THE POST INTERNET FAR RIGHT & ECOFASCISM
WITH 12 RULES FOR WHAT PODCAST

THE FINAL STRAW RADIO - AUGUST 21, 2022
TFSR: Would you please introduce yourselves for the audience with any names, preferred pronouns, or other information about yourself that you care to share?

SAM: Yes, my name is Sam Moore, I use he/him pronouns. Someone recently asked me if I had other identifying information, but this name is, of course, a pseudonym. This is not my real name. So I guess the information that we have about ourselves, both of us, we were, until very recently the co-hosts of a podcast called 12 Rules For WHAT, and the author of two books, Post Internet Far Right and The Rise of Eco Fascism. I’ll let Alex say if he wants to dox himself any further than that.

ALEX: I’m Alex, and I use he/him pronouns. I am also the co-author of those two books. I’m still a host of 12 Rules For What We are both anti-fascist activists and researchers as well.

TFSR: I’m excited to have you all on the show. I’ve been an avid listener of your podcast. Since you joined the Channel Zero Network of anarchists podcasts, regular listeners to our show may be familiar with your amazing jungle, but for folks who aren’t familiar with the 12 Rules For WHAT podcast, as the shared project that the books are coming out of, can you speak a bit? Give a brief rundown on the project, its scope, and its goals moving forward from here?

SAM: So maybe I could do the history, because I’ve now left the project as of about two weeks ago. I’ll just say what it was when I was involved. Alex can tell you all about what it will become when it becomes its full self in the future.

So starting in 2018, there was a notable absence in the UK anti-fascist movement of understanding of the far right and the different ways in which it had been shifting and moving and changing and adapting to the conditions of the Internet, and adapting to the kind of different social forces that were at play on the far right in the UK at that time. It’s quite a peculiar time, for the far right in some ways. Through the Cameron period, so that’s from 2010 to 2016 when David Cameron was the Prime Minister, there had been a large street movement called the EDL. Which started actually before that. But the basic idea of the EDL, the English Defense League, was obviously far right, but also quite a quite complex movement. It was often accused of being fascist, I think a lot of people felt it was an apt subscription. I don’t think it was necessarily, retrospectively, but I think

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it was a pretty decent description at the time. It's politics were militantly Islamophobic. Hatred of Muslims was it's ruling idea.

However, in 2017, and 2018, there was a kind of a shift. So the EDL started to decline, it has not become the kind of the most important figure or component of the UK far right and it was replaced, partially because of it’s very charismatic leader, Tony Robinson, left to do other things and became a news grifter or what he described as a ‘citizen journalist.’ He got into various legal troubles, and there was a movement around him being released from prison where he was put for obvious breaches of contempt of court and various other kinds of problems he ran into. That meant that the EDL, which was the clear defined center of gravity on the UK far right side started to dissolve.

It's also true that on the parliamentary wing of the far right, or not parliamentary because they weren’t in Parliament, but the more electoral wing of the far right - UKIP, Brexit, and so on, had basically won. There was this kind of contestation of what Brexit was supposed to now mean and that meant that all kinds of other things were being pulled into the orbit of the far right, and lots of different kinds of things were at play at once.

So 12 Rules For WHAT, just to get to the very long end of that history, intended to understand this conjuncture. The histories that co-informed it, the ways in which the far right had changed its political forms, the way in which it changed the way it organized over the previous 10 years, the rise of the Internet and so on, to get away from the stereotypes of the far right that people have held, which is the all that they are all neo Nazis, (which is not true), or that they’re all just conservatives, (which is also not true). We needed to differentiate, to pull those things apart, and to see what we could do then, as anti-fascists, in order to counter them.

**ALEX:** I would also say that having a broader audience was a good thing that we got, but we would mainly try to talk to the anti-fascist movement as it was in the UK. Because of the kind of misunderstandings or misconceptions about how the far right was currently constituting or constituting at the time, there was kind of a failure to act in a way that would properly oppose those forces as anti-fascist needed to oppose them. So, from the start, we also had discussions about anti fascism, about movements, and how you build movements as well. There was two components to it. It was talking about the far right, but also about anti fascism, which oftentimes goes really un-interrogated as a form of political activity and we wanted to discuss that.
**TFSR:** Now moving forward, are you continuing in the same trajectory now that Sam has left the show?

**ALEX:** Yeah! I think we did some really good stuff. I want to continue doing good stuff. I don’t really have radically different positions from Sam. We agree. I think you kind of have to agree to write the kind of books we did. There’s not gonna be a massive diversion.

**SAM:** If people are looking for gossip about the collapse of 12 Rules, I’m afraid there’s very little. All there is a sense from me that we had completed the project, to some extent, that we set out to do. I think, if you read our two books, there’s a really quite good account of the far right in those books in scholarly areas. The one thing everyone agrees on at an academic conference, is there must be another academic conference. But I also think that you can get to the end of something. I think, for my part, I got to the end of that. I’m sure Alex will produce things that I could never have conceived of. But nevertheless, I feel I’ve come to the end of the exploration of the far right. That’s kind of it, I suppose.

**ALEX:** I suppose there’s the difference there, because I still care about the far right. I think it’s important to oppose whereas, Sam has moved on to...

**TFSR:** Oh yeah he has gone social fascist! [Laughs]

**ALEX:** He was always a Nazi! Just never exposed himself till now. [Laughs]

I was just reflecting on that a bit more seriously, I was thinking about, “was it worth doing on my own?” I was 50/50 about whether to carry on with it, and I kind of got persuaded by a few people in the anti-fascist movement who describe it as like a ‘movement resource.’ I think it has value in itself of being a reflective space for anti-fascists in the UK and elsewhere, as well.

**TFSR:** Sam, you mentioned that you’re not going to be working on the podcast anymore. I wonder if you wanted to shout out your other podcast and the newsletter that you’re moving along with (Collapse) and maybe introduce listeners who haven’t heard it, to what it is, and also tell us what the hell a substack is?
SAM: So I was mentioning that part of the interesting thing about the far right in 2018, was they had won Brexit, but they didn’t know what Brexit meant. Of course, there’s this wonderfully surreal answer from Theresa May, who is the prime minister from 2016 to about 2018 or 2019 perhaps, when she says, “Brexit means Brexit,” which is just beautifully circular. To be clear we didn’t know what Brexit was supposed to be. So there was this sense that across the political spectrum, and including on the far right, lots of people were trying to work out what they thought they meant by Brexit, and therefore impose something on it.

It seems to me that the basic political fact of the rest of our lives will be climate change, right? That will entail not only hotter summers, like we’re currently going through the UK. We now have a summer which is a new thing for the UK. But also it will entail possibly social collapse, something quite slow, but nevertheless, quite sustained. A fairly likely interpretation of what might happen. So that event will happen. But it will also, just like Brexit, require someone to give it some meaning, require someone to articulate what that collapse is, what its story is, what are we supposed to do now, and so on.

It seemed to me that the prudent thing, or the long range strategic thing for the left, is to consider what left wing politics would be, given that basic fact, given the need for extraordinary levels of solidarity over the next century internationally. But also given the need to re articulate a politics that doesn’t contain some sort of brilliant utopia where everything is saved, where everything is transformed. Our politics, essentially, is without a future, but nevertheless, is hopeful in some other sense. If that sounds like a contradiction in terms, if it sounds like I don’t have the specifics worked out, that’s because I don’t.

So the project is to try and find our way to political theory adequate to our moment of collapse, without simply saying, “everything is different now.” And without saying, “everything is the same as it always was,” and we can just carry on as if the left was in the 20th century or the 19th century or like we’re all heading towards the sunny uplands of the future forever. These are not the facts. That’s the project of thinking about collapse now, I think.

TFSR: I think you’ve definitely set yourself up with a very large project that will keep you busy for a long time. That’s really fascinating, though. I’ve been cutting back on podcasts, actually, so I just only now just got around to listening to the first episode. It was really interesting. So I’m looking forward to that.
As you’ve mentioned, you’ve published two books over the last two years, Post Internet Far Right from Dog Section Press, 2021, as well as The Rise of Eco Fascism from Polity Press 2022. First up, congratulations to both of you on this. That’s awesome.

ALEX: Thank you.

TFSR: Yeah. So, Post Internet Far Right... I might call it PIFR from here on out. I was afraid if I called it Piffer, you’d give me a weird look. So I’m going to call it PIFR.

ALEX: Some people call it Piffer.

