



Global Network  
on Extremism & Technology

# 30 Years of Trends in Terrorist and Extremist Games

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# Executive Summary

**V**iolent extremist, terrorist, and targeted hate actors have been actively exploiting video games to propagandise, recruit and fundraise for more than 30 years. This report presents an analysis of that history using a unique dataset, the Extremist and Terrorist Games Database (ETGD), developed by the authors. It contains 155 reviewed entries of standalone games, modifications for existing games (mods) and browser-based games dating from 1982 to 2024.

The titles analysed appear across the ideological spectrum: far right (101 titles), jihadist (24), far left (1) and other forms of extremism and targeted hate (29), including school-massacre ideation (12). They span platforms ranging from simple standalone games for Atari in the 1980s to sophisticated mods for some of today's most popular games. The number of titles has increased year on year – in line with global conflict and extremist ideological trends, and revealing a continued push by malicious actors to exploit gaming.

Meanwhile, the means of distribution have shifted from violent extremist organisations and marketplaces – such as white supremacist, neo-Nazi and jihadist organisations – to distributed repositories of extremist games hosted on internet archives, Ethereum-hosted file-sharing, Telegram and with subtly coded titles on mainstream platforms like Steam.

While most of the titles in the ETGD are available for free, several that have been sold (often at symbolic prices like \$14.88 or \$17.76) appear to have generated revenue for groups ranging from Hezbollah to the National Alliance, an American neo-Nazi group. Through new analysis of Steam data, we also show that a small number of extremist and targeted hate titles have generated almost an estimated \$600,000 in revenue for small publishers on the platform.

Far from being a comprehensive analysis of the ETGD, we intend this preliminary launch report to form a basis for future research of the dataset and a framework for continued contributions to the ETGD from Extremism and Gaming Research Network (EGRN) members. Above all, we seek to contribute to sensible policymaking to prevent violent extremism that situates games as part of a wider contested and exploited information space, which deserves far more attention from those working towards peaceful ends.

Complete recommendations are provided in the conclusion section of this report, but include the following:

- 1. Prohibit and prevent violent extremist exploitation:** Gaming platforms should explicitly prohibit violent extremist and terrorist behaviours and content. Leadership exists here from Twitch, Discord, Microsoft/Xbox and the affiliated Activision-Blizzard.

- a. Audio and video platforms, such as Spotify, Apple Music and YouTube** should seek to identify extremist gaming content currently available under misleading titles and tags.
  - b. Flag and remove extremist titles across platforms:** Hashing and preventing outlinking to ETGD games and links should be a priority across platforms.
- 2. Improve reporting mechanisms:** Platforms must improve reporting mechanisms to make it easier for players to report violative content found in games and in-game conduct.
- 3. Understand and take down distributed repositories:** Larger repositories of extremist gaming content readily available on the surface web accelerate user exposure.
- 4. Collaborate across sectors:** Addressing the spread of extremist games requires a collaborative effort between tech companies, government agencies and civil society organisations.
- 5. Educate across sectors:** Programmes supporting educators and frontline community moderators should be developed.
- 6. Support research and innovation:** Including cross-sector initiatives like the Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET) and EGRN, which produced this database.
- 7. Enhance regulatory frameworks:** Governments should update regulatory frameworks applying to digital platforms, recognising the nuances of gaming platforms and complying with human rights.
- 8. Encourage positive community engagement:** Thoughtful, well designed community guidelines, moderation policies and reporting mechanisms can support community-building.

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# 1 Introduction

Since the 1980s, terrorists, violent extremists and targeted hate actors have created and exploited video games to spread hateful ideologies, propagandise, recruit and fundraise. This paper explores the history of extremism in videogaming as a companion to the launch of the EGRN's historical database of extremist video games, the ETGD. Previous research by EGRN members explores in depth why the relationship between extremism and videogaming needs to be better understood, examining why and how video games, gaming platforms and gaming content have been used by extremist individuals and organisations.<sup>1</sup>

There has long been interest in how extremists exploit new and emerging technologies for their own purposes. This exploitation includes projects such as Louis Beam's Aryan Nations Liberty Net, launched in 1984 – the first white supremacist online bulletin board, and Don Black's Stormfront – the first and oldest white supremacist website, launched in 1995.<sup>2</sup> Much has also been written about the evolution of the history of video games, and the aforementioned burgeoning field looks at its exploitation by extremists. However, to the knowledge of the authors, there has never been a comprehensive database that specifically catalogues extremist games and mods.<sup>3</sup>

This project is intended to address this gap, and provide a repository for researchers to build on. We hope that the database will help researchers to better understand the platforms that extremist games exist on and how they are distributed. This data and its analysis should also assist platforms in making more informed decisions about the content they choose to host, and give policymakers greater insight into the scope of the problem that civil society faces as a result of this exploitation.

The ETGD can also be used to illustrate the tactics extremists use to build an audience for their content: from tracking advances in gaming technology, the distribution of gaming content, and the multi-platform approaches of extremist game publishers and their followers. The ETGD also helps place newer titles in a historical trajectory that highlights how extremist use of videogaming mirrors advances in technology in the development of videogaming, by extremist games.

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1 See a full list at "Network Member Publications," Extremism and Gaming Research Network, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://extremismandgaming.org/research/>; for example, Galen Lamphere-Englund and Jessica White, "The Online Gaming Ecosystem: Assessing Digital Socialisation, Extremism Risks and Harms Mitigation Efforts," *Extremism and Gaming Research Network (EGRN) and Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET)*, 2023, [https://gnet-research.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/GNET-37-Extremism-and-Gaming\\_web.pdf](https://gnet-research.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/GNET-37-Extremism-and-Gaming_web.pdf); Rachel Kowert and Elizabeth Kilmer, "Toxic Gamers Are Alienating Your Core Demographic: The Business Case for Community Management," *Take This!*, 2023, [https://www.takethis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ToxicGamersBottomLineReport\\_TakeThis.pdf](https://www.takethis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ToxicGamersBottomLineReport_TakeThis.pdf); Galen Lamphere-Englund and Luxinaree Bummnathong, "State of Play: Reviewing the Literature on Gaming & Extremism," *Extremism and Gaming Research Network (EGRN)*, 2021, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AatJSq8vhXenjnXHFrSLmxyH4aONRU/view>.

2 Bruce Hoffman and Jacob Ware, "Online Extremism Is Decades in the Making," *Time*, February 5, 2024, <https://time.com/6551865/extremist-social-media/>; Craig Phillips, "Who is Watching the Hate? Tracking Hate Groups Online and Beyond," *PBS*, April 1, 2016.

3 Tristan Donovan, *Replay: The History of Video Games* (Yellow Ant, 2010); Steven L. Kent, *The Ultimate History of Video Games*, vol. 1 (Crown, 2001); Jordan Minor, *Video Game of the Year* (Harry N. Abrams, 2023).

Both the database and this paper will contribute to building an understanding of the historical trends in this realm. The database is a living project and as such, this paper can only reflect what it contains at the time of writing. We hope that other researchers will contribute their knowledge as we continue to build out the scope and depth of this resource, expanding further into sandbox gaming, virtual reality and the use of artificial intelligence in extremist video game creation.



## 2 Methodology

This report is based on a unique dataset, the ETGD. At the time of writing, the ETGD contains 155 reviewed entries of standalone games, mods and browser-based games dating from 1982 to 2024. No earlier titles have been found in our research to date. Future editions of the ETGD will also contain sandbox experiences, minigames, and servers for Roblox, Minecraft and similar titles.

For this report, entries for the ETGD were compiled by the two authors and were based on titles that had appeared in previous research on the subject, were noted at some point in the last four years in meetings by the EGRN, or were found through additional open-source digital ethnographic research undertaken by the authors from August 2023 to August 2024.

Searches and titles gathered were primarily in English, with additional titles in German where they had been archived in work carried out by the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the EGRN members such as Linda Schlegel, affiliated with modus | zad and Peace Research Institute, Frankfurt (PRIF).

Further searches in Arabic and Farsi were conducted for specific titles and tags, though these were only partial. As such, the dataset should not be viewed as a comprehensive index of all terrorist and violent extremist titles online. Additional analysis in other languages is needed. Regions and language groups that would benefit from future inclusion – based on indications in the database of potential games in each language – include Arabic, Farsi, Bahasa Indonesia, French, Russian, Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, Hindi, Japanese and Korean.

To be included in the ETGD, the game **content**, including audio-visual content, narratives, characters and promotional material, or an **actor** involved in the game, such as the publisher, developer or studio, must support:

### **1) Violent extremism:**

We see this as largely synonymous with terrorism for the purposes of coding content for this dataset. It specifically involves:

1. Promoting ideological, political or religious aims
2. Advocating for or using violence to realise those aims
3. Tolerating, supporting, and actively calling for or directly using violence against civilians or critical civilian infrastructure.

