

The Extreme Right, Climate Change and Terrorism

Graham Macklin

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Front Matter

Abstract

“Eco-fascism” has recently regained prominence following two of the most lethal extreme right terrorist attacks: the murderous assault on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, which killed fifty-one, and the massacre at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, which killed twenty-two. Both of these attacks were justified by their perpetrators, at least in part, in environmental terms. Brenton Tarrant, the Christchurch terrorist, went so far as to proclaim himself an “eco-fascist.” Whilst “radical right” populism is often associated with climate denial, “extreme right” environmentalism, with its roots in the “blood and soil” thinking of Nazism, is concerned with protecting the spiritual link that supposedly exists between man and nature. Having established the historical lineage of such ideas, the article explores how contemporary extreme right groups have reacted to population growth, migration, and climate change. It explores the emergence of a particular form of “dark green” environmentalism that builds upon the “blood and soil” ideas of Nazism, synthesizing them with an anti-human ecology derived from several sources including Greco-French Hitler-worshiper Savitri Devi; the “Unabomber” Ted Kaczynski; and the Finnish environmentalist and misanthrope Pentti Linkola. The misanthropic ideas of these three ideologues and their extreme “solutions” to environmental degradation and overpopulation represent an increasingly prevalent ideological tendency within extreme right subcultures online. The violent panaceas they advocate and envisage as being necessary to defend the natural environment will undoubtedly gain greater prominence as climate change-driven migration northwards to Europe intensifies.

KEYWORDS

Extreme right; eco-fascism; terrorism; Savitri Devi; Ted Kaczynski; Pentti Linkola

Contact the Author

Graham Macklin g.d.macklin@c-rex.uio.no Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), University of Oslo, PO Box 1097 Blindern, 0317 Oslo, Norway.

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Introduction

Environmentalism and climate politics are not inherently “progressive” or “liberal” issues. Ecology has long been a genuine concern for far-right groups and conservative nationalists for over a century.[1] Indeed, it was the German nationalist, zoologist, and naturalist, Ernest Haeckel, who coined the term *ökologie* in 1866. Who and what belongs in nature, who should it be protected for and against, and its importance for the spiritual and racial health of a people, was a central preoccupation for fascist thinkers across Europe and has remained so throughout the post-war period though historical debates about how “green” the Nazis actually were ongoing.[2]

For the contemporary far right, opposed to both immigration and multicultural society, the “politics of nature is at the same time a politics of identity.”[3] Nature and nationalism are intrinsically linked. The basic building blocks of race and nation rest upon accepting that the nation is ringfenced by “natural” borders within which a unique “native” population resides that requires defence against the depredations of “invasive species” from outside. Migrants, being “nomadic” rather than “rooted,” have no organic bond with their host country, lacking the essential connection through “blood and soil” in classic Nazi parlance, and thus, it is argued, care little for the natural environment or indeed any other aspect of national heritage. They are despoilers, not preservers of nature.[4]

Opposing immigration is increasingly articulated as a matter of urgent environmental concern since immigration, it is argued, increases capitalist consumption and therefore the chances that environmental targets on climate change will be missed. “Borders are the environment’s greatest ally; it is through them that we will save the planet,” claims Jordan Bardella, head of the European candidate list for Marine Le Pen’s Rassemblement National (National Rally, formerly the Front National) during the 2019 European Parliamentary elections.[5] Other more militant sections of the far right, for instance the pan-European Generation Identity movement, have also highlighted the lacklustre response of liberal democracies to the climate emergency as a means of appealing to young people for whom environmental concerns loom large.[6]

The far-right response to climate change is heterodox, ranging from denial to acceptance.[7] This

paper is not concerned with the “green” politics of “populist” parties or the attitudes of their supporters, however. These are extensively discussed elsewhere.[8] It focuses instead upon a strain of misanthropic ecological apocalypticism percolating online amongst extreme right-wing grouplets that agitate for the acceleration of Western civilization’s destruction since it is only through such a cataclysm that nature can be

restored to its pristine state, free from racial pollution and capitalist exploitation. These actors share little in common with those environmentalists who are often denigrated as “eco-fascists” because they campaign for greater regulation or state intervention to protect the natural environment. For these groups, there is “no political solution” to climate change or indeed any other question. If environmental collapse contributes to sweeping away the liberal order so much the better since this will contribute to “a new post-catastrophic world order—the painful birth of a new civilisation.”[9]

The extreme right rarely features in discussions about environmental militancy though in hindsight it can be seen to align with predictions made about the future of “eco-terrorism” during the 1990s. One scholar predicted that it was “possible, if not highly probable, that more radical environmental movements will emerge” and that those with “a millenarian belief structure . . . will be the most threatening [and best] prepared to use any tactics they deem necessary to achieve their goals.”[10] In the intervening thirty years, the central grievance of environmentalists that climate change is an existential threat to human existence has only become more salient, leading other commentators to assert that the “next wave” of extremism “will be Green.”[11] As the climate crisis worsens, the “wave” of environmental militancy that began in the 1970s might “look like nothing more than a ‘Ripple’ compared to what is to come,” others have argued.[12] Only belatedly, however, have some analysts sounded the alarm that of all the “salad bar” ideologies (i.e. those blending a range of different ideologies) “eco-fascism” represents the “most imminent threat” albeit without further elaboration.[13]

But how are “eco-fascist” *groupuscules* responding to fears of demographic doom and environmental entropy that will presumably only increase as the impact of climate-driven migration makes itself felt? Thirty years ago, in 1990, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) observed that the “gravest effects of climate change may be those on human migration as millions are displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and severe drought.”[14] The number of people who might be displaced is unknowable at present though some scientists have predicted 200 million forced “climate refugees” by 2050, a widely contested figure.[15] Regardless of the actual figure, the IPCC concluded in 2008 that “on current predictions the ‘carrying capacity’ of large parts of the world will be compromised by climate change.”[16]

Violence is, of course, only one outcome and debate continues as to whether or not climate change “causes” human violence, conflict, and migration.[17] Some studies suggest a “strong historical association” between large-scale human violence, migration, and extreme climatic events, overtime and at a macro-level, though they also predict that the level of turmoil experienced by any given society will be largely contingent upon the degree of resource depletion and the effectiveness of social buffering mechanisms to offset potential violent escalation. Other studies argue, however, that the above proposition is of limited present-day relevance, since human conflict is always multi-causal (which the authors on the other side of the debate do not deny), driven by myriad factors, many of which are more important than climate change.

