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Echoes of Fascism?

Social Exclusion and Radicalisation among Muslim Minorities and Ethnic Majorities in Northwestern Europe

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Abstract

This paper examines how social exclusion and relative deprivation foster extremist ideologies among Muslim minorities and ethnic majorities in four Northwestern European countries and to what extent theories of fascism can help to unravel these contemporary trends. We identify three key findings based on extensive interview data from the DRIVE project. First, minority and majority participants express ideological positions sharing structural similarities with historical fascism, including perceptions of cultural threat, economic grievances, and desires for societal transformation. Second, these elements manifest distinctly: for ethnic majorities as nativist sentiments and calls for cultural homogeneity, and for Muslim minorities as totalising religious-political worldviews rejecting liberal pluralism. Third, social exclusion creates 'cognitive openings' for extremist narratives in both populations, but through different pathways: majorities through perceived cultural threats and economic insecurity, minorities through discrimination and cultural alienation. Here, we see critical divergences from theories of fascism, with minorities facing different processes as the result of exclusion from majority society. Ultimately, use of such theories has notable limitations, but helps to track different patterns of social exclusion and

the normalisation of exclusionary ideologies. Our analysis bridges fascism studies and radicalisation research while highlighting the increasing significance of relative deprivation in driving contemporary patterns of extremism.

Introduction

The rise of extreme and exclusionary ideologies within both Muslim minorities and nationalist majorities in Northwestern Europe has emerged as a critical concern in recent years, challenging key elements of social cohesion and democratic values.[1] This paper examines the interplay between experiences of social exclusion and the development of viewpoints and attitudes to assess to what extent theories of historical fascism could help us to better understand the exclusionary narratives and violent actions that are taking place.[2] By drawing on rich interview data from the Horizon 2020 DRIVE project,[3] we offer a nuanced analysis of patterns of marginalisation, identity crises, and ideological radicalisation among Muslims and ethnic majority nationalists in Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and the UK. By examining parallel processes of ideological radicalisation among both majority and

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1   Francesco Duina and Dylan Carson, "Not So Right After All? Making Sense of the Progressive Rhetoric of Europe's Far-Right Parties," *International Sociology* 35, no. 1 (2020): 3–21: https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580919881862; Martijn de Koning, "The Racialization of Danger: Patterns and Ambiguities in the Relation between Islam, Security and Secularism in the Netherlands," *Patterns of Prejudice* 54 (2020): 123–35, https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2019.1705011; Hajra Tahir et al., "Threat, Anti-Western Hostility and Violence among European Muslims: The Mediating Role of Acculturation," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 73 (2019): 74–88, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.08.001; Florian Stoeckel and Besir Ceka, "Political Tolerance in Europe: The Role of Conspiratorial Thinking and Cosmopolitanism," *European Journal of Political Research* 62, no. 3 (2022): 699–722, https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12527.

2   Franka Metzner et al., "Experiences of Discrimination and Everyday Racism among Children and Adolescents with an Immigrant Background: Results of a Systematic Literature Review on the Impact of Discrimination on the Developmental Outcomes of Minors Worldwide," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.805941.

3   "DRIVE: Understanding Social Exclusion, Exploring Perspectives on Polarisation (2021–2023)," https://www.driveproject.eu/, accessed October 25, 2024. According to European Commission agreements, the data for this study is not publicly available.

minority populations, the study contributes to developing a comparative framework for understanding how similar experiences of marginalisation can foster distinct but structurally similar exclusionary ideologies.

Our study is situated at the intersection of several key scholarly debates, including discussions on the nature of contemporary extremism, the role of social exclusion in radicalisation processes, and the ongoing relevance of fascism studies to understanding modern political phenomena. By bringing these disparate fields into dialogue, we aim to contribute to a more holistic understanding of the factors driving ideological polarisation in diverse European societies. The analysis reveals potential parallels between elements of contemporary extremist thought and key features of classical fascism, including perceptions of cultural threat, economic grievances, and desires for societal transformation. Exclusionary ideologies are notably evident in both minority and majority populations but manifest themselves in distinct ways, shaped by their particular social, cultural, and historical contexts, leading to questions as to what extent theories rooted in understanding engagement with fascism can be applied firstly in a contemporary context and secondly to groups that exist as a minority.[4] For ethnic majority nationalists, we observe a resurgence of nativist sentiments and calls for cultural homogeneity that resonate with fascism's emphasis on palingenesis, or national rebirth. Among Muslim minorities, we identify totalising religious-political worldviews that, although distinct from classical fascism, share certain structural similarities in their rejection of liberal pluralism and democracy and their vision of societal transformation. At the same time, our analysis highlights important distinctions between these contemporary ideological positions and historical fascism. We argue that while there are notable continuities, the specific manifestations of exclusionary ideologies in the twenty-first century are shaped by unique historical circumstances, including the challenges of multiculturalism, the impact of globalisation, and the lingering effects of colonial legacies.[5] By carefully delineating these similarities and differences, we contribute to ongoing

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4   Saladdin Ahmed, "Fascism as an Ideological Form: A Critical Theory," *Critical Sociology* 49, no. 4–5 (2023, first published online in 2022): 669–87, https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205221109869; Carlos Martins, "The Resurgence of Fascism in the Contemporary World: History, Concept, and Prospective," *Critical Sociology* 49, no. 7–8 (2023): 1095–1108, https://doi.org/10.1177/089692052311 77493.

5   cf. Simon Ozer, "Globalization and Radicalization: A Cross-National Study of Local Embeddedness and Reactions to Cultural Globalization in Regard to Violent Extremism," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 76 (2019): 26–36, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2020.02.007.

scholarly debates about the nature of 'fascist-like' ideologies in the contemporary world, as well as the relevance of theories of fascism beyond their traditional context.

