

Xenophobia, Radicalism and Expressions of Hatred in the UK (2018-20)

Dr William Allchorn

Introduction

Recent events in the UK relating to xenophobia, radicalism and radical right extremism suggest that racial and societal tensions are not going away any time soon. At the time of this report's completion in December of 2020, expressions of polarisation, stigmatisation and racialisation emerged in the UK's public life that have emboldened xenophobic, radical movements. First, and during the last week of January 2020, UK cultural nationalists' targeted mosques, taxi ranks and hotels in the South Yorkshire town of Rotherham in an attempt to inflame racial tensions, telling Muslim residents of the city to "get ready and watch what we do to you".² Secondly, and in reaction to the police's killing of George Floyd in the USA in May 2020, a wider campaign by UK radical right extremists was sparked in response to Black Lives Matters protests in the UK. Situated around protecting statues but also uniting disparate strands of culturally and racially nationalist groups, a large protest was held in London in June 2020 in a show of "patriotic unity" to "defend our memorials"; a clear attempt to galvanise culturally conservative communities to the cultural nationalist cause in reaction to the desecration of statues elsewhere in the UK prior to the protest event.³ Thirdly, a record rise in migrants attempting to cross the channel has led to further mobilisations by radical-right organisations and solo-actors, who see such crossings as part of a broader "invasion". Both culturally nationalist group Britain First and former UK Independence Party leader, Nigel Farage, visited hotels in a concerted attempt to intimidate refugees and migrants.

Likewise, neo-Nazism in the UK continues to inspire individuals to accelerate a 'race war' through violent means, as made clear in the most recent in a series of proscriptions. In February 2020, for example, the neo-Nazi groupuscules and National Action offshoots, Sonnenkrieg Division and System Resistance Network, were proscribed after two members of the former group were jailed for encouraging an attack on Prince Harry after his marriage to Meghan Markle.⁴ Moreover, in July 2020, a small, international neo-Nazi organisation, Feuerkrieg Division, was also proscribed by the UK government as it emerged that the group was radicalising individuals as young as 13 to commit violent 'accelerationist' acts.⁵ Such cases – also joined by solo-actor attempts – were symptomatic of a broader coalescing of individuals around an international radical right extremist terror ideology – sometimes dubbed as 'Siege Culture' -

¹ Cultural nationalism here is used to signify the ideology of anti-Islam street protest movements. For more on this typology, see: Bjørge, T. and Ravndal, J.A., 'Extreme-Right Violence and Terrorism: Concepts, Patterns, and Responses', ICCT Policy Brief, September 2019, online at: <https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2019/09/Extreme-Right-Violence-and-Terrorism-Concepts-Patterns-and-Responses-4.pdf>.

² Halliday, J., 'Rotherham Muslims launch 'guardian' group after far-right threats', *The Guardian*, 29 January 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jan/29/rotherham-muslims-launch-guardian-group-after-far-right-threats>.

³ Sabbagh, D., 'Campaigners fear far-right 'defence' of statues such as Churchill's', *The Guardian*, 10 June 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/10/far-right-protesters-plan-defence-of-statues-such-as-churchills>.

⁴ Grierson, J., 'UK to ban neo-Nazi Sonnenkrieg Division as a terrorist group', *The Guardian*, 24 February 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/feb/24/uk-ban-neo-nazi-sonnenkrieg-division-terrorist-group>.

⁵ UK Counter-Terrorism Policing, 'Feuerkrieg Division (FKD) Proscribed as Terrorist Group', 17 July 2020, online at: <https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/fkd-proscribed/>.

who's clandestine nature on dark social media and dark chat forums poses an increasing challenge for policymakers and law enforcement in the UK and elsewhere due to the terrorist potential therein.

The wider context of these interventions and activities by radical right (and Islamist) extremist groups are covered in this tri-annual review. This includes discussion of the continuing 'mainstreaming' of racist and xenophobic views in both major UK parties, as well as the developing actions to address and counter it. An essential backdrop to these developments was the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic that saw now established radical right (such as the National Front and Democratic Football Lads Alliance) and conspiracist influencers (such as James Thring and David Icke) join forces on the streets in several cities in the UK to voice their opposition to the UK governments lockdown measures. Sparsely attended (and found displaying signs of neo-fascist symbology),⁶ the UK radical right seemed to, however, follow a trend of other European partners in being unable to seize on the pandemic to put boots on the streets.⁷ Moreover, the continued fall from grace of UKIP over the last three years – with no less than six leaders during this period – has only added to the fragmentation (and what some argue as the post-organisational nature) of the radical right scene in the UK.⁸ This has resulted in a rise of 'lone actor' vigilantes and more radical, often street-based, movements to fill the void. The responses by the UK government, political parties, and policy practitioners are all central considerations in what follows; no less than six recommendations for practical action to counter rising xenophobia and radicalism can be found at the end of the conclusion to this report.

1. Overview of Legislation Protecting Minorities

The UK has a large array of legislation to combat racial and religious discrimination. Although also cast into some uncertainty by the UK's exit from the European Union on 31st January 2020, at the time of writing the United Kingdom remains a signatory to the European Charter of Fundamental Human Rights, and has also acceded to all international agreements protecting the rights of minority populations in Europe. While codified rights for subjects are not enshrined in the constitution (that is, a single, authoritative document like in the United States), a number of authoritative charters and statutes govern democratic relations; including the landmark Magna Carta (1215) and the Bill of Rights (1689), through to the Great Reform Act (1832) and more recent the Human Rights Act (1998). The latter initiative has helped enshrine certain political, civil and social rights in the UK over the last generation, while providing a key form of protection for ethnic and religious minorities.

Focusing more closely upon anti-discrimination measures, the UK has a number of legal initiatives to combat religious and racial hatred, discrimination against sexual, religious and racial minorities, and hate crime. Introduced under the Labour Prime Minister, James Callaghan, perhaps the most important Parliamentary Act to deal with racial discrimination is the 1976 Race Relations Act, which prohibits discrimination based on a person's colour, race,

⁶ Harpin, L., 'Conspiracy theorist David Icke cheered by thousands at anti-lockdown demo', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 30 August 2020, online at: <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/conspiracy-theorist-david-icke-cheered-by-thousands-at-anti-lockdown-demo-1.506085>.

⁷ Gruen, N., 'COVID won't kill populism, even though populist leaders have handled the crisis badly', *The Conversation*, 16 October 2020, online at: <https://theconversation.com/covid-wont-kill-populism-even-though-populist-leaders-have-handled-the-crisis-badly-145309>.

⁸ Mulhall, J., 'A Post-Organisational Far Right?', *Hope Not Hate*, 2018, online at: <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/research/state-of-hate-2018/online-radicalisation/post-organisational-far-right/>.

nationality, ethnic or national origin.⁹ Furthermore, grounds for prosecuting acts of discrimination against racial and religious minorities were enhanced in 2006 with the adoption of the Racial and Religious Hatred Act, making it an offence to stir up hatred against persons on racial or religious grounds.¹⁰ The 1976 Race Relations Act was, however, later subsumed and superseded by the 2010 Equality Act, which introduced nine key protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This helped to harmonise fully nine previous pieces of legislation in order to protect individuals from discrimination based on sex, age, religious belief, and disability.¹¹ The net effect was to legislate against both direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation; including public and private places of work, but also leisure and travel.

Looking more specifically at safeguards against specific acts of discrimination, the 1986 Public Order Act, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Criminal Justice Act 2003 all have provisions against racial and religious harassment and hate crime. In terms of the former, Section 5 of the Public Order Act outlaws the use of threatening (or abusive) words or behaviour, as well as writing, signs or any other visible representation, which is threatening (or abusive).¹² Moreover, Sections 18 and 19 of the Public Order Act stipulates that offences or written materials intended to stir up racial hatred, or that which has a likelihood of stirring up racial hatred, is outlawed.¹³ In terms of the latter, Sections 28-32 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Sections 145 and 146 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 allow prosecutors to apply for an uplift in sentence for those convicted of a hate crime.¹⁴

During the period under review, there were no substantial changes in anti-discrimination legislation in the UK. This did not, however, stop an appetite for reform to, and expansion of, anti-discrimination law; both nationally and in the UK's devolved Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland law-making bodies. The advent of Black Lives Matters protests in the UK in 2020 saw Boris Johnson's government extend his 'levelling up' agenda for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.¹⁵ Despite a commission on race and ethnic disparities being put together to review health, education, criminal justice and employment for BAME community members, little is known, however, about whether this will lead to concrete policies or guidelines to elevate the chances of BAME communities in the UK.¹⁶ Such attempts mirror the 'life chances' agenda of the UK's previous Prime Minister, Theresa May.¹⁷ On a slightly different

⁹ UK Government. Race Relations Act (1976), online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/74/enacted.

¹⁰ UK Government. Racial and Religious Hatred Act (2006), online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/1/contents.

¹¹ UK Government. Equality Act (2010), online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents.

¹² UK Government. Public Order Act (1986), Section 5, online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/64/section/5.

¹³ UK Government. Public Order Act (1986), online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/64.

¹⁴ UK Crown Prosecution Service. 'Hate Crime', online at: www.cps.gov.uk/hate-crime.

¹⁵ Tolhurst, A., 'Boris Johnson says his 'levelling up' agenda will tackle racial inequality in wake of Black Lives Matters protests,' *Politics Home*, 9 June 2020, online at: <https://www.politicshome.com/news/article/boris-johnson-says-his-levelling-up-agenda-will-help-tackle-racial-inequality-in-wake-of-black-lives-matters-protests>.

¹⁶ UK Government, 'Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities', Press Release, 16 July 2020, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities-16-july-2020>.

¹⁷ BBC News, 'UK must act against race inequality, Theresa May says', 10 October 2017, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41560927>.

note, and at the UK's central Westminster parliament, debates raged also about the legislation concerning the ability of transgender people to self-identify as such.¹⁸ After a period of public consultation, however, no legislation was brought forward and transgender people will still need medical evidence of transition to another gender to be legally certified as such.¹⁹ On a more positive note, on 8 March 2018, the Scottish Parliament passed legislation to improve gender representation on public boards. The Act created a target for public boards to have 50% of non-executive members who are women in order to alleviate gender disparities in public and private sector boards and institutions.²⁰ Mapping onto similar debates as in Westminster about the definition of 'woman' put forward by women's rights movements, however, the Act has recently been challenged at Scotland's highest Court of Session by 'For Women Scotland' because of the inclusion of trans-women within the new quota system.²¹ Finally, 2020 saw the tortuous passage of a new Hate Crime and Public Order Bill by the Scottish Government. Again, however, concerns over attempts to lower the legal threshold for hate crimes - through a new "stirring up hatred" offence - were heavily criticised by free speech groups, meaning that the Bill (introduced in April 2020) has had a delayed gestation that might outlast 2020.²²

2. Law enforcement procedures protecting minorities & curtailing extremism

The main safeguards against discrimination in everyday life and the workplace in the UK are the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and Tribunals Service. The former was set up on 1 October 2007 with particular powers to challenge discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights.²³ It was created out of three pre-existing equality organisations (the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission) and operates independently from the UK Government.²⁴ The latter service houses key institutions for recourse against discrimination within the workplace and against the state. In particular, Employment Tribunals and Asylum and Immigration Tribunals provide key legal fora for individuals feeling unfairly discriminated against based upon their religious, racial or ethnic background.²⁵

While hate crime is systematically recorded by a number of police constabularies, there still remains concerns with systemic underreporting and differences in recording practices across the UK. In the period under study, for example, Avon and Somerset Police suggested that, while official figures released in August 2020 showed a 20% increase in hate crimes in reaction to the

¹⁸ For more information, see this House of Commons Briefing Note (Number 08969, 22 July 2020): <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8969/>.