Much research on climate change, environmental degradation, and resource depletion and the consequences of this in terms of fueling conflict and violence focuses, for obvious reasons, on the developing world.[18] However, despite the prospect of increased climate-driven migration flows into Europe and the United States acting as a potential flashpoint for future far-right mobilization there is scant research on the topic. One review article on “climate change and the far right” published in 2019 remarked that “none” of the articles it had cited focused on how “climate refugees” might transform far right politics even though it was obvious that the milieu was “unlikely to stay silent and is likely to increasingly connect opposition to immigration to their stance on climate change.”[19] This disconnect is also evident in security policy planning too. The 2020 Munich Security Conference listed “rightwing extremism” and “climate security” as two of the four security challenges facing Western governments though treated the issues separately rather than being in anyway interlinked.[20]

Extreme right violence, migration, and “overpopulation”

“People on the right will eventually stop denying climate change,” argued a recent article in *Harper’s Bazaar*. “But when they do, we will *long* for the days when they denied it, because instead, they will decide it is necessary and fine—and perhaps even good—if some people die as a result.”[21] Whilst this article focusses upon the ideas being used to legitimate violence and terrorism in defence of nature and the place of the white race within it, it is overly reductive to suggest, as the above quote does, that it is only after right-wing activists stop denying climate change that violence will occur. The Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, who murdered seventy-seven people in a bomb attack in Oslo and a mass shooting on Utøya on July 11, 2011, believed that anthropogenic global warming was a “scam” and exhibited a marked hostility towards environmental activists: “Enviro-Communism” was a wider conspiracy aiming to dragoon mankind into a “world government” under the thumb of the United Nations.[22]

Dismissive of climate change, Breivik fixated upon white demographic decline and rising Muslim birth rates, fears that saturated his manifesto. Breivik framed his concerns by culling passages from Wikipedia about the planet’s “carrying capacity” and overpopulation which, he claimed, was “a direct result of the current cultural Marxist/multiculturalist appeasement and egalitarian approach.” His neo-Malthusian “solution” was an enforced “global population cap” limiting the world’s population to

2.5 billion. Given that world population stood at approximately 7 billion in 2011, Breivik’s solution was necessarily genocidal. The developing world would be made to bear the cost through famine and starvation to help “nature” correct the “primary cause” of overpopulation.[23]

If Breivik’s manifesto paid scant attention to climate change, ecological catastrophe and demographic death were insolubly linked in the manifesto of Brenton Tarrant, the Australian terrorist who murdered fifty-one people in two attacks on mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand on March 15,

2019.[24] Tarrant’s manifesto was also obsessed with birthrates. “If there is one thing I want you to

remember from these writings, it’s that birthrates must change,” he stated. Repatriation could no longer prevent the “European” people “spiralling into decay and eventual death.”[25] Tarrant declared himself to be an “Ethno-nationalist Eco-fascist” and titled part of his manifesto “Green nationalism is the only true nationalism.” In another

section, he explicitly framed his atrocity as an act of environmental defence against overpopulation: “The invaders are the ones overpopulating the world. Kill the invaders, kill the overpopulation and by doing so save the environment.”[26]

Later that year, on August 3, Patrick Crusius murdered twenty-two people and injured a further twenty-six, during a racist terrorist attack against “Mexicans” at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas.[27] Crusius had also penned a manifesto, *The Inconvenient Truth*—its title an apparent allusion to Al Gore’s environmental documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), which had sought to raise public consciousness about global warming. Crusius also raged against the impact of overpopulation and overconsumption, resource depletion and pollution, concluding that it was necessary “to reduce the number of people in America using resources. If we can get rid of enough people, then our way of life can become more sustainable,” he wrote.[28]

Whilst none of this trio had a particularly sophisticated or well-developed environmental philosophy, it is clear that the ideas of overpopulation, overconsumption, and environmental degradation were all to a greater or lesser degree intrinsic to their racist belief systems. The arguments articulated in their manifestos will be familiar to ecologists. Norwegian environmental philosopher Arne Næss— who coined the term “Deep Ecology”—wrote thus of migration’s impact on the climate: “Because today’s lifestyles in the richest countries of the world ensure gigantic waste per capita compared with lifestyles in poor countries, immigration from poor to rich countries creates more ecological stress. It is clear that the children of immigrants will adopt the fatal consumption patterns of the rich countries, thereby adding to the ecological crisis.” For Næss, however, such a proposition did not necessitate a Tarrant-style massacre but required Green parties to lobby more intensely for a “tenfold increase” in the fight against hunger and for human dignity “as a more ecologically sound solution.”[29]

Ideological influences on the “eco-fascist” milieu

Man’s place in the natural world was central to National Socialism which propagated a biocentric Weltanschauung in which man was simply part of a “chain of living nature” rather than a privileged species, though the Nordic race sat at the apex of humanity. Hitler, like other Nazi ideologues, fundamentally depreciated the position of humanity believing that mankind owed its “higher existence” to “the knowledge and ruthless application of Nature’s stern and rigid laws” which could just as easily depose mankind if they were to forget. The unsentimental brutality of nature, red in tooth and claw, in which “might was right,” legitimated “natural” racial hierarchies and social Darwinian struggle in Nazi thought, whilst simultaneously giving the lie to “unnatural” concepts like egalitarianism and tolerance that ran against the “natural” grain of things. Recognizing this reality meant that, for the Nazis, their ideology was based on the “life-affirming” principle of Nature. It was thus a *Lebensphilosophie*—a philosophy of life rather than an arid, materialistic creed like Marxism. Acknowledging nature’s immutable truths and understanding racism to be a natural ecological imperative, National Socialism was thus simply the logical application of nature’s “stern and rigid

laws” to humanity.[30] This view is crystallized in an oft circulated quote attributed to Italian fascist

journalist Enzo Pezzato: “nature is the full embodiment of truth. It applies without ego, natural order upon all. As mankind continues to align itself with falsehood and ego, it will be overtaken by nature. Nature is fascism.”

