

Polis Analysis

The Anatomy of a Riot Fake News Observatory: The Southport Knife Attack

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About Polis Analysis

Polis Analysis is a provider of high quality analysis of global politics with teams based in the heart of political capitals including London, Brussels, Berlin, Paris, Rome, Washington D.C. and Hong Kong. Our next generation team of experts bring a fresh and innovative approach to political analysis, which is delivered in an impartial, fact-based and accessible way.

The political media space is a crowded field. However, media coverage of international politics is increasingly polarised and partisan in recounting stories. Even those consultancies that provide rigorous analysis instead of sensationalist media coverage deliver it to the exclusive preserve of big corporates and wealthy clients. At Polis Analysis, we do things differently. Our next generation team is uniquely placed to deliver a new way of covering global politics. We don't simply recount political stories, we analyse them to explain their significance to your life.

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Glossary of Key Terms

Activists: Individuals or groups who campaign for political or social change, often through organised efforts such as public demonstrations.

Content Aggregators: People or accounts that collect and disseminate content from various sources, usually on a large scale in one place, typically around a specific topic.

Disinformation: Intentionally false content that is spread to cause harm, it can be motivated by three factors: to make money; to have political influence, or to incite trouble and discord for its own sake.¹

Extreme Right: Those on the far right who reject all forms of democratic governance, including majority rule and popular sovereignty, often espousing authoritarian sentiments or expressing affinity for 20th century fascism.²

Far Right: A broad term denoting those hostile to liberal democracy.³ Generally entailing four elements: nationalism, xenophobia, law and order, and welfare chauvinism.⁴

Hate speech: Communications of animosity or disparagement of an individual or a group on account of a group characteristic such as race, colour, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.⁵

Influencer: An individual with large followings on the internet who can leverage such following to shape the views of their audience.

Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim hatred or ideologically driven prejudice.⁶

Malinformation: Genuine information that is shared with an intent to cause harm.⁷

Misinformation: False content, shared by a person unaware of the fact it is misleading or false.⁸

Radical Right: Those on the far right who are hostile to elements of liberal democracy such as the rule of law or minority rights but are broadly accepting of the essence of democracy.⁹

¹ (Wardle, 2020)

² (Carter 2018) Note: There is a lack of scholarly consensus over this terminology, and these terms are often used interchangeable within media and literature, but there are general defining themes in the Radical and Extreme Right: authoritarianism, anti-democracy and exclusionary and/or holistic nationalism.

³ (Mudde, 2019)

⁴ (Kopeček, 2007)

⁵ (Nockleby, 2000)

⁶ (ISD, 2023)

⁷ (Wardle, 2020)

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ (Mudde, 2019)

Introduction

On Monday the 29th of July 2024, the northern English city of Southport was left reeling by a knife attack on a children's dance class that left three young girls dead. The tragedy quickly reached viral prominence online, and narratives emerged that the attack was terror related, that the culprit was Muslim, that they had entered the UK illegally on a small boat. These narratives were entirely speculative but filled a void in public discourse left by the British police's standard procedure of withholding information about minors in custody from the public. The initial false claims were quickly laundered through wider social media discourse, via a disparate collection of influencers, commentators and sources claiming to be authoritative news outlets. Now, with the veneer of credibility, these falsehoods generated a surge in vitriolic discourse around immigration and multiculturalism in Britain, spurred on by inflammatory comments from figures on the mainstream, radical and extreme political right.

Within hours of the attack itself, that wave of angry, xenophobic online discourse had become manifest in calls for mobilisation and violence by far-right agitators and extremists. By 19:45 on Tuesday the 30th of July, violent disorder had broken out near the scene of the attack in Southport. That violence alone left 53 police officers injured and criminal damage to local homes, businesses, and a mosque.¹⁰ Over the following week, similar violent disorder occurred in London, Manchester, Nottingham, Leeds, Hull, Hartlepool, Stoke-on-Trent, Aldershot, and Belfast. As of 1 September 2024, 1,280 people have been arrested¹¹ for what has been described the UK's worst social unrest since riots in 2011.¹²

This report by Polis Analysis' Fake News Observatory will deconstruct the spread of viral falsehoods on X in the wake of the attack. The platform has been selected for investigation because it will show the effects of changes to platform design instituted by Elon Musk since he purchased the platform in 2022.¹³ This investigation will show that in the case of the Southport riots X's monetisation policies and algorithmic recommendation enabled the spread of disinformation, Islamophobia and even outright calls for violence.

From a methodological standpoint, in contrast to short form video platforms such as TikTok, X also offers a more accessible pool of data. The report can therefore serve as a historical case study in the spread of viral disinformation and misinformation. It is built using a hybrid methodology: combining primary sources i.e. key posts that are still accessible on the platform, and secondary quantitative data, primarily from disinformation researchers and organisations that track online hate speech. The contributions of these entities will receive due acknowledgement throughout the piece, as ultimately this report would not have been possible without their timely and empirically rigorous analysis.

¹⁰ (Merseyside Police, 2024d)

¹¹ (Dodd & Wilding, 2024)

¹² (Picheta, 2024)

¹³ Goujard, 2024)

Part 1 of this report will catalogue key actors involved in spreading disinformation and misinformation about the Southport attack, it is designed to capture the diversity of actors involved, as well as the breadth of interests and ideologies that contribute to the dissemination of a viral narratives online.

Part 2 will chronologise the spread and development of the fake Southport narrative itself, showing how it grew to encompass the tropes and stereotypes of the far right, while circumventing efforts by the authorities to maintain an informed public narrative.

Part 3 will identify X facilitated the spread of viral falsehoods in three regards: algorithmic recommendations, inadequate content moderation and the incentives of monetisation. It will conclude by analysing how and why, in the context of the far right in Britain today, viral disinformation was able to erupt into violent disorder throughout the UK.

Part 4 will conclude by offering readers the latest media literacy tools and practices that can help secure their own digital experience and perhaps in some small way contribute to a healthier information ecosystem online.

Trigger Warning. The Southport attack was an atrocious act of violence which some readers may find distressing. To survey the falsehoods surrounding the attack, this report will survey social media content that is often graphic, racist and Islamophobic.

Disclaimer: Many sources relied upon for this publication have been deleted from social media since the events in question and in light of subsequent scrutiny, consequently research has relied on secondary and at times partial data sources. Some primary sources have been compiled from time zones different to that used in the chronology of the piece, which uses GMT, hence any discrepancy between the time presented and the posts themselves in the appendix.

As of Wednesday 30, October 2024, it was revealed by Merseyside Police that Axel Rudakubana was to receive additional charges over his possession of Al Qaeda terrorist materials, as well as the biological toxin ricin.¹⁴

This has raised valid questions about whether the case should, either now or originally, be classified as case of terrorism. That question is beyond the scope of this report, however, some actors involved in the spread of the false narratives at the time have sought to exploit these revelations to exonerate themselves for comments made. This report is therefore all the timelier and will establish categorically that their provocative rhetoric was not based on factual sources but instead on viral dissemination of disinformation and misinformation.

¹⁴ (Halliday & Siddique, 2024)

PART 1: Key Agents

The following is a catalogue of eight actors that each played an important role in sharing disinformation and misinformation about the Southport attack. This section will investigate each of their backgrounds and evaluate their history on social media to build a picture of the kinds of actors that can exploit, or be exploited by, fake narratives in online discourse. It is designed so when tracing the chronology (Part 2) readers can refer back and contextualise their interventions in the Southport case against past records, whether those records be moderate political scepticism, an affinity for conspiracy theories or outright racist disinformation and incitement.

The accounts surveyed here ultimately have few unifying characteristics but have been chosen because each held a distinct agency in creating, developing, or amplifying the false narrative that the Southport attacker was a Muslim and an immigrant. Some of these pages are significant because of the sheer scale of their followings, while others contributed small embellishments to the narrative, but at critical moments. It was the cumulative effect of all their interventions, platform tuned to incentivise sensationalist content and facilitate virality, that resulted in the explosion of viral Islamophobic narratives and ultimately caused violence on the streets of Britain.

The pages have been categorised into two broad categories, anonymous commentary pages, some with clear past records of racist disinformation,¹⁵ and the influencers, activists, and politicians, many of whom have long records of inflammatory politics. This is not an exhaustive survey; indeed, analyses are available that quantify at scale many of the prominent accounts involved¹⁶ but this is designed instead to identify the diversity of actors and agency that collectively created a vast, amorphous and ultimately dangerous viral phenomenon.

¹⁵ An analysis of the posting history of @EuropeInvasionn and @EndWokeness will outline this beyond reasonable doubt. An overview and evaluation of their racist posting history posts can be found in the source catalogue (For @EuropeInvasionn see Figures 1-6, for @Endwokeness see Figures 7-11). These will be introduced in more detail in their respective profiles.

¹⁶ (Jones, 2024a)

PART 1.1: Anonymous commentary accounts

Note: Ordered in terms of audience reach

Account Name: Channel3 Now News

Handle: @channel3nownews

Followers: ≈3,000



Note: Channel3now was part of a wider network of pages including a website, Facebook, YouTube and X profiles, some of these had as few 100 followers, others up to 70,000. The figure 3,000 is from the latest available record of its X account.

A central account to the sharing of misinformation around the Southport attack was @Channel3nownews. The account is part of a network of X, Facebook, YouTube and web pages professing to be a digital news outlet, but sparse public information about its background, writers, editorial process or funding is available online. A detailed investigation by the BBC was able to unearth and identify several individuals involved with the network.

A man named Kevin from Houston, Texas, claimed to be the site’s “verification producer” and described @Channel3NowNews as “an independent digital news media website covering news from around the world.”¹⁷ Kevin subsequently apologised for the network’s involvement in spreading misinformation about the attack Southport, but suggested that its content had originated with a UK-based team.

The claim that the network is operated by legitimate creators in the UK has not been substantiated, only three individuals have been identified in connection with the organisation, Kevin in Houston, James Lawley, a Nova-Scotia based man running a lawn-cutting company¹⁸ who has not responded to any media requests for comment, and lastly, some of the Facebook pages were linked to an individual in Pakistan.¹⁹ This latter individual seems to have been Farhan Asif, who was briefly arrested for having written the website’s piece on Southport from information he had seen online. Asif has been released without charge.²⁰ While there has been speculation surrounding the origin of the network’s YouTube pages, which were originally purchased from a Russian language account.²¹ There is no evidence that the online network’s pages themselves, or its staff, have connections to Russian state enterprises, and Kevin rejected the suggestion that they might have any “affiliations” with Russia.²²

¹⁷ (Spring, 2024b)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ (Jones, 2024a)

²⁰ (Saifi, Syed & Mahmood, 2024)

²¹ (Jones, 2024a)

²² (Spring, 2024b)

Farhan Asif described his work on @Channel3nownews as based on a model of generating news stories from social media content in the US, Britain, and Australia, to secure revenue from Google Advertisements.²³ Kevin also described the group as a commercial enterprise, seeking to generate revenue from “covering as many stories as possible.”²⁴

@Channel3nownews’s content does not appear have any underlying theme or ideological commitment. Instead, it appears to have been a content aggregator, driven by financial interests and by extension, the pursuit of content that generates engagement on X and other platforms. This is an early indicator of the structural role that financial incentives can play in encouraging creators to make or share content on X not based off of its veracity, but because it can capitalise on, or inflame, viral sentiments. This trend on X will be highly significant when identifying the critical role of @Channel3nownews in the spread of the false Southport narratives.