¹⁹ Murphy, S. & Brooks, L., 'UK government drops gender self-identification plan for trans people', *The Guardian*, 22 September 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/sep/22/uk-government-drops-gender-self-identification-plan-for-trans-people>.

²⁰ Scottish Parliament, Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill (2018), 8 March 2018, online at: <https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/gender-representation-on-public-boards-scotland-bill>.

²¹ Scottish Legal News, 'Permission Granted for Judicial Review of Act's Definition of 'Woman'', 21 October 2020, online at: <https://www.scottishlegal.com/article/permission-granted-for-judicial-review-of-act-s-definition-of-woman>.

²² Paton, C., 'Changes to Scottish Hate Crime Bill 'under active consideration'', *The Scotsman*, 27 October 2020, online at: <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/changes-scottish-hate-crime-bill-under-active-consideration-3016666>.

²³ Equality and Human Rights Commission. 'Who we are', online at: www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/about-us/who-we-are.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ HM Courts and Tribunals Service. 'About Us', online at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-courts-and-tribunals-service/about#our-tribunals.

UK's Black Lives Matters protests.²⁶ In the same analysis, Muslim, Jewish, Polish communities were however found to be at high risk of underreporting due to a normalisation of such crimes as well as some linguistic and cultural barriers.²⁷ Added to this, a lack of trust and confidence in the police is also a sizeable factor among minority communities in the UK more generally.²⁸ Moreover, comparisons between officially collated figures and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) also highlight the issue. Between March 2018 to March 2020, for example, 190,000 hate crimes were reported on the basis of race, religion, gender, disability, gender identity and sexual orientation. This is compared with the 105,090 hate crime offences recorded nationally by the police.²⁹ Finally, the patchwork nature of hate crime statistics and how they are gathered in the UK sometimes makes it hard to ascertain the scale of the problem. In recent years, there has been criticism of intransigence by the UK government and police forces in recognising gender-based,³⁰ ageist,³¹ disablist³² and transgender hate crime.³³

Turning from official reporting of hate crimes to court cases, we have seen an increase – during the reporting period – of sentences being awarded on the basis of hate crime offences in UK court. In UK Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) 2017-18 reporting period, there was a 13.6% increase in the percentage of cases of sentences being 'uplifted' (from 53.5% to 67.1%) and a 12.5% increase in the following (2018-2019) reporting period (from 67.1% to 73.6%).³⁴ This has resulted from a sustained effort in meeting a 55% target set in 2016. Looking further into the data, however, a more mixed picture emerges for the current reporting period. CPS's 2018-2019 reporting period saw a decrease of 12.5% in pre-charge decisions based on a hate crime and a 9.3% decrease in completed cases, which contained a hate crime element from the 2017-2018

²⁶ Avon and Somerset Police, 'Avon and Somerset Police records 20% increase in the number of racially-motivated hate crimes reported by victims', 12 October 2020, online at: <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/news/2020/10/avon-and-somerset-police-records-20-increase-in-the-number-of-racially-motivated-hate-crimes-reported-by-victims/>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Skellington, D., 'Race and hate crime go unreported because people believe police will do little', Open University, 20 May 2014, online at: www.open.edu/openlearn/people-politics-law/politics-policy-people/society-matters/race-and-hate-crime-go-unreported-because-people-believe-police-will-do-little.

²⁹ UK Home Office, 'Hate crime, England and Wales, 2019 to 2020', Gov.UK Website, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020#police-recorded-hate-crime>.

³⁰ Grierson, J., 'Misogyny 'should become a hate crime in England and Wales'', *The Guardian*, 23 September 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/sep/23/misogyny-hate-crime-england-wales-law-commission>

³¹ Grierson, J., 'Review of UK hate crime law to consider misogyny and ageism', *The Guardian*, 16 October 2018, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/16/review-of-uk-hate-law-to-consider-misogyny-and-ageism>.

³² Bowcott, O., 'Victims of disability hate crime are still being let down, report claims', *The Guardian*, 21 May 2015, online at: www.theguardian.com/society/2015/may/21/disability-hate-crime-police-probation-prosecutors-failing-victims-report-claims.

³³ Butcher, R., 'More than a third of all trans people suffered hate crimes in 2017, research suggests', *The Independent*, 19 January 2018, online at: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/trans-hate-crimes-stats-figures-2017-more-than-third-a8166826.html.

³⁴ UK Crown Prosecution Service, 'Hate Crime Annual Report 2017-2018', p.6, online at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/cps-hate-crime-report-2018.pdf> & UK Crown Prosecution Service, 'Hate Crime Annual Report 2018-2019', p.7, online at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/CPS-Hate-Crime-Annual-Report-2018-2019.PDF>.

reporting period. The CPS attributed this drop as mainly due to more general decrease in “the number of suspects the police have referred to us for a charging decision”; something which the organisation is investigating. Finally, and in relation to prosecution rates vs. total hate crimes, an even bleaker picture emerges – with a drop from a quarter to just under ten percent in the reporting period.³⁵ The total percentage of convictions vs. non-convictions have remained steady (at 84.7 % in 2017-18 and 84.3% in 2018-2019), with guilty pleas slightly increasing slightly (by 0.7%).³⁶

Moving from hate crimes to acts of terrorism and extremism, the UK has robust procedures for identifying individuals on the road to radicalisation and more downstream measures to proscribe terrorist organisations. Part of the UK government’s CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy, Prevent allows for a multi-sector response to individuals referred to them.³⁷ Participation in the Channel process - as part of this - is voluntary and individuals are often paired with a mentor as well as mental health, employment and housing experts to provide a holistic solution out of extremism; not just tackling the ideological basis of their extremist engagement but also social, economic and psychological push and pull factors that informed their choice to go down a particular radical pathway in their first place.³⁸ Added to this, there are non-governmental de-radicalisation programmes (such as EXIT UK) – mainly run by former extremists – that provide training, education and mentorship services.³⁹

Prevent has been widely criticised for stigmatising the Muslim community and has recently been put under independent review.⁴⁰ Despite public debates that have shown the toxicity of the Prevent ‘brand’, opinion polls actually show strong support for the programme (58% in favour in 2020)⁴¹ and it is often cited by international bodies as a gold standard in government programmes to prevent violent extremism.⁴² Moreover, and as Channel caseloads show, radical right extremism has achieved parity (and according to some metrics overtaken) with that of Islamist extremism as one of the “fastest growing problems” for counter-terror officials in the UK.⁴³ This has been shown in relation to several high profile cases of solo-actor and groupuscular radical right extremists being caught in the planning stages of a terror attack and

³⁵ Dearden, L., ‘Less than one in 10 hate crimes prosecuted despite record attacks’, *The Independent*, 27 December 2019, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/hate-crime-attacks-jews-muslims-gay-prosecutions-police-falling-a9257256.html>.

³⁶ UK Crown Prosecution Service, ‘Hate Crime Annual Report 2018-2019’, p.30, online at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/CPS-Hate-Crime-Annual-Report-2018-2019.PDF>

³⁷ For more on the UK’s CONTEST strategy, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest>.

³⁸ See this Channel case study as an example: <https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/the-channel-programme>.

³⁹ See EXIT UK’s website at: <https://exituk.org/>.

⁴⁰ UK Home Office, ‘Independent review of Prevent’, Documents Page, 16 September 2019, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/independent-review-of-prevent>.

⁴¹ ICM Polling Unlimited, ‘Perceptions of the UK Counter-Terrorism programme, “Prevent”’, August 2019, online at: <https://www.icmunlimited.com/our-work/understanding-perceptions-of-the-uk-counter-terrorism-programme-prevent/>.

⁴² Ware, J., ‘Prevent isn’t ‘rotten’ – it’s working’, CapX, 25 March 2017, online at: <https://capx.co/prevent-isnt-rotten-its-working/>.

⁴³ Dodd, V. & Grierson, J., ‘Fastest-growing UK terrorist threat is from far right, say police’, *The Guardian*, 19 September 2019, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/sep/19/fastest-growing-uk-terrorist-threat-is-from-far-right-say-police>.

has given the UK the infamous mantle of seeing highest number of radical right extremist terror attacks and plots in Europe in 2019, according to Europol's figures.⁴⁴

Finally, and on the note of discriminatory practices in law enforcement, one sizeable story that has been debated in the reporting period is the trial use of facial recognition technology and stop and search techniques in the UK. In March 2020, for example, the UK's Equalities and Human Rights Commission pleaded with police forces and the UK Home Office to halt the public use of facial recognition technology as it was deemed to amplify racial discrimination and stifle free expression.⁴⁵ In particular, evidence has been found that because the technology has mainly be trained on Caucasian faces the algorithms used in identification "disproportionately misidentify black people and women" and therefore potentially "replicate and magnify patterns of discrimination in policing".⁴⁶ Such an issue came to a head in summer of 2020 when police were warned not to use facial recognition at UK Black Lives Matter protests due to such inaccuracies.⁴⁷ Turning to the second issue of stop and search, a wave of debates on the issue of police halting minorities for suspected criminal activity crested again in the UK amidst broader BLM activity. In October 2020, for example, the Metropolitan Police were found to have incurred multiple errors while using the practice,⁴⁸ and – in the same month – statistics released by the UK's Office for National Statistics showed that black people were eighteen times more likely to be stopped under Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.⁴⁹

3. Social attitudes towards immigrants, foreign nationals and various ethnic minorities

Much recent scholarship in the UK has been devoted to focusing upon xenophobia and its links to so-called 'trigger events' during the reporting period. In November 2019, a study by Cardiff University's HateLab found that 2013 Woolwich terror attacks, 2016 EU Referendum and subsequent 2017 terror attacks led to an increased hate speech online and hate crimes offline – mainly in the 24-48 hour window after such events.⁵⁰ Moreover, another earlier study came to similar conclusions – suggesting that the EU referendum led to a significant increase in hate crimes equivalent to the Manchester and London terror attacks, controlling for other factors.⁵¹ In addition, a London-focused criminological study found that anti-Black and anti-Muslim hate

⁴⁴ Dearden, L., 'UK saw highest number of far-right terror attacks and plots in Europe in 2019, Europol says', *The Independent*, 23 June 2020, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/terror-attacks-far-right-islamist-europe-uk-stanwell-2019-a9581921.html>.

