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"Transnational History of the Far Right" Series

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TransHistFarRight

Transnational History of the Far Right
A Collective Research Project led by Marlene Laruelle

At a time when global political dynamics seem to be moving in favor of illiberal regimes around the world, this research project seeks to fill in some of the blank pages in the contemporary history of the far right, with a particular focus on the transnational dimensions of far-right movements in the broader Europe/Eurasia region.

www.historyofthefarright.org/

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Note: Parler's role as a hub for far-right and conspiratorial networks has most recently come to light due to the platform's role in enabling these groups to radicalize individuals and organize for action. The attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6 highlighted the very real danger of permitting these groups to operate in a digital space. Since then, a number of companies have taken steps to dramatically curb access to such platforms.¹ On January 10, Amazon canceled the company's hosting services and, as of the time of writing, Parler is offline.² This paper was written prior to the events of January 6 and has been modified slightly to account for the event and its ongoing fallout.

Social media's role as an environment for social and political activism has become increasingly significant as right-wing movements have embraced these platforms as a medium for organization. The more extreme of those groups have seen their use of social media platforms curtailed, since the spread of their conspiracy theories and radical speech has prompted companies such as Facebook and Twitter to strike back by removing accounts and content. In the wake of these efforts, far-right groups have moved to other platforms. One new platform that was explicitly tailored to these users was Parler. Parler's commitment to free speech and minimal censorship resulted in the platform becoming an echo chamber—a closed information system isolated from outside views—that circulated conspiracy theories and radical-right ideas.

The movement toward Parler of individuals with conservative worldviews, including members of right-wing conservative parties, was particularly pronounced in the wake of the 2020 U.S. election, when dominant social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook began adding warning labels to content in an attempt to limit the spread of claims of voter fraud shared by supporters of Donald Trump.³ Parler's rise to prominence was accompanied by a frenzy of discussion in the media analyzing the platform from an American perspective: as the outgrowth of distrust in dominant media companies,⁴ concern over targeted information campaigns conducted by Russia,⁵ or as a hub for organizing radical political action.⁶

Yet the fact that a number of right-wing politicians from other countries had joined the platform before it was taken offline illustrates new potential for forging transnational networks among right-wing groups. Over the past year, elected politicians and political candidates from at least 12 different

countries (not including the United States) joined Parler. The individuals from four of these countries—namely Brazil, France, Poland, and Italy—had networks of followers and accounts that are significant due to their magnitude. Those from the other eight countries had accounts that either did not have a significant following, were not particularly active, or a combination of the two.

This paper focuses on far-right, nationalist, and right-wing groups, many of which are habitually labeled as populist, and seeks to provide a broad survey of their presence and activity on Parler. Consequently, the investigative work conducted was not exhaustive and should not be considered as such, though attempts were made to identify accounts in all regions of the world, including Europe, Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Oceania. The adoption of this platform by members of right-wing political parties, far-right entities, and populist movements around the world holds the potential for increased spread of conspiracy theories within transnational networks of far-right movements should Parler or a similar website re-emerge in the near future.

The American Context

Parler was created in August 2018 by John Matze Jr. and Jared Thomson, computer science graduates of Denver University, with the backing of conservative investor Rebekah Mercer.⁷ Rebekah Mercer is the daughter of hedge-fund manager Robert Mercer. Together, the two have become large financial funders of conservative causes, the Republican Party, as well as of Cambridge Analytica, the political consulting firm that worked to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential elections through social media.⁸ Mercer posted a message on the platform on November 15, 2020 confirming her role in founding it. She specifically said that she and Matze Jr. launched Parler “to provide a neutral platform for free speech, as our founders intended, and also to create a social media environment that would protect data privacy,” adding that “[the] ever increasing tyranny and hubris of our tech overlords demands that someone lead the fight against data mining, and for the protection of free speech online.”⁹

Though Parler advertised itself as a home for conservative values and ideas, a large proportion of its American userbase belonged to one of three segments, many of which overlapped with each other. The first major segment comprised supporters of Donald Trump and adherents of Trumpism—a political behavior and ideology modeled on Trump’s leadership. The Trump family as a whole promoted the platform as a space for conservatives to freely express their views and were early adopters of it.¹⁰

A related, but not necessarily synonymous, second segment was made up of believers in the QAnon conspiracy theory.¹¹ These users tended to come to Parler after larger platforms such as Facebook and Twitter began cracking down on the spread of false information. That being said, there was also a push within this crowd to avoid dominant social media platforms on the grounds that their leadership was part of the “globalist pedophilia network.”

