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The Banner of Hate

A Study on the Transatlantic use of the Confederate Flag

Abstract

The Confederate flag is a symbol that continues to be used nearly 156 years after the United States Civil war ended. The use of this symbol is unique not only in its everchanging meaning but also as the use of this flag is not simply isolated to the country of its origin. Rather, it has evolved into a global symbol. This paper follows the history of this flag, which began as a non-official banner of a lost rebellion and became a current-day hate symbol. With this change comes the need to study it. As the flag has come to represent a transatlantic white supremacist symbol of hate, something can be seen in its use by far-right groups such as PEGIDA in Europe and the KKK in the United States. They have both attached a racist message to the flag. Using this flag to help spread that message. The use by both groups is difficult to explain as current-day academic explanations of an inherent “rebel nature” associated with the flag fail to fit its use among these groups. This paper analyzes this phenomenon with both existing literature as well as primary sources to see how these groups use the flag to improve the public perception of their groups. This perception helping to increase the number of viable members among the group. This approach hopes to result in a new direction for the study of the far-right in transatlantically helping to explain and solve their modern resurgence.

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*Bright banner of freedom, with pride I unfold thee.
Fair flag of my country with love I behold thee;
Gleaming above us, in freshness and youth,
Emblem of liberty symbol of truth,
For this flag of my country in triumph shall wave
O'er the Southerner's home and the Southerner's grave.*

- Susan Blanchard Elder, 1861

Introduction

During the United States Civil War, there were three official flags introduced by the provisional Confederate congress.¹ These flags were introduced at different points throughout the war in an attempt to create a compelling symbol for Confederate soldiers to fight for.² Beyond the official flag taken up by the Confederate congress, various Confederate armies created their own battle flags to fight under.³ This is what we know of today as the Confederate flag, not an official flag of the confederacy but rather a Northern Virginia army battle flag that became adopted by former Confederate soldiers and sympathizers as the true “rebel flag”.⁴ Today this rebel or Confederate flag is a source of great controversy both within the United States and around the world as its use grows and its meaning is debated.

On July 18th, 2015, members of the local Ku Klux Klan hosted a rally protesting the removal of the Confederate flag from the South Carolina capitol building, defending the racial attacks performed by the domestic terrorist Dylann Roof a few months earlier.⁵ On October 5th, 2016, members of PEGIDA in Dresden Germany carried the Confederate flag proudly while protesting the German government's refugee and asylum policies as a reaction towards an influx of refugees in the area. On July 6th, 2017, during a visit by then-President Donald

¹ John M. Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* (Harvard University Press, 2005), 19-20.

² Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag*, 2005, 19-20.

³ Ibid, 14.

⁴ Ibid, 97.

⁵ Justin Carissimo, “KKK to Host Pro-Confederate Flag Rally & Says Dylann Roof ‘Was Heading in the Right Direction,’” *The Independent*, June 30, 2015, sec. News.

No longer a battle flag for the Northern Virginia army, the Confederate flag has taken on new meanings and become an important symbol for many extremist groups. This symbolism has grown and spread past the borders of the southern US, becoming a symbol for far-right groups on both sides of the Atlantic. This can be seen with its use by PEGIDA as well as at various other protests and rallies throughout Europe.⁶ This paper aims to explain this phenomenon through an analysis of the current meanings and interpretations associated with the flag as well as a study on its use as a symbol by US-based far-right groups in comparison with its use by European far-right groups. Answering the question: *How has the interpretation of the Confederate Flag evolved over time and how has this meaning affected its use by the far-right today in the United States and Europe?*

To answer this question, I use qualitative sources to follow the historical developments of the Confederate flag to provide a standard for our analysis of its meaning. I will similarly track the historical rise in the far-right to provide a more fitting definition of what the far-right is and how it has developed over time. Paying special attention to the transatlantic development of the far-right as well as the concepts of ‘identity’ and ‘normalization’. This qualitative analysis is spread across three separate chapters, each dedicated to exploring a different part of our analysis, and is combined with primary sources to analyze our case study.

In the first chapter, we explore the history of the Confederate flag, tracing how the use and the meaning of the Confederate flag have evolved since its origin. This meaning is not simply tracked by the direct spoken intentions related to the flag but requires analyzing the intentions of the organizations who use it. The evolution of these intentions is what we focus on to help us further understand the meaning attached to the flag today. We further explore the history of the far-right focusing on its transatlantic history. As the world has become more global so has the far-right in terms of organizations, movements, and symbolism. With this new global trend, the far-right has become more diverse both in location and ideology. This diversity makes it difficult to create comparisons between separate groups located within different countries. Due to this diversity, concepts such as identity and normalization have become further associated with the far-right. These concepts we will explore and define within this section will follow us throughout the rest of the paper.

Once a historical context has been provided and the main concepts have been defined, we will look at two far-right groups, PEGIDA from Dresden, Germany, and the Ku Klux Klan

⁶ Valentina Pop, “In Europe, Separatists and Nationalists Are Sprouting Old Colors,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 2018, sec. World.

from the United States, to explore as a case study. We explore the history of each group itself as well as their history in connection with the flag providing further historical and ideological context which is important for our later analysis. The Ku Klux Klan has a long history as one of the most infamous groups within the United States. This history is connected to their use of the Confederate flag which has been an official symbol of the organization since the 1940s. More recently, however, the KKK has experienced a decline in power, something they are actively trying to combat. PEGIDA has a much shorter history, only coming into existence in 2014. Yet similarly, the flag can be seen within this group not as an official symbol but used by members at official events. PEGIDA as seen with the KKK has also experienced a rapid decline in members. The rise and fall of membership in both groups as well as their use of the Confederate flag throughout their history is important to explore for our analysis given in later chapters.

Finally, I will utilize primary sources including news articles, member quotes, as well as photographs, to examine each group's use of the Confederate flag. This helps us to examine what similarities or differences there are in how the Confederate flag is used or seen within Europe and the United States. The results of this analysis will be then connected to the current historiographical debate on the use of the flag. There has not been much written on the Confederate flags' use within Europe in comparison with its use within the United States. What has been written has associated the flag's use in Europe because of its reputation as a 'rebel' symbol, providing a possible alternative explanation on the flag's use. The results from our case study will either reject or confirm this 'rebel nature' giving possible alternative explanations to the flags use transatlantically.