⁴⁵ Grierson, J., 'Review of UK hate crime law to consider misogyny and ageism', *The Guardian*, 16 October 2018, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/mar/12/halt-public-use-of-facial-recognition-tech-says-equality-watchdog>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Boland, H., 'Police warned not to use facial recognition at UK Black Lives Matter protests', *The Telegraph*, 11 June 2020, online at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2020/06/11/police-warned-not-use-facial-recognition-uk-black-lives-matter/>.

⁴⁸ Dodd, V., 'Met police criticised for multiple errors in stop and search practice', *The Guardian*, 28 October 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/28/met-police-criticised-for-multiple-errors-in-stop-and-search-practice>.

⁴⁹ Vikram, D., 'Black people nine times more likely to face stop and search than white people', *The Guardian*, 27 October 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/27/black-people-nine-times-more-likely-to-face-stop-and-search-than-white-people>.

⁵⁰ Williams, M. & de Reya, M., 'Hatred Behind the Screens: A Report on the Rise of Online Hate Speech', November 2019, Mishcon Acadaemy, online at: <https://www.mishcon.com/upload/files/Online%20Hate%20Final%2025.11.pdf>.

⁵¹ Devine, D., 'The UK Referendum on Membership of the European Union as a Trigger Event for Hate Crimes', SSRN, March 2018, online at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3118190.

crime in the post-Brexit era were predictors of racially and religiously aggravated hate crimes in the offline world.⁵² Finally, this maps onto qualitative findings of studies into hate crime published during the moment prior period under consideration – suggesting that Donald Trump’s presidency and ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks in European countries such as France, Germany, Sweden also played a part in anti-immigrant hate crime attacks.⁵³

Looking more broadly at xenophobic attitudes in the UK during the reporting period, figures published by the EU’s annual Eurobarometer survey found that negative perceptions of immigration and its importance as an issue have actually tended to decrease over the reporting period. In fact, positive feelings toward migrants from other EU states and outside the EU rose markedly in the UK – an increase from 58% in 2017 to 64% positivity in 2018 and 54% to 62% positivity for EU and outside EU migration⁵⁴ – whilst concerns over immigration remained low, with only 13% citing it as the most important issue facing them personally (4% below the EU 28 average).⁵⁵ This may be unsurprising in light of the more authoritarian and right-wing populist line adopted on immigration first by Theresa May and Boris Johnson since the June 2016 EU Referendum result and the promise of “taking back control” of the UK’s border subsequent to the referendum result. Reported attitudes towards the EU itself in 2018 were more in line with recent voting patterns, with a plurality (43%) taking a negative view of the EU and 44% of respondents claiming optimism about the UK’s future outside of the EU.⁵⁶ Such trends have staid broadly stable over time – with concerns over the importance of immigration remaining low (14% in 2019 and 9% in 2020), a slight decline in negative views toward the EU itself (20% in 2019 & 31% in 2020), and at least a plurality feeling pessimistic about the future of the EU (47% in 2019 & 50% in 2020).⁵⁷

Turning to the theme of anti-Muslim prejudice in British society more broadly, several opinion polls conducted in the period under review have fleshed out trends regarding anti-Muslim prejudice. In October 2018, a poll of over 43,000 people conducted by the UK anti-fascist collective Hope not Hate found that - while overall attitudes to multiculturalism are softening - the opposite is happening with Islam – with the 2017 UK terror attacks and media coverage of

⁵² Williams, M.L., Burnap, P., Javed, A., Liu, H., & Ozalp, S., ‘Hate in the Machine: Anti-Black and Anti-Muslim Social Media Posts as Predictors of Offline Racially and Religiously Aggravated Crime’, *The British Journal of Criminology*, 60 (1): 93–117, January 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azzo49>.

⁵³ Awan, I. & Zempi, I., “You all look the same’: Non-Muslim men who suffer Islamophobic hate crime in the post-Brexit era’, *European Journal of Criminology*, 17 (5): 585-602, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1477370818812735>.

⁵⁴ *Eurobarometer 90*, ‘National Report United Kingdom’, Autumn 2018, online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2215>, pp.6-7.

⁵⁵ *Eurobarometer 91*, ‘National Report United Kingdom’, Spring 2019, online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/87480>, p.2.

⁵⁶ *Eurobarometer 90*, ‘National Report United Kingdom’, Autumn 2018, online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2215>, p.14.

⁵⁷ *Eurobarometer 92*, ‘National Report United Kingdom’, Autumn 2019, online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinionmobile/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/surveyky/2255>, pp. 2-3 & *Eurobarometer 93*, ‘National Report United Kingdom’, Summer 2020, online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2262>, pp. 2-3.

sexual grooming gangs.⁵⁸ For example, 32% of people believed there were Muslim “no-go areas” in the UK governed by Sharia law, a view endorsed by 49% of leave voters in the Brexit referendum – demonstrating (in the authors eyes) that opposition to the EU and prejudice towards Islam “are clearly interlinked issues for many”.⁵⁹ Moreover, in a separate study conducted by the American-based polling company, Pew Research, 36% of UK respondents suggested that they would not be ready to accept a Muslim as family members and 46% believed in UK national cultures as superior to others.⁶⁰ In addition, another 2019 Hope not Hate poll (n=<5000) found that 35% of the population believe that Islam poses a threat to the British way of life and 30% would support a campaign to stop proposals for building a mosque.⁶¹ Added to this, anti-Muslim attitudes within the UK’s Conservative party were investigated in 2020 – with over half seeing Islam as a threat to British way of life.⁶²

Turning to antisemitic prejudice in the UK, one of the largest (n=<1,000,000) investigations into attitudes towards Jews and Israel was published in the period under study. In 2019, the UK Campaign against Antisemitism (in partnership with Kings College London) found that more than a third (37%) of people in British society hold at least one antisemitic statement (e.g. around Jewish control of business) to be true – although only a small proportion (i.e. less than 20%) of British adults strongly agreed with the statements.⁶³ Moreover, only 14% suggested that connection to Israel made Jewish people less loyal to the UK.⁶⁴ Perhaps the most telling finding was the prevalence of antisemitism within the far-left of British politics – with 58% of those identifying as having ‘very left-wing’ view holding to two or more antisemitic viewpoints suggested by researchers.⁶⁵ In conclusion, the report identified how left-wing antisemitism – particularly within the UK Labour party – had overtaken such expressions on the very edges of the UK right.

Finally, the reporting period – coming a year after the 50th anniversary of homosexual decriminalisation - also saw polling attitudes towards sexual minorities that was both concerning and illuminating. Research by the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey found that the proportion of people who say they are completely comfortable with same-sex relations had fallen for the first time in more than three decades.⁶⁶ Of the nearly 3,000 people polled, two-

⁵⁸ Walker, P., ‘Divided Britain: study finds huge chasm in attitudes’, *The Guardian*, 17 October 2018, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/17/divided-britain-study-finds-huge-chasm-in-attitudes>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Joshi, O. & Evans, J., ‘British attitudes on national identity and religious minorities not unique in EU’, *Pew Research Center*, 19 February 2019, online at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/02/19/british-attitudes-on-national-identity-and-religious-minorities-not-unique-in-eu/>.

⁶¹ Perraudin, F., ‘Third of Britons believe Islam threatens British way of life, says report’, *The Guardian*, 17 February 2019, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/17/third-of-britons-believe-islam-threatens-british-way-of-life-says-report>.

⁶² Gayle, D., ‘Half of Conservative party members believe Islam is threat, poll finds’, *The Guardian*, 30 September 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/sep/30/half-of-conservative-party-members-believe-islam-is-threat-poll-finds>.

⁶³ Campaign Against Antisemitism, ‘Antisemitism Barometer 2019’, online at: <https://antisemitism.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Antisemitism-Barometer-2019.pdf>, pp.8 & 15.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.9.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 23.

⁶⁶ Bulman, M., ‘Acceptance of same-sex relationships slowing down in UK, report suggests’, *The Independent*, 11 July 2019, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/lgbt-gay-relationships-britain-acceptance-social-attitudes-survey-bsa-a8998596.html>.

thirds (66 per cent) said same-sex relationships were “not wrong at all”, down from 68 per cent the previous year – marking the first drop since 1987.⁶⁷ With regards to the transgender community, the report concluded that despite not wanting to be seen as personally prejudiced, the BSA survey respondents were less clear that prejudice against transgender people was in principle wrong. For example, less than half (49 per cent) said they viewed prejudice against transgender people as “always” wrong, while 6 per cent said it was “rarely” or “never” wrong.⁶⁸ Researchers suggested that the change was down to a minority of the British public who are increasingly focused on ensuring that socially conservative views and voices are reflected in public discussion of gender and relationships rather than a wholesale change in the processes of liberalisation.

4. Radical Right Extremist Groupuscules, Street Movements and Parties in the UK

The United Kingdom has often been seen as an exceptional case when it comes to the success of radical right parties. One key trope within the UK literature on radical right-wing extremism was its abject failure to make any appreciable impact upon UK electoral politics. In his 1996 chapter in a co-edited book regarding the ‘Failure of British Fascism’, for example, Roger Griffin likened the UK radical right to an “ugly duckling” in comparison with some of its European brethren.⁶⁹ Limited by a First-Past-the-Post electoral system and a political consensus in respect of “moderation, a hatred of fanaticism, an aversion to demagoguery, uniforms and overt racism”,⁷⁰ the UK’s radical right – according to Griffin – has been left to “scratch around indefinitely without ever coming out as a swan”.⁷¹ It was therefore recognised that the post-war anti-fascist consensus and a strong civic culture had immunised the UK and its political institutions from all forms of radical right extremism – acting as a firewall against extremist representation in the UK Parliament and municipal elections.⁷²

Such an anti-fascist consensus and exceptionalism to radical nationalist groups and parties has, however, been sorely tested over the past two decades. During the 2000’s, the neo-fascist British National Party (BNP) started to moderate its ideology away from a more extreme form of palingenetic nationalism (i.e. national rebirth after a period of moral decadence) towards a radical right populist stance – expressing nativist and nationalist scepticism in the areas of immigration, welfare and the European Union.⁷³ This was typified at the 2005 UK General Election when the BNP’s manifesto included pledges to withdraw from the EU, to bring back grammar schools, cut immigration, and increase security.⁷⁴ The result of this moderation was significant electoral success for the party – winning more than 50 Council seats, two seats in the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Griffin, R., ‘British fascism: The ugly duckling’, In L. M. Cronin (ed.) *The Failure of British Fascism: The far right and the fight for political recognition*, London: Palgrave, 1996, pp. 141-165.

⁷⁰ Goodwin, M.J., ‘The Extreme Right in Britain: Still an “Ugly Duckling” but for How Long?’ *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No.2, 2007, p.242.

⁷¹ Griffin, R. Op Cit. p. 163.

⁷² Eatwell, R., ‘The extreme right and British exceptionalism: the primacy of politics’, In: Hainsworth, P. (ed.) *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream*. London: Pinter, 2000, pp. 172-192.