**OR**

### **2) Targeted hate and violence:**

While not working towards specific political, ideological or religious aims, the content or actor is nevertheless:

1. Actively dehumanising other people by seeking to elevate the position of members in one group while diminishing that

of non-members, based on a particular protected characteristic<sup>4</sup> of those people

2. Advocating for or using violence to realise their aims
3. Tolerating, supporting, actively calling for or using violence against civilians or critical civilian infrastructure.

**Additionally**, games or mods were also classified in cases where any entity on the following proscribed organisation lists could be attributed as creating, supporting the creation of the content, or were being glorified in the content:

1. Currently listed entities (Canada)<sup>5</sup>
2. Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations (UK)<sup>6</sup>
3. Terrorist designations and state sponsors of terrorism (US)<sup>7</sup>
4. United Nations Security Council consolidated list.<sup>8</sup>

We note that the definitions above are not presumed to be universal, given that definitions of terrorism, extremism, political violence and ideological movements are nearly impossible to agree upon despite more than 50 years of study. Our definitions were developed and used for reference to categorise games and mods that appear to be associated with violent extremism, terrorism, and targeted hate organisations and actors. In this paper, we occasionally use the terms *extremists* and *extremism* interchangeably with *violent extremists* and *terrorists* to avoid repetition.

Each title in the ETGD was categorised into one top-level category of extremism (far right, far left, jihadist, and other), and then tagged with up to two additional sub-categories of extremism that appear to be relevant to the content in the title. Top-level categories are described in the following sections, and the full taxonomies, as well as definitions used, are described in detail in the ETGD codebook.<sup>9</sup>

Only publicly accessible, open sources on the surface web were used to gather games and information on them. Each title included in the database was crosschecked by the other author, and tagged to include:

- **Basic information including:** Name of game or mod, date published, extremist type (with up to two sub-types), responsible entity, any affiliated entity and country of origin.
- **Game content information:** Language(s), content type, platform(s), whether the content was changed post publication, how many copies were sold (if known) and the estimated revenue (if known).

4 These include ethnicity, religion, nationality, country of origin, gender (including gender assigned at birth and identity), sexual orientation and identity (including straight/heterosexual, lesbian, gay, trans, queer and any other formulations) and political affiliation.

5 "Public Safety Canada," Public Safety Canada, Government of Canada, accessed December 21, 2018, <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-en.aspx#160>.

6 "Policy Paper: Proscribed Terrorist Groups or Organisations," Home Office, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations>.

7 "Terrorist Designations and State Sponsors of Terrorism," US Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/terrorist-designations-and-state-sponsors-of-terrorism>.

8 "United Nations Security Council Consolidated List," United Nations Security Council, <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/un-sc-consolidated-list>.

9 Second level categories include: white supremacist; nationalist; fascist; anti-Semitic; neo-Nazi; identitarian; militant accelerationist; anti-LGBTQ+; violent misogynist; anti-immigrant; racist; Salafi-Jihadist; Takfiri-Jihadist; Shi'a-Jihadist; Christian theocrat; anti-Muslim; anti-government; anarchist; classist; single-issue movement; hybridised extremism; school massacre ideation. Tagged under 'other' due to number of titles.

- **Access information:** Whether the content is viewable online, download or access platform, number of downloads/views/plays (if known), whether the game is playable, whether any special software is needed (such as a base game for a mod or an emulator for old titles) and archival status.
- **Description:** Each game also received a text description based on the official information for the game, our analysis, and any additional open source or media information available.
- **Multi-media:** Screenshots, videos and archival content were also catalogued.

Of the 155 titles in the dataset, 116 were accessible in open-source locations such as Archive.org and Steam, while 37 were not fully accessible (downloadable or playable) for the research team and two were never published. The full archival dataset associated with the accessible titles in the ETGD comprises 26.8 gigabytes, encompassing content from 125 titles.

Access to the dataset is restricted due to the sensitivity of content but will be available to verified researchers on written request and subject to accreditation.

Once catalogued, entries were cleaned and reviewed by the other author, and additional verification steps were carried out (with checks for other links to the content, prior analysis published about the work and additional archival documentation). Analysis was carried out as an integral part of the data collection process and following the completion of the dataset.

Quantitative analysis was performed simply in Excel, while qualitative analysis coding of the extremist sub-types was carried out according to grounded theory principles. This allowed additional codes to be added to the *a priori* codes formulated at the start. These are reflected in the ETGD codebook. Further analysis was undertaken following open-source gathering techniques on responsible revenue sources entities, funding and other relevant data in this report.



### 3 Origins and Chronology of Extremist Gaming

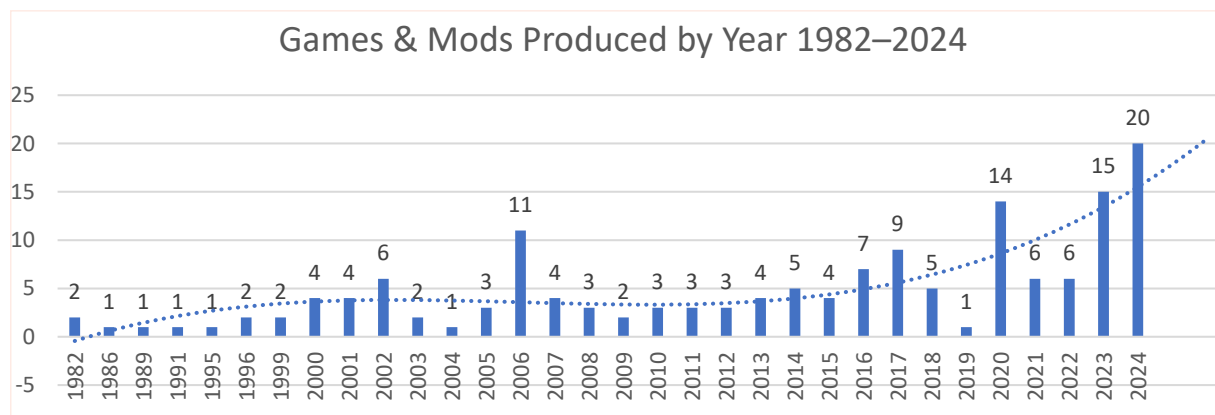
Extremist gaming predates the popularisation of the worldwide web by more than ten years: the internet only became prevalent in millions of American homes from 1995, whereas the first games in the ETGD date back to 1982.<sup>10</sup> The development of extremist gaming falls roughly into three phases:

1. The beginning of the phenomenon in the late 1980s/early 1990s
2. A marked increase during the early 2000s with an intensification in 2006
3. Steady growth during the 2010s with a marked increase from 2020 to date.

Across these three phases, mods to pre-existing games were also catalogued. We find that they have increased significantly in number in the past five years. The database has to date logged 81 standalone games, 21 in-browser games and 53 modifications. Standalone games are defined as those requiring downloading without needing another platform to function. In-browser games are those that can be played through a web browser, typically embedded in a larger website. Mods are typically made for a more prominent commercial title.

The earliest extremist-made game currently in the EGRN's database is a 1986 Commodore 64 game titled *Anti Türkentest*, created by "Hitler and Hess" and "Made in Buchenwald". This game was located by the Simon Wiesenthal Center in 1991 while being distributed in Austria as part of a wider investigation that uncovered games promoting

Chart 1 – ETGD Entries by Year



Source: Extremism and Terrorism Games Database (2024)

<sup>10</sup> Joseph A. Schafer, "Spinning the Web of Hate: Web-Based Hate Propagation by Extremist Organizations," *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture* 9, no. 2 (2002): 69–88.

antisemitism and racism.<sup>11</sup> It is a basic quiz game in which the player answers stereotype-based questions about Turkish people in Germany. If a certain number of 'correct' (racist) answers is reached, the player wins and is told, "You must be a real German." Similarly, KZ Manager, a concentration camp simulator, was published in 1990 for the Amiga computer system in Germany, replacing the Jews at Treblinka concentration camp with Turkish people.<sup>12</sup> Mirroring the dynamics of a lemonade stand game, the player must buy and sell Turkish people in the game as enslaved people, along with gas to murder them, to yield the most profit and murder the most Turkish people. Turkish people seem to have been used in place of Jewish people to evade German laws surrounding the Holocaust.<sup>13</sup> A new edition, KZ Manager Millenium (sic), was published in 1991 for Windows.

Figure 1 – Anti Türkentest (1986)



Source: EGRN (2024)

- 11 John Tagliabue, "Video Game Uncovered in Europe Uses Nazi Death Camps as Theme," *New York Times*, May 1, 1991, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/01/world/video-game-uncovered-in-europe-uses-nazi-death-camps-as-theme.html>.
- 12 Linda Rohrbough, "Racist Computer Games Distributed by Nazis – KZ Manager and Similar Games Exploit Antisemitism – Neo-Nazis Circulating Computer Games with Concentration Camp Theme," *Newsbytes News Network*, May 3, 1991, accessed 10 September, 2024, [https://web.archive.org/web/20070311043800/http://calbears.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_mONEW/is\\_1991\\_May\\_3/ai\\_10692247](https://web.archive.org/web/20070311043800/http://calbears.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_mONEW/is_1991_May_3/ai_10692247).
- 13 Dan Glaun, "Germany's Laws on Hate Speech, Nazi Propaganda & Holocaust Denial: An Explainer," *PBS Frontline*, July 1, 2021, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/germanys-laws-antisemitic-hate-speech-nazi-propaganda-holocaust-denial/>.