*Haste to the battle field!
Thy country calls thee to the deadly fight -
Go forth undaunted in thy manhood's might,*

*Thy noble cause thy shield;
And if thou fallest- hush, heart, thy agony-
God will defend the right!*

- Anonymous (The Confederate Soldiers Wife), 1861

Chapter One: The “Rebel Flag” and the Far-Right

To begin to understand the Confederate Flag we must first understand the war it came from. The Confederate flag was not simply a part of a failed rebellion but rather an important symbol from one of the most impactful wars in US history. This chapter looks to provide much-needed context of the history of the flag both during and after the war. Similarly, this chapter aims to provide a better understanding as to who makes up the far-right and how they have evolved transatlantically. It is only with this context that we can adequately examine the flag today, both in its US context, as well as its emergence in Europe.

The Civil War

The United States Civil war began in 1861 after seven southern states succeeded from the union in protest against the anti-slavery stance of President Abraham Lincoln.⁷ After seceding and before even the declaration of war at Fort Sumter, the leaders of these states began to search for a flag to legitimize their new country.⁸ This flag was important not only as a legitimizer but also as a symbol for the Confederate cause and for the soldiers to fight under. The first flag to be approved by the provisional Confederate congress was named the *Stars and Bars* this however proved to be widely unpopular and received extreme criticism.⁹ It was from this criticism that individual troops began to create their own battle flags to fight under.¹⁰ One of these battle flags being what we know today as the Confederate flag.¹¹

Because of this, we can see that the original meaning of the Confederate flag is intrinsically tied to the Confederate cause which was the continuation of slavery. President

⁷ Steven E. Woodworth, *This Great Struggle: America's Civil War* (Lanham, United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011, 29.

⁸ Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag*, 2005, 3.

⁹ Ibid, 4.

¹⁰ Ibid, 14.

¹¹ Ibid, 11.

The Civil War ended in 1865 with the surrender of Confederate General Lee at the Appomattox courthouse in Virginia.¹² Initially, the Confederate flag did fade away as could be expected. This was the result of popular Confederate symbols, including the flag, being discouraged if not outright forbidden in certain locations in the United States.¹³ It was not until twenty to forty years later when the flag again became popular in the south as groups such as the Daughters of the Confederacy revived the flag in an effort to keep the memory of the Confederacy alive as the former soldiers began to die off.¹⁴

States Rights

During the Civil War, the meaning of the flag was relatively clear. Though still a battle flag, the meaning was easily tied into the cause of the Confederacy. It was primarily after the war when these meanings began to shift as the use of the flag moved further from its Confederate origins. This shift can most clearly be seen with the use of the flag by the States Rights Party in the late 1940s.¹⁵ It is important to note that the Confederate flag was never an official symbol of the States Rights Party rather it was more so widely used by many, younger, supporters.¹⁶ The States Rights Party was not the first to use the Confederate flag but what makes them different is the sway it held on the perception of the flag throughout the whole of the United States.

The States Rights or as it has been nicknamed the “Dixiecrat” party came into being as citizens, mostly from the south, became unsatisfied with the Democratic party.¹⁷ As the name suggests the main concern of the party was the preservation of states’ rights over federal rights, something not completely detached from the Confederate cause though not directly related either.¹⁸ The Confederacy fought for the right of the southern states to continue the practice of slavery.¹⁹ This fight is similar to the mission of the States Rights Party while also being different, as the States Rights Party was not primarily focused on the concepts of rebellion,

¹² Woodworth, *This Great Struggle*, 352-353.

¹³ Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag*, 2005, 46.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 52.

¹⁵ Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag*, 2005, 98.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 99.

¹⁸ Nelson and Sheriff, *A People at War*, 2007, 30.

¹⁹ Gallagher and Nolan, *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, 14.

slavery, or race as was seen in the Confederacy. This difference is important to note as the popularity of the Dixiecrat party grew so did the use of its symbols, such as the Confederate flag. This created a situation in which the symbol became detached from its origins allowing the flag to be seen in a new light, no longer a symbol for the pro-slavery Confederacy but now a symbol representing the support of state over federal rights.

This change in meaning is not necessarily of significant importance to this paper. It is however important to recognize this as an example of the fluidity of the meaning of the Confederate flag. The States Rights Party was not the last to alter the meaning of the flag. Throughout history the Confederate flag has continued to change from a states' rights symbol to a southern symbol, to a rebel symbol, to what is more known today as a hate symbol.²⁰ What this symbol represents can very easily be misunderstood. We, therefore, define the meaning of its use not as the direct spoken intention of those using it but rather how it is used. The flag was never an official symbol of the Dixiecrat party and yet for that period, it became a symbol for States Rights as it was shown at States Rights conventions as well as used by states' rights supporters.²¹

The Rise of the Far-Right

To begin the discussion on the rise of the far-right we must first define it. As historian Matthew Sweeney describes, the far-right can be defined as 'highly diverse and fragmented, characterized by significant ideological diversity, organizational instability, as well as in the exercise of various operational methods.'²² This definition is purposefully broad and stresses the diversity of the far-right itself. This broad nature creates an issue for our paper when trying to find an exact definition of the far-right. No such definition exists and so for our papers purpose we will need to clearly define what section of the far-right we wish to examine. With this in mind, the section of the far-right that this paper will explore will be those groups who share more "traditionally" assumed far-right ideologies such as racial superiority, fascism, nationalism, and islamophobia.

Because of the broad nature of the far-right, it is not only difficult to define but also difficult to track its history. Rather than tracking the beginning of the far-right, it is more constructive for our paper to track the rise of some of the previously mentioned conservative

²⁰ Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag*, 2005.

²¹ *Ibid*, 99.