Methodologically, our study demonstrates the value of in-depth qualitative research in capturing the nuanced ways in which experiences of marginalisation shape ideological positions. Through careful analysis of interview data, we uncover the narratives and meaning-making processes that underpin the adoption of extremist viewpoints. This approach allows us to move beyond simplistic explanations of radicalisation that have bedevilled the field,[6] revealing instead the role of individual experiences, group dynamics, and broader societal trends, as well as placing our findings in a longer historical context. Theoretically, our work engages with and extends several key concepts in the fields of fascism studies, radicalisation research, and social identity theory. We build on Griffin's notion of 'palingenetic ultranationalism'[7] and Wiktorowicz's cognitive opening theory[8] to develop a more comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between social exclusion and the appeal of extremist ideologies. The implications of our findings extend beyond academic debates, offering valuable insights for policymakers working to prevent irregular violence and promote social cohesion. We argue for a nuanced approach that addresses both the material and symbolic dimensions of social exclusion, engages seriously with identity-based grievances, and promotes democratic values while recognising the concerns of diverse communities.

In the following sections, we first provide a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, situating our study within ongoing scholarly debates. We then outline our methodological approach, detailing the DRIVE project data collection process and our analytical strategy. The core of the paper presents our findings, organised around key themes that emerged from the data. We conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of our work, acknowledging its limitations and suggesting directions for future research. Throughout, we aim to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of contemporary extremism and its roots in experiences of marginalisation and social change, with the ultimate goal of informing study and action in encouraging inclusive, democratic societies.

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6   Christopher Baker-Beall et al., *Counter-Radicalisation: Critical Perspectives* (Routledge, 2014).

7   Roger Griffin, *Fascism: An Introduction to Comparative Fascist Studies* (Polity Press, 2018).

8   Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

Our analysis draws on a rich tapestry of theories relating to social exclusion, radicalisation, and the defining features of fascist ideology. This interdisciplinary approach allows us to explore the relations between societal marginalisation and the adoption of extremist viewpoints that echo historical fascism. This study also draws on the theory of relative deprivation, defined as the perception that oneself or one's group is undeservingly worse off than others.[9] Relative deprivation theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how subjective experiences of disadvantage can fuel extremist ideologies, even when objective circumstances may not seem to warrant such responses. By incorporating this perspective, we can better explain the psychological mechanisms that link experiences of social exclusion to the adoption of fascist-like ideologies within both minority and majority populations.

The concept of social exclusion refers to 'a complex and multi-dimensional process . . . involving the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities available to the majority of people in a society'.[10] This definition highlights the nature of exclusion, encompassing economic, social, and political dimensions. Building on this, we employ a framework of radicalisation, which posits that the process often begins with a sense of grievance or perceived injustice.[11] This aligns with relative deprivation theory,[12] which suggests that individuals become prone to radicalisation when they perceive a significant gap between their expectations and their actual circumstances. In the context of our study, this perceived gap may relate to eco-

9   Jonas R. Kunst and Milan Obaidi, "Understanding Violent Extremism in the 21st Century: The (Re)Emerging Role of Relative Deprivation," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 35 (2020): 55–59, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.03.010.

10   Ruth Levitas et al., *The Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion* (University of Bristol, 2007), 9.

11   Randy Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011): 7–36, http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.1.

12   Kunst and Obaidi, "Understanding Violent Extremism," 55–59; Cf. John Boswell et al., "Place-Based Politics and Nested Deprivation in the U.K.: Beyond Cities-Towns, 'Two Englands' and the 'Left Behind'," *Representation: Journal of Representative Democracy* 58 (2020): 169–90, https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2020.1751258; Justin Gest et al., "Roots of the Radical Right: Nostalgic Deprivation in the United States and Britain," *Comparative Political Studies* 51, no. 13 (2018): 1694–1719, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414017720705; Bart Meuleman et al., "Economic Conditions, Group Relative Deprivation and Ethnic Threat Perceptions: A Cross-National Perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46, no. 3 (2020): 593–611, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1550157.

nomic opportunities, cultural recognition, or political representation. Wiktorowicz's cognitive opening theory provides a complementary perspective, suggesting that individuals become more receptive to radical ideologies and engagement with radical movements during periods of personal crisis or disillusionment with mainstream society.[13] This theory is particularly relevant when examining how experiences of exclusion may create vulnerabilities to extremist narratives among majority and minority populations.

To analyse how contemporary extremist viewpoints may echo elements of historical fascism, we draw on scholarly work defining the core features of fascist ideology. Eatwell provides a comprehensive framework, identifying several key elements of fascism.[14] These include hyper-nationalism, an extreme form of nationalist sentiment often incorporating notions of racial or cultural superiority; racism, manifesting as a belief in inherent racial hierarchies and the need for racial purity; the myth of national rebirth, which presents a narrative of societal decay followed by national regeneration; and anti-liberal authoritarianism, characterised by a rejection of liberal democratic values in favour of strong, often dictatorial leadership. Kunst and Obaidi's research on identity fusion provides insight into how experiences of relative deprivation can strengthen bonds between followers and extremist leaders.[15] They found that relative deprivation can increase individuals' sense of closeness or 'fusion' with political leaders, which in turn makes them more willing to engage in violent actions against perceived threats. This mechanism helps explain the intense loyalty and readiness for action often observed in fascist movements. Griffin's concept of 'palingenetic ultranationalism' offers a synthesising framework that is particularly useful for our analysis.[16] This concept emphasises fascism's core myth of national rebirth following a period of perceived decay, capturing both the backward-looking nostalgia and forward-looking utopianism often present in fascist ideologies. By focusing on this central narrative of renewal, Griffin's framework offers resonances of fascist thought in contemporary extremist discourses, even when they may differ in specific content or context.

13   Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising*.
14   Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (Penguin Books, 2017), 363.
15   Kunst and Obaidi, "Understanding Violent Extremism," 55–59.
16   Griffin, *Fascism: An Introduction*.