Figure 2 – KZ Manager Millenium (1991)



Source: EGRN (2024)

Figure 3 – Custer's Revenge (1982)



Source: EGRN (2024)

Two earlier games, *Custer's Revenge* (1982) and *General Re-Treat* (1982), are also included in the database. While no extremist individual or organisation explicitly made these, the Atari 2600 games draw on targeted hate and glorify sexual violence. They put the player in the shoes of "General Custer", an American general famous for dying while fighting indigenous Native Americans. In the first title, the player must evade arrows and cacti in order to rape a Native American woman on the other side of the screen. Each successful assault equates to one point and the player gains an extra life. These games can currently be played for free online using emulators.

Other early titles from the 1980s and 1990s include antisemitic, anti-Muslim, racist and neo-Nazi games for the Microsoft Disc Operating System (MS-DOS), which predated the Windows operating system. The 1990s also saw the creation of mods. The earliest mod logged in the database is *Wolf3D Nazi* (1996), which was



created on MS-DOS for the explicitly anti-Nazi first-person shooter *Wolfenstein 3D* (1992). The mod replaced graphics with white supremacist and National Socialist symbols. It changed the enemy characters from Nazis to racialised characters of Black and Jewish people, specifically Jewish Defense League characters. In a motif to be replicated by many far-right and neo-Nazi games until the present day, the mod also added image walls in the game featuring individuals popular in the German far right during the 1990s.

A few years later, in 1999, one of the perpetrators of the Columbine school shooting in the US infamously created a series of mods for *Doom* (1993), another first-person shooter.<sup>14</sup> Contrary to depictions in the media at the time, gameplay did not contribute to the perpetrators' radicalisation to violence, a notion which journalist Dave Cullen thoughtfully debunked in his comprehensive book on the attack.<sup>15</sup> However, the mods made by the perpetrator, which are a mix of customised space-based levels with aliens in *Doom*, remain popular among school-shooting ideation and 'black pill'<sup>16</sup> forums online.

Figure 4 – Wolf3D Nazi (1996)



Source: EGRN (2024)

In the early 2000s, violent extremists and terrorist actors took up the mantle and began developing a slew of games themselves to better distribute their own propaganda and ideologies. This was partly due to the availability of open-source game engines such as Genesis3D, which allowed individuals to create their own, more sophisticated games far more easily.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Dave Cullen, *Columbine* (Twelve, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Cullen, *Columbine*.

<sup>16</sup> There is not complete agreement on what constitutes 'black pill' communities online, but they typically epitomise a nihilist, fatalistic section of online communities that hold there are "no personal solutions to systemic problems – which can only resolve over evolutionary time". Black pill communities often overlap with self-harm, mass shooting and involuntary celibate (incel) communities that promote violent misogyny.

<sup>17</sup> Constance Steinkuehler and Kurt Squire, "Introduction to Videogames and the Extremist Ecosystem," in *Gaming and Extremism: The Radicalization of Digital Playgrounds*, ed. Linda Schlegel and Rachel Kowert (Routledge, 2024), 16.



In 2002, *Ethnic Cleansing*, a Windows PC game, was released by the National Alliance. The description for this game reads: “The Race War has begun. Your skin is your uniform in this battle for the survival of your kind. The White Race depends on you to secure its existence. Your peoples [sic] enemies surround you in a sea of decay and filth that they have brought to your once clean and White nation. Not one of their numbers shall be spared...”<sup>18</sup> *Ethnic Cleansing* was revolutionary in the calibre of its graphics and the length of gameplay offered for an extremist title. It also pioneered customisation trends in extremist gaming by allowing the player to choose what type of Nazi music they listened to and which character they could play as.

The title also provided some degree of funding for neo-Nazi groups, as it was released through National Alliance’s record label (Resistance Records) and could be purchased in CD-ROM format by mail order. It was initially sold for \$14.88, a symbolic amount combining a reference to the 14 Words of David Eden Lane, a founding member of a white supremacist terrorist group, and Lane’s “88 Precepts”. Lane was ultimately sentenced to 190 years in federal prison for planning and abetting the assassination of a Jewish talkshow host.<sup>19</sup>

The following year, Resistance Records published a second title, *White Law* (2003), based on a far-right foundational text, *The Turner Diaries* (1978), which inspired the terrorist attacker behind the Oklahoma City bombing.<sup>20</sup> *White Law* was an openly racist title featuring a postal cop killing racialised stereotypes of non-White individuals, and was billed as being “much more challenging than *Ethnic Cleansing*”, according to the game description offered by Resistance Records.

By building on *The Turner Diaries* in depicting a future in which Jewish and other minorities controlled the US government, the title referenced an explicit backlash to diversity efforts in policing: “with the minority arrest rate at an all time high, Mayor Redstone arrested Police Chief O’Malley claiming he was a vigilante and created the all minority ‘Equality Police.’ Now former police officers like Michael Riley formerly of the KPD SWAT team are taking matters into their own hands”. Similar to the prequel, the title was sold for a symbolic \$14.88, available by mail order through the Resistance Records website.

18 P. B. Gerstenfeld, D. R. Grant, and P. Chiang, “Hate Online: A Content Analysis of Extremist Internet Sites,” *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 3, no. 1 (2003): 29–44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2003.00013.x>.

19 “Racist Skinhead Glossary,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2015/racist-skinhead-glossary>.

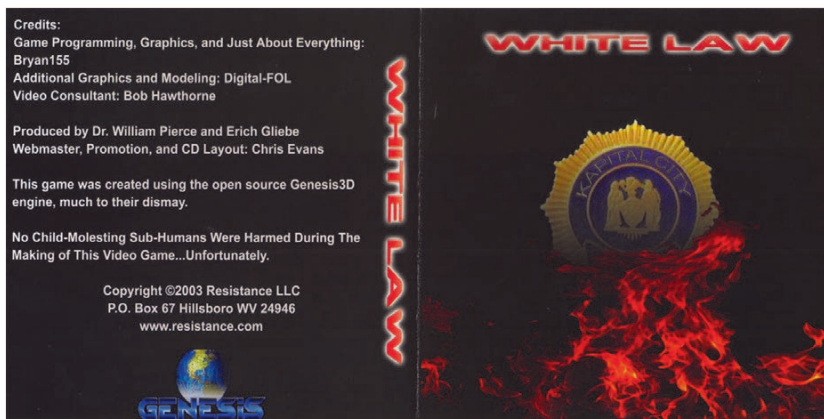
20 Carmen Celestini, “Fighting ‘The System’: *The Turner Diaries*”; Susan C. Cloninger and Steven A. Leibo, eds., *Understanding Angry Groups: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Their Motivations and Effects on Society* (Bloomsbury, 2017), 209.

Figure 5 – Ethnic Cleansing (2002)



Source: EGRN (2024)

Figure 6 – White Law CD Cover (2003)



Source: EGRN (2024)

Gerhard Lauck of the Nebraska-based hate group NSDAP/AO (*NSDAP Aufbau- und Auslandsorganisation* – NSDAP Development and Foreign Organization), a notorious neo-Nazi, also made available a series of simpler games, promoting antisemitism and neo-Nazism, on his website. These included *SA Mann* (2001), a modified copy of the popular Pac-Man, in which the player distributes Nazi propaganda leaflets to houses in their neighborhood while evading Jews who supposedly “escape their ghetto to come and interfere with your work”. This is reflective of a trend in extremist gaming whereby extremists copy popular, pre-existing games to capitalise on their success, while inserting their own ideology and gameplay modality. Others in the dataset include *Nazi Pong* (2006) and *Nazi Soccer* (2006), as well as *George Zimmerman’s Big Game Hunter* (2014), which plays on the classic arcade game, *Big Game Hunter*.

Figure 7 – Nazi SA (Pac) Mann (2001)



Source: EGRN (2024)

Meanwhile, the early 2000s saw a spike in jihadist titles from unaffiliated Salafi-Jihadist and Shi'a extremist groups, which accompanied the conflict period of the Second Intifada (2000–2005). *Islamic Fun* (1999) was an early religious edutainment game made in the UK by Innovative Minds studio, a small outfit led by Abbas Panjwani, but which featured a minigame for Windows PCs where the player received rocks to throw at retreating Israeli IDF tanks for each correct answer to a religious question. That appeared to set a gameplay precedent, retooled in later years as two future Windows games, *Under Ash* (2001) and its sequel *Under Siege* (2003). Both took care to avoid rewarding the player for targeting civilians, and allowed the player to carry out attacks against IDF troops in a variety of ways across levels.<sup>21</sup> These games seem to have inspired more evolved titles from Hezbollah (2003 onwards), along with a multitude of other actors, which shifted to directly promote targeted violence against civilians.<sup>22</sup> Hezbollah titles during and after this period are discussed in depth later in this report.

