The QAnon Security Threat: A Linguistic Fusion-Based Violence Risk Assessment

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Abstract

This study compares the narratives and language of QAnon groups in the encrypted messaging apps Telegram and Discord to those observed in the manifestos of terrorists. Drawing on our systematic linguistic analysis of fifteen terrorist manifestos that were published in the past decade, we developed a coding scheme which traces the narratives and linguistic markers that occur in the written communication of perpetrators of political violence. In this pilot study we apply our new coding scheme to QAnon content to assess the scale and nature of violence-associated narratives within the movement. Based on 200,000 messages that we collected from the online QAnon group "Great Awakening Community" on the gaming chat application Discord, we quantitatively examine to what degree they carry the trademarks of violent terrorist manifestos that are not found in non-violent texts. We then compared the results for the Great Awakening Community to content from both a non-violent and a violent-terrorist control group. To complement our computational assessment of QAnon narrative and linguistic patterns we share ethnographic observations from ten QAnon Telegram and Discord groups with English, German, and French speaking audiences. Past research has found that identity fusion in combination with a range of mediating and moderating variables is a strong predictor of violence in groups, and this is further supported by our terrorist manifesto analysis. Our study of QAnon messages found a high prevalence of linguistic identity fusion indicators along with external threat narratives, violence-condoning group norms as well as demonizing, dehumanizing, and derogatory vocabulary applied to the out-group, especially when compared to the non-violent control group. The aim of this piece of research is twofold: (i.) It seeks to evaluate the national security threat posed by the QAnon movement, and (ii.) it aims to provide a test of a novel linguistic toolkit aimed at helping to assess the risk of violence in online communication channels.

Keywords: QAnon, terrorism, radicalisation, manifestos, lone-offender attacks, identity fusion, social media

Introduction

QAnon has made headlines in recent years for its links to the storming of both the U.S. Capitol on 6 January 2021 [1], and the German Reichstag a few months earlier on 27 August 2020.[2] In both assaults on democratic institutions the flags, banners, and T-shirts carried by the rioters featured prominent QAnon slogans such as WWG1WGA ("where we go one, we go all") and QAnon symbols, such as the letter Q.[3] According to a 2021 analysis by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), at least 61 QAnon adherents participated in the Capitol insurrection.[4] QAnon connections were also detected in a series of violent plots and threats against political representatives in North America, Europe, and Australia.[5] As of September 2021, 101 QAnon followers had committed crimes in the U.S. alone, according to START's data.[6] Its adherents have also inspired election-related violence, anti-vaccine protests, and pro-Russia demonstrations across the world.[7]

A May 2019 report by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) highlighted the growing role of anti-government extremism, including conspiracy theory extremists such as QAnon, in criminal activity, including acts of violence.[8] Likewise, the Norwegian Police Security Service flagged the rising threat from anti-government extremism, partly fueled by foreign state-sponsored disinformation campaigns, in its National Threat Assessment for 2022.[9] Nonetheless, many governments have been hesitant to label QAnon as a violent extremist threat to national security, as the advocates, followers, and sympathizers are a diverse group and do not necessarily share a distinct and clearly defined belief system. Moreover, in the past few years, policymakers and law enforcement agencies have tended to focus terrorism prevention efforts on ji-

hadist and far-right extremist groups and networks.[10]

The term "violent self-sacrifice" will be used in this article to describe violent pro-group behaviors that entail risk to life and limb for the perpetrators, regardless of whether they subscribe to ideological extreme beliefs or not. By contrast, we will apply the term "ideological extremism" with reference to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue's extremism definition:

> *Extremism is the advocacy of a system of belief that claims the superiority and dominance of one identity-based 'in-group' over all 'out-groups.' It advances a dehumanising 'othering' mind-set incompatible with pluralism and universal human rights.*[11]

QAnon began as a U.S.-centered online subculture in 2017. On 18 October 2017, an anonymous post on 4Chan's /pol (politically incorrect) board predicted that "Hilary Clinton will be arrested between 7:45 AM – 8:30 AM EST on Monday – the morning on Oct 30, 2017." The message was signed with "Q", in reference to Q-level clearance in the U.S. government's secret document classification. As the successor of the original *Pizzagate* conspiracy myth, QAnon continued to promote the idea that a global cabal of Satan-worshipping elites secretly controls the world and is also running underground child-trafficking networks. Knitting together a variety of old and new conspiracy tropes, QAnon has become a conspiratorial master narrative that has attracted adherents from diverse ideological backgrounds, based on the common denominator of anti-establishment resentment.[12] Today the movement's support base ranges from far-right extremists, hardline conspiracy theorists, and sovereign citizens to alternative medicine esoterics, anti-vaxxers, Covid deniers, and concerned parents.[13] A recent study by Baker demonstrated the role of health and wellness influencers in amplifying the reach of the conspiracy myth.[14]

In the beginning, QAnon had only a few thousand followers and was mainly focusing on the U.S. However, less than one year after its emergence, QAnon followers were running campaigns across Europe, including efforts to boost hardline Brexit campaigns [15] and influence the discourse around the 2018 Bavarian elections.[16] In 2018, ISD identified close to 30 million mentions of "QAnon" across Twitter, YouTube, and forums such as Reddit and 4chan.[17] By 2020, the movement had expanded to more than 4.5 million aggregate followers worldwide.[18] Several studies pointed to the QAnon movement's successful exploitation of the Covid-19 pandemic and related grievances and uncertainties in the population to increase its support base.[19] In March 2020, ISD research registered major spikes in QAnon related content on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.[20]

In this article we present a pilot study that seeks to assess the threat of violence posed by the growing QAnon community. Government policies, legal frameworks, and intelligence investigations tend to be based on explicit online threats or expressions of support for terrorism in an effort to reduce the danger of violent terrorist acts and crimes.[21] Verbal threats, however, are not a reliable predictor of actual violence as many users make empty threats.[22] Consequently, the challenge is to establish a more robust set of predictors of violence based on analysis of more fine-grained patterns of language use. In this study, we outline a theoretically grounded and empirically tested approach to assessing the risk of violence based on language that indicates strong motivations to engage in extreme forms of pro-group action, regardless of whether acts of violence are specifically threatened or not. We do not claim to have a predictive model at this stage but are rather working to build the foundations of a linguistic framework that identifies recurrent socio-psychological factors associated with subsequent violence committed by individuals or groups.

The systematic text-based coding framework we apply to QAnon content is grounded in social identity studies. There has been a growing body of research into the relationship between different forms of group cohesion and radicalisation towards violence.[23] Previous studies found evidence that the socio-psychological phenomenon of identity fusion – a visceral feeling of oneness with the group – motivates violent self-sacrifice on behalf of the group, when combined with a real or perceived existential threat to the in-group.[24] The fusion-violence link has been demonstrated in a number of studies conducted among groups as diverse as Libyan revolutionary battalions [25], Indonesian religious fundamentalists [26], Cameroonian herders and farmers [27], as well as British and Brazilian football hooligans.[28] Our new threat assessment

framework is based on Whitehouse's fusion-plus-threat model, which aggregated previous theoretical and empirical findings.[29] Key to this model is that in-group identity fusion has been shown to be the more potent driver of extreme pro-group behavior, including acts of terrorism, than in-group identification.[30] However, before outlining our approach and methods in greater detail it is necessary to first review the existing research on the QAnon phenomenon.

Emerging Literature

QAnon's sudden emergence in 2017 and swiftly rising influence on both the political arena and the security threat landscape has resulted in widespread interest from both academic and non-academic researchers across multiple disciplines. Since the movement's inception, many investigations have sought to better understand the nature, motivations, and tactics of this new online community.

