

STATE OF HATE 2021

BACKLASH, CONSPIRACIES

& CONFRONTATION



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EDITORIAL

WELCOME TO **State of HATE 2021**, the most comprehensive and analytical guide to the state of far-right extremism in Britain today.

This year's report, which surveys the tumultuous impact of 2020, is being produced against the backdrop of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a massive increase in visibility of, and support for, conspiracy theories, and an uprising over racial justice.

Despite the country being in lockdown for much of 2020, the far right managed to morph and take advantage of these challenging circumstances. While organisationally the British far right remains very weak and fragmented, the number of people who are coming across their ideas is growing exponentially and, as a consequence to the racist backlash to Black Lives Matter, we have seen the return of racial nationalism.

This year's report has a couple of important changes from previous years. While we focus on the British far right, we have put our analysis into a broader societal context while also exploring the racism and hate surfacing more generally across our society.

EXCLUSIVE POLLING

In exclusive polling, we reveal the extent of racism facing those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities in Britain today. However much we feel that Britain is a more tolerant and open-minded country than most others in Europe, the fact that 40% of BAME Britons have experienced or witnessed racial violence in the past 12 months, and 45% have experienced or witnessed racial abuse, is a sobering reminder of the work that still needs to be done.

Our report also contains many now-common features. We survey far-right street movements and record the demonstrations they attended, plus explore online hate and how the deplatforming of many far-right figures during 2020 has led to an exodus of key online figures to "alt-tech" platforms – many of which are smaller than mainstream social media outlets, but definitely less moderated.

TERRORISM & ONLINE

We reveal yet another teenage nazi group, part of a small but worrying trend of teenagers actively promoting terrorism. With 70 members spread across 13 countries, and led by a 15-year-old, the National Partisan Movement continues a trend of these spreading international teenage nazi networks.

In recognition of the increasing importance of online activism, sped up by the pandemic, we devote more of this report to the far right's online footprint. Some of the traditional far-right organisations and individuals who featured in past editions of **State of HATE** have been replaced by online activists and self-defined "citizen journalists".

We focus heavily, as we have done for the past year, on the rise in awareness and popularity of conspiracy theories. We have led the research into QAnon in the UK, exposing the key people behind it. While we celebrate the conspiracy's declining support, we also pose the question as to where those who once believed in it have gone.

THE DISUNITED KINGDOM?

In another departure, we end **State of HATE 2021** by exploring some of the issues which could shape the political landscape in the future: principally the potential constitutional crisis that could see Scotland pushing to leave the UK, a referendum on Irish unification and a possible English nationalist backlash to both.

We conclude the report with an article I've co-written with my colleague and our deputy director, Jemma Levene, explaining why "hope" has to be a central ingredient in combating the hate we have exposed and reviewed in these pages.

The **State of HATE** report is our single most important publication of the year. In offering a snapshot of the far right in Britain today, it moulds our work over the next year and helps us to determine our priorities.

We want this report to be a resource for all. Given its unique nature, to say nothing of its comprehensiveness, we would like to think it helps informs and directs the work of others.

I'd like to finish by thanking all those who have contributed to this report, from those who have written the content, helped put it together and others who will ensure it is spread widely. I'd also like to thank the thousands of people who donate every month to our **HOPE Action Fund** – it is because of your support that we can produce in-depth publications such as this.

I hope you enjoy reading the **State of HATE 2021**. I admit it is sometimes difficult reading, but that in itself makes it so essential. The more we understand those who seek to spread division and hate, the better equipped we are to contain and defeat them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GENERAL

- COVID-19 has quickened the demise of many traditional far-right groups while younger, more tech-savvy activists have thrived.
- 2020 has continued the move to a ‘post-organisational’ far right, as traditional groups declined but more fluid online networks and individual ‘citizen journalists’ grew in number.
- The outbreak of the pandemic was met with a surge of anti-Chinese violence and racism.
- Journalists are increasingly being targeted for harassment and violence by the far right.
- The Government’s ‘hostile environment’ and inflammatory language has led to dozens of anti-migrant protests & targeting of immigration lawyers.
- Nazi terrorism remains a threat, increasingly involving teens: 12 people were convicted last year.