21 "Under Ash", Wikipedia, accessed June 29, 2024, [https://web.archive.org/web/20240827235429/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Under\\_Ash](https://web.archive.org/web/20240827235429/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Under_Ash) [note: page is only accessible through archive.org and appears to have been removed]; "Under Siege", Wikipedia, accessed June 29, 2024, [https://web.archive.org/web/20240828105127/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Under\\_Siege\\_\(2005\\_video\\_game\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20240828105127/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Under_Siege_(2005_video_game)) [note: page is only accessible through archive.org and appears to have been removed].

22 Daniel Bynam, "The Third Intifada?," *Foreign Affairs*, February 7, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/third-intifada-israeli-palestinian-conflict>.

Figure 8 – Under Ash (2001)



Source: EGRN (2024)

As the 2000s continued, extremist games continued to be created. However, as technology from larger video game studios rapidly outstripped the capabilities of small, home creators, many moved towards using mods to spread their hateful ideologies instead.<sup>23</sup> The ease of use brought about by downloadable development kits for creating mods facilitated this process. These include mods for bestselling titles such as *Grand Theft Auto IV* (2008), *Skyrim* (2011), *Fallout 4* (2015), and *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018).

Nevertheless, some significant standalone extremist gaming titles were released in the 2010s and early 2020s. These include the *Angry Goy* series – *Angry Goy* (2017) and *Angry Goy II* (2018) – created by Wheel Maker Studios. In *Angry Goy II*, the goal is to kill stereotypes

23 Garrison Wells, Agnes Romhanyi, Jason G. Reitman, Reginald Gardner, Kurt Squire, and Constance Steinkuehler, "Right-Wing Extremism in Mainstream Games: A Review of the Literature," *Games and Culture* 19, no. 4 (2024): 469–492; Alexander von Lunen, Katherine J. Lewis, Benjamin Litherland, and Pat Cullum, eds., *Historia Ludens: The Playing Historian* (Routledge, 2020); A.J. Salvati, "Fantasies of Control: Modding for Ethnic Violence and Nazi Fetishism in Historical Strategy Games," in Von Lunen, Lewis, Litherland, and Cullum, eds., *Historia Ludens*.



of Jews, Black people, Arabs, the LGBTQ+ community and leftists, in order to reach the US President and “save the West”. In a similar vein, in the wake of worldwide protests in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd, *Black Lives Splatter* (2020) was released on Steam for Windows PCs. This free game describes itself as “the ultimate protestor splattering video game”. The goal is to run over and kill as many protestors as possible. The game is rife with racist slurs and stereotypes, and features alt-right memes like the Moon Man<sup>24</sup> as playable characters.

Figure 9 – Angry Goy II (2018)



Source: EGRN (2024)

In recent years, there has also been a move to creating more retro-style arcade extremist games, which use stylised graphics and iconography to make games look as though they were made in the 1980s. These include *Swastika Strike* (2021), an antisemitic space-themed shooter featuring swastikas and sunwheels, and *Pajeet* (2024), an anti-Indian game similar to *Flappy Bird* (2013). This retro wave of extremist titles, mainly on the far-right and white supremacist spectrum, mirrors the retro-chic, attempts to draw on older aesthetics, found in far-right music genres, fashwave (fascist wave). That genre explicitly incorporates far-right, white supremacist, and neo-Nazi content by sampling speeches of Hitler and others. It also often draws on accompanying visuals that appeal to a retro 1980s aesthetic.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, international gaming titles from KVL T Games, an identitarian studio in Austria which appeals to the German far right, specifically incorporate retro themes and fashwave-inspired music (thinly coded as “retro-wave”). The games from KVL T, including *Heimat Defender* (2020) and *The Great Rebellion* (2024), along with arcade-style games from other developers, all appear to tap into nostalgia as a way to bring their players into an imagined reality.

<sup>24</sup> The Moon Man originated on a now-closed internet forum in the early 2000s but was popularised across Chan boards when it became associated with alt-right and white supremacist imagery and iconography. For more details: “Moon Man,” Anti-Defamation League, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/moon-man>.

<sup>25</sup> Logan Macnair, “Understanding Fashwave: The Alt-Right’s Ever-Evolving Media Strategy,” *Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET)*, June 28, 2023, <https://gnet-research.org/2023/06/28/understanding-fashwave-the-alt-rights-ever-evolving-media-strategy/>.

Perhaps this is because nostalgia “is an incredibly powerful force in how cultures create shared memories”, which is readily exploited by far-right and white supremacist movements to harken back to “a time when their resentment and domination could be centered as the social default, with everyone else excluded or an exception, when they felt they were on top”.<sup>26</sup> Retro appeals – from the power of the “Make America Great Again” slogan deployed by Donald Trump to the deliberate, nostalgic evocation of union jobs by labour movements and social justice causes – are often effective aesthetically, politically and culturally.<sup>27</sup> The ongoing use of such motifs in expressly extremist titles attests to that power.

**Figure 10** – Swastika Strike (2021)



Source: EGRN (2024)

**Figure 11** – The Great Rebellion (2024)



Source: EGRN (2024)

<sup>26</sup> Joshua Foust, “How We Are Weaponizing Nostalgia,” December 29, 2023, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://joshuafooust.com/posts/weaponizing-nostalgia/>; C. K. Travis, “Nostalgia, Hypermasculinity, and the American Far Right: What Ever Happened to Being Proud of Your Boy?,” *New Political Science* 45 no. 4 (2023): 591–612, doi: 10.1080/07393148.2023.2272537.

<sup>27</sup> L. Smith and G. Campbell, “‘Nostalgia for the Future’: Memory, Nostalgia and the Politics of Class,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 23, no. 7 (2017): 612–627, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2017.1321034>.

## Ideologies and Classification

As noted in the methodology section, each game is classified within the database under a top-level extremist category to explicitly identify the ideology that fuels the game and/or its creators, along with specific sub-categories to denote the content more precisely where possible.

There is overlap and increasing hybridity between extremist and terrorist typologies. Where these were open to debate, the games were categorised according to what the reviewing author felt was the most significant ideology driving the gameplay. The games and mods encountered during the initial research for this project covered a substantial variety of extremist ideologies, frequently targeting minority communities with violence and death.

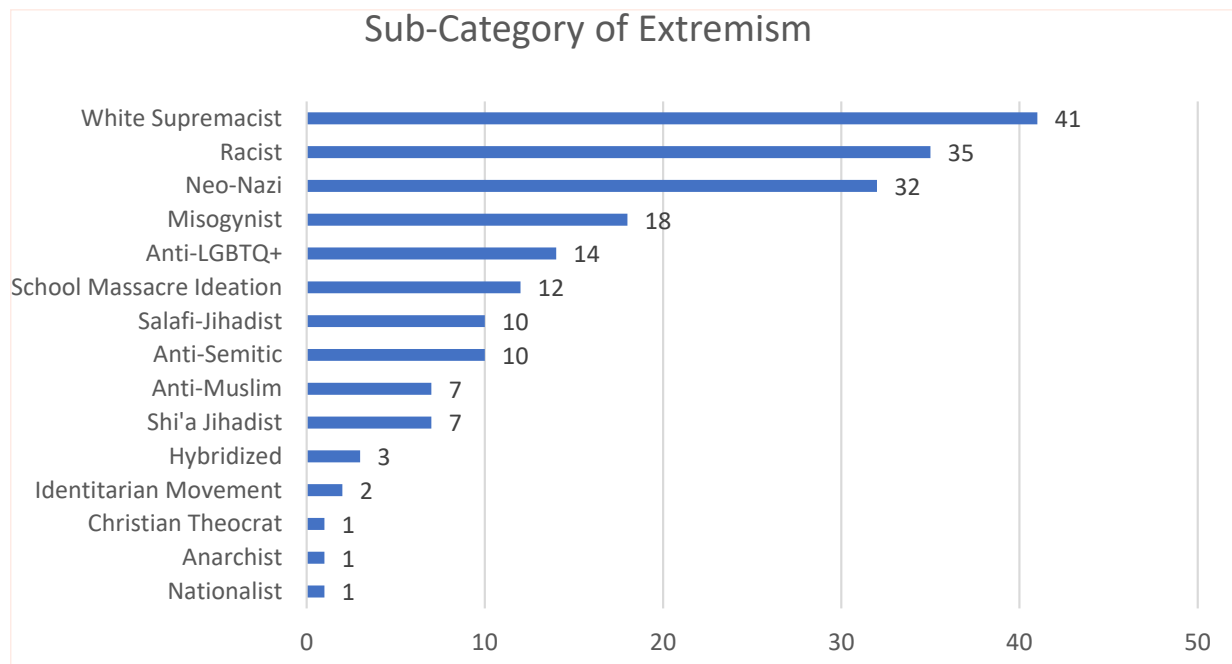
At top level, the database splits games into far left (1), far right (101), jihadist (24) and other forms of extremism (29). The general lack of far-left titles endorsing violent extremism or targeted hate against civilians is notable here – we searched for leftist anarchist and Marxist-Leninist titles that met our definitions and only unearthed one anarchist title, *SharpShooter3D* (2018). The lack of games by leftist violent extremist groups is likely to correlate with the decline of extreme left-wing violent extremism since the 1970s, as well as the fact that left-wing extremists are less likely to use violence than jihadist or far-right extremist groups.<sup>28</sup> This does not, of course, preclude the production of extremist titles by extreme-left actors in the future, nor that we may have missed existing productions.

