

Matthew Feldman

## **Subjects and Occasions**

Articles, Comment Pieces, and Reviews on the Far Right  
and Other Matters

Vol. 2

Edited by Kate Yanduganova

With an Afterword by Steven Matthews

# The Best of Scholars and Scholarship in the Humanities

---

Edited by:

Elliot Y. Neaman, Matthew Feldman, and Karim Mamdani

- 1 Elliot Neaman  
*Selected Writings*  
A Journey in Intellectual  
History (1988–2025)  
With a foreword by Martin  
Woessner
- 2 Matthew Feldman  
*Subjects and Occasions*  
Articles, Comment Pieces,  
and Reviews on the Far  
Right and Other Matters,  
Vol. 1  
Edited by Karim Mamdani
- 3 Matthew Feldman  
*Subjects and Occasions*  
Articles, Comment Pieces,  
and Reviews on the Far  
Right and Other Matters,  
Vol. 2  
Edited by Kate Yanduganova  
With an afterword by Steven  
Matthews
- 4 Dan Stone  
*Thinking Europe's  
Catastrophe*  
Essays on Fascism and the  
Holocaust, Vol. 1
- 5 Dan Stone  
*Thinking Europe's  
Catastrophe*  
Essays on Fascism and the  
Holocaust, Vol. 2
- 6 Roy Starrs  
*Understanding Modern  
Japan*  
Through Its Literature
- 7 Martin Jay  
*At the Crossroads of  
Philosophy, Politics, and  
Culture*  
Essays for a Troubled Time
- 8 Paul Hoyningen-Huene  
*Selected Writings, Vol. I*  
Papers on Kuhn and  
Feyerabend, 1989–2025
- 9 Zachary Shore  
*Judgment Calls*  
Finding the Way to Wise  
Decisions
- 10 Peter Nicholls  
*Modernist Figures, Vol. 1*  
New Poetries
- 11 Peter Nicholls  
*Modernist Figures, Vol. 2*  
Ezra Pound and After
- 12 Jeffrey Herf  
*Essays on Reactionary  
Modernism and After*

Matthew Feldman

**SUBJECTS AND OCCASIONS**

Articles, Comment Pieces, and Reviews on  
the Far Right and Other Matters

Vol. 2

Edited by Kate Yanduganova

With an Afterword by Steven Matthews

*ibidem*  
Verlag

# **Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek**

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche  
Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

This is volume 2 of a 2-volume publication:

Vol. 1:

*Subjects and Occasions*

Articles, Comment Pieces, and  
Reviews on the Far Right and Other  
Matters

ISBN 978-3-8382-1753-6

Vol. 2:

*Subjects and Occasions*

Articles, Comment Pieces, and  
Reviews on the Far Right and Other  
Matters

ISBN 978-3-8382-2153-3

ISSN (print): 3054-0488

ISSN (digital): 3054-0496

ISBN (Print): 978-3-8382-2153-3

ISBN (E-Book [PDF]): 978-3-8382-8153-7

© *ibidem*-Verlag, Hannover • Stuttgart 2026

Leuschnerstraße 40  
30457 Hannover  
Germany / Deutschland  
[info@ibidem.eu](mailto:info@ibidem.eu)

Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlages unzulässig und strafbar. Dies gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und elektronische Speicherformen sowie die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any person who commits any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

Printed in the EU

# Contents

Introduction.....	7
Section 1: Channels of Propaganda	
Tracing the Far-Right's Digital Revolution: A Conversation with Matthew Feldman .....	21
Understanding the Alt-Right: Ideologues, 'Lulz,' and Hiding in Plain Sight .....	37
Social Media and the <i>Cordon Sanitaire</i> : Populist Politics, the Online Space, and a Relationship that Just Isn't There .....	53
<i>Siege</i> : "Sheer political terror" .....	71
<i>Siege</i> Culture after <i>Siege</i> : Anatomy of a Neo-Nazi Terrorist Doctrine .....	107
From 'Brexhaustion' to 'Covidiot': The United Kingdom and the Populist Future .....	147
The Real Story Behind Pavel Durov's Arrest in France....	167
A Call for Civil Courage .....	175
Section 2: The Branches of the Radical Right	
The Evolution of the Radical Right: An Interview with Matthew Feldman .....	187
Paging Mr. Aaronovitch: The Radical Right Is Scarcely without Platform .....	193
Broadband Terrorism: A New Face of Fascism.....	199
The Radical Right in Britain .....	203