Holt and Rizzuto's data-driven analysis analysis of QAnon catchphrases on Gab, Parler, Dot-Win forums, 4chan, and 8kun during the timeframe of January 2020 to April 2021 concluded that QAnon-related slogans remained considerably higher on mainstream platforms than on alternative fringe platforms.[31] However, Ebner pointed out that the "alt-tech universe" meant that QAnon could adopt a "glocal" strategy to disinformation, using a globally standardised and networked approach coupled with hyper-localised mobilisation channels.[32]

In 2021, ISD's research highlighted the rising importance of Telegram for QAnon influencers and online groups.[33] Zihiri, Lima, et al.'s 2022 study used a mixed-methods approach to compare QAnon with far-right and far-left extremist communities. The researchers analysed over 3.5 million Telegram messages from these three extreme subcultures to establish QAnon's position in the wider political ecosystem of the political fringes. Their conclusion was that despite its mainstreamed appeal to different population segments, the QAnon community continues to share important traits with the far-right and coalesces around similar political events in the U.S.[34]

Recent research and polls have highlighted the extent to which QAnon has been mainstreamed. Fourteen congressional candidates on ballots in the 2020 U.S. elections openly endorsed QAnon conspiracy myths.[35] A 2020 NPR/Ipsos poll of U.S. Adults found that 17 percent of Americans believed in the idea that "a group of Satan-worshipping elites who run a child sex ring are trying to control our politics and media."[36] Another representative survey conducted in the U.S. by the Chicago Project on Security & Threat reported that there are 21 million adamant supporters of insurrection movements with potential for violent mobilisation. According to the study, American insurrectionists are driven by two main conspiracy theories: 65 percent of them believe in the Great Replacement – the idea that whites are gradually being replaced by non-whites – and 54 percent believe in QAnon.[37]

Many researchers have sought to understand the appeal of the QAnon cult. Matfess and Margolin established that women have played a key role in the creation and dissemination of QAnon propaganda content. According to them, QAnon is more gender-inclusive than traditional far-right extremist groups.[38] As Argentino and Crawford noted, the use of female influencers and hashtags such as "#SavetheChildren" has allowed the movement to widen its reach beyond traditional audiences.[39] Holoyda outlined the importance for forensic psychiatrists to better understand how the psychological drivers and belief systems of QAnon followers are consistent and how they are different from those held by proponents of other conspiracy theories.[40] Zuckerman highlighted common narrative patterns QAnon shares with other conspiracy theories but also argued that QAnon may be the first conspiracy that fully taps into the participatory potential of modern-day media and technology.[41] According to a report by the Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab (PERIL) and the Network Contagion Research Institute, "QAnon bears many of the hallmarks of an augmented reality game (ARGs)."[42]

Both in academia and in policy circles, there has been significant disagreement on the extent to which the QAnon movement poses a threat to national security and democracy. Amarasingam and Argentino warned in 2020 that QAnon presents a novel challenge to the security forces and a domestic terror threat in the

making. Their report presented five criminal case studies with a nexus to QAnon, including one case that resulted in a terrorism charge.[43] Likewise, Jensen and Kane conducted a study of the backgrounds of 100 QAnon sympathizers who committed crimes in the U.S., arguing that traditional counter-terrorism strategies are unfit to address the new risk factors (e.g. mental health problems, substance use disorders and family disruptions) found among QAnon supporters.[44] Taking the opposite stance, Moskalenko and McCauley argued in their research that "deradicalization efforts aimed at QAnon opinions are a waste of resources and potentially dangerous in exaggerating the QAnon threat and increasing Right-Wing perception of government over-reach."[45] The authors combined the Two-Pyramids model of radicalization with polling data to conclude that the threat of radical action from QAnon is "relatively small".[46]

The underlying thesis of the Two Pyramids model is that there are two types of radicalisation: radicalisation in opinion and radicalisation in action, with only the latter culminating in terrorist activity.[47] Moskalenko and McCauley's model bears comparison with our socio-psychologically grounded distinction between identification versus fusion-based radicalization. In particular, identification may be associated with extreme ideologies but not self-sacrificial behaviours (e.g. among religious fundamentalists), while fusion may drive self-sacrificial behaviour in the absence of extreme ideology (e.g. among football fans and soldiers). Nevertheless, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that QAnon radicalisation is predominantly limited to the first pyramid. Our study seeks to contribute to this debate and help to better understand whether the prevalence of linguistic indicators can indicate underlying psychological processes that may be capable of motivating violent action among QAnon followers. Based on this pilot study of systematically detecting fusion-plus-threat in digital materials, we propose a new text-based approach to identify socio-psychological violence risk factors in online groups.

Approach and Methods

Our study of QAnon uses a mixed methods approach, combining NLP-driven quantitative analysis with ethnographic qualitative analysis of QAnon-related communications channels. Both the quantitative and the qualitative research streams draw on a new theoretically grounded framework of violence-predicting narratives and linguistic patterns that we created based on a recently published systematic analysis of manifestos of authors who went on to commit acts of terrorism.[48] To test our linguistic framework we completed an Intercoder Reliability (ICR) Analysis with the help of two independent expert coders and twenty-four non-expert coders, yielding a reliability rate of over 90 percent for most narrative categories.[49] Compared to a control group of political manifestos – ranging from ideologically extreme to moderate – that were not followed by violent activities by their authors, we found a high prevalence of in-group identity fusion and existential threat narratives among the manifestos of future terrorists. In addition to supporting the fusion-plus-threat model, our manifesto analysis demonstrated a high presence of anticipated mediating and moderating variables such as violence-condoning norms and offensive language applied to members of the out-group.[50]

Here we apply the same fusion-based violence risk assessment framework to QAnon groups, and then compare the results to the outcomes in non-violent and violent control groups. Our NLP analysis was conducted in R, tracking linguistic markers we previously identified as associated with subsequent violence (see Appendix 2 for an overview of the linguistic markers).[51] Our selection of variables and the metrics we used to measure them was informed by the findings of our manifesto analysis and our review of the existing literature (see Appendix 1 for more details).[52] For example, metaphors of kinship or familiar ties (e.g. brotherhood) when talking about the in-group and its members have been identified as an important diagnostic marker of fusion in written or verbal communications.[53] Furthermore, previous research has indicated that survivors of atrocities develop feelings of psychological kinship that mediate the relationship between fusion and self-sacrificial behaviors.[54] Hence, early detection of kinship language that is applied to fellow group members in conjunction with existential threat narratives might offer an important indicator of a higher risk for future acts of extreme violence and terrorism.

The quantitative analysis covered 200,000 messages scraped from the "Great Awakening Community", an

online QAnon group of over 5,300 members exchanging messages using Discord, a VoIP and instant messaging platform originally associated with gaming communities. The 'Great Awakening Community' Discord server was one of the main communication hubs for QAnon during the timeframe 2018-2019. We compared the results from the server to content taken from both non-violent and violent control groups. The first control group was Third Hour, a popular discussion forum for Mormons with at least 30,000 users. The second control group was the white supremacist platform Iron March, which was a public web forum used by roughly 1,200 regular users – many of whom were found to have participated in terrorist activities and engaged with proscribed groups, such as National Action and Atomwaffen Division.[55] A total of 1,160 messages from Iron March posted in 2017 until the forum's closure in November that year and 160,000 messages from Third Hour in the timeframe 2004-2019 were included in the analysis. We selected Third Hour and Iron March in order to compare the QAnon content with content from two groups of online users that are characterised by a shared ideology, like QAnon, and represent the two ends of the violence spectrum for the comparative analysis.

