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# The rise of eco-paramilitarism in the United States

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Amidst growing military response to climate challenges, the United States is seeing a rise in far-right ecologism and right-wing environmentalism. In this paper, I argue that due to this rise, the United States is experiencing a convergence of the two extremist ideologies. I call this convergence eco-paramilitarism. I define eco-paramilitarism as a subgroup of far-right militarized ecologists, rooted in right-wing ideologies like *völkisch*, who inform their strategies through mirroring the actions of the US military and law enforcement agencies against political dissenters and marginalized groups. Throughout the paper, I examine the link between the manosphere, incels, and far-right content on social media rooted in environmental concerns that help facilitate radicalizing younger and impressionable men. I use the United States as a case study to demonstrate a global trend in the rise of militarism in response to climate challenges and rising populism. This paper aims to highlight the increase in these organizations amidst intensifying climate change impacts and growing populism worldwide and contribute to the ongoing research on political responses to climate change and their ethical implications.

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## Introduction

In this paper, I introduce the concept *eco-paramilitarism* to examine how gendered and environmental concerns increasingly intersect with militaristic and nationalist ideologies. This convergence has led to radicalized men, who increasingly engage in paramilitary behavior. High-profile incidents like the 2022 Buffalo shooting and the 2019 El Paso Walmart shooting illustrate this phenomenon. In both cases, the far-right perpetrators cited eco-fascist ideologies aligned with far-right nationalism (Walsh, 2022; Achenbach, 2019). This rise in distorted environmentalism coincides with the rise in online misogyny, particularly within spaces like the “manosphere.” Social media platforms serve as powerful recruitment tools that far-right groups like the Proud Boys and other proto-fascist groups use to mainstream their ideologies. These groups rely on algorithmic recommendations to push users toward more extreme material, moving them from seemingly benign content like “tradwife” videos, to extreme ideological content. This gradual shift legitimizes and normalizes extreme ideologies like eco-nationalism.

Over time, users begin receiving a blend of different forms of far-right propaganda. This exposure cultivates a convergence of radical far-right ecologism and right-wing environmentalism, often repackaged as “cottagecore,” and “tradwife” content. Online ecosystems normalize and legitimize a violent version of environmentalism that is deeply tied to white supremacy, militarized nationalism, and far-right ideologies. I argue that the rise in far-right ecologism and right-wing environmentalism in the United States has produced a convergence I call *eco-paramilitarism*. As a result, a distinct form of eco-nationalist violence forms that legitimizes the blurring of civilian and military power.

While this paper focuses on far-right ecologism and right-wing environmentalism in the United States, it illuminates a global trend in the rise of paramilitarism in response to climate challenges and rising populism. To maintain conceptual clarity, this paper does not go into great detail regarding popular overpopulation discussions in far-right channels, such as the Great Replacement Theory<sup>1</sup> (Bauder, 2022). Overpopulation plays a central role in far-right ecologism, but has been extensively discussed in the literature, such as by Cassidy Thomas and Jordan Dyett (2019). Consequently, the paper centers the discussion on the convergence of eco-nationalist violence, the use of military-style force by far-right civilian groups, and their use of social media to recruit and further radicalize men online. This area is less discussed in the literature. Given this, while I do reference broader ideological frameworks that discuss overpopulation, I do not engage with them in depth. Accordingly, I do not focus on any one empirical case, rather draw from various mutually reinforcing extremist movements currently in the United States, such as eco-nationalism, militarism, incel culture, and the manosphere.

Consequently, I build a theoretical framing that is grounded in real-world discourse, including secondary sources (e.g., manifestos, public-facing content, online platforms). Similarly, this paper does not draw a false equivalence between far-right *eco-paramilitarism* and leftist environmental movements. Rather, I demonstrate in “*Eco-Paramilitarism*” how the paramilitary formation is unique to far-right groups. This is because empirical evidence and scholarly literature demonstrate that these formations radically differ in origin, tactics, and alignment with state power. To equate them irresponsibly obscures both nuanced and more prominent distinctions between the two, which could lead to a misrepresentation of either one. I expand on this later in the paper.