Account Name: Europe Invasion

Handle: @EuropeInvasionn

Followers: 565,500



An account that was a critical early vector in the spread of disinformation about the Southport attack was @EuropeInvasionn. An exploration into its provenance will ultimately show that the account exists primarily to create inflammatory racist disinformation.

@EuropeInvasionn seeks to be entirely anonymous, although recent analyses have potentially revealed the account’s owner and identified it as part of a network of for-profit X accounts run from Dubai.²⁵ It is possible that much of the account’s content is not created by an active human user, but instead with generative artificial intelligence, suggesting it may in fact be an AI powered content aggregator.²⁶

While the page originally opened in 2010 under handle @makcanerkripto, the page was entirely rebranded in February 2024.²⁷ This is a common practice on social media. Pre-existing accounts with no verifiable owner are often bought or hacked for a head start in algorithmic recommendation, letting new profiles quickly grow to larger audiences and revenue streams.

@EuropeInvasionn was verified with a blue checkmark, formerly a Twitter-granted mark of legitimacy. Since changes implemented under Elon Musk in November 2022 that mark of legitimacy can be purchased by any account for \$8 a month, without proving ones identity or legitimacy. Verification also gives an account’s posts a boost in algorithmic recommendation.

²³ (Spring, 2024b)

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ (Svensson and Sköld, 2024)

²⁶ During the course of this research, ‘Artificial Intelligence’ has been added to the account’s biography.

²⁷ (Jones, 2024a)

Between the 27th of July 27th and the 7th of August, @EuropeInvasionn received more than 133 million impressions on X.²⁸

Delving into the posting history of @EuropeInvasionn, one finds a catalogue of inflammatory, racist, and false commentary:

The page regularly falsely attributes violent crimes to immigrants, Muslims, and other ethnic minorities.²⁹

- The page makes explicit calls for violence against ethnic minorities.³⁰
- The page uses quasi-genocidal rhetoric, often referring to Muslims as viruses.³¹
- Even after its role in the viral falsehoods around Southport attack was exposed, @EuropeInvasionn has continued to post disinformation about violent crimes to falsely ascribe responsibility to Muslims and Immigrants.³²

@EuropeInvasionn therefore has a clear past record of disinformation which meet a broader, narrative that foreigners, immigrants and Muslims represent an ‘invasion’ to European and western societies. This content narrative may be purely ideological, but as new research has suggested, the page’s connection to a series of other anonymous X accounts may signal that it is also driven by financial motives, the page acknowledges that it seeks to exploit X’s content recommendation algorithms.

These findings are essential context for its forthcoming role in the spread of disinformation after Southport.

Account Name: End Wokeness

Handle: @EndWokeness

Followers: 3 million



A larger account that came to occupy a later role in the spread of false narratives around the Southport attack was @Endwokeness.

The page has no verifiable owner but was founded in July 2022. It is worth noting the quantitative leap in scale between @Endwokeness and the other X commentary pages surveyed here. The page has 3 million followers and receives regular algorithmic boosts from

²⁸ (Jones, 2024e)

²⁹ See Figures 1, 2, 4, and 6 for examples of posts that misrepresent real violent crimes to falsely ascribe responsibility to immigrants and Muslims.

³⁰ See Figure 4.

³¹ See Figure 5.

³² See Figure 6.

with X owner Elon Musk, who often shares its controversial posts with approving comments to his 200 million followers.³³

- In many ways akin to @EuropeInvasionn, the page focuses on provocative political commentary, especially mocking and memeing the perceived excesses of the political left:
- The page routinely mocks and demonises LGBTQ causes and ‘woke’ politics more generally.³⁴
- The page champions President-elect Donald Trump, while attacking his opponents with doctored videos and AI generated imagery.³⁵
- The page posts provocative, oftentimes grossly racist commentary about immigrants and minorities, specifically around violent crime.³⁶

Overall though its xenophobia and racism is often much more subtle than that of @EuropeInvasionn, @Endwokeness is a considerably larger, more influential vector on X. Although it’s messaging primarily focuses on political mockery, it also posts provocative content that demonises ethnic minorities, often misattributing violent crimes and engendering a narrative of white people as besieged by multiculturalism and Islam.

³³ See Figure 11

³⁴ See Figure 10

³⁵ See Figure 7

³⁶ See Figures 9, 16

PART 1.2: Influencers, Activists, Politicians

Account Name: Bernie

Handle: @Artemisfornow

Followers: 64,400



One individual that came to have a outsized role in the spread of viral falsehoods after the Southport attack was @Artemisfornow. This account belongs to Bernadette Spofforth, a 55-year-old woman from Chester.

- Spofforth describes herself as a social commentator, her commentary largely consists of narratives aligning with the political right, particularly anti-establishment scepticism:
- Spofforth previously appeared on internet talk-shows to decry COVID-19 lockdown measures.³⁷
- Spofforth’s Twitter profile was suspended in 2021 for violating the platform’s guidelines over the spread of misinformation around COVID-19 medical guidance. In subsequent interviews she confessed that she did in fact, believe the COVID-19 pandemic was real.³⁸
- Spofforth regularly tweets her scepticism towards policies combating climate change.³⁹
- Spofforth has posted decrying “the steady march towards a one world government”.⁴⁰

Ever since the Southport falsehoods, for her role in which Spofforth was briefly arrested, she has capitalised on her newfound prominence to brand herself as a free speech champion, an ordinary citizen silenced by the state.⁴¹

As will become apparent later when tracing her role in the development of the false Southport narratives, Spofforth is an important example of a genuine social media user who ended up holding considerable agency at a critical moment in the evolution of a viral narrative. Given she has publicly expressed remorse over her role in the phenomenon,⁴² Spofforth serves as an important reminder of the responsibility that comes with engaging in public deliberation on social media. Upholding informed and healthy discourses around controversial issues online is not purely the responsibility of public figures with huge followings, for even relatively small profiles can have a dramatic impact.

³⁷ See Figure 12

³⁸ (Spring, 2024b)

³⁹ See Figure 13

⁴⁰ See Figure 14

⁴¹ See Figure 15

⁴² (Spring, 2024)

Account Name: Laurence Fox

Handle: @LozzaFox

Followers: 557,800



The next actor who played a role in disseminating and amplifying the Southport disinformation was Laurence Fox, the former actor turned political campaigner. Fox holds a comparably smaller audience relative to some other disseminators involved, but represents an especially political, ideological element of the overall Southport phenomenon.

After founding his Reclaim Party in 2020, Fox has tried and failed to secure public office on numerous occasions, including the Mayorship of London in 2021, receiving just 1.9% of the vote. For the present case, he represents a medium sized figure in the quasi-professional, commentator-activist class of the political right:

- Fox regularly demonises immigrants and ethnic minorities, particularly sharing a narrative of Britain as a post-multicultural dystopia. To this end he regularly targets Mayor Sadiq Kahn on X with racially charged posts, describing London as “a safe space for machete monsters and rapists.”⁴³
- In April 2024, Fox was ordered to pay £180,000 in compensation to two social media users he called “paedophiles” in response to their labelling him as racist.⁴⁴
- Fox especially vilifies the LGBTQ movement, regularly calling the rainbow banner a “child mutilation flag” and comparing it to waving swastikas.⁴⁵

In summary, while Fox does not hold the quantitative clout online as other figures who will come to be involved in the spread of Southport disinformation, he signifies the contrast between those unintentionally sharing ambiguous falsehoods to something approaching statements of ideological commitment. Therefore, Fox’s influence is not necessarily to be found in the reach of his posts, rather in his synthesising of viral trends into more coherent narratives that resonate ideologically with the active, mobilising constituencies of the political right.

Account Name: Tommy Robinson

Handle: @TRobinsonNewEra

Followers: 1 million



Another key actor was Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (known as Tommy Robinson). A figure with a long, controversial history on the fringes of Britain’s political right, Robinson rose to

⁴³ See Figures 17, 19

⁴⁴ (Culley, 2024)

⁴⁵ See Figure 18

prominence in the 1990s as a figurehead of the English Defence League, a now defunct anti-Muslim street group that originated in football hooliganism.⁴⁶

Robinson is primarily an activist and occasionally organises large gatherings across the UK. These have recently included a 2023 demonstration at the Cenotaph war memorial in London, which deteriorated into violence,⁴⁷ and an event to show his banned film ‘silenced’ to 20,000 people in London’s Trafalgar Square on 27 July 2024.⁴⁸

Having previously been removed from Twitter for hate speech in 2018, Robinson was reinstated and has soared to new prominence on Elon Musk’s X, who has even taken to commenting and sharing the controversial activist’s posts to his 200 million followers.⁴⁹ The former leader of the English Defence League now has 1 million followers on the platform and in the three months leading up to August 2024, his posts were viewed an estimated 1.2 billion times.⁵⁰

- Using his newfound social media prominence Robinson is once more a figurehead for Britain’s far right.⁵¹
- Robinson describes Islam as a mental health condition.⁵²
- Robinson has called for mass deportations of Muslims and immigrants from European countries.⁵³
- Robinson regularly posts veiled hints of the British “spirit to fight”, describes himself doing “battle” with British authorities and posts self-aggrandising AI generated images framing himself as a towering, armoured knight draped in English flags.⁵⁴

Tommy Robinson is as close to a leadership figure as can be found in Britain’s contemporary far right,⁵⁵ serving as a figurehead for a movement that is dispersed both organisationally and geographically. His leadership does not necessarily derive from organisational authority, but by serving as a mouthpiece to a vocal minority of the political right that are adept at mobilising in street protests.

Note: on 24th October 2024, Tommy Robinson was jailed for 18 months and ordered to pay £80,350.82 for contempt of court over his sharing of his banned film.