While imperfect, these terms provide a heuristic for coding more specific forms of content or endorsed violence (such as white supremacist, neo-Nazi, Salafi-Jihadist and Shi'a Jihadist). The database also provides classifications that reflect targeting based on racial, ethnic, religious, sexual and gender identities. It includes games that promote jihadist and far-right terrorism. There is also a range of games that have been included because they glorify mass shootings, particularly in schools and colleges. These have also been used to inspire hybrid extremist and terrorist actions, so they have been assigned to the “other” top-level typology. Some games were published in reaction to a significant event, domestic or global, whereas others were published without any specific motivating incident. Commonly, extremist games and modifications either demonise the target demographic or attempt to remove them entirely from the storyline. Games that were slated for production but were removed due to backlash or reconsideration by the publisher or developer are also included in the database. Complete definitions used for each category are included in the codebook accompanying the ETGD.

In terms of language and locale of production, while the majority of titles were in English, we archived a range of games in other languages: nine in Arabic, five in German, four in Farsi, three each in French and Portuguese, two each in Chinese and Italian, and single titles in Hebrew, Czech and Russian. For titles where we could easily identify locales of development, 47 were made in the US, four each in Austria and Lebanon, and three each in Brazil, Iran and the UK. We also found two titles per country in Canada, Egypt and Italy.

28 K. Jasko, G. LaFree, J. Piazza, and M. H. Becker, “A Comparison of Political Violence by Left-Wing, Right-Wing, and Islamist Extremists in the United States and the World,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119, no. 30 (2022): e2122593119, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2122593119>.

Chart 2 – ETGD Categories



Note: Some titles fall into multiple categories

Source: ETGD (2024)

## Far Right

Far-right extremism is also referred to as right-wing extremism (RWE) and occasionally as alt-right extremism, depending on the commentator. We use the “far-right” label in the dataset as a general top-level term to group together both the radical right – groups seeking popular support and typically condemning the use of violence in public, and the extreme right – or individuals and groups rejecting democracy which are often supportive of the use of violence.<sup>29</sup> While lacking a precise definition, five features are typically mentioned in one form or another in 26 definitions of RWE provided in the literature. These five (core) features are nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy and support for a strong state or law and order.<sup>30</sup> Many researchers add extra features, such as the targeted use of violence (including non-physical forms, such as targeted hate speech and other types of intolerance) against perceived enemies, the prevalence of conspiracy theories, and misogynistic or anti-LGBTQ+ beliefs. We have coded these as additional sub-categories.

### Neo-Nazi and White Supremacist

32 games and mods which explicitly champion Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party, or were made by neo-Nazi groups such as the National Socialist Movement (*ZOG's Nightmare* [2006]), were classified as neo-Nazi. Meanwhile, 41 games with white supremacist content mainly

<sup>29</sup> Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester University Press, 2000; Alexandra Phelan, Jessica White, Claudia Wallner, and James Paterson, “Introductory Guide to Understanding Misogyny and the Far-Right,” Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/introductory-guide-to-understanding-misogyny-and-the-far-right/>).

<sup>30</sup> Piyush Ghasiya, Georg Ahnert, and Kazutoshi Sasahara, “Identifying Themes of Right-Wing Extremism in Hindutva Discourse on Twitter,” *Social Media + Society*, September 26, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231199457>.



focused on allowing the player to assert White racial superiority over another race.

Modifications to games such as *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018), where the player can encounter the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) more frequently or even replace the Wapiti Indians (a Native American tribe) with the KKK were coded as white supremacist. Games that specifically target one or more persons of colour, such as *George Zimmerman's Big Game Hunter* (2014) – in which the player targets Black people in a gated Florida community, and *Nigger Genocide* (2016), a crude Doom-style shooter targeting stereotyped Black male figures with anti-Black propaganda on the walls of the game arena. There are also two entries for games that promote the ideology of identitarianism, which has its roots in the far right and promotes White nationalism: namely *Heimat Defender* (2020) and *The Great Rebellion* (2024).<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 12** – Red Dead Redemption 2 Modification (2024)



Source: Archive.org

### **Violent Misogynistic and Anti-LGBTQ+**

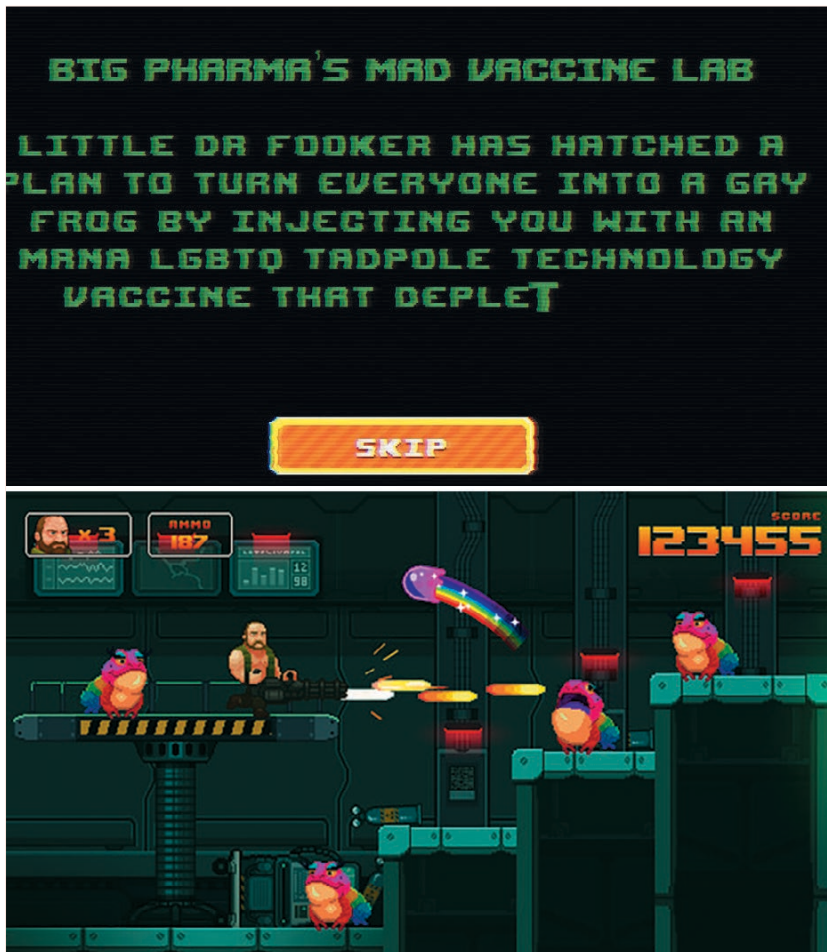
There are 18 games tagged as violent misogynist in the database. These include titles like *Feminazi: The Triggering* (2017) and *Karen Simulator* (2020). 14 games with anti-LGBTQ+ themes demonise the LGBTQ+ community by presenting them as dangerous to society, often particularly towards children. The Westboro Baptist Church released its own title, *Fags vs Kids* (2002), in which the goal was “to place exactly 5 sodomites (represented by a pink swastika) and exactly 3 kids (represented by a baby bottle) on the grid ... such that none of the sodomites can get their repulsive hands on any of the kids”.<sup>32</sup>

31 Karel Šima, “From Identity Politics to the Identitarian Movement: The Europeanisation of Cultural Stereotypes?,” in Jürgen Barkhoff and Joep Leerssen, eds., *National Stereotyping, Identity Politics, European Crises* (Brill, 2021), 75–94, [https://www.academia.edu/49332948/From\\_Identity\\_Politics\\_to\\_the\\_Identitarian\\_Movement](https://www.academia.edu/49332948/From_Identity_Politics_to_the_Identitarian_Movement); Göksel Türker and Ali Gök, “Video Games and Radical Movements: ‘EIN PROZENT’ and ‘HEIMAT DEFENDER,’” *Journal of Strategic Security* 17, no. 2 (2024): 89–125, <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol17/iss2/6>.

32 “Games Extremists Play,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, 2002, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2002/games-extremists-play>.

More recent anti-LGBTQ+ titles include *Alex Jones: NWO (New World Order) Wars* (2024), published by the eponymous far-right internet personality made famous for libelously denying the Sandy Hook school massacre. Apart from the title, which belies the antisemitic origins of New World Order conspiracies,<sup>33</sup> the player gets to kill gay frogs (a meme created by Jones), as well as barely disguised caricatures of Anthony Fauci (“Dr. Fooker”), Bill Gates (“Virgin Billionaire”), Joe Biden, Bill Clinton (“The Rapist”), Hilary Clinton (“Crooked Witch of the West Wing”) and George Soros (“All Powerful Globalist”).