“*The Coalescing of Right-Wing Environmentalism and Far-Right Ecologism*” discusses the convergence of far-right ecologism and right-wing environmentalism. “*The Manosphere and*

*Rise of Online Misogyny and Radicalism*” provides an overview of the Manosphere, the rise of online misogyny, and its connection to the increase in radicalism. “*Eco-Paramilitarism*” introduces the term *eco-paramilitarism*. “*The U.S. Military’s Connection to Far-Right Extremism*” examines the U.S. Military’s increasing connection to far-right extremism. “*The Boomerang Effect and Broader Implications*” expands the intersection of U.S. military power and domestic policy and the role of state violence. “*Conclusion*” concludes the paper.

## The coalescing of right-wing environmentalism and far-right ecologism

In this section, I provide an examination of how far-right ecologism and right-wing environmentalism are coalescing into a more defined and radical ideology. For example, inspired by Baša Lubarda’s far-right ecologism (Lubarda, 2020), in their book, *The Rise of EcoFascism*, Sam Moore and Alex Roberts (2022, 16) offer an operational definition of far-right ecologism opposed to eco-fascism. Moore and Roberts (2022, 16) define far-right ecologism as, “those forces that seek to produce and enforce racial hierarchies *in and through* natural systems. It is not one singular project, but a diverse array of responses to crises.” Their broad definition includes various components of far-right politics and explains how far-right groups implement, maintain, and assert them. Moore and Roberts (2022, 16) further explain:

In far-right ecologism, ‘nature’ mutates between a bottomless resource, an exotic threat, a final explanation, a weapon and a regulatory ideal. As a weapon it is dangerous. As a regulatory ideal it is volatile, because two opposed conceptions of nature conflict in this idealization.

The goal of their definition of far-right ecologism is to decouple all far-right politics from fascism, and instead elucidate important distinctions and nuances. Moore and Roberts later acknowledge that there is a potential for future far-right ideologies rooted in nature politics to evolve into eco-fascism. In particular, they discuss two far-right ideologies that could arise and evolve into fascism if current far-right nature politics manage to gain access to capital: 1) Fossilized Reaction and 2) Batters, Bombs and Borders. First, Fossilized Reaction involves a political landscape grounded in capital invested in fossil fuel extraction (2022, 104).<sup>2</sup> Second, Batters, Bombs and Borders involves a military framing in climate change mitigation in order to secure global supplies, surveillance, and national security (2022, 105).

Consequently, Moore and Roberts shy away from defining eco-fascism. Rather they define characteristics that far-right groups use in environmental rhetoric to justify far-right authoritarianism. Moore and Roberts (2022, 122) state, “Fascism is a political form that seeks to revolutionize and reharmonize the nation state through expelling a radically separate ‘Other’ by paramilitary means.” Through describing fascism in this way, it allows Moore and Roberts to explore more nuanced aspects of eco-fascism. These nuances explore how eco-fascism manifests in certain political movements and its broader implications. They also explain how far-right ecologies can meet the conditions needed to evolve into eco-fascism. These conditions include, “the state aspect, the movement aspect, and the crisis aspect” (Moore and Roberts, 2022, 125). According to Moore and Roberts, when these forms of far-right ecologies meet these conditions, they can evolve into eco-fascism.

Similar to Fossilized Reaction and Batters, Bombs, and Borders, Moore and Roberts discuss an additional far-right ideology they call, “*Climate Collapse Cultists*.” Unlike the two former far-right ideologies, *Climate Collapse Cultists* grounds itself in explicit deadly violence. Moore and Roberts (2022, 103) state, “In this

form of far-right ideology, the idea of nature is used to justify killing, either by a more or less coherent movement, or by comparatively isolated actors.” Moore and Roberts’ recognition that there is a real possibility of future violence, either by a group or isolated actors, is more in line with the trajectory of far-right extremists co-opting environmentalism that we see today (e.g., El Paso, Christchurch, etc.).