CONSPIRACIES

- There has been an explosion in conspiracy theories during the lockdown.
- British conspiracy theorists generated massive online followings: before being deplatformed, David Icke had 780,000 Facebook followers, 900,000 on YouTube and 230,000 on Twitter. Stand Up X, an energetic conspiracy street movement, had 40,000 Facebook followers before being deplatformed and self-styled “truthpaper” *The Light* claims a 100,000 print run.
- Between 15–22% of Britons believe the main COVID conspiracies are true.

QANON

- The UK is the most significant country for QAnon support outside the US.
- One of the most important QAnon advocates is UK-based Martin Geddes, who had 250,000 Twitter followers. Another QAnon advocate is Simon Parkes, whose YouTube channel jumped from 50,000 subscribers to 670,000 by the US election.
- Support for QAnon has dropped substantially in the last six months. In autumn 2020, 3.2% of British people strongly supported QAnon, while a further 2.5% declared themselves soft supporters –today, it is 1.2% strong support and 2% soft.
- Our report reveals that Berlin-based artist Sebastian Bieniek is the creator of a strange new religion targeting QAnon believers.

BLACK LIVES MATTER AND RACIAL JUSTICE

- Our polling highlights the true extent of racism: 40% of BAME Britons have experienced or witnessed racial violence in the past 12 months; 45% have experienced or witnessed racial abuse.
- Over half (54%) think Britain is institutionally racist, but 45% still believe that Britain is one of the least racist countries in Europe (26% disagreed).
- Two-thirds (65%) agreed that the debate around tearing down historical monuments has distracted from important discussions on racism in Britain.

- While most BAME Britons have seen little change in the lived realities of racism, many have seen BLM’s messages taken up by white friends & colleagues.

RACIST BACKLASH

- There was a racist backlash to the BLM protests, with overt racial nationalism replacing previous far-right attempts to moderate their language.
- Patriotic Alternative organised 66 events under the ‘White Lives Matter’ banner.
- Football hooligans and far-right activists organised 26 anti-BLM protests .

NAZI TERRORISM

- 12 far-right activists/sympathisers were convicted of terrorism during 2020 (six teenagers). Another 11 far-right activists/sympathisers are awaiting trial.
- A teenager from Cornwall, who was convicted of terrorism last year, was Britain’s youngest known terrorist.
- There is concern about the leniency of sentences handed out to convicted nazi terrorists.
- We expose the National Partisan Movement, an international nazi group made up of 70 teenagers drawn from 13 countries.
- Telegram is still the platform of choice for nazi terrorists.

ONLINE HATE

- There has been a major effort by many social media companies to deplatform extremists, but this has led to far-right activists and conspiracy theorists moving to unmoderated “alt-tech” platforms.
- HOPE not hate’s reporting was responsible for the removal of 75 QAnon Twitter accounts, with a combined 1.1 million subscribers.

GREEN NATIONALISM

- We are witnessing a worrying growth of “Green” nationalism, which – far from denying climate change – is co-opting it for a racist agenda.
- Eco-fascists are promoting violent direct action, drawing influence from a terroristic style of extreme-right politics that has proliferated online.

THE UNITED KINGDOM

- In exclusive polling, most people believe that Brexit makes Scottish independence more likely, while in Northern Ireland many people think that Scottish independence will make a referendum on whether to leave the UK more likely.
- There is growing ambivalence among the English towards a possible break-up of the UK, including among Conservative voters.
- Support for the Good Friday Agreement remains fairly strong in Northern Ireland, though most people think it is not perfect.

OVERVIEW: BACKLASH, CONSPIRACIES & CONFRONTATION



A year in a lockdown has driven many into the arms of poisonous conspiracy theorists, while tech-savvy neo-nazis seek to exploit tensions over Black Lives Matter and anti-migrant tensions. NICK LOWLES and JOE MULHALL warn that politicians must take note of the gathering clouds as a nation emerges battered and bruised from the pandemic.

2020 WILL forever be marred by the global pandemic. We were locked in our homes, forced to hide our faces, as millions around the world lost their lives or were left with debilitating symptoms. Many millions more have lost jobs, struggled to pay their rent or mortgages, and been left isolated and lonely.

As we enter 2021, the death toll from the disease continues to rise, though the arrival of numerous vaccines has provided a much needed glimmer of hope. However, the ramifications of the pandemic will continue to be felt for years to come, not least the impending economic crisis set to grip the world economy.