A third segment of the platform’s American userbase was elected representatives of the Republican Party.¹² Most of these individuals were strong supporters of President Trump, though claims by members of the Republican Party that dominant platforms actively suppressed conservative ideas did encourage some members to embrace Parler as an “unbiased” platform.

How Parler Worked

To register for Parler, users were required to provide an email address and a phone number. The phone number was used for two-factor verification, with a code sent to a user's phone when he or she logged in. Upon signing up, new users were presented with a list of recommendations for established "influencer" accounts to follow. Among the suggested accounts were figures like Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson, two conservative American talk show hosts and political commentators, as well as Devin Nunes, a Republican Congressman from California. Users could interact with other posts (or "parleys") by "voting" them or "echoing" them (similar to Twitter's "like" and "retweet" features) and could comment underneath parleys. Parler also kept track of how many "views" each parley received.

If they wished, users could provide Parler with a photo of the front and back of a government-issued ID (driver's license or passport for U.S. residents, passport only for international users), as well as a selfie of themselves, to receive a red "verified" badge.¹³ Parler noted that this badge "simply means that the person is a unique individual and the sole owner of an account," but in many instances this is a good indicator that an account was run by the person it claimed to be. Parler also offered a yellow "verified influencer" badge for which users could apply. The latter badge was intended as an added layer of protection for individuals who were at risk of being impersonated and was a strong indicator that the individual was who they said they were.

Brazil

Brazilian adoption of Parler came relatively early, predating the U.S. election in November 2020 by a number of months.¹⁴ It has also been the strongest showing of users flocking to the platform outside of the U.S. in terms of the quantity of users.¹⁵ President Jair Bolsonaro had two accounts on Parler. @jairmessiasbolsonaro was created on June 29, 2020, and was unverified.¹⁶ This account had over 187,000 followers and accumulated over 318 parleys. Most parleys from this account averaged about 30-40,000 views and received between 30 and 100 comments, 100-300 echoes, and 500-700 votes. @JairMBolsonaro was created on July 1, 2020, and was a "verified influencer."¹⁷ This account had over 63,000 followers and accumulated over 447 parleys. Most parleys from this account averaged about 10,000 views and received 15-50 comments, 50-150 echoes, and 200-500 votes. Both accounts were highly active and posted multiple times per day. However, their interaction with other posts was minimal, indicating that both accounts were used strictly as official outlets of the president. Both accounts followed a number of Brazilian political figures as well as the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), a "verified influencer."



Parler post by Jair Messias Bolsonaro

Other prominent Brazilian political figures on the platform included three of the president’s sons: Eduardo Bolsonaro,¹⁸ Carlos Bolsonaro,¹⁹ and Flávio Bolsonaro,²⁰ all of whom are very active in Brazilian politics. Eduardo and Flávio are members of the Brazilian Congress (Chamber of Deputies and Senate, respectively) for São Paulo, while Carlos is a City Councillor for Rio de Janeiro.

The three have made headlines for their political activity. Carlos was accused earlier this year of being part of a fake news network,²¹ Flávio was accused of organizing a money-laundering scheme,²² and Eduardo—who has ties to far-right movements such as Steve Bannon’s The Movement²³—was offered the position of ambassador to the United States.²⁴ All joined Parler on the same day as their father: July 1, 2020. Both Carlos and Eduardo were verified users with 114,000 and 25,000 followers, respectively, while Flávio was a “verified influencer” with 103,000 followers. While their content generally seemed to be restricted to Brazilian politics, Flávio’s account did post a picture on November 14, 2020, of the “Million MAGA March” in Washington, D.C.,²⁵ with the caption “STOLEN ELECTION Here is America’s answer.”²⁶ Additionally, Carlos’s account followed Ted Cruz.