While the far-right ideology ‘Batters, Bombs and Borders’ focuses on militaristic and geopolitical aspects that are distinct from fascism, Moore and Roberts’ discussion intersects with broader ideologies, as explored by Daniel Rueda. In his article, “Neofascism: The Example of the United States,” Rueda examines contemporary manifestations of ecofascism within the Alt-Right movement in the United States. Rueda claims that neofascism occurs more prominently in the United States and explains the rationale behind his discussion of neofascism occurring within the context of the United States. Rueda (2020, 103) states, “If today there is a country in which neofascism (which is the word conventionally used to refer to fascist movements and ideologies after 1945) is a relatively flourishing ideology, it is the United States.” Unlike other countries, like Hungary, Poland, and Austria that are experiencing a rise in authoritarian regimes, the United States has had an increase in high-profile cases of alt-right and right-wing domestic terrorists who specifically frame their motivations for their attacks as rooted in environmental concerns.

Furthermore, as Rueda (2020, 111) notes, “Thus the radical right, as the Alt-Right is proof of, possesses a great “ideological reserve” for the ongoing climate change distress, and it is already making use of it in order to radicalize American right-wingers, especially the youngsters.” American right-wingers have an especially prominent position in today’s political environment and social media content. Right-wing environmentalism, then, is in reference to environmentalism within the context of U.S. right-wing framing. In their article, “Conservative and Right-Wing Movements,” Kathleen M. Blee and Kimberly A. Creasap (2010, 270) define right-wing movements as, “movements that focus directly on race/ ethnicity and/or promote violence as a primary tactic or goal.” Importantly, Blee and Creasap’s definition of right-wing movements, does not encompass all conservative or right-leaning individuals.

Rather, their definition refers to a subgroup of individuals who align with conservative values. These individuals emphasize more radicalized versions of conservative values, such as subscribing to white nationalism, eco-fascism, and militaristic, illiberal, or violent approaches to achieve their goals. Thus, for this paper, right-wing environmentalism refers to this subgroup of conservative individuals, or the radical right, that embraces radical or violent ideologies. These individuals explicitly use militarized radicalism and violence to achieve environmental solutions based on radical ideologies like far-right ecologism or nationalist or nationalism.

### **The manosphere and rise of online misogyny and radicalism**

Social media is a popular online space where right-wing individuals share their propaganda in order to radicalize and promote their messages to conservative-leaning individuals. These content creators commonly use various social media platforms to mainstream extremist views. They achieve this by promoting content that seems *prima facie* to endorse more traditional values that appeal to conservative values. Online spaces enable these content creators to organize events and engage with their followers while slowly and discreetly promoting more extreme messages. Over time, this radicalization process, especially in spaces like the manosphere, contributes to the broader rise of eco-paramilitarism by merging gendered and environmental concerns with

militaristic and nationalist sentiments and ideologies. However, the manosphere is not the ideological origin for eco-paramilitarism. Rather, throughout this section, I highlight the ways it functions as an accelerant that facilitates radicalism and recruitment in online spaces.

For example, a growing concern amongst researchers involves the rise in online misogyny driven by highly popular “Manosphere” groups. In his article, “Online Misogyny: The ‘Manosphere,’” Steve McCullough (2023) defines the manosphere as, “a wide variety of men’s groups operating on the internet and offline. Many describe themselves as fighting against progressive (or “woke”) ideas about gender equality.” Discord, like many gaming platforms, provides fertile ground for misogynistic subcultures with members consisting primarily of incels. In their article, “Exploring incel group dynamics: a computational study of hierarchy and group-boundary policing” Veronika Solopova, et al. (2025, 2) define incels as “Incels (involuntary celibates) are individuals who desire but are unable to obtain romantic relationships.”

In Discord, and similar chat forums and platforms, incels can and do create forums based on racism, misogyny, glorifying school and mass shootings, and other extremist groups. Members here can share memes, promote hate speech or content, or engage in coordinated harassment. This makes platforms like Discord the perfect recruiting arena for extremists, like Neo-Nazi groups and proto-fascist groups like the Proud Boys, looking to recruit vulnerable, impressionable men or men who are receptive to harmful ideologies and carrying out acts of violence (Myers and Browning, 2023). In the same way that extremists weaponize gaming chat platforms, they weaponize social media apps, meant to foster and connect community, to target and radicalize men.