The (Democratic) Football Lads Alliance: A Far Right  
Antechamber?..... 211

Section 3: Scapegoating and Its Discontents

Far-Right Islamophobia: From Ideology to  
'Mainstreamed' Hate Crimes..... 257

Anti-Muslim Hatred Briefing Paper..... 281

Xenophobia and Radicalism in the UK (2017)..... 305

A Working Definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred with a  
Focus on Hate-Crime Work ..... 355

How Should Europeans Respond to the Paris Attacks? .. 395

No Comment? ..... 409

Section 4: The Ethics of the Present Day

*Terrorist's Creed* by Roger Griffin ..... 415

Nazi-Satanism? Yes, It's a Thing ... Fanned by  
Big Tech..... 421

American Thanatocracy ..... 427

This Is Not Your Parents' Terrorism..... 431

Pandering to the Far Right Is No Way to Counter Them.. 437

Afterword ..... 441

# Introduction

*Kate Yanduganova*

This second volume in the collection of Matthew Feldman's shorter texts focuses on 21st-century developments. The task of these essays is to describe the situation that has first arisen in the post-Cold War multi-polar climate. It is characterized by increasing globalization, better and faster ways of sharing information and of using this information to influence people's thought—despite geographical distances. The far right has embraced the information revolution and become especially visible online, using its increased internet presence for marketing and indoctrination. In the articles that follow, Feldman looks at radical right movements that develop in the internet and in the streets, assesses their public danger, and gives practical advice on how to counter them.

\*\*\*

The first section begins with a look on the global spread of far-right movements in the digital age, as new technologies “amplify their reach, foster anonymity, and create enduring networks.” Harking back to the first section of volume 1, Feldman underscores that “the far right—and, in particular, fascism, which is the revolutionary form of the far right—has always been very skilled at leveraging technology,” starting with the use of radio for propaganda between the wars. This makes internet and social media a site of enormous possibility as well as danger, especially at the time when the memory of fascism is being gradually obscured, and there little legal recourse to protect users online, especially from risks that

## Subjects and Occasions

might come from other countries—or in the guise of offering, again, a better world built on the basis of scapegoating.

Feldman traces the resurgence of the far right online to the social changes of the 1990s-2000s. The economic upheavals such as the collapse of the Communist block and, later, the great recession, created a feeling of insecurity that was also fostered by the collapse of traditional regional and national identities tied to the rewiring of the global work and production market. At the same time, disillusionment with Cold War narratives meant that no new coherent political story has come into being, even as politicians are increasingly seen as corrupt, out-of-reach, or perverting the “will of the people.” This has created a vacuum into which extreme groups (of all flavors) can expand, “increasing the likelihood that radical or fringe outriders could fashion a narrative that framed social problems—stagnating wages, identity precariousness, immigration, and rising inequality—as the result of inefficacy, political corruption, and globalization. Against this backdrop, the emergence of anti-migrant political discourse and hostility to the institutions of globalization—in the case of Europe, the European Union above all—is perhaps unsurprising.”

To this *long durée* explanation, Feldman adds an emphasis on the centrality of the media, which has made far-right messaging much more visible, despite the currently small number of activists. In addition, far-right ideologues have learned how to dilute their messages so as to attract a broader audience. This audience potentially includes people who are dissatisfied with their lifestyle: for some, mental health challenges might be a factor, while others accept extremist messages because of a history of prior violent behavior, and yet others fall prey to the far-right promises of restoring “traditional” respect for masculinity (historically most

of the far-right supporters are male). Even though the average internet user is likely pragmatic, there will always be people who are unsure and who can be hooked, while propaganda makes it easy to find a class, a nation (note the modern-day rebranding of fascism), or a group of people who look different, who sound different, and who are associated with all the problems of the stale and unjust modern world, against which the far-right activists are crusading. And the assault of content is unabating—an average person spends about two hours a day on social media, an unprecedented amount of time to absorb information, with almost no pauses to reflect on its truthfulness. The situation is made more difficult by algorithms, adopted by social networks and many other websites, that are trained, once the user has expressed interest in a certain topic, to offer more and more similar content.