Our concern here is not to trace a detailed historical lineage of the Nazi’s “religion of nature”[31]

ideas, which constituted “a volatile admixture of primeval Teutonic nature mysticism, pseudoscientific ecology, irrationalist anti-humanism, and a mythology of racial salvation through a return to the land.”[32] Instead, this article highlights an emerging strain of “eco-fascism” within sections of the contemporary extreme right that takes “Blood and Soil” as its ideological baseline and fuses it with a particularly virulent form of misanthropic ecological nihilism that views violence and terrorism against the current social, political, and economic order, as the only means of restoring man to a state of pristine pastoral purity. As such “eco-fascism” is not a “doctrine” let alone an “ideology” but rather a “state of mind” derived from an eclectic mélange of often contradictory ideas and thinkers, many of them drawn from outside the far-right tradition.

The remainder of this section examines three major ideological tributaries to this “dark green” milieu: Savitri Devi, a Greco-French esoteric Hitler worshipper whose abhorrence of animal cruelty was combined with a complete indifference to non-Aryan life; Ted Kaczynski, the “Unabomber” whose visceral loathing of technology, industrialization and urbanization, led him to embark upon a solo terrorist campaign lasting from 1978 until his arrest in 1995; and Pentti Linkola, the misanthropic Finnish environmentalist who relished the prospect of mankind’s extinction. The respective positions of the three figures, who often contradict one another, has been distilled by one extreme right image circulating online as “love animals,” “hate people,” and “hate technology.” The common thread uniting each of these disparate individuals is an apocalyptic ecological vision that systematically devalues human life.

“Love animals”: Savitri Devi

The Greco-French esoteric Hitlerite Savitri Devi (1905–1982) propagated the idea that Nazism was a quasi-religious creed, a view expounded in her seminal book, *The Lightning and the Sun* (1958) which deified Hitler as an avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu. She is notable for popularising amongst the post-war extreme right the Hindu concept of time-cycles or “yugas” (golden, silver, bronze and iron ages) through which civilisation was believed to pass. “Men Against Time,” Hitler being the archetype, heroically fought against the destructive forces of the iron age, the “Kali Yuga,” in order to bring about a new golden age. Whilst her views were marginal to the wider far right, Savitri Devi’s blend of Aryan supremacism, vitriolic anti-Semitism, Hinduism, animal rights and ecology, have served as the basis for a post-war redefinition of Nazism as a “religion of nature” in the more cultic corners of the extreme right.[33] “Probably you couldn’t really imagine anyone more militant than her,” observed another extreme right ideologue which explains part of her transgressive appeal to a younger generation of activists.[34]

In the present context, Savitri Devi’s most important ideological contribution was a short book entitled *The Impeachment of Man* (1959). Written in the shadow of the Holocaust and whilst the Nuremberg Trials were ongoing (but only published fourteen years later after the original manuscript was lost), *The Impeachment of Man* radiated her disgust at a “civilisation” which made “such a ridiculous fuss” about “war crimes” and “war criminals” but yet mistreated animals “in the name of scientific research, of sport, of luxury or of gluttony.” The “hypocrisy” of this “man-centred” attitude only hardened her “bitter contempt for ‘man’ in general” and for Jews in particular.[35] Vivisection in particular appalled her—if human life could only be saved through such means, “it is better—far better—for men to die. Their death would at least be an honourable one.”[36] Even in return for the magical resurrection of her beloved Third Reich, Savitri Devi refused to accept the sacrifice of a single animal. By comparison, she claimed she would accept her own vivisection “at once” were it to achieve the same end.[37]

Savitri Devi’s embrace of Hinduism, the “most beautiful of all living religions,” as well as her interest in the ancient Egyptian pharaoh Akhnaton, convinced her that animal welfare was paramount. Hindu Pantheism, which she synthesised into her own National Socialism, revealed that all living beings possessed an “everlasting soul” in which was to be found the spark of the Divine. This served to reinforce her rejection of “man-centered” religions like Christianity, which had convinced its adherents into believing that “the species to which they belong—is the only really loveable one; the

only one, at any rate, for which one can sacrifice oneself.”[38] In line with traditional National Socialist thought, Savitri Devi believed that Nazism was a ‘life-centered’ creed led by an “inspired Prophet” who had fought for “the reinstallation of a world order in tune with the divine order of nature: a world order in which beautiful healthy beasts had rights, while decadent men had none.” Hitler, she believed, was “the one great vegetarian ruler the West has ever had ahead of those most uncompromising expounders of the life-centered outlook who are, at the same time, men of action.”[39] This saccharine portrait of Hitler as a compassionate animal lover ignores the fact that before committing suicide on April 30, 1945 one of Führer’s last acts was to have his dog, Blondi, murdered by testing cyanide capsules on her to see if they worked or not, as well as having her puppies shot so they could not fall into Soviet hands. “He said nothing, nor did his face express any feeling,” it was recorded of Hitler’s reaction.[40]

She held similarly pronounced anti-civilisational views regarding man’s encroachment upon the natural environment and forests in particular. Better that civilisation ground to a halt if any of its advantages came “at the cost of a forest in flames, even of a felled forest—of beautiful trees lying dead where they could have been alive, enjoying the light and warmth of the Sun!”[41] Prefiguring contemporary ecological arguments, she also believed that the “root of much human misery” resulted from “overbreeding” and that if there was less life there would be no starvation and no need for Hitler’s fateful decision to seek “Lebensraum” in the East. Birth rates should be radically reduced unless the progeny were of “exceptionally fine racial stock,” she argued since: “Less people would mean ‘more living space’ for all men. And racial selection would mean a more beautiful and nobler mankind.”[42] For Savitri Devi, the perennial truth of Nazism’s *Lebensphilosophie* transcended time and space. It embodied the immutable laws of nature, which was proof that, regardless of Hitler’s death, Nazism, was eternal, universal, and would bloom again since “You cannot de-Nazify Nature!”[43]

“Hate technology”: Ted Kaczynski

“The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race,” began Ted Kaczynski’s 35,000-word manifesto. It had succeeded in “reducing human beings and many other living organisms to engineered products and mere cogs in the social machine . . . depriving people of dignity and autonomy.” Kaczynski (b. 1942) did not believe that industrial-technological society could be reformed, only destroyed through revolution, if the physical enslavement and psychological enslavement of mankind was to be stopped. “If the system breaks down the consequences will still be painful,” Kaczynski wrote. “But the bigger the system grows, the more disastrous the results of its breakdown will be, so if it is to break down it had best break down sooner rather than later.” In the pages that followed, Kaczynski outlined the measures he believed were necessary to pave the way for revolution against that system. “This is not to be a POLITICAL revolution,” he wrote. “Its object will be to overthrow not governments but the economic and technological basis of the present society.”[44]