²² Matthew M. Sweeney and Arie Perliger, "Explaining the Spontaneous Nature of Far-Right Violence in the United States," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 6 (2018): 52–71.

far-right ideologies. For many of these ideologies, we can easily see their growth around the time of the World Wars. It is important to note however that while we can most easily view the growth of these ideas during this period that these ideologies have existed in some form before this time.²³

Fascism grew in Italy after the end of World War I to be later adopted by the leaders of many Axis powers during the second war.²⁴ Nationalism had seen a growth in popularity in Europe before the start of World War I, greatly contributing to the start of the war itself.²⁵ Racial superiority had of course existed long before the World Wars but saw a devastating development in World War II with the holocaust.²⁶ Islamophobia itself is one ideology that can be seen as a more recent trend with its growth occurring most rapidly after the attacks of 9/11 in 2001 by Islamic terrorists.²⁷

More recently, the 2010s have been described by Professor Carl Mudde as ‘The decade of the far-right’.²⁸ This is not an exaggeration as by any means since 2015 there has been significant growth in far-right political parties, groups, and even right-wing terrorist attacks across the United States and Europe.²⁹ This exponential growth has continued even to this day being spurred on by events such as the election of US President Donald J. Trump, the backlash against the 2016 New Year’s Eve sexual assaults in Germany, and the January 6th US Capital insurrection.³⁰ These large-scale events and their coverage by media help to spread the far-right message increasing their growth.

Transatlantic Exchange

As previously mentioned, these popular far-right ideologies are not simply isolated within the country where they originated. Rather many of these ideologies have become global ideologies

²³ Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 22.

²⁴ Davies and Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right*, 2002, 2.

²⁵ Richard Frederick Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig, *The Origins of World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9.

²⁶ Eric Ehrenreich, “Racial Scientific Ideology and the Holocaust,” in *Nazi Ancestral Proof: Genealogy, Racial Science, and the Final Solution* (Bloomington, United States: Indiana University Press, 2007).

²⁷ Lorraine P. Sheridan, “Islamophobia Pre- and Post-September 11th, 2001,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 21, no. 3 (March 1, 2006), 317.

²⁸ Cas Mudde, “The 2010s’ Grim Legacy? The Decade of the Far Right | Cas Mudde,” *The Guardian*, January 6, 2020, sec. Opinion,

²⁹ Eliot Assoudeh and Leonard Weinberg, “In Western Europe, Right Wing Terrorism Is on the Rise,” *openDemocracy*, July 1, 2021.

³⁰ Aurelien Mondon and Antonia Vaughan, ‘White Supremacist Extremism and the Far Right in the U.S.’, *Political Extremism and Radicalism: Far-Right Groups in America*, Cengage Learning (EMEA) Ltd, 2021.; “Germany Shocked by Cologne New Year Gang Assaults on Women,” *BBC News*, January 5, 2016, sec. Europe.; Andrew Katz, “Scenes From the Deadly Unrest in Charlottesville,” *TIME.Com* (blog), accessed June 5, 2021.; Lauren Leatherby et al., “How a Presidential Rally Turned Into a Capitol Rampage,” *The New York Times*, January 12, 2021, sec. U.S..

with supporters around the world. Fascism was not isolated to Italy or even just to Germany. The German American Bund, a Nazi sympathizer group founded in America in 1936, is just one example of the transatlantic existence of fascist ideals.³¹ Even after the end of the war similar sympathizer groups, holocaust deniers, and even an American Nazi party have continued to exist.³² Today with the growth of the far-right we continue to see the spread of these global ideologies as a globalized far-right movement forms.

Cynthia Miller-Idriss talks about this globalized far-right in her book *Hate in the Homeland*.³³ She mentions how the increased globalization of the far-right in recent years is a result of the far-right's aims to 'normalize' their message.³⁴ Idriss explains that while far-right groups carry extremist ideals they make active efforts to normalize their message to downplay the extremism of their organization and make their groups seem widely supported to recruit members or sympathizers to their cause.³⁵ They do this through symbols, merchandise, the media, political speeches, and social sites.³⁶ Far-right groups take this 'normalization' further by attempting to say how open and inclusive their groups are. The United States 'Proud Boys' are one such example, touting how their group includes not just members of multiple races but also members in multiple countries.³⁷ Making their message seem less extremist but rather more normalized as it is a message which many people from around the world support.

As Idriss explains further, this globalized far right that is growing is almost a contrast against the message of many of these far-right groups.³⁸ Nationalism is a popular ideology among many of these especially anti-immigration far right groups.³⁹ These groups repeatedly condemn the process of globalization while they themselves like to say how global their message is. One example of this is Anders Breivik, the Norwegian far-right terrorist convicted of killing 69 people at a Workers Youth League summer camp in 2011.⁴⁰ Breivik considers himself a nationalist and yet in his manifesto named '2083: A European Declaration of Independence' he calls on the mass distribution of his manifesto throughout various parts of Western Europe and the United States. He wishes for a seemingly global audience for his far-

³¹ Alan Taylor, "American Nazis in the 1930s—The German American Bund," *The Atlantic*, May 6, 2017.

³² Samuel Osbourne, "Holocaust Denier Set to Become Republican Nominee for Congressional Seat," *The Independent*, February 5, 2018, sec. News.

³³ Cynthia Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland* (Princeton University Press, 2020).

³⁴ Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland*, 220, 136

³⁵ *Ibid*, 137.

³⁶ Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland*, 220, 136

³⁷ EJ Dickson, "Proud Boys Channels Are Exploding on Telegram," *Yahoo News*, January 14, 2021.

³⁸ Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland*, 2020, 31.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 150.

⁴⁰ "Norway Massacre: 'We Could Hear the Gunshots Getting Closer,'" *BBC News*, October 19, 2017, sec. Scotland.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided context into our understanding of important history and concepts. It is important to understand that the history of the Confederate flag is complex as its meaning has been fluid throughout time changing to fit the goals and ideologies of the people using them as was seen with the States Rights Party. Similarly, it is important for us to understand what is meant when speaking of the far-right. The far-right is broad and difficult to define but it is through common conservative ideologies that we can define and connect groups not just historically but also globally. It is through 'normalization' that we can explain this growth in the global far-right not just in ideologies but also in symbols. It is similarly through this 'normalization' that we will later explore the use of the Confederate flag in connection to our two hate groups of the KKK and PEGIDA.