Yet, it has by no means been all bad news. In the face of these many tragedies communities have come together, neighbours and strangers helping one another and examples of heart-breaking sacrifice, love and hope.

2020 was also a year of anger, with millions of people around the world hitting the streets to chant “I can’t breathe”, protesting against the murder of an African American man, George Floyd, by a white Minneapolis police officer and demanding racial justice. Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests erupted in over 60 countries across all seven continents, pushing the issues of racism and systemic inequality up the political agenda. Statues fell, street names changed and national conversations about racism, imperial and colonial legacies filled column inches and TV screens.

POLLING: NEED FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

The need for racial justice is evident in exclusive polling of BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) Britons for this **State of HATE** report. Almost half of respondents (45%) had either experienced or witnessed racial abuse over the last 12 months and 40% had experienced or witnessed racial violence.

For the British far right, the last year has been a difficult one. Locked in their homes like everyone else, their ability to organise offline, meet and campaign has been severely curtailed. However, it was also a year of opportunities. With everyone locked indoors on their computers, the chances of reaching and radicalising new people online grew.

Exploiting the gateways offered by digital technology, far-right groups continued to proselytise, promote and recruit via online gaming, voice chats on social media and even in (online) film clubs. Some also tried to exploit home schooling as a way of pushing their divisive politics towards young people.

Importantly, with the explosion of conspiracy theory content, last year the far right sought to exploit new ways of radicalising others by exploiting various (non extreme-right) conspiracy theories related to COVID-19.

Because the unique circumstances of 2020 demanded innovation, many older, traditional far-right groups and individuals appeared to do very little, while the younger, more tech-savvy elements of the movement made a much greater impact.

In recent years HOPE not hate has increasingly talked of the threat posed by the ‘post-organisational’ far right: thousands of individuals across the globe, offering micro-donations of time and sometimes money to collaborate towards common far-right goals.

Although this has not replaced traditional far-right organisations with their leadership structures and formal memberships, the rapid growth of the digital landscape – and especially social media – has helped foster the growth of an alternative organising model. In turn, this has led to the creation of a growing number of decentralised and transnational far-right movements. This trend continued and even accelerated over the past year.

KEY THEMES

With Brexit delivered, the far right began looking for issues around which it could muster support. Unsurprisingly, the primary shift was a return to anti-migrant politics, spurred on by a Home Secretary who appeared determined to talk (very) tough on immigrants, while simultaneously demonising so-called “activist lawyers” working on immigration cases.

A small group of far-right ‘citizen journalists’ capitalised on the anti-migrant firestorm that splashed across tabloid media, as a growing number of migrants attempted the fraught Channel crossing between southern England and France. In a trend that began years ago, but accelerated in 2020, many of the figureheads that are now directing much of the UK far-right scene have begun to self-identify as “journalists”. In an age when trust in traditional media outlets is low and increasing numbers of people get their information via social media, the rise of these far-right ‘citizen journalists’ poses a growing danger.

Last year, a handful of these figures spent large amounts of time filming the arrival of migrant boats and various locations used to house the arriving migrants, including hotels. These videos, which occasionally included footage of the so-called ‘journalists’ chasing arrivals, quickly spread across far-right social media platforms and whipped anti-immigrant activists into a peak of anger. Each new video served to confirm the far right’s already existing (and twisted) belief that Britain was being invaded.

The daily drip-drip of anti-migrant content they produced and fed into far-right online spaces forced the issue up the agenda, until more formal far-right organisations including Britain First and For Britain enthusiastically jumped on the issue with their own demonstrations and migrant hotel invasions. Here we saw something new: post-organisational (far-right) ‘citizen journalists’ setting the agenda for traditional far-right parties.

WHITE LIVES MATTER

The second primary campaign issue for the British far right during 2020 was their racist reaction to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests which spread across Britain (and many other countries) in the wake of George Floyd’s killing.

There were over 30 protests by football hooligans and far-right activists to “counter” these BLM protests, some numbering many hundreds and, in the case of London, attracting as many as 5,000 people. While claiming purely to “defend” statues and monuments, several of these protests turned to violence, as the hooligans clashed with police and BLM supporters.