France

Although the French Parler network was not as large as its Brazilian counterpart, several right-wing politicians did join the site. The highest-profile account was that of Marion Maréchal. The niece of Marine Le Pen, Maréchal is a former member of the French far-right party Rassemblement national (RN) and current director of the conservative university Institut de sciences sociales, économiques

et politiques (ISSEP Lyon). Her account was created on July 21, 2020, was verified, and had over 4,000 followers.²⁷ The account remained active, posting nearly daily updates; her posts received an average of 3,000 views, 5 comments, 10 echoes, and between 10 and 30 votes. Marine Le Pen reportedly had a Parler account that appeared to behave similarly to her other official accounts; however, it appears to have since been removed from the website.²⁸ One remaining account did claim to be Marine Le Pen, but it engaged in behavior inconsistent with that of the actual figure of Le Pen: whereas the account congratulated Trump on “winning” re-election, Le Pen has remained fairly reserved on the topic, neither conceding that Biden won nor being too overt in her support for Trump.²⁹ The parleys on the account also did not bear the telltale signature “MLP,” which she uses to sign all her Tweets, and the language generally diverged greatly from that used on either Twitter or Facebook.³⁰

Marion Maréchal announced she had created a Parler account on Twitter the day after its creation, as well as announcing the creation of a Parler account for ISSEP Lyon.³¹ The latter was a verified account with close to 1,000 followers. It typically received less than 5 comments, 10 echoes, and 30 votes per parley, but its parleys averaged about 5,000 views.³² The account followed those of Thibaut Monnier³³ and Christophe Bentz.³⁴ Bentz is a member of the French Christian Democratic Party (PCD). His account was small, with barely 100 followers, and was unverified, but remained active, mainly echoing posts from ISSEP Lyon or Marion Maréchal.³⁵ Monnier is a cofounder of ISSEP and ran for a local seat in Lyon in the 2020 French municipal elections in March.³⁶ His account was unverified, with a small following of about 270 users, and had not—prior to Amazon’s cancellation of the platform’s hosting services—been active since late July. Monnier ran in Lyon with Agnès Marion, a member of RN and president of the French conservative political movement Le Cercle Fraternité.³⁷ Her account was verified, with just over 700 followers, but had not been active since early September.³⁸

French adoption of Parler was a mixed bag. There were a number of French and French-speaking users on the platform, but it had yet to achieve real popularity with right-wing politicians. Most importantly, among the few political figures who joined the platform, there was a notable absence of high-profile figures from the Rassemblement National, with the result that those further to the right, around Marion Maréchal, seemed to dominate.

Some political media figures, such as Damien Lefèvre, joined the platform and gained a certain degree of prominence. Lefèvre, a political activist who goes by the name Damien Rieu, is a member of the French nationalist movement Génération Identitaire (GI) and the RN who is known for his provocative and xenophobic anti-Muslim comments.³⁹ His account was verified, with nearly 4,000 followers. It was fairly active, averaging about 10 comments, 20 echoes, 50 votes, and 3,500 views per parley.⁴⁰ However, there were few such examples; much of the French Parler network seemed confined to ordinary users and QAnon sympathizers.

The only other item of note when analyzing the network in France is that some accounts, such as Maréchal’s, did follow accounts from other countries. Among the accounts that Maréchal followed were those of Candace Owens (conservative author and political activist), CPAC, and VOX Spain. However, unlike the Brazilian users, there is no evidence that she shared content from these accounts.

