Twitter Thread by Anti-Bullshit Alien



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“Fanatical Remainers and the FBPE cult”: a thread

The populist right seems to be intensifying its efforts to portray supporters of EU membership as some sort of lunatic fringe. (Never-knowingly-impartial @afneil and billionaires’ stooge @darrengrimes_ are among (1/20-ish)

the worst offenders.) “Fanatical Remainers,” they sneer at every opportunity. “FBPE cultists! Extremists! Ideologues!”

So what is a cult? What are the hallmarks of extremism? The Oxford Dictionary defines a cult as “a system of religious veneration and devotion /2

directed towards a particular figure or object”; “a relatively small group of people having religious beliefs or practices regarded by others as strange or as imposing excessive control over members”; or, in its weakest sense, “a misplaced or excessive admiration /3

for a particular thing”.

According to Janja Lalich PhD, a sociologist who specialises in cults and extremist groups, a cult is “a group or movement held together by a shared commitment to a charismatic leader or ideology. It has a belief system /4

that has the answers to all of life’s questions and offers a special solution to be gained only by following the leader’s rules”.

“Cults tend to be founded by charismatic leaders … great manipulators. They know how to read people. They come along and offer a message /5

that is going to resonate”.

Further signs of culthood as identified by Dr Lalich and other experts may include, but are not limited to:

• Inculcation of loyalty and unity by inventing and exaggerating external threats. Outgroups are demonised and dehumanised, and /6

one or several individuals are singled out as the arch-enemy or Antichrist.

• As well as messianic leader figures and satanic enemies, cults often feature speculation about some sort of apocalypse.

• Stereotyping and caricaturing of perceived ideological foes. /7

• Recruits tend to be disillusioned, low achievers, and less educated.

• Reductive, Manichean view of the world: believers are the good guys, and everyone else is either evil, stupid, or brainwashed.

• Vague promises about making things better, but little detail. /8

Everything is kept strictly abstract.

• Simple solutions to complex problems.

• Language heavily laden with emotion.

• Frequent appeals to glorious former times, tradition, and culture.

• Prohibition of challenging, questioning or disbelieving their high priests. /9

They are given symbols, slogans and abstract concepts to cling to, rather than real, measurable quantities. Demand of total commitment from members. In a cult, all doubt is heresy.

• Discouragement of independent thought. Cult followers are not permitted to have insights, /10

or even phrases of their own; they must simply recite the same tenets and mantras over and over, without pausing to reflect on what they mean, in order to spread the gospel.

• Cult members are invited to frequent mass gatherings where the charismatic leaders give rousing, /11

demagogic speeches.

• There is no truth but the cultists' truth. Followers must believe the word of their high priests over the evidence of their own eyes.

Now, who does all this remind you of?

Charismatic leaders: Farage, Rees-Mogg, Johnson /12

External threats and outgroups: immigrants, Jews, Germany, Remoaners, metropolitan elite, traitors, BLM, antifa
Antichrists: Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, Sadiq Khan, George Soros, Bill Gates
Apocalypse: "The EU is collapsing", "Our culture is being destroyed", /13

“Immigrants are overwhelming our public services”, “White people are being replaced”
Emotional language: “freedom”, “I’m PROUD of my country”, “You HATE Britain”, “You LOVE the EU”
Invocation of past: “We’ve survived worse”, “We won the war”, “We civilised the world” /14

Symbols: flags, poppies, emoji
Slogans: “You lost, get over it”, “No deal is better than a bad deal”, “EU shackles”, “You hate democracy”, “Love Europe, hate EU”, “Global Britain”, “We hold all the cards”, “Will of the people”
Abstract concepts: “sovereignty”, “freedom”, /15

“democracy”.
Mindless repetition: retweeting
Quasi-religious mass gatherings: Brexit party rallies.

Meanwhile, Remainers look at facts and listen to expert opinion. What’s fanatical about that? Remainers care about the details, about the real impacts on real people. /16

In what way is that ideological?

Remainers don’t venerate or blindly worship the EU (despite what Brexiters think). Instead they have a rational certainty – or at the very least, a high probability – that staying in the EU makes better economic, social and political sense. /17

Which Remain figurehead could you legitimately describe as a demagogue? (No offence, Remainlings, but who could you even call charismatic?) Who, on the Remain side, has been shown to be a serial liar? How many remainers have stabbed and shot their political opponents? /18

It’s not Remainers who keep crying “Ye of little FAITH” and “BELIEVE in Britain”. It’s not Remainers who hold 1930s-style rallies to gee up their base.

It is, of course, Euroscepticism – or rather, the Europhobia that it always pretended it wasn’t – that is the real cult. /19

What the populists are doing with their cries of “cult” and “extremism” (beyond trying to silence valid criticism and dissent) is classic deflection and projection: accuse your opponents of your own sin.

But it is all too obvious who the crackpots are. /E

Yes, Remainers care, passionately, about people's jobs, about individual freedoms, and about the economic and political future of the UK.

But it is a passion rooted in fact, not in a formless rage that waves flags and screams slogans to try to conceal its lack of substance.

Leave v Remain is not an ideological war for the simple reason that Remain is not an ideology, but rather a rational position.

Leave v Remain is an epistemological conflict: a fundamental difference in ways of thinking and living.