⁴⁶ (HopeNotHate, N.D.a)

⁴⁷ (Dugan, 2023)

⁴⁸ Robinson’s film is banned by court order for repeating libellous remarks about a Syrian refugee (Cooney, 2024)

⁴⁹ (Greenwood, 2024)

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ (Tapper, 2024)

⁵² See Figure 23

⁵³ See Figure 20

⁵⁴ See Figures 21, 22

⁵⁵ Robinson and his ilk reject the label ‘far right’ and frame themselves as patriots or concerned ordinary citizens. However, his role in Britain’s far right will be analysed in more detail in Part 3, against the backdrop of the violent riots after Southport.

Account Name: Nigel Farage MP

Handle: @Nigel_Farage

Followers: 2.1 million



The next figure can be considered at the other end of the spectrum of Britain's political right. The right-wing British firebrand and Member of Parliament for Clacton, Nigel Farage was one of the most prominent public figures to have contributed to the spread of misinformation about the attack and subsequent unrest.

For more than 30 years Nigel Farage has occupied a contentious, complicated place within British politics and public discourse. Emerging onto the political scene in the 1990s in the UK Independence Party, his prominence rose dramatically in the build up to and throughout the Brexit referendum of 2016. During that time, he was a mainstay of British political TV and radio. Farage wielded this platform to cultivate the British public's sense of an overbearing EU bureaucracy and to inflame, in textbook populist fashion,⁵⁶ a sharp nativist swing in British politics.⁵⁷

- Farage has described immigrants from the Middle East as a “Fifth Column” of Islamist terrorism.⁵⁸
- Farage is a self-described admirer of infamous British politician Enoch Powell, who was ostracised for predicting that immigration to the UK would result in “rivers of blood”.⁵⁹
- While championing Brexit, Farage vocally denounced the EU's immigration policies, at times with a poster that has been compared to propaganda used by the Nazi regime.⁶⁰

Farage will come to play an important yet narrow role in the dissemination of misinformation after Southport. He represents a source of national political legitimacy and will use that stature to signal support for manipulative narratives about the Southport attack, without explicitly delving into disinformation. With his large base of supporters, Farage serves as a national mouthpiece to constituencies that are predisposed to be receptive to nativist, anti-immigrant rhetoric.

⁵⁶ The foremost scholar of right wing populism, Cas Mudde describes nativism as one of the three constituent ideals of Populism (Mudde, 2018)

⁵⁷ (Iakhnis et al. 2018)

⁵⁸ (Channel 4 News, 2015)

⁵⁹ (Diver, 2014)

⁶⁰ See Figure 16, for the comparison to Nazi propaganda see Bartlett, 2016

Account Name: Andrew Tate

Handle: @Cobratate

Followers: 10 million



One of the largest single amplifiers of the Southport misinformation narrative will be found to be the controversial social media influencer Andrew Tate. The former kickboxer and self-professed radical misogynist has a long history of extremist rhetoric, towards women, LGBTQ groups and ethnic minorities.⁶¹

Tate was banned from major social platforms in 2022 after a campaign to deplatform his views. This effort was based on concerns that his flaunting of wealth and unapologetic masculine rhetoric risked increasing the appeal of extremist ideologies to young men and boys.⁶² Tate also has close ties to Tommy Robinson from his UK upbringing. His X profile was restored in 2023 under the auspices of free speech, after the platform was purchased by Elon Musk.

- Tate describes himself as “a woman beating, racist, misogynistic, homophobe... [who doesn’t] like blacks or whites or gays.”⁶³
- Tate describes immigration as an invasion, clearly championing the far-right worldview that contains violent conspiracy theories such as the Great Replacement theory.⁶⁴
- As of September 2024, Andrew Tate and his brother Tristan Tate are standing trial in Romania for human trafficking and rape charges.⁶⁵

Recent algorithmic investigations have revealed that on YouTube Shorts and TikTok, Andrew Tate’s content receives considerable stimulus from platform recommendation algorithms.⁶⁶ There are yet to be systematic analyses of the role of X’s recommendation algorithms on his popularity since being restored to the platform, however his following has clearly grown markedly in the X content ecosystem.⁶⁷

Now with 10 million followers on X, Tate has an enormous platform to spread a macho brand that subliminally spreads a violently extremist worldview. The scale of his following naturally means that it encompasses both constituencies that share his views on gender, race and sexuality, and, perhaps more dangerously, millions of those who while not explicitly supportive, are subliminally drawn to his glitzy rebranding of masculinity.

⁶¹ (Hope Not Hate, 2022b)

⁶² (Hope Not Hate, 2022a)

⁶³ See Figure 24

⁶⁴ See Figure 25

⁶⁵ (Kwai, 2024)

⁶⁶ (Baker, Ging, and Brandt Andreassen, 2024)

⁶⁷ (Conger, Hsu and Krolik, 2024)


PART 2: The Chronology of Disinformation on X

Having introduced the series of actors that came to have significant roles in the dissemination of disinformation and misinformation about the Southport attack, this report will now outline chronologically their specific contributions, and how they collectively built a narrative of viral falsehood. It will identify the different forms of agency needed to build a compelling and ultimately false viral narrative. These include the creation of a novel theory or narrative which taps into popular tropes and resentment. The generation of false legitimacy by the appearance of epistemic authority. The transmission and endorsement of a narrative to a vast audience, perhaps already sympathetic to its subliminal meaning and values. And the exploitation of viral narratives for political or personal gain.

The purpose of this exercise is not simply to record for posterity the online origins of a dramatic episode in British history, but also to offer an important case study in viral disinformation. Ultimately it aims to empower Polis' readership to understand, spot and mitigate cases of harmful information online.

Polis
Analysis

MONDAY 29 JULY 2024

- 
- 11:49 → **Axel Muganwa Rudakubana** exits a taxi on Hart St. Southport, England without paying the fare. Wearing a hoodie and a surgical mask he enters an adjacent alleyway leading to the Hart Space community centre which is hosting a Taylor Swift themed children's dance class. Once inside, Rudakubana attacks the occupants with a knife. Three children were killed, and eight injured alongside two adults who had intervened to protect the children.
 - 11:50 → **Merseyside Police** arrest **Axel Muganwa Rudakubana** on Hart St. He is moved to police custody where he is questioned extensively by specialist officers. **Rudakubana is 17 years old**, this means British law mandates the police to withhold details about him from the public, unless they are granted an exemption by a court of law.⁶⁸
 - 13:14 → **Merseyside Police** announce a major incident in Southport, and the arrest of one man. They urge the public to avoid speculation about the incident.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ (GOV UK, 2010)

⁶⁹ See Figure 42

- 13:49** → **@EuropeInvasionn** posts on X that '[t]he attacker is alleged to be a Muslim immigrant.'⁷⁰
- This post was the first with viral reach⁷¹ that hinted that the perpetrator might be of an ethnic or religious minority background. We can therefore assume that prior to @EuropeInvasionn posting, public reactions to the attack were predominantly that of unspecified shock and horror instead of explicitly political statements.⁷²*
- 15:49** → **@Artemisfornow**, Bernadette Spofforth, shares a LinkedIn post on X. The screenshot claims that a father's two children were attacked at their holiday club by a "migrant".⁷³ Spofforth captions the screenshot with the claim that the name of the Southport suspect is "Ali Al-Shakati", an asylum seeker on an MI6⁷⁴ watchlist who had recently entered the UK by boat.⁷⁵
- Spofforth quickly deleted that original post and stated she was deceived about the name and backstory. She has claimed to have both heard the information from a local source in Southport and copied and pasted it from Facebook. These claims have been evaluated and, on balance, both appear false.⁷⁶ A survey of posting data from the time shows that shortly after @Artemisfornow posted the name "Ali Al-Shakati" it went viral on X.⁷⁷*
- 16:51** → The "Ali Al-Shakati" narrative is bolstered by a **@Channel3nownews** post sharing a story from their website, which includes the same allegation.⁷⁸ The link to the website gives a new appearance of veracity to the narrative- it now appears to users as if a legitimate news outlet is confirming the claims through objective reporting.
- It warrants acknowledgement that while "Ali Al-Shakati" was a particularly pernicious and specific falsehood, it was just one component of a broader narrative claiming that the attacker was Muslim and/or an immigrant. By 16:51 it is estimated that the narrative claiming the offender was Muslim had received more than 15 million views on X.⁷⁹*

⁷⁰ See Figure 26

⁷¹ See Figure 35

⁷² This can be deduced from data collated by disinformation researcher @marcowenjones on the 29th of July. See Figure 27 for Jones' graph depicting prominent tweets about Islam or Muslims in and around the Southport attack.

⁷³ See Figure 39

⁷⁴ MI6 is the British Secret Intelligence Service

⁷⁵ See Figure 28

⁷⁶ Figure 29 is a Facebook post Spofforth claims vindicates her sharing the name Ali-Al Shakati. However, the screenshot was taken when the user was not logged in, meaning the time of posting is given in Facebook's standard time zone- Pacific Standard Time. This means the post originated hours after Spofforth's own X post. Meanwhile, the somewhat contradictory claim that she received the name from a source in Southport could be plausible, but Spofforth has not disclosed any information that might verify the existence of a source, despite having ample opportunity and motive to do so, therefore, it also appears tenuous.

⁷⁷ See Figure 30 for Jones' data of posts featuring the name "Ali Al-Shakati" from the 29th of July.

⁷⁸ After Farhan Asif was arrested in Pakistan, there was an effort by some right-wing commentators to vindicate Bernadette Spofforth and place responsibility for the Ali Al-Shakati narrative solely on Asif and @Channel3nownews. As this chronology and data from Marc Owen Jones have shown, this is mistaken and possibly disingenuous. See Figures 31 and 32 for the post and article in question.

⁷⁹ (Jones, 2024c)

- 17:09 → **@Artemisfornow**'s original "Ali Al-Shakati" post is shared by **@LozzaFox** (Laurence Fox) who, captions "[c]lose the borders. Do it now. Have the police track down these murderous thugs."⁸⁰
- Understood in the context of his narrow following and background, Fox's contribution exhibits the transformation of ambiguous falsehood into ideologically coherent substance about the state of immigration and multiculturalism in Britain. By exemplifying that subtle transition, Fox illustrates how the false narratives around Southport were tapped into by far-right subcultures to mobilise, bridging the gap from online falsehoods to real-world violence.*
- 17:25 → **Merseyside Police** release a statement, saying that they have apprehended a 17-year-old male from the village of Banks, Southport for the attack. They declare the incident as non-terror related and urge the public to avoid speculation while the investigation was ongoing.⁸¹
- As aforementioned, it is a legal norm in British policing not to release further details about minors in custody. Yet to many online, the lack of information in the statement appeared conspicuously vague, especially when contrasted with the vivid, but inflammatory "Ali Al-Shakati" backstory becoming increasingly established online.*
- 17:57 → A Telegram channel is opened by a far-right extremist, with the display name 'Stimpy' detailing plans for a demonstration in Southport, on the St Luke's Road for the following day at 20:00.⁸²
- 18:00 → The false Southport narrative around is shared by **@Trobinsonnewera**⁸³ who contrasts his own treatment by British authorities⁸⁴ with the implied violent criminality of migrants entering the UK by boat.
- Robinson is the first user with **more than one million followers** to interact with the narrative that the Southport attack was perpetrated by a Migrant, or a Muslim, escalating the narrative's presence in recommendation algorithms.*
- 18:38 → **@Trobinsonnewera** posts again, now captioning the original LinkedIn post shared by Spofforth with the caption that he had "been warning about this for years"⁸⁵ presumably meaning the inherent violence of immigrants was leading to an imminent, avoidable tragedy.
- At the time of analysis, this @Trobinsonnewera post is still on X, it has **1.3 million views**.*

⁸⁰ See Figure 34

⁸¹ (Merseyside Police, 2024a)

⁸² See Figure 38

⁸³ See Figure 36. Note that this original post was deleted by Robinson after it emerged the migrant narrative was false. The record displayed is from a capture of post data at the time, compiled by Jones (2024a).