#### **a. Trad Wife and Slow Radicalization**

For example, “trad wife” content targets conservative men, specifically men who hold chauvinistic views that emphasize a reestablishing of gender roles and hierarchies. It is typical for this type of content to contain a component of idealizing traditional ways of life that promote a lifestyle that is more in line with the environment. However, hidden beneath Trad wife content lies an overarching nationalist agenda that promotes traditional values. These ideologies overlap in their emphasis to preserve traditional values, racial purity, and oppose modernity. Like Rueda (2020, 113) notes, “Although they are closer to conservatism than to fascism, their views can easily be assimilated and appropriated by more radical groups and could become a gateway to these.” An example of the assimilation of the views that then become appropriated by more radical groups is seen with content creator Ballerina Farm, or the “Queen of Trad Wives” (Agnew, 2024; Hampson, 2024). Ballerina Farm is a popular trad wife content creator who curates her content for a conservative audience. Her romanticized depictions of nature and promotion of traditional values mirror *völkisch* -inspired ecological rhetoric, where both environmental and racial purity are idealized. Although some far-right groups emphasize Malthusian concerns about overpopulation, often expressed as anti-immigrant sentiment (Yousef, 2022), more mainstream content emphasizes an idealized version of ec-nationalism that focuses on family values, a return to social order, and rural self-sufficiency. This is to build a fantasy for their followers, recruit newcomers, and legitimize ec-nationalism.

As Ryan Coogan (2024) notes in his article, “The ‘trad wife’ lifestyle is a dangerous fantasy,” typical “trad life” content contains some aspects of anti-LGBT rhetoric sold as pro-

family values, racism sold as a return to community, in which their followers are encouraged to live off the grid, and an overall distrust of the government, public education, and healthcare professionals. Across trad wife content, women sell trad-wife merchandise to encourage others to adopt the lifestyle that includes eschewing their busy city jobs, move to a remote farm to raise their own animals, eat an all-organic diet, sew their own clothes, and provide an easy living for their husbands. These content creators sell this fantasy to men already predisposed to violence towards women and hold misogynistic views. The content is not overly radical. However, in its marketing of a return to “the good ol’ days,” it provides a palatable idea of eco-nationalism. This is because of its esthetic appeal, such as rural nostalgia and returning to a political infrastructure that defends gender roles and norms and upholds those traditions, too. Because this content already idealizes and provides a fantasy based on values the audience holds, they may miss nuances in the content gradually becoming more radical.

#### b. Incels

In some instances this includes incels viewing this lifestyle as out of reach and blaming women for this failure and expressing this frustration through violent or terroristic actions. Popular podcasts also further mainstream misogynistic and extremist views and ideologies that appeal to incels, such as by social media influencers and podcasters like Joe Rogan and self-proclaimed misogynist Andrew Tate (Who Is Andrew Tate? 2022; Javed et al. 2023; Mullin, 2025). These violent incels draw inspiration from Tate and other manosphere social media influencers to carry out acts of mass violence or incel terrorism (Bergantino, 2024; Yang, 2022; Vink et al. 2024).

For instance, Thomas James Vaughan Williams et al.’s article, “Foreshadowing Terror: Exploring the Time of Online Manifestos Prior to Lone Wolf Attacks” includes both the El Paso and Christchurch shooters in their research, who both referenced environmental motivations for their attacks and were both part of radical right-wing groups. Williams et al.’s empirical research provides important evidence that indicates environmental motivations are not as disparate or set apart from right-wing framings. Williams et al. (2023, 3) state, “Research has highlighted the escalating tendency for lone wolf terrorists to produce and share a manifesto before they commit the attack, with this behavior being ever more prevalent amongst assailants who adopt extreme far right ideologies.” Williams et al.’s study found that the time between a “lone wolf terrorist”<sup>3</sup> sharing a manifesto and carrying out an attack is one hour and 43 minutes. This study is significant as it quantifies the rapid escalation from holding ideological extremist views to taking violent action in pursuit of those beliefs. Similarly, there is a new and emerging dimension of escalation found within a crossover of far-right ecologism and right-wing environmentalism, which I call eco-paramilitarism.