The R code of our NLP analysis used a dictionary approach (see Appendix 3). By using the grep R function, we wanted to capture a wide range of derivations of our selected linguistic markers (e.g., nouns, verbs and adjectives in both singular and plural forms) and thereby minimise the number of false negatives. However, this approach meant that the R-based datasets for each narrative contained a relatively high proportion of false positives—i.e., terms and phrases that were wrongly categorized as a narrative-specific linguistic marker. For instance, a common false positive that was mistaken for a fusion marker by our R code was the use of kinship language by users to speak about their biological family rather than refer to fellow group members as "brothers" and "sisters". Likewise, the messages the R code identified as instances of out-group dehumansation (using linguistic markers such as "monkey", "dog" or "beast") sometimes contained references to real animals. To address this potential limitation, the datasets of phrases captured by the R code for each narrative category were exported from R and scanned manually for false positives by the lead author. Based on a careful review of all messages, every detected case of a false positive was removed manually from datasets with up to 800 messages.

Due to time constraints, a sampling technique was used for the manual review of large datasets. Whenever a dataset filtered for narrative-specific markers by the R code exceeded 800 messages, the lead author manually reviewed a random sample of 500 messages taken from the respective dataset to determine the percentage of false negatives and applied this percentage to the overall dataset. To ensure that the manually reviewed sample was large enough and the percentage of false positives found in the sample was representative for the entire dataset, a confidence interval was calculated. The confidence interval we used (95% CI < ± 3) means that the false positive percentages we computed based on the manual sample review for larger datasets is expected to vary by a maximum margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points at a 95 percent probability. We also tested our datasets for spam activities by conducting a manual review of 100 sample messages posted by the five accounts with the highest number of messages. Based on our review, no spam accounts were detected; even the messages of the user with the highest number of messages (38,813 messages) appeared authentic. Our general observation was that Discord is not a platform that is accommodating to bots due to its infrastructure and communication mode of live chats which bots do not perform well in.

To complement the quantitative analysis with real-time observations from live channels, an ethnographic analysis was carried out across QAnon groups that were active during the timeframe May 2020 - May 2022. In the wake of the U.S. Capitol riots on 6 January 2021, big tech companies such as Twitter, Meta, and Google, were pressured to remove QAnon-related groups and networks from their platforms. As a result, QAnon and their adherents migrated from large social media platforms towards smaller alt-tech platforms, in particular Gab, Discord, and Telegram.[56] As of July 2021, there were at least 3,500 QAnon Telegram groups and channels and more than 10,000 affiliated groups and channels in multiple languages with a global reach, according to the database of the Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET).[57]

Our ethnographic analysis covered ten QAnon channels on Telegram and Discord varying in their size,

mode of interaction, and geographical focus. To identify relevant channels we searched for key words that have emerged as typical QAnon phrases: "QAnon", "WWG1WGA", "great awakening", "the storm", "trust the plan", "dark to light", "the military is the only way", "future proves past", "Q forces" "expose the pedos", "end the cabal", "save the children", and other phrases containing "Q" or "anons". Many of these keywords were used in previous analysis of QAnon, such as studies conducted by the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab which identified 13 QAnon phrases and terms.[58] We included channels operating in English, German, and French to allow for the detection of comparative differences and commonalities across different geographies. The narratives and associated linguistic markers used in this analysis do not vary substantially across these three languages. For full transparency, we provide all original quotes featured in the ethnographic observations and translated for the purpose of this article in the notes.

Table 1 provides an overview of the selected channels:

Table 1. QAnon Group Selection

Channel Name	Geography	Language	Subscribers (as of May 2022)	Channel Type
Great Awakening Community	United Kingdom, United States	English	7869	Discord, Open Posts
Q+Anons	United States, United Kingdom	English	35164	Telegram, Central Posts
SpecialQForces	Worldwide	English	91207	Telegram, Central Posts, Open Comments
Anons	United States	English	10299	Telegram, Central Posts, Open Comments
Q Kingdom Family	Germany	German	7357	Telegram, Central Posts
QFaktor Germany Die Echtzeit Analyse	Germany	German	25201	Telegram, Central Posts
QAnon Austria	Austria	German	12792	Telegram, Central Posts
Qlobal Change	Germany, Austria, Switzerland	German	136943	Telegram, Central Posts
Dark to Light Channel	Germany	German, English	4226	Telegram, Central Posts, Open Comments
QAnon Quebec/France	Canada, France	French	1003	Telegram, Central Posts

The aim of our qualitative risk assessment was to investigate the nature and context of violence-predicting narratives and language found in QAnon groups. The lead author scanned all messages published in the selected groups (see Table 1) in the timeframe May 2020-May 2022 to (a) identify occurrences of relevant linguistic markers (see Appendix 2), (b) analyse them in the context of the entire message exchange, and (c) classify them into risk categories. The risk categories "high", "medium" and "low" were used to reflect the prevalence of both fusion and threat in the messages from the assessment timeframe. The additional metric "calls to violence" was included as a comparative measure to determine to what degree the outcome of our fusion-based approach aligns with traditionally used violence risk assessments via explicit threats to violence.[59]

To fulfil our duty of care, we ensured full anonymity and confidentiality of all gathered data. No identifiable data such as user names or meta data is shared in this study to protect the privacy of all users. The collected datasets were treated confidentially and held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and research codes of conduct. Collected datasets and screenshots were securely stored as evidence for all observations and quotes provided in this study. Due to the sensitive nature of the analysed content, the raw datasheets and screenshot evidence will only be made available on

demand to researchers who can provide proof of their academic affiliation.

Quantitative Results

Table 2 below summarises the relative prevalence of each of the linguistic categories in the target Great Awakening Community and the related Violent and Non- Violent Control Group. Percentages shown in the table describe the detected number of messages carrying relevant linguistic markers of each narrative category relative to the overall message count of the relevant data set (200,555 total messages in Great Awakening, 161,977 total messages in Third Hour and 1164 total messages in Iron March). The risk categories were determined based on the combined value of markers for fusion and threat. The following classification scheme was used: low: 0-0.05%, medium: 0.06-0.15%, high: 0.16-0.4%, "very high": > 0.4%.

Table 2. Quantitative Analysis Results

	Violence Predictors		**Potential Violence Mediating and Moderating Variables**										**Risk**
	Fusion	**Existential Threat**	**Out-Group Slurs**	**Out-Group Demonisation**	**Out-Group Dehumanisation**	**Belief in Conspiracy of Out-Group**	**Inevitable War Narrative**	**Justification of Violence**	**Martyrdom Narrative**	**Violent Role Model**	**Hopelessness of Political Solutions**	**Calls to Violence**	**Estimated Violence Risk**
Great Awakening Community	**0.27%**	**0.08%**	**0.04%**	**0.79%**	**0.24%**	**0.48%**	**0.01%**	**0.38%**	**0.01%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**	**0.23%**	**HIGH**
Non- Violent Control Group: Third Hour	0.06%	0.02%	0.00%	0.39%	0.00%	0.04%	0.01%	0.00%	0.03%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	**LOW**
Violent Control Group: Iron March	0.86%	0.43%	2.75%	0.95%	1.03%	0.60%	0.26%	0.34%	0.00%	0.09%	0.00%	1.55%	**VERY HIGH**

Our analysis indicates elevated levels of fusion and threat among members of the Great Awakening Community, when compared to the non-violent Control Group. One pattern in the Third Hour content was that kinship language was not applied to the in-group but to all of humanity. For example, one message said: "We are told that we are all children of God. We're all brothers and sisters." Likewise in Third Hour content, existential threat narratives hardly ever highlighted threats to the in-group of fellow Mormons but most often dealt with threats faced either on an individual level or by mankind.