In order for him to make himself heard, Kaczynski “had to kill some people.” During the course of a seventeen-year long, one-man terrorist campaign, waged from a cabin in rural Montana, Kaczynski murdered three people, injured twenty-three more, some seriously, and caused hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage. Those he attacked were symbolic of his wider target: industrial-technological society. Versluis characterises Kaczynski’s manifesto as “possibly the most extensive antimodern terrorist treatise ever written.”[45] The “Unabomber,” as Kaczynski’s FBI file famously labelled him, sympathised with anarcho-primitivist ideas and, after his apprehension in 1996, he corresponded with John Zerzan, the milieu’s most prominent philosopher, who also attended his trial.[46] Following the publication of his manifesto, his ideas found a sympathetic audience amongst militant environmentalist circles including organisations like Earth First!, who engaged in direct action against commercial interests like logging and dam building that were despoiling the natural environment.[47]

Despite such sympathies Kaczynski’s characterisation as a “environmental saboteur”[48] oversimplifies his position. His relationship to “environmentalism” is more complicated. One biographer asserts

that Kaczynski “did not care about ecology or the environment” having failed to mention it either in earlier writings or as a rationale for his terrorist campaign until sixteen years after embarking upon it. Whilst his manifesto contained fleeting references to the environment, ecology was not mentioned and the first full discussion of “wild nature” did not occur until paragraph 183 of the 232-paragraph document, and only then in the section entitled “strategy” that was “clearly intended as a discussion

of ways to recruit converts to his cause.”[49] Furthermore, Kaczynski had confided to his journal:

I don’t even believe in the cult of nature-worshippers or wilderness-worshippers (I am perfectly ready to litter in parts of the woods that are no use to me—I often throw cans in logged-over areas or in places much frequented by people; I don’t find the wilderness particularly healthy physically; I don’t hesitate to poach).[50]

Whilst seemingly dismissive of nature, this passage, those sympathetic to his ideas have argued, illuminates instead the centrality of “freedom” to Kaczynski’s concept of the environment.[51] Industrial society was an anathema and Kaczynski, a neo-Luddite, sought to free himself and to revenge himself upon it. Environmentalism was secondary to this overarching concern.

At first glance, Kaczynski might appear an unlikely source of inspiration for the extreme right since there is little by way of obvious ideological affinity though, as Peter Staudenmaier convincingly argues, there are, whether he was aware of it or not, “consistent parallels” between his writings and those of several anti-industrial and proto-ecological “Conservative Revolutionary” thinkers active in interwar Germany.[52] He was dismissive of Nazism, claiming that whilst the Nazi’s *Machtergreifung* (“seizure of power”) was “partly a revolution against civilization” Hitler had achieved “nothing against civilization because of his lust for personal power and self-glorification.”[53] A decade ago his ideas piqued the interest of Anders Breivik, who plagiarised Kaczynski’s attack on the left that featured in *Industrial Society and Its Future* for his own turgid anti-Muslim manifesto, substituting the words “multiculturalism” or “cultural Marxism” for “leftism.” Breivik also quoted a number of other passages verbatim, particularly one in which Kaczynski assailed feminism, albeit without attribution.[54] There was little else to suggest, however, that the Unabomber’s critique of technological society had greatly interested him.

Whilst Kaczynski’s attack upon “leftism,” which he believed to be a “totalitarian force,” certainly explains part of his appeal to the extreme right, it was his idea of “revolution” rather than his politics that has interested them. Kaczynski’s essentially anti-human stance chimes with the overarching misanthropy of the extreme right digital space. And though he rejected Nazism, Kaczynski listed neoNazis, alongside “welfare leeches,” youth gangs, cultists, Satanists, radical environmentalists, and militiamen, as being “rebels against the system”[55]—an interpretation that undoubtedly endeared him further to those extreme right millenarians who believe themselves to be pitted against the selfsame “system.” Seemingly unphased by Kaczynski’s rejection of Nazism, Brandon Russell, the founder of Atomwaffen Division (AWD), who is currently serving five years for possessing explosives, clearly remains enamoured of Kaczynski’s revolutionary vision. His own “Prison Essays” begin with a quote from *Industrial Society and Its Future*:

People tend to assume that because a revolution involves a much greater change than reform does, it is more difficult to bring about than reform is. Actually under certain circumstances revolution is much easier than reform. The reason is that a revolutionary

movement can inspire an intensity of commitment that a reform movement cannot inspire.[56]

AWD lauded Breivik, Kaczynski and Timothy McVeigh as “the father, the son and the holy ghost.”[57] Kaczynski’s emergence as an icon for extreme right eco-accelerationists is reflected in the barrage of ironic and darkly humorous memes about “Uncle Ted” proliferating online. Many of those who have imbibed Kaczynski’s visceral hatred of technology refer to themselves as being “Ted Pilled,” a derivation of the more widely used concept of being “redpilled.” This turn of phrase, popular on the far right, derives from the film *The Matrix* (1999) in which Morpheus offers the film’s hero, Neo, a choice between taking the “red pill,” which will enable him to see the world for what it is and what needs to be done about it; or the “blue pill” that will allow him to slide back into a blissful somnambulance. Neo chooses the “red pill.”

Various eco-accelerationist channels on Telegram glorify Kaczynski’s terrorism whilst proclaiming him a “martyr.” One popular meme consists of a photograph of Kaczynski together with the “Ted Talks” logo and its slogan, “ideas worth spreading.” “Uncle Ted Did Nothing Wrong,” declares another. His violence is also linked to contemporary calls for the “Boogaloo”—shorthand for the impending race war in extreme right circles. “Ted boogied for 17 years,” declared one Telegram channel. “Ted used his mega brain. Be like Ted.” Kaczynski’s aforementioned hostility to Nazism is also rationalised in terms of common struggle. “Certain elements will caw that Uncle Ted dissed national socialists and modern adherents,” another channel stated. “I encourage you to trust me because this is 100 percent our fight and a huge reason he is facing backlash is because our collective spheres spread his ideas harder than almost anyone.” Others involved in this milieu have corresponded with Kaczynski directly. One user posted a photograph of the letter he had received from the Unabomber, advising its sender to “undertake the systematic cultivation of self-discipline” in response to a question about the qualities young people should aspire to. “Ted wants us to do better, and frankly we should listen to him,” responded another user.