⁸⁴ Robinson has been leading a campaign against his perceived ill treatment by the British police and legal system ever since he was found guilty of libeling a Syrian refugee in 2021. In 2023, after losing his appeal Robinson made a film, 'Silenced', in which he repeated the libelous claims, and organised numerous public viewings, including to 20,000 people in London's Trafalgar Square on 27 July. He fled the UK on Sunday 28 July 2024 to put himself 'beyond the reach of the authorities' after a warrant was issued for contempt of court, over his ignoring the 2021 libel ruling. He was subsequently jailed in October 2024 for 18 months.

⁸⁵ See Figure 37

- 18:49 → **@EuropeInvasionn** reshares its original inflammatory post, claiming it is verified with the addition of the “Ali Al-Shakati” name and backstory.
*At the time of analysis, the original @Europeinvasionn post is still on X, it has **6.8 million views**.*
- 19:18 → **Merseyside Police** hold a press conference to reveal that two of the victims had passed away from their wounds. They restate that the 17-year-old in custody is from the village of Banks, Southport, but to dampen speculation add that he was born in Cardiff, Wales.⁸⁶
This signals the structural challenge facing authorities in such a case. Sharing the culprit’s entire background would have been illegal under British law, but a partial repudiation only amplified the sense, for those cynical of authority, that the police were carefully tailoring public facts to suit some hidden agenda. That agenda, in the worldview of the online political right, is political correctness preventing criticism of immigrants or ethnic minorities.
- **@Trobinsonnewera** posts in response to the statement, describing the fact the suspect had moved to Cardiff with Rwandan parents as “insane gaslighting”.⁸⁷
This captures the response to revelations about the suspect’s true background. The fact that the suspects parents were foreign, and ethnic minorities, represented a symbolic truth. It is increasingly apparent that narratives were no longer necessarily speaking about empirical fact of the attacker’s background but blurring into ideological statements about the state of multicultural Britain.
- 19:20 → **@Endwokeness** posts that asylum seeker, “Ali Al-Shakati” was behind the Southport attack.⁸⁸ The post shares **@Channel3nownews** as a news source, and the caption explicitly contrasts the police statement that the perpetrator (Rudakubana) was from Cardiff with the claim he was an asylum-seeker.
This illustrates the broader effort by commentators and influencers to ferment suspicion of authorities and the official narrative, accusing them of hiding truths from the public that would be perceived as politically inconvenient.
- 19:44 → **@LozzaFox** gives an interview to Dan Wootton,⁸⁹ during which, in a barely veiled threat of violence, he claimed ‘you’re about to hear the roar of the British lion.’ Fox shared the interview with the caption that “We need to permanently remove Islam from Great Britain. Completely and entirely.”⁹⁰
*At the time of analysis, the original @LozzaFox post is still on X, it has **1 million views**. It is a remarkable indictment of X’s algorithmic recommendations that on the evening of 29 July, users searching “Southport” on the platform were immediately recommended Laurence Fox post calling to “permanently remove Islam from Britain. Completely and entirely.”*

⁸⁶ (Merseyside Police, 2024b)

⁸⁷ Note that this original post was deleted by the time of this analysis, See Figure 47.

⁸⁸ See Figure 40. Note that this original post was deleted by @EndWokeness after it emerged that the migrant narrative was false. The record displayed is from a capture of post data at the time compiled by Jones (See Figure 30)

⁸⁹ Dan Wootton is a disgraced former GB News presenter. He was forced to leave the fringe right wing British commentary channel in March 2024 for a conversation with Laurence Fox that was described as “clearly and unambiguously misogynistic” and generated 8,867 complaints to Britain’s media regulator (Rufo, Youngs & McIntosh, 2024)

⁹⁰ See Figure 45

20:50

→ **@Cobratate** posts a video on X captioned with “ILLEGAL MIGRANT STABS 6 LITTLE GIRLS WAKE UP”.⁹¹

In the video, Tate accuses the media of hiding the fact that the stabber was a “17-year-old male” who had arrived on a boat. He proceeds to encourage “Western men” to go out and protest and protect their daughters from “invaders”. This narrative of “illegal migrant invaders” stabbing the children of the UK, has been shown to be pertinent on the political right, but has never been substantiated with empirical evidence.⁹²

Andrew Tate has one of the largest followings on X. Given prominence and notoriety of his brand, which is outlined in Section 1, we can assume that his following contains a large portion of X users subliminally receptive to narratives around immigration posing a danger to western societies and the perceived violence of immigrants and Muslims in particular.

This @Cobratate post was eventually algorithmically restricted by X and removed. In a subsequent interview with Piers Morgan on 8 August, Tate acknowledged that “perhaps” he was wrong about the Southport attacker having been an illegal migrant.

*By the time of its removal the post was recorded with at least **11.7 million views**, it also had 132,000 likes, suggesting that in addition to its dramatic reach, the false narrative had resonated with a sizeable audience.*

23:55

→ **@Trobinsonnewera** shares a post on X claiming an individual was contacted by police explaining their ‘management’ of information in the aftermath of the Southport attack.⁹³ Robinson captions “[the children’s] bodies are barely cold, others fighting for their lives in hospital. And their goal is to manipulate us!”

This illustrates how the false narratives around the identity of the Southport perpetrator evolved into broader discourse challenging the legitimacy and authority of the police.

It is plainly evident that, if the contact cited above actually occurred, it is an accurate description of the police having to reconcile their legal responsibility to withhold details about a minor in custody, with the public interest concerns of swirling misinformation.

**TUESDAY 30 JULY
2024**

12:12

→ **Merseyside Police** release a statement confirming that a third child has passed away from wounds sustained during the Southport attack.⁹⁴ They also deny the veracity of the name circulating online, although not using ‘Ali Al-Shakati’ by name. The police urge the public not to speculate on the investigation.

⁹¹ See Figure 41

⁹² Besides the more transparently racist and Islamophobic comments in this vein from figures online, there have been some efforts to make arguments about Immigration, Islam and criminality more respectable (Migration Watch, 2024). However, in the UK there is insufficient data to substantiate any conclusions, and what little data does exist, is fundamentally questionable given the challenges ethnic minorities face in the broader criminal justice system, such as institutional racism, unequal policing, higher rates of stop-and-search etc. (Institute of Race Relations, 2023)

⁹³ See Figure 49

⁹⁴ (Merseyside Police, 2024c)

15:52 → **@Trobinsonnewera (Tommy Robinson)** posts a video on X of an Islamophobic tirade, describing the religion as a mental health issue.⁹⁵

At the time of analysis, the original @Trobinsonnewera post is still on X, it has 1.4 million views.

17:34 → **@Nigel_Farage** posts a video on X of his “response to the attack in Southport.”⁹⁶ Farage, speaking directly to the camera, ponders that “[t]he police say it’s a non-terror incident... I just wonder whether the truth is being withheld from us? I don’t know the answer.” He continues to ask “[w]as this guy being monitored by the security services? Some reports say he was, others less sure.”

The video is a remarkable case of political posturing. It echoes many of the themes circulating in far-right ecosystems but without making direct claims or citing sources.

As of Wednesday, 30 October, when Rudakubana was charged with possession of Al Qaeda Materials and Ricin, Farage posted suggesting that “[p]erhaps I was right all along.”⁹⁷ This is a false and disingenuous claim, Farage’s position as a Member of Parliament, grants him the ability to appeal to police officials for information about cases, both in private and through parliamentary channels. There is no evidence he had pursued either before releasing his ‘concerns.’ Farage also confessed that his video was based off of misleading information he had seen online.⁹⁸ A former head of Metropolitan police counterterrorism branch has lambasted the video as “undermining the police, creating conspiracy theories, and giving a false basis for the attacks on the police.”⁹⁹ At the time of analysis, the original @Nigel_farage post is still available on X, it has 6.6 million views and 40,000 likes.

19:59 → **@EuropeInvasionn** posts a video on X of first-hand footage of violence at riots in Southport. The video depicts missiles being thrown at police officers and is captioned with “British police are HELPLESS against patriots in Southport.”

There is a remarkable symmetry that the account that originally posting disinformation around the Southport attack, likely with the intent of stoking racial animosity, was 30 hours later posting videos relishing violence against police in the vicinity of the original crime itself.

THURSDAY 1 AUGUST 2024

→ With the approval of a judge, the attacker's identity is publicly revealed as 17-year-old **Axel Muganwa Rudakubana**.¹⁰⁰ The boy was born in Cardiff to practising Christian parents who were themselves originally from Rwanda.

By the time the identity and backstory of the attacker was released to the public, on X alone ‘Ali Al-Shakati’ had received more than 30,000 mentions from more than 18,000 different individual accounts. This was symptomatic of a surge in Islamophobic discourse around the attack, as of 18:00 on 30 July, tweets mentioning Islam in the context of Southport, excluding those denouncing the speculation, had received 27 million impressions.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ See Figure 48

⁹⁶ See Figure 50

⁹⁷ (Halliday & Siddique, 2024)

⁹⁸ (De Wolfe, 2024)

⁹⁹ (Dodd, Mason, and Quinn, 2024)

¹⁰⁰ (Sandford, 2024)

¹⁰¹ (Jones, 2024a)

PART 3: Findings and The Eruption of Violence

This investigation into viral falsehoods surrounding the Southport attack reveals disinformation and misinformation thrived in an information environment where sensationalist content was structurally amplified by algorithms. The findings of this report raise serious concerns about X's platform design and governance.

1. Algorithmic Amplification:

- The false name attributed to the attacker was circulated organically but was directly amplified by X's recommendation algorithms. The name was promoted to users as a 'Trending in the UK' topic,¹⁰² pushing users directly to content that was plainly Islamophobic and contained allusions to, and even explicit calls for violence.