Italy

There was a small group of Italian accounts on the platform, including those of Claudio Borghi and Alberto Bagnai, two elected deputies in the Italian Parliament and members of the Northern League Party (LN). Borghi's account was created on November 13, was verified, and had over 3,000 followers.⁴¹ It was an active account that collected as many as 29,000 views, 157 comments, 232 echoes, and 404 votes for its parleys. Bagnai's account was created on November 12, was also verified, and had over 5,000 followers.⁴² His parleys amassed as many as 26 comments, 73 echoes, and 227 votes, with 18,000 views. The only account associated with the Brothers of Italy, the other major Italian right-wing Eurosceptic party, was that of Cesare Maria Ortis, who was formerly the vice director of national communication for the party. His account was verified and had about 1,000 followers; however, it did not receive much engagement compared to the accounts of Claudio Borghi or Alberto Bagnai.⁴³

Both Deputy Borghi and Deputy Bagnai were able to reach a far wider audience than their narrow base of supporters might suggest, due in large part to the work of Italian-language accounts such as Marco Narcisi, LegaEsteri, and La Forma e Sostanza. The first was the verified account of entrepreneur and author Marco Narcisi and had about 1,000 followers.⁴⁴ He frequently amplified content from Bagnai, Ortis, and Borghi and hit view numbers for his own parleys higher than his follower count would lead one to expect. LegaEsteri was a verified news handle that had about 1,500 followers, but it was another account that formed part of the amplification chain of Italian political news related to the Brothers of Italy and the LN.⁴⁵ Finally, La Forma e Sostanza was a verified news handle with about 1,000 followers.⁴⁶ It was highly active in promoting content from other accounts, especially information about the LN. It regularly collected between 4,000 and 15,000 views on its parleys.

The Italian circle of Parler accounts was relatively small, featuring only two politicians. However, it was highly active and the network of accounts that amplified the content from political personalities was very effective in spreading information within the network. Of added note, many of the accounts mentioned above followed similar American accounts, such as One American News Network (OANN), Senator Ted Cruz, Dan Bongino (American conservative political commentator), Eric Trump, and Maria Bartiromo (American conservative television personality), among others.

Poland

Polish adoption of Parler was highly mainstream and very recent. On November 18, the right-wing Catholic-nationalist political party, Solidarna Polska, announced on Twitter that they had created an official Parler account.⁴⁷ Their account had yet to be verified, but had amassed over 800 followers and averaged 1 comment, 3 echoes, and 15 votes per parley. It regularly hit 1,500 views per parley, indicating that its content spread well on the platform.⁴⁸ That same day, a slew of ostensibly Polish politicians began creating accounts on the platform. An account claiming to be Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki of the Law and Justice party (PiS) was created on November 18, 2020.⁴⁹ However, there is no official confirmation that this was indeed him. Moreover, the account had very little activity and was unverified.

Nevertheless, members of PiS elected to the Sejm, such as Dominik Tarczynski,⁵⁰ Tomasz Rzymokowski,⁵¹ Mateusz Lewicki,⁵² and Kazimierz Smoliński,⁵³ were all on the platform, as was Lech

Kołodowski,⁵⁴ who left the party in November 2020.⁵⁵ All accounts were unverified and had less than 1,000 followers each. Of note, however, were the accounts of Anna Maria Siarkowska (elected member of the Sejm), Piotr Uściński (elected member of the Sejm), and Krystyna Pawłowicz (Constitutional Tribunal of Poland).

Siarkowska's account is noteworthy because, unlike most accounts, it was verified.⁵⁶ Moreover, she shared content about U.S. politics (echoing a parody from Ron Paul criticizing COVID-19 lockdowns) and followed the American accounts of Abby Johnson (American anti-abortion activist), Ron Paul (former U.S. Representative), Jack Posobiec (American alt-right conspiracy theorist and political activist), the National Rifle Association (NRA), and Senator Ted Cruz. Uściński's account was similarly verified and included the hashtag #BabiesLivesMatter in his username.⁵⁷ Pawłowicz's account is noteworthy because, while unverified, she is a judge of the Constitutional Tribunal of Poland and regularly outperformed metrics by getting as many as 89 comments, 27 echoes, 167 votes, and 7,600 views while only having 648 followers.⁵⁸ Finally, while unverified, the PiS had an account claiming to be official, with a very small following,⁵⁹ and a second account called Dariusz-Polska that was highly active and dedicated to posting updates about the party.⁶⁰