SAM: Pif is a piece of genuine UK slang, which you can use. So maybe I’ll tell you what that means afterwards. [Laughs]

TFSR: Please take some time to think up what it means. So PIFR kind of felt like a theme park ride, if you don’t mind me saying, it was a sort of a ‘not so fun house,’ the reader passes through on a boat as monsters pop up along the way, a presentation of relationally of organizations, events and modalities, but also taking place on a timeline. That seems kind of like an appropriate approach to setting the development and stage of important questions of how to counter the far right while attempting to avoid the pitfalls of writing 1,000 Page academic treatise or homogenizing all the subject matters by saying, “everyone’s fascist that we don’t like.” I do want to note that while I made that little crappy metaphor of the monster house, I don’t mean to say..

SAM: It’s a great metaphor!

TFSR: Thank you very much. You can use it, if you want to. Second edition, you can put that on the back of it. I don’t mean to say that the approach was a menagerie of freaks, to use a phrase (I’m paraphrasing) that you’ve said on the show before, the focus on individual instances, or events, or people personalities, that tend to draw a lot of shallow recognition and attention from people, but more as like a mapping of an ecosystem of relationships.

So first up, I’m wondering if you can talk a bit about this approach to writing your book, how you sort of created this wending path to take the readers on and share your definitions of terms like ‘far right’ and ‘fascist,’
why is it important to be clear about your language when talking about our enemies?

ALEX: Well, I think the structure of the book is quite deliberate. We start off with a chapter on feelings, the very kind of blobby feelings you get when you’re online and depressed, or online and angry. We kind of expand out from that very individual, very singular point of reference inside someone’s head and their individual feelings, out to ultimately eco fascism and the end of the world.

In that gap, we kind of trace their journey of expanding far right variation, basically. We wanted to do that, because oftentimes people see these different scales on a level on their own. There’s no connecting them together, there’s no understanding how someone could be radicalized and what that could mean and how that radicalization then transfers to more real world “political action.” Oftentimes, it’s the neo Nazi teenager who commits a mass atrocity is sprung up out of these very pat reasons for radicalization. Like he was bullied or he saw some bad memes and then went bad.

We wanted to understand how someone can go through a process and oftentimes, it’s a very short process as well. There is this idea of the pipeline and we wanted to introduce other kinds of mechanisms in which people could become fascist, or members of the far right, or Nazis or whatever. So also talk about ruptures, we talk about breaks in people’s political thinking and political activity, just as much as a slow, steady pipeline, which we think has been the ‘go to’ easy answer for a lot of these questions.

SAM: I think that the arguments of the book, is the structure of the book. They are the same thing. So it is a winding path, but I think it’s supposed to be also an ascent through a collection of ways, as Alex was saying, I think is really good phrase, “blobby feelings.” There’s a certain sense of numinous things gliding inside you. If you ever just sat for a long time, or even just like a short while and just thought about the kind of various things that are going on inside you, which I recommend doing, they are indeterminate, they are vague, they are inexpressive. So politics can’t just rely on them kind of being fully formed. I think we send the book that it has to make them march. The purpose of the infrastructure of the far right that we explore through the first few chapters after the feelings, is the things that would make these feelings politicized essentially, which will make them able to reproduce themselves, will provide a community in which they live, will
provide a means by which they can be disseminated throughout the world, and so on.

So those are all the kinds of different aspects of that, and that loops through action on the streets in the classical fascist mode, it loops through online communities, it loops through joining organizations, most prominently right now in the UK - Patriotic Alternative, most common in the US perhaps - Patriot Front, but also the Proud Boys and other things like that. So there are there are all kinds of ways in which these feelings are reproduced, remade, politicized, articulated, drawn out and so on.

On this thing about the precision of terminology, far right and fascism. In that book we actually don’t give a good definition of either. We do note that there are gradations, I should say the definition of Eco fascism are absent. It’s not that we shirked that, we delayed it for another book. So the need for a precise terminology, is not because the world is full of precise objects, which are easily categorized and easily found and easily kind of put in their place. The reason for precise terminology is strategic. The need for that is so that you can do something with the object.

I’m trying to think of the right metaphor. So on a coastal wall, a wall next to the sea. You get these measurements like, “This is how far the tide was up. This how far the tide is up,” and they have numbers on them. But political politics isn’t like that. You can’t say, “oh, this person is this radical. Seven out of 10 radical. This person is nine out of 10 radical. This person is 10 out of 10 radical, you really need to be worried.” This is not possible, partially, because the coastal wall itself is going up and down. Like it’s kind of sinking, kind of moving up or down all the time, there are warps in the wall and the way the measurement works, so it doesn’t quite work. But at least what the precision of the terminology gives you a sense of how the dynamics of the sea are changing or something. This metaphor is really torturous. It’s making your metaphor about the fun-house seem exceptionally crystal clear, although I think it’s a really good metaphor, actually, I really do like it.

So the idea is that it’s not that the world is precise, the world is very messy, and there’s a need to like strategize about the world in order to bring it into its clarity. Not because the clarity pre exists and is out there, and you just kind of go and find it. But because politics is a matter of making clear making distinctions and organizing the world in a certain kind of way. And that requires you to think in a certain kind of strategic way as well.

ALEX: Also a kind of trap, quickly before we get into our actual definition, which Sam is gonna give because I can’t remember what we actually wrote...
The point of being very definitely clear and defined is oftentimes a tendency on the radical left within anti-fascist movements, and indeed, even wider society, is the way to label something as a bad thing that we must reject wholeheartedly is to is to label it a fascist thing. This is really tricky, because then you start kind of merging lots of different things together into one label, which is very unusable imposing an opposing all different kinds of stuff.

Oftentimes people talk about the transphobes, TERFS, being fascists. It’s like, “okay, we can acknowledge the relationships that transphobic radical feminists have with the Christian Evangelical right wing groups in America and the UK, we can acknowledge those alliances without putting these people who self identify as feminists in with people who definitely don’t self identify as feminists. This is obviously not a defense of transphobia or transphobes. It’s to acknowledge that there are things that are not fascist which are also awful and should be opposed and fought against and worked against as well.

So, oftentimes, in certain kinds of more liberal strains of anti fascism as well, the kind of mass terror of the border, or the mass terror of the prison system, or of policing in general, is kind of put into the realm of acceptability. Because it’s non fascist, and it’s not. The border isn’t fascist, it’s part of the ongoing mechanisms of neoliberal capitalism. You know, it’s the norm. It’s not a fascist thing. It’s a liberal capitalist thing.

So, to draw in all of the other stuff into our critiques, we need to be very clear about what they are and what they aren’t. We’ve said, and this has been a big theme for the show is, “where is the biggest harm, societal harm, being caused on the broad spectrum of the right?” You can look at something like Atomwaffen, they did murders, but they kind of merely murdered each other. The biggest threat on the right comes from Border Force, or the Republican Party, or the overthrow of Roe V Wade and the abolition of abortion in half the states of America. So that’s where we need to acknowledge that stuff is not necessarily fascist, but also that it should be vehemently opposed.

**SAM:** One thing Alex said that’s kind of the danger of the thing I was mentioning before about the strategy, is you get into the same kind of traps that Alex is talking about when you pursue that notion of strategic too far. Because then what you do is you decide that whatever you aren’t capable of opposing must be fascism. So, if you’re really good at setting the discourse on Twitter, if that’s what you got as a movement, then you’re gonna decide that the things you need to oppose our part of the discourse on Twitter.
And if you're really good at opposing street movements, then you're going to decide the thing you need to oppose is street movements, or if you have a legal apparatus, you're going to decide that thing you need to oppose is the legal apparatus.

In some sense, although I've argued in favor of a strict strategic-ness, or the use of a political strategy to guide definitions, at the same time, it is essential that we don't simply just decide that whatever we happen to have, must be the right answer, because the far right is always changing. You're gonna build capacity to oppose one part of it, it's going to change, and then you're going to be stuck opposing an iteration of it, because that was in the past. There are some really key examples of this in the UK in particular, I don't want to open old wounds with the audience, maybe I won't go into that.

**TFSR:** Anti fascism in the United States’ conception and the way that it could be adopted by a lot of people who were liberals and who were radical leftists, and who are radical centrists is because they can point to this one historical example where, in the 1940’s the US sent military across the ocean and then they fought against this absolute evil above all other evils. So, either something equates with that absolute evil, or it doesn’t. It also puts us in the same boat, as it were, as the institution that was continuing to impose Jim Crow at that period of time in the US South and supporting redlining in northern states and such.