Figure 13 – Alex Jones: NWO Wars (2024)



Source: EGRN (2024)

33 Myles Flores, “The New World Order: The Historical Origins of a Dangerous Modern Conspiracy Theory,” *Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism, Middlebury Institute of International Studies*, May 30, 2022, <https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/academics/centers-initiatives/ctec/ctec-publications/new-world-order-historical-origins-dangerous>.

### Jihadist

There are 24 titles in the database which are classified as jihadist in nature, including 10 meeting Salafi-Jihadist criteria, seven by Shi'a violent extremist groups, and the remainder without a clear sectarian affiliation. The use of video games by jihadist terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and IS/Da'esh is well-documented by scholars such as Lakomy (2017).<sup>34</sup> The ETGD shows a wide variety of types of games created by jihadist actors, including:

- A mobile-first children's alphabet game created by IS (2016), released and subsequently removed from Google Play
- State-sponsored titles created in Iran, such as *Missile Strike* (2015), which promotes bombing civilian cities and was unveiled in honour of Al-Quds Day in opposition to Israel and Zionism
- More recent titles created by independent studios, such as *Fursan al-Aqsa* (2022), a retro-shooter that allows players to fight as a Palestinian militia member and receive awards for killing as many "Zionists" as possible.

**Figure 14** – *Fursan al-Aqsa* (2022)



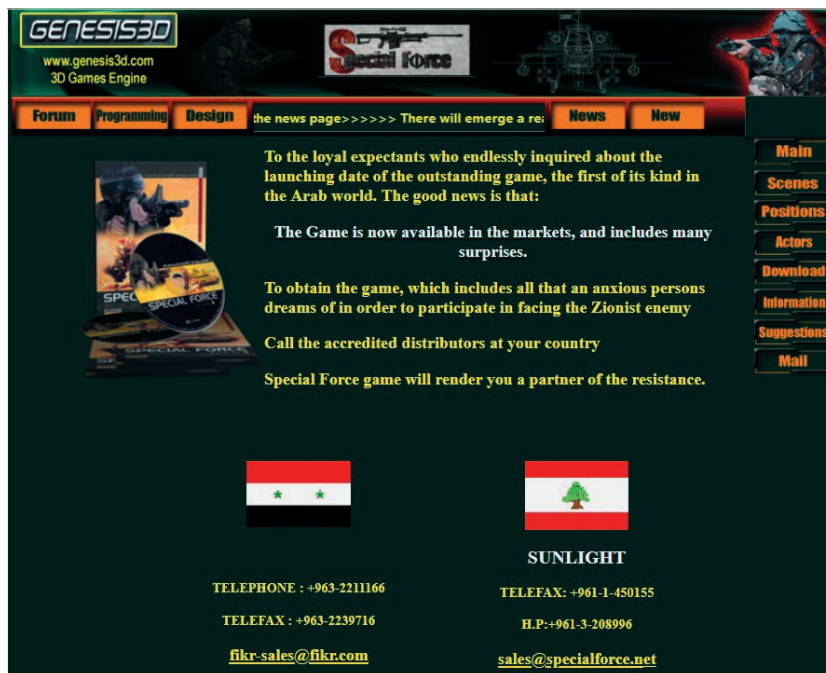
Source: EGRN (2024)

The Lebanese political, militant and US-designated terrorist organisation, Hezbollah, has been the most prolific creator of Shi'a gaming titles for Windows and more recently Android, with four standalone creations in the database. These stand out for their general sophistication, gameplay acumen and wide marketability. The first title produced by Hezbollah was *Quds Kid* (2000), which was a modification of *Counter-Strike* and could not be accessed for review.

<sup>34</sup> Miron Lakomy, "Let's Play a Video Game: Jihadi Propaganda in the World of Electronic Entertainment," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1385903>.

Subsequently, the group made two explicitly anti-Israeli titles following the Second Intifada, which feature political assassinations of civilians: *Special Force* (2003) and *Special Force 2: Tale of Truthful Pledge* (2007). *Holy Defense* (2018) changed tack to pit Hezbollah fighters against IS, in a contemporary Syrian setting, while depicting Hezbollah as defenders of innocent civilians and supporters of Iranian-backed militias in Syria and beyond.<sup>35</sup> These games were released in Arabic, English and Farsi, appealing to domestic and international audiences, especially among diaspora communities, per media commentary provided at the time of launch from Hezbollah spokespersons.

Figure 15 – Special Force website (2003)



Source: EGRN (2024)

## Other

Among the 29 additional entries categorised as “other” which met definitional inclusion for supporting violent extremism or targeted hate, there are 12 games and mods which were classified under “school massacre ideation”. These all put the player in the role of an active shooter, allowing them to reenact mass shooting incidents, including Columbine (1999), Dawson College (2006) and Virginia Tech (2007).

Given the hybridity of targeted hate and violent extremist attacks, which draw inspiration from the tactics, techniques and procedures of prior incidents, we felt it prudent to include these titles in the ETGD. Arguably, these titles meet our definition of targeted hate by actively

35 Pablo Rey-García, Pedro Nieto, and Nadia McGowan, “Holy Defence: El héroe islámico en videojuegos,” in Mohamed El Mouden El Mouden, Antonio Javier Martín Castellanos, Rafael González Galiana, and Rafael Crisman Pérez, eds., *El mundo árabe e islámico y occidente. Retos de construcción del conocimiento sobre el otro*, (Dykinson, 2022), 1231–1252, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362126515\\_Holy\\_Defence\\_El\\_heroe\\_islamico\\_en\\_videojuegos](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362126515_Holy_Defence_El_heroe_islamico_en_videojuegos).



targeting and dehumanising students on the basis of their age and presence in learning institutions and, in turn, advocating for violence against them.

## Access and Revenue Generation

There are more than 30 platforms and additional websites on which extremist games and modifications can be downloaded, so this paper will only focus on the most prevalent in the ETGD: Archive.org, Telegram, Based Mods and Steam. Additional mod sites such as ModDB and NexusMods have similar attributes to those reported here. This has been previously analysed by Winkler and Wiegold (2024), who exposed the use of other mod platforms to share and promote extremist games, including Gamers Rise Up, Indie DB, Gamebanana, and ModDB.<sup>36</sup>

### *Archive.org*

Of the 94 games in the database that are currently accessible, more than 50 are available for free download from the Internet Archive (Archive.org). The Internet Archive is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that launched in 1996, and has catalogued more than 835 billion web pages (through the Wayback Machine), 44 million books and texts, and more than one million software programs.<sup>37</sup> The terms of service of the Internet Archive state that “the Collections may contain information that might be deemed offensive, disturbing, pornographic, racist, sexist... or otherwise objectionable”.<sup>38</sup>

The Archive does not prohibit any type of content other than child sex abuse material, or where an author objects to the inclusion of their work in the database. The Internet Archive has therefore become a repository for a wide range of terrorist and extremist writings, videos, speeches, manifestos and video games.

Games can be downloaded for free, skirting copyright where present, thereby expanding the audience for extremist video games of the past to a new generation. Mods can also be downloaded from the Internet Archive. Users can also explore entire catalogues of content curated by other users, often exposing individuals to a range of extremist games in addition to the one they may have accessed initially. The Similar Items tab of Archive.org also recommends similar downloads based on metadata tags, which furthers proliferation through thinly veiled references such as “red-pilled” or “mall shootings”, and even overt references to Hezbollah. Further titles were available through archived websites also present on the Internet Archive, including sites of proscribed violent extremist and terrorist organisations.

36 Constantin Winkler and Lars Wiegold, “Gaming the System: The Use of Gaming-Adjacent Communication, Game and Mod Platforms by Extremist Actors,” *Global Network on Extremism and Terrorism*, June 2024, <https://gnet-research.org/2024/06/10/gaming-the-system-the-use-of-gaming-adjacent-communication-game-and-mod-platforms-by-extremist-actors/>.

37 “About the Internet Archive,” Internet Archive, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://archive.org/about/>.

38 “Terms of Use,” Internet Archive, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://archive.org/about/terms.php>.

## Telegram

The use of Telegram by extremists from across the spectrum is a well-documented phenomenon that continues to grow in scale despite efforts by Europol to remove channels that promote terrorism.<sup>39</sup> Telegram's use as a repository for files and file-sharing is one of the facets that makes it such an attractive platform for extremist and terrorist users who are looking to share books, films, videos, images and software in an encrypted format at no cost. This usage also extends to the extremist video gaming community, which creates channels to promote a specific video game, or to share files and links to games elsewhere.

References to extremist games, recommendations, files and links can also be found in Telegram discussion channels. Examples include a Telegram channel for Based Arcade Games, featuring white supremacist and racist titles such as *Groid Safari* (2024) and *Pajeet* (2024). Games are available for download directly from the channel or to play for free in-browser. Game publishers such as *KVLT Games*, responsible for *Heimat Defender* (2020), have more than 2,000 Telegram subscribers and offer English and German chat channels for followers.