#### c. Eco-Paramilitarism

The actions of eco-paramilitarists, such as policing the disabled and LGBTQIA communities, women, and ethnic and racial minorities, epitomize a broader phenomenon, where radical environmental groups adopt militarized responses. In this context, I define eco-paramilitarism as a militarized ecologism, where a right-wing environmentally motivated group adopts military tactics. Although their involvement is not directly state-sponsored, they find inspiration in violent state-sanctioned action.

Their tactics manifest in many ways: they may use the threat of violence online or while at any social or environmental justice event, like Pride or climate or political protests. An eco-paramilitarist’s motivation is driven directly from far-right ecologism and right-wing environmentalism, such as the German *völkisch*, with links to ethnocentric nationalism, anti-immigration sentiments, and racial purity (Shanaah et al. 2024, 50). This makes an eco-paramilitarist distinct from a non-ideological individual joining a climate protest on Earth Day, on a whim, or even part of an organization engaging in different forms of direct action (e.g., public comment, tree sitting, blockades, etc.).

Although eco-paramilitarism is not yet widespread, it is critical that we acknowledge the dangerous convergence of trends that are in motion. In particular, within emerging trends in far-right ecologism, paramilitary culture, and the increase militarized response to dissent. This explains why throughout the paper, the examples are more illustrative rather than concrete empirical examples. However, this does not undermine the importance of identifying, tracking, and analyzing the emerging phenomenon. Given this, despite paramilitarism violence existing in both left and right-formations, this paper focuses explicitly on right-wing formations. This is because it is necessary to make a distinction between other paramilitary movements. Additionally, the right-wing’s frequency and alignment with state and institutional power structures in the U.S is important to explore more deeply. Given this, although left-wing examples exist, they differ in salient ways, such as ideological origins, organization, and political and institutional support.

Similarly, eco-paramilitarists differ from leftists who may be at the same climate event, but more inclined to confrontation with law enforcement. For example, it was not until recently, around 2020, that left-wing protestors showed up to direct actions armed. The media attention surrounding left-wing actors adopting right-wing paramilitary esthetics underscores how unusual this shift is. In a *Rolling Stones* article, “Anti-Fascist. Armed to the Teeth” Jack Crosbie (2023) starts his article with, “The far right brings guns to drag shows. Now, the left is showing up with weapons, too.” Crosbie (2023) further elaborates:

It’s a Monday afternoon in Fort Worth, Texas, and the group in all black are mostly members of the Elm Fork chapter of the John Brown Gun Club (JBGC), a left-wing anti-fascist organization created to level the playing field with right-wing militias that show up armed to protests around the country.

This mirroring by left-wing groups underscores the growing normalization of armed presence at protests. Subsequently, just as right-wing groups, dress in military fatigues, bullet-proof vests, carry AR-15s, pepper spray, and other munitions easily acquired at big box stores, left-wing groups are beginning to do the same. However, it is important to note that the right-wing’s paramilitarism still significantly overshadows the left, even as more left-wing, anti-fascist groups mobilize to mirror the paramilitarism integral in the far-right’s movement. Further in Crosbie’s article he (2023) notes:

And where the far right goes, so do their guns: Militias, gangs, and other groups have been open-carrying firearms at public protests, showing up to drag events and government buildings toting weapons of war. Last year, *The New York Times* analyzed more than 700 armed demonstrations across the country, and found that the right wing was responsible for bringing heat to 77 percent of them, protesting everything from LGBTQ rights to Joe Biden’s victory in the 2020 election.

Consequently, armed left-wing protestors still only make up about 23% of those armed at events. The large majority still remain right-wing groups. Additionally, the leftist’s motivation, at least in the United States, is rooted in different ideologies, stemming from John Muir’s focus on preservation (Shanaah et al.

2024, 48). This is not to deny any overlap that can and does occur between the two. Rather, it is to distinguish specific features of eco-paramilitarism from eco-extremism.