2. Inadequate Content Moderation:

- X's Hateful Conduct Policy prohibits "inciting fear or spreading fearful stereotypes about a protected category."¹⁰³ However, given much of the content highlighted here remains on X, enforcement appears to have been either entirely absent or inconsistent.
- While X's recent transparency report¹⁰⁴ reveals a quantitative increase in the removal of posts, this report suggests that X has failed to protect its users from the dangers of viral falsehoods. The restoration of prolific, repeat offenders to the platform, combined with the prevalence of fake accounts,¹⁰⁵ suggest that the scale of falsehoods is either outstripping X's moderation infrastructure, or it is not being prioritised.

3. Monetisation incentivises sensationalism:

- X's revenue sharing model has spawned an industry of pages creating and sharing content with the sole objective of achieving virality for monetary gain. This disincentivises thoughtful, fact-based coverage in favour of provocative, sensationalist content narratives. @EuropeInvasionn, @EndWokeness and @Channel3nownews are prime examples of this trend, which is likely to accelerate given changes to X's monetisation scheme that ties financial rewards directly to engagement with X's 'premium' user base.¹⁰⁶
- The Centre for Countering Digital Hate found X ran prominent advertising around many of the viral falsehoods surrounding Southport.¹⁰⁷ For example, @LozzaFox, posted boastfully that throughout the Southport saga, he received considerable financial remuneration for his posts on the platform.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² See Figure 33

¹⁰³ See Figure 38

¹⁰⁴ (Elliott, 2024)

¹⁰⁵ (Cohen, 2024)

¹⁰⁶ (X, 2024)

¹⁰⁷ (CCDH, 2024b)

¹⁰⁸ See Figure 56.

However, it was only with the intersection of mobilisation from organised extremists and underlying societal tensions that these digital dynamics metastasised into real life unrest. This also warrants an assessment of how disinformation can tap into societal dissatisfaction and be weaponised by extreme actors.

Social media analyses at the time reveal a disparate, loosely coordinated effort to mobilise protesters and incite violence. Amidst the false xenophobic narratives about Southport, we can trace deliberate efforts across numerous platforms to mobilise demonstrations, often with explicit invitations to criminality and violence.

In an opaque Telegram channel established to organise the 30 July demonstration, a user known as 'Stimpy', has been identified as one of the earliest figures mobilising for the St Lukes Road protest.¹⁰⁹ 'Stimpy' used that Southport channel to post Nazi materials, including a masked man standing in front of a swastika flag.¹¹⁰ A subsequent analysis by ISD revealed sharp spikes in Telegram usage in regions of the UK leading up to riots in those respective regions.¹¹¹ This signals both the opportunism of more extreme ideologues and the undeniable mobilising capacity of these loose online networks.

On X, one 30 July post has been identified as mobilising for the St Lukes Road protest and hinting at coming violence.¹¹² The posts read "children are being slaughtered at the altar of uncontrolled mass migration. Open Borders advocates have blood on their hands." The image is titled 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH', which is the catchphrase for Patriotic Alternative,¹¹³ followed by a bloody handprint and details for the protest. TikTok also saw a surge of videos encouraging users to mobilise,¹¹⁴ often featuring far-right imagery, and encouraging attendees to conceal their identities, in a clear allusion to coming criminality and violence.

By 20:05 on Tuesday 30 July, crowds had gathered outside the Southport Mosque, chanting nationalist and Islamophobic slogans such as 'English 'till I die', 'Tommy Robinson' and 'Allah, Allah, who the *** is Allah'.¹¹⁵ By 21:00 the crowd was hurling projectiles at police and vandalising the mosque and nearby businesses. Fifty-three police officers were injured in the line of duty on that Tuesday alone.¹¹⁶

Over the following week, the exhibition of unrest and violence in Southport inspired wider demonstrations throughout the United Kingdom. Nearly 30, racially motivated, "anti-immigration demonstrations" erupted in 27 towns and cities.¹¹⁷ In Sunderland, a citizen's advice bureau was set on fire,¹¹⁸ in Rotherham, rioters set fire to a hotel housing asylum

¹⁰⁹ See Figure 55

¹¹⁰ See Figure 53

¹¹¹ (ISD, 2024b)

¹¹² See Figure 57

¹¹³ Patriotic Alternative is one of Britain's few active Fascist organisations. (HopeNotHate, 2024c)

¹¹⁴ See Figure 58

¹¹⁵ (Mackay et al., 2024)

¹¹⁶ (Merseyside Police, 2024d)

¹¹⁷ (Duncan, et al., 2024)

¹¹⁸ (Manning & Watson, 2024)

seekers.¹¹⁹ Internationally, several countries, including Australia, Nigeria, Malaysia, and Indonesia, issued travel alerts for the UK.¹²⁰ As of September 2024, Police have arrested 1,280 individuals, with more than 800 charged, primarily with violent disorder. Notably, the youngest person charged was just 12 years old.¹²¹ In accordance with legal norms, they have not been named by police.

The involvement of known far-right figures and organisations was evident throughout the week of unrest. Britain First and its leader Paul Golding vocally expressed their support for the demonstrations online.¹²² Public affiliates of Tommy Robinson, such as Rikki Doolan, were present at the riot in Southport and also organised their own demonstration in central London on 31 July. That demonstration also deteriorated into violence.¹²³ Meanwhile members of Patriotic Alternative, one of Britain's few active fascist organisations, were identified as participating in the riots: David Miles, one publicly renowned member, posted himself at the scene in Southport.¹²⁴ Besides ardent political actors, the riots were also supplemented by local groups of football hooligans¹²⁵ and wider groups driven to wanton violence by societal dissatisfaction and deprivation.¹²⁶

The disparate, largely atomised nature of this mobilisation illustrates what researchers of Britain's far right have described as a 'post-organisational' phenomenon.¹²⁷ This is where the traditional institutional bastions of the radical and extreme right, such as the English Defence League or Britain First, have either formally disbanded or seen their monopoly of influence wane considerably. Instead, experts today paint a picture of a highly dispersed and subcultural far right, perhaps unified only in their shared participation in a right-wing media ecosystem, that has been briefly surveyed in this report. Joe Mulhall of anti-fascist organisation HopeNotHate has pointed to figures such as Tommy Robinson or Laurence Fox as 'weathermakers'.¹²⁸ These are informal figureheads who can channel resentment and implicitly encourage violence among supporters. Such mobilisation is often dispersed geographically but concentrates on occasions of national significance, such as in Southport, in the wake of this shocking attack.

The Southport episode vividly illustrates the dangerous intersection of disinformation, organised extremism and societal tensions. It is a testimony to the potency of that interplay

¹¹⁹ (Fox, 2024)

¹²⁰ (Lancefield & Wilson, 2024)

¹²¹ (Dodd & Wildring, 2024) (Al-Othman, 2024)

¹²² See Figure 54

¹²³ (Hope Not Hate, 2024f) (Holden, 2024)

¹²⁴ See Figure 55

¹²⁵ (Yeomans & Lambert, 2024)

¹²⁶ A subsequent demographic analysis of those arrested reveals deeply rooted societal divisions. Over half of those charged came from the most deprived 20% of Britain, while 36% came from areas that self-report as the unhealthiest 10% in the country. Furthermore, 29% were from neighborhoods with the lowest educational qualifications, and one-third of those charged came from areas that disproportionately supported the right-wing populism of Nigel Farage's Reform UK. (Duncan et al., 2024)

¹²⁷ (Mulhall, 2018)

¹²⁸ (Tapper, 2024)

that it was a mere thirty hours from the initial false narratives to the hospitalisation of dozens of police officers.

This report has catalogued the agency of influential social media figures in spreading the fake Southport narratives. It has traced their chronology and development, before identifying the role of extremists and organisers in stoking real violence. This report will now conclude by offering readers with tools to critically evaluate online information, recognise manipulation tactics, and understand the broader socio-political context of viral content. To this end, Polis invites our readers to join in working to build more resilient societies, better equipped to withstand the divisive forces of political extremism.

PART 4: MEDIA LITERACY TO COMBAT MIS AND DISINFORMATION

The speed with which false speculation surrounding the Southport attacker morphed into a viral campaign of hatred is a clear testimony to the ways in which societal sentiment and prejudice can be weaponised by cynical actors and amplified by social media algorithms. Especially in sensitive cases such as extreme violence and political controversy, it is imperative that all readers approach online discourse with a grounded understanding of the effectiveness of misinformation at manipulating users and broader discourses.

A series of recent surveys suggest that individuals overestimate their ability to identify false or misleading content at a time where mis/disinformation's influence is becoming increasingly potent. Whilst the effectiveness of fake news can be attributed to several psychological and societal factors – including historic low trust in institutions and the 'illusory truth effect' – initial research has shown media literacy tips to be a successful method to mitigate these dangers.

- **EVALUATING METHODS:**

- The University of Chicago recommends several methods to “quickly and efficiently” critically analyse information from differing websites and sources:
- **SIFT METHOD:** <https://clark.libguides.com/evaluating-information/SIFT>
- Created by Mike Caulfield, a research scientist at the University of Washington's Center for an Informed Public, the SIFT method asks readers to Stop; Investigate the Source; Find Better Coverage; and Trace Claims, Quotes, and Media to their Original Context.
- **CRAAP METHOD:** https://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/ld.php?content_id=77584250
- *Designed by Sarah Blakeslee, Librarian at California State University, the CRAAP advises readers to consider Currency; Relevance; Authority; Accuracy; and Purpose.*
- **SMART CHECK:** <https://hnresearch.lonestar.edu/c.php?g=1002813&p=7262202>
- *SMART (Source; Motive; Authority; Review; Two-Source Test) is described by the University of Chicago as being “particularly helpful when evaluating news stories”.*

- **ACCOMPANYING TOOLS:**

- *In order to successfully apply either SIFT, CRAAP, OR SMART, Polis Analysis recommends these tools to help readers navigate the digital world:*

- **BAD NEWS GAME:** <https://www.getbadnews.com/en#intro>

- *“Bad News works as a psychological “vaccine” against disinformation: playing it builds cognitive resistance against common forms of manipulation that you may encounter online.”*

- **FAKEY:** <https://fakey.osome.iu.edu/>

- *“This game aims to teach media literacy and study how people interact with misinformation.”*

- **POLITITRUTH:** <https://www.cinqmarsmedia.com/politifact/index.html>

- *“PolitiTruth is a fake news quiz game that challenges players to distinguish political fact from fiction.”*

- **BOT SENTINEL:** <https://botsentinel.com/>

- *Bot Sentinel “publicly display[s] detailed information about Twitter accounts the platform is tracking to give visitors of this website a better understanding of how nefarious accounts spread disinformation and target other accounts.”*