Echo by Anna Maria Siarkowska sharing a post by former U.S. Representative Ron Paul

However, the PIS was not the only Polish political party with a presence on Parler. The right wing and Eurosceptic Coalition for the Renewal of the Republic—Liberty and Hope (KORWiN) party had an unverified account with about 200 followers that claimed to be official.⁶¹ There was a second account, similarly unverified, that did not claim to be official but had 500 followers and typically received about 2,500 views on its parleys.⁶² While there was an account claiming to be Janusz Korwin-Mikke, the leader of KORWiN, it was likely inauthentic given that it exclusively followed U.S. accounts and that all of its content was written in English in support of Donald Trump, whereas the politician himself took a very public stance against Trump a year ago.⁶³ Additionally, Krzysztof Bosak, elected member of the Sejm, leader of the Konfederacja party, and former member of the League of Polish Families and National Movement (RN), had an account with about 200 followers.⁶⁴

Other Far-Right and Right-Wing Representatives

Smaller networks and individual accounts of politicians and political parties from other countries also featured on the website.

Elected politicians: There were two Australian members on the platform: Senator Malcolm Roberts and MP George Christensen. Senator Roberts is a member of the Australian far-right Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party (or One Nation party). His account joined on June 24 and was verified, with 6,000 followers.⁶⁵ He remained active and received solid engagement with his posts, typically garnering 20-40 comments, 10-40 echoes, and 50-150 votes, with 3,000-4,000 views per parley. Christensen is an elected member of the National Party of Australia. His account was created on June 27 and was unverified, with 988 followers.⁶⁶ It linked to his podcast, e-newsletter, and Facebook page, and frequently promoted content about U.S. politics.

There was also a small network of accounts associated with the Flemish-nationalist Vlaams Belang party. Tom Vandendriessche (member of the European Parliament), Dries Van Langenhove (Member of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives), and Tom Van Grieken (Member of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives and leader of Vlaams Belang) all had accounts. Tom Vandendriessche's account was verified, was created on June 24, and continued to be active.⁶⁷ However, it had only 132 followers and did not receive much engagement. Dries Van Langenhove's account was unverified, was created July 11, and had 515 followers. It had not been active since November 13 and posted exclusively in English.⁶⁸ Tom Van Grieken's account was unverified, was created on June 29, and had 430 followers. It had not been active since November 15.⁶⁹

There was an unverified account claiming to be Marko Pogačnik, member of the National Assembly of Slovenia from the Slovenian Democracy Party. It was created on August 9 and had 69 followers, but had not been active since August.⁷⁰

Party leaders: Pauline Hanson, leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party in Australia, had an account that was unverified but claimed to be official in its bio. It was created on June 29 and had 2,100 followers but outperformed her expected metrics by averaging between 5,000 and 10,000 views, 20-40 comments, 50-100 echoes, and 100-400 votes per parley.⁷¹

Maxime Bernier, leader of the People's Party of Canada and former candidate for leadership of the Conservative Party of Canada, had two accounts on Parler. One, created on June 21, was verified, had 3,300 followers, was active, and posted English-language content.⁷² The other, created on November

11, was unverified, had 161 followers, was active, and posted French-language content.⁷³ The two accounts linked to each other in their bios.

Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch far-right Party for Freedom, had one account that joined on June 23, 2020.⁷⁴ It was verified and had 2,900 followers but had not been active since June 29, when it posted a video with the text “Monday. Taken to court—for speaking the truth—in an armored police car because radical muslims want to kill me. A typical Monday as leader of the biggest opposition party in the Dutch parliament.”