Moreover, unlike left-wing extremism, eco-paramilitarists distinctly act from radicalized, right-wing ecogism that emphasizes reestablishing racial and socio-ideological hierarchies. Similarly, they may escalate to actual acts of violence through destroying critical energy systems, like the grid system, using the built environment, or taking advantage of climate breakdown, or overwhelmed emergency services during natural disaster events to carry out violence against their targets. Through the threat of violence or through actual acts of violence, they assert their dominance in to achieve their hierarchical goals. In this way, they aim to suppress and police dissent to their extremist beliefs and values. Because they view themselves as enforcers, their threats and acts of violence are ways to maintain, legitimize, and propagate their values and belief systems. The groups draw from right-wing ideologies and enforcers of violence in particular. They do not need justification for resorting to violence. Because they draw inspiration from the military and law enforcement, they find violence a natural response to maintaining or achieving their ideals.

Beyond physical force, they exploit digital media to spread their ideology and normalize violence through propaganda and normalizing acts of violence. Similar to tactics used by accelerationists and the Alt-Right, these attacks allow eco-paramilitarists to use a sensationalized incident to go viral and mainstream their messages. For example, when a protestor or a journalist at an event posts a video of a confrontation between an armed right-wing individual and an individual they label as a liberal, right-wing groups, like eco-paramilitarists, view this as free publicity and welcome the exposure. They typically edit the video to reframe it as “owning the libs,” aiming to discredit or undermine concerns about their actions and to make the content easily shareable and memeable, given the popularity of meme culture among far-right users (Beckett, 2017; Schmid et al. 2025).

While these tactics are framed online, their ideological roots are embedded in radical environmental and far-right worldviews. Thus, these events are not always obviously environmentally-motivated. It can take until after an investigation or discovery of a manifesto to know the motivation. However, this is not unusual, as the motivations for similar attacks, like Christchurch and El Paso, were not initially obvious. Moreover, this is a subgroup of the radical right known for using discursive language and meme culture to push a message or advance a goal (Rueda, 2020, 104–5). Eco-paramilitarists also mimic these tactics and the display of force that they see taken by the U.S. military and law enforcement.

As previously mentioned, they also regularly dress similar to law enforcement, equipped with bullet-proof vests, camouflage, riot helmets, shields, and other military-grade weaponry and riot gear used by U.S. law enforcement and military personnel. Therefore, they can visually resemble actual law enforcement or federal agencies, like Customs and Border Protection (CBP), either through their uniforms or through the military-style tactics. This makes it difficult for outsiders to discern who they are, and this is precisely the point. Eco-paramilitarists use the same tactics as both far-right ecogists and right-wing environmentalists. They use existing political structures to gain institutional support. They exploit social media and deploy memes and viral content as a recruitment tool to spread their ideology. They not only employ violence that resembles state violence perpetrated by U.S. law enforcement, but also attempt to visually align with state actors. Therefore, as the U.S. continues its military approach to planetary planning, there is a genuine concern

that there will be an increase in the development of eco-paramilitarism.

### **The U.S. military's connection to far-right extremism**

Understanding eco-paramilitarism requires exploring its connection to militarism. As demonstrated earlier in the paper, far-right extremists not only imitate tactics used by the United States military against foreign combatants, but also replicate how the military and militarized police force respond to marginalized communities and political dissenters. In their book, *The Red Deal: Indigenous Action to Save Our Earth*, The Red Nation (2021, 45) states, “As we have seen recently with the Black Lives Matter uprisings, the police and military are deeply entwined with white supremacist militias, far-right groups, and fascist formations.” The Red Nation continues (2021, 45), “On top of this international state violence, oppressed people in the United States face vigilante violence from settlers intent on defending white supremacy along the southern border, in towns surrounding Indigenous nations, and in cities across the country.” This vigilante violence highlights the growing overlap between extremist violence and violence by state tactics, especially from the military and law enforcement agencies. In some cases, this military-style violence is because the far-right extremist has current or present membership in the U.S. military or police agency. Another possibility is them sharing intel with fascist-adjacent groups and individuals. Further, it is common for aggrieved former military personnel to spearhead new factions of far-right extremist groups. As Moore and Roberts (2022) note that Rinaldo Nazzaro led an especially violent neo-Nazi group called The Base.

Formerly, Nazzaro contracted for the Pentagon and was part of the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) (2022, 95–96). Nazzaro used his former military training to inform the type of tactical violence his group members carried out. Moore and Roberts (2022, 96–97) state, “Nazzaro’s connections to the military are not unusual on the far right: it is possible to track waves of the far right in the U.S. reasonably closely to waves of veterans returning from war.” Nazzaro is not the only former military member to either form or become a member of an extremist group.