Complementing these perspectives, Paxton provides a definition of fascism that emphasises its emotional and psychological dimensions.[17] Here, fascism is described as a form of political behaviour marked by an obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood, coupled with compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity. Paxton's definition highlights the role of a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites. This collaboration, he argues, leads to the abandonment of democratic liberties in pursuit of goals of internal cleansing and external expansion, often through redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints. This understanding of fascism, drawing on the work of Eatwell, Griffin, and Paxton, provides the framework for our analysis. It allows us to suggest that echoes of fascist ideology can be traced in contemporary extremist viewpoints, to provide us with a framework for considering their relevance, while remaining attentive to the specific historical and social contexts in which these ideas emerge. By examining how elements such as perceived victimhood, desires for societal renewal, and rejection of liberal pluralism manifest in current discourses, we can better understand the relationship between historical fascism and modern forms of extremism, as well as the interaction between extremism and patterns of social exclusion or marginalisation.[18]

While recognising that contemporary extremist ideologies are not identical to historical fascism, we explore how they may echo or borrow certain fascist elements. For ethnic majority populations, these elements may manifest as what Mudde terms 'nativism', an ideology that combines nationalism with xenophobia, advocating for a state composed exclusively of members of the 'native' group.[19] Hafez introduces the concept of 'injured nationalism' to describe how perceived threats to national identity can fuel exclusionary ideologies.[20] This concept is particularly relevant when examining how experiences of social change and perceived cultural displace-

17   Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (Vintage Books, 2004), 218.

18   cf. Bart Cammaerts, "The Neo-Fascist Discourse and Its Normalisation through Mediation," *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 15, no. 3 (2020): 241–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2020.1743296; Martyn Hammersley, "Karl Mannheim on Fascism: Sociological Lessons about Populism and Democracy Today?" *Sociological Research Online* 28, no. 2 (2021): 320–35, https://doi.org/10.1177/13607804211042032.

19   Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

20   Farid Hafez, "Shifting Borders: Islamophobia as Common Ground for Building Pan-European Right-Wing Unity," *Patterns of Prejudice* 48, no. 5 (2014): 479–99, https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2014.965877.

ment may foster fascist-like sentiments among majority populations. For Muslim minorities, we draw on Roy's concept of the 'Islamisation of radicalism' to examine how religious extremism can become an outlet for broader social and identity-based grievances.[21] This perspective allows us to explore how experiences of exclusion may lead to a rejection of mainstream society and the embrace of totalising worldviews, anti-liberalism and the desire for societal transformation. Khosrokhavar's work on the 'double absence' experienced by some Muslim youth in Western societies, feeling alienated from both their heritage culture and the host society, provides a useful framework for understanding how identity crises can encourage engagement with extremist ideologies.[22]

To synthesise the various theoretical perspectives we have explored, we propose a comprehensive model that links experiences of social exclusion to the adoption of fascist-like ideologies through the process of radicalisation. This model provides a framework for understanding how marginalisation can lead to the embrace of extremist viewpoints that echo elements of historical fascism, even in contemporary contexts. Our model posits that the process begins with experiences of social exclusion, which can take various forms, including economic marginalisation, cultural alienation, and political disenfranchisement. These experiences, often cumulative and intersecting, create a sense of grievance and precipitate an identity crisis for affected individuals. Building on Wiktorowicz's concept, we argue that this state of grievance and crisis creates a 'cognitive opening' that makes individuals more receptive to radical ideologies that offer clearcut explanations for their difficulties and promise solutions to their grievances.[23] In this context, extremist narratives that echo elements of fascist ideology become particularly appealing because of their specific framing of social exclusion as directly linked to totalitarian conceptualisations of race and the nation.

These narratives often include promises of societal rebirth, scapegoating of outgroups, and rejection of liberal pluralism. Their appeal lies in their ability to offer simple explanations for complex societal problems and promise a restoration of lost status or identity. This is more likely to find resonance with individuals experiencing a sense of displacement or disempowerment. The strength of this model lies in its ability to explain

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21   Olivier Roy, *Jihad and Death: The Global Appeal of Islamic State* (Hurst & Company, 2017).

22   Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Radicalization: Why Some People Choose the Path of Violence* (The New Press, 2017).

23   Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising*.

how similar experiences of exclusion can foster ideological positions that, while distinct in their specific content, share certain structural similarities with historical fascism among both minority and majority populations. It allows us to identify common patterns across diverse groups while still accounting for the historical, cultural, and social contexts that shape the particular manifestations of extremist ideologies. By applying this model, we can better understand the processes that lead some to embrace extremist viewpoints in response to experiences of marginalisation. This, in turn, can inform more effective strategies for preventing radicalisation, engagement with violence and promoting social cohesion in diverse societies.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations and potential critiques of applying concepts derived from the study of historical fascism to contemporary contexts. Brubaker cautions against an overly broad application of the fascism label, arguing for a more nuanced analysis of contemporary far-right movements.[24] Similarly, Mammone emphasises the need to recognise both continuities and discontinuities between historical fascism and contemporary extremism.[25] We address these concerns by focusing on the use of specific ideological features in understanding contemporary extremism, rather than making blanket comparisons, and by emphasising the potential resonances of fascist elements rather than direct equivalences. Our analysis remains attentive to the unique historical, political, and social contexts of contemporary patterns of extremism, recognising that while certain structural similarities may exist, the specific manifestations and underlying dynamics may differ significantly from historical fascism. In conclusion, this theoretical framework provides a robust foundation for examining how experiences of social exclusion may foster ideological positions that overlap with elements of fascist thought, applying this theory to both ethnic majorities and Muslim minorities in Northwestern Europe. By integrating theories of social exclusion, radicalisation processes, and the defining features of fascist ideology, we are able to explore the relations between societal marginalisation and the adoption of extremist viewpoints in contemporary contexts.

24   Rogers Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationism: The European Populist Moment in Comparative Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 8 (2017): 1191–1226, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1294700.

25   Andrea Mammone, "The Eternal Return? Faux Populism and Contemporarization of Neo-Fascism across Britain, France and Italy," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 17, no. 2 (2009): 171–92, https://doi.org/10.1080/14782800903108635.

Methodology

The DRIVE project employed a robust and comprehensive mixed-methods approach across Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques to provide a nuanced understanding of social exclusion, identity formation, and potential radicalisation processes among Muslim minorities and ethnic majorities.