The articles in this section look at extremist pages in social networks, websites, and online collections of essays, offering examples of propaganda in hopes of fostering digital literacy. Perhaps, if extremist content “exists online in a permanent or semi-permanent state, could that fact serve as an unintended advantage? Might it enable us to more effectively catalogue, analyze, and counteract such ideologies, eventually relegating these groups to the periphery?” Hopefully, there is a future where national actors and organizations that spread awareness and encourage content filtering on the internet can work together across borders. Either way, it is imperative that users are taught which websites are trustworthy, and how to cross-check the information they find online.

In addition, there is a need to offer alternative narratives in place of propaganda. Most websites have a low entry cost barrier due to lack of moderators and editors. Anyone can publish harmful content—but it is equally easy to offer stories of positive cooperation. Social media, for one thing, has

## Subjects and Occasions

been built around the tradition of “sharing” posts, which can massively expand the reach of these narratives. Put simply, the same algorithms that make it easy for members of average public to see extreme news content can also be used to challenge extremism.

For example, communities can acknowledge cultural pride that the far-right movements try to exploit, and use it to build a healthy acknowledgment of moral and ethical values. Ideally, these efforts will transition from respecting one tradition to holding a measure of respect for all traditions, so as to negate white suprematism and the calls towards a “race war” that are very much present in online circles.

\*\*\*

Section 2 looks at the manifestations of the radical right at the level of government parties and officials, and at the level of street movements. Discussing the situation in various European countries before centering on Britain, this section explores the connection between power, including political power, and violence, and asks whether this nexus can be broken.

A major hurdle, for Feldman, is that the Western radical right has produced parties that have learned to camouflage themselves: they project a democratic façade as they promise more legislative support to majority populations, while obscuring the fact that their programs include limitations or the withholding of protection for minority groups. This deception takes root among publics who are no longer inured by historical example, as “the memory of historical fascism and the destruction it has caused passes into historical memory. The experience of fascist terror is being consigned to history books, making the risk of radical right extremism less visceral.”

In addition, much of the public's understanding of political programs has been diluted with the advent of digital media. As Feldman has shown in section 1, the radical right has sufficiently expanded its networks in the digital age, making ample use of new tools and tactics such as trolling, internet memes and clickbait, while benefiting from the limited space of social network post to provide a seductive, distorted picture. Feldman's review of European rightist parties boils down to this: the radical right's most dangerous weapons are currently not its politics but its tactics; it has learned to find a key to almost any heart. And the biggest problem is not that radical parties win votes, but the social consensus that allows them to do so, the public's belief that they can give the power to make political decisions over to a group who looks like they know what they are doing. Yes, radical groups might offer "genuine campaigns against homelessness, IRA terrorism, and Catholic child abuse scandals." But that is only part of the truth. The impression of being a positive force is, for these groups, simply the result of aggressive marketing, and the underlying problem is people's fear to be active and to stand against scapegoating. It is not sufficient to deplore intolerance, one also must call it out when one sees it.

The mainstreaming of user-friendly radical right ideas is, for Feldman, a challenge to liberal institutions, to humanist values, and even to intellectualism—even though he concedes that some radical right organizations offer a genuinely intellectualized message. Feldman proposes to counter it with a similar radicalization on the side of liberalism: "a radical defense of the other," especially the migrant minorities who have borne the brunt of Western extremists' hate for decades. Feldman urges internet users to learn to identify and weed out violent ideas, becoming, in the process, better, more engaged citizens, and thus also transforming their states and even international politics. Just how exactly to do

this remains an open question, as Feldman finds, for example, few watchdog organizations currently existing able to offer detailed guidance. Some measures against online extremism are offered below in section 3 of this volume. As an aside, the footnotes for the articles in section 2 provide evidence for the struggle undertaken together by the governments and internet providers to police the internet: many refer to snapshots of webpages that have been taken down in the time since these articles were first published. Legal mechanisms for moderation in the online spaces already exists; what is needed is simply a more consistent implementation.