**Figure 16** – Anti-Indian game Pajeet (2024)



Source: EGRN (2024)

## Based Mods

Based Mods is a repository of approximately 307 mods, hosted on a decentralised domain, eth.limo. For reference, 'based' is a term appropriated from Black Twitter/X which is now used widely across the far right in online settings generally to mean 'not caring about what other people think', which in many cases appears to be a memetic device to obscure reference to white supremacist or

<sup>39</sup> "Telegram: A Briefing", Simon Wiesenthal Center, July 2020, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://www.wiesenthal.com/assets/pdf/swc-telegram-briefing-july.pdf>; Jakob Guhl and Jacob Davey, "A Safe Space to Hate: White Supremacist Mobilisation on Telegram," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, June 2020, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/A-Safe-Space-to-Hate.pdf>.

neo-Nazi content.<sup>40</sup> The repository runs on eth.limo, which serves as an Ethereum-based name service and domain gateway which allows individuals to create their own digital tokens and autonomous applications on the Ethereum blockchain.<sup>41</sup> Eth.limo domains provide greater privacy because they do not log IP addresses or engage in Transmission Control Protocol fingerprinting that could provide identifiable information about a user.<sup>42</sup> This and other security features make it a viable option for individuals who would typically be removed from mainstream web domain services because of the objectionable or illegal nature of their content.<sup>43</sup> As Based Mods describes, users can “upload mods anonymously without worrying about censorship or submit ones delisted from other sites”.

The resulting catalogue of mods provides extremists with ways in which to play mainstream video games that better reflect their worldview. For example, there are mods for different editions of *Fallout*, *Hearts of Iron IV* (2016) and *Left 4 Dead 2* (2009), which allow the flags of the Nazi Third Reich to fly or the replacement of uniforms and hats with Nazi alternatives.

Other mods focus on reconfiguring game content to remove women and individuals who are part of the LGBTQ+ community from gameplay. Mods are available for a wide range of games, such as *Stardew Valley* (2016), an indie farming simulator, where the ability to have same-sex marriage can be removed. Other mods targeting the LGBTQ+ community include the removal of Pride clothing in the *Sims 4* (2014) Create-A-Sim mode, the removal of ‘they’ pronouns in *Battletech* (2018) and *Delta Rune* (2018), and the removal of transgender Pride flags from *Cyberpunk 2077* (2020), *Marvel’s Spiderman Remastered* (2022) and *Need for Speed Unbound* (2022). A misogynistic mod for *Total War: Rome II* (2013) reduces the chance of women being elected as politicians and generals. Several of the modifications use AI to create new scripts, for example, to replace female voiceovers or add new dialogue, for games including *Baldur’s Gate 3* (2023). *Hogwarts Legacy* (2023) has a mod available that lightens the skin tone of characters, as does *Far Cry Primal* (2016). Some mods are explicitly extremist in nature, such as *More Racism in Windhelm* for *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim SE* (2016). New games that are released often appear to quickly gain mods that are extremist in nature. One such example is the mod that allows you to play as a Nazi Lara Croft who can “Heil Hitler” in *Tomb Raider I-III Remastered* (2024).

Other mods remove the option to have Black skin from gameplay in games such as *Dwarf Fortress* (2006) and *Mind Over Magic* (2023). These latter two examples show that individuals are committed to using mods for older games as well as newer releases.

40 For a comprehensive analysis of the term ‘based’ see: Zaron Burnett III, “How ‘Based’ Became the Alt-Right’s New Favorite Piece of Black Slang,” *Mel Magazine* (2022), <https://melmagazine.com/en-us/story/based-alt-right-iii-b>; S. Hagen and D. de Zeeuw, “Based and Confused: Tracing the Political Connotations of a Memetic Phrase Across the Web,” *Big Data & Society* 10, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517231163175>. Interestingly, other controversial games such as *Al-Fursan* (2022), which rewards the player for killing “Zionists”, also refer to themselves as being “based.”

41 “ETH.LIMO – Updates, Overview and a Luxurious dWeb Experience,” *eth.limo Substack*, November 8, 2022, <https://ethlimo.substack.com/p/ethlimo-updates-overview-and-a-luxurious>.

42 *eth.limo Substack*, “ETH-LIMO.”

43 “What Is the Ethereum Name Service? How ENS Works and What It’s Used For,” *CoinDesk*, July 11, 2022, updated May 11, 2023, accessed June 24, 2024, <https://www.coindesk.com/learn/what-is-the-ethereum-name-service-how-ens-works-and-what-its-used-for/>.

**Figure 17** – Examples of Modifications from Games Offered on Based Mods



Sources: Based Mods, Game Rant and EGRN (2024)

Many of these mods are seen as a backlash to so-called ‘woke’ videogaming companies that are purportedly run by Jews, especially in the aftermath of Gamergate 2.0, which was a reaction to diversity, equity and inclusion efforts by gaming studios.<sup>44</sup> This is reflected in posts on the Based Mods forum. Mods are referred to as “de-wokeing mods”. One user shared that a recent “Xbox showcase showed us that the number of ugly women, niggers, and queers is only going to increase in games”.

<sup>44</sup> “Extremism Across the Online Gaming Ecosystem,” Moonshot, 2024, accessed June 24, 2024, <https://moonshotteam.com/resource/extremism-across-the-online-gaming-ecosystem/>.



**Figure 18** – Modification for Tomb Raider Remastered (2024)

Source: EGRN (2024)

### Steam

16 of the titles – including both mods and standalone games – in the database are currently available on Steam. Steam is the largest digital game storefront, with an estimated annual revenue of around \$8.56 billion, and more than 33 million concurrent players, offering more than 73,000 games on its platform.<sup>45</sup> Privately held and run by Valve Corporation, Steam’s revenue comes from game sales and microtransactions, with the company taking a purported 30% cut of all revenue passing through the platform.<sup>46</sup>

Far from being only for game sales, Steam is a social platform, with forums, peer-to-peer messaging, content hosting and mods. Far-right extremists have been present on the platform for years, in part thanks to a generally lax and libertarian approach to content moderation. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue investigated far-right and proscribed groups on Steam in 2021, and found that “the extreme right use Steam as a hub for individual extremists to connect and socialize... [with an] entrenched and long-lasting extreme right community... [while] some groups also provide off-ramps to ideological content and other social media platforms, suggesting that Steam is being used to recruit to specific movements”.<sup>47</sup>

The ETGD reinforces this finding, although some studios that are highly explicit do find their games removed. For example, *2GenPro Games* released seven far-right and white supremacist titles in 2020, which were removed from Steam after widespread backlash, though mainly because they were deemed by Steam to be troll titles.

<sup>45</sup> “Steam,” Statista, accessed July 12, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/topics/4282/steam/#editorsPicks>.

<sup>46</sup> Tyler Wilde, “Most Game Devs Don’t Think Steam Earns Its 30% Revenue Cut,” *PC Gamer*, April 28, 2021, <https://www.pcgamer.com/most-game-devs-dont-think-steam-earns-its-30-revenue-cut/>.

<sup>47</sup> Pierre Vaux, Aoife Gallagher, and Jacob Davey, “Gaming and Extremism: The Extreme Right on Steam,” *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, August 12, 2021, <https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/gaming-and-extremism-the-extreme-right-on-steam/>.

However, violently misogynistic, racist, white supremacist, antisemitic and anti-LGBTQ+ titles remain on the platform, including *Feminazi: The Triggering* (2017), *Tyrone vs. COPS* (2022), *Fursan al-Aqsa: The Knights of the Al-Aqsa Mosque* (2022), *Alex Jones: NWO Wars* (2024) and *The Great Rebellion* (2024).

Having a presence on Steam is critical for gamemakers seeking to profit from their products, as the platform is the primary sales front for game downloads globally. As such, the extremist titles on Steam directly provide funding for their creators which, according to figures available, may be small sums, but constitute supplemental income nevertheless. Known violent extremists often struggle to find gainful, regular employment, so any income can be helpful in allowing them to continue their primary mission of propagandising or organising for their ideological struggle (see the bankruptcy of Alex Jones as an indicative case here).

Although Steam does not make individual game sales or revenue data publicly available, two video game industry datasets provide an estimate of copies sold and revenue for each game, of which an analysis is presented below. These are rough estimates, with upper and lower bounds based on varying assumptions and are expressed as gross revenue before the 30% fees taken by Steam.<sup>48</sup> Based on the median of these estimates, *Alex Jones: NWO Wars*, sold for a symbolic \$17.76, topping the gross revenue estimates at \$318,000, followed by the misogynist and racist *Cuckold Simulator* at \$117,400, the identitarian *The Great Rebellion* at \$94,500, the antisemitic jihadist *Fursan al-Aqsa* at \$67,900, and the racist, white supremacist *Tyrone vs COPS* at an estimated \$45,000.