**SAM:** I think it gets through like a conception of the global far right. It’s important, particularly now, thinking about the way in which, for example, the government of Modi, and the government of Bolsonaro, and the erstwhile government of Trump in America, and various other far right movements around the world, how do they all intersect? How do they kind of how to tactics flow between them? How can you make linkages? That was as true for the historical things you’re talking about? Right? There’s an interesting book, I’m not going to affirm it totally, but an interesting book called *Hitler’s American Model*, which looks at the way in which certain aspects of race law in the US were implemented by the Nazis, to the extent that some of the Nazis, even quite seedier Nazis, at some points regard the US having gone too far, which is, of course, not historically how it’s borne out. It will not be correct to equate Jim Crow with the Holocaust.

**TFSR:** But the Reservation system, the use of smallpox blankets...
**SAM:** So most of the time, most of the things they draw directly, are actually about the policing of Black Americans, rather than the Reservation system and so on. Because when the Nazis are doing this in 1930’s, they regard the indigenous population as essentially a kind of vanished thing, it’s always in terminal and inevitable decline, a kind of defeated race. It’s interesting that to some extent, actually, the indigenous peoples of America are treated as a kind of a warning for Germans of what will befall them if they do not fight for their racial superiority. They will be crushed, as they see Indigenous Americans as having been. There is a whole complex history there about the way in which they understand again, this question of political events. Then their interpretation, their meaning comes later, this whole question about how they understand the genocide of the Americas as both a glorious achievement of the white people, and also simultaneously as a warning of what will befall them.

**TFSR:** That whole holding yourself as a discriminated or oppressed population simultaneous to viewing yourself as being Superman and elite and whatever, I’d like to get back to that in an upcoming question.

Pivoting a little bit. So technology and online sociality have shaped how the far right organizes, as well as everyone else in society, in some surface ways what it looks like. Alex set a challenge in its 2019 episode of Dissident Island, unless I’m getting that wrong, in the wake of the Christchurch shooting for anti-fascists to understand the new spheres of radicalization that were visible-ized by that tragedy for a lot of us. I feel like PIFR was meant to be a tool to further that challenge and as more and more interaction is occurring online, especially through the COVID pandemic, and with new platforms, there’s a continual need to grow and learn that terrain.

I’m wondering if you can talk a little bit about some of the shifts in anti-fascist activism, how you feel the movements have done ala the far right and fash and counter organizing online? Are there any projects you know that are working on the cutting edge, delving into challenging the spread of fashy ideas in virtual or augmented reality?

**ALEX:** Do you want to go first? I went first last time.

**SAM:** How well did we sculpt the Internet? Or how well do we understand the Internet in that book? Well, the book is now one year old, which means that is written two years ago. Therefore the Internet has changed immeasurably since that. There’s always this sense that one is kind of discussing
something that has happened a long time ago in the past when trying to talk about the dynamics of Internet spaces.

One thing that’s happened in particular, is the uneven distribution of things like discord servers, I just need to be really concrete about it, the far right are using discord servers more than they were when I first started writing the book, but they’re also using discord servers less than they were at the peak of the book, because Discord had a clampdown on its terms or conditions. To actually impose them, as opposed to being kind of more or less laissez faire. Telegram continues to be an important workplace where far right meet.

But I think we shouldn’t get too focused on exactly what the interface is supposed to tell us about the far right in general. What is that supposed to inform us about? I think we described in the book. We talked about a realm of affordances. There’s kind of a sense in which, and affordances is like... It’s a thing and an object, or a thing in the environment that presents itself to you as an opportunity for you to do something. So for example, I’m holding out a mug. But it’s so obvious that the way I’m holding the mug is the wrong way to hold the mug. Right, the handle is here. I’m supposed to hold the mug by the handle. This mug has been designed to have an affordance that I can choose to pick up or not. But as you can see, I’m holding it the wrong way.

And that’s important, because in some ways, the way the Internet is designed, is as a collection of affordances for action, right? Like the ‘Share’ button looms very large, it’s like, “Please share this thing.” There’s a there’s a consistent vocabulary across websites, and across designs of operating systems to make everything very easy to use. It’s like you’re kind of in an environment where the whole of the thing, everything around you, is this big handle offering itself to you. So, this space is extremely designed and nevertheless, it’s totally possible like it is with a mug, to use it wrong, and to use it against the grain.

I think there’s been excess, at least in the liberal press, about the kind of determinism of technology over far right politics. I can think of some really heinous articles. For example, the article in Rolling Stone about 4chan, which declares that 4chan... the posts are displayed according to an arcane logic, impossible to work out for mere mortals. “Guys, they are in chronological order. The top post is the most recent one, and then it goes down.” It’s not that hard to work out. So, this mystification of the Internet that I think happens in lots of the press, and we will try to cut through that. You’re
on the Internet, you know what it’s like on the Internet. Then you read an article, you’re like, “That’s not what it’s like to be on the Internet.”

So how does the far right use the Internet now? I couldn’t tell you, because I stopped doing this stuff some time ago, but Alex did not. So he can tell you.

**ALEX:** Okay, so how well has the anti-fascist movement done countering the far right online? I think it’s a tricky question to answer because how do you define successful opposition online? One kind of marker of success, of course is deplatforming. So like a certain prominent far right account is taken down, there is cause for celebration, people will move on to the next one. The Internet is a mechanism for disseminating information, people dox people, it’s shared widely, there is some kind of regulatory pressure on that person to stop being a fascist or stop being a Nazi, or stop being on the far right, and things like this.

I think what we need to acknowledge is the fact that the Internet is owned by these giant companies, and these very rich people, it’s something we can’t ever get away from. So we’ve always talked about just on its own, appealing to our Internet masters to delete certain fascists or reject people from their platforms... That can only be one tiny part of what we need to do. Ultimately, in my opinion, the way anti fascism is successful is building movements offline, street movements, investigatory collectives, whatever, in order to bring opposition into the real world.

In terms of doxing, it is really useful to be able to spread awareness about a particular individual or a particular organizer, I think we do need to be careful. I think this is a particularly American anti-fascist movement phenomenon of because basically doxing any member of any far right organization as a thing that must happen. The problem with that is that it has some kind of disciplinary function, some of those people who are adopted will stop being fascists. But if there’s a doxing without consequence, then it starts to lose a lot of its power as well. What you end up creating is a movement of out and proud Nazis who don’t mind being very fascist in their public lives, online, wherever. Then you have a problem, which needs to be opposed in a different way.

So basically, I’m just coming back to the fact that it’s quite difficult to measure a successful online opposition. Because the Internet is ever changing and ever moving around.
**SAM:** The sense in which you can kind of like push things, it’s kind of a system with lots of water in it or something. You squeeze one part of it and the water just flows somewhere else, you can’t compress the water, you can’t get rid of it. That’s a bit pessimistic, maybe, as a metaphor.

I should say that in addition to... I am less skeptical than Alex of the utility and power of large card companies to moderate things on their platforms. After the Christchurch shooting, there was a thing called the Christchurch call, which was begun by the government of New Zealand and France, signed on to by Facebook, Google, all kinds of big Internet companies. They’ve done a relatively good job at removing some extremist content. Definitely, like the more kind of terroristic and neo Nazi elements of things have been pretty effectively removed because of that. That is a serious victory. I am, of course, also slightly worried about the kind of the creeping States that kind of comes and does your anti fascism for you.

Of course, in Europe, we have models of anti-fascist states that are constitutionality anti-fascist, Germany is the most obvious example. It is illegal to be fascist in Germany. The German police enforce that law very strictly. It’s not easy to be to be a neo Nazi in Germany for very good reasons. I don’t think the German state employees that law upon the left, as far as I’m aware, I don’t think there’s ever been the kind of example of that happening.

I mean, this is something particular about Germany, that other countries wouldn’t do as do as well. But I’m less terrified of the powers of the States and giving them more capacity to organize civil society. Why am I saying this? Maybe I don’t believe any of that. But I said it now. So I’m going to stick with it.

**TFSR:** Out of pure stubbornness. While it may be difficult to be a fash, like an out and out fash, in the way that people aren’t marching around Germany for the most part flying Nazi flags. However, you’ve had this ongoing crisis where it turns out that members of security forces have been participating in secret telegram groups and organizing among themselves, or then you’ve got people that are flying some old preexisting German flag in replacement of the Nazi flag, and it technically doesn’t check that mark on the box and showing up at Q ANON events until somebody can write that into law than the government’s unable to respond to it in that way.