Racial nationalist groups and individuals used the BLM protests to push their existing political platform, built around concepts of race, to a wider audience. In August, there were 66 White Lives Matters protests organised across the UK by the far right group Patriotic Alternative, which emerged as a rising far-right force last year.

Additionally, other elements of the far right that had traditionally distanced themselves from open racial politics, promoting instead ‘cultural nationalism’, more openly took to explicit racial politics. Most notable here was Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson] who jumped on the BLM issue in the summer, providing a brief moment of relevance in a year otherwise dominated by legal woes.

Whether this shift towards more overt racial politics becomes permanent remains to be seen, but in the short-to-medium term we are likely to continue to see cultural nationalism cede ground to racial nationalism within the far right. With the combination of anti-black racism and anti-migrant politics as the twin prongs of its platform in 2020, the UK far right looks more akin to the far right of decades gone by, rather than the scene we have got used to in recent years.

CONSPIRACY THEORY

The arrival of the coronavirus pandemic proved an incredible boon to conspiracy theories and theorists, as a confused and anxious population sought explanations for the shocking calamity of COVID-19 and the resulting lockdowns.

An Ofcom report published in June 2020 found that during the first lockdown, Britain’s internet users spent an average of four hours and two minutes online each day, 37 minutes more than they did in January. While young people averaged five hours and four minutes per day, the highest percentage increase was among over-54s who were online 24% more than they were in January. It’s perhaps unsurprising that in these circumstances, more people came across and even believed conspiracies and disinformation.

From March onwards we saw meteoric increases in engagement with conspiracy content online, from anti-vaccine to anti-5G content, as well as QAnon pages and groups. HOPE not hate’s polling repeatedly found alarming awareness of conspiracy theories among the British public. A third of Britons have read or seen videos claiming that “elites in Hollywood, governments, the media and other powerful positions are secretly engaging in large scale child trafficking and abuse” – a key component of the QAnon conspiracy.

Forty percent (40%) had heard or seen claims that “Coronavirus is a bio-weapon intentionally spread by the Chinese state”, while 35% said that they had come across the conspiracy that “Coronavirus has been intentionally released as part of a “depopulation” plan orchestrated by the UN or New World Order.”

While thankfully far fewer people actually believe these conspiracies, the levels are still worryingly high. Seven percent (7%) of Brits think that it is definitely true that “elites in Hollywood, governments, the media and other powerful positions are secretly engaging in

“

Telegram continues to be the most important platform tying the violent elements of the British far right closer together

”

large scale child trafficking and abuse”, with a further 15% saying it is probably true.

Four percent (4%) think it is definitely true that “the Covid-19 vaccine will be used maliciously to infect people with poison”, with a further 11% saying it is probably true.

CONSPIRACY INFLUENCERS

An early beneficiary of this upsurge of interest in conspiracy theories was former BBC sports presenter David Icke, whose videos denouncing the pandemic as a hoax and blaming 5G internet were viewed by millions of people in the early days of the outbreak.

From summer onwards, a small but highly active network of conspiracy-minded anti-lockdown groups emerged led by the likes of climate-sceptic Piers Corbyn and anti-vaxxer Kate Shemirani, organising protests in towns and cities across the UK on a weekly basis.

Of the dozens of anti-lockdown protests across the UK, the largest were in London, where up to 10,000 people gathered. In addition to the size, the protests drew in a lot of young and middle-aged women, many apparently new to protesting.

This broad array of people was mirrored online. David Icke had 780,000 followers on Facebook, 900,000 on YouTube and 230,000 on Twitter. Fortunately, he’s now been removed from all these platforms. Stand Up X, one of the most energetic conspiracy street movements in the UK, had 40,000 followers on Facebook before it too was taken down and *The Light*, a self-styled “truthpaper”, claims to print 100,000 copies per edition.

As the year went on, the imported American conspiracy theory QAnon began to play an increasingly large role in the UK scene, with its proponents playing key roles in anti-lockdown and anti-vaccine campaigning, as well as developing a own street movement protesting against child trafficking supposedly being carried out by an imagined cabal of elite Satanic paedophiles.

Our *State of HATE* report reveals that one of the most important QAnon advocates is UK-based Martin Geddes, who had 250,000 Twitter followers. Another QAnon advocate and all-round conspiracy theorist is Simon Parkes, whose YouTube channel jumped from 50,000 subscribers early in the year to an astonishing 670,000 in the tumultuous days following the US election.