⁷³ Copsey, N., ‘Changing course or changing clothes? Reflections on the ideological evolution of the British National Party 1999–2006’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 41, No.1, 2007, pp. 61-82.

⁷⁴ Meyjes, T., ‘Some of the BNP’s 2005 election pledges are now mainstream policy’, *The Metro*, 27 April 2017, online at: <http://metro.co.uk/2017/04/27/some-of-bnps-2005-election-pledges-are-now-mainstream-policy-6599296/?ito=cshare>.

European Parliament and one on the devolved Greater London Assembly. Largely due to infighting over finances and the divisive character of its chairman, Nick Griffin, the party's electoral bubble burst after failing to gain Parliamentary representation at the 2010 General Election – returning the party to the electoral wilderness and quickly spiralling into irrelevance. At the 2017 General Election, for example, the party was unable to score more than 4,500 votes – down from just over 500,000 seven years prior.⁷⁵ Moreover, at the 2019 General Election, the party suffered a further fall from grace – losing its only Lancashire-based councillor to retirement⁷⁶ and only fielding one councillor in North East London who received 510 votes, thus coming last.⁷⁷

As the BNP star rose and began to wane, a new party, the UK Independence Party (UKIP), came to take its place in the UK – again testing the UK's resilience to extremist parties. For most of its history, UKIP was electorally irrelevant. Founded in 1993 as a way of converting Conservatives to hard Euroscepticism, its early attempts at electoral breakthrough were thwarted by infighting and stronger Eurosceptic opponents (such as James Goldsmith's Referendum Party). Briefly successful under the leadership of Robert Kilroy-Silk in 2004, it wasn't until Nigel Farage, a former City banker and one of UKIP's first MEPs, assumed the leadership for a second time in November 2010 that the party took off, transforming UKIP from a single-issue movement into an ideologically broad-based, far-right party able to fuse anti-EU politics with socially conservative, anti-migrant, and anti-elitist messages.⁷⁸ Becoming an insurgent actor in British politics it came first, ahead of all other mainstream parties, in the 2014 European Elections – in the process, scoring over 4 million votes at the 2015 General Election. Witnessing key defections from the UK Conservative Party in 2014, it was thus able to gain Parliamentary representation for the first time.

Owing to the exit of Farage and seeming lack of purpose after the 2016 Brexit vote to leave the EU, however, the party has also entered the electoral wilderness and became more ideologically extreme in the monitoring period. It returned just under 600,000 votes at the 2017 General Election and 22,817 at the 2019 UK General Election.⁷⁹⁸⁰ In the interim, the party also lost nearly all of its Council seats at the May 2018 UK local elections.⁸¹ In this atmosphere, questions are rightly being about the relevance and electoral viability of the party going forward ⁸² - with former UKIP leader, Nigel Farage, using the vehicle of his new Brexit and Reform parties to

⁷⁵ *BBC News*, 'BNP vote increases, but fails to win seat', 7 May 2010, online at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8667231.stm.

⁷⁶ Pidd, H., 'As the BNP vanishes, do the forces that built it remain?', *The Guardian*, 2 May 2018, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/may/02/bnps-last-district-councillor-bows-out-but-insists-party-will-rise-again>.

⁷⁷ 2019 General Election Results, 'Hornchurch and Upminster Results', online at: <https://candidates.democracyclub.org.uk/elections/parl.2019-12-12/>.

⁷⁸ Goodwin, M. and Ford, R., *Revolt on the Right: Explaining Support for the Radical Right in Britain*, London: Routledge, 2014.

⁷⁹ *BBC News*, 'Election Results', May 2017, online at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2017/results.

⁸⁰ *BBC News*, 'Election Results', December 2019, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2019/results>.

⁸¹ Walker, P., 'Ukip general secretary says party is "like the Black Death"', *The Guardian*, 4 May 2018, online at: www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/may/04/black-death-ukip-almost-wiped-out-in-english-local-elections.

⁸² Mance, H. and Tighe, C., 'Ukip contests local elections as questions swirl over its survival', *The Financial Times*, 16 April 2018 online at: www.ft.com/content/e76d6798-3e5a-1e8-b7e0-52972418fec4.

further frustrate Conservative attempts to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and successfully negotiate a transition treaty going into 2020.⁸³ Meanwhile, UKIP has gone through six leaders and slowly ensconced itself with more fringe far-right individuals (such as Tommy Robinson, Mark Meecham and Carl Benjamin) and outfits (such as the Democratic Football Lads Alliance) associated with the UK's established extreme radical right.⁸⁴ Drivers for radicalisation within the mainstream UK far right tend to be anti-Muslim prejudice and anti-elite sentiments – layered with a sense of victimhood and being shut out of mainstream political conversations.

In parallel with the developments at the party political level has seen the rise of culturally nationalist⁸⁵ street movements and neo-Nazi terror cells in the UK – especially in the period after the BNP's collapse. In June 2009, the anti-Islam English Defence League (EDL) street movement emerged as a strident voice against what it saw as the “creeping effects” of ‘Islamisation’ in UK public life.⁸⁶ Able to mobilise thousands of loyal foot soldiers for its events and emerging as the result of Islamist extremists demonstrating at the homecoming of UK troops in the Bedfordshire town of Luton, it hosted over fifty major demonstrations up and down the UK until the exit of its founder, Tommy Robinson, in October 2013.⁸⁷ The EDL continues to be active – hosting 13 major demonstrations in 2017, 3 in 2018 and 1 in 2019 – but the scale of its demonstrations has dropped significantly – with its best turnout in the monitoring period some 200 activists.⁸⁸

Yet the EDL is not the only street-based movement to emerge in the wake of the BNP's collapse. In May 2011, another anti-Islam protest movement and political party, Britain First, emerged on the UK culturally nationalist scene. Led by a former BNP Councillor, Paul Golding, Britain First has gained notoriety for its ‘Mosque Invasions’, ‘Christian Patrols’, and demonstrations held in areas with sizeable Muslim populations in the UK that are explicitly designed to provoke minority communities. Despite garnering a significant online following (nearly 2.3 million Facebook followers), it was in fact offline actions by the group caught up with the movement in 2017 – with both leaders facing time in prison for conducting a Cardiff ‘Mosque Invasion’ in November 2016⁸⁹ and an aggressive leafleting campaign against an Asian-owned takeaway restaurants in May 2017.⁹⁰ As of spring 2018, the movement and its leaders have been banned

⁸³ Sabbagh, D. & Parveen, N., ‘Farage party's relaunch marked with low-key anti-lockdown protest’, *The Guardian*, 8 November 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/nov/08/nigel-farage-reform-party-relaunch-marked-low-key-anti-lockdown-protest>.

⁸⁴ Allchorn, W., ‘Towards a new ‘populist’ party? UKIP's interim manifesto and the future of the UK radical right’, LSE British Politics and Policy Blog, 5 October 2018, online at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/ukip-interim-manifesto/>.

⁸⁵ See footnote 1 above for a full explanation of this.

⁸⁶ EDL Website. ‘Mission Statement’, online at: www.englishdefenceleague.org.uk/mission-statement/.

⁸⁷ Goodwin, M.J., ‘The Roots of Extremism: The English Defence Leagues and the Counter-Jihad Challenge’. London: Chatham House, March 2013, online at: www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/189767.

⁸⁸ *Hope not Hate*, ‘2018 State of Hate: Far Right Terrorism on the Rise’, January-February 2018, online at: www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/State-of-Hate-2018.pdf, p.19.

⁸⁹ Pasha-Robinson, L., ‘Paul Golding: Former Britain First leader jailed for eight weeks’. *The Independent*, 15 December 2016, online at: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/paul-golding-jailed-britain-first-leader-8-weeks-high-court-injunction-mosque-a7477046.html.

⁹⁰ Doherty, S., ‘Britain First's leaders “shouting and banging” outside a Ramsgate home “left a toddler traumatised”’. *Kent Live*, 31 January 2018, online at: www.kentlive.news/news/kent-news/britain-firsts-leaders-shouting-banging-1141962.

from Facebook and Twitter and its operations have largely been relegated to Northern Ireland.⁹¹ The litany of criminal charges – including terrorism – lodged against its leaders has fractured and limited the groups largely confrontational form of activism.

In addition to Britain First, several other significant extreme-right nationalist movements have emerged in the post-2010 period. Founded in 2013, the neo-Nazi group National Action (NA) has quickly established itself as one of the most violent and concerning movements to ever emerge on the UK extreme right. Uncompromising adherents of National Socialism and outspoken admirers of Hitler, the group came to public attention in 2014 after one of its members was convicted for racially aggravated harassment of a Liverpool Labour MP, Luciana Berger who is Jewish.⁹² In June 2015, things took a more sinister turn when NA activist Zack Davies was convicted of the attempted murder of a Sikh Doctor with a claw hammer and a machete.⁹³ Moreover, in Summer 2019, one of NA's more senior activists, Jack Renshaw, was found guilty of preparing an act of terror and given a life sentence for plotting to kill a West Lancashire MP, Rosie Cooper.⁹⁴ After the proscription of the group as a terrorist organisation in December 2016, news came to light of the group's persisting activities under the pseudonyms Scottish Dawn and NS131.⁹⁵ Arrests and ongoing trials of individuals connected with National Action and its various offshoots are continuing – with serving soldiers and more than a dozen other individuals subsequently having been through court.⁹⁶ Both National Action itself and its subsequent offshoots (such as the System Resistance Network and Sonnenkrieg division) have recently been proscribed – making membership, using the name and activism within such movements a criminal offence. More specifically, former members of National Action have been charged with various offences, including terror offences,⁹⁷ being part of a proscribed organisation,⁹⁸ the making of a pipe bomb,⁹⁹ sex offences¹⁰⁰ and a number of assassination

⁹¹ Cellan-Jones, R., 'Facebook bans Britain First pages', *BBC News*, 14 March 2018, online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-43398417>.

⁹² Press Association, 'Racist troll guilty of harassing Labour MP with antisemitic posts', *The Guardian*, 7 December 2016, online at: www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/dec/07/racist-troll-guilty-harassing-labour-mp-luciana-berger-joshua-bonehill-paine.

⁹³ *BBC News*, 'Lee Rigby revenge attacker Zak Davies given life sentence', 11 September 2015, online at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-east-wales-34218184.

⁹⁴ *BBC News*, 'Jack Renshaw: MP death plot neo-Nazi jailed for life', 17 May 2019, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-48306380>.

⁹⁵ Cockburn, H., 'National Action: Neo-Nazi group's aliases 'Scottish Dawn' and 'NS131' banned under terrorism laws, says Home Office'. *The Independent*, 28 September 2018, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/national-action-neo-nazi-scottish-dawn-ns131-banned-terrorism-laws-home-office-british-soldiers-west-a7971906.html>.

⁹⁶ *Hope not Hate* 'National Action', February 2017, online at: www.hopenothate.org.uk/research/the-hate-files/national-action/.