I guess what I’m wondering also, in addition to what you all have said is not so much and as it’s been pointed out, you compress the thing and then the water comes out in different places. It seems like the building of the skill set of being able to address the changes as they occur by trying to look for innovation
on far right uses of the Internet, not just looking at new platforms, and not just breaking encryption or actually just finding weaknesses and code to get the contents of whatever Discord or Rocket Chat is happening. I wonder if there’s any groups that you’re aware of online, or networks that are public that have been pretty good about keeping an eye on developments and far right applications of technology for organizing? It’s okay if you don’t.

**ALEX:** I would say that the leaks that have come and been published by people like Unicorn Riot, for example, has been really useful to researchers. There is a there is a contingent of antifascist online who have the ability to breach some of these platforms, or at least get into these spaces like Discord. That has proved very useful, like the leaking of the Iron March forum, all the messages, all the DMS, all the profiles, has been materially useful to investigators in the UK, for example. Researching stuff that had come out past National Action, after that was proscribed.

As a society, we still haven’t particularly worked out how to... People share around privacy manuals and how to be secure online, but the mass of people have no understanding of how to do that, there is still an ever increasing trove of information out there if you know how to find it. That is materially useful to anti-fascist movements, and it has been. There’s a group of which I am peripherally involved with in the UK called Red Flare, who have made use of this information quite a lot.

**SAM:** In providing investigations for the Times, and other newspapers in the UK, as well as publishing their research.

**TFSR:** Unless anyone had anything else to say I was gonna move on to the next question.

**SAM:** I was just going to say about the German case right? So there’s the thing called, I’m going to horribly mispronounce this. Reichsbürgerbewegung. It means Reich People’s Movements, or Reich Citizens Movements, in general. And it’s essentially a German Q Anon. The main way in which things like fascist and Nazi sentiment get channeled, because they are definitely there in German society, I’m not denying that there’s a problem with neo Nazis. But the way in which they get channeled is not much more peculiar, much more conspiratorial, much more syncretic movements, like Q Anon in the US, right? There’s no part of US politics more well stated, and this
is true for UK as well, than. “We don’t like Hitler.” Hitler is the ultimate enemy even for much of the US far right. Because what justifies the US’s place in the world is the moral authority it gets from crushing Nazism. It crushes fascism, it’s capitalist, it’s not fascist, it’s not communist. It defeats both these enemies. That’s what gives the US it’s right to hegemony. It’s a right by conquest of the global order.

The UK, although it’s not hegemonic in the same way as the US nevertheless, also thinks about the right very deeply. Therefore, there’s a need to not express fascism in terms of like sieg heiling, and Roman salutes, and doing silly walks in the streets. There’s a need to kind of express it in these different peculiar ways. That’s obviously much more acute and much more concrete in Germany. Where waving a swastika in the street will not only get you proscribed like it will in the UK, or punched in the head like it would in the US, but will also get you arrested, thrown in jail.

**TFSR:** I will say I was warned not to wear my RAF shirt when I was in Germany, because apparently it is illegal to wear symbols of the RAF, which is interesting, but definitely not the same scale as what you’re talking about with swastikas. That’s a good point. I appreciate that.

A major contradiction in far right thought often is a simultaneous uplifting of the capital “I” individual as a downtrodden elite, as well as the subsumption of that individual to a leader who represents the greatest possibilities of the collective. This is kind of adjacent to the ‘to many fears in the reich’ problem. This brings us to the topic of grifters and influencers. I feel like looking back to the position of the alt right, generally as an umbrella, it’s street power and media presence. There was an amazing groundswell of talking heads and swarms of neck beards and trads ready to show up in the streets during the heady days of 2016 through 2019. Where are those influencers and swarms now, have they retreated to walled gardens online or been successfully de-radicalized and re radicalized towards an anti racist position? And I wonder if you have any anecdotes that you want to share?

**ALEX:** I think these things are again, fairly hard to track. Obviously the alt right collapsed quite spectacularly. What we’ve seen in its place has become these massively fragmented subcultures, and micro movements in between the bigger things that still remain, for example, the followers of Nick Fuentes, the proud boys would be another example of that. And, of course, ultimately Q Anon.
It's not clear that the alt right morphed into Q Anon. I think Q Anon comes from a different place, really. It's not made up for the same demographics. But what we think is going to happen is these kind of fragmentary bits and pieces of online far right subcultures and online far right activity, are going to kind of reform themselves in some form. We are beginning to see those kind of moves happening behind the activity, for example, January 6, we had an episode on it at the time. You can see some of those movements coming in behind it and going forward in defense of it, and in defense of Trump's actions in the run up and on the day of January 6, you can see formations occurring.

Most importantly, we've seen the capitulation of the Republican Party to much more extreme explicit far right movements and ideas than they ever were in the Trump era. Trump kind of opened the door in many respects to these things. There was a general kind of acceptance of the of the “crazies” in order to give their sclerotic party some kind of vitality. But what we're seeing is that is those kinds of people, now I'm being more institutionalized within the party, and much more open and explicit relationships as well.

So the kind of danger of this is, the alt right, it was always difficult to work out, when it did kind of materialize in the streets, it was always quite chaotic, always quite incoherent in many ways. You saw that in Charlottesville, where there was a lots of people there, but it was all very cacophonous. The danger, of course, is if these online movements are adopted by the Republican Party, it seems increasingly that it is, these forms, these very extreme forms of politics and very reactionary form of politics will be given an institutional form. We can expect to see much bigger, much more consequential changes in government in the US because of it.

**SAM:** Yeah, that’s also my sense of how things have moved. A shift from this micro influencer model, where people are often directly monetizing through being on different platforms where they share adverts, or through super chats. This kind of thing. Directly monetizing their capacity to talk to a camera on far right in the period of 2015 to 2018, or thereabouts. Then the decline of that economy, there’s a recession, essentially, in demand for this, and there’s a consolidation around a few very key influences.

The other really important part here is the rise in America of Tucker Carlson, and the kind of the increasing centrality of Tucker Carlson to the American media landscape. Because Tucker Carlson, unlike, say, Bill O'Reilly before him, will say the kind of more or less extreme things that
the US right were saying amongst themselves, and the far right were saying amongst themselves with these micro influencers. But he’ll do it in a way it’s much more slick, sarcastic. He’s much better at interviewing people than anyone else is, he knows much more than other people. And he has an extremely clearly defined political worldview. He’s not incoherent. He’s not difficult to listen to. Whenever something embarrassing happens on his show. It’s to the embarrassment of the other person on the show. He’s very good at not embarrassing himself. In this kind of existence, Tucker Carlson on TV, these micro influencers just can’t compete. In the same way as the local bookstore can’t compete with Amazon. It’s the same dynamics. So Carlson is Amazon. He’s just taking all your all your demand. There’s a sense in which I think that’s really one of the important parts of it.

Also, Carlson allows for direct connection between the movement and its institutional structure. You can just ring up the Supreme Court Justices. There’s a connection which no one on the far right was able to do. Richard Spencer, does not have Clarence Thomas’s phone number, obviously, but Tucker Carlson does, right? It maps together these different parts of the far right.

There’s also a kind of a sense in which that seems much more palatable to the right wing party, to donors and so on, which is where the kind of the motor of this stuff comes from. I would assume that those big funders, who fund lots of US far right, are breathing a sigh of relief that Richard Spencer is no longer the force he was, or many people on the alt right are no longer the force they were. There’s a sense of almost relief, because everything is kind of coming back into the institutional setting of being kind of therefore much better coordinated amongst its various parts, which is why the far right as an institutional force, is having so many victories in the US right now, even as the far right as a movement is splitting up and going in different directions and kind of not cohering in the same kind of way was maybe even last year, or like maybe five years ago.

**TFSR:** So you kind of talked about this in a recent episode of your podcast, or the last episode that, for instance, Sam, you were a part of about how this is not the approach in the UK that the Conservative Party, the Tories, have towards holding power and towards pulling in folks from the extreme? Can you talk a little bit about that difference?

**SAM:** Yeah, so the Conservative Party is an attempt to respond... It’s a flexible political organization with a very long history, which responds to the
task it has, which is to govern British capitalism. British capitalism is not US capitalism, but they have important key functional differences in their position to in the global economy. The UK is a financial superpower. But it’s not important as a military power. It’s not important as a manufacturing power. It’s kind of important as a cultural power. Like it has very famous institutions, the BBC, NHS, the Royal Family, it has things that it can export around the world, it’s kind of institutional forms. It’s not for nothing that a lot of the post colonial constitutions, when people are kind of hunting around for a constitution to base their system on, they go for the US one, or the UK, one the French one. Those are normally the three models that are employed.