- **ALLSIDES:** <https://www.allsides.com/unbiased-balanced-news>

- *AllSides “provide[s] Media Bias Ratings for over 1,400 media outlets and writers, so you can easily identify different perspectives,” including AI-powered bias checker,*

- **GROUND NEWS:** <https://ground.news/media-bias>

- *Ground News collects daily news stories from over 50,000 sources, “deliver[ing] them with a colour-coded bias rating.”*

- **POLITIFACT:** <https://www.politifact.com/>

- *“Each day, PolitiFact journalists look for statements to fact-check. We read transcripts, speeches, news stories, press releases, and campaign brochures. We watch TV and scan social media.”*

- **FULL FACT:** <https://fullfact.org/>
- *Full Fact “fact checks claims in public debate which are of public interest. This includes—but is not limited to—claims made by politicians and the media.”*
- **NEWSGUARD:** <https://www.newsguardtech.com/>
- *“NewsGuard deploys a team of expert journalists to rate and review the reliability of news sources across the open web, social media, and content platforms based on a set of apolitical criteria of journalistic practice.”*

Appendix



Figure 1

- Figure 1 is a @EuropeInvasionn post from 30 May 2024 depicting a crime scene, the image shows an abandoned London bus and a bloody sheet on the pavement. The comments captioning the image are false. @EuropeInvasionn claimed that the attack had taken place that day, that the suspect was 'North African', and that there had been a 2500% increase in crime during the Mayoral Term of Sadiq Khan.
- The image is after a knife attack on the 436 Lewisham bus on Camberwell New Road. At approximately 21:00 on 29 May 2024, a day prior to the post, an unknown culprit had attacked a 60-year-old male passenger after a verbal altercation. At the time of writing, police have not released any information about the suspect, and there are no witness statements which describe the ethnicity of the attacker.
- The claim that crime rates, presumably in London, have soared by 2500% under the Mayorship of Sadiq Khan is often repeated on @EuropeInvasionn, but is demonstrably false. According to Metropolitan Police data, from 2015, the year prior to Khan becoming mayor, to 2023, total crimes in the Greater London region increased by 25%, violent crimes increased by 37%, while homicides have decreased by 10%.



Figure 2

- Figure 2 is a @EuropeInvasionn post from 6 May 2024, sharing the aforementioned false claim around London's crime rates, attached to a video of young men seemingly slashing at one another with knives.
- The event itself is not identifiable from the video and it does not align with any high-profile crimes close to the time. While the general claim cannot therefore be disproven, it is unconvincing that @EuropeInvasionn was privy to details about the participants, their religion or their immigration status, none of which is in the public domain.
- To the contrary, it is apparent from the video that numerous participants were Caucasian, while the man seen separating the fighting groups appears himself to be of an ethnic minority background. This post illustrates @EuropeInvasionn sharing graphic, yet ambiguous, photos and videos framed to demonise ethnic minorities and immigrants.



Figure 3

- Figure 3 is a @EuropeInvasionn post from 5 June, 2024, displaying the mugshot of a convicted attacker at a nightclub in Halifax, England.
- The attacker's identity and the partial description of his crime are each correct. However, @Europeinvasionn treats the attack, which was triggered by a romantic feud, as representative of worsening crime in 'Sadiq Khan's London'. This is despite the fact Halifax is another city which is 200 miles north of the capital.



Figure 4

- Figure 4 is a @EuropeInvasionn post from 18 July, 2024 that shows a video of violent disorder in the Harehills area of Leeds taken earlier that day. The post claims that the video portrays Muslim immigrants involved in violent disorder, although it clearly shows the main culprits to be Caucasian. Furthermore the riot was actually sparked by Police officers attempting to take children from a Roma traveller community into care.
- The effort to falsely ascribe responsibility for the events in Leeds to immigrants and Muslims featured prominently online. Several right-wing influencers falsely accused Local Councillor Mothin Ali of participating in the violence. Ali was later seen on a separate video intervening to stop violence and criminal damage.
- The post ends with a clear call to violence, describing violence as the only 'language' that they, referring to Muslim immigrants, 'understand'.



Figure 5

- Figure 5 is a @EuropeInvasionn post from 6 May, 2024 depicting a march or protest on the Church Road of Bradford, England. While the date and provenance of the march cannot be conclusively identified, it appears neither violent nor illegal, yet the post clearly presents the crowd of people, from an ethnic minority, wearing traditional dress, as threatening.
- @Europeinvasionn reposted the video, alluding that those depicted were inhuman, describing them as viruses. It is well documented that dehumanisation and the use of viral metaphors are important rhetorical devices in the normalising of political violence.



Figure 6

- Figure 6 is a @EuropeInvasionn post from 2 August, 2024 post detailing the death of a woman, Anita Rose, in Brantham, UK.
- The case was another example of disinformation surrounding violent crime. Similar to Southport, the story went viral based on false claims about the perpetrator's ethnicity and immigration status.
- Suffolk Police publically declared (Cunningham, 2024) that none of the suspects, two of whom were in police custody, were from Somalia.



Figure 7

- Figure 7 is a post from 14 August, 2024 depicting an AI generated Vice President Kamala Harris armed with a rifle, who appears to be overseeing a dystopian work camp.
- The artificially generated image is captioned with a quote, about equity and equality of outcome, attributed to the Vice President although it has not been successfully verified.
- The AI clearly depicts tropes held on the American political right about their democratic opponents, primarily that they are radical, extreme leftists in a quasi-dictatorial sense.

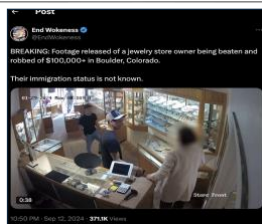


Figure 8

- Figure 8, an @EndWokeness post from the 12 September 2024, depicts a video, likely security camera footage from a what appears to be a robbery in Boulder, Colorado.
- The graphic video is captioned with the statement that '[t]heir immigration status is not known', while the robbery has not been identified, the caption is a clear effort to tie one's status as an immigrant to a propensity to crime.



Figure 9

- Figure 9 is a @EndWokeness post from 17 September, 2024, showing a crowd of people depicted on the city of Deaborn, Michigan's official social media.
- The crowd is a peaceful protest against the Israeli war in Gaza, but seems to have been posted because of the ethnic makeup of the crowd and the preponderance of signs and flags bearing Arabic slogans.
- The post is captioned with the suggestion that while the video looks like Tehran, Iran, it is instead the United States.
- This appears to be an effort to stoke division over ethnic diversity. It conforms to broader right wing themes of ethnic minorities threatening the racial makeup of Western societies.



Figure 10

- Figure 10 is a @EndWokeness post from 12 September, 2024 contrasting NASA's sharing of a rainbow LGBTQ flag for pride month, with the recent private spacewalk by billionaire Jared Isaacman, led by Elon Musk's SpaceX.
- The implication seems to be that NASA has prioritised issues of representation and 'wokeness' generally over their mission of sending humans to space.
- This is a general theme on @EndWokeness, denigrating US institutions like NASA or the US military for 'prioritising' what is perceived as identity politics to the detriment of their mission.



Figure 11

- Figure 11 is a 22 September, 2024, screenshot of the highest ranking interactions between Elon Musk and @EndWokeness.
- As the platforms most followed account, Musk's regularly engagement with these posts acts as an algorithmic boost to their reach. Furthermore, by tweeting his approval or indignation towards the post or sentiment in question, Musk directly signals to his 200 million followers that @EndWokeness is a worthy, legitimate source of information.



Figure 12

- Figure 12 displays an excerpt from Bernadette Spofforth (@artemisfornow) appearing on TalkRadioTV, a fringe British internet talk show, discussing the easing of coronavirus lockdown measures in January 2022.
- In 2021, Spofforth was suspended from Twitter for allegedly sharing health misinformation around the COVID-19 pandemic.



Figure 13

- Figure 13 is an @artemisfornow post from 21 September, 2024, displaying a large solar farm in Japan.
- The video has an ironic caption mocking the expansion of solar energy and renewables in the UK for doing more harm than good to the planet.
- Mocking and deriding net zero measures are a prominent theme on the political right, both in moderate and more radical ideological circles.



Figure 14

- Figure 14 is a @artemisfornow post from 22 September, 2024, depicting a Guardian article on Antonio Guterres, of the United Nations.
- The post derides the UN's 'Pact for the Future' at the 2024 UN General Assembly as part of a sinister 'march towards one world government'.
- The post's rhetorical invocation of 'did you vote for this?' is an unsubtle reference to conspiracy theories of malevolent unelected globalists, scheming to 'rule the world'.
- The 'Pact for the Future' is an elaborate statement of intent for UN participants to commit towards implementing the UN's sustainable development goals among other anodyne objectives.



Figure 15

- Figure 15 is a post from @artemisfornow on 18 September, 2024, wherein she 'tells her side' of the Southport disinformation saga and portrays herself as a victim of censorship by an overbearing government.
- Spofforth was 'dragged from her home' for her part in the Southport disinformation saga, and detained by police for 36 hours before being released without charge.
- The video has been widely shared among free speech advocacy communities and Spofforth on 23 September, 2024, has reappeared on TalkRadioTV, to decry her alleged mistreatment.



Figure 16

- Figure 16 is an infamous poster from the 2016 Vote Leave campaign. Released on 16 June 2016 in central London, the poster drew instant ire for its depiction of immigrants arriving in a long queue to the European borders.
- The clear implication was that staying in Europe represented a 'flood' of immigrants and refugees of a different racial composition to the UK.
- The poster has been compared, side by side, with Nazi propaganda and there is a clear resemblance to the imagery (Barlet, 2016)

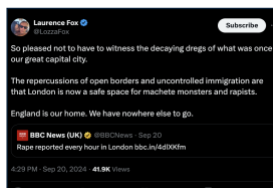


Figure 17

- Figure 17 depicts a 20 September, 2024 post from @LozzaFox (Laurence Fox).
- The post is in response to a BBC article about the prevalence of rape and sexual assault in London, the piece is based on Metropolitan Police data and paints a dark image of a 14% increase from 2018-2023 (Evans, 2024).
- Fox blames 'open borders and uncontrolled immigration' for the phenomenon. This appears both false and disingenuous. According to the most recently published data on the ethnicity of sexual assault offenders, 60.8% were ethnically white (Office for National Statistics, 2018).
- The broader assertions that London is a 'safe space for machete monsters and rapists' is a frequent trope from far right commentators about the capital under the mayorship of Sadiq Khan, who is a practising Muslim.