⁹⁷ Dearden, L., 'National Action: 'Miss Hitler' contestant and three fellow neo-Nazis convicted of terror offences', *The Independent*, 18 March 2020, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/national-action-neo-nazi-terrorist-miss-hitler-alice-cutter-trial-a9345291.html>.

⁹⁸ Press Association, 'Four UK neo-Nazis jailed for membership of National Action', *The Guardian*, 9 June 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jun/09/four-uk-neo-nazis-jailed-for-membership-of-national-action>.

⁹⁹ *BBC News*, 'Neo-Nazi pipe bomb teenager admits terror offence', 16 July 2018, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-44848985>.

¹⁰⁰ Dearden, L., 'Jack Renshaw: Neo-Nazi paedophile who plotted to kill Labour MP jailed for life', *The Independent*, 17 May 2019, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/jack-renshaw-trial-jail-sentence-rosie-cooper-labour-neo-nazi-a8918206.html>.

attempts.¹⁰¹ Drivers at the more extreme, racially nationalist end of the UK far right tend to be around a sense of ethnic marginalisation,¹⁰² broader processes of social fragmentation, isolation & disintegration,¹⁰³ and the attractiveness of violence¹⁰⁴ as social empowerment¹⁰⁵, all enabled by fringe social media platforms (e.g. Telegram and Fascist Forge) and esoteric forms of ‘accelerationist’ and ‘Siege’ neo-Nazism on the Internet.

Added to this, and in terms of specific organisational developments, 2020 saw the reporting of the emergence of two UK groups on the racially nationalist end of the far right spectrum. One that came to prominence was the biologically racist Patriotic Alternative whose activities have mainly been restricted to stickering, vlogging and ‘prepper’-type outdoors activities around issues of ‘white marginalisation’ and a ‘white lives matter’ discourse.¹⁰⁶ The other more sinister group, Hundred Handers, has also engaged in such activities but with a neo-Nazi ideology.¹⁰⁷ Its use of Telegram to co-ordinate activities that are autonomous and anonymous to the groups (largely teenage) leadership are something for interested researchers, policymakers and practitioners to look out for going forward.¹⁰⁸

In addition to this, and in terms of other developments on the racially nationalist side of the radical right scene, there have been several high profile prosecutions and arrests of national socialist inspired individuals planning to carry out solo-actor forms of terrorism. For example, in December 2018, two neo-Nazi teenagers – linked to the now proscribed Sonnenkrieg Division – were arrested for signalling their intent to kill Prince Harry.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, in September 2019, a Nazi-obsessed High Wycombe teenager who said it was his dream to plan a terror attack and vowed to fill London’s streets with blood was jailed.¹¹⁰ Such attempts have not gone unabated recently. For example in October 2020, a man was accused of radical-right extremist

¹⁰¹ See references above.

¹⁰² McClaren, L. & Johnson, M. ‘Resources, Group Conflict and Symbols: Explaining Anti-immigration Hostility in Britain.’ *Political Studies*. 55: 709-732, 2007; Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, P. 205; & Rydgren, J., ‘The Sociology of the Radical Right’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 33, 2007, P. 249.

¹⁰³ Druxes, H. and Simpson, P.A., ‘Introduction: Pegida as a European Far-Right Populist Movement.’ *German Politics and Society* 34 (4): 1-16, 2016 & Hartleb, F., *Lone Wolves: The New Terrorism of Right-Wing Single Actors*, SAGE Press, 2020, P.112.

¹⁰⁴ Treadwell, J. & Garland, J., ‘Masculinity, Marginalization and Violence: A Case Study of the English Defence League’, *British Journal of Criminology*. 51 (4): 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azr027>.

¹⁰⁵ Abbas, Tahir. "Ethnicity and Politics in Contextualising Far Right and Islamist Extremism." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 3 (2017): 54-61.

¹⁰⁶ Murdoch, S., ‘Patriotic Alternative: Uniting the Fascist Right?’, *Hope not Hate*, 17 August 2020, online at: <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2020/08/17/patriotic-alternative-uniting-the-fascist-right/>.

¹⁰⁷ Davis, G., ‘Exposed: The anonymous Nazi activist behind the Hundred Handers network’, *Hope not Hate*, 11 August 2020, online at: <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2020/08/11/exposed-the-anonymous-nazi-activist-behind-the-hundred-handers-network/>.

¹⁰⁸ Lee, B., ‘Blind Networks in the Extreme-Right’, *Vox-Pol Blog*, 28 October 2020, online at: <https://www.voxpol.eu/blind-networks-in-the-extreme-right/>.

¹⁰⁹ Cox, J., ‘Two teens and 21-year-old arrested over Neo-Nazi group ‘that called for Prince Harry to be shot’’, *The Sun*, 6 December 2018, online at: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/7911585/neo-nazis-arrested-prince-harry/>.

¹¹⁰ Wareham, S., ‘Nazi-obsessed High Wycombe teenager who dreamt of planning a terror attack is jailed’, *Bucks Free Press*, 22 September 2019, online at: <https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/news/17919337.nazi-obsessed-high-wycombe-teenager-dreamt-planning-terror-attack-jailed/>.

terror plot to kill solicitor at law firm that represented migrants.¹¹¹ Moreover, in November 2020, a teenage neo-Nazi Satanist was been given a suspended sentence after admitting to attempted terror offences.¹¹² It is therefore no surprise that radical-right terror referrals overtook that of Islamist extremists in the period under consideration.

The final group and most recent group to emerge this re-emergence on the British culturally nationalist scene from the ballot box to the streets is the Football Lads Alliance. Formed in June 2017 by property manager and Tottenham Hotspur fan, John Meighan, the movement successfully hosted its first demonstration on 24 June 2017 in the immediate aftermath of several UK-based terror attacks – mobilising nearly 10,000 supporters to its first London protest.¹¹³ At its subsequent 7 October 2017 protest, the group managed to mobilise again in central London – turning out nearly 30,000 activists marching under the banner of “uniting against extremism”, and lobbying for a harder line against Islamist terrorists.¹¹⁴ At the group’s protest on 24th March 2018, another estimated 7,000 people demonstrated in Birmingham against terrorism and extremism – with the emergence of a splinter group, the Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA).¹¹⁵ On 16 April 2018, it was announced that John Meighan had left the FLA.¹¹⁶ The most recent protest by the group was (again) organised on 13 June 2020 – to demonstrate against the removal of statues as part of that summer’s BLM protests – although the number of activists was only in the hundreds.¹¹⁷

5. Radical and Extremist Islamist Groups in the UK

Turning to what some see as the mirror image of extreme-right nationalist groups in the UK,¹¹⁸ radical Islamist groups have also been a problematic feature of the extremist scene in the UK over the last two decades and more recently. Mobilising a critical response to Western foreign

¹¹¹ Dearden, L., ‘Man accused of far-right terror plot to kill solicitor at law firm that represented migrants’, *The Independent*, 23 October 2020, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/terror-attacks-uk-solicitors-duncan-lewis-migrants-cavan-medlock-b1249349.html>.

¹¹² Williams, T., ‘Teen neo-Nazi satanist spared jail after admitting terror offences’, *The Metro*, 2 November 2020, online at: <https://metro.co.uk/2020/11/02/teen-neo-nazi-satanist-spared-jail-after-admitting-terror-offences-13523592/>.

¹¹³ Smith, M. and Shifrin, T., ‘Eyewitness report from first FLA demo: Football Lads Alliance puts thousands on the streets’, *Dream Deferred*, 24 June 2017, online at: www.dreamdeferred.org.uk/2017/06/a-second-warning-thousands-on-the-streets-of-london-as-far-right-reorganises/.

¹¹⁴ Chaplain, C., ‘Football Lads Association march: Thousands gather in central London in anti-extremism protest’. *The Evening Standard*, 7 October 2017, online at: www.standard.co.uk/news/london/football-lads-association-march-thousands-gather-in-central-london-in-antiextremism-protest-a3652981.html.

¹¹⁵ *BBC News*, ‘Birmingham Football Lads Alliance demo: Thousands march in city’, 24 March 2018, online at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-43527109.

¹¹⁶ Bryant, B. and Frymorgen, T., ‘Football Lads Alliance: “We could have a civil war in this country”’. *BBC Three*, 1 May 2018, online at: www.bbc.co.uk/bbcthree/article/e5ee9e0a-18d7-49a4-a3c2-80b6b4222058.

¹¹⁷ Campbell, L., ‘UK protests: Far-right demonstrators clash with London police – as it happened’, *The Guardian*, 13 June 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2020/jun/13/uk-news-live-patel-warns-of-health-and-legal-risks-at-blm-protests-coronavirus>.

¹¹⁸ See Abbas, T., ‘Ethnicity and politics in contextualising far right and Islamist extremism’, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 11 (3): 54-71, 2017; Ebner, J., *The Rage: The Vicious Circle of Islamist and Far-Right Extremism*. London: IB Tauris, 2017; & Feldman, M., ‘From Radical Right Islamophobia to ‘Cumulative Extremism’: A Paper on the Shifting Focus of Hatred’, London: Faith Matters, 2012.

policy interventions abroad, perceived illiberal security interventions at home and in some cases demanding the overthrow of democracy itself, several such groups have been proscribed by the UK Government for their fostering and support of domestic and international terrorism.¹¹⁹ Prominent examples include Al-Qaida and Al-Muhajiroun – with the latter implicated in a 2007 fertiliser bomb plot, a May 2013 case of domestic terrorism against a serving British army soldier, a terror attack involving a truck at London Bridge in June 2017 and the 2019 London Bridge stabbing attack. Like with National Action and its offshoots, Al-Muhajiroun has tried to change its title in order to get around proscription measures – going under the names ‘Islam4UK’, ‘Need4Khilafah’ and ‘the Shariah Project.’ Such attempts have however been largely thwarted by the UK Government – with the Home Office banning subsequent iterations of these groups.

Aside from providing foment for violent extremism, Al-Muhajiroun has also shown potential to create the polarising conditions needed for other forms of extremism to exist in the UK. Interestingly, and in a case of cumulative extremism where “one form of extremism can feed off and magnify other forms [of extremism];¹²⁰ the English Defence League and its subsequent round of street protests across the UK emerged out of localised opposition to an Al-Muhajiroun protest in the South Bedfordshire town of Luton. Moreover, and in the period just before the one under study, it was found that earlier Islamist terror attacks in 2017 at least provided some tactical basis for Darren Osborne’s June 2017 Finsbury Park Mosque terror attack – with the use of cruder vehicular attacks becoming a key *modus operandi* in a broader range of terror attacks by the UK far right.¹²¹ Drivers for radicalisation among Islamist groups in the UK tend to revolve around grievances in relation the UK foreign policy, the adherence to fringe Salafist interpretations of Islam and (again) the perceived victimisation of fellow Muslims by the UK state.¹²²

Another key group of note on the UK’s radical Islamist scene is the more tactically moderate, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT). Part of a wider transnational pan-Islamic movement to re-establish the ‘Islamic Khilafah’ and finding its ideological basis in a radical critique of Western democracy, Hizb ut-Tahrir UK was established pre-9/11 to mobilise young Muslims to its “radical, but to date non-violent Islamist” cause on University campuses in the early 1990s.¹²³ Courting controversy for its “anti-semitic, anti-western and homophobic views”,¹²⁴ HT has been considered for proscription on several occasions in 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2015. However, and largely due to successful ideological moderation and counter-tactics after the 2005 London

¹¹⁹ UK Home Office, ‘Proscribed Terrorist Organisations’, 17 July 2020, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/901434/20200717_Proscription.pdf.