Kaczynski was also valorised by “Mike Ma” the author of a short accelerationist novella entitled *Harassment Architecture*. Stylistically redolent of Chuck Palahniuk’s novel *Fight Club* (1996) and saturated with irony and dark mordant humour, a trait characteristic of the wider milieu of message boards and chat rooms, *Harassment Architecture* exhorts readers to become “an engine of chaos, an accelerationist.”[58] *Harassment Architecture* enjoins readers to “funnel your nihilism into something absurd and productive” whilst suggesting several violent possibilities. “Please note: Do not do any of these things,” the author writes sardonically. “Especially do not cover your face and destroy the many and largely unprotected power stations and cell towers. Electricity is a ghost, but one you can catch and kill. Do not do that. Do not become the sort of person who gets really good at blowing power stations up while never getting caught.”[59]

Such musings are broadly congruent with Kaczynski’s critique of technological civilisation and its deleterious effects upon freedom, autonomy, and the “anti-beauty” of

modernity that was hastening man's mental deterioration. "I'd like to embrace nature and live in its purity" the protagonist states at one point before stating that "technocracy" has robbed man of "a fulfilling, earnest life." [60] In another passage the narrator declares: "The entire presence of industrialized man has been a violent preface to his looming and inescapable consequence. The final consequence." [61] *Harassment Architecture* holds out a panacea, however. "The solution is always found in nature," the protagonist proclaims in one of book's closing passages. "Nature always wins. It has never lost, and I pray it never will." [62]

These echoes of Kaczynski's critique are not coincidental. When discussing the aesthetics of violence, the novella singles out a number of killers whose acts "are forgiven simply by looking good." Kaczynski is mentioned by name alongside white supremacist Dylann Roof, "Incel" terrorist Elliot Rodger and Islamist mass murderer Omar Mateen for instance. On his website "Ma" also sells "Kaczynski Electric" merchandise; t-shirts branded with a logo featuring a shield on which a fist clasp a bolt of lightning in front of a pine tree are depicted. [63] Other items, purporting to support his "Pine Tree Party," declare "Liberation through Acceleration—All that defies Natural Order Stands on Weak Footing. Kick the Legs out or Apply Additional Pressure." [64] Such apparel is pregnant with meaning. As Cynthia Miller-Idriss highlights, clothing provides a powerfully symbolic means of "branding identity" and "selling rebellion" within extreme right countercultural milieus. [65]

“Hate people”: Pentti Linkola

The third figure to animate the current “eco-fascist” imagination is Pentti Linkola (1932–2020), a Finnish fisherman, ornithologist, and “deep green” environmentalist whose writings, collected under the title *Voisiko Elämä Voittaa* (2004), were re-published in English by the far right meta-political publisher, Arktos Media, five years later.[66] *Can Life Prevail: A Revolutionary Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (2009) mixes a lament for the devastation of Finland’s flora and fauna with the author’s horror at the “unthinkable” idea that man, of all species, should continue to dominate and wreck the biosphere. “The worst enemy of life is too much life: the excess of human life,”[67] he argued. Overpopulation was accelerating the current climate crisis, threatening our impending ending. “Mankind, the human species, seems to have reached its end,” Linkola believed and had “at the most” one hundred years left.[68] Liberal environmental solutions like cutting carbon emissions by 10 percent were no answer. Only by “forcing the human species to retire from the domineering position it has acquired” could the climate crisis be averted:

The crippling human cover spread over the living layer of the Earth must forcibly be made lighter: breathing holes must be punctured in this blanket and the ecological footprint of man brushed away. Forms of boastful consumption must violently be crushed, the natality of the species violently controlled, and the number of those already born violently reduced – by any means possible.[69]

This “means” included requiring future births to be licensed; “forced” abortions; the abandonment of efforts to lower infant mortality (which Linkola claimed “should be deeply distressing to a biologist”[70]); infanticide; sterilization; euthanasia; reintroducing capital punishment; abandoning measures to combat famine (since food aid programmes only increased climate change, and, he implied, distressed populations would have “to ditch the taboo of consuming human flesh”[71]) if they wanted to survive. Such draconian measures would aid a “controlled pruning”[72] of the planet’s population. War he considered a “waste of time” since peoples rapidly replenished themselves, though conflict could become a positive phenomenon if were “to target the actual breeding potential of a population: young females and children, half of whom are girls.”[73] Be that as it may, mass death of any sort was “always a positive occurrence,” he averred.[74] Using the lifeboat metaphor to justify this premise, Linkola stated: “When the lifeboat is full, those who hate life will try to pull more people onto it, thus drowning everyone. Those who love and respect life will instead grab an axe and sever the hands clinging to the gunwales.”[75]

Democracy had failed to deal with “ecocatastrophe,” it had empowered selfishness and individual material desires at the expense of nature, rendering it a “suicidal”[76] form of government. Any dictatorship, including a fascist one, was “superior” by comparison.[77] “The sole glimmer of hope,” Linkola argued, “lies in a centralized government and the tireless control of citizens” through which “genuine life” could again become a possibility.[78] Overpopulation had become a problem in part because of the “mindless over-valuation” of human life.[79] Humanity should be classified according to its worth. Only an elite few were truly valuable. Since mass of humanity was “enormously destructive” of nature, human rights were “a death sentence for all Creation.”[80]

Linkola wanted to “stop, return and regress . . . We almost need to start from Adam and Eve again.”[81] This *tabula rasa* would bring immigration and international trade to a grinding halt ensuring that economic “growth” was forcibly curtailed. Air travel and private cars would also be prohibited—road building he regarded as a “criminal activity”; bicycles, rowboats and horse carts would return as the principal means of travel. Since “nothing good” had resulted from progress, only “misery,” Linkola argued (like Kaczynski, whose manifesto provided a “thoughtful model for an alternative society”[82]) that any future primitive society would have to be “extremely prejudiced against technology” which was “never a servant, but always a master.”

