



1992

After 30 seasons Johnny Carson hosted his penultimate episode and last featuring guests (Robin Williams and Bette Midler) of The Tonight Show.

1994

The Democratic Republic of Yemen unsuccessfully attempts to secede from the Republic of Yemen; a war breaks out.

1996

The ferry MV Bukoba sinks in Tanzanian waters on Lake Victoria, killing nearly 1,000.

1996

In Miami, five abortion clinics are attacked by a butyric acid attacker.

are mainstreaming racism



man charged in relation against the March 15 attack on two mosques in

de, and talks about cultural identity. es that this is what Heinz-Christian Freedom Party leader of Austria, sued for a photo of nner with several e suit failed; but en taped musing, gs, about how he l of the Austrian e'll find a way. e movement's ideas e Freedom Party's ay attention when e "Great Replace- ache has used in

Identitarians and the Alternative for Germany (AfD), the far-right party that is now the third-largest group in the German parliament.

Not all of this is new: Jacob Davey, the author of a forthcoming Institute for Strategic Dialogue paper on this subject, told me that fears of "white genocide" date back decades. But new communications technologies, plus the new international coordination of the far right, plus current politics — the migration crisis and jihadist terrorist wave — have created a perfect storm. Davey calls it a "linking tool" that taps into different debates all over the world. It also radicalizes. The "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory provides a path from mainstream conversations about the impact of migration and the compatibility of Islam and democracy to calls for mass "remigration" — to the legitimization of murder. Most people won't be radicalized all the way, but a few will. To its more unbalanced adherents, fears of a "Great Replacement" create a sense of urgency, of an existential crisis that requires violent action.

I'm explaining all of this because it's also the hidden background to a number of recent news stories. The "manifesto" published by Tarant referred explicitly to migrant "invasions." The synagogue shooting suspect in Poway, Calif., said he believed that "global Jewish elites" were secretly plotting to change the ethnic composition of the United States. The Pittsburgh synagogue shooting suspect also said Jewish organizations were bringing in "hostile invaders." The obsession with the Jewish financier George Soros, a feature of far-right propaganda every-

The Identitarian movement or Identitarianism is a European, North American, Australian, and New Zealander white nationalist movement that originated in France. Politically a part of the far-right, it began as a youth movement with strong associations with French Nouvelle Droite groups such as Generation Identitaire and Unite Radicale. Identitarianism became notable with the formation of the anti-immigration and nativist Bloc Identitaire, and the movement has since taken on its own identity and has spread internationally

where from Hungary to Alabama, is linked to this set of ideas. And when President Trump or Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini talk about immigrant "invasions," they are nodding and winking to Identitarianism, too.

All of this presents a dilemma for Austrian police and, indeed, American police. Sellner is not a terrorist. But does his movement inspire terrorism? Clearly he is entitled to freedom of speech. But is that speech shaping the political debate in ways that could lead to violence? He has been banned from entering the United States and is under investigation in Austria. But the questions he poses aren't strictly legal; they are moral, political or, perhaps, digital. And, as of yet, we don't have answers to them.

(Anne Applebaum is a columnist for The Washington Post and a Professor of Practice at the London School of Economics' Institute of Global Affairs)



Protesters demonstrate to denounce New Zealand mosque attacks in Chirstchurch (file photo)

metal groups pitted against each other, ently. o its credit, the beleaguered Sri Lankan erment — which has come under fire ot acting on multiple intelligence orts that warned of the Easter Sunday ck in advance — has said and done the at things in response. Leading officials e called for calm and unity. Security es have cracked down on those involved e anti-Muslim violence, crackdowns ave been particularly robust since Sri ka declared a state of emergency the day r the Easter attack, which gives it full ics would say excessive) powers to act nt those suspected of violence.

nd yet, there are three reasons to fear Sri Lanka's communal tensions could sen and even spiral out of control, de e the best efforts of state and civil soci-

ety to bring the country together.

Firstly, the virulent Buddhist nationalism that has fuelled anti-Muslim attacks not only in recent days but also in the months preceding the Easter Sunday attacks, is a clear and present danger.

Buddhist extremist groups in Sri Lanka have been around for quite some time and have generally been treated with kid gloves — if not openly supported — by Sri Lankan political leaders. These groups advocate for, and carry out, violent acts against Muslims. This phenomenon is also seen in Myanmar, where nasty anti-Muslim ideologies spouted by radical Buddhist monks have contributed to the environment that led to the Myanmar military's assaults on the Rohingya Muslim community.

Until the Sri Lankan authorities take irreversible steps to expunge the scourge of

In Sri Lanka, officials banned social-media platforms after the Easter attacks to reduce the likelihood that they would be used to incite retaliatory violence. But banning the platform will not solve the underlying problem, as the violence of recent days makes painfully clear

Buddhist extremism, communal violence will continue to flare.

Secondly, in Sri Lanka, social media — one of the great double-edged swords of our time — is a powerful purveyor of the toxic narratives that fuel communal violence. We all know the power of social media; it has the ability to instantaneously spread news far and wide. This is a good thing when it is spreading important information, from warnings about incoming flash floods to tips on where to vote on election day, and many other useful things in between. But social media's clout when it comes to information dissemination is a very bad thing when that information consists of fake news or other provocations that prompt violence.

Indeed, reports abound that social-media posts played a role in triggering the anti-Muslim violence recently seen in Sri Lanka — just as they did in 2017, when false rumors spread about Muslims planning to attack a sacred Buddhist monument. Of course, this nefarious use of social media

to trigger unrest is part of a wider problem that plays out across the globe.

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Thirdly, Sri Lanka's political situation heightens the risk of increased communal tensions and violence. The country faces an election later this year. With emotions from the Easter Sunday attack sure to remain high for some time, leaders of the current government might find it politically expedient to resort to increasingly tougher rhetoric (and actions) toward Muslims. Indeed, given that a leading presidential candidate, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, has been associated with hard-line Buddhist nationalist causes, politicians aspiring for high office might calculate that such ugly talk could strengthen their electoral position.

This is not to say Sri Lanka cannot step back from the precipice. Sri Lankans — both the state and society — know all too well the bloody consequences of letting widening societal divisions go unaddressed. This painful legacy of past tragedy provides a powerful incentive to take corrective measures that can bridge divides and generate stability.

But given Sri Lanka's troubling trend lines, it will not be easy.

(Michael Kugelman is deputy director of the Asia Program and senior associate for South Asia at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.)



A view of a damaged shop after a mob attack in Minuwangoda



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



Idea for my next novel: Ruling party captures Election Commission, thereby gaining access to EVMS, & then fixes exit polls to inflate numbers & thus provide cover for stolen seats via captured EVMS. Purely fictional scenario. Any resemblance to actual events is purely coincidental!

@RaisinaSeries

02



The excitement levels only on exit polls is a bit excessive. It would be wise and prudent to quietly wait and watch to see what unfolds on May 23, in my humble opinion.

@HindolSengupta

03



We have an Administration that is trying to goad Iran into war, but is not doing a thing about the 20 veterans a day who die by suicide. We will not stand for dishonoring our veterans in that way.

@KamalaHarris

04



Journalists need to stop letting themselves be used by politicians and making their self-esteem dependent on "access" to politicians. Let Indian journalism re-discover its true vocation as the voice of citizens not political VIPs, the press is voice of powerless not of powerful

@sagarikaghose

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