learned from that, as you think about white supremacists' groups, who're more loosely associated with each other, but still might be providing financial and other types of support to each other. So, my initial reaction was, "Gosh, it's really not that much similar between white supremacists and ISIS, but then when you think about it more, there certainly may be lessons to be learned.

**DUBOWITZ:** So, Daveed, I want to go to you and then Hagar, based on what Danny has said, lessons to learn in terms of countering ISIS, but you've written about this in your description of the various white supremacist groups and

## Strategies for Addressing Global White Supremacists

*Introductory remarks provided by: Congressman Max Rose, Congressman Mark Walker, Congressman Josh Gottheimer, and Christopher K. Harnisch*

*Featuring panelists: Hagar Chemali, Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Danny Glaser*

*Moderated by: Mark Dubowitz*

the role that Ukraine has played. I wonder if you could describe that in a little bit more detail, and then in terms of state sponsors of white supremacy, do you see any regimes around the world that you're concerned about, for example, Russia, and Russia's role in advancing this movement? If you could talk a little bit about –

**GARTENSTEIN-ROSS:** Great questions. So, with respect to Ukraine, you've had a lot of foreign fighters drawn to the Ukraine conflict. If you look at the raw numbers, it does look a lot like Syria. I think when you distill the numbers down to the non-Russians and the non-Belorussians who are going over, the numbers are less worrisome, though still quite worrisome. Overall, you have about 17 to 20,000 foreign fighters who've traveled to the Ukraine conflict to fight on both sides of that conflict. Some of them having gone over to fight on the part of the separatists, where you have the Russians and Belorussians with about – And then others to fight on Ukraine side and against the separatists.

Now, I should say fortunately about 15 to 16,000 have traveled from Russia or Belorussia to fight on the side of the separatists. And in our account, you only have about 1,400 that have traveled from other regions. That's still a pretty large number, to be very clear. People who travel for a variety of reasons, some of them don't have anything to do with white supremacist extremism, some of them are there for reasons that have to do entirely with historical grievances or alignments.

You've had Serbs, for example, travel over from Serbia or other Balkan countries to fight alongside pro-Russian forces. Then you've had people from the Baltic States where they see Russia as presenting a threat to their region, going to fight against the separatists, same things with Georgians and Chechens who have gone over to fight against the separatists. But there's been some white supremacist activity that's mixed into this. The Azov movement it is what it's called, and to be clear, there's a battalion called the Azov Battalion, which sometimes is referred to as para military, but it actually was ultimately incorporated into a part of the Ukrainian national guard. But the Azov movement has become a nexus for transnational white supremacist activity.

The movement has tried to establish ties with ultra nationalist groups, including in the United States and Europe, and it is also connected with a number of violent extremist groups in the United States. Some statements by the Azov leadership indicate that it wants to export its ideology, export its movement, and it espouses a vision of a modern Reconquista that begins with Ukraine and Eastern Europe before spreading to the rest of Europe. You also have other actors there who have a Ukraine nexus, the Right Sector is one of those, which is an organization whose leadership also shares the vision for a European Reconquista, but unlike Azov right sector's military arm hasn't been fully absorbed into the Ukrainian military.

As we all know, you can designate a group, even if it's part of a state military, though, especially in the context of the Ukraine and the Russian separatists who are fighting against Ukraine, there are some sensitivities to doing so. So Right Sector would be, I think, an interesting group to consider for designation, given that it has transnationally focused activities.

In terms of state sponsorship, Mark, that's a really good question where I think research is nascent, but there is some worrying indication that Russia may be involved in supporting some of these movements. You've had some exposes claiming that they've had a role related to some of the accelerationist groups which I talked about. Now, given the nascentcy there, I don't want to lean too fully into pointing a finger, but if you look at Russia's overall strategy, vis-a-vis the United States, both in the information and disinformation sphere, and in the sphere of fomenting activism, Russia



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has this very clear worldview when it looks at the U.S., when it looks at Europe, and its predominant worldview is that a multicultural multiethnic society is a tremendous weakness that Russia can exploit.

It's looked to foment and exacerbate tensions that fall along fault lines based on identity within our society. We can see this in some of the information that came out about what Russia was trying to do around election time, including sponsoring anti-Muslim groups and sponsoring some ostensibly Muslim groups, which were a little bit crazy. With sponsoring anti-Trump and pro Trump rallies that were slated for the same place at the same time. This is an area, white supremacist organizations, where if you're looking at it from Russia's perspective, there's a lot that they could do with their information campaign and with all of the mechanisms that the state controls. I'd emphasize again, that the research there is nascent, there is some there. One can Google it. If you Google Atomwaffen and Russian support, you'll see some of the current state of journalism in that regard.

I think there's plenty of leads that are definitely worth following. And I'm concerned that there is enough there that Russia could do and see as advantageous, that this is something which, regardless of the current state of the reporting, falls in line with their MO and falls in line precisely with the fault lines and schisms within American society that they believe could play to their strategic advantage.