*There is burning on the hilltop far away,
A fiery cross both night and day,
The flag of the free waves away away,
The Ku Klux Klan has come to stay.*

-George Zterb 1924

Chapter Two: The Legacy of the Ku Klux Klan and PEGIDA

Now that we have context for both the flag and our core concepts, we can explore our case study of the Ku Klux Klan and PEGIDA. Like the previous chapter, this chapter aims to provide much-needed historical and ideological context on our two chosen groups and their use of the flag. This will be done by exploring the history of both groups' rise to power. Alongside the history of each group, we will examine each group's use of the Confederate flag throughout its existence. It is only with this context that we will later be able to properly compare their use of the Confederate flag and determine how or if it differs significantly,

The Rise of the KKK

While the KKK was founded in 1865 during the post-war reconstruction period it was only around the 1920s when the Klan had its "heyday" and held significant power throughout the US.⁴¹ Important to note for our paper is that even though we are exploring the Klan within the 1920s its use of the Confederate flag did not begin until the 1940s.⁴² Even with this fact we still wish to examine the Klan's history in its entirety as it is important to understanding how the Klan has evolved. The Klan's power has always been unstable as its organization works through created chapters rather than a strong central leadership.⁴³ These chapters, though without a central leader, do follow standard central articles which include membership rules, mission statements, and articles of purpose. The articles state that the purpose of the KKK is to 'unite Christian white men across the United States to protect people from those who are brutal and savage'. This can more accurately be read as the protection of people from those who are

⁴¹ Rory McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis, United States: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 21.

⁴² Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag*, 2005, 49.

⁴³ David Mark Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Duke University Press, 1987), 2.

The Invisible Empire was the self-given description of the Ku Klux Klan during the 1920s.⁴⁴ It is said that an estimated one in seven white Americans belonged to the Klan at that time.⁴⁵ This success could be seen not only through large-scale rallies held throughout the US but also in the growth of KKK merchandise including newspapers, songbooks, and even standardized uniforms.⁴⁶ It was truly an empire as now Klan members could feel as though they belonged to something bigger than their largely secret individual chapters. They displayed this belonging using this new symbolic merchandise, though notably still not yet having adopted the Confederate flag. This is important to note in our continuing theme of identity as mentioned within the first chapter. With this growth in symbolism new Klan members were able to attach their identity to being a part of the KKK. Evidence of this can be seen within some of the KKK newspapers of the time as businesses advertised themselves proudly as being a part of the brotherhood.⁴⁷ They were not simply doctors, or businessmen, or lawyers but they were also Klan members, and they were proud of it. This sort of identity was new for the KKK in the 1920s and an important mark of that period.

The KKK and the Confederate flag

After the 1920s the KKK began to fall out of popularity due to infighting, a change in American morals, and dwindling support by the federal government.⁴⁸ This is not by any means to say that the KKK did not exist in the period following the 1920s just that it did not hold the power that it previously had. The KKK saw some growth during the 1940s and was very active in the 1960s during the Civil Rights period within many of the southern states.⁴⁹ Still, it never managed to reach its previous numbers.⁵⁰

As mentioned, it is only in the 1940s where we truly begin to see the use of the Confederate flag by the KKK. Beginning in 1939 reports of Klan members displaying the Confederate flag began to appear. By the 1940s the Confederate flag had become an official

⁴⁴ The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (incorporated)* (Atlanta, United States), 4.

⁴⁵ Reel Truth History Documentaries, "Inside the Ku Klux Klan Meeting The Imperial Wizard | History Documentary | Reel Truth. History" *YouTube* video, Aug 19, 2018, 30:07.

⁴⁶ "Brotherhood Groceries," *The Fiery Cross*, March 9, 1923, Volume 11 Number 14 edition, sec. Classifieds.

⁴⁷ McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 199-200.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

Even though the KKK has significantly diminished in power since the 1960s it cannot be said they have disappeared. The United States Anti-Defamation league in their 2017 report stated that there are over forty active chapters within the United States including three thousand active members.⁵¹ It is not nearly as many as was seen during the large-scale rallies of the 1920s, but it still represents three thousand organized citizens within the United States who hold violent ideas of race and religion. These ideas continue to be showcased as modern-day chapter leaders react with violent threats against what they deem to be more modern-day threats to white supremacy such as the election of an African American president and the Black Lives Matter movement.⁵² Nevertheless, the KKK is continuing to this day to decline in members.⁵³ There is one important reason for this decline that connects to our theme of identity as mentioned in chapter one. In 1920, or even in 1960, it was more widely accepted to hold these racial and hateful beliefs that the KKK have become known for.⁵⁴ There were very few consequences and even some benefits in that time for being a part of such a hateful group.⁵⁵ Without this, the KKK would not have been able to maintain so many members. It was only after the 1960s and the civil rights period that this began to change, this being when the KKK began to truly decline.⁵⁶

This decline was not simply ignored. In 1975, KKK Imperial Wizard David Duke attempted to rebrand the KKK, not as a ‘hate group’ but rather a ‘white civil rights’ movement. The KKK even to this day does not want to be seen as a declining extremist organization but rather as a thriving active political group. This protection of public image as well as the efforts to gain new members being an important point for our later analysis on their use of the flag. Former Imperial Wizard Frank Ancona when interviewed by a documentary crew stated that ‘When we say we are not a hate group it is true. Most of us are in this for the fraternal brotherhood.’⁵⁸ This quote represents an obvious attempt at making the KKK seem gentler than it actually is. The ungentle nature is seen by Ancona’s later mentioning of his desire to

⁵¹ “Despite Internal Turmoil, Klan Groups Persist” (Anti-Defamation League, 2017).

⁵² Reuters, “White Supremacist Convicted in Plot to Kill Obama with ‘death Ray’ Device,” *The Guardian*, August 21, 2015, sec. US news; “KKK ‘leader’ Charged for Attack on Black Lives Matter Protesters,” *BBC News*, June 9, 2020, sec. US & Canada.

⁵³ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 424.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 426-427.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 426.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 424.