At the core of the qualitative data collection were 417 semi-structured interviews conducted across the four countries. These interviews were distributed as follows: 32.6 percent in the United Kingdom, 23.2 percent in Denmark, 23 percent in the Netherlands, and 21.1 percent in Norway. The interviewees comprised young people (51.6 percent), activists (19.7 percent), and practitioners (28.8 percent), with a gender distribution of 57.3 percent male, 41.2 percent female, and 1.4 percent unknown. These in-depth interviews explored participants' experiences of social exclusion, identity formation processes, and political or ideological views. For young participants, the interviews also included a twelve-item 'wellness check', incorporating the ten-item Symptom Check List (SCL-10) and the two-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Check List (CD-RISC-2).[26] Complementing the interviews were thirty ethnographic event observations, web analysis of far-right and Islamist organisations, and focus groups with sixty-four young participants.

The target populations for this study were diverse, including young people (aged 18–25) from both Muslim minorities and ethnic majorities with nationalist perspectives, as well as practitioners working in relevant fields and activists. This variety of perspectives allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the research topics from multiple angles. Data analysis employed a mixed-methods approach. Qualitative data underwent thematic content analysis and grounded theory approaches, utilising Atlas.ti software for coding and analysis. Quantitative data was managed and analysed using SPSS for statistical analysis. The project's overall design can be characterised as a typological mixed-methods, partial concurrent, and partial sequential explanatory design.

Theoretically, the study was grounded in several key perspectives, including relative deprivation theory, cognitive opening theory, and eco-bio-

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26 cf. Craig Rosen et al., "Six- and Ten-Item Indexes of Psychological Distress Based on the Symptom Checklist-90," *Assessment* 7, no. 2 (2000): 103–11, https://doi.org/10.1177/107319110000700201.

psychosocial models of adaptation. This theoretical framework guided both the data collection and analysis processes, ensuring that the research was firmly rooted in established academic discourse while also contributing new insights to the field. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the project. The research received ethical approval from relevant committees in each participating country, and protocols were developed to ensure data security, researcher wellbeing, and appropriate incident assessment procedures.

Despite its comprehensive nature, the study acknowledges certain limitations. The qualitative focus, while providing rich, in-depth data, may limit the generalisability of findings. The cross-sectional design may not fully capture the dynamic nature of radicalisation processes over time. And there is also potential for self-reporting bias in interviews. The researchers also faced challenges in recruiting certain populations.

Analysis

Perceived Cultural Threat and Identity Crisis

A central theme emerging from our data is the perception of cultural threat and resulting identity crises among both majority and minority populations. This phenomenon aligns with what Betz terms 'reactive nationalism',[27] a defensive posture against perceived threats to national or cultural identity.

A Norwegian participant's statement illustrates this defensive nationalism:

> We've been inflicted with so much guilt in a way, so much guilt, not just in Norway, but everywhere . . . I mean, we're starting to bring up the colonisation era and things like that that we should have a guilty conscience about. We have a prime minister who says that we have an inherent gene for racism and things like that. (Norway, nationalist youth, female)

This quote exemplifies what Hafez terms 'injured nationalism',[28] a sense of victimhood and resentment towards perceived attacks on national pride.

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27 Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (St. Martin's Press, 1994).
28 Hafez, "Shifting Borders," 479–99.

The rejection of historical guilt echoes fascism's emphasis on national regeneration and its dismissal of liberal self-critique.

The theme of cultural threat was also evident in more explicit calls for cultural preservation:

> We need an ethno-cultural revitalisation of our own people before we worry about ingratiating and integrating any foreign bodies into the system, which I think is a monumental task, as we are seeing from all perspectives. (UK, nationalist youth, male)

This statement directly echoes fascism's emphasis on cultural purity and national rebirth, aligning with Griffin's concept of 'palingenetic ultranationalism'.[29] For ethnic majority participants, this often manifested as anxiety about the changing cultural landscape due to immigration and multiculturalism.

One UK participant expressed:

> I think what accelerates racism or like Islamophobic attacks or like Islamophobia in general is when an event occurs. (UK, Muslim youth, male)

This statement highlights the event-driven nature of cultural anxiety, echoing Wodak's concept of the 'politics of fear', where specific incidents are used to amplify existing cultural insecurities.[30] The participant's framing of Islamophobia as a reaction suggests a defensive posture that mirrors fascism's historical exploitation of cultural anxieties.

For Muslim minorities, such experiences of exclusion often led to identity crises that made totalising ideologies more appealing. As one UK participant noted:

> I think, for the women, like, the reason that you end up having these so-called Jihadi Brides going abroad . . . I think that the whole lexicon was set up by the British government and the media. It's just very, very disrespectful. Instead of being sensible and ensuring that they win the hearts and minds of the mainstream Muslim community. They just indicted them. (UK, Muslim youth, male)

29 Griffin, *Fascism: An Introduction*.
30 Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (Sage, 2015).

This quote illustrates what Roy terms the 'Islamisation of radicalism',[31] where extreme religious views become an outlet for broader social and identity-based grievances. The participant's framing of radicalisation as a response to disrespect is similarly rooted in how fascist movements historically appealed to those feeling marginalised by mainstream society.

The identity crisis experienced by Muslim minorities was often exacerbated by a sense of not belonging to either their parents' culture or mainstream society:

> There's maybe not a place I feel 100 percent at home, unfortunately. It's perhaps one of the biggest consequences, if you can put it that way, of being the children of migrants because it's really difficult in the sense of being born and raised in a country and still not feeling that you belong 100 percent, and when you are, well, when you travel to your home country, for example, on holiday, you're also just an outsider; they can see that right away. (Denmark, Muslim youth, male).

This quote highlights the concept of 'double absence' described by Khosrokhavar, where individuals feel alienated from both their heritage culture and the host society.[32] This state of limbo can make totalising ideologies that offer a clear, unambiguous identity particularly appealing.

By centring theories designed to understand perceptions of cultural threat and identity crisis within traditional fascism movements, we are able to understand processes of social exclusion that impact majority and minority communities and create similar patterns of radicalism.