**DUBOWITZ:** Well, actually, Hagar, I want you to talk about that because it's clear those fault lines in American society and the political divisions have become even more exacerbated, even more toxic over the years. And one thing that always impressed me about the office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence at U.S. Treasury Department, where you were spokesperson and the public face of Treasury, was Treasury's ability over the Bush administration, Obama administration, and Trump administration to really stay above the fray in terms of the political wars that were taking place in Washington, and really be able to work on a bipartisan basis.

So, let's talk a little bit about this challenge of white power and white supremacy, and the extent to which this either has become part of that political food fight or the extent to which we can keep it above the fray. Now I'll just underscore that, I think as Danny said, I think it was great that we had Democrats and Republicans participate in this event. Two democratic members of Congress, Republican member of Congress, somebody from the Trump administration. Clearly there's an opportunity for bipartisanship on this issue. Any advice from your time in the trenches at Treasury, in dealing with the media and dealing with the public messaging campaign around this?

**CHEMALI:** Sure. Well, so first you are right, and this is not to toot Treasury's horn, though I am a poster child for Treasury, but in the entire time, at least that I was there, and I started there as a civil servant under the Bush administration, and it didn't even have to do really with the administrations. The group at Treasury, both the leadership and the staff, really are nonpartisan, and they really work toward a larger goal and mission. And for a long time, that mission really didn't have a political bend to it. And I'm not trying to be naive about this, I know that a lot of foreign policy stems from the White House, obviously, and goals that are set by a political administration that Treasury then and other agencies have to support. But the tool itself, the tools the Treasury has, the way they view the mission and going about achieving it is really as void as possible of any kind of political influence. And that really stemmed from the leadership, certainly when I was there at that time.

So, what you're seeing now, and Danny and I went back and forth on this, by the way, a lot when we were working on the op-ed, we debated how much to highlight the increase in this threat, the domestic and international threat of

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a violent white supremacy under the current administration. And we had language in there that we took out. And we took it out not because we disagreed with it, but because at the end of the day it just wasn't necessary to the argument we were making.

But that language highlighted that although there were efforts done, so there are certainly agencies, government agencies like DHS, DOJ, FBI, who have come out and said in testimonies, in reports, and others. And they have said, this is a big threat, or we need to prioritize it, or we are prioritizing it, whatever they were saying, the message from the White House and messaging. And I can tell you this, having been spokesperson, messaging in every effort is really critical. And even if you have some folks in the trenches doing some dirty work to fight for the good fight, if your public message doesn't convey that properly, then you're going to have a real gap, I mean a real problem.

And so, one of the things that we had been considering talking about was that there were statements made by the President that may have come off, and I think that was the term we used, we were very careful with our wording, that may have come off as though it was some kind of ambivalence to this threat or to white supremacy groups. And whether or not that's the intention, that plays a very large role in how someone on the outside who is part of a group or who is thinking of joining a group, or is thinking of some kind of nefarious activity, how they view, how they are empowered, how they view whether or not the government may condone this behavior or not.

And so that plays a very large role. One of the things for sure, when I was spokesperson at Treasury and then at the U.S. Mission to the UN was, every word is calibrated. Every word you say, everything you think, every sentence is very carefully deliberate and strategic to convey a message that's as clear as possible and so that it's not spun. And I have to be honest with you, I don't see that as much now. I don't think that's a surprise. I don't see that as much now, but that does really play a very significant role in what you're seeing more broadly here in the United States, certainly, but internationally as well.

And by the way, these groups, we've already mentioned this already and it's one of the reasons why Danny and I argued for these sanctions, which of course have to target foreign groups, but they're transnational in nature and they all have ties. And that's proven. That's proven with the Russian Imperial Movement. There are many reports on their ties here to U.S. groups. And we see that generally across the case with many extremist groups. So, it underscores the importance, both of going after them abroad so that you can hit them here as well, and also the case for being as clear as possible in the method.

**DUBOWITZ:** Great. Well, I think that's a great opportunity to, first of all, thank you guys for a great discussion. I learned a lot. I think that my takeaways are calibrated messaging is critical if we're going to fight the disinformation campaigns of white supremacists and other adversaries. I think in spite of the fact that we are in a toxic environment in Washington, politically, there is opportunity for bipartisan support. We saw that on in this event. We've seen that with the Trump administration moving against the Russian Imperial Movement as the first SDGT designation. I think we understand the power of Treasury and the financial campaigns that Treasury has run since 9/11, very successfully against violent extremist groups as well as state actors. And I think we have a better appreciation for who these white supremacist groups are. We'll be putting out a report as part of this event, which will provide more detailed taxonomy on who these groups are, how they differ, their ideologies, the transnational nature of these groups.



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And I think we certainly have learned that this is a significant threat to the United States, to our way of life, to the plurality of what America represents. I'm an immigrant to this country. I grew up loving America. I love America. I'm a great patriot. This is a country that has tremendous resilience and its resilience comes from its diversity. And that diversity is certainly under attack from these kinds of white supremacist groups. So, thank you very much for participating in this discussion. Thanks to everybody for your leadership. Let's continue this bipartisan conversation. If you're not already receiving updates from FDD, please visit [fdd.org](http://fdd.org) and sign up for updates on this issue. Look for an upcoming report, as I said, on this issue, and thanks to the panelists, and thanks to everybody for joining us today.

**GLASER:** Thanks Mark.

**CHEMALI:** Thank you.



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