In a previous 2021 Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) study, “The Military, Police, and the Rise of Terrorism in the United States,” by Seth G. Jones et al. (2021), they found that a growing number of military personnel and active-duty members have perpetrated or actively participated in domestic terrorism plots and events. Jones et al. (2021) observe, “In 2020, the FBI alerted the DoD that it had opened 143 criminal investigations involving current or former service members—of which nearly half (68) were related to domestic extremism.” Consequently, a high percentage of military veterans involved in the January 6<sup>th</sup> Insurrection brought the military’s connection to far-right extremism into further focus. An analysis conducted by NPR found that of the 140 charged in the January 6<sup>th</sup> Insurrection, 27 were either active duty military personnel or veterans (Dreisbach and Anderson, 2021). The problem of far-right extremism within active duty military personnel has become more scrutinized and getting more coverage but remains difficult to track. However, it is important to examine more closely the connection between the military, domestic terrorism, and far-right extremist groups, like far-right ecogists and right-wing environmentalists. Moreover, as climate change becomes more acute and challenging, this will continue to provide many opportunities for far-right extremist groups to recruit frustrated and angry individuals to join their cause.

Additionally, a recent CSIS analysis, “Assessing the Pentagon’s Progress on Countering Extremism in the Military,” by Catrina

Doxsee and Michelle Macander (2022) note, “Extremist networks frequently tailor efforts to recruit military personnel and veterans for these skills, and extremists may also attempt to infiltrate the ranks of the military and law enforcement.” Extremists target military personnel because of their combat and tactical skills (Jones et al. 2021). As Doxsee and Macander (2022) highlight, extremists will also join law enforcement to gain similar tactical and combat experience. This strategy has proven successful so far and aligns with growing trends of militarized responses to social and environmental issues in the United States, particularly the military and law enforcement.

### The boomerang effect and broader implications

There is institutional support and precedence for the type of escalation seen within the merging of right-wing environmentalism and far-right ecologism in the United States. The U.S. government recognizes that climate change leads to increased demands like food insecurity, shortages, and affordability, national security threats, and immigration pressures, which often result in violence, particularly ethnic violence. Accordingly, the U.S. government frames their climate response as a military issue. In fact, since the Cold War, U.S. Military planners have examined ways U.S. control extends into the environmental and planetary surveillance. In “Ecological Militarism: The Unusual History of Military’s Relationship with Climate Change,” Adeene Denton (2018) states, “After 1957, the dawn of the space age seemed to herald the beginning of total surveillance from above, and for the military planetary surveillance was the beginning of integrated planetary control.” In the US, the response to these climate challenges include a response primarily framed by military planning.

In his book, *Tropics of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence*, Christian Parenti (2012, 13–14) states, “Military planning, conceived of as a response to events, also shapes them...America’s overdeveloped military capacity, its military-industrial complex, has created powerful interests that depend on, therefore, promote, war.”<sup>4</sup> The Red Nation made similar observations around the framing of police, white supremacist militias, far-right groups, and fascist groups responses during the Black Lives Matter protests and their shared militaristic strategies to repress protestors and dissenters.

In addition, in *Tyranny Comes Homes: The Domestic Fate of the U.S. Militarism*, Christopher J. Coyne and Abigail R. Hall (2018, 17) caution that American citizens face the boomerang effect occurring “...which explains how the tools of social control associated with coercive foreign intervention can infiltrate domestic life in the intervening country. This process can result in changes to domestic political institutions that affect the lives and liberties of American residents.” Coyne and Hall (2018, 18) continue, “We contend that limiting the boomerang effect ultimately requires curtailing the American empire, which requires that citizens possess an antimilitarist ideology.” Coyne and Hall’s incisive warning is occurring today with the increase in militarized police forces across the country and the introduction of tens of legislative bills presented under the pretense of protecting minors under review that require those criticizing elected officials to “register.”<sup>5</sup> Coyne and Hall provide examples of the U.S. intervention in the Philippines and the Espionage Act of 1917 that illustrate how the U.S. government has set precedent for the institutional framing for those in power to abuse. In line with Coyne and Hall’s example, Parenti (2012, 14) observes:

This new security-industrial complex offers an array of services at home and abroad: surveillance; intelligence; border security; detention; facility and base construction; anti-terrorism

consulting; military and police logistics, analysis, planning, and training; and, of course, personal security.