Figure 18

- Figure 18 depicts a 9 June, 2024 @Lozzafox (Laurence Fox) post.
- The image is of a side by side comparison of children holding rainbow pride flags with a historic image of children, presumably from Nazi Germany, waving swastikas.
- Fox uses the comparison to present, his own opposition to the LGBTQ flag.
- Drawing false equivalency between a flag designed to symbolise inclusivity and tolerance with the symbol of history's most oppressive and murderous regimes is distasteful at best, but it does clearly display the vitriolic ideological opposition of far right commentators to progressive causes.



Figure 19

- Figure 19 is a 4 May, 2024 @Lozzafox post of a long list of claims about the prominence of Islam in the UK. Some of the claims, such as the mayor of Rochdale being a Muslim are factual and benign.
- Many more of the claims are either verifiably false or difficult to quantify. The claim there are 130 'Sharia Councils' in the UK is false, the most recent evidence places the number between 30-85 (Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2018).
- The claim that 63% of Muslims do not work and receive state support also appears disingenuous. While this exact data is not recorded, 78% of all recipients of universal credit benefits are ethnically white, with white British families the largest single recipient, suggesting that Fox's claim may be false (Department for Work and Pensions, 2024).
- The general message that the UK is being taken over or infiltrated by Islam is plainly Islamophobic and does not seem, from the data points offered, factual.



Figure 20

- Figure 20 is a 21 September, 2024 post from @Trobisonnewera (Tommy Robinson) sharing a video claiming to be a confrontation between ethnic minority men and boys (fake refugees according to the poster). The video and its provenance have not been identified or verified.
- Robinson captions the shared video with the declaration that 'mass deportations' are the 'only solution to save Europe.' This clearly portrays the far right figures xenophobic ethno-nationalism, and reinforces the trope that the 'west' is facing an 'invasion'. At the time of capturing the post, it had approximately 500,000 views.

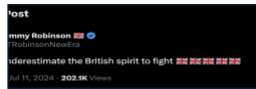


Figure 21

- Figure 21 is an 11 July, 2024 post from @Trobisonnewera championing 'The British spirit to fight' alongside a string of Union Flags.
- Such invocations of strength, will and violence are frequent from Robinson, who always disowns real violence.
- At Robinson's 27th July 2024 'patriotic rally' in central London, two men were arrested for previous bodily harm inflicted against an anti-racism protestor.



Figure 22

- Figure 22 is an April 23rd 2024 post from @Trobisonnewera (Tommy Robinson) declaring he was 'going into battle' and fighting for 'what is right.'
- The post came when Robinson was facing a British court for repeatedly libelling a Syrian refugee in a film.
- It is accompanied by an AI generated image of a knight draped in English flags, encapsulating the mythic, self-aggrandising terms in which far right activists conceive of their mission to defend what they portray as traditional values.



Figure 23

- Figure 23 is a video from 30 July, 2024 @Trobisonnewera that depicts Tommy Robinson decrying Islam as a 'mental health issue' rather than a religion of peace.
- The refrain that 'there is evidence' is typical among far right figures and commentators that frequently cite an apparent abundance of proof to substantiate false and often plainly islamophobic comments.

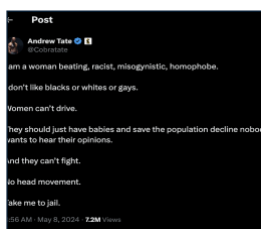
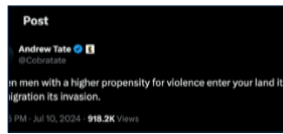


Figure 24

- Figure 24 is an 8 May, 2024 X post by @Cobratate (Andrew Tate) in which he lists the values he claims to believe and represent, including being a 'woman beating racist misogynistic homophobe' who doesn't 'like blacks or whites or gays'.
- Tate goes on to profess his belief that women 'should just have babies and save the population decline nobody wants to hear their opinions.' It is a remarkable indictment of X under Elon Musk's ownership that such content has a staggering 7.2 million views.
- Although the number of likes is proportionately far lower- 31,000- it should still be extremely worrying that such a number would publicly voice their affirmation of such a toxic worldview.

Figure 25



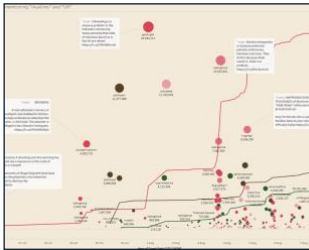
- Figure 25 is a 10 July, 2024 post from @cobratate (Andrew Tate), he decries the apparent influx of migrants with a 'higher propensity for violence'. This is likely using the far right trope that ethnic minority communities and immigrants are more prone to criminal and violent behaviour. At least in the United States, this suggestion has been empirically debunked (Seid et al., 2024).
- Tate goes on to describe such an influx as an 'invasion'. This appears a homage to the far right conspiracy theory of a 'Great Replacement' whereby shadowy elites, often 'globalists' or plainly antisemitic villains, seek to replace white Christian populations in the West through the absorption of migrants of other ethnic backgrounds.
- The Great Replacement was the title of the 2019 Christchurch shooter's manifesto. The theory has been connected to as many as 12 terrorist attacks (Kriner, et al., 2022)

Figure 26



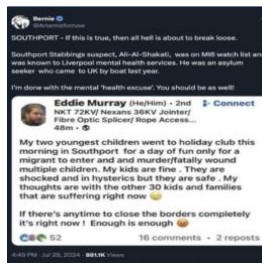
- Figure 26 is the original @EuropeInvasionn post from 13:49, 29 July 2024.
- The image is a screenshot of police officers at the Southport crime scene, likely from local news coverage of the attack. Beneath a summary of the attack, which was likely the sum of partial details available in the public sphere, @EuropeInvasionn adds '[t]he attacker is alleged to be a Muslim immigrant.'
- Although this claim is speculative and ultimately false, it is clearly entirely in keeping with the page's history of misattributing violent crime to Muslims and immigrants.
- While the original post was shared at 13:49 GMT, but the post was later reshared with embellishment of the 'Ali Al-Shakati' narrative.

Figure 27



- Figure 27 is a graph by @marcowsenJones of X post data from 8 August. By this time, some of the more egregious falsehoods surrounding the Southport attack had been deleted and thus are not depicted in the data. The data shows that @EuropeInvasionn's post was the earliest mention of Islam or Immigrants around the time of the attack which had significant enough reach on the platform to be picked up in a macro analysis.
- At the time of the post's capture the @EuropeInvasionn post had 6.8 million impressions.
- The subsequent spike in posts discussing Islam and immigrants signals the broader surge in online discourse following the Southport attack and riots.
- @Cobratate's 1 August post is clearly visible as a highly prominent post that was still on the platform. (Jones, 2024d)

Figure 28



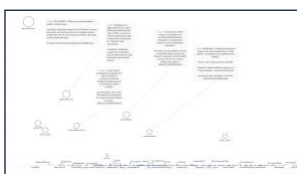
- Figure 28 is an @Artemisfornow X post from 15:49, attached to a screenshot of a LinkedIn anecdote about the Southport attack.
- That LinkedIn post, which has since been deleted, has been curiously under analysed since the Southport episode, but whether it was a genuine anecdote from a shocked parent or simply a manifestation of the anti-migrant sentiment circulating since @EuropeInvasionn, this does not change its functional impact- it does not mention the name Ali Al-Shakati.
- @Artemisfornow captions the screenshot with "Southport stabbing suspect Ali Al-Shakati was on MI6 watchlist an was known to Liverpool mental health services. He was an asylum seeker who came to UK by boat last year."
- Note: The chronology of these posts is of critical importance, when analysing posts that have since been deleted there is often the need to rely on screenshots from others to illustrate the posts themselves. The extract shown in Figure 28 was taken from a GMT+1 timezone, therefore the displayed post time is incorrect by one hour. This is verified by Figure 44, which depicts the chronology of key Ali Al-Shakati posts.

Figure 29



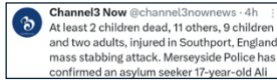
- Figure 29 depicts a side-by-side of a Facebook post that was subsequently offered by Bernadette Spofforth (@Artemisfornow) as proof that the name 'Ali Al-Shakati' was circulating online prior to her posting it.
- The post on the left depicts the Facebook post in Pacific Standard Time, Facebook's technical baseline which is shown when a user is not logged into the service. Furthermore, were the time accurate, it would have required the post to have been shared prior to the Southport attack.
- The post on the right depicts the same post in GMT, showing it was actually shared after @Artemisfornow originally posted.

Figure 30



- Figure 30 is a 29 July, 2024 graph of post data containing the term 'Ali Al-Shakati' compiled by disinformation researcher @MarcowsenJones on 29 July. This is evident because @Artemisfornow's original post was captured in the data, despite being deleted several hours after it was originally shared.
- The graph clearly shows the chronology and viral reach of posts from @Artemisfornow, @Channel3nownews, and @EndWokeness.
- (Jones, 2024b)

Figure 31



- Figure 31 is the @Channel3nownews post from 16:51 on 29 August, that affirms the false 'Ali Al-Shakati' narrative.
- The false claim is embellished with basic facts about the attack and the claim that Merseyside Police had actually confirmed the identity 'Ali Al Shakti'.
- This original post was deleted shortly after going viral when it became apparent that the claim was entirely false.

Figure 32



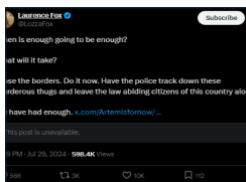
- Figure 32 is a screenshot of the original article on the Channel3Now website, captured by
- The link to this website became a widespread mark of legitimacy, as it appeared a verified news source was making the revelations.
- Although in a subsequent BBC interview Channel3Now 'verification producer' Kevin claimed the piece was written by a 'UK based team', the article is now widely believed to have been created by Farhan Asif in Pakistan (Spring, 2024b).

Figure 33



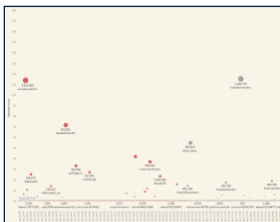
- Figure 33 is a screenshot of X's UK What's Happening page by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD, 2024) at some point during 29 July.
- It displays Ali Al Shakati as a trending topic with 17.6 thousand posts under the heading.
- This shows how directly X's algorithmic recommendations pushed users towards false, Islamophobic content, presumably because the topic was generating lots of engagement.

Figure 34



- Figure 34 depicts @LozzaFox's (Laurence Fox) from 17:09, 29 July 2024 in which Fox shared @Artemisfornow's original 'Ali Al Shakati' post, although Fox does not use the term himself he clearly validates the narrative and contributes to its dissemination.
- Fox's caption of '[w]hen is enough going to be enough' shows how the false claims about 'Ali Al Shakati' were contextualised into a broader ideological narrative holding as, that holds as truth the narrative that violence by Muslims and/or immigrants is a hidden societal emergency.