The UK is a big cultural empire, but mostly it’s a financial empire. It’s just a global financial power. So the task of managing that does not necessarily include questions of the relationship between the UK and its military as a kind of heroic and unimpeachable guarantor of collective security. We don’t have that relationship to the military in the UK. People walk around with their army uniforms in near where I live, but no one stops them and thanks them for their service. Whereas the US is the global hegemon, whose function is to make the US stay in that position by forcing everyone else to buy dollars in order to buy oil. It guarantees that people will buy it oil and trade oil by threatening to militarily intervene globally. Everyone else funds its military by keeping the dollar more powerful and stronger than it would otherwise be. That’s the position for US.

In that position, you can well imagine that being really intensely nativist in your politics, valorizing the military as a particularly impressive unimpeachable and valiant dimension of life, valorizing conquest and domination and violence, these are all integral parts of what American capitalism does on a global scale. There’s not necessarily a surprise that those things come out in the politics.

The other thing to say is that the UK was a colonial power, but the US is still a colonial situation. Still colonization going on in the US. It’s a live aspect. The unreconciled, the unfinished process of colonization, is the other kind of thing that informs the US, which doesn’t inform the UK. It isn’t there as much. Obviously, the UK is a colonial power, but in regards in its self conception, colonization is having kind of ended in 1948 when we gave back India. That’s kind of the way in which the UK likes to imagine itself as a colonial power. I think that’s true. Alex is grimacing. I think that’s the way the UK likes to imagine it’s relation to colonialism.
ALEX: The thing about the Tories is that they have an ability to absorb the far right political positions and energies without actually inviting the far right into them necessarily all that much. And so you see it in various different waves of the far right activity in the UK. For example, the National Front, that was built in the late 1970’s and was completely kind of absorbed by Thatcher-ism and Thatcher in a way. It wasn’t as if Thatcher took on these far right elements into her party, it’s that she took on their positions and stole their energy and built Thatcher-ism and neoliberalism as it is along with people in the US.

In the same way, the sting that was taken out of the EDL, and these movements in the 2010’s was the very explicit institutionalization of what Theresa May called “the hostile environment” to migrants, to refugees, and to asylum seekers. We’re gonna make this a hostile environment to anyone who’s coming into the country. That was basically an adoption of far right politics without adopting the far right.

You can see the kind of ingraining of that within the modern contemporary Conservative Party in things like the policy of deportations to Rwanda, which is very unclear whether that’s ever going to happen, whether they’re actually going to go through with it, but was another one of these moves of creeping authoritarianism explicitly geared against the kind of hippie lefties, Extinction Rebellion, and the disruptive elements of various movements, and a clamping down on those things. Most importantly, clamping down on unapproved by the State migration. I don’t really know how to say it, un-official migration.

TFSR: In some ways, that description kind of makes me think of the way that the Democratic Party in the US relates to the progressive politics. It’s sort of absorbing and identifying itself with those causes, maybe absorbing individuals, and then shifting them into neoliberal politics that they already had going on. But it appears in some ways to be the party of labor, the party of immigrants, the party of multiculturalism, or whatever, or feminism, at the same time.

A group that you’ve mentioned frequently on the show is Patriotic Alternative in the UK. I wonder if you’d say a few words about where you see this group today and why you consider it to be a growing threat? In the US context, I know it’s not your fishbowl, as it is mine, but we do take up a lot of space. So I know you’re educated on what’s going on the side of the pond. Where do you pin groups like Patriot Front in terms of level of threat as a street fascist group?
ALEX: Patriotic Alternative, for people who don’t know, it’s a UK fascist... They kind of danced around the term but they are pretty a fascist organization founded by a guy called Mark Collette, who had an extensive career in the British National Party, which was the last mass fascist, far right party, electoral party, before they collapsed in 2010. What makes them a particular threat is that at the moment, they’re entirely uninterested in building street demonstrations, i.e. building through things that are easily opposed by anti-fascists.

This is a break with the classic tactic of building UK far right parties and movements, which is this kind of approach that’s called ‘March and Build.’ So you have a march you bring people into the march, it’s vital, it’s exciting, they want to go to the next March. This is a classic case of the EDL, where they kind of toured the country building these big marches. Then the idea is you grow your organization on the back of these things. The problem with that, of course, is that these situations become targets of anti-fascists, and once enough anti-fascist power has been built up or an organization’s happened, they are opposed to the point where they’re either smashed as got happened in a couple of instances in confrontations in Dover, which was hours of running street battles which resulted in about 50 members of the far right and fascists being sent to prison for kind of quite extensive prison sentences. About two or three anti-fascists receiving the same thing. There’s obviously an unbalanced there and ultimately, those instances destroyed that movement that was growing in Dover.

What Patriotic Alternative is focusing on is what they call ‘white community building.’ So it’s very private event, their politics are explicitly very racist. They talk about the extinction of white people in the UK, they talk about the need to deport non white people. It’s very much a racial politics. But what they actually do apart from the leafleting and whatever is going on hikes or doing fitness activities and fitness clubs or these private, very difficult to oppose things which is meant to build this white community. They have a director of white owned and white friendly businesses. There’s a tea company, there’s various different things. The idea is to build this kind of separatism, at least in the short term.

Colette, the leader of Patriotic Alternative, his history and his kind of political training is in these confrontational marches. It feels like he’s found a way to build a base of power both in number of activists that are actively organizing for Patriotic Alternative, without the opposition that goes along with it. I think that there’s a real danger there, because they’re quite hard to impose without having an extra level of information about their activities,
their private schedules, for example. You don’t get this stuff, usually. So, there’s a danger that anti-fascist don’t try to oppose them, because it’s very difficult to, and therefore, this kind of group is allowed to build itself essentially, unimpeded.

What we do know is that kind of form of organizing has created a level of... I don’t want to use the term softness, because it implies a kind of macho thing. But, there’s a kind of fragility to the activists, because they haven’t faced regular confrontation or because they’re not hardened street fighters, like the UK far right scene has traditionally been, it means that when they do get opposed, it’s actually fairly effective.

There was a there was an incident in Kent a couple of years ago, in which a PA hike walk was very severely disrupted. And it took about two years for that group to get itself together again, and reconstitute itself. Because there wasn’t that same level of resilience. In the 80’s, when we had bands like screwdriver, the lead singer of screwdriver was regularly having his window smashed, was regularly getting beaten up on the street, and was continuing to be a neo Nazi singer and organizing and organizing Blood and Honor and all this kind of stuff. He had it as part of his life style. You can’t say the same thing about PA today. So one thing that has been successful has been these investigations that’s been happening about them as well. The way the media has turned to them in recent months, there was a quite interesting documentary about them on Channel Four and things like this. So I think the increased attention will draw more anti-fascists into opposing them. But yeah, I’m gonna stop.

TFSR: So the final chapter of PIFR share some challenges to antifascist organizers including the scope of our work and our vision as well as our breakout of subculture and into coalition’s. For those of us who are trying to do this work, can you break down some of the pitfalls and weak spots that the book talks about? Or that you’ve come across that you want to share? Where do you see some room for improvement? Give us some tekmil?

SAM: So I guess there are two things I want to say. One is that we make a distinction in the book, sliding scale perhaps, between minimum and maximum anti-fascism. Minimum anti Fascism is the actually fairly recent practice of anti fascism, which is that you find the people who are doing the sieg heils, or waving the swastikas, and you trying to stop them from organizing politically. There’s no political content to that in the sense that you don’t try and oppose them discursively, you don’t try like argue with them.
just try and stop them from organizing. And you do that against people who everyone would agree, possibly even them, that they are fascists or neo Nazis or whatever. You oppose those groups. That’s minimum anti fascism.

Then there’s maximum anti fascism. Maximum anti-fascism, at its fullest extent, is just whatever it takes to stop the conditions for fascist organizing happening at all. Right? So at the very limit of that, that means like transitioning to a non capitalist society that doesn’t revolve around personal domination as a whole. Right? As you can see, there’s a lot of stuff in the middle, between these two things. I’m not saying that minimum anti-fascism is good, or that like maximum anti-fascism is good. I’m just saying that there are attempts that represent totally different poles of a total artifact of strategy. And we’re always moving between these two poles.

I think a lot of the mistakes in anti-fascist movement have been down to an attempt to basically to fixate on one of these two ends of the spectrum. It’s only anti fascism, if you’re opposing people who are actually fascist, actual neo Nazis operating in the streets, or it’s only anti-fascism if you’re doing the deep work of transforming the whole of society so that fascism is not even possible anymore.