Another Brit-born QAnon vlogger is Charlie Ward, who reached 170,000 subscribers on his YouTube channel by mid-September and, after his page was subsequently removed, migrated to the video hosting site Bitchute where he currently has over 106,000 subscribers.

Our polling found that at its autumn peak, 3.2% of British people strongly supported QAnon, while a further 2.5% declared themselves soft supporters. While this level of support was to drop after President Trump’s election defeat and the storming of the Capitol, the relatively high support for something that has been declared a “domestic terrorism” threat by the FBI is deeply concerning.

Anti-BLM protesters
confront people in central
London in June 2020



The street protests dwindled as the year went on, with frequent arrests and worsening weather taking its toll on morale. Unsurprisingly, the far right was closely linked to the anti-lockdown and conspiracy theory scene more generally, with major figures like Yaxley-Lennon adopting the language of the conspiracy theory movement.

THE FAR-RIGHT SCENE

The emergence of Patriotic Alternative (PA) was one of the most notable developments on the far-right scene in 2020. Patriotic Alternative is a white nationalist, neo-nazi group created in 2019 by Mark Collett, former head of publicity for the British National Party (BNP), and Laura Towler, a vlogger and former editor at the far-right site Defend Europa.

Before its various social media bans in early 2021, PA's Facebook group had nearly 18,000 likes. Despite lockdown the group remained active

throughout the year and held numerous large campaign days. For a period it appeared that PA was managing to unite much of the traditional, fascist far right in Britain, which had splintered and been in decline for some time. That said, many had also been at pains to distance themselves from PA due to its perceived extremeness. There have been a number of damaging internal fights, too. So while the group has grown quickly into one of the major players on the UK far right scene, it is unlikely to grow significantly in the coming year.

The traditional far right has become even more irrelevant than it has in recent years. The death of veteran fascists such as Richard Edmonds and Eddie Morrison exemplified the ending of an era, both in terms of organisations but also people. The BNP is kept afloat as a means to cash in on wills, while the National Front (NF) now barely exists. A range of smaller nazi groups all-but-disappeared,

such as the Racial Volunteer Force and Combat 18, while others, such as Blood and Honour, continue to be in steady decline.

On the more moderate end of the far-right spectrum, the populist radical-right parties had something of a rootless, rudderless year. Having united around the pro-Brexit cause for the previous five years, the UK's exit from the EU in January 2020 forced Britain's populist radical right to seek out new crusades and rallying cries. This search was complicated by the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic and public health measures to prevent it, which did not provide an easy platform to exploit.

Nigel Farage's supposed retirement from politics post-Brexit will challenge those following in his wake, although polling suggests Boris Johnson has sapped a great deal of the electoral appeal once provided by Farage's movements.

Despite the efforts of some on the pro-Brexit right to generate a populist opposition to lockdown

policy and paint its proponents as "out of touch elitists", all segments of the British public have remained overwhelmingly supportive of government interventions, and the arrival of the vaccine looks to have settled that debate for good.

As with other elements of the far right, the radical right sought to jump on the anti-BLM mood and anti-migrant politics through the lens of the "culture war", with emotive talk about "woke ideology" and "cancel culture" – ill-defined terms that fuelled a suitably emotive and fractious debate to replace the Brexit wars. None of these topics have yet provided a visible boost to the electoral prospects of the radical right, however, with Reform UK support standing at 3% and UKIP less than 1% in recent polling. The arrival of actor Laurence Fox's Reclaim party split these 'culture warriors' even further. They are also undermined by the increasing mainstreaming of far-right narratives by Conservative party politicians, such as Home Secretary Priti Patel.



THE THREAT REMAINS

However, while the electoral far right remains in the doldrums, with little hope of posing a genuine threat in the coming years, it would be wrong to say the far right as a whole is currently irrelevant. Measuring the far-right threat by its votes has always been a myopic approach, particularly when it takes just one extremist to plan or carry out violence or a terror attack.

During 2020, 12 people either in far-right groups or influenced by far-right ideology were convicted of terrorist offences. They included Paul Dunleavy, who was 16 at the time of his arrest and was sentenced to five years and six months in prison for preparing acts of terrorism and possessing terror manuals.