The patterns found in the Great Awakening Community analysis demonstrate a much greater presence of anticipated predictors of violence than in average discussion forums. Notably, however, compared to the violent control group, the levels were lower. As expected, the conversations on the terrorist Iron March website were marked by very high levels of fusion and threat as well as calls to violence.

This same pattern was found for additional variables that we predicted to mediate or moderate pathways from fusion to violence. For example, violence condoning norms such as justification of violence and calls to

violence as well as demonising, dehumanizing and derogatory language applied to the out-group were found to be more common in the Great Awakening Community than in the Third Hour content – but less common than in the Iron March group.

Qualitative Results

All QAnon groups we examined in our ethnographic research showed some degree of identity fusion and existential threat markers. However, fusion and threat were more pronounced in some QAnon groups than in others. Four out of the ten examined channels exhibited very high or high levels. Four were marked by medium levels and two by low levels of fusion and threat. Higher fusion and threat levels generally correlated with more instances of calls to violence but there were a few cases that did not follow that pattern. Contrary to common practice among counter-terrorism professionals, we argue that it can be misleading to focus predominantly on calls to violence to determine the violent potential of any given group or individual. The fact that calls to violence are low does not necessarily mean risk of violence is low. On a group level we would expect that high levels of calls to violence tend to go hand in hand with actual proneness to violence. They can be indicative of a group-based acceptance of violence and responsible for a violence-inciting atmosphere in the group. However, on an individual level they are not a robust predictor for which users are most likely to engage in extreme pro-group violence. The ones who use the most violence-threatening language are not necessarily identical to those that are most willing to put their lives on the line for the group.

Table 3 illustrates an overview of the observations made in the ethnographic research. The risk categories were determined based on the combined value of markers for fusion and threat. The following classification scheme was used to describe the prevalence of fusion, threat and violence metrics: high: > 3 examples per 100 messages, medium: > 1 examples per 100 messages, low: 0-1 examples per 100 messages.

Table 3. Qualitative Analysis Results

Channel Name	Fusion	Threat	Fusion + Threat	Calls to Violence	Estimated Violence Risk
Great Awakening Community	High	Medium	High	High	High
Q+Anons	High	Medium	High	High	High
SpecialQForces	High	High	Very High	High	Very High
Anons	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Q Kingdom Family	High	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
QFaktor Germany Die Echtzeit Analyse	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
QAnon Austria	Medium	High	High	Medium	High
Qlobal Change	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
Dark to Light Channel	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
QAnon Quebec/France	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium

Fusion + Threat

A significant proportion of QAnon groups (40% in our selection of groups) showed very high or high levels of the linguistic hallmarks found in terrorist manifestos. Based on the fusion and threat levels we found in the different geographies, English speaking groups tended to have higher estimated violence risk levels than German and French ones. However, we acknowledge that the geographic variations in threat detected in this study might be coincidental and should be further explored in follow-up studies.

Identity fusion markers in combination with existential threat narratives were highly prevalent in the channels Special Q Forces, Q + Anons, Great Awakening Community, and QAnon Austria, but could also be observed in other channels of the conspiracy theory movement. QAnon adherents frequently referred to each other as "brothers and sisters of the Awakening", "Anon Brothers and Sisters" and "Q family". One member of the Great Awakening Community wrote: "I love you all, fellow Patriots, fellow Guardians of Q... We happy few, we band of brothers... Never ever ever ever ever ever ever give up." Another one commented: "Stay strong my brothers and sisters. Satan wants to keep your [sic!] from God and His word […]." One user in the channel Q-Kingdom Family wrote: "I love you all, siblings of light […] We are almost there, dear brothers and sisters […]."[60] A third one said he was deeply touched and grateful whenever he received messages from fellow members and stressed an eternal bond with his "brothers" and "sisters".[61] A message in Q Anon Quebec/France read: "Rest assured my brothers and sisters, a new world is slowly taking shape and this requires the type of battle we are currently fighting."[62] One Qlobal-Change user shared a song together with the words: "How many of our brothers and sisters are playing this song before the drop?"[63] Members of the channel QFaktor Germany die Echtzeit Analyse were encouraged to trust God, the Q-Family, the plan and the military. The same post continued: "Look where we are, brothers and sisters. Would you have thought that we manage to get here?"[64]

The emphasis on metaphorical kinship with like-minded fighters in other geographies was a common feature across different channels. "Support to our brothers and sisters from the Netherlands! WE WILL NOT OBEY THIS Mandatory vaccination and the fascistic covid pass...WE ARE ALL UNITED," a message in the Anons channel said. A post by the Special Q Forces channel read: "WE LOVE OUR RUSSIAN BROTHERS and SISTERS! WE ARE THE HUMAN FAMILY." One QAnon Austria post announced that "our French brothers and sisters just arrived in Berlin,"[65] while a comment in QFaktor Germany die Echtzeit Analyse stressed that Anons "need to pay attention to our brothers in the U.S. and abroad."[66]

Fusion often appeared in tandem with the idea of an existential threat against the metaphorical family of QAnon: "Brothers and sisters […] we are in a race against time and a battle against sustained, relentless propaganda. But together we can turn the tide," read a message in the Great Awakening Community. The same channel warned that "the Globalists/Communitarians/Internationalists are attacking, whites, guns, and free speech" with the alleged end goal of "destroying the U.S.". One conspiracy theorist wrote: "The evil government controls the skies, the high ground, and if you are a dissident, you will be hunted down and killed unless you have a protector.[…] their objective is to reduce world population by 95%." Another Great Awakening Community member shared the fabricated idea that "electromagnetic weapons are used to torture and subjugate countless American citizens..." Shared suffering of the Q-family was also highlighted frequently: "Your Patience and Suffering was NOT for Nothing, Brothers and Sisters!" According to previous research, the reflection by group members on shared negative transformative experiences such as periods of suffering and traumatic incidents is a leading cause of identity fusion.[67]

Representation of an existential threat frequently came in the form of inevitable war narratives: "With you on this one brother," a user in the Great Awakening Community wrote, "war is inevitable I think and it feels like it's getting closer every day." Another one commented: "Now my family is being called up to end this galactic war." When asked "Your family? Your earthly family?" the QAnon adherent replied, "No not my human family, my soul family." Likewise, a Special Q Forces post announced: "THIS IS WAR," calling on fellow members to prepare for the fast-approaching storm. The channel QFaktor Germany die Echtzeit Analyse urged fellow patriots and Anons to be strong in anticipation of "the hardest part of the looming war."[68] Meanwhile, a member of Q + Anons wrote: "We are in a war". The user described the war as a battle "against the cabal, news media propaganda, banking systems, tyranny authorities." According to a member of QAnon Quebec/France, "the war between Dark and Light is the war between Satan and God. Between the reptilian bloodline of Satan and the human bloodline of Jesus."