¹²⁰ Eatwell, R., ‘Community Cohesion and Cumulative Extremism in Contemporary Britain’. *Political Quarterly*. 77 (2): 205, 2006.

¹²¹ Veilleux-Lepage, Y., ‘The Extreme Right’s Legitimation of Vehicle Ramming’, Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right Insight’s Blog, 26 August 2018, online at: <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2018/08/26/the-extreme-rights-legitimation-of-vehicle-ramming/>.

¹²² Allan, H., Glazzard, A., Jespersen, S., Reddy-Tumu, S., & Winterbotham, E., ‘Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review’, *Royal United Services Institute*, 16 October 2015, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0899d40f0b64974000192/Drivers_of_Radicalisation_Literature_Review.pdf.

¹²³ *The Guardian*, ‘Background: the Guardian and Dilpazier Aslam’, 22 July 2005, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2005/jul/22/theguardian.pressandpublishing1>.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

Bombings, the organisation has never received a UK Government ban. This therefore cuts to the quick of legal versus normative restrictions around such groups – with many ministers hesitant to ban HT UK due to its largely non-violent nature.¹²⁵ It also comes amidst news just before the reporting period (2017) that Indonesia has been the latest of thirteen Arab and non-Arab countries to ban HT for threatening “national unity”.¹²⁶

Criticised for unfairly targeting and stigmatising the UK’s Muslim community at the start of the UK government’s attempts to combat Islamist extremism early on in the twenty-first century, there have however been several additional security measures to deal with this variety of extremism by the UK state. For example, while the UK government can’t close a private religious institution, the UK’s 2015 Counter-Extremism Strategy bestowed a duty on the UK’s education regulator Ofsted to inspect Islamic schools (or ‘Madrassas’) for signs of extremism.¹²⁷ Moreover, and under the strategy, the UK government also commissioned the Home Office’s Extremism Analysis Unit to investigate links between international funding and Islamist groups in the UK.¹²⁸ In addition, and going back a bit further, Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000 has been criticised for allow police officers to engage in religious profiling in the post-9/11 environment, allowing officers to interrogate individuals on subjects as varied as the number of times a day they pray, the names of mosques they attend, their understanding of the term jihad, their knowledge of Muslim community groups and organisations.¹²⁹ Finally, and while extremist literature cannot be banned in the UK,¹³⁰ the government and law enforcement do keep a track of literature circulated among Islamist extremists (and other extremist groups in general), including works by Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam, Abu Mohammed al-Maqqdissi, Abu Musab as-Suri, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Usama bin Laden and Anwar Al Awlaki.¹³¹

6. Hate Crime

Since 2007, hate crime has been administratively defined in the UK as “any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice

¹²⁵ Morris, N., ‘PM forced to shelve Islamist group ban,’ *The Independent*, 18 July 2005, online at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20060719172827/http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/article1183364.ece>.

¹²⁶ *Al-Jazeera*, ‘Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia banned 'to protect unity’’, 19 July 2017, online at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/07/indonesia-hizbut-tahrir-group-banned-protect-unity-170719050345186.html>.

¹²⁷ HM Government, ‘Counter-Extremism Strategy’, UK Home Office, 19 October 2015, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470088/51859_Cm9148_Accessible.pdf, p.14.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 18 & 19.

¹²⁹ Choudhury, T. & Fenwick, H., ‘The impact of counter-terrorism measures on Muslim communities’, Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report 72, 2011, online at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-72-the-impact-of-counter-terrorism-measures-on-muslim-communities.pdf>, p.VII.

¹³⁰ The key exception to this is Government-run institutions. For example, UK prisons have been made to remove extremist literature from their libraries based on popular anxieties around Islamist extremist radicalisation. See: PTI, ‘“Extremist” books allowed in UK prison libraries till recently’, *Financial Express*, 28 July 2016, online at: <https://www.financialexpress.com/world-news/extremist-books-allowed-in-uk-prison-libraries-till-recently/332189/>.

¹³¹ HM Government, ‘Prevent Strategy’, June 2011, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf, p. 46.

towards someone based on a personal characteristic.”¹³² British police officers can flag instances of hate crime (alongside other forms of crime) based upon one or more monitored strands that include race or ethnicity; religion or beliefs; sexual orientation; disability; and transgender identity.¹³³ While race and religious hate crimes might factor as a motivation for a wide number of offences (for example, harassment, assault and criminal damage), racially and religiously aggravated offences in the UK are defined separately by law.¹³⁴ Both racially and religiously aggravated and non-aggravated offences, however, appear on the hate crime database under the first and second strands. Moreover, hate crime can extend to individuals who are wrongly targeted if they perceive that they have received abuse under the five monitoring strands. Finally, hate crimes based on age, gender and terrorist incidents are excluded from officially reported figures, as they are not deemed specific enough in nature to constitute a hate crime offence.¹³⁵

The 2018-2020 came off the back of a particularly intense period of hate crime activity in the UK. During the March-June period in 2017, for example, the UK saw a large rise in racially and religiously motivated hate crime – owing to the contemporaneous Manchester and London terror attacks. In the March 2016/17 reporting period, the UK saw a 29% increase in hate crimes, representing the largest total amount for one year since records began in March 2011/12.¹³⁶ Looking more contemporaneously at the reporting period under consideration, the UK government’s reporting period saw a sustained (but plateauing) rises in overall hate crime figures – with an 17% increase in March 2017/2018, 10% increase in March 2018/2019, and 8% rise in the 2019/2020 period.¹³⁷ Looking more deeply into the statistics, the UK Home Office reported that race hate crimes are the largest component of offences (76% in 2017/2018, 76% in 2018/2019 and 72% in 2019/2020).¹³⁸ Importantly, the largest increase of hate crime offences for the reporting period tended to be those based on sexual orientation (27% in 2017/2018, 25% in 2018/2019 and 19% in 2019/2020), transgender identity (32% in 2017/2018, 37% in 2018/2019 and 16% in 2019/2020), and a person’s disability (30% in 2017/2018, 14% in 2018/2019 and 9% in 2019/2020). This can be attributed to better awareness amongst both subjects and the police in

¹³² O’Neill, A., ‘Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2016/17’. London: HM Government, 17 October 2017, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652136/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717.pdf, p.2.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p.3.

¹³⁵ Full Fact, ‘Hate crime in England and Wales’, 17 October 2017, online at: <https://fullfact.org/crime/hate-crime-england-and-wales/>.

¹³⁶ BBC News, ‘Rise in hate crime in England and Wales’, 17 October 2017, online at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41648865.

¹³⁷ UK Home Office, ‘Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2017/18’, London: HM Government, 16 October 2018, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748598/hate-crime-1718-hosb2018.pdf; UK Home Office, ‘Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2018/19’, London: HM Government, 15 October 2019, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839172/hate-crime-1819-hosb2419.pdf; & UK Home Office, ‘Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2019/20’, London: HM Government, 28 October 2020, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020>.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

reporting mechanisms and confidence in coming forward when such incidents happen.¹³⁹ As the graph below suggests, extraneous events (outside of the robustness of reporting practices) also influenced an uptick in racially-motivated hate crime offences – with the 2016 Brexit referendum and 2017 UK Islamist terror attacks seeing 62,685 and 71,251 offences recorded between March 2016 - March 2017 and March 2017 - March 2018, respectively.¹⁴⁰ The largest spike in hate crime occurred immediately after the 2016 EU Referendum and 2017 terror attacks – with just over 5,500 and 6,000 offences recorded in July 2016 and June 2017.¹⁴¹ There have been spikes in subsequent summers – with the most sizeable coming in June and July 2020 following the Black Lives Matters protests and far-right groups’ counter-protests in England and Wales following the death of George Floyd on the 25 May in the USA.¹⁴²

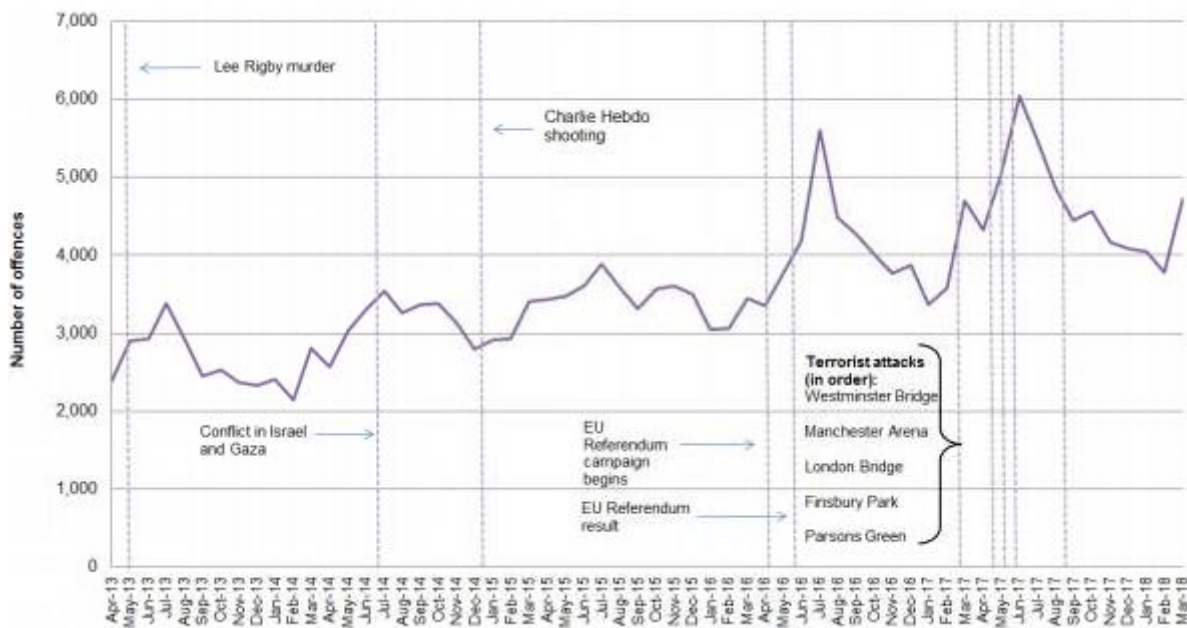


Figure 1: Number of Racially or Religiously Aggravated Offences recorded by the UK Police by month, April 2013 – March 2018

(Source: UK Police recorded Crime, UK Home Office)

Looking beyond officially reported statistics, hate crime reported to third party recording agencies also saw an appreciable uptick in antisemitic, homophobic and anti-Muslim hate crime

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ UK Home Office, ‘Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2017/18’, London: HM Government, 16 October 2018, online at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748598/hate-crime-1718-hosb2018.pdf & UK Home Office, ‘Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2018/19’, London: HM Government, 15 October 2019, online at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839172/hate-crime-1819-hosb2419.pdf

¹⁴¹ UK Home Office, ‘Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2018/19’, London: HM Government, 15 October 2019, online at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839172/hate-crime-1819-hosb2419.pdf, p.14..