To give some examples of identifying radical rights rhetoric online, Feldman delves into the genealogy of far-right texts in his paradigmatic “Broadband Terrorism,” a term he coined. Apart from so-called ‘lone wolf terrorists,’ to whom Feldman devotes much space in his articles on the terrorist book *Siege* in the first section, the internet has enough material to create armies. The online dissemination of radical content means that these movements are not limited to specific locations and can easily coordinate the activities across countries, as Feldman shows by quoting their summons to hold a “Punish a Muslim Day.” He uses radical right movements’ attitude towards Muslims as a touchstone to assess their wider worldviews. As the articles in the next section of this volume demonstrate, anti-Muslim sentiment is one of the most common hate crimes in Europe and the US. Feldman links it to a larger problem of scapegoating the minorities, “which remains the sine qua non for far-right activism.”

After diagnosing the problem, Feldman offers in his co-authored article about the Democratic Football Lads Alliance, a British far-right group, a section on “Recommendations” for members of public as well as police officers. If online extremism is often untraceable, violence in the streets

can be prevented, traced and reduced by a cooperation between the police and the public. Feldman gives very specific advice regarding the organization of the protests: ensuring that counter-protesters are kept away from a protest's route, and ideally any demonstrations are to be organized outside town centers. He favors "low-key approaches," which include "negotiations with protesters and communities both on the day and in the lead up to" demonstrations, which have been shown to reduce disorders and even to dissuade some would-be demonstrators. As a remarkable, creative example of such successful communication Feldman relates the 2013 story from York where "a local mosque faced down an EDL protest with tea, biscuits and a football kick-about in mixed groups," showing that "emphasizing shared values goes much further than widening divisions through belligerence, abuse, or harassment—let alone violent confrontations." Like radicalization, de-radicalization proceeds best at a personal level, in each locality and for each individual psychology. This is why Feldman encourages the public to stand behind local peace-makers, support them, and learn from their experience. "Amplifying voices that seek commonality and understanding is sensible and easy; it also works." This heartwarming advice reflects an idealistic belief that everyone is able to talk rationally and to hear arguments from another side—this belief is the unerasable, core value of humanism.

\*\*\*

The third section revolves around three terms: phobia, prejudice, or hatred. Anti-Muslim prejudice became pervasive after Islamist terror attacks in the early 2000, with 9/11 in the foreground. In Western, and especially British, contexts far-right organizations used the fear of Muslims in society to pro-

mote hatred against anyone who might be identified as Muslim. This is only an example of the far-right demonization of all things that can be perceived as different. Feldman describes cases of mistaken identity where attackers seized Hindu or Sikh victims believing them to be Muslim. But, going deeper, the nature of this hatred is the same as with any scapegoating of minorities, including BAME racism and antisemitism.

The papers in this section stem from Feldman's involvement with Tell MAMA (an acronym for Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks), which uses quantitative data to provide a picture of anti-Muslim hate crimes in Britain. Together, they give a statistical picture of anti-Muslim attacks to show that these acts are rarely motivated by responses to international terrorism. Instead, they target a much larger part of the Muslim population that is not connected to terrorist organizations—and may even produce an opposite effect insofar as young Muslims may become radicalised as part of response to far-right hatred. To curb ongoing radicalization on both sides of the mainstream vs. minority divide, Feldman and his co-authors offer educational instruments, which allow to teach that blind hatred is delusional and criminal. As Feldman explains, each Islamist attack triggers a spiral of criminal reprisals victimizing innocent people. And there is one other harmful consequence: on the political level, these attacks prompt talks about limiting freedom of travel and other civil liberties, which Feldman see as fundamental for post-Second World War “West,” from the United States to Romania, because they represent core “humanistic and human values.” As governments introduce new legislation to combat terrorism, public bodies should be on the lookout to ensure that these freedoms, “what unites us and what it is that makes us strong,” are not violated. Similarly, non-governmental organizations can and must fight for adequate hate