QAnon channels made frequent use of demonising and dehumanising language to denounce political opponents. For example, members of the Great Awakening Community claimed that Jews "were born predators," speaking about their "animalistic mentality." One message from Q+Anon read: "Pay these parasites

no mind, OUR love makes us Stronger." Celine Dion was called a "reptile" for promoting vaccines. QAnon Quebec/France spoke of the "satanic Elite, the Iluminati, the Cabal" and claimed that "13 ROYAL families are REPTILIAN hybrids who are shape-shifters posing as HUMANS." The Dark to Light channel warned of the "globalist parasites."[69]

Calls for Violence

Even if calls for violence in isolation are not a reliable proxy for violence, they can nonetheless be a helpful marker to understand the overall atmosphere in a group. A violence-condoning group setting can – if combined with high fusion and threat – be indicative of a higher violence risk level. As expected, calls for violence were generally observed to be more common in the channels that showed higher levels of fusion and threat language. The channels Special Q Forces, Q+Anons and Great Awakening Community contained a high number of direct calls for violence and use of force, compared to the other examined channels. "Divided we fall, and the only way to be united outside of government is an insurrection and concentration of force. That is what we called "a target rich environment." QAnon members frequently painted the picture of a situation with no viable political or peaceful alternatives. One Q+Anon member stressed that "there is no legal path". Members who choose the illegal path can hope that "a brother will back your freedom." Another one wrote: "You may have to defend what you took thru violence." One user in the Great Awakening Community commented:

> *It is us or them. We live and they die, or we die and they live. If they live with us, they subvert the system as they have been doing for centuries. Only by removing them and their evil influence do we have any hope of survival.*

There was a recurring theme of justifying violence with the need to protect the in-group. One message in the Q+Anon channel read: "If the fools think this shit is still legitimate, they deserve the death that's coming quickly for them. Protect yourselves against the shedding. Arm up […]." Another member of the channel wrote: "I say, if you see anyone coming to get you, shoot first and ask questions later!"

Calls for violence were often directed at prominent people supportive of the Covid-19 vaccines. "Kill Gates," one user in Q+Anon wrote. Another asked "Why isn't anyone killing Soros?" A third user replied: "That's an excellent question!! He's a Jew." The user who posed the question about murdering Soros continued: "Someone should go and cut his throat." Prince Harry and Meghan Markle were also targeted with threats to violence. "Can I shoot them now?" a group member wrote in response to a message that read "this couple are promoting the vaxx," linking to a video of the speech by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at the Global Citizen Live event in New York. Other political opponents who were at the centre of violent threats included anti-fascist movements and minority communities such as Black people and trans people: "PEDOPHILE TRANSGENDER PINK NAZIS | ANTIFAS" (…) GOOD THING: you will die," a post in the Q Special Forces channel said. One post in Q+Anon called on fellow members: "LYNCH this Black Lowlife Parasite, if this was my kid, this ANIMAL would not see the next light of day."

Calls for violence frequently went hand in hand with dehumanizing language applied to the targeted group or individual. For example, one Q+Anon member wrote "HANG THESE MONSTERS," while another posted "We need to kill all these sick pedo satanic dogs!" A post about Bill Gates' vaccine promotion was met with the comments: "This fucking rats [sic!] need to burn" and "this is evil not a human." One post by the Special Q Forces said: "just plain filth," "they are part of SATAN" and "I will definitely not object to pedophiles getting a bullet in the head! No mercy to these f*ckers! Send them to the black depths of hell!" The administrator of QAnon Austria warned that "it smells like rat" and announced that Anon "fighters" should "identify the enemy within in order to defeat the most dangerous enemy."[70]

The narrative of widespread pedophilia among the global elites was used to justify violence. "Expose the Pedos. End the Cabal," on message in the Special Q Forces channel read and was linked to an image of an execution rope with the words "get em all". The same channel warned: "ARE YOU A PEDO OR EVEN A REPTO? Expect a bullet ANYTIME". Other threatening messages in the Special Q Forces channel included

"To all BASTARDS: YOUR DEATH IS NEAR," "NO WHERE TO HIDE - the last rats got in the traps" and "THE HUNT IS ON, NO MERCY". Under every message the slogan "Military is the only way" featured in combination with pictograms of skulls, fire and swords and "WWG1WGA" and the signature of "Q".

Research Limitations and Future Perspectives

Due to time and capacity limitations, we only analysed a small fraction of available QAnon channels. However, we selected our sample of groups varying in their sizes, communication modes and geographies, in order to try and achieve a broader representation of the overall QAnon community. Despite this, an important limitation this introduced is that while we believe it is appropriate to quantitatively analyse one dataset per group, the limitations this introduces did not allow for us to conduct meaningful inferential statistical analysis. The associations and details we provide are thus primarily descriptive in nature and need to be subject to more robust statistical tests—ideally with future studies conducting a wider quantitative assessment using multiple datasets of QAnon and control groups.

Furthermore, even though our narrative and linguistic framework was tested, using in an Intercoder Reliability Analysis, language is always subjective, contextual, and ambiguous. We therefore acknowledge that our manual sorting of the NLP-based results can be subject to potential differing interpretations. Discord is also an idiosyncratic platform that is heavily populated by gamers and trolls whose messages cannot always be taken at face value. The linguistic markers used in this study, however, aim to detect patterns that can reflect subconscious and socio-psychological phenomena that are not reliant on making a distinction between satirical and serious threats.

Regarding classifications, while the selected control groups were classified into "violent" and "non-violent", these classifications only reflect a general group tendency based on known cases of members engaging in acts of violence and terrorism. However, as both groups count many users, most of them anonymous, it is impossible to determine the exact number of violent or non-violent members. Our risk of violence assessment is not primarily based on the comparative analysis of QAnon content with the violent and non-violent control groups but rather draws on a large body of evidence of the fusion-violence link and our systematic terrorist manifesto analysis, which served as the foundation for the text-based assessment framework. Nonetheless, it is important to be clear that we make no claim that our approach can or should be understood as reliably singling out individuals who will commit acts of violence. Our intention in the article is more limited and is focused around building the foundations of a framework and providing a linguistic toolkit that can help with risk assessment based on the proposed fusion + threat model which has been, and is being, tested in many different contexts.

To avoid that outliers dominate our analysis, we cross-checked the raw datasheets for recurring user names who made repeated use of the selected linguistic markers. While our checks reassured us that the linguistic analysis would not be distorted by one or several outliers, we found that there were dozens of usernames who made more frequent use of fusion language and other variables than others, potentially signaling a greater propensity for violence than the group average. The QAnon Telegram groups we included for the qualitative assessment varied widely in their architecture and mode of communication. While some groups were highly interactive with messages originating from many different members, other channels were dominated by the host accounts, meaning the content was primarily that of the host. This implies that in these specific cases the linguistic markers might say more about the group leader's proneness to violence than that of the broader membership. On the other hand, continued membership in such a group does seem to imply at least a tolerance for such language. Nevertheless, our estimated risk assignments should be understood with this important limitation in mind.

Our finding that QAnon groups vary widely in their degrees of proneness to violence points to a need for future research. We recommend that follow-up studies focus on further exploring why some QAnon groups and individuals showed much stronger violence predictors than others. The findings also raise further questions about the evolution of pro-violence group dynamics: What are the psycho-social factors that make

anti-establishment conspiracy myth groups turn towards violence as a viable solution? What role does in-group identity fusion play in this process? What are potential measures that could be taken to prevent identity fusion or to intervene by de-fusing members?

Conclusion

Our study supports the thesis that the QAnon movement poses a risk to national security, particularly in English-speaking countries. The high prevalence of identity fusion indicators along with external threat narratives, violence-condoning group norms as well as demonising, dehumanising and derogatory vocabulary in several QAnon groups are a particularly concerning warning sign that points to an increased proneness of group members to commit acts of political violence. This assessment is further supported by the higher occurrence of calls for violence we detected in QAnon channels when compared with our non-violent control group.