Linkola regarded the United States venomously as the “most wretchedly villainous state of all times.” He was indifferent to the fate of those who died on 9/11 on environmental grounds as much as anything else:

Those who died in the attack were not simply humans: they were Americans; and not ordinary Americans, either, but the priests and priestesses of the supreme God of this age: the Dollar. The passengers of the domestic flights were not a valid sample of humanity either, but a wealthy, busy, environmentally damaging and world-devouring portion of mankind.[83]

Having previously railed against the principle of human solidarity (“a forced, artificial behaviour”), he nonetheless felt that regardless of how unfamiliar their religion or culture might be, Al Qaeda “deserve all our sympathy.”[84] Targeting the World Trade Center “was the best target among all the buildings of the world, both symbolically and concretely,” he applauded. “It was a magnificent, splendid choice.”[85] Linkola’s contempt for the value of human life has been linked to real-life violence. His ideas appear to have formed a part of the ideological cosmology of Pekka-Eric Auvinen, a Finnish teenager who murdered eight people and wounded others with a semi-automatic pistol at Jokela High School in southern Finland in 2007 before taking his own life. Linkola’s anti-human sentiments mingled with Auvinen’s obsession with the Columbine shootings to produce a deeply misanthropic worldview. He uploaded a “tribute video” to Linkola shortly before the massacre containing several of his misanthropic musings including “I wish that death to mankind comes soon.” He had also appeared in other online videos wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with the slogan “humanity is overrated.” Auvinen produced several online manifestos regurgitating Linkola’s sentiments in dec-

larations like “death and killing is not a tragedy . . . Not all human lives are important of worth saving.”[86] Seemingly, unimpressed by his would-be acolyte, Linkola told the Finnish newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet*: “The massacre was too small. In the long run it doesn’t help shooting some fellow students. What is needed

is a larger movement to reduce the population.”[87]

Like Kaczynski, Linkola’s visage also appears in memes and has been used to commercially market misanthropy. T-shirts featuring his portrait and the motto “No Lives Matter” have a quote on the back from him reading “If there were a button I could press, I would sacrifice myself without hesitating, if it meant millions of people would die,” are readily available online.[88] Marketed through e-commerce platforms that allow individuals to create and to sell custom apparel, these items were associated with James Porrazzo, former leader of one of the United States oldest violent skinhead gangs, American Front, who appears to have produced them as part of a campaign he and his wife had begun in 2015, “in response to the arrogance of humanity demanding more and more.”[89]

“Save bees, shoot refugees”: The visual aesthetic of ecological accelerationism

One of the principal outlets through which this medley of ecology, misanthropy, and racist extremism is propagated is Telegram, a free end-to-end encrypted messaging service founded in 2013, which experienced a “massive” migration of extreme right users to its’ platform in April 2019 when many users were “de-platformed” from other social media platforms following the Christchurch attacks.[90] The community of so-called “Terrorwave” channels that coalesced on Telegram during this period distinguished themselves within the wider digital eco-system through open and untrammelled incitements to violence and mass murder; many, though not all, of the most egregious channels were subsequently deleted following a purge undertaken by Telegram in January 2021.[91]

Those channels that were distinctly “eco-fascist” in orientation emerged from the wider “Siege culture” milieu devoted to spreading the ideas of James Mason, a veteran US national socialist whose book, *Siege* (1992), has become a foundational text since its rediscovery and republication by militants active on the now defunct Iron March forum in 2017. Those groups and individuals aligning themselves with “Siege culture” propagate a dystopian and often nihilistic ideological vision, frequently called “accelerationism” (through Mason never used the phrase himself) that supports any means by anyone if it hastens the collapse of “the system.” To this end, the community glorifies and heroizes violence, romanticizes and fetishizes it. A wider study of this burgeoning digital milieu is beyond the scope of his paper, suffice to say that channels propagating racist, apocalyptic ecology fit comfortably within this orbit, where their core themes resonate with other racial jeremiads, survivalist cultures and “end times” theologies that have long predominated on the far right more generally. Such forms of ecological catastrophism, which are prevalent in “deep ecology” too, are part of a broader cultural phenomenon that nature writer Leigh Phillips calls “Collapse Porn.”[92]

Aside from inciting violence, this cluster of Telegram channels also serves a wider educative function for the milieu. They feature online libraries, some containing dozens of texts written by “green” Nazis as well more mainstream titles with a back-to-the-land theme, including Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild*, the story of Christopher McCandless, a young man who retreated to the Alaskan wilderness where he starved to death in

1992. These channels also provide “reading lists” to introduce viewers to the works of numerous extreme right authors who wrote about nature as well as the aforementioned works by Savitri Devi, Kaczynski and Linkola. These books are often helpfully grouped around specific topics including overpopulation, pollution, eco-fascist theory, and fiction and then linked to other reading lists as a means of placing “eco-fascism” within its overarching ideological context. They also provide copious amounts of “how-to” advice. One is usually only a click or two away from finding bomb making guides, templates for 3D-printed weaponry, tips on “eco-sabotage” and so on and so forth.

The extreme right’s communication strategy is inherently visual.[93] Whilst this was equally true for interwar fascists, those operating today have no recourse to state-sponsored parades and pageantry and so are reliant upon broadcasting their violent, ecologically infused propaganda through “memes”—units of “cultural transmission”[94] that convey beliefs or behaviours through images or signs rather than text, as a means of mobilization.[95] Collectively, these “Terrorwave” channels and associated chat groups produce a constant salvo of violent, dystopian memes, which have been posted and cross-posted across myriad other channels (and on other platforms too). Broadly speaking their purpose is to instill within the viewer a set of prognostic and diagnostic frames that endorse, glorify, and incite violent action in defence of a sacred “natural order” and against the obscenity of a modern industrial society that is committing ecocide.