There was one account allegedly belonging to Nigel Farage, the former leader of UKIP. The account was unverified and had 5,400 followers. It was very active and mainly posted links to articles, Tweets, or videos by Nigel Farage on other websites.⁷⁵ Comparing posts on Farage’s official Twitter account to those on Parler, the tone and content appeared consistent enough to suggest that the Parler account was genuine.⁷⁶

Political parties: There was an account for the Belgian Vlaams Belang party. It was unverified, was created on June 24, and had just under 1,000 followers. It remained active and received a handful of comments, echoes, and votes for its parleys, which averaged between 500 and 1,000 views.⁷⁷

There was a very small network of accounts affiliated with the Portuguese populist CHEGA party. The party itself appeared to have two accounts. One, CHEGA, was created on July 2, was unverified, and had 1,400 followers.⁷⁸ The other, CHEGA TV, was created on July 16, was also unverified, and had 609 followers.⁷⁹ Both accounts continued to be active and both provided links in their bios to the party website, email, Twitter handle, and Instagram account.

There was one account dedicated to the VOX party in Spain. It was created on July 2, was unverified, had 1,800 followers, and was active.⁸⁰ It regularly posted content from the official VOX YouTube channel and was likely an official account. There was also an account for VOX Madrid that was created on September 15.⁸¹ It had 324 followers, was unverified, and had not been active since the day of its creation.

Non-elected politicians: There were unverified accounts affiliated with some unelected members of the Portuguese CHEGA party: Lucinda Ribeiro,⁸² Rui Paulo Sousa,⁸³ and Pedro dos Santos Frazão.⁸⁴ Both Ribeiro and Sousa’s accounts were very small, with less than 100 followers; they were created on July 3 and July 16, respectively. The account of dos Santos Frazão, created on June 26, was also unverified but had 367 followers. Both dos Santos Frazão and Ribeiro’s accounts continued to be active.

There were two accounts associated with the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) on Parler. One allegedly belonged to Neil Hamilton, the disputed leader of UKIP.⁸⁵ The account was unverified, had 300 followers, and had not been active since August 25. The other belonged to David Kurten, former UKIP representative and current leader of the Heritage Party.⁸⁶ It was unverified but was active, had 4,000 followers, and had posted pro-Trump content in the past.

Discussion

More research is required to provide a more detailed and comprehensive look into the adoption of Parler by certain right-wing, far-right, and populist parties. However, this overview has painted a

general picture of the extent to which politicians and parties from different countries across the globe launched their presence on the platform and how they engaged with communities online. From this cursory examination, it is possible to pick out four main trends observed across cases.

Cross-following. Nearly every account followed at least one American political personality. This is likely a product of the fact that Parler introduced new users to the site by recommending many of these accounts for the new user to follow. While it may be of curiosity to note which American political personalities different individuals chose to follow, the reality is that many may have followed these personalities without much consideration. However, there are some instances of cross-country follows involving countries other than the United States. For instance, Tom Vandendriessche followed Marion Maréchal. Marion herself followed VOX Spain, and VOX Spain almost exclusively followed the high-profile Brazilian accounts. Lucinda Ribeiro of CHEGA followed VOX Spain and Marine Le Pen's spoof account. These cross-country follows are not particularly significant in the strict sense that there did not seem to be much utilization of these ties (e.g., echoes). However, they do demonstrate that the platform was not exclusively a center for U.S.-foreign influence but that there were international avenues for transnational influence and collaboration.

Creation waves. Frequently, adoption of Parler by parties in particular countries happened in identifiable waves. Initially, there was the wave of Brazilian accounts in June 2020, which appeared to be motivated by President Bolsonaro's creation of an account and the restrictions imposed by Facebook and Twitter on the spread of misinformation and disinformation on their platforms—particularly pertaining to the COVID-19 global pandemic.⁸⁷ This wave produced one of the largest bases of foreign accounts on the network. A second wave occurred in June and July 2020 that appeared to center on Marion Maréchal's entry to the platform. Polish adoption of Parler occurred almost entirely on November 18, 2020, when the Konfederacja account was created. This investigation did not, however, explore the extent to which ordinary individuals mirrored this pattern, nor the extent to which those who signed up and created an account remained active on the platform. Reportedly, Parler suffered from poor user retention.