Taken together, the findings from the three groups offer support for the fusion-plus-threat model and illustrate how the proposed narrative and linguistic framework can be employed effectively for a computational NLP analysis of large datasets when this is followed up with a manual review of representative samples. Our holistic framework seeks to provide a better way of assessing risk of violence than simply taking calls to violence at face value. Apart from the fact that cases of high risk for violence might be missed when only measuring calls to violence, the fusion-plus-threat approach adds to our understanding of how to manage the threats posed by today's online spaces. With increasingly strict removal policies adopted by the big tech platforms for social media, we have seen that violent extremist movements have skillfully adapted their language to evade detection and deletion of their accounts and content. This means that even the most violent groups and individuals have started to refrain from making explicit calls to violence and would therefore easily go under the radar in most conventional monitoring systems. Even if it appears that there is a correlation in our study that looks at end-to-end encrypted messaging apps, this might no longer be the case when groups operate in spaces where they purposefully seek to cover up their willingness to commit violence.

Our findings have direct implications for research and policy. QAnon's proneness to extreme violence points to the need for a new definition of violent extremism. The movement's confusing ideological composition, post-organisational structures and wide-ranging membership [71] means that it does not fit into existing counter-terrorism frameworks. Many national and international terrorism strategies tend to list specific jihadist, right-wing or left-wing extremist groups, neglecting movements that transcend clear-cut ideological and organisational boundaries.[72] As mentioned in the introduction, the UN Designated Terror Groups list is almost exclusively focused on ISIS and Al-Qaeda related threats.[73] Broad categories such as "right-wing extremism" and "Salafi-jihadist extremism" are insufficient in an era of ideologically fluid movements with the potential to resort to violence – a growing phenomenon the FBI described as "salad bar ideologies".[74] Reflecting on this trend, the German intelligence agency introduced a new category for the monitoring of anti-government and anti-democracy extremist groups ("Staatsdelegitimierer") in 2021 to include violent extremists who no longer fit into the traditionally applied framework.[75] We could even ask whether radicalisation towards violence should be viewed as a phenomenon entirely distinct from ideological indoctrination, driven not by group doctrines but by identity fusion. From the perspective of security services, despite the important limitations discussed above, we contend that the analytical approach outlined in this article could help with resource allocation, as it can help narrow down at-risk populations. Follow-up projects could take a user-centered approach, although this would inevitably raise ethical concerns that would need to be navigated carefully. Ultimately, our research might open new doors for potential intervention approaches, such as de-fusing [76] members of violent extremist groups.

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[61] Original message: "Fühl mich jeden Tag zutiefst gerührt/Dankbarkeit wenn ich Eure Sprachnachrichten und Nachrichten höre und lese! Ewige Verbindung Bruder/Schwestern."

[62] Authors' translation of the French original: "Rassurez-vous mes frères & sœurs, un nouveau monde s'installe peu à peu et cela nécessite de livrer le type de batailles qu'on mène actuellement."

[63] Authors' translation of the German original: "Wie viele unserer Brüder und Schwestern spielen dieses Lied vor dem Drop (LZ)?"

[64] Authors' translation of the German original: "Alles wird gut werden und wir sollten GOTT, der Q-Familie, dem Plan und dem Militär vertrauen, die harte Arbeit der White Hats schätzen und stolz auf uns sein, dass wir so weit gekommen sind! Seht, wo wir sind, Brüder und Schwestern... Wer hätte gedacht, dass wir es bis hierher schaffen und dass wir den Wandel zum Guten miterleben werden? Was für eine ZEIT, um am LEBEN zu sein!!!"

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[69] Authors' translation of the German original: "Viele von uns in der Freiheitsbewegung verstehen die Eigenschaften des globalistischen Parasiten sehr gut, und das macht es viel einfacher für uns vorherzusagen, was sie tun werden."

[70] Authors' translation of the German original: "Es riecht nach einer Ratte" and "liebe Kämpferinnen und Kämpfer".

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Appendix 1: Relevant Variables and Definitions

For this study we selected variables that were previously identified as potential mediators or moderators of the fusion to violence pathway. Of particular note due to being frequently cited factors that might contribute to an escalation towards violence include:

(1) Perceived out-group entitativity,[1] which will be traced via the use of "us versus them" narratives[2], in particular the use of language that insults, demonizes or dehumanizes an entire out-group,[3]
(2) perceived out-group threat,[4] which may manifest itself in narratives of an existential threat posed to the in-group,[5] the belief in a conspiracy of the outgroup,[6] or the belief in an inevitable war between the in- and out-group,[7] and
(3) violence condoning norms,[8] which may include the justification of violence, the glorification of violence via martyrdom narratives or the so-called "warrior mentality",[9] the identification with a violent role model,[10] and perceived hopelessness of alternative solutions.[11]

Figure 1. Proposed Relationships Between Group Alignment and Behavioural Outcome

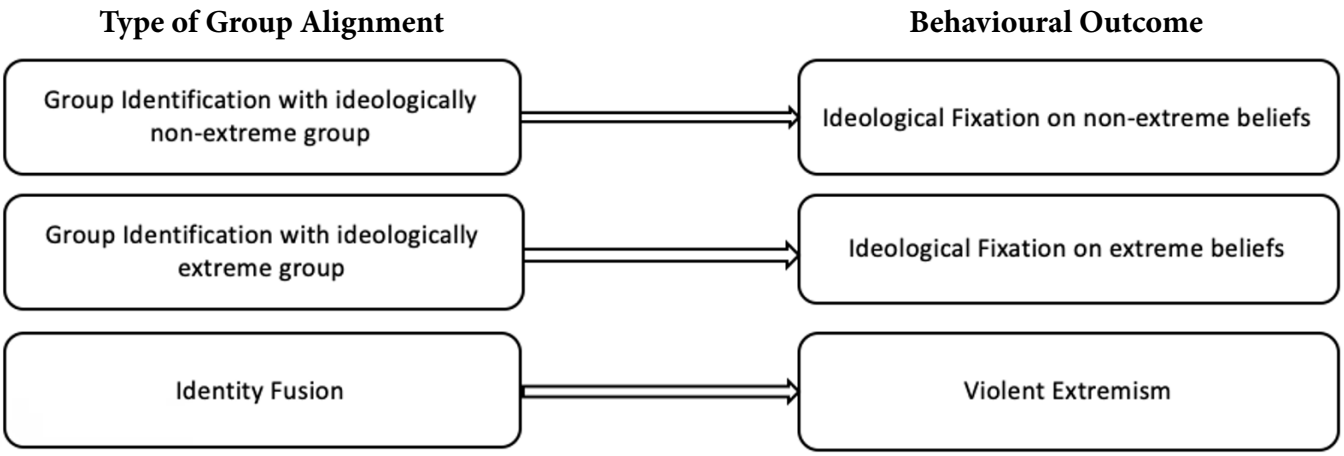
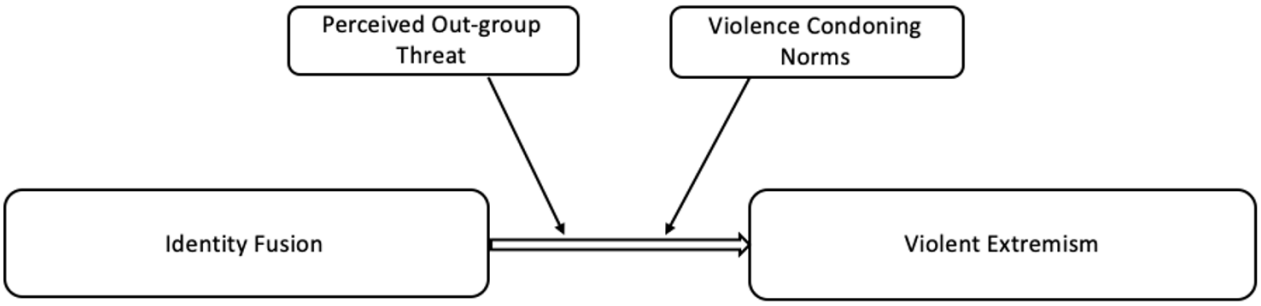


