Islamophobia online: The English Defence League and the 'Clash of Civilisations'

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Overview of presentation

- Outline the English Defence League (EDL): ideology, aims and membership.

- Explain how symbolic boundaries are constructed within Social Networking Sites.

- Explain how the EDL coordinate events and how anti-Islamic identity is mobilised

- Provide an overview of a key emergent theme of study: the 'Clash of Civilisations'

Introducing the EDL

- **Formation of the EDL**: 2009 homecoming, social movement

- **Ideology and aims**: 'new far right', anti-Islamism

- **Strategy for achieving its aims:** SNS, demonstrations

- **The organisation's structure**: centralised and grassroots, splintered

- **The typical membership**: disenfranchised: hooligans, nationalists, ex-servicemen, online demographic?

In-group and 'othering'

- **The in-group**
  - Imagined community linked to an abstract notion of Englishness / Britishness
  - Incorporates other avowedly anti-Islamic elements: LGBT, Jewish, Europe, US
  - Values: rejection of Islam, the nation, cultural purity, civil liberties
  - Social and political debate with EDL ideological slant
  - Shared information polarises opinion

In-group and 'othering'

- ## The 'other'
  - Muslims (even moderates), politicians, anti-fascists, journalists, police, academics
  - Homogenised as facilitating Islamic expansionism, immigration, cultural erosion, terrorism
  - Values: Sharia, violence, misogyny, homophobia, paedophilia
  - Despised 'other' contrasted with greatness of the nation
  - Immoral behaviour and Muslim atrocities globally and locally

Coordination and mobilisation

- **Coordination**
  - EDL events and armed forces events are advertised
  - Supporters directed toward regional officers
  - Travel arrangements made via Facebook, fine details shared privately

- **Mobilisation**
  - Dedication to attend events stimulated, often by central administration
  - Invokes empowering discourse: love for their cause, hate for the 'other'
  - Use of YouTube videos and media articles
  - E-activism, whereby campaigns can be mobilised by members

'Clash of Civilisations'

- **Boundaries consolidated between Muslim / non-Muslim world via impending war**
  - Failure of democratic politics to resist expansionism
  - Fears and insecurities generated: Jihad, Taqiyya
  - Creeping takeover via cultural, socio-political subversion, inevitable war
  - The EDL regards itself as the only genuine site of resistance: self-importance of disenfranchised

Summary

- **Key points**
  - SNS used to construct / mobilise identity and coordinate activities
  - Defending against products and processes of globalisation
  - Infuses purpose into lives of disenfranchised / disaffected
  - Cathartic expression of love and hate creates in / out group
  - Latent Clash of Civilisations will ultimately culminate in violent confrontation