Absence of major leaders. Across the board, there appeared to be a notable absence of major right-wing, far-right, and populist leaders from the platform. These might have included Marine Le Pen of France,⁸⁸ Matteo Salvini or Giorgia Meloni of Italy, André Ventura of Portugal, Santiago Abascal or Javier Ortega Smith of Spain, or Andrzej Duda of Poland. One exception is Geert Wilders, who ostensibly had an account; however, it appeared to no longer be active. Some noteworthy members—particularly from Poland, France, and Brazil—were present on the platform, but by and large the platform did not seem to be fully embraced by most parties. This could be explained by drawing a distinction between so-called moderate populists who aim at official government positions and radical ones who are more openly associated with far-right countercultures. More extreme political actors may feel increasingly limited in their capacity to post and share information online or operate in digital spaces on Facebook or Twitter and thus feel increasingly compelled to join Parler. Moderate actors, especially those like Le Pen and Duda, may not gain anything from joining a platform that is home to more radical opinions.

Absence of particular countries. What was clear when searching on the platform was the definitive absence of parties such as Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland), Fidesz—Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz—Magyar Polgári Szövetség), Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom), Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs), Freedom and Direct Democracy (Svoboda a přímá demokracie), Golden Dawn (Λαϊκός Σύνδεσμος—Χρυσή

Αυγή), and the All-Ukrainian Union “Svoboda” (Всеукраїнське об’єднання «Свобода»). Some countries with an established far-right or populist movement with at least one representative elected nationally did have a presence on the platform. However, at the time research was conducted, there was no sign of any parties from Germany, Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic, Greece, or Ukraine.

Conclusion

Parler’s growing popularity, among not only an American audience but also a demonstrably international audience, provided clear evidence for how new, transnational connections between far-right groups could be formed online. Significantly, although this survey only looked at high-profile members of far-right, right wing, and populist parties in other countries, ordinary users from these countries followed these political personalities to the platform, creating userbases from other countries. Thus, while Parler was primarily a hub of QAnon believers, Trump supporters, and conservative-minded Americans in general, its growing presence abroad demonstrates that there is an audience for those views and that style of politics outside the US. Noting which political actors and parties abroad had joined the social media website prior to its being taken offline is useful for identifying those attracted to the ideology and message of Parler and to building connections with U.S. conservative and far-right groups.

With Parler now offline, it remains to be seen whether the platform’s lawsuit against Amazon or efforts to find other services willing to host it will be successful and allow it to come back online.⁸⁹ Regardless, users who embraced the platform will likely seek out other options—such as Telegram or Gab—for engaging with each other. Taking down Parler does not remove the ideas and rhetoric of its users from social discourse, as those users simply migrate to other platforms. Their political beliefs remain present, albeit now removed a step further from public scrutiny.

¹ Jack Nicas and Davet Alba, “Amazon, Apple and Google Cut Off Parler, an App That Drew Trump Supporters,” *The New York Times*, January 9, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/09/technology/apple-google-parler.html>.

² “Parler Social Network Drops Offline after Amazon Pulls Support,” *BBC*, January 11, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-55615214>.

³ Renée DiResta, “Right-Wing Social Media Finalizes Its Divorce from Reality,” *The Atlantic*, November 23, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/11/right-wing-social-media-finalizes-its-divorce-reality/617177/>.

⁴ Jeff Horowitz and Keach Hagey, “Parler Makes Play for Conservatives Mad at Facebook, Twitter,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 15, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/parler-backed-by-mercator-family-makes-play-for-conservatives-mad-at-facebook-twitter-11605382430>; Allana Akhtar, “Everything you need to know about Parler, the social-media app that conservatives are flocking to and that’s No. 1 on the App Store,” *Business Insider*, November 10, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-parler-app-social-media-twitter?r=MX&IR=T>; Elizabeth Dwoskin and Rachel Lerman, “‘Stop the Steal’ supporters, restrained by Facebook, turn to Parler to peddle false election claims,” *The Washington Post*, November 13, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/11/10/facebook-parler-election-claims/>.

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