Economic Insecurity and Scapegoating

Economic grievances and perceived competition for resources emerged as key themes, often leading to scapegoating of outgroups. This phenomenon has some relevance to fascism's historical exploitation of economic anxieties and aligns with what Eatwell and Goodwin term 'relative deprivation',[33] the sense that one's group is being unfairly disadvantaged.

The economic dimension of exclusion was emphasised by one participant:

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31 Roy, *Jihad and Death*.
32 Khosrokhavar, *Radicalization*.
33 Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, *National Populism: The Revolt against Liberal Democracy* (Pelican Books, 2018).

> Where I live, for example, it's very, very White . . . there's more commu-
> nities coming into the area now, thank God, but it's very, very White. But
> you find that in very low, lower-socioeconomic-deprived areas, there is
> this idea of a blame culture, so where you find poverty, you find blame.
> (UK, nationalist youth, male)

This quote highlights the intersection of economic deprivation and racial
tensions, illustrating how economic insecurity can fuel intergroup hostil-
ity, a key element in fascist ideology. Other interviewees drew direct links
between economic insecurity and the rise of migration and multicultural
communities in Northwestern Europe.

As one interview stated on their local area:

> I think it is less than 50 percent now, English people living in that town,
> whereas my parents, when they were growing up for most of their
> lives, it was ninety-plus per cent English. So, they've seen a massive
> change in demographics, and they said as soon as that demographic
> change started to happen, they felt a lot less safe. Crime rates went up.
> It tends to get a lot worse—a lot more murder, a lot more theft, a lot
> more vandalism, and all sorts of horrible things. (UK, nationalist youth,
> male)

When we explored instances of economic insecurity among minority com-
munities, we found that many expressed sentiments that veered into active
scapegoating of other communities.

A Dutch participant expressed:

> Dutch politics said we're going to chase these racist employers down
> and fine them and put them in jail, but nothing. There's been noth-
> ing. You see, this is the justice system in this country. The way to tackle
> racism is to tackle racism. (Netherlands, Muslim youth, male)

This quote reveals frustration with perceived economic discrimination and
lack of government action, potentially fuelling resentment towards both
elites and minorities. The participant's call for punitive action against 'racist
employers' echoes a desire for decisive action against perceived societal
problems and aligns with populist anti-elite sentiments.

The intersection of economic and cultural grievances was evident in
another participant's statement:

Obviously, it's a voting thing, and I think the majority of the people have this prejudice in them already when it comes to like minorities and Muslims. And the media doesn't help at al. It kind of fuels that prejudice even more. And you hear stories about, like, terrorist activities or, like, moral positions and it just brings out the racism in people. (UK, Muslim youth, female)

This quote links to what Mudde terms the 'nativist' aspect of populist radical right ideology, where economic and cultural threats are considered intertwined.[34]

For Muslim minorities, economic marginalisation often intersected with cultural exclusion:

I've just got very strong exterior and interior, to be honest. So, like, when I faced difficult adversities, I kind of just shrugged off a little bit. I deal with it by myself and see what I can do about the situation, rather than just moping about it. So, a lot of the time, if there's something that I don't like, whether it's racism, I'll deal with it head-on. (UK, Muslim youth, male)

While this participant frames their response to discrimination positively, it highlights the ongoing economic and social challenges faced by minorities. The need to constantly 'deal with it head-on' suggests a persistent state of marginalisation could potentially breed resentment, aligning with the theory of relative deprivation as a driver of radicalisation.

The use of similar language between some of the nationalist and Muslim interviewees suggests that theories designed to better understand fascism are relevant in a contemporary context and within a variety of different communities. The economic grievances expressed by both majority and minority participants can be understood, for example, through the lens of group-based relative deprivation,[35] such that perceptions of group-level disadvantage often have a stronger impact on collective action than individual experiences of deprivation. This understanding helps explain why economic anxieties can fuel extremist ideologies even among individuals who may not be personally experiencing significant economic hardship.

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34 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*.
35 Kunst and Obaidi, "Understanding Violent Extremism," 55–59.

However, when these theories are applied to Muslim communities, they take on a two-way dimension. The scapegoating and prejudice created by national media and politicians act to marginalise, isolate and disadvantage Muslim minority communities, which in turn creates the conditions for elements of hostility to form in turn among these communities.[36] As such, applying the lens of economic insecurity and scapegoating to minority communities, we create a two-step process, able to perceive both the way in which social exclusion occurs and how this can manifest in an exclusionary response.

Rejection of Pluralism and Desire for Societal Transformation

Both minority and majority participants often expressed views that rejected pluralism and multicultural society, echoing fascism's vision of a homogeneous national community. This aligns with what Mudde terms 'illiberal democracy',[37] a rejection of key liberal democratic principles in favour of majoritarian rule and cultural homogeneity.

A Norwegian participant stated:

> I'm very much in favour of absolute freedom of expression. As long as you don't threaten anyone, you should really be able to say whatever you want. And I think the racism clause is used a little too liberally by the police. You should be able to express yourself as long as you don't physically threaten someone with violence, so I think you should be able to express yourself more freely than you do today. (Norway, nationalist youth, male)

This quote reveals a desire to roll back hate speech protections, framed as promoting free expression. This echoes fascism's rejection of liberal democratic norms in favour of more unconstrained political expression and aligns with what Mounk terms 'undemocratic liberalism'.[38]

The rejection of pluralism was also evident in more explicit calls for cultural homogeneity:

> I think our entire government system as it exists is pure theatre. I don't think I think that you can see, like, lots of interest groups emerging in

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36   Tahir Abbas, *Islamophobia and Radicalisation: A Vicious Cycle* (Oxford University Press, 2019).
37   Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (Polity Press, 2019).
38   Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

society and lots of radical groups emerging. There feels to be almost like a big divide and conquer going on, like they're trying to stir up racism, you know, between, you know, different races, like, 'Oh, look at these brown people who are doing bad things'. (UK, nationalist youth, male)

This statement echoes fascism's conspiratorial worldview and rejection of pluralistic democracy, aligning with what Mudde and Kaltwasser term the 'anti-pluralist' dimension of populist radical right ideology.[39]