The visual aesthetic cultivated by these memes was, and is, absolutely crucial to defining not just the message but the “brand” itself. This is not unique to the eco-accelerationist sphere; other insurgents regularly provide graphic depictions of their violence which is “no longer as peripheral to their objectives” but “a new strategic operating concept.”[96] Many of these memes utilize simplistic slogans calling for environmental preservation with others that de-humanize those outside the racial community in the starkest terms, blaming them for environmental degradation and despoilation as a means of legitimizing violence against them on another front than just overt racism. Many of these highly stylized graphics present violence as not only a necessary action but also a visually attractive and emotionally satisfying one, calculating that this will appeal to a youthful audience.[97]

Since violence is actually “hard” to do,[98] this constant stream of imagery is also intended to reduce

any ethical aversion to it by de-humanizing its object and eliciting feelings of disgust towards them. Violence is not only morally right but a matter of urgent necessity backed by a sacred “natural” legitimacy—the climate crisis and climate-driven migration represent an existential threat to the white race: an extinction level event. Whether or not we interpret these messages as “literal endorsements of violence” is immaterial since their constant repetition (together with the dissemination of sadistic novels like *Iron Gates*) is designed to de-sensitize viewers to violence and lower the bar for participating in it.[99] This is not to argue there is a monocausal relationship between violent imagery and violent action, however. Other studies have highlighted

that the use of “grotesque” images can be a doubleedged sword since the “moral shock” they are designed to induce, which is intended to mobilize viewers, also risks repelling others.[100]

In some instances, these Telegram channels subvert preexisting environmental messages such as “help more bees, plant more trees, clean the seas” by adding “shoot refugees” to the end of the phrase. Similar memes juxtapose such slogans against images of armed men wearing skull masks (a fashion accessory popularized by AWD). Images of bees are also used to invoke wider points of racial ideology such as those urging the viewer to “cultivate hives of Nordic racial hygiene,” a slogan superimposed upon an image of “Big Brother” from the film *1984* wearing a beekeeping mask. A battery of other memes openly incites racial cleansing, using animal liberation as their moral rationale: “Save animals. Test on subhumans,” “Save Dog, Kill ZOG [Zionist Occupation Government]” or “Save a Seal, Club a Kike.”

There is an implicit rather than explicit threat of violence in other accelerationist memes that encourage attacks both on infrastructure but also on society as a whole. “Why Civilization?” asks one such image depicting an electricity pylon. Some of the imagery circulating amongst these Telegram groups is rather obviously purloined from preexisting environmental groups and adapted to serve a very different agenda. For instance, the arresting slogan “Visualize vast Wilderness. Actualize industrial collapse” was actually borrowed (without accreditation) from the Wild Roots Feral Futures Direct Action and Movement Building Camp held in southwest Colorado in 2019, itself a play on an older slogan used by Earth First!.[101]

Like ISIS, which alongside its brutal beheading videos also kept up a relentless propaganda barrage suggesting what “normal” religious and social life in their self-proclaimed caliphate was supposedly like,[102] the voluminous social media content propagated by these “Terrorwave” groups does not simply hinge upon the images of ultra-violence. Other messages are purveyed in this digital space too. Whilst many images de-humanize racial enemies, others seek to re-humanize the perpetrators of violence. Photographs of heavily armed men, like Waffen-SS soldiers or, contemporaneously, Ukraine’s Azov Battalion, playing with puppies or kittens is a particularly popular trope.

Much of the imagery circulating in this space eschews violence altogether, evoking instead an elegiac pastoral romanticism, a yearning for a return to a rural arcadia, and with it the advent of an authentic and natural mode of living, being, and belonging. Such Telegram channels are replete with images of wild animals (particularly wolves), forests, mountains, and happy young women frolicking in traditional national costumes, which, if taken out of context, are unremarkable. However, when rooted in this specific context, these images provide non-verbal, visual cues for the viewer aimed at triggering a racial response—a process dubbed “racial priming.”[103] Similar images are made more explicitly political by virtue of having extreme right symbols superimposed upon them. One such meme, widely circulated across multiple channels, features a Sonnenrad (the Black Sun, a Nazi sunwheel) rising behind a mountain range symbolizing the desire

for a new dawn, a quintessentially fascist trope. The accompanying slogan urges readers to “find yourself within nature” in terms of physical health, spiritual actualization, and ideological commitment. The regenerative quality of “pristine nature” is deemed to reconnect man with his “authentic” self that has leached out of him as a result of the corruption of impure urban living.[104]

This carefully cultivated “back-to-the-land” aesthetic is often conjoined with very modern images of armed men in balaclavas or skull masks accompanied by phrases like “trees before refugees” or, in an effort to indicate man’s synergy with nature, “we speak for the trees.” If man and nature share an insoluble bond, then other memes, including those depicting lone gunmen standing in a forest clearing at sunrise, emphasize “Our selfless duty, to be stewards to this land.” Such images indicate that the threat of violence is never far away when imagining rural idylls. The broader fusillade of imagery that surrounds individual memes constantly emphasize that violence is necessary to defend the purity of this vision but also to achieve it in the first place since it is only through the collapse of industrial society, accelerated through terrorism, that this original state of grace can be recaptured.

Despite advocating blood-curdling violence, these Telegram channels, like other platforms frequented by the far right, can also be an irreverent collective space, fueled by trolling. Some users are clearly aware of the irony of simultaneously promoting a neo-Luddite vision of the future whilst using the latest in digital technology to do so. Indeed, one meme posted to an esoteric ecology channel sharply lampooned the preparations of their fellow accelerationists for the widespread societal collapse. “We finally made it to the homestead boys,” one masked cartoon figure states to a group. “Does anybody know how to grow a potato?” “I brought my copy of *Siege*,” replies one. “Who has the Wifi password,” asks another.

The Green Brigade

Given the profusion of “eco-fascist” Telegram channels it is worth focusing upon one as a means of highlighting some of the broader ramifications of this digital milieu for offline behavior. The Green Brigade (“Against the exploitation of our land, animals and people”) described itself as “an organization consisting of openly accelerationist, Eco-Extremist members focused on tearing down the system that exploits our land, animals, and people. These individuals prioritize and practice an autonomous environmentalist lifestyle, with a fascist emphasis and with a hatred for modern civilization.” The group, if one can characterize it as such, began life on a Discord chat server, a platform popular with gamers. Highlighting the ideological fluidity of such online spaces, this “eco-extremist community,” which numbered around thirty adherents, did not court the extreme right but nor were such viewpoints prohibited. “So long as you like trees and hate corporations you could get in. Whether you call those corporations capitalists or Jews it didn’t matter,” according to one former member. “We had everything from socialists to anarchists to fascists.”[105]

Having begun life as a “general eco-terror group,” asserting that force should be used to protect nature, The Green Brigade was not specifically “eco-fascist” until its co-founder, an Oregon high school student, aligned the group with The Base, an extreme right accelerationist group that had emerged from milieu around AWD. As well as creating propaganda for The Green Brigade, its founder also reportedly assisted in administering and moderating several other ecologically inclined Telegram channels including the (now deleted) “Eco-Fascist Central” which was described as “a one stop shop for Ted Kaczynski memes, Swastika emblazoned nature photos, and calls for mass murder.”[106]

The evolving aesthetics of the Green Brigade’s visual communication strategy, embodied in a series of memes, reflected this shift as the group moved its online activities onto Telegram. Here, the group absorbed and adapted the visual style of the “Siege culture” milieu that had grown up around James Mason. Green Brigade paid homage to earlier violent extreme right groups like the National Socialist Liberation Front (NSLF), which Mason himself had venerated, albeit with an environmental twist.