**Table 1:** Estimated Steam Copies Sold and Revenue Figures

Name	Price	Est. Copies Sold	Est. Revenue	Est. Revenue Range
Alex Jones NWO Wars	\$ 17.76	19.4k (9.7k – 29.1k)	\$318,100	(\$159k – \$477.2k)
Cuckold Simulator: Life as a Beta Male Cuck	\$ 3.16	40.4k (20.2k – 60.6k)	\$117,400	(\$58.7k – \$176.1k)
The Great Rebellion	\$ 19.99	5.8k (2.9k – 8.7k)	\$94,500	(\$47.2k – \$141.7k)
Fursan al-Aqsa: The Knights of the Al-Aqsa Mosque	\$ 14.99	7k (3.5k – 10.5k)	\$67,900	(\$33.9k – \$101.8k)
Tyrone vs COPS	\$ 1.95	60.7k (30.3k – 91k)	\$45,000	(\$22.5k – \$67.5k)
Feminazi: The Triggering	\$ 0.99	81.2k (40.6k – 121.8k)	\$41,600	(\$20.8k – \$62.4k)
Heal Hitler	\$ 4.99	6.6k (3.3k – 10k)	\$21,500	(\$10.7k – \$32.3k)
Tyrone vs COPS VR	\$ 1.99	3k (1.5k – 4.5k)	\$4,700	(\$2.3k – \$7.1k)
Tyrone Soulz	\$ 1.95	2.2k (1.1k – 3.4k)	\$3,700	(\$1.8k – \$5.5k)
Maroon Berets: 2030	\$ 7.99	960 (480 – 1.4k)	\$3,100	(\$1.5k – \$4.6k)
Feminazi 3000	\$ 1.99	3.5k (1.7k – 5.3k)	\$2,100	(\$1k – \$3.2k)

Source: Gamalytic and ETGD (2024)

<sup>48</sup> The figures in the chart below are taken from Gamalytic, which uses an algorithmic approach to estimate the number of game copies sold based on reviews, playtime and game rank, along with gross revenue figures. For more information, see: "How to Accurately Estimate Steam Sales," Gamalytic, May 13, 2023, <https://gamalytic.com/blog/how-to-accurately-estimate-steam-sales>.

## 4 Conclusion and Recommendations

In examining the evolution of extremist and terrorist games over the past 30 years through the ETGD, it's clear that gaming spaces have become contested by numerous ideologically motivated actors. There is significant debate on whether video games created by extremists are designed for recruitment purposes or to solidify the worldview of those who are already involved.<sup>49</sup> Certainly, in games such as *Ethnic Cleansing* (2002), propaganda promoting a neo-Nazi Violent Extremist Organisation, National Alliance, is evident. Adverts for the organization are accessible at the game menu, and the symbol of the National Alliance is used during gameplay as a health package. The game also came with a video of National Alliance leader William Pierce, stating that “the only way to make a revolution in this technological era is from inside the gates”, calling for professors, the military, police officers and scientists to join the movement and be ready to “throw open the gates at the right moment”.

In *Angry Goy II* (2018), the player is faced with far-right propaganda every time they lose the game. Videos showcasing the supposed decline of the West play automatically, showing, for example, a transgender child, a video about the decline of the US since the 1960s, and an image of President Biden with a yarmulke to suggest that the Jews control him. The crude game *Nigger Genocide* (2016) even advertises the KKK on one of its walls, encouraging individuals to make donations. Hezbollah's titles from 2000–2018 feature the organisation in a persistently positive, heroic light and are clearly designed as propaganda pieces. Other, more subtle titles project ideological influences or organically popularise targeted hate against a particular group (including women, minorities and LGBTQ+ communities).

The proliferation of these games underscores the adaptability and persistence of extremist groups in exploiting technology for recruitment, propaganda and fundraising. From the early standalone games for Atari of the 1980s to today's sophisticated mods and online communities, the gaming ecosystem continues to be exploited by those seeking to spread hateful ideologies.

We hope this top-line analysis of the first 155 titles in the ETGD will form a basis for future research, contributions to the database, and sensible policymaking which recognise games as part of a wider contested information space that is actively exploited by violent extremist, terrorist, and targeted hate actors.

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49 Nick Robinson and Joe Whittaker, “Playing for Hate? Extremism, Terrorism, and Videogames,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2021): 1–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1866740>.

**For tech companies and policymakers, this analysis highlights several recommendations:**

- 1. Prohibit and prevent violent extremist exploits:** Platforms must implement robust content moderation strategies to detect and mitigate the spread of violent extremist content and behaviours. While platform policies and thresholds can and should vary, the prevalence of gaming content from proscribed terrorist organisations across gaming-related platforms is striking, as is the widespread availability of targeted hate games on mainstream platforms. Sensible policies that prohibit violent extremist and terrorist behaviour and content, while balancing freedom of expression and human rights, should be the norm yet are often absent from gaming spaces. As a minimum, platforms should explicitly prohibit violent extremist and terrorist behaviours and content. Leadership from the likes of Twitch, Discord, Microsoft/Xbox and the affiliated Activision-Blizzard show how this can be done. Employing advanced AI tools and increasing human expertise in trust and safety teams to identify and remove harmful games and mods swiftly should also be a priority, especially in non-English languages. These systems should not only respond to flagged content but also proactively scan for emerging threats, adapting to new keywords, symbols, and memetic-cloaking techniques used by VEO and targeted hate actors.

  - a. Moderation efforts across audio and video platforms, such as Spotify, Apple Music and YouTube** should also identify extremist games and associated content that are featured on their platforms under misleading titles and tags to avoid detection. The database contains numerous examples of extremist game soundtracks and gameplay videos which directly contradict the platform terms of service on these adjacent, non-gaming-specific services, and which include outlinks or guides to download the games elsewhere.
  - b. Flag and remove extremist titles across platforms:** The ETGD titles are compiled to allow for a range of policies, depending on the specifics of a title and the requirements of an individual platform. Hashing and preventing outlinking to download links should be a priority across platforms.
- 2. Improve reporting mechanisms: Platforms** must improve reporting mechanisms to make it easier for players to report violative content in both games and in-game conduct. This would assist trust and safety teams and provide a better feedback mechanism to counter the exploitation of platforms by extremists. In particular, Steam should implement a reporting category for violent extremist and terrorist games.
- 3. Understand and take down distributed repositories:** Many of the terrorist and extremist titles included in this database were identified through larger repositories of extremist gaming content readily available on the surface web, particularly the Internet Archive. These compiled groupings of games provide rapid access to extremist content, potentially exposing users to more intensified or radicalising content that is more extreme than the original piece they may be seeking. Understanding distributed repository hosting techniques, for example, across Ethereum blockchain sites or through chain hosting services, should be a future priority.

4. **Collaborate across sectors:** Addressing the spread of extremist games requires a collaborative effort between tech companies, government agencies and civil society organisations. Sharing threat information and best practices can enhance collective capabilities to counteract these harms. Establishing formal partnerships and communication channels can ensure timely and coordinated responses to the appearance of extremist content. The ETGD represents one potential framework for such collaboration.
5. **Educate across sectors:** Raising awareness of the proliferation of extremist content in games among developers and educators, particularly those engaging with younger audiences, is crucial. Programmes targeting both educators and platform community moderators could include practical guidance to identify a variety of online harms, from online childhood sexual exploitation and abuse, to school-shooting ideation material, violent misogyny (black pilling) and violent extremist content. These could be integrated into school safety and digital literacy curricula, as well as public awareness campaigns that highlight digital safety tools for young people.
6. **Support Research and Innovation:** Continued support for research initiatives like GNET and EGRN is essential. These efforts provide valuable insights and data that can inform policy and technology solutions to combat the spread of extremist ideologies in digital spaces. Encouraging academic institutions, thinktanks and independent researchers to focus on this issue will help keep our understanding of terrorist and extremist tactics online – and in gaming – up to date.
7. **Enhance regulatory frameworks:** Governments should move ahead with updating regulatory frameworks that recognise the nuances of gaming platforms and grapple with the unique challenges posed by digital terrorist and violent extremist content, while remaining compliant with human rights standards.
8. **Encouraging positive community engagement:** Tech and gaming companies can foster positive online communities by promoting in-game behaviour that encourages inclusivity, fun and critical engagement with social issues. This involves creating and promoting such content, and ensuring that community guidelines, moderation policies and reporting mechanisms in-game and across gaming platforms support these values.

As we move forward, we must remain adaptive to the evolving tactics of terrorist, violent extremist, and targeted hate actors online. By fostering safer and more inclusive gaming environments, we can help mitigate the impact of those seeking to divide and promote violence against people on the basis of protected characteristics in all societies. This ongoing effort will require a comprehensive approach that makes judicious use of technology, policy, education, law enforcement and community engagement to effectively counteract the influence of terrorist and extremist content in the gaming world.

By providing a historical overview of these trends, we hope to situate current titles within a long-term frame that shows that extremist and terrorist use of games is not new, yet remains deserving of greater attention.







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