⁵⁸ Reel Truth History Documentaries, “Inside the Ku Klux Klan Meeting The Imperial”, 2018, 4:07.

violently suppress a local Black Lives Matter rally.⁵⁹ Even with these efforts of rebranding, it has not worked to bring further members to the KKK. The infamy that the KKK holds within the United States is something that is unshakable.⁶⁰

The History of PEGIDA in Germany

When compared to the 156-year history of the KKK, the history of PEGIDA is limited. PEGIDA or, the Patriotic Europeans against the Islamification of the West, began not as a well-organized group but as a series of protests held in Dresden, Germany beginning only in October 2014.⁶¹ Founded by Lutz Bachmann, the weekly PEGIDA populist protests were aimed to unite citizens who were unhappy with the German government's asylum policy.⁶² Protesters believed that the influx of Middle Eastern asylum seekers within Germany was eroding German identity.⁶³ PEGIDA did not stay isolated to Dresden for long as soon protests began popping up in other German cities.⁶⁴ PEGIDA reached its peak in January 2015 when its protest managed to attract 25,000 people bringing the movement international fame.⁶⁵

It is at this protest where we first see the use of the Confederate flag by PEGIDA.⁶⁶ The Confederate flag was never their official symbol like was seen with the KKK. Rather it was a symbol adopted by certain followers of PEGIDA to represent what they felt PEGIDA's mission to be. PEGIDA's primary stated mission as listed above was a protest against the influx of Middle Eastern refugees in Germany which had caused what they state as an Islamification of Europe. The Confederate flag was never attached to this cause by the KKK instead being seen more as a symbol for white supremacy. For our paper, we need to conclude whether this use by PEGIDA is a shift in the meaning of the flag or not. We will explore this further when comparing the use of the flag in chapter 3. It is hard not to connect PEGIDA's use of the flag to racially motivated intentions however these intentions are not as clearly stated as with the KKK and we must explore why this is.

Leaders of PEGIDA do not like for it to be described as far-right let alone as a hate group. The reasoning for this is not explained, however, can be viewed as a result of German laws. In

⁵⁹ Ibid, 20:42.

⁶⁰ "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan," Southern Poverty Law Center.

⁶¹ "Estimated 15,000 People Join 'Pinstriped Nazis' on March in Dresden," *The Guardian*, December 15, 2014, sec. World news.

⁶² Ben Knight, "German Issues in a Nutshell: PEGIDA," *DW*, June 6, 2017.

⁶³ Knight, "German Issues in a Nutshell."

⁶⁴ "Record Numbers of Anti-PEGIDA Protesters in Germany," *DW*, January 13, 2015.

⁶⁵ "Record Numbers of Anti-PEGIDA Protesters in Germany."

⁶⁶ Tom Barfield (@tombarfield), Twitter Post, October 19, 2015.

Germany, there are very strict laws associated with hate speech in that you can be fined for stating in public what government officials determine to be racist.⁶⁸ These laws greatly affect PEGIDA's official actions as for their protests to continue they must be subtle in what they say and how they are defined. PEGIDA's reluctance to be labeled as a far-right hate group can also be seen in a similar line as the KKK's reasonings. There is a connotation attached when you describe something as a hate group; this connotation similarly exists when something is described as far-right. While PEGIDA may not wish to attach themselves to such labels the make-up of their members does it for them. With the international attention given to PEGIDA's protests questions began to emerge as German far-right party leaders as well as neo-Nazis were repeatedly spotted at the protests.⁶⁹ With this, as well as racist online actions by the founder, PEGIDA grew its reputation as a hate organization regardless of its intention to do so.

PEGIDA's peak in Dresden was only short-lived as its reputation as a hate organization led to widespread counter-protests by February 2015.⁷¹ PEGIDA's image struggle led many potential supporters to stick with the more mainstream far-right political parties such as Germany's AfD.⁷² By late 2015 PEGIDA was already heavily struggling in its efforts to appeal to new supporters.⁷³ In early 2016 there was intense backlash against migrants due to the New Year's sexual assault attacks in Cologne.⁷⁴ PEGIDA tried to capitalize on this, experiencing a short period of growth throughout Europe. This growth however did not last long as PEGIDA's decline continued shortly after.⁷⁵

PEGIDA Today

PEGIDA today is not dead. Even in 2021 PEGIDA still organizes its regular weekly protests some of which draw the use of the Confederate flag.⁷⁶ It can be said that while PEGIDA is not dead its supporter base is limited. Something that they decline to acknowledge in efforts to appear larger than they are. That is the place of PEGIDA as a group today. This, however, does not tell the whole story, we need to not simply look within the group itself but also the movement of which PEGIDA was a part of. While PEGIDA as a group perhaps failed, the

⁶⁸ "Germany Is Silencing 'Hate Speech', but Cannot Define It," *The Economist*, January 13, 2018.

⁶⁹ "Estimated 15,000 People Join 'Pinstriped Nazis' on March in Dresden."

⁷¹ "Germany: Far-Right PEGIDA and Critics Hold Opposing Dresden Rallies," *DW*, October 20, 2019.

⁷² Helga Druxes and Patricia Anne Simpson, "Introduction: Pegida as a European Far-Right Populist Movement," *German Politics & Society* 34, no. 4 (2016): 3.

⁷³ Druxes and Simpson, "Introduction," 3.

⁷⁴ News Wires, "Cologne Braces for Far-Right Rally after New Year's Violence," *France 24*, January 9, 2016, sec. europe.

⁷⁵ "Germany: Far-Right PEGIDA and Critics Hold Opposing Dresden Rallies," 2019.

⁷⁶ "PEGIDA - Patriotische Europäer Gegen Die Islamisierung Des Abendlandes," accessed June 26, 2021.

populist ideas that they helped invoke did not.

In their book *PEGIDA as Part of Right-Wing Populism in Germany and Europe* Vorländer et al. state that ‘PEGIDA can be understood as a *populist revolt*’.⁷⁷ The important word in this statement is revolt as PEGIDA in its life span was and is part of a larger populist revolution that is occurring across the entirety of Europe.⁷⁸ This revolution beginning as early as 2013 has been extremely disruptive within the European population and politics.⁷⁹ Currently, in 2021, there are an estimated fifteen active populist far-right political parties within Europe.⁸⁰ These populist parties have emerged as more and more citizens within Europe have become dissatisfied with their central governments. This is due to a multitude of complex reasons however immigration and anti-Islam sentiments are a common issue shared among most of the parties.⁸¹

It is hard to make a claim that even with its limited member base PEGIDA is obsolete or dead. PEGIDA must be viewed as a part of the more widespread movement which it helped create. Populist political parties and groups continue to grow and with this growth, they further the spread of the ideals that PEGIDA fought so heavily for. It is alongside these ideals that we see the Confederate Flag used by a number of these populist far-right parties and their supporters throughout Europe.⁸² We may not see PEGIDA’s former leader Bachmann on the stage anytime soon, but we will see leaders sharing similar statements such as Geert Wilders from the Netherlands, Jarosław Kaczyński from Poland, and Sebastian Kurz from Austria.⁸³

In conclusion, as can be seen within this chapter, the KKK has a long history as a white supremacist hate organization. This includes their use of the Confederate flag as a symbol of their white supremacy. More recently however we have seen a massive decline in this group resulting in active efforts to save their public image through rebranding the group in a more “acceptable” way as a white rights organization. PEGIDA has a much shorter history and yet similarly has used the same flag within their protests to represent the sentiments of their

⁷⁷ Vorländer, Herold, and Schaller, “PEGIDA as Part of Right-Wing Populism in Germany and Europe,” 199.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 202.