I think there are there are arguments in favor of both. Maximum anti-fascism is of course, much more difficult project in some ways, because it is essentially the same as the left as a scale, but there are lots of kinds of other medium anti-fascisms. Minimized. Fascism is much more physically risky, much less politically risky. There’s a kind of a trade off here between the different kind of aspects of doing that work. So that’s the general framework in which I think it’d be useful to think about the way in which anti-fascism is done as a strategic thing and obviously there is lots more in the book on that.

The other thing that I think is a kind of a big pitfall about anti-fascism, in general, is that anti-fascism has a kind of an uneven rhythm. I think I say sometimes that it’s like a third or fourth order consequence of financial crises, which are by their nature are predictable, right? There is a big financial crisis in capitalism. This becomes a crisis of unemployment, or crisis in the economy more generally, and then there are far right responses that mediate that crisis and try and turn it something else. To mediate fury about the declining conditions of life, and try to get to blame Muslims, or blame on the whoever it is. Then anti-fascism responds to that.

Because of that, because you can’t predict the sequence of things that aren’t actually responding to, you get into situations where there are long periods of time, where there’s just not a very clear far right threat. So at
least in the UK, what’s been happening, what’s happened in the past, is
that people have said, “Okay, well, we’re anti-fascists. There must be some-
thing for us to oppose. Let’s find some fascists.” And not in some ways, wait-
ing for there to be some fascists. So you end up kind of conjuring people,
boogeyman, for you to oppose. Conjuring people who you might regard as
not particularly fascists, like Alex talked about before, people who are bad
in lots of ways, but are not adequately opposed by the kind of tactics that
anti-fascism has got useful for it or was able to use. So you simply having
the proverbial hammer and trying to find some proverbial nails to engage
with because it’s an uneven rhythm, that there’s this problem with it. I think
the solution to this problem is to not regard anti-fascism as an identity.
You shouldn’t think of yourself as an anti-fascist, you should see yourself as
someone who is temporarily fulfilling the role of being anti-fascist.

Of course, the counter argument, there’s something it’s always kind of
kept in tension with is that there are specific skills that certain people who
are involved in minimum anti-fascism need. Certain practices they need
to be good at, certain ways of keeping information secure, certain ways of
organizing together, certain physical training even, certain ways of coordi-
nating on the street you need to be good at. But somehow we need to get
good at those things without thinking, “okay, that means that I am the an-
ti-fascist and that means that I know exactly what fascism is, and that means
I know exactly when it’s gone and when it hasn’t. I know exactly how to op-
pose it. I’m the expert and everyone should follow my lead.” Because then
we end up with this kind of peculiar subcultural authoritarianism. And I
think we’ve all encountered that in the past and know its risks.

ALEX: Considering coalition building, as well. There’s often a danger that
anti-fascists come in to build these coalitions and then expect them to be
kind of permanent things that have longevity, instead of recognizing that a
bunch of organizations and networks that are dedicated liberatory politics,
have their own politics and their own activism that they’re doing all the
time anyway. They’re campaigning around housing and racial justice, and
whatever. You can’t turn everything into anti-fascism. Anti-fascism should
be ultimately opening up space for the liberatory in movements to be able
to do good stuff, and to be defensive of attacks on them, but also just recog-
nize when you need to fade back.

A counter to that, again, is that there is a benefit... We critique subcul-
tural politics, I think you need to critique it. You need to be building out
beyond all the time. But there is a use in having these kinds of anti-fascist

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bands, or anti-fascist red gyms, or training groups or whatever. There is a use to having that connection to it, to an ongoing history of resistance and struggle, and to lose connection with that history, or to not understand your anti-fascist history, is to lose some of that generational knowledge, and lose some of that generational kind of meaning. The Spanish Civil War. The resistance in the Spanish Civil war has meaning to anti-fascist today, and rightly so. So we shouldn’t let all that aside. I think we’re both kind of teasing out these tensions. You can’t go one way or the other, you’ve got to find your happy place in that tension, I think. 

TFSR: It seems like find a happy place and that position is going to shift as needs be and so be flexible enough to be able to find what makes sense for the moment on that spectrum.

One thing that I’ve heard about in the UK, mostly over the show more than any other source, has been the concept of proscription. I don’t know if that’s just the illegalization of a group or what the legal consequences of that are. Combat 18 or I don’t know if BNP, British National Party, or like these other groups who are examples of groups that have been proscribed. I wonder what the consequences are of being in a group that’s proscribed. And also, in your view dealing with the government... We’ve had recently, a number of charges brought against in the United States context, Proud Boys in relation to the January 6th. I think anti-fascists here have various views on how that feels. I mean, fuck around and find out. If you try to overthrow the US government, there’s going to be consequences from the US government. I’m sure that there’s some liberal people who call themselves anti-fascists who are promoting this sort of approach, or people who, after January 6, we’re using their resources of research tools, in order to feed information specifically to the FBI or to law enforcement.

I kind of wonder, just what your thoughts are, in terms of the concept of the three way fight, that not only is the government not our friend, fascists are not our friend, and that as anti-fascists, or as people that are doing anti-fascist work, it’s questionable about whether or not it’s a positive when the government is able to gain the upper hand and say, “look, we’ve done the anti-fascist thing we are antifascists. Join the NSA.”

ALEX: So I’ll take the proscription part, and maybe you can take the next bit.

Okay, so proscription is one of the most repressive instruments that the UK State has available to it. It’s not even a matter of passing a law or...
anything, it’s a decision of the Home Secretary, under consultation of civil servants, but ultimately, it’s on her to proscribe groups. Proscription brings along a number of criminal offenses. It becomes a crime to be a member of the organization. Basically it becomes a crime for that organization to continue existing. Also, the crime carries a sentence of years in prison, up to 10 years in prison.

What we’ve seen how that works in practice, is after National Action got proscribed, which was the first far right group organization in the UK, to be to be proscribed, is that were people going to prison for being members of National Action after proscription for around four years. Four years in prison is a very significant sanction. It also becomes a crime to speak positively in public, or materially support, morally support, that group, that banned organization in public, to publicly declare your moral support, or to raise money for them as well. It’s also a becomes a crime to found a new organization, that’s basically the old organization under another name or made up of the same members.

Obviously, this is a very terrifying power that is available and its ability obviously rests on basically one person because, it’s the Home Secretary, and it’s something, of course, that you would never have in the US. The First Amendment is sacrosanct in regards to the these forms of political organizing. Now, obviously, there’s many other techniques and instruments that are available to the US, and indeed, the UK, in which you can effectively make the leaders of political organizations, to heavily discourage them of continuing or even take them out completely. You could see some of the tactics of the FBI opposing the civil rights movement, there’s all kinds of very illegal or very repressive things that happened there. Later, with the Black Lives Matter movement as well, you’ve seen the similar kind of repression from State police and from the FBI as well. So that’s proscription.

Going back to Patriotic Alternative, they’ve been really desperate to keep the tent of National Action away from them, and keep that kind of proscription talk away from them as well. They’ve done that to some that success. The question to anti-fascists is, “do you want to try and provoke that instrument being used?” Do you want to highlight and publicize links to National Action which could attract a proscription order. I would say the most desirable way to oppose is a mass movement anti fascism that can oppose them physically and ideologically in the communities in which they’re working. But oftentimes there’s a misconception of how the State operates, it’s kind of seen as an anti-fascist thing. As an instrument that can be used. So the problem the problem is, of course, the first point is that of course, the
State can ban radical left groups just as much. If it has the justification, if it has the kind of way laid out for it, considering the circumstances.

**TFSR:** I just looked it up really quickly. I was like, “I’ve never heard of the proscription of left wing groups,” but I was just like, “Was the Irish National Liberation Army a proscribed group?” At least Wikipedia tells me, ‘Yes.’ So it’s not a tool that’s only wielded against the far right?

**ALEX:** The case of Ireland is separate, it’s specific as well. A lot of the proscription orders that have taking place in the island of Britain are modeled on the island of Ireland, the stuff that was happening there, but they are distinct. That kind of politics and that history is distinct in the UK.

**SAM:** Yeah, there are all kinds of legal instruments that are used in Northern Ireland, that are different in quite marked ways. It’s completely different from the mainland. I think what we’ve been consistently doing for the answers to the last three or four questions actually, has been articulating a feel of tensions. On the one hand, this, but also on the other hand, this. There’s a sense in which there are not particularly good or easy answers. I have contradictory thoughts, as you can imagine about proscription as an instrument wielded by the State. I think it is actually not impossible that it would be done in the US, because the explicit justification of in the UK is not that they said bad things. It’s that they advocated for terrorism and in the US advocating violence is not protected speech. That’s not covered in the First Amendment, if you threaten someone directly, you can be arrested for that, as far as I understand.