¹⁴² UK Home Office, ‘Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2019/20’, London: HM Government, 28 October 2020, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020>.

in the period under consideration. The Community Security Trust (CST), a body specifically set up to protect the UK Jewish community in 1994, reported that it had also recorded its second highest annual total of antisemitic incidents in January - June 2018.¹⁴³ In particular, the CST found recorded 122 antisemitic assaults and 78 incidents of Damage and Desecration of Jewish property.¹⁴⁴ In particular, the highest increases were antisemitic attacks on social media and through mass-produced or mass-emailed antisemitic literature. A single causal factor for an increase in incidents could not be identified with certainty by the CST. However, a report on 2018 figures suggested that it might have resulted from ongoing controversies to do with antisemitism in the UK Labour Party.¹⁴⁵ 2019 saw the CST record the highest total of incidents on record after 2018 – with a slight drop in 2020 – all concordant again with discourse around Jews and antisemitism in the news legitimised within the Left of UK Labour.¹⁴⁶

Such a controversy arose as much due to the accusations themselves as the handling of the issue by the party. Arising from the election of Jeremy Corbyn as party leader in 2015, his leadership (until April 2020) saw the influx of new, more radical members, many of whom were vocal critics of Israel, especially regarding its policies towards the Palestinians and its building of settlements in West Bank.¹⁴⁷ As the balance of power within Labour changed, attention quickly focused on activists and elected representatives about what they had said about Israel and Jewish people on social media and in closed meetings. At the height of the issue in April 2018, the party's General Secretary, Jennie Formby, attempted to instigate a disciplinary process to deal with claims about antisemitic tropes and verbal attacks.¹⁴⁸ Many on the Jewish Left were unsatisfied with the partiality and piecemeal nature of the reforms, leaving current Labour leader, Keir Starmer, to implement obligations set out by the UK's Equality and Human Rights Commission in its own independent report (released at the time of writing in October 2020). Such a report was so bitterly received by Corbyn and in such poor spirit that Starmer was forced to suspend him.¹⁴⁹

Other third party organisations also highlighted the rise of homophobic hate crime during the period under review. In March 2019, the gay rights charity, Stonewall, responded to the release of Home Office statistics that showed a 37% increase in transphobic hate crimes and 25% in homophobic and biphobic hate crimes.¹⁵⁰ Laura Russell, then Stonewall's Director of

¹⁴³ Community Security Trust, 'Anti-Semitic Incidents: Report 2018', 2019, online at: <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/2/9/Incidents%20Report%202018%20-%20web.1549538710.pdf>, p.4.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, pp.18-20.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, pp.4.

¹⁴⁶ Community Security Trust, 'Anti-Semitic Incidents: Report 2019', 2019, online at: <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/0/IncidentsReport2019.1580815723.pdf>. & Community Security Trust 'Anti-Semitic Incidents: January-June 2020', 2020, online at: <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/c/5/Incidents%20Report%20Jan-Jun%202020-1.1596720071.pdf>.

¹⁴⁷ BBC News, 'A guide to Labour Party anti-Semitism claims', 19 November 2020, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-45030552>.

¹⁴⁸ Harpin, L., 'Formby steps down from role as Labour's General Secretary', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 4 May 2020, online at: <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/formby-steps-down-from-role-as-labour-s-general-secretary-1.499451>.

¹⁴⁹ Hodge, M., 'Antisemitism in the Labour party was real and it must never be allowed to return', *The Guardian*, 29 October 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/29/antisemitism-labour-party-echr-report>.

¹⁵⁰ Stonewall UK, 'Stonewall Response to increase in anti-LGBT hate crime figures', Press Release, online at: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/media-statements/stonewall-response-increase-anti-lgbt-hate-crime-figures>.

Campaigns, Policy and Research, described the uptick as “worrying” – demonstrating that “lesbian, gay, bi and trans people [in the UK] still face hatred simply because of who they are.” Digging deeper into the causal factors behind such a rise, Russell noted debates on LGBT-inclusive education and trans equality in the media and online had an important part to play in explaining upticks, as well as higher confidence in reporting such hate crimes. Finally, Russell suggested that such statistics should be treated with caution and might represent the tip of the proverbial iceberg – with Stonewall’s own research suggesting that four in five anti-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and trans hate crimes go unreported.¹⁵¹

Returning back to religiously motivated hate crimes, there were several reports by third party reporting agencies that showed increases in anti-Muslim hate crimes in the period under study, particularly in the years 2018 and 2019. In September 2019, the UK’s third-party reporting service, Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks), released independently verified figures for the 2018 period (n=1,072). What they found was that – while incidents of abusive behaviour (54% of total offline incidents), threatening behaviour (5% of total offline incidents) and assault (13% of total offline incidents) had reduced compared to the previous year – both the rates and proportions of discrimination (n=72 in 2017, n=87 in 2018), hate speech (n=11 in 2017, n=18 in 2018) and anti-Muslim literature (n=28 in 2017, n=58 in 2018) had increased in 2018.¹⁵² Street-based forms of abuse made up the largest percentage of offline incidents (54%) – with a particular focus (57%) on female members of the UK Muslim community.¹⁵³

Moreover, and continuing this gendered theme, 73% of perpetrators were identified as white males – with terrorism, paedophilia, hatred of foreigners, and insulting/derogatory remarks about Islam being uttered during such hate crime incidents.¹⁵⁴ On a side note, online anti-Muslim incidents actually decreased (by 10%) in 2018. The report also noted a 375% increase in anti-Muslim attacks after then Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson referred to veiled Muslim women as “letterboxes” and “bank robbers”,¹⁵⁵ with references to popular discourses to Johnson’s comments being predominant in recorded hate incidents.¹⁵⁶ Such a spike was also noted in 2018 after the release of a letter calling for 3 April 2018 to be “Punish a Muslim day” and follow similar previous comments by the Prime Minister, including that Islamophobia is a “natural reaction” to Islam and that – in the wake of the July 7 2005 London Bombings – that “Islam is the problem”.¹⁵⁷

Turning to third-party recording by Tell MAMA of anti-Muslim hate crime incidents in the follow year (2019), complete figures were not available at the time of writing, but an interim report again attested to the importance of national and international ‘trigger events’ (such as xenophobic public pronouncements by politicians, terror attacks and large-scale migration

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Tell MAMA, ‘Normalising Hatred: Tell MAMA Annual Report 2018’, September 2019, online at: <https://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Tell%20MAMA%20Annual%20Report%202018%20-%20Normalising%20Hate.pdf>.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp.5-6.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p.40.

¹⁵⁵ *BBC News*, ‘Boris Johnson faces criticism over burka ‘letter box’ jibe’, *BBC News*, 6 August 2018, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-45083275>.

¹⁵⁶ *Tell MAMA* September 2019, p.19.

¹⁵⁷ Bienkov, A., ‘Boris Johnson said that Islamophobia is a ‘natural reaction’ to Islam and that ‘Islam is the problem’’, *Business Insider*, 27 November 2019, online at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/boris-johnson-islam-is-the-problem-and-islamophobia-is-a-natural-reaction-2018-8?r=US&IR=T>.

events) in catalysing identity-based violence. One year after the March 2019 Christchurch Mosque massacre, Tell MAMA found a 692% spike in anti-Muslim hate crime attacks in the week following Christchurch (n=12 vs n=95) and a 433% increase in incidents targeting mosques or other Islamic institutions between February and March 2019 (n=3 vs n=16).¹⁵⁸ This was consistent with UK police data surrounding the time of the attack, which showed a 350% increase in recorded offline anti-Muslim hate crime incidents (n=70 vs n=245).¹⁵⁹ Tell MAMA data showed that 74 of the 374 verified offline incidents in the period reported made direct reference to the Christchurch attacks.¹⁶⁰

7. Conclusions

Mainly owing to the incidence of several ‘trigger events’ (such as xenophobic public pronouncements by politicians, terror attacks and large-scale migration events), the period under study has shown a troubling increase in religious and racial intolerance in the UK. In stark contrast, the electoral fortunes of radical right parties remain at an all-time low. As shown above, what, however, explains this apparent paradox is the organisational fragmentation and marginalisation of the UK radical right and radical Islamists by mainstream forces. In particular, repeated Government proscriptions and, for the radical right, the ability of Boris Johnson’s Conservative Party to adopt socially conservative policies and be seen as the most competent deliverer of a ‘hard’ Brexit immediately after the June 2016 Referendum has ensured that the Tory party is the main beneficiary of the radical right’s electoral collapse. The uptick in hate crime after several pronouncements by senior politicians (e.g. Boris Johnson) and international events (e.g. the Christchurch terror attack and BLM protests) can therefore be seen as part of a hardening of popular racism in the UK.

Overall, despite these troubling trends (not least the continuing issues of Islamophobia and antisemitism in the main Conservative and Labour parties), however, the climate of humanitarian norms and safeguards against discrimination has largely held. According to the 2018-2020 Eurobarometer surveys, positive popular attitudes towards migrants from within and outside EU states has risen markedly in UK, whilst concerns over immigration seem to have evaporated in the wake of the 2016 EU referendum. As a recent study at King’s College London has shown, this may be less a signal of the ease at which the UK people accept foreigners at the individual level and more a reaction to their demands on greater immigration restrictions being met at the policy level (though there is a small element of regret in there).¹⁶¹ Moreover, the UK has a developed system of equality and anti-incitement laws that has gone some way in safeguarding ethnic or religious minorities from threats by radical right groups and ideologues. Additionally, awareness of hate crime reporting, as well as the methodologies for capturing hate attacks, have also improved substantially over the last handful of years. Whilst underreporting remains a substantial challenge, victims from religious, racial and sexual minorities have become more confident in reporting crimes motivated by prejudice and open hostility, based upon their protected characteristics.

¹⁵⁸ Tell MAMA, ‘The Impact of the Christchurch Terror Attack: Tell MAMA Interim Report 2019’, online at: <https://www.tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Impact-of-the-ChristChurch-Attack-Tell-MAMA-Interim-Report-2019-PP.pdf>, p. 5.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 44.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 52.

¹⁶¹ Duffy, B., ‘New poll shows British people have become more positive about immigration,’ *Open Democracy*, 26 May 2018, online at: <https://theconversation.com/new-poll-shows-british-people-have-become-more-positive-about-immigration-95813>.