⁷⁹ Paula Sandrin, “The Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Europe: A Psychoanalytical Contribution,” in *Financial Crisis Management and Democracy: Lessons from Europe and Latin America*, ed. Bettina De Souza Guilherme et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 227–39.

⁸⁰ Richard Wike et al., “Classifying European Populist Parties” (Pew Research Center, October 14, 2019).

⁸¹ “Europe and Right-Wing Nationalism: A Country-by-Country Guide,” *BBC News*, November 13, 2019, sec. Europe.

⁸² Charles P. Pierce, “An American President Was Greeted in Poland by the Confederate Flag,” *Esquire*, July 6, 2017.

⁸³ Robin McKie, “Far-Right Leader Geert Wilders Calls Moroccan Migrants ‘Scum,’” *The Guardian*, February 18, 2017, sec. World news; “Poland Did Not Invite Refugees, Has Right to Say ‘No’: Kaczynski,” *Reuters*, July 1, 2017, sec. Emerging Markets; Laurenz Gehrke, “Sebastian Kurz Aims to ‘Protect Young Girls’ from Effects of Immigration with Headscarf Ban,” *POLITICO*, January 13, 2020.

members. PEGIDA has also experienced the same extreme decline as the KKK and has taken actions to combat this in a similar fashion. The decline experienced by both groups as well as their efforts against this decline represents an important point in our later understanding of how the flag is being used today transatlantically.

*Furl that banner! furl it sadly!
Once ten thousands hailed it gladly.
And ten thousands wildly, madly,
Swore it should forever wave;*

- Abram Joseph Ryan 1865

Chapter Three: The Long-Living Confederate flag

Now that we have explored the two groups from our case study, we can properly compare the groups' use of the Confederate flag. With this comparison, we can associate a meaning to the Confederate flag and determine whether this meaning exists transatlantically or is isolated to a particular group or country answering our research question. It is difficult within the confines of our paper to complete a full comparison of the KKK and PEGIDA as they do differ fundamentally not only in country of origin but also in historical background. Instead, this chapter will compare the groups by analyzing how they have used the flag in recent years, especially at rallies highlighting similarities where they may exist. With this analysis complete this chapter will further connect the results with previously written literature. It has been assumed that an explanation of the flag's use in Europe could be connected to its past reputation as a "rebel" flag. This chapter will determine whether the flag's use in Europe by far-right groups truly is a representation of their "rebel" nature or whether another explanation can be given.

The KKK and Dylann Roof

Shown below is a picture taken in 2015 at a KKK rally in South Carolina.⁸⁴ This rally was held to protest the removal of the Confederate flag that had been displayed at the state capitol building.⁸⁵ The flag was being removed due to the tragic events that had occurred earlier that year. On June 17th, 2015, Dylann Roof shot and murdered nine people at an African American church in Charleston, South Carolina. His reasoning for this was to start what he called a 'race war'. The controversy with the flag began here as Roof's website/manifesto was found after the

⁸⁴ Adam B. Lerner, "KKK Chapter to Hold Rally on South Carolina Statehouse Grounds," *POLITICO*, accessed June 26, 2021.

⁸⁵ Lerner, "KKK Chapter to Hold Rally on South Carolina Statehouse Grounds."



Source: Adam B. Lerner, *POLITICO*, accessed June 26, 2021.

After this backlash, the South Carolinian state government decided it was best to distance themselves from the flag leading to the aforementioned KKK rally.⁸⁶ It is important to note here that Dylann Roof was never a part of the KKK and even criticized the group within his manifesto for doing too little.⁸⁷ The KKK similarly stated that they heavily condemned Roof's actions.⁸⁸ However, at the same time as condemning the actions of Roof, the Klan reiterates Roof's sentiments declaring publicly that the flag represents what Roof believed it to be. A symbol of the rightful separation of races and a symbol of white supremacy.⁸⁹

Dylann Roof's manifesto shows the extremist nature of his as well as sympathizer's white supremacist sentiments. Included in the manifesto Roof states that 'Negroes have lower Iqs, lower impulse control, and higher testosterone levels in generals.'⁹⁰ These extremist statements are a direct contrast to the more subdued statements made by KKK leaders such as the former Imperial Wizard Frank Ancona who emphasized that the KKK does not hate other races only believing that 'the white race is the superior race.'⁹¹ The reasoning for Ancona's subdued

⁸⁶ Worland, "This Is Why South Carolina Raised the Confederate Flag in the First Place."

⁸⁷ Paul Lewis, Jessica Glenza, and Amanda Holpuch, "FBI Investigates Website and Manifesto Linked to Charleston Shooting Suspect Dylann Roof," *The Guardian*, June 20, 2015.

⁸⁸ Tom Polansek, "White Nationalists Condemn Church Killings, Identify with Shooter," *Reuters*, June 24, 2015, sec. Deals.

⁸⁹ Justin Carissimo, "KKK to Host Pro-Confederate Flag Rally & Says Dylann Roof 'Was Heading in the Right Direction,'" *The Independent*, June 30, 2015, sec. News.

⁹⁰ Lenny Bernstein, Sari Horwitz, and Peter Holley, "Dylann Roof's Racist Manifesto: 'I Have No Choice,'" *Washington Post*, June 20, 2015, sec. National.