Figure 2. Proposed Relationship Between Fusion and Violence



Meta - Category	Sub-Category	Definition
Group alignment	**In-Group Identification**	*In-Group Identification* describes an individual's sense of belonging to a defined group in social psychology (Pennebaker and Chung 2008). Previous studies found that in-group identification can be reflected in the use of first-person plural pronouns such as "we", "us", "our".[12]
	In-Group Identity Fusion	*In-Group Identity Fusion* is a socio-psychological concept that describes a process where an individual's identity merges with the group identity. This dynamic is usually characterized by the use metaphors of kinship and family relatedness when talking about the in-group: e.g. words such as "brother", "sister", "loyalty" "family" "sons" "daughters" "our blood" "brotherhood" "motherland" "fatherland" might be used to talk about the in-group and/or fellow group members.[13]
Out-Group Entitativity	**Out-Group Slurs**	*Out-Group Slurs* are derogatory terms used in the context of hate speech and extremist texts.[14] They are offensive labels used to describe an entire group of people based on their ethnicity, race, gender, religion or sexuality.[15] Well known examples are "kike", "kufar", "infidel", "fag", "negro", "spic", "the Jew", the n-word or similar terms.[16]
	Out-Group Demonization	*Out-Group Demonization* describes "the attribution of basic destructive qualities to the other",[17] or the blaming of the out-group for the personal misfortunes or the in-group.[18] It usually involves the framing of an out-group as bad, hostile or threatening to the in-group. For example, studies explain that depictions of Jews as the "devil", "sly conspirators", "greedy Shylocks" or "vengeful beneficiaries" have been used to demonize them as a dangerous out-group.[19]
	Out-Group Dehumanization	*Out-Group Dehumanization* "involves viewing others as less than human", for example by describing them as, or comparing them with, animals.[20] Beyond the literal comparison with animals such as "monkey", "donkey, "dog", non-human related words applied to members of an out-group such as "creature", "tame" and "breed" could also be indicative of out-group demunisation.[21]
Out-Group Threat	**Existential Threat to In-Group**	*Existential Threat to In-Group* summarizes the idea of the in-group being threatened with physical or symbolic collective annihilation.[22] This might express itself in the belief that the in-group is facing a genocide or coordinated attack: for instance, some far-right extremist groups argue that white populations are facing an existential threat because they are dying out demographically due to immigration, abortion, and violence against whites.[23]
	Belief in Out-Group Conspiracy	*Belief in Out-Group Conspiracy* denotes a functionally integrated mental system which assumes that "a group of actors collude in secret to reach malevolent goals".[24] A linguistic analysis of the subreddit r/conspiracy found that compared to the control group the conspiracy theory community made more frequent use of words related to the categories "crime", "stealing" and "law".[25]
	Belief in Inevitable War	*Belief in Inevitable War* involves the idea that a war of races, religions, cultures or other opposing groups is looming above the in-group and cannot be prevented, or that a war between the in- and out-group is already under way. Inevitable war narratives are closely linked to "Accelerationism", which describes the desire to trigger a looming and inevitable violent escalation of existing tensions and societal collapse.[26]

Violence Condoning Norms	**Justification of Violence**	*Justification of Violence* include rational or emotional reasonings of why resorting to violence is the best or only solution.[27] For example, research highlighted group norms within jihadist groups that suggested a moral justification of terrorism and violent action via the ideas of pre-emptive action, self-defence or escape from a deleterious condition that requires an immediate action.[28]
	Martyrdom Narrative	*Martyrdom Narrative* describes the glorification of violence and terrorism by framing past or future violent action by in-group members against the out-group as heroic, selfless acts that serve a bigger purpose. For example, the language and symbolism of martyrdom might appear in the form of references to "heroic martyrs", "resistance", "self-sacrifice" or "dying in glory".[29]
	Violent Role Model	*Violent Role Models* may be mentioned in manifestos by invoking well-known perpetrators of genocidal violence as sources of inspiration.[30] For example, authors might indicate support of previously successful terrorists by expressing identification, support or admiration (e.g., "I admire", "I salute", "I support", naming someone "Saint", "God", etc.) for previous terrorists.[31]
	Hopelessness of Alternative Solutions	*Hopelessness of Alternative Solutions* summarizes the perceived failure of non-violent solutions such as political, diplomatic or other peaceful activist means. Authors of manifestos may indicate that they have "nothing to lose" or that "democracy/politics have failed" and therefore resort to more extreme solutions.[32]
Violence Threats	**Calls to Violence**	Calls to Violence cover announcements of violence and/or extreme self-sacrifice committed by the author as well as calls that encourage the manifesto's readers to engage in violence and/or self-sacrifice against a defined out-group. Words such as "kill", "shoot", "hang", "bomb", "slaughter" or "assassinate" may be indicative but calls to violence may also reference specific weapons such as "sniper rifles", "ammonium nitrate", etc.[33]

Appendix 2: Linguistic Markers used in NLP analysis

	Narrative	Detected Keywords
Group Alignment	**In-Group Identification**	*"We"/"Us"/"Our" in combination with* "European", "cultural conservative", "Christian conservative", "conservative", "indigenous", "non-Muslim", "Justiciar Knight", "patriot", "martyr", "nationalist", "my people", "my race", "our race", "anon", "white men", "whites", "Aryan", "true Muslim", "believer", "Muslim community", "ummah", "Muslim society"
	In-Group Identity Fusion	"brother", "sister", "sons", "daughters", "kin", solidarity", "family", "fellow …", "comrades", "my blood", "our blood", "bloodline", "ancestry", "descendant", "ancestor", "brethren" (These terms only indicate identity fusion when used metaphorically to describe the in-group rather than biological family.)
Violence Threats	**Calls to Violence**	"executed", "execution", "punished", "punishment", "death penalty", "kill", "massacre", "attack", "destroy", "retribution", "revenge", "punish", "eradicate", "starve", "die", "torture", "behead", "guns", "must attack", "must fight", "must kill", "give them hell", "must play his part in this revolution", "burn", "shoot", "flamethrowers", "firearm", "weapon", "grenade", "bomb", "set fire", "Molotov", "fight", "brutal steps", "jihad", "bring death to", "forcible overthrow", "revolution"
Out-Group Entitativity	**Out-Group Slurs**	"kike", "nigger", "negro", "spic", "fag", "goyim", "golem", "the Jew", "global Jewry", "pajeet", "bitch", "whore"
	Out-Group Demonization	"traitor", "corrupt", "evil", "enemy", "our enemies", "vicious", "barbaric", depraved", "vile", "puppets", "perversion", "blood libel crimes", "cruel", bloody", genocidal", "sinful", deceitful", "invader", "poison", parasite, "menace", "brutal", "ruthless", " "bloodsucking", "dirty", "deceptive", "treacherous" "poisonous", "oppression" , "oppressive", "shirk" "unbeliever", "immoral" "jahili", "pollute", "demolish", "shake the foundations", "Dar- ul-Harb", "arrogant", "mischievous", "criminal", "deceivers", "liars"
	Out-Group Dehumanization	"animal", "plague", "impure", "brute", "dog", "lower Iq", "lower being", "inferior", "squalid" "parasitic", "parasite", "creature", "trash", "filth", "vermin", "spider", "devil", "monster", "beast", "reptile", "reptilian", "snake", "cockroach", "beneath human skin", "scum"
Out-Group Threat	**Existential Threat to In-Group**	"subjected to", "coerced", "brainwashed", "exterminated", "brutalised", "raped", "terrorised", "ravaged", "robbed", "replace", "subjugate", "make war upon my people" "destroyed", "overwhelmed", "under siege", "under demographical siege", "disenfranchise", "subvert", "destroy", "assault", "kill us", "kill our…", "running out of time", last chance", "enslavement", "suffer", "economic plunder", "condemned to death", destruction of all mankind", "ill society", "at the brink of", "danger", "annihilation", "extinction", "decay"
	Belief in Out-Group Conspiracy	"betray", "betrayal", "sell", "sold", "collude against", "colluded", "conspire", "fake", "fraud", "corruption", "corrupt", "ZOG", "Kalergi", "white genocide", "great replacement"
	Belief in Inevitable War	"war", "battle", "fight", "jihaad" *in combination with* "imminent", "inevitable", "looming", "started", "already"