Founded in 1974 in El Monte, California, the NSLF had disseminated militant propaganda, borrowed from contemporaneous left-wing “urban guerilla” groups, as a means of exhorting its followers to violence: “The Future Belongs to the Few of Us Still Willing to Get Our Hands Dirty: Political Terror It’s the Only Thing They Understand,” the group declared. Green Brigade propaganda reconfigured this slogan in its own propaganda to read “The Soil Belongs to the Few Still Willing to Get Their Hands Dirty:

Eco Terrorism. Direct Action is the Only Reaction.” The group also reconfigured other white supremacist slogans such as David Lane’s “Fourteen Words” to read, “We Must Secure the Existence of Our People and a Future for Mother Nature.”

Telegram channels disseminating violent accelerationist messages are often ephemeral. The Green Brigade was no exception. Having appeared on November 6, 2019 the “group,” which had 1,156 subscribers to its channel, dissolved itself on March 19, 2020 due to the “prolonged disappearance of certain key members including the founder.” The group is of interest because it provides one of the few instances to date in which those associated with such online endeavours are linked to offline criminal activity. In October 2019 two young Swedish activists, one of whom became involved with the group and another who had recently joined The Base sought to free mink from a farm near Sölvesborg in Southern Sweden. Upon arrival, however, they found no animals there, and so committed an arson attack against the property causing SEK 800,000 worth of damage.[107] The Green Brigade’s leader in the United States subsequently posted a video of the destruction, presumably sent to him by the Swedes, to iFunny, a popular platform for memes, gifs, and videos.[108] This amateurish action, applauded online by eco-accelerationists, would have jarred with purist Linkola devotees, however. He loathed mink, believing they, “should be vanquished down to the last paw print . . . these predators are archenemies of environmentalism, of friends of nature and of nature itself.”[109]

Conclusion

Extreme right environmentalism and ecology has re-emerged as an ideological agent for dehumanising those perceived to threaten racial purity. None of this is “new” but such ideas have achieved a new prominence due to their espousal by Brenton Tarrant and through the activities of meta-political publishing houses which have translated or republished some of the “classic” works of those thinkers discussed above, thereby making them available to a new generation of readers. These works—ranging from books to memes—have developed older ideas about National Socialism as a religion of nature and synthesised this with a misanthropic nihilism and anti-tech primitivism drawn from sources like Savitri Devi, Linkola, and Kaczynski. This anti-human stance is evident across the full spectrum of the far-right ideological universe, from the so-called digital “Terrorwave” groups to the seemingly more benign “ethno-pluralism” of the “New Right” which regards protecting “human diversity” as being as important as defending biodiversity.

Reframing racial exclusion and violence as an act of physical, spiritual and environmental salvation was one dimension of the ideological justification for mass violence in Christchurch and El Paso in 2019. It is entirely possible that as the climate crisis continues to unfold, and as migration, urbanisation, and technological advance continues apace, or even accelerates, that future far right terrorists might follow suit. Whilst such a shift would be concerning, far right violence generated by climate change is perhaps more likely to manifest itself in a less spectacular fashion.

In Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) one of characters asks another how you go bankrupt. “Two ways. Gradually and then suddenly,” comes the reply.[110] The same is likely true of climate change. The sudden collapse many extreme right activists envisage is unlikely to materialize. Instead, the impact of climate change will be a slow burning affair, until it isn’t. The devastating wildfires that scorched millions of acres of land and claimed dozens of lives across Oregon, Washington and California in 2020, which forced 40,000 people from their homes and saw a further 500,000 living under an evacuation order, highlights one of the ways in which, in the United States at least, climate change and far right violence might intersect. During the course of the wildfires the far right and other sundry conspiracy theorists deliberately disseminated an avalanche of online rumours that “antifa” had started them. 9-1-1 dispatchers and professional police staff were subsequently “overrun” by requests for information about “antifa” involvement in the wildfires,[111] a claim amplified by the anonymous account behind the QAnon conspiracy theories.[112]

These rumours, despite being dismissed by the FBI as “untrue,”[113] forced several local police forces to publish appeals pleading with the public to stop spreading such disinformation since dealing with these calls and following false leads was costing them precious time and resources that could have been used to protect local residents and property.[114] In some areas of Oregon groups of heavily armed men illegally set up roadblocks and harassed drivers, often people of colour fleeing the fires, demanding they identify themselves and their connection to the area and sometimes aggressively suggesting that they leave.[115] In another instance, a local videographer and his partner photographing the fires were misidentified as “antifa” by locals and had details of their vehicle posted online causing armed groups to scour the streets for them.[116]

One of the key threats posed by this “green” strain in extreme right thinking, which has gained prominence after Christchurch, is not so much the violence that it might engender, though this is clearly a cause for serious concern, but rather the broader downstream problem of how far right ecology, which propagates a profoundly anti-human understanding of environmentalism and its purpose, might, if left unchecked, come to influence wider public attitudes to, and our understanding of, the looming climate emergency and measures necessary to combat it.

Back Matter

Disclosure statement

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Notes on contributor

Graham Macklin is Assistant Professor/Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) at the University of Oslo, Norway. He has published extensively on extreme right-wing and anti-minority politics in Britain and North America in both the inter-war and post-war periods including most recently *Failed Führers: A History of Britain's Extreme Right* (2020). He is co-editor of the “Routledge Studies in Fascism and the Far Right” book series and associate editor of *Patterns of Prejudice*.

ORCID

Graham Macklin <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5049-9749>

Notes

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