Among Muslim participants, some expressed a desire for societal transformation based on religious principles, whilst others discussed the engagement of British individuals with organisations such as Islamic State:

I was really struck by something said by the father of [an individual who travelled to Islamic State], who I think was cursing himself for . . . having been such an armchair revolutionary . . . the incorrectness of politicians, the rottenness of the capitalist system, you know, whatever particular ideas he was fond of declaring to his son. And he felt that had actually contributed, I think, to the way his son developed. (UK, Muslim practitioner, male)

This quote reveals that those who seek alternatives to mainstream society may frame their actions as a response to a sense of exclusion. The desire for a society aligned with religious values as a direct response to forms of social exclusion echoes fascism's vision of moral regeneration and aligns with what Roy terms the 'Islamisation of radicalism'.[40]

The rejection of pluralism was also evident in more subtle forms of cultural essentialism:

Islam and Muslim groups were just associated with threat and potential danger and damage to Western civilisation. And that initially started with a threat to physical safety. And that was a constant theme the whole way through. But what we were seeing then, or what I saw . . . was this culturalist ideological incompatibility with Western values. And that's not something that's supported, but it was something that was believed. (UK, Muslim youth, male).

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39 Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2017).
40 Roy, *Jihad and Death*.

This quote illustrates what Brubaker terms 'civilisationism',[41] the framing of cultural differences as essential and insurmountable, a key feature of both far-right and Islamist ideologies. As such, application of theories to explain historical fascism to contemporary contexts around the themes of the rejection of pluralism and a desire for societal transformation reveals findings that are relevant to both majority and minority communities. The importance and limits of these findings are explored below.

Discussion

Our analysis reveals several ways in which experiences of social exclusion among both Muslim minorities and ethnic majorities are fostering ideological positions that may be understood through the applications of theories seeking to explain historical fascism. These findings contribute to ongoing debates about the nature of contemporary articulations of extremism and the relevance of theories of fascism, as well as helping to highlight the interplay between social exclusion and radicalisation in diverse societies.

The tendency for some majority participants to express exclusionary ideologies aligns with Kunst and Obaidi's findings that members of high-power groups may show more violent extremism against outgroups when intergroup inequality is high, particularly when they experience relative deprivation.[42] This suggests that perceptions of threat to privileged status, rather than just objective disadvantage, can drive the adoption of fascist-like ideologies among majority populations. For these majority populations, perceptions of cultural threat and economic insecurity can fuel ethnonationalist sentiments and lead to the greater prevalence of ideologies that seek a restoration of a mythologised past. In some senses, this mirrors fascism's emphasis on national rebirth and cultural purity, as outlined by Griffin in his concept of 'palingenetic ultranationalism'.[43]

The data reveals several key themes that resonate with the way in which fascist ideologies are constructed:

- *Cultural Threat and Defensive Nationalism*: Many majority participants expressed anxiety about perceived threats to national identity due to immigration and multiculturalism. This aligns with what Betz terms

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41 Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationism," 1191–1226.
42 Kunst and Obaidi, "Understanding Violent Extremism," 55–59.
43 Griffin, *Fascism: An Introduction.*

'reactive nationalism',[44] a defensive posture against perceived threats to cultural identity. The rejection of historical guilt echoes fascism's emphasis on national regeneration and its dismissal of liberal self-critique.

– *Economic Insecurity and Scapegoating*: Economic grievances and perceived competition for resources emerged as key themes, often leading to scapegoating of outgroups. This mirrors fascism's historical exploitation of economic anxieties and aligns with what Eatwell and Goodwin term 'relative deprivation',[45] the sense that one's group is being unfairly disadvantaged.

– *Rejection of Pluralism*: Some majority participants expressed views that rejected pluralism and multicultural society, echoing fascism's vision of a homogeneous national community. This aligns with what Mudde terms 'illiberal democracy',[46] a rejection of key liberal democratic principles in favour of majoritarian rule and cultural homogeneity.

Among Muslim minorities, experiences of marginalisation can lead to a rejection of mainstream society and an embrace of totalising religious-political worldviews. While distinct from classical fascism, these ideologies often share fascism's anti-liberal stance and vision of societal transformation. Key themes include:

– *Identity Crisis and Appeal of Totalising Ideologies*: Many minority participants expressed feelings of alienation from both their heritage culture and mainstream society, creating vulnerabilities to extremist narratives. This aligns with Khosrokhavar's concept of 'double absence'[47] and Roy's 'Islamisation of radicalism',[48] where religious extremism becomes an outlet for broader social and identity-based grievances. The appeal of totalising ideologies among some Muslim minority participants can be partly explained by what Kunst and Obaidi term 'victimisation-by-proxy'.[49] This phenomenon helps explain the transnational appeal of certain extremist narratives, as individuals experience strong reactions to perceived injustices against their group members in other geographical areas. It demonstrates how experiences of relative deprivation can transcend national boundaries, creating a sense of shared grievance that extremist groups exploit.

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44   Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism*, 23.
45   Eatwell and Goodwin, *National Populism*, 7.
46   Mudde, *The Far Right Today*, 18.
47   Khosrokhavar, *Radicalization*, 78.
48   Roy, *Jihad and Death*, 42.
49   Kunst and Obaidi, "Understanding Violent Extremism," 55–59.

- *Economic Marginalisation and Resentment*: Many minority participants described persistent experiences of economic discrimination, potentially breeding resentment towards mainstream society. However, this operates in a different way from processes of economic inequality and scapegoating experienced by majority communities, with Muslim communities facing demonstrable inequality and social exclusion, largely as a result of majority policies.
- *Vision of Societal Transformation*: Some minority participants expressed desires for fundamental societal change based on religious principles. This shares certain structural similarities in its rejection of current societal norms and desire for a purified community, as well as some framing of a historical ideal that has been lost.