What Parenti describes is the boomerang effect, in which a blurring of foreign and domestic policies occurs, which results in securitization, the coupling of the police and the military, and surveillance of citizens in response to crisis, manufactured or actual. Parenti (2012, 18–19) continues:

National security intellectuals, in and out of government, have started to imagine a militarized geography of social breakdown on a global scale; they have coalesced around the idea of war and permanent counterinsurgency as planetary crisis management. Containing and policing failed states is the center of the project.

The state prominently blurs foreign and domestic policies in its response to the Black Lives Matter, Pro-Palestine, and other climate and social movements. In each case, the government weaponizes military tactics learned from foreign insurgency and uses those domestically against environmental and social justice protestors. As a result, the US keeps seeing an increase in the formation of paramilitary groups, including eco-paramilitary groups.

### Conclusion

This paper examined the formation of eco-paramilitarism, its ideological origin, online catalysts like the manosphere and trad-wife content, and the ethical concerns around the militarization of social and environmental dissent and conflicts. I defined eco-paramilitarism as a subgroup of far-right militarized ecologists, rooted in right-wing ideologies like *völkisch*, demonstrating the ways in which their strategies mimic the actions of the US military and law enforcement agencies against political dissenters and marginalized groups. Additionally, I explored the growing link between far-right extremists and the military, and how state violence informs the tactics far-right paramilitary groups employ. I also focused on the convergence of far-right ecologism and right-wing environmentalism. I then examined the link between the manosphere, incels, and far-right content on social media rooted in environmental concerns that facilitate radicalizing younger and impressionable men, and their reliance on online platforms to normalize or amplify their views, such as through content by Andrew Tate or more subtle trad wife content like Ballerina Farm. Ultimately, this convergence is leading to the creation of eco-paramilitarists, who use both violent tactics and institutional influence to achieve their goals. Given this, the paper highlights the rising ethical concerns regarding the normalization of the militarization of environmental and social conflicts.

Throughout the paper, I demonstrated the ways in which this militarization has begun to contribute to the erosion of civil liberties through the rise of paramilitary groups and the mainstreaming of extremist content throughout various online spaces. Thus, this paper aimed to highlight the increase in these organizations amidst intensifying climate change impacts and growing populism worldwide. This work adds to ongoing research on political responses to climate change and their ethical implications.

### Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

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### Notes

- 1 The Great Replacement Theory is now a mainstream white supremacist conspiracy theory that espouses the idea that white populations are becoming increasingly replaced by immigrant and nonwhite populations (Maher 2025).

- 2 Moore and Roberts suggest envisioning Trump and Bolsonaro's politics materializing.
- 3 Williams et al. (2023, 2) state, "This all-encompassing definition was chosen as it showcases the independent element that a lone wolf terrorist has regarding their preparation and implementation of the terrorist act, as opposed to terrorist acts that are not classified as lone wolf attacks and are carried out by individuals associated with a group or involve multiple perpetrators."
- 4 This echoes a similar worry Coyne and Hall have discussing national security. Coyne and Hall (2018, 23) state, "Instead, those who work for the security state have an incentive to intentionally foster it."
- 5 Since their publication, domestic surveillance has increased significantly in the United States and even more proposals are currently under review by Congress for the 2023–24 session that includes the Kids Online Safety act (KOSA) backed by white supremacist and hate groups like Moms for Liberty, which critics argue is a way for the government to censor and limit discussions online (Newton 2023). Similarly, in early 2023, Florida Republicans attempted to pass SB 1316 called the "Information Dissemination"(Gregorian 2023) bill that would have required online bloggers to "register" if they criticized an elected official.

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## Author contributions

I am the sole author of this paper.

## Competing interests

The author declares no competing interests.

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This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

## Informed consent

Informed consent is not applicable to this article.

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