⁹¹ Reel Truth History Documentaries, "Inside the Ku Klux Klan Meeting The Imperial Wizard", 2018, 3:52.

statements as explained in chapter two is a direct result of the KKK's efforts to control their public image as a non-extremist organization. What Roof's statements show us is what the members of the KKK are not publicly saying but more so believe. The KKK may be careful with their public language like PEGIDA, but that does not mean that the members are not sympathetic to extremist actions and beliefs like Roofs. This sympathetic nature can be seen within the previously mentioned violent threats the KKK has made against the Black Lives Matter protesters as mentioned in chapter two.

The presence of the flag here allows for the KKK to make these public statements or spread this extremist message without saying anything. The Confederate flag is connected to the meaning of white supremacy. When this flag is used, at a rally, for example, it is a public display of this message of white supremacy. This public display means something not only in its ability to allow the KKK to make statements they wish to avoid for public image reasons, but it also allows for the KKK to spread its message in a simple and easy way. Through a wave of a flag.

PEGIDA and the Confederate Flag in Action

One key difference between the usage of the Confederate flags by the KKK and PEGIDA is that for PEGIDA the flag has never been an official symbol. As mentioned within chapter two to properly explore PEGIDA's use of the flag as well as the meaning attached to it you must look at its members not just its leaders. In the picture below a Confederate flag can be seen at an anti-immigration rally hosted by PEGIDA in Germany.⁹² This begs the question, why is this flag here?

⁹² Ruptly, "Germany: Thousands of PEGIDA supporters rally against refugees in Dresden" *YouTube* video, Oct 6, 2015, 0:56.



Source: Ruptly, YouTube video, 2015

The answer to this question is not simple and requires us to look further into the intentions of the rally itself. This rally was held as a protest against the government's immigration, asylum, and refugee policies.⁹³ Rally attendees felt that there had been an unprecedented increase in Middle Eastern refugees within Germany and Europe.⁹⁴ As PEGIDA leader Lutz Bachmann stated at one protest the goal of the group is the 'protection of the Judeo-Christian western culture'.⁹⁵ This protection of "western culture" is against immigrants or rather Muslim immigrants. This most clearly can be seen in some of the racist statements given by supporters at the rally one example being that 'Muslims are plotting to infect our food chain with their excrement',⁹⁶ After Bachmann's mention of a housing unit being built for refugees, another supporter can be similarly heard threatening that 'that'll soon be in flames'.⁹⁷ These racial comments are not just limited to protests but also spread to online social media groups. 'They're trying to pass this shit off as normal, poor Germany' is just one example of this as a PEGIDA supporter refers to the chocolate company Kinder's inclusion of a black and middle eastern child on their packaging.⁹⁸

These comments are heavily racially motivated showing the true intentions of the protest and PEGIDA itself. Though PEGIDA organizers are careful with their language due to hate

⁹³ "Record Pegida Rally in Dresden Sparks Mass Rival Protests," *BBC News*.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

⁹⁵ Ben Knight, "German Issues in a Nutshell: PEGIDA," 2017.

⁹⁶ "Estimated 15,000 People Join 'Pinstriped Nazis' on March in Dresden," *The Guardian*.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

⁹⁸ Emma Henderson, "Pegida Are Furious about These Chocolate Bars," *The Independent*, May 25, 2016.

speech laws in Germany their supporters are not and give us insight into what the flags may be used for. The racial statements made by supporters are like the racial statements made by KKK members even if they are perhaps focused on two different “enemy” races. When Bachmann mentions the goal of the ‘protection of Judeo-Christian western culture’ a question occurs of what that is. Based on the makeup of the attendants and supporters of the PEGIDA protests as well as the statements mentioned above it can be concluded that this ‘Judeo-Christian western culture’ is really a made-up “white western culture”. Something that notably the KKK states the Confederate flag represents.

A Common Banner

This is not the first paper to investigate the Confederate flag’s use in Germany or Europe. Though it has not been extensively explored academically it is examined in author Karin Crelling’s paper *The Confederate Battle Flag: Why is it perceived so differently in the US and Europe/Germany?*.⁹⁹ In this paper, Crelling concludes that the use of the Confederate flag here is not due to hate but rather a result of American pop culture being spread to Europe.¹⁰⁰ This pop culture, including movies and tv shows such as *Dukes of Hazard* and *The Birth of a Nation*, Crelling argues displays the Confederate flag as a ‘rebel symbol’.¹⁰¹ And it is this ‘rebel symbol’ which has been adopted across Europe.

Crelling is not entirely wrong in her analysis as the Confederate flag’s reputation as a symbol of rebellion is not new. As previously mentioned in this paper one of the original nicknames of the flag itself is the “Rebel Flag”. Confederate flag historian John M. Coski further explores the attachment of the Confederate flag as a symbol of rebellion in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰² Here Coski states that this ‘rebel nature’ was a representation of the down-to-earth ‘red-neck’ who did what he wanted when he wanted.¹⁰³ I am not here to argue against the fact that some of those who use the flag will declare it a sign of how much of a ‘rebel’ they are. What I will argue however is in the case of the Confederate flag’s use by groups such as

⁹⁹ Karin Crelling, “The Confederate Battle Flag: Why Is It Perceived so Differently in the US and Europe/Germany?” (University of Washington, 2019).

¹⁰⁰ Crelling, “The Confederate Battle Flag: Why Is It Perceived so Differently in the US and Europe/Germany?,” 4.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 40.

¹⁰² Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag*, 2005, 173-174.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 174.

PEGIDA and the KKK, simply denoting this use as a symbol of rebellion is not telling the whole story.

Who are the people who state that the flag is a sign of their rebellious nature? As Coski states these are often self-described ‘rednecks.’¹⁰⁴ These rednecks are primarily white southern-based US citizens.¹⁰⁵ Notably, these ‘rebels’ are not very diverse in race or ideology as many if not most would sympathize with conservative ideals. Beyond the lack of diversity within these ‘rebels’ there is also an issue in the logic of the Confederate flag representing strong rebellions. The Confederacy lost the war. So the idea of the Confederate flag representing strong movements such as what PEGIDA and the KKK claim to be is highly questionable. To argue this is the case is ignoring many factors and similarities within these two groups such as the similar protection of “white culture” both groups display.