In both majority and minority groups, we see evidence of what Griffin terms 'palingenetic ultranationalism',[50] the desire for national or civilisational rebirth. For majorities, this often manifests as wanting to 'restore' traditional national culture. For some minorities, it appears as a desire to establish a purified Islamic society. However, it is crucial to note key distinctions between contemporary ideological positions and historical fascism. As Brubaker argues, we must be cautious about drawing direct equivalences between contemporary extremism and classical fascism.[51] The specific historical, cultural, and political contexts differ significantly, shaping the particular manifestations of exclusionary ideologies. Furthermore, various ideological currents were expressed in interviews, many of which intersected with, conflicted with or outright rejected those that could be understood through a lens informed by theories of fascism. The use of theories of fascism identified here should be understood as a means of understanding potential trends rather than dominant ideologies.

Our findings contribute to ongoing debates about the nature of how we understand contemporary extremism in relation to classical fascist movements. They support Mammone's argument that while there are continuities between historical fascism and contemporary far-right movements, there are also significant discontinuities that must be recognised.[52] The data also aligns with Wiktorowicz's cognitive opening theory, suggesting that experiences of exclusion and crisis can bolster the resonance of extremist narratives among both majority and minority populations.[53] This

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50 Griffin, *Fascism: An Introduction*, 13.
51 Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationism," 1194.
52 Mammone, "The Eternal Return?," 174.
53 Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising*, 20.

highlights the importance of addressing underlying social and economic grievances to prevent radicalisation. Our analysis supports Eatwell's identification of key elements of fascist ideology, including hyper-nationalism, racism, the myth of national rebirth, and anti-liberal authoritarianism.[54] However, it also reveals how these elements manifest in distinct ways, often intertwined with religious ideologies or exclusionary sentiments not central to historical fascism. The findings also engage with Paxton's definition of fascism, particularly its emphasis on 'obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity'.[55] Our data reveals how experiences of social exclusion can foster similar preoccupations among both majority and minority populations, albeit through different mechanisms and manifesting in distinct ways.

The application of theories used to explain historical fascism has highlighted and helps to support the theoretical link between social exclusion and radicalisation proposed by scholars such as Borum and Wiktorowicz.[56] The experiences of both majority and minority participants illustrate how marginalisation can create a 'cognitive opening' that makes individuals more receptive to extremist narratives. For majority populations, perceived cultural and economic threats align with relative deprivation theory, fostering resentments that can be exploited by ethnonationalist ideologies. For minority participants, experiences of discrimination and alienation create vulnerabilities to totalising religious-political worldviews that promise a sense of belonging and purpose. However, our findings also highlight the complexity of this relationship. Not all experiences of exclusion lead to radicalisation, and the specific pathways vary significantly between individuals. This supports the need for nuanced, context-specific approaches to radicalisation.

A key theme emerging from our analysis is the centrality of identity concerns in fostering extremist viewpoints. This aligns with social identity theory,[57] and its application to radicalisation processes.[58] For both majority and minority participants, perceived threats to group identity often under-

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54   Eatwell, *Fascism: A History*.

55   Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 218.

56   Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism," 7–36; Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising*.

57   Kunst and Obaidi, "Understanding Violent Extremism," 55–59.

58   Michael A. Hogg, "From Uncertainty to Extremism: Social Categorization and Identity Processes," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 23, no. 5 (2014): 338–42, https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721414540168.

pinned the appeal of exclusionary ideologies. This finding highlights how both identity construction and economic grievances are relevant in engagement with extremism, with cultural recognition and belonging representing important factors. This supports the link made by Kymlicka between multicultural policies that recognise diverse identities within a shared civic framework and successful societal responses to extremism.[59]

While the DRIVE project offers insights into the complex relationship between social exclusion and extremist ideologies, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that impact the interpretation and generalisability of the findings. Firstly, the issue of sample representativeness must be considered. The study's qualitative approach, while providing rich and nuanced data, may not fully represent the broader populations in each of the four countries studied. The depth of information gathered from individual interviews and focus groups comes at the cost of wide-scale representativeness. As such, caution should be exercised when attempting to generalise these findings to larger populations or different contexts. Secondly, the cross-sectional nature of the study design presents limitations. By capturing participants' views and experiences at a single point in time, the research is unable to track the evolution of ideological positions over time or in response to changing social conditions. This snapshot approach, while informative, may not fully capture the dynamic and often fluid nature of radicalisation processes. The reliance on self-reported data introduces another potential limitation. Participants' accounts of their experiences and views may be influenced by social desirability bias, where respondents provide answers that they believe are more socially acceptable. Additionally, incomplete self-awareness may lead to inaccuracies in how participants perceive and report their experiences and beliefs.

While the study identified common themes across Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom, more in-depth comparative analysis could further illuminate how specific national contexts shape the manifestation of exclusionary ideologies. The unique historical, political, and social landscapes of each country are likely to play a significant role in how social exclusion and extremist viewpoints interact, and this complexity may not be fully captured in the current analysis. Finally, the complexity of causal relationships in the realm of radicalisation presents a significant challenge. While the analysis suggests links between social exclusion and

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59 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Clarendon Press, 1995).

extremist viewpoints, establishing clear causal relationships is inherently difficult given the individual, social, and structural factors involved in radicalisation processes. The multifaceted nature of these phenomena makes it challenging to isolate specific causal pathways. Given these limitations, the findings of this study should be viewed as part of a broader research landscape. Complementary research approaches would be valuable in addressing these limitations, such as longitudinal studies to track changes over time, larger-scale quantitative surveys to enhance representativeness, and mixed-methods designs that combine the depth of qualitative insights with the breadth of quantitative data. Such diverse approaches could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between social exclusion, identity formation, and processes of radicalisation in contemporary European societies.

By using theories derived from seeking to understand fascism within a contemporary context, we highlight certain important findings that may have several implications, particularly around the interaction of socioeconomic and identity-based factors. The key role of inequality and social exclusion suggests that targeted economic interventions, such as job training programmes or initiatives to promote equal access to employment opportunities, may be important in fostering intercultural understanding and recognition of diverse identities. By addressing both material and cultural aspects of exclusion, such approaches can help create a more inclusive social fabric. Equally important is the need to engage meaningfully with identity-based grievances rather than dismissing them. The approach highlights systemic forms of discrimination and inequality that contribute to feelings of exclusion among minority populations and may encourage responses that involve reviewing and reforming policies and practices in areas such as education, employment, housing, and criminal justice, as well as encouraging context-specific rather than one-size-fits-all approaches.