**TFSR:** But there is no list of domestic terrorist organizations, for instance, that’s usually the framing. So it would be it would be framed within as opposed to an ideological argument around like criminal specific activity, prosecuted as criminal activity.

**SAM:** This is what’s really interesting about the Canadian case. So in Canada, they proscribed three organizations at the same time Atomwaffen, The Base, and the Proud Boys. Just when we came on we were talking about the differences there...

**TFSR:** Is that because they’re all run by the FBI. Sorry, okay. [Laughs]
ALEX: You are not the first person to make that joke. [Laughs]

SAM: We were talking before we came on, I was just confused with eight different organizations. Atomwaffen, had maybe 50 members at its height, something like that. Of those, six committed some sort of murder. That’s a very high rate of murder. The Base had maybe slightly more members, it was a supposedly international network, but overwhelmingly based in the US, but with members in the UK and Sweden and Canada and Russia as well, where it turned out that the leader was staying for reasons that are completely unconnected from the shadowy world of spooks and had nothing to do with the decline of the Soviet Union or the CIA. Nothing to it! Then the Proud Boys, which is a western chauvinists drinking club, essentially, that had been responsible for an immense amount of political violence in the streets, but who, to my knowledge, have never committed terrorist murders.

Of course, we can argue about the definition of terrorism as a category. I think it’s a fact that the category ‘terrorism’ is a mark of the distinction that is made between politics proper and violence in politics. Right. They tend to police that boundary. Proper politics is discursive, people talk about things, they argue heatedly. Terrorism is when there is indiscriminate killing of innocent people, right?

That’s not a stable boundary and the proud boys by kind of wandering around on that boundary, have made it much more difficult for these kinds of proscription legislation in Canada to be enacted clearly. But I think it’s still kind of peculiar, because I think really what is aimed at is not violence, but a certain kind of unacceptable politics. A politics of extremity, and undoubtedly Atomwaffen had that politics of extremity. Atomwaffen’s organizing principle was that it was the most extreme organization on the far right. That was its advertising.

TFSR: One of their main organizers called himself ‘Rape.’ Yeah.

SAM: Whereas the proud boys didn’t have that. I think there’s a complicated thing about who gets proscribed. If I was going to say that proscription shouldn’t be used or should be abandoned as a measure, it would be about that level of political inarticulacy, or political misunderstanding on the part of the Canadian State, which I would assume the Home Secretary of Canada is no less well informed the Home Secretary of the UK. I don’t know who the Home Secretary of Canada is. It’s not of interest to me.
It would be on the basis of that kind of, obviously wrong decision. But I would seriously question the use of proscription.

**TFSR:** As for your second book, *The Rise of Eco Fascism*. What do you mean by the term eco fascism? And what is far right ecologism? How do they relate? And are there any contemporary examples you think are especially informative for the audience?

**SAM:** So I think we promised earlier, or as Alex promised earlier, that there will be a definition of fascism. So we’re now getting into that. But first of all, we have to answer another question. Which is the question of what is far right politics? I think far right politics is basically, again, in this kind of unclear zone at the edges of liberalism. Far right politics is a collection, like all politics are, I think, a collection of suggestions and practices for reproducing social roles and relations that utilize tactics that are unacceptably brutal for liberalism. Liberalism won’t accept the far right as part of itself. But nevertheless, the far right is a necessary part of the reproduction of liberalism as a whole. Right. So liberal states need their violent border regimes, they need, to some extent, far right movements to scare the left, they need ways for the anger of politics to be articulated, the anger and the daily humiliation of the working class produces in politics. They need some of that to go. And so the far right is a useful aspect of liberalism.

Fascism is something quite peculiar within that more general category of the far right, in that it seeks to unify different parts of the political forms, that the far right kind of contains. So I would say there are basically broad three broad political forms. There’s electoral politics, or like politics of the government. There’s politics of movements. And there’s the politics of violence, or extra-judicial violence in particular. Obviously, governments contain violence, movements contain violence to some extent as well. This tripartite separation is not some sort of eternal law of how politics works. But it’s specific to the history of neoliberal capitalism in particular.

So the fact that movements can’t get themselves heard in government, or can’t transform the practice of governance, which we’ve seen in the US with Bernie Sanders and so on, or the movements version of the Labour Party that we have for Jeremy Corbyn. The fact that there is no relationship between the politics of movements and the policies of the government is a split that is produced by neoliberalism deliberately. The fact there is a split between movements and terroristic violence, the split that proscription
legislation tries to police, that is a product largely of the Second World War, and the kind of horror that fascism represented for liberalism.

And so, what has happened since the Second World War is the security state has become much, much, much more powerful. There are no movements that are able to physically overwhelm the power of a national police force. Obviously, you had this kind of weird exception, January 6th, in the US, it was very quickly stamped out. Now the FBI, which is extraordinarily well equipped, an extraordinary surveillance state and so on, is now coming down very hard on those people who dared to defy its kind of capacity to organize the structure of violence in society. To have that monopoly on violence that defines the contemporary state.

So, there’s a split between these three different parts. Fascism is a political product that attempts to unify their interests to make governments work with terrorists, or what I’m now describing as terrorists, but extra-judicial violence in general, to work with movements, and it’s kind of the unification of these three parts. Now, the way it does that, is by presenting a notion of the unified nation, the whole nation state and that is mediated through ideas of nature and the natural law, but also physical natural landscapes. And it’s that the we describe as eco fashion.

What we describe in the book is far right ecologism, which can be for many different parts. You can have a governmental far right ecologism, you have a movement far right ecologism, you have a terroristic far right ecologism. But it’s when these three things come together as a political unity. When you get governments that are not doing the kind of reflexive thing that contemporary foreign governments do. We just say, “Oh, these terrorists, it’s terrible. It’s horrible. He was crazy. He doesn’t know what he’s talking about.” “He was on the left,” as the Kellyanne Conway wanted to frame the Christchurch shooter, equating environmentalism with the left. As of course, the US far right is frequently equated fascism with the left. It being a movement with some form of collectivity.

So that’s what eco fascism is, it’s a coordination of these three elements, mediated through a notion of the natural whole. The danger of it, over the period that we’re looking at in the future, 50 years or so, is these three parts of the political separation of neoliberalism will start to recur here and become coherent together. That’s the real kind of terror that I think lies in the notion of ecofascism. All that’s to say, there aren’t particularly good examples right now. Because we’re looking at an emergent political formation, rather than pointing at people who have eco fascist views. Because as we’ve kind of repeatedly tried to get across, the important thing is not to believe,
the important thing is what will people able to enact upon the world. That means that the question of politics is not just who is saying the wrong thing or who has the wrong beliefs. But how does the whole structure of society shift and change and fall under the sway of the control of real eco fascist movements, and that is not happening yet.

**ALEX:** Just to build off what Sam was saying about eco fascism, you have to think about this in the context of the climate crisis, and the increasingly worsening conditions of life that are going to happen, that’re already happening and are going to continue to happen in the next few decades, basically for the rest of both our lives and all of our lives. One of the responses to this increasingly desperate situation that we’re all facing, people in the global south are facing it now and gonna face it much worse. People in the West are going to face it too. In America, there are certain areas that are increasingly becoming completely uninhabitable. You see what’s happening in Texas with the power grid, which fails in cold, and fails in heat. You see what’s happening in Arizona with the water levels, it’s and incredibly dire situation for an area in which millions of people live. The answer is that in these deficit situations, we need to turn to some form of far right, authoritarian environmentalism, in order to make the changes that we need to happen, make him on a top down state level. The only way to do that is some kind of increasingly eco fascist state structure or state intervention.

There’s many problems with this. One is the obvious one, it’s that kind of authoritarianism that comes along with a whole bunch of repressive actions, oppression, the kind of exclusion of people based on their race and the intensification of misogyny and all these things are attendant to this ramping authoritarianism, which we must oppose, and which we probably will be left entirely unequipped to opposed if these authoritarian state instruments are re-instituted and re justified. In the UK, there’s this tendency of the Tories to, every time there’s some kind of thing in the news or thing protesting that they don’t like, they’ll immediately come out with a new law that will ban it.