Instead, I would argue that to truly explain the use of the Confederate flag by these groups we need to look back at the idea of ‘normalization’ as presented by author Cynthia Miller-Idriss.¹⁰⁶ As Idriss explains, many far-right groups make active efforts to normalize their message in order to recruit members and downplay the extremism of their organization.¹⁰⁷

The meaning of the Confederate flag today is connected to a movement of white supremacy as argued earlier in the chapter. This is not to say there are not still defenders of the flag as a southern heritage or ‘rebel’ symbol. Even with these defenders the fact that the flag has been used as a hate symbol since as early as the 1940s, not simply by just the KKK but by other groups and sympathizers, cannot be ignored. It is a hate symbol and is recognized as a hate symbol not simply by those who use it but also by those who it is used against.

There is legitimizing power in seeing the Confederate flag at a rally by potential far-right group members. There is especially power in seeing the Confederate flag at similar rallies across the world. Both PEGIDA and the KKK have stated that their movement is bigger than themselves.¹⁰⁸ They have both boasted having a large and diverse range of members from a variety of locations.¹⁰⁹ These statements are not necessarily true, but they do something in

¹⁰⁴ Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag*, 2005, 174.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland*, 2020, 135.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Lars Erik Berntzen and Manes Weisskircher, “Anti-Islamic Pegida Groups Have Spread beyond Their German Heartlands,” *EUROPP* (blog), June 17, 2015; Reel Truth History Documentaries, “Inside the Ku Klux Klan Meeting The Imperial Wizard”, 2018, 3:30.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

that they help reiterate that what these groups are fighting for is something ‘normal’ as many people are fighting for it. The KKK for example has been criticized greatly for being an extremist hate group, something which they have tried hard to rebrand as a tamer and more acceptable ‘White Rights’ organization. What greatly helps with this rebranding is the flag, one of the KKK’s official symbols, being seen all around the world. This tells potential recruits that perhaps the ideas they may hold are not so extreme and they are not alone but rather a part of a large-scale community in which people believe in what they do. This normalizes the message of white supremacy as well as makes the organizations who share that message appear as a large and strong community even if that may not be the case. This normalization in connection with the above analysis on the current meaning of the Confederate flag as I argue provides the key answer to our main research question; How has the meaning of the Confederate flag affected its use by the far-right today in the United States and Europe?

*Flag of the South! Aye, fling its folds
Upon the kindred breeze;-
Emblem of dread to tyrant holds-
Of freedom on the seas!
Forever may its star and stripes
In cloudless glory wave;
Red, white and blue - eternal types
Of nations free and brave!*

-A.F. Leonard (Land of the South) 1861

Conclusion

It is through a combination of our three chapters including our case study of the US-based KKK and the German-based PEGIDA far-right groups that this paper has answered our main research question: How has the interpretation of the Confederate Flag evolved over time and how has this meaning affected its use by the far-right in the United States and Europe? The Confederate flag is a hate symbol associated with the concept of white supremacy. This is very easily seen by taking a further look at who exactly is using this flag. PEGIDA and the KKK believe in this symbol and use it to help make their organization, as well as this message of white supremacy, appear more normalized as the flag appears to be widely used and excepted by a variety of people around the world. To understand the use of the Confederate flag today by US and European far-right groups the concept of ‘normalization’ needs to be used over previously assumed assumptions such as the flag as a ‘rebel symbol’.

First, we explored the history of the Confederate flag. Beginning as a battle flag for a lost rebellion during the United States Civil War the flag’s meaning has evolved over time from a representation of southern identity to an unofficial states’ rights symbol to its modern-day interpretation as a hate symbol. The flag’s meaning is reliant not only on what its stated meaning is but also on who uses it and what their true intentions are. We further go on to explore who these users are by attempting to define the far-right. The far-right is a very broad concept, and so this paper chose to focus on the ‘traditionally’ assumed far-right as a group fighting for extreme conservative ideologies such as nationalism, fascism, racial superiority, and islamophobia. These ideologies, thus similar to the Confederate flag, are not limited to a

particular time or space and exist around the world. This existence allows us to view the far-right as part of a growing transatlantic movement rather than separate isolated groups. These far-right groups are not unaware of the transatlantic nature of their ideologies even using this nature to ‘normalize’ their message to appear larger than they are and appeal to more members.

Following this, the KKK and PEGIDA were introduced as we tracked the history of each group as well as their use of the Confederate flag to the modern-day. The KKK has a long history as the most infamous group within the United States. This reputation was gained as the KKK grew to immense popularity within the 1920s as one in seven Americans belonged to the white supremacist organization. This was the KKK’s past, a past that greatly contradicts with modern times as the KKK has declined dramatically since then. Today the KKK is limited with only a few thousand members and so must and has spent time rebranding themselves not as a racist organization but as a large-scale “white rights” organization. The PEGIDA movement has met a similar fate as backlash against the organization grew quickly after its peak in 2014 due to its racially motivated message of anti-immigration and anti-Islam. Both groups refusing to acknowledge their decline instead continuing to boast of their growing number and worldwide impact. In connection with the flag, the groups’ histories contrast as the Confederate flag has been an official symbol of the KKK since the 1940s but has never been an official symbol of PEGIDA. Today the flag is continuously used by both groups’ members. These members and their beliefs being an important exploration point when comparing the meanings of the flag associated by both groups.

Finally, this paper explored PEGIDA and the KKK’s use of the Confederate flag using modern-day examples to conclude the meaning of the flag itself. Member’s statements allowing for the conclusion to be made that the flag is associated with the hateful meaning of white supremacy. It was through this meaning, as well as an exploration of the previously assumed ‘rebel’ nature of the flag, that we argue that ‘normalization’ provides the reasoning for the flags use by both groups.

It is important to recognize that the Confederate flag is not limited to just the United States and Europe or even just these continents but can be seen around the world, as part of a larger trend. When the flag is seen on the news being used at rallies around the world this does something. It shows the flag as not something simply used by a small number of extremists, but it ‘normalizes’ the message associated with the flag. Even if the group using the flag is small, it is through multiple groups’ use of the flag that legitimizing power exists, helping to create a movement around this common banner. A movement that is bigger than they could ever

achieve and a movement that must be explored not just within this paper but also among future academic studies. For it is only with a better understanding that we can combat this movement of hate.

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