In sum, then, while this report shows that there has been concerning upticks in hate crime and incidents of prejudicial rhetoric at the elite level over the period of reporting, strong, organised forms of hatred have become more fractured and have continued to decrease.¹⁶² Moreover, awareness and reporting of such instances has increased. Government and third-party organisations should therefore actively focus their attention on building on this strong foundation – making the recording of hate crime even more prevalent and continuing to curb hate groups where criminal intent is evident, thus going some way to explaining the ‘immigration positivity vs. hate crime increase’ paradox. This will help the protection of minorities and prevent the spread of radicalism in the years to come. There also needs to be greater unity between individuals on either side of the political divide in order that radical groups do not seize on the opportunity of division of key social and cultural issues to further their own ethnical and cultural supremacist agendas.

8. Recommendations

Xenophobia, racism and extremism are intractable problems in any society. The UK is no different in this regard. The below policy recommendations are advanced, therefore, in order to chip away at this edifice, ranging from the more straightforward to more complex, global to local and online to offline solutions in tackling these issues:

- A. One of the key stumbling blocks for better reporting of hate crimes in the UK has been the online space. Unlike other European countries (like France, Germany and Belgium), the UK does not have a legislative framework for bringing internet companies to bare on online harms that might have real offline consequences. Better online intervention and regulation in the UK - as well as international agreements and conventions to sanction internet companies for inaction- would help mitigate the propagation of hate speech online. The UK already has such an online harms bill ready for consideration but – at the time of writing – there are significant delays to its enactment.¹⁶³ The writer of this report encourages the UK government to bring forward such legislation and for social media companies to be bolder in their approach of sanctioning individual acts of hate speech and hate speech where they exist on their platforms.
- B. An additional legislative stumbling block when it comes to racial and religious hatred in the UK is the lack of a government-backed definition for a particular type of prejudice that has sadly become too prevalent in the past twenty years: anti-Muslim prejudice. Whilst many extra-parliamentary organisations have put pressure on the UK government to accept a version (similar to International Holocaust Remembrance Association definition of antisemitism),¹⁶⁴ concerns over infringement of free speech and (even) rendering counter terror operations within the Muslim community ineffective have been suggested as key barriers to change.¹⁶⁵ However, the adoption of such a definition

¹⁶² Or their policy agendas have been subsumed by the prevailing anti-elitist populism, authoritarianism and cultural nationalism of the current Conservative government.

¹⁶³ *BBC News*, ‘Online Harms bill: Warning over ‘unacceptable’ delay’, 29 June 2020, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-53222665>.

¹⁶⁴ Khan, O., ‘Evidence to All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims’, online at: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/policyResponses/Islamophobia%20APPG%20presentation%202018.pdf>.

¹⁶⁵ Dearden, L., ‘Proposed Islamophobia definition ‘would undermine counterterrorism operations and threaten free speech’, police tell prime minister’, *The Independent*, 15 May 2019, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/islamophobia-meaning-definition-terror-operations-theresa-may-appg-british-muslims-a8914686.html>.

– that included free speech provisions - by authorities would better enable UK government, law enforcement, online companies and statutory bodies in policing anti-Muslim criminality and prejudice – especially in the wake of xenophobic mobilisations and domestic terror attacks. Inroads have been made in sidestepping the aforementioned free speech issues attached to the use of Islamophobia and it is the author’s opinion that a definition using the very specific, core concept of ‘anti-Muslim hatred’ should be adopted to circumvent the mislabelling of legitimate criticism.¹⁶⁶

- C. Staying on the issue of definitions, one thorn that continues to prevent better responses to radical-right extremism in the UK is the lack of a clear conceptualisation of what constitutes radical (i.e. acceptable) and extreme (i.e. problematic) representations of this particular ideology. Whilst German Basic Law is very clear that the ‘radical’ right (hostile to, but accepting of, the democratic order) and ‘extreme’ right groups (who reject liberal democracy and aim to overthrow the system, often through violent means) should be treated separately, there is no such similar statute in the UK. The closest that the UK government has come to seizing such a challenge is defining what it means by extremism as part of its own 2015 Counter-Extremism Strategy (i.e. “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”), but even then this is vague and has been criticised in many quarters as unhelpful.¹⁶⁷¹⁶⁸ Due to the expansive nature of the definition, the Government’s Commission on Counter-Extremism has helpfully proposed a new category to the government’s recommended definition of ‘extremism’ to ‘hateful extremism’ (or “Behaviours that can incite and amplify hate, or engage in persistent hatred, or equivocate about and make the moral case for violence; beliefs that are hateful, hostile or supremacist and which target specific groups as posing a threat to the wellbeing, survival or success of the majority; and which causes – or is likely to cause - harm to individuals, communities or wider society.”).¹⁶⁹ I, like others who have written on this subject, still think that such a categorisation simply adds another definition rather than tackling the specific threat of extremism – and for that matter radical right extremism - itself.¹⁷⁰ The upshot of this is that we in the UK need better national and international definitions of extremism that adopt the radical/extreme distinction but also maps the broad constellation of groups that make

¹⁶⁶ Allchorn, W. & Feldman, M., ‘A Working Definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred – Summary’, Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right, 15 May 2019, online at: <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2019/05/15/a-working-definition-of-anti-muslim-hatred-summary/>.

¹⁶⁷ HM Government, ‘Counter-Extremism Strategy’, UK Home Office, 19 October 2015, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470088/51859_Cm9148_Accessible.pdf.

¹⁶⁸ Commission for Countering Extremism, ‘Independent adviser calls for overhaul of extremism strategy’, 7 October 2019, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/independent-advisor-calls-for-overhaul-of-extremism-strategy>.

¹⁶⁹ Commission for Countering Extremism, ‘Challenging Hateful Extremism’, October 2019, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874101/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf, p. 10.

¹⁷⁰ Allen, C., ‘The UK’s “Hateful Extremism” report: more muddled thinking on an already over-crowded pitch’, 18 October 2019, online at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/hateful-extremism-and-radical-right-we-need-new-definitions/> & McCann, C., ‘Hateful extremism and the radical right: we need new definitions’, *Open Democracy*, 17 December 2019, online at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/the-hateful-extremism-report-more-muddled-thinking-on-an-already-over-crowded-pitch/>.

up specific extremisms. For example, in case of the contemporary radical right, a definition that encompasses all the ideological variety within this extremist milieu (an example Bjørgo and Ravndal's (2019) conceptualisation of cultural, ethnic and racial nationalism) would help to provide a more nuanced and targeted approach when tackling the sources of grievances that animate such groups in the offline and virtual space.¹⁷¹

- D. Descending from the macro to the micro level, better community-based initiatives are needed in order to tackle both the polarising, stigmatising and racialising barbs that have become seized upon by UK extremist groups at a local level.¹⁷² Beyond COVID-19, efforts at fostering community contact through shared initiatives and cultural events – based on the findings of experiments into group contact theory¹⁷³ – might be the best avenues to combat forms of religious and racial prejudice. Moreover, greater responsiveness by local officials and politicians to those at the ‘tipping point’ of supporting radical nationalist or Islamist groups might help offset their feelings of being ‘shut out’ from the prevailing systems of the state. Added to this, experts, policymakers and public officials need to be very careful in the language that they use to label different communities and radical groups when engaging in local initiatives. For example, it may be unhelpful to use ‘white working class’ or ‘Muslim’ for such varied communities, with different social and faith backgrounds, as stigmatisation through can lead to further radicalisation. Instead, a more nuanced picture of ‘community’ needs to be held in mind that captures the complexity of issues and vulnerabilities at play that might lead someone down the road of extremism and similarly mainstream actions that can hold zealots in a cycle of radical activism.
- E. The penultimate and linked recommendation – at a more cultural level – is elite rhetoric around issues of race and religion. In the UK (and arguably further abroad), there is need in our current moment to be far more tempered in our public racial and religious discourse, in order to reduce potential tensions or a ‘licence for hate’ that might occur from malformulated comments. Recent campaigns by UK parliamentarians have suggested that “a politics of hate and division has emboldened racist and sexist abuse on a scale neither of us thought we would ever see again”.¹⁷⁴ By signing a code of conduct or pledge to use more responsible and compassionate language, elites can show their effort and part in reducing attacks against religious and racial minorities that often spike in response to corrosive comments from the very top. Moreover, both of the main UK parties need to take more responsibility for racial and religious hatred in the ranks – with the Conservative party being particularly intransigent in this regard. Full commitment – beyond suggestions in leadership contests – to tackling such prejudice and introducing robust and transparent internal disciplinary systems to deal with such corrosive threats are needed in both major parties.

¹⁷¹ See: Bjørgo, T. and Ravndal, J.A., ‘Extreme-Right Violence and Terrorism: Concepts, Patterns, and Responses’, ICCT Policy Brief, September 2019, online at: <https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2019/09/Extreme-Right-Violence-and-Terrorism-Concepts-Patterns-and-Responses-4.pdf>.

¹⁷² See for an expanded version of these recommendations: Allchorn, W., *Anti-Islamic Protest in the UK: Policy Responses to the Far Right*, London: Routledge, 2018.

¹⁷³ See: Allport, G., *The Nature of Prejudice*, Addison-Wiley, 1954 & Gaertner, S. & Dovidio, J.F., *Reducing Intergroup Bias: The Common Ingroup Identity Model*, Psychology Press, 2001.

¹⁷⁴ Whannel, K., ‘Mass MP walkouts ‘could combat hate speech’ in Parliament’, *BBC News*, 3 March 2020, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-51725597>.

- F. A final and related suggestion would be around better research and funding for programmes that mitigate the harmful effects of radical-right extremist narratives that circulate in the online space. Whilst in its infancy, research has shown that such counter-narratives need to be emotive, powerful and change-oriented in order to be effective among their target audiences.¹⁷⁵ They also need to be inserted in tricky to navigate (and sometimes closed) online 'echo chambers' by practitioners and researchers to scope out the possibility of such actions puncturing the sort of group think that legitimises prejudicial (and sometimes violent) ideations against particular minorities.¹⁷⁶ Such tools may be crucial in the future to mitigate polarisation and stop people venturing down the path of extremism in the first place.

¹⁷⁵ See: Allchorn, W., 'Expert Workshop Report', Hedayah/CARR Radical Right Counter-Narratives Collection, online at: <https://www.cn-library.com/login/>; Briggs, R. & Feve, S., 'Review of Programs to Counter Narratives of Violent Extremism', London: ISD, 2013; Tuck, H. & Silverman, H., 'The Counter Narrative Handbook', London: ISD, 2016; Reynolds, L & Tuck H., 'The Counter Narrative Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook', London: ISD, 2016; Silverman, Stewart, Amanullah and Birdwell, 'The Impact of Counter Narratives'. London: ISD, 2016; & Hedayah/ICCT, 'Developing Effective Counter-Narrative Frameworks for Countering Violent Extremism'. Hedayah/ICCT: Abu Dabi/Hague, September 2014.

¹⁷⁶ See: Braddock, K. & Horgan, J., 'Towards a Guide for Constructing and Disseminating Counternarratives to Reduce Support for Terrorism', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 39(4), 2015, p.392 & Braddock, K., *Weaponized Words: The Strategic Role of Persuasion in Violent Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.95-96.