So the example for that is Extinction Rebellion, and the groups that came out of them, who used the tactic of locking on to various things, to lock their bodies on to various bits of infrastructure and roadways, and to be as difficult to remove as possible. And that’s not a crime, locking your body to another piece of infrastructure is not the crime, but they brought in a law that has made it a crime and has a prison sentence attached to it. If these kinds of authoritarian instruments are instituted, it means that those
kinds of movements that we need, these movements of liberation, are made harder and harder and harder and harder.

The other problem with specifically eco fascist politics is that it only operates on a national scale. Of course, we’re not operating on a national scale, we can’t do that this is a global crisis. For example, the Rassemblement National in France, talk about protecting the French landscape, a kind of green nationalism. What they mean by that is to export their environmental degradation out of France, and to preserve France in some bubble of Western landscapes and all this kind of stuff. And this is obviously inadequate in so many different ways.

**TFSR:** Yeah. *Without a fundamental rejection of capitalism, for instance, whether or not you’re arguing national borders or not, you’re absolutely ignoring one of the essential things that has been contributing and creating the scenario that has put us in the situation that we’re in right now.*

**ALEX:** Yeah, I also feel like that for these neoliberal governments and states, the situation will have to get so dire to attract the authoritarian response. But it’s going to be too late in my opinion. You can just see it now with the way people talk about the cost of living crisis in the UK, and the global instability in the oil price, and the war in Ukraine. It seems to me that every answer to a global crisis is to drill for more oil. Russia is this oppressive, authoritarian, imperialist power, we need to increase our national over looks, and we need to convince Saudi Arabia to drill more oil for us. You know, this kind of stuff. In the UK, the government has started to revive the North Sea oil projects and fracking, shale gas drilling in America as a response, as a kind of thing. We need energy independence, we need UK energy independence, when obviously, once you’ve got that infrastructure in place, capitalism is going to extract as much profit out of it as it can be before they have to decommission it. So the key thing is stopping these projects from happening.

**TFSR:** Once it’s extracted, it’s gonna get used.

*Well, since I have had you on for a very long time. I want to go to my guilty pleasure question of the last one. It may not be a guilty pleasure, it may be like perfectly reasonable question. Is that okay?*

**ALEX:** Oh, yeah. I’m interested to hear what your guilty pleasure is.
TFSR: Well, yeah. So I came out of an anti-civilization green anarchist position at a certain point, but I have always felt like I’ve had an allergic reaction to the misanthropy in it. So, this is sort of me reacting in my older age, as I continue to see the misanthropy perpetuated. An element of anti-fascist organizing that I find really important, is working to shift hegemony in contested spaces, which you talk a little bit about in that latter book. It feels like in these contested spaces, we have an immediate agency in pushing hegemonic cultural values. And it’s also spaces where we have the most in common with other participants, or a lot in common with other participants, and so have the leverage to change people’s minds and hearts. I’ve been a bit disturbed by the resurgence and uplifting of Ted Kaczynski in recent years among some anarchists, and this goes back. I mean, he’s identified himself as an anarchist in the past. Green anarchists magazine, the US had a dialogue with them for a while. Crimethinc put out stickers, saying, “Uncle Ted for president,” or something like that in 2000, some edge Lord thing. There was a recent TV show about him... Anyway. You’ve alluded a few times in the letter-book with headings like far right ecologism and its future and referenced eco extremist acolytes, ITS or Individuales Tentiendo al Salvaje in Mexico, that you list as an example of a climate collapse cult.

One can find themes in Kaczynski’s writings, including in his manifesto, warning of the mitigation of natural scarcity through technology, leading to the weakening of the essence of humans. Also essentialist ideas around gender, sexuality and disability, a post left position embraced by Anders Brevik in his manifesto and other places, by other dastardly people. Misanthropy and concerns about overpopulation mixed in with nativism can be encountered in the writings of Edward Abbey, as you all noted in an earlier chapter of the Ecofascism book, and the early founders of Earth First such as Dave Foreman, notably. While the adherence of these sorts of ideas are quite fringy in the general population, and they’re very few in number. So are anarchists and other libertarian Marxists or like other people that I consider to be comrades? Can you talk a bit about contested spaces? And if you can, a little bit about Uncle Ted?

ALEX: Okay, I can see why this is the guilty pleasure.

TFSR: It’s a very long question.

ALEX: So this is a really interesting point because what we’ve been talking about for the most part in this interview is not how reactionary, I think we can kind of label the people who coalesce around Ted K as reactionary,
in many respects, or are leading to reaction positions. We’ve talked about these kind of reactionary influences in society at large. We talked about borders, we talk about these movements in the left opposing the right. We didn’t speak much about within these spaces, that are our own spaces, what we can do in them.

I think Kaczynski and the manifest in particular has a really interesting place within both far right and far left discourses. Of course, there’s a far right online subculture, which I don’t know if you’re familiar with called ‘Pine Tree Twitter,’ which actively valorizes Kaczynski and his writing. If you read some of what Pine Tree Twitter writes about, there is an overlap between kind of misanthropic valorization of nature above all else, valuation of wilderness above all else, for example, and the kind of generalized misanthropy against the modern world and the modern human with all his or her comforts and this kind of thing. It’s not something that in the spaces I’ve been a part of in the UK that I’ve particularly encountered. There’s an anarchist bookshop in London, which I am a part of, and there is kind of a generally agreed that certain kind of anti civ writers, not all, but certain particular anti civ writers are not acceptable to have in the shop and this kind of thing.

I think, going forward, a lot of the purchase of Kaczynski’s writing is carried by the violence he carried out. It’s carried out by the bombings and the kind of mystique that surrounded him. I saw that TV show about him, and the investigation to him too. It’s that TV show that kind of translated within, into kind of radical spaces. If Kaczynski had not done those killings, done those bombings, those writings would not have had the same widespread influence that they did have.

So, I think it’s hard because a lot of the anti civ types... I would be very persnickety about definitions again. I don’t think they are fascist and I don’t think they should be opposed using anti-fascist tactics. I think what we need is a way of explaining collapse, explaining civilization, and explaining alternatives to that civilization. So anti civ has ultimately the right ideas in the right direction of travel, I suppose, in that this civilization can’t continue as it is because it is destroying the planet.

But the question is, one, what tactics are opened up in opposing that? What is acceptable to do to other human beings and what isn’t acceptable to do to other human beings? And, two, what kind of world do we want to build? Is it a world built on the exclusion of people who need certain things within civilization in order to live? Now, the obviously the go-to here is people who rely on certain medications that have been produced in
contemporary capitalism, but also trans people, for example, as well. A certain anti civ responses to declare trans people unpersons, freaks of contemporary society, who will either cease to exist once this civilization collapses, or will need to be eliminated in some form, societally. Similarly, for people with disabilities, the same thing applies. These people are left aside. That’s one path.

The other path is one of extending and strengthening and kind of all encompassing solidarity with every person who lives in this world as it is now, and how we can transition, together, into some kind of new world, whatever that is. There’s obviously massive discussions about how we get there, and what that looks like. But I think the key thing is, and what we talk about in the conclusion of the book is, the key thing here is solidarity. You need to have solidarity with everyone, all different kinds of people with their experiences and their relationships to the world and their identities within that world as well.

Was that adequate?

TFSR: That’s great. We solved the problem! [Laughs] This is going to be in the show notes. But would you mind saying a few places where people can find the books, find the 12 Rules project online, social media, whatever, to engage with y’all?

ALEX: The books, one is available from Polity Press, the Eco Fascism book, and I believe that has now had an American release. So it’s available to purchase domestically in America. The first book *Post Internet Far Right*, is from Dog Section Press. I don’t think that book does have American distribution, which is a shame but what I’ll do is I’ll check with the publisher and see what they say about it, because I think I’m sure there must be some distro. There should be anyway.

Online we have a Twitter @12RulesForWhat which we put out our episodes on and we have a Patreon if people want to support but you obviously don’t have to, we run book clubs through there and it’s open to subscribers. But also if you want to just get in on joining and discussing the book, you can DM us and we’ll get you in and it’s not a big deal. We have the Patreon to pay our RSS fees or whatever it is. We’re not trying to make a particular career out of podcasting, necessarily. And you can follow Sam’s new project on his substack and it’s called collapsology.substack.com. Its a newsletter and he writes it every Thursday.
As for what we’ve got coming up next we’re going to have another episode on Patriotic Alternative and fascist fitness as a kind of historical trend on a contemporary trend. And we’re going to have a conversation was about Q Anon in America and transphobia and LGBTQ-phobia, homophobia. It’ll be coming out very soon as well.

**TFSR:** That’s awesome. I really look forward to it, and Alex, thanks a lot for having the conversation.

**ALEX:** Thanks. Thanks Bursts!
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