Figure 35



- Figure 35 is a graph of post data about Islam and immigrants compiled by disinformation researcher @MarcowenJones in the aftermath of the Southport attack.
- The graph clearly shows the virality of @EuropeInvasion's original post about Southport, as well as identifying the spike in engagement after the 'Ali Al Shakati' narrative was created, centered around accounts like @Trobinsonnewera and @EndWokeness.

Figure 36



- Figure 36 depicts posts captured from @Trobinsonnewera between 18:00 and 18:33, 29 July, posts captured from . The first post is believed to have linked to the @Channel3nownews post, while the second contains the base LinkedIn screenshot used by @Artemisfornow.
- These posts are presented via secondary data because the former was promptly deleted after it became apparent that the 'Ali Al Shakati' claim was false.



Figure 37

- Figure 37 is an 18:38 post from 29 July post from @Trobinsonnewera reacting to the Southport attack.
- Robinson has shared an unverified LinkedIn post, which also was the underlying image for @Artemisfornow's original 'Ali Al-Shakati' post.
- Robinson has captioned the screenshot with the 'I've been warning about this for years' likely referring to an act of horrific violence by an immigrant or Muslim, along with linking a recent podcast appearance in which Robinson had made such claims. The post concludes with the call to 'close our borders now, deport all these wrong'uns'
- This is representative of Robinson's regular calls for mass deportations, whereby 'wrong'uns' presumably serves as a stand-in for dangerous immigrants.



Figure 38

- Figure 38 is a series of posts captured from a Telegram channel that was used to organise the 30/07 riot in Southport. These were captured by the extremist monitoring organisation, Hope Not Hate (HopeNotHate, 2024e)
- The upper portion of the image shows the user, with the pseudonym 'Stimp' beginning to organise the riot in Southport, stating 'never again' and calling for a 'protest' at the road of the Southport Mosque.
- 'Stimp' also used the channel to share explicitly Nazi propaganda, featuring a man, possibly stimp himself, masked and hooded in front of a Swastika flag.
- This post is the earliest record of far right extremists actively using the Southport attack to spread extremist material and organise violence.



Figure 39

- Figure 39 is a record of the original LinkedIn post that was shared by @Artemisfornow and later @Trobinsonnewera.
- The post claims to be that of a father who's children had attended the dance class in Southport and narrowly avoided being wounded or worse in the attack by a 'migrant'. The post proceeds to call on the government to 'close the borders completely'
- This LinkedIn post has been curiously under-analysed in subsequent assessments of the Southport saga. Although the post itself has been deleted since, the LinkedIn profile corresponds to the Facebook profile of a Southport man, Eddie Murray. It is entirely unclear whether Murray's children were genuinely caught in the horror of the attack, but the post nonetheless came to serve as anecdotal proof of the attacker's immigrant status.
- The name Ali Al-Shakati is not mentioned, and neither is the claim that the attacker was Muslim.

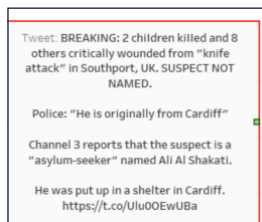


Figure 40

- Figure 40 depicts a 19:20 29 July post from @EndWokeness.
- The post directly cites and shares the link to Channel-3, presenting them as as a news outlet 'reporting' that the suspect was 'asylum seeker' 'Ali Al-Shakati'. This is presented in contradiction to Merseyside Police's statement that the suspect was from Cardiff. It appears an attempt to foment distrust of the official narrative.
- It is necessary to disclaim that the original post was promptly deleted, the only available record is from a scrape of post data by Jones (2024a).



Figure 41

- Figure 41 is a 20:50 29.7 post from @Cobratate (Andrew Tate) in which Tate is driving and shouting to the video about the media hiding the truth that a "17 year old male" had arrived in the UK as an asylum seeker on a boat. Tate proceeds to call for "Western men" to protest and protect their 'daughters from "illegal migrant invaders"'. The video is captioned "ILLEGAL MIGRANT STABS 6 LITTLE GIRLS WAKE UP."
- The post is captioned "ILLEGAL MIGRANT STABS 6 LITTLE GIRLS WAKE UP."
- This post is a clear blend of Tate's brand of white masculinity 'standing up for their civilisation' with the Islamophobia of the Southport narratives themselves.
- It was eventually algorithmically restricted and removed by X, after receiving more than 11.7 million views.



Figure 42

- Figure 42 is the original 13:14 Merseyside Police report that there had been an incident in Southport.
- It details that a man had been arrested and a knife seized, along with the presence of casualties.
- It states that the situation presents no further danger and urges the public to avoid speculation.



-
- 52 minutes
- 18 accounts tweeted the name before Channel3NowNews

Figure 44

- George Fox** @GeorgeFox1988 · 11h
 light of this madness now.
- need to permanently remove Islam from Great Britain,
 completely and entirely.
- Don Wootton** @donwootton · 14h
 we're making the UK unsafe for our own children - you're above
 us near of the British race."
 George Fox reacts in fury to the news that 11 children have been
 abducted and two killed in Southampton today.
- Lozzerfox**
- 

Figure 45

- A screenshot of a Facebook profile page under the 'People' tab. It shows three profile pictures of a man. The first profile picture is at the top left, with a 'Follow' button to its right. Below it is a post from 'University of Cambridge' dated 'Wednesday 11 October 2017', with a 'Like' button. The second profile picture is below that, with a 'Follow' button to its right. Below it is a post from 'University of Cambridge' dated 'Wednesday 11 October 2017', with a 'Like' button. The third profile picture is at the bottom, with a 'Follow' button to its right. Below it is a post from 'University of Cambridge' dated 'Wednesday 11 October 2017', with a 'Like' button.

Figure 46

- is required to meet
- 
- The growth, which *couldn't* be named for legal reasons and to originally from Cardiff, moved to the intelligent area, with its Warrington premises where he was again able.
- In a *preliminary* *investigation* *of* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *Warrington* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* *in* *the* *United* *Kingdom* *in* *2020* *and* *the* *role* *of* *the* *Warrington* *premises* *in* *the* *outbreak* *of* *the* *novel* *coronavirus* <

Figure 47

- Twitter · @TheDailyBeast
- There's more evidence to suggest Islam is a mental health issue rather than a religion of peace.
- 
- 100% · 14.5K · 100%

Figure 48





- Tommy Robinson**   
@TPoliceonNews24
- The police are "managing" what they tell us about the slaughter of children in Southport today.
- And "managing" our response to it
- Their bodies are barely cold, others fighting for their lives in hospital.
- And their goal is to manipulate us!
-
- Steven Barrett**  @StevenBarrett Jul 30
I have been privately contacted by a Police Officer - which is rare for me
- And told that what we are being told about the Southport stabbings is being managed
- [Show more](#)

Figure 49

- # Fake News Observatory: The Anatomy of a Riot



Figure 50

- Figure 50 depicts @Nigel_Farage's 30.07.24 video responding to the events in Southport.
- Sat at a desk and speaking directly to the camera, Farage proceeds to 'raise some questions' about the police's handling of the Southport case. "[t]he police say it's a non-terror incident... I just wonder whether the truth is being withheld from us? I don't know the answer." He continues "[w]as this guy being monitored by the security services? Some reports say he was, others less sure."
- In subsequent public interviews (de Wolfe, 2024) Farage confessed to having been deceived by the disinformation swirling around Southport, he claims Andrew Tate had been one of his online sources.
- A sitting member of parliament spreading the same conspiratorial rhetoric emanating from far right figures is remarkable. Without personally referencing any sources or making explicit claims, Farage gave such discourse the stamp of legitimacy while maintaining plausible deniability.



Figure 51

- Figure 51 is a @EuropeInvasionn post from 21:59 on 30.07.24. The video posted, while unverified, appears to show the St Lukes Road in Southport and rioters clashing with police officers.
- With remarkable relish, @EuropeInvasionn captions the video "British police are HELPLESS against patriots in Southport."
- This post captures the vitriolic content narrative and worldview @EuropeInvasionn shares on X: the police embody a state that is politically correct and complicit, while the criminals hurling abuse and missiles at police are patriots and heroes.
- That this was a mere 30 hours after @EuropeInvasionn seemingly invented the original disinformation about the Southport attacker, is a damning indictment of the possible effectiveness of disinformation at fomenting distrust, division and violence.



Figure 52

- Figure 52 depicts an X post in the build up to the 30.07.24 riots. The original poster and timestamp are not available as the post was captured by the disinformation monitoring group ISD (2024).
- The post reads 'children are being slaughtered at the altar of uncontrolled mass migration. Open Borders advocates have blood on their hands.'
- The image is titled 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH', which is the catchphrase for Patriotic Alternative, followed by a bloody handprint and details for the protest. Patriotic Alternative is one of Britain's few active Fascist organisations. (HopeNotHate, 2024c).
- As Figure 52 is sourced from a third party, the details of its viewership and engagement are not available, but nonetheless speak to extremist organising on X in the build up to the riots of 30.07.24.



Figure 53

- Figure 53 depicts a series of TikTok posts that were identified by ISD as mobilising the protest on the St Lukes road for the 30.08.24.
- The general sentiment of the TikToks is similar to those circulating on X, including calls for vengeance for those who lost their lives, calls for mass deportations and the suggestion participants hide their faces, in clear anticipation of criminal activity.



Figure 54

- Figure 54 is a 21:09, 30.07.24 post by Paul Golding, Co-founder of Britain First, which is one of the nation's few active far right extremist organisations. Britain First has been infamous since MP Jo Cox, was murdered in 2016 by an extremist, who although not directly affiliated with the organisation, shouted the words 'Britain First' during the attack
- Golding captions his video 'Southport erupts. 'CAN YOU BLAME THE LOCAL ENGLISH RESIDENTS? OUR BABIES ARE BEING KILLED. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.'
- The legitimisation of violent disorder in Southport clearly builds off of the narrative that the attack itself had been symptomatic of broader problems of multiculturalism and immigrant violence generally in the UK and that rioters held 'legitimate grievances'.



Figure 55

- Figure 55 depicts a picture shared by David Miles (HopenotHate, 2024e), a known member of Patriotic Alternative from Birmingham.
- Patriotic alternative is described by Hope Not Hate as 'Britain's most active fascist organisation.' (2024e)
- Although subsequent analyses have revealed rioters were predominantly lived locally, Miles' presence at the riots, while flagrantly advertising his participation, signals the loose networking, and sheer opportunism of active extremists at the fringes of Britain's political right.



Figure 56

- Figure 56 is a @LozzaFox post from 6.8.2024 where Fox shares how much revenue his X profile has received from revenue sharing over the period of the Southport saga.
- Fox personally earned \$1277 from his X posts from 20.07-02.08.

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