Filip Golon Bednarczyk, 26, was sentenced to four years in prison after admitting one count of possessing explosives and seven counts of possessing terrorist documents.

Four others were convicted for membership of National Action (NA), a proscribed terrorist organisation. They included Mark Jones, NA's former London organiser who had close personal links to the neo-nazi group linked to five murders in the US, Atomwaffen Division, and who had also visited the nazi Azov Battalion in Ukraine.

“

we saw meteoric increases in engagement with conspiracy content online

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Reflecting a trend in recent years, several of those convicted were teenagers. Jack Reed, from Durham, was sentenced to six years and eight months in prison for preparation of terrorist acts, disseminating a terrorist publication, possessing an article for a purpose connected with terrorism and three counts of possessing a document or record containing information likely to be useful to a terrorist. Reed was just 15 at the time he committed these offences.

More disturbingly, Reed incorporated a sadistic nature to his political outlook. In a separate trial, he was convicted of sexually abusing a minor as well as the family dog. Like many other recent nazis convicted of terrorism, Reed was influenced by, among others, the satanic nazi group, the Order of Nine Angles (O9A).

Another O9A-linked nazi convicted of terrorism was Harry Vaughan, who pleaded guilty to 14 terror offences and two of possessing indecent images of children. He was also an activist with the banned Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD).

Given that he uploaded self-made propaganda images to the SKD, posting a series of weapons and explosives manuals online and possessing videos of young boys being raped, Vaughan inexplicably escaped prison.

Vaughan's light sentence, mirroring that of 23-year-old Luke Hunter, who was jailed for just over four years after being convicted of a string of terror offences, has raised some concern. Both were drawn from very comfortable middle-class backgrounds (Vaughan was a pupil at the elite Tiffin Grammar School, while Hunter's father was a senior officer in Counter-Terror Command and his mother was an executive at Johnson & Johnson) and both were actively involved in encouraging others to commit terrorist offences.

It is hard to believe that Islamist terrorists would have been given such lenient sentences.

In August 2020, HOPE not hate exposed another British nazi terrorist gang, The British Hand, led by a 15-year-old teenager. He and two others linked to the group are now awaiting terror charges. In this report we also expose the National Partisan Movement, an international youth-led nazi group, which boasts 70 supporters from 13 countries, including the UK.

Noteworthy is also their focus on transgender people. Over the last years we have seen increasingly violent anti-trans rhetoric in fascist online communities. For the National Partisan Movement, trans people and the wider LGBT+ community are the focus of several of their first pieces of propaganda.

Telegram continued to be the platform of choice for the terror-advocating far right in the UK in 2020. While other platforms are used alongside it both for organising and outreach, Telegram continues to be the most important platform tying the violent elements of the British far right closer together. With its relative ease-of-use and sign up, and commitment to secrecy, it lowers the hurdle to engage with violent groups and allows individuals to easily receive a constant stream of violent propaganda and immerse themselves into virulently racist communities. Telegram has done little to stem the use of its platform for these groups.

GATHERING CLOUDS

2020 was a difficult year for the traditional far right, but one of opportunities for the more tech-savvy groups and conspiracy theorists.

Of concern is the greater opportunity for far-right growth over the coming year or two. The health impact of COVID-19 will soon be eclipsed by the economic fallout from the pandemic, both as the furlough scheme ends here in the UK and as unemployment increases. In the not-too-distant future, the Government will be reducing public spending and increasing taxes in order to reduce the huge deficit. As history has so often proved, economic hardship and pessimism can lead to a climate of fear and political hate.

Two other factors could potentially help the far right going forward. First is what happens to all those people who were introduced to conspiracy theories during the pandemic, especially those exposed to QAnon. While most will probably drift back to their normal lives, some will undoubtedly carry on down the rabbit hole, potentially to more extreme and dangerous conspiracies.

Then there is the impact of Brexit. While Brexit has been delivered and many of those campaigning for it have stood down (including Nigel Farage), the longer-term economic and the constitutional impacts are still to be truly felt. Brexit has increased the likelihood of the Scots pushing for a new independence vote north of the border, while the Northern Irish protocol has led to a virtual border in the Irish Sea and deeply rattled Unionists and Loyalists, raising the prospect of a border vote there too.