There are also notable problems with the theoretical approach suggested here. Whilst this article shows the relevance of applying approaches to understanding fascism within a variety of contemporary contexts, this is not to make the case that such patterns of extremism should be equated to fascism. What is being expressed by some of the interviewees could or has been understood within the broader context of non-violence extremism,[60] and such extremisms have long historical threads and interact with

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60   Elisa Orofino and William Allchorn, *Routledge Handbook of Non-Violent Extremism: Groups, Perspectives and New Debates* (Routledge, 2023).

their contexts. Evidence of long historical trends suggests an echo of fascism within contemporary movements, and these theories shed new light on both the case studies and research, while also demonstrating clear diversions and divisions between them.

The research also finds evidence for some limited interaction between exclusionary nationalist and Islamist movements. Whilst not to the extent perhaps that these extremisms can be called 'reciprocal', as has been implied in some other studies,[61] some interviewees certainly framed minority or majority outgroups as the cause of their engagement with more extreme ideologies. However, the use of theories of fascism has, rather, highlighted structural conditions and identity-based concerns, rather than meso-level interactions, suggesting either that these were secondary or that such theories are less adept at understanding interactions between different communities.

Such a theoretical lens has also only provided limited understanding of specific mobilisations that come from nationalist and Islamist movements and of the processes that potentially occur after radicalisation and engagement with extreme ideologies. These can take several different guises, with protest and irregular violence used differently by, and even within, different communities.[62] Whilst this article demonstrates that there is engagement with extremist ideologies that can be understood through theories of fascist research, the resultant mobilisation is subject to various processes that can also shape and mitigate its impact,[63] therefore suggesting limits in the current theoretical approaches, beyond the identification of 'cognitive openings'.

Conclusion

The DRIVE project has made significant contributions to our understanding of how social exclusion can foster ideological positions among both Muslim minorities and ethnic majorities that can be understood through the

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61   Benjamin Lee and Kim Knott, "More Grist to the Mill? Reciprocal Radicalisation and Reactions to Terrorism in the Far-Right Digital Milieu," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14, no. 3 (2020): 98–115, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26918303.

62   Joel Busher et al., *The Dynamics of Violence Escalation and Inhibition during 'Hot Periods' of Anti-Minority and Far-Right Activism* (CREST, 2022).

63   Pietro Castelli Gattinara et al., "Far-Right Protest Mobilisation in Europe: Grievances, Opportunities and Resources," *European Journal of Political Research* 61, no. 4 (2021): 1019–41, https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12484.

lens of historical fascism. By identifying these parallels while also recognising important distinctions, the study contributes to ongoing debates about the nature of contemporary extremism and its relationship to theories of classical fascism. The analysis reveals several ways in which experiences of social exclusion are fostering ideological positions that echo elements of historical fascism among both Muslim minorities and ethnic majorities in Northwestern Europe. These include cultural threat and defensive nationalism, economic insecurity and scapegoating, rejection of pluralism, identity crisis and appeal of totalising ideologies, and visions of societal transformation. Many majority participants expressed anxiety about perceived threats to national identity due to immigration and multiculturalism, mirroring fascism's emphasis on cultural purity and national rebirth. Economic grievances and perceived competition for resources emerged as key themes among both majority and minority participants, aligning with fascism's historical exploitation of economic anxieties. Some participants from both groups expressed views that rejected pluralism and multicultural society, echoing fascism's vision of a homogeneous national community. Many minority participants expressed feelings of alienation from both their heritage culture and mainstream society, creating vulnerabilities to extremist narratives. Lastly, some participants from both groups expressed desires for fundamental societal change, which echoed a fascist vision of national rebirth.

The DRIVE project makes several significant theoretical contributions to our understanding of contemporary extremism and its relationship to social exclusion. By examining how experiences of exclusion can foster ideological positions that may echo elements of historical fascism, the study bridges the fields of fascism studies and contemporary radicalisation research. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the structural similarities and differences between historical fascism and contemporary extremism. The findings support the argument that while there are continuities between historical fascism and contemporary far-right movements, there are also significant discontinuities that must be recognised, which are identified by the study. The analysis also extends cognitive opening theory by demonstrating how experiences of exclusion can create vulnerabilities to extremist narratives among both majority and minority populations, highlighting the need for a broader application of this theory beyond its original focus on 'Islamist' radicalisation. By examining parallel processes of ideological radicalisation among both majority and minority populations, the study contributes to developing a comparative framework for understanding how similar experiences

of marginalisation can foster distinct but structurally similar exclusionary ideologies. Lastly, the findings highlight the centrality of identity concerns in fostering extremist viewpoints, contributing to ongoing debates about the role of identity in radicalisation processes and potentially supporting the need for integrating insights from social identity theory into models of radicalisation and extremism.

The DRIVE project demonstrates the value of qualitative, in-depth approaches to understanding the relationships between social exclusion and extremism. Through the analysis of rich interview data, the study captures the nuanced ways in which marginalisation shapes ideological positions. However, this approach also has limitations, including potential issues of representativeness and the challenge of establishing clear causal relationships. Future research could build on these findings by employing mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative depth with quantitative breadth. Longitudinal studies would be particularly valuable in tracking how ideological positions evolve over time in response to changing social conditions. Comparative studies across different national and cultural contexts could further illuminate the interplay between local factors and broader trends in exclusionary ideologies.

Looking ahead, relative deprivation will become an increasingly significant driver of violent extremism across cultures and contexts in the twenty-first century due to growing social inequalities. This study adds credence to this prediction and underscores the urgency of addressing both objective inequalities and subjective experiences of deprivation in efforts to counter the spread of fascist-like ideologies. It suggests that promoting social cohesion and reducing inequality may be crucial strategies for preventing the further growth of extremist movements.

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