14. Violence Condoning Norms	**Justification for Violence**	"pre-emptive", "defend", "protect", "self-defense", "self-defence", "forced to fight", "no longer ignore", "act of defense", "purified", "purify", "brutal steps should have been used", "need for jihaad", "reasons for jihaad", "need for war", "the struggle is imposed upon", "natural struggle", "cannot co-exist"
	Martyrdom Narrative	"die in glory", "sacrifice", "knight", "martyr", "dying selflessly", protecting our people", "immortal", "act of preservation", "my death", "defending the work of the Lord", "standing guard", "appears as the herald", "release mankind from servitude", "free from", "freed from"
	Violent Role Model	Mention of the names of previous terrorist attackers or violent political leaders (e.g. Breivik, Tarrant, Hitler, etc.) or specific attack references (e.g. Christchurch, Poway, El Paso, Utoya, Halle, etc.), in combination with terms that indicate perceived role model status such as "hero", "role model", "saint", "inspiring", "inspire", "inspiration", "support", "influenced by"
	Hopelessness of Alternative Solutions	"democracy", "democratic", "peaceful", political", "system", "politics", "dialogue", "passivity" *in combination with* "meaningless", "weakness", "failed", "end", "vanish", "man-made", "jahili", "all societies existing"

Appendix 3: R Codes for Narrative Categories

```
#FUSION
data_filtered_fusion = QAnon[grep("Brother|sister|family|motherland|our blood|fatherland|sons|daughters|kin|my people|my race|our people|European race|ancestry|ancestor|descendant|fellow", QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
nrow(QAnon)
nrow(data_filtered_fusion)/nrow(QAnon)

#VIOLENCE
data_filtered_violence = QAnon[grep("kill|hang|bomb|shoot|slaughter|exectued|execution|punish|death penalty|massacre|destroy|must attack|must fight|revenge|retribution|eradicate|starve|die|torture|behead|burn|bring death to| give them hell|weapon|firearm|assassinate|gun|rifle|knife|grenade|brutal steps|molotov|jihaad|jihad|set fire|revolution|forcible overthrow|flamethrowers|M1-16|ammonium nitrate", QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE, useBytes = TRUE),]
nrow(QAnon)
nrow(data_filtered_violence)/nrow(QAnon)

#SLURS
data_filtered_slurs = QAnon[grep("kike|nigger|negro|dirty jew|spic|fag|goyim|golem|the jew|global jewry", QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
nrow(QAnon)
nrow(data_filtered_slurs)/nrow(QAnon)

#DEMONISATION
data_filtered_demonisation = QAnon [grep("traitor|evil|enemy|corrupt|vicious|barbaric|depraved|vile|puppets|perversion|blood libel|pervert|pedo|blood libel|crime|cruel|bloody|genocidal|sinful|deceitful|invader|poison|parasite|menace|brutal| ruthless|blood-sucking|dirty|deceptive|treacherous|poisonous|oppressive|oppressor|shird|
unbeliever|immoral|jahili|pollute|demolish|shake the foundations|dar ul-harb|arrogant|mischievous|criminal|deceivers|liars", QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
nrow(QAnon)
nrow(data_filtered_demonisation)/nrow(QAnon)

#DEHUMANISATION
data_filtered_dehumanisation = QAnon[grep("animal|plague|impure|brute|dog|lower iq|lower being|inferior|squalid|parasitic|parasite|creature|trash|filth|vermin|spider|devil|monster|beast|reptile|reptiloid|femoid|reptilian|snake|cockroach|beneath human skin|sub human| anti-human|disease|savage|infest|breed|locust|monkey|gorilla|rat|microbe|satan|cancer", QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
nrow(QAnon)
nrow(data_filtered_dehumanisation)/nrow(QAnon)

#EXISTENTIAL THREAT
data_filtered_existentialthreat = QAnon[grep("subjected to|coerced|brainwashed|exterminated|brutalised|raped|terrorised|ravaged|extinction|replacement|genocide|robbed|subjugate|make war upon my people|destroy|subvert|overwhelmed|under siege|demographic siege|disenfranchise|assault|kill us|kill our|kill my|running out of time|run out of time|last chance|enslavement|enslaved|suffer|plunder|condemned to death|destruction of all mankind|at the brink of|endanger|annihiliation|decay", QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
nrow(QAnon)
nrow(data_filtered_existentialthreat)/nrow(QAnon)

#BELIEF IN CONSPIRACY
data_filtered_conspiracybelief = QAnon[grep("betray|betrayal|sell|sold|collude|conspire|fake|fraud|corruption|corrupt|zog|great replacement|white genocide|kalergi", QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
nrow(QAnon)
nrow(data_filtered_conspiracybelief)/nrow(QAnon)

#BELIEF IN INEVITABLE WAR
data_filtered_inevitablewar = QAnon[grep("war|battle|fight|jihad|jihad|collapse|conflict", QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
data_filtered_inevitablewar = data_filtered_inevitablewar [grep("imminent|inevitable|looming|started|already", QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
nrow(QAnon)

# VIOLENCE JUSTIFICATION
data_filtered_violencejustification = QAnon[grep(paste(violencejustification,collapse="|"), QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
nrow(QAnon)
```

```
nrow(data_filtered_violencejustification)/nrow(QAnon)

#MARTYRDOM NARRATIVE
martyr_dist <- function (message) {
 return(min(unlist(lapply(martyr, function(pattern) {
  drop(adist(pattern, message, partial = TRUE)) / nchar(pattern)})))}
QAnon$martyrdom_distance = unlist(lapply(QAnon$message, martyr_dist))

data_filtered_martyrdom = QAnon[QAnon$martyrdom_distance<0.15,]
nrow(QAnon)
nrow(data_filtered_martyrdom)/nrow(QAnon)

#VIOLENT ROLE MODEL
data_filtered_violentrolemodel = QAnon[grep("breivik|tarrant|hitler|crusius|rodger|baillet|earnest|minassian|mcveigh", QA-
non$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
data_filtered_violentrolemodel = data_filtered_violentrolemodel[grep ("hero|role model|saint|inspire|inspiration|inspiring|sup-
port|influenced", QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
nrow(QAnon)
nrow(data_filtered_violentrolemodel)/nrow(QAnon)

#HOPELESSNESS OF ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS
data_filtered_hopelessness = QAnon [agrep("democracy|democratic|peacful|political|system|politics|dialogue|passivity", QA-
non$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
data_filtered_hopelessness = data_filtered_hopelessness [grep ("meaningless|weak|fail|end|vanish|man-made|flawed|jahili|given
up", QAnon$message, ignore.case=TRUE),]
nrow(QAnon)
nrow(data_filtered_holelessness)/nrow(QAnon)
```

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