What impact the possible break-up of the United Kingdom has on the English remains to be seen, but the likelihood is that it will lead to an upsurge in a more bitter English nationalism. Given how the far right has repeatedly attracted support from those who identify as “English”, a constitutional crisis is likely to be good news for the extremists – and bad news for everyone else.

SECTION 2 – RACISM





HATE CRIMES SUMMARY: 2020

Afrida Chowdhury, Roxana Khan-Williams, Jemma Levene

HATE CRIMES are incredibly hard to quantify. Along with all the other crimes captured in the National Crime Survey, they are hugely underreported, data is inaccessible and inconsistent, and even when reported there is no standardisation on data collection across all police forces. There is a need for better training on hate crime identification across forces, too.

A year-by-year increase in reported hate crimes since 2011 might be due in part to improvements in reporting, but what the graph below does show us is a spike in most kinds of hate crimes following the 2016 EU referendum, with terrorist attacks in the UK provoking further spikes since then. In July 2020, it's clear to see a huge spike, which has been attributed almost entirely to racist hate crimes as a backlash to the Black Lives Matter movement, of which more below.

RACISM: COVID-19

As structural racism became more and more apparent in 2020, COVID-19 provided another way for it to manifest.

The inequalities that ethnic minorities face in the health sector are long-standing and deep-rooted, but with COVID-19 these inequalities have been receiving more public attention. Many studies show that those from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds are at a higher risk of catching the virus.

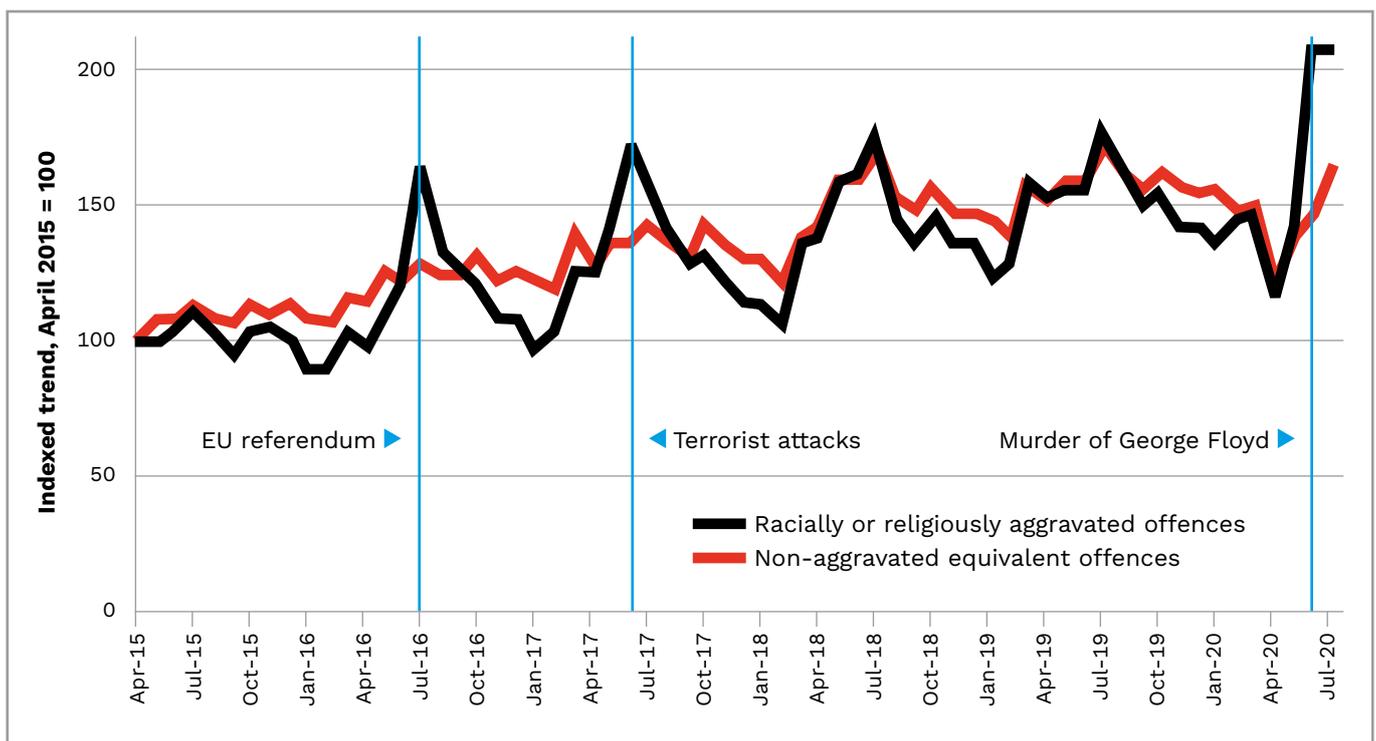
Clear evidence shows that these groups are also at a higher risk of dying from COVID-19 compared to those of white British ethnicity (where the Government has recognised ethnicity being a COVID-19 risk factor).

It is important to consider how structural, interpersonal and institutional forms of racism together shape the experience of minority ethnic groups, and not only reflect on how genetic differences can be the causal effect for the risk of catching COVID-19 in these groups.

Evidence shows that social and economic circumstances are important factors in explaining the exposure to COVID-19 and also help explain the differences between ethnic groups. Region, population density, socioeconomic deprivation, occupation, employment and underlying health issues (among others) can show a causal chain linking ethnicity to the risk of exposure and illness from the virus. People from ethnic minority groups are also more likely than people of white British ethnicity to be born abroad, which means they face additional barriers in accessing services due to cultural and language differences

BLM AND HATE CRIMES SPIKE

In October 2020, *The Independent* and other news outlets reported a spike of racially-motivated offences recorded by police in England and Wales. During the first lockdown in the months of March, April and early May 2020, racially-motivated offences had dropped, but in June and July the number of both racially and religiously-motivated offences was up a third from previous year, according to Home Office statistics.





**IN YEAR ENDING MARCH
2020, WHERE THE PERCEIVED
RELIGION OF THE VICTIM
WAS RECORDED,**

**50%
OF RELIGIOUS HATE
CRIME OFFENCES
WERE TARGETED
AGAINST MUSLIMS**

Photo: DFID - UK
Department for
International
Development

These suggested that the increases were likely related to the Black Lives Matters (BLM) protests, which motivated far-right groups and counter-protests in England and Wales following the murder of George Floyd in late May last year. The Victim Support Charity also said there was a “significant spike” in hate crime victims seeking support in June and July. Almost three-quarters of hate crimes in 2019-20 were racially- motivated, and the number rose by 6% to more than 76,000.

DISPARITY OF POLICING OF MINORITIES DURING LOCKDOWN

During the lockdown in 2020, police were twice as likely to issue fines to young black and Asian men under lockdown regulations than their white counterparts. BAME individuals were 1.6 times more likely to be fined than white people according to an analysis by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC).

The numbers are even higher for young black and Asian men. Young men aged between 18-34 from BAME groups were over-represented at around twice the rate of young white men. The analysis from the NPCC showed that 17,093 fines were issued between 27 March – 25 May in 2020, which accounted for three fines per 10,000 people. For black people the rate was 4.6 per 10,000 and for Asian people 4.7 per 10,000.

The use of stop and search in London also rose by 40% during lockdown, where black men were disproportionately targeted. Black people are four times more likely than white people to be subject to a stop and search. More than 20,000 young black men in London had been stopped and searched during the first lockdown, equivalent to more than a quarter of all black 15–24-year-olds in London.

SINOPHOBIA

The rise of anti-Chinese hate, or Sinophobia, rose drastically during the first months of lockdown.

Between January and June 2020, the Metropolitan Police recorded 457 race-related crimes against their category of ‘Oriental’ ethnicity or people who self-identified as Chinese. The rates were three times higher than previous two years.

Labour MP Sarah Owen who is half-Malaysian Chinese, said in October last year: “An undercurrent of anti-Asian racism has plagued this country well before the pandemic started, but now the lid has been lifted and the far-right have wrongly been given legitimacy to air their derision, violence and hatred.”

ISLAMOPHOBIA

Anti-Muslim sentiment is evolving and transforming in the new social context created by the pandemic. Some social media users used the pandemic to peddle hate.

Analysing posts across Facebook, Twitter and Telegram, as well as content commonly shared across WhatsApp groups, reports have shown a significant number of users sharing content portraying British Muslims as “super-spreaders” of the virus, as well as anti-British, and in some cases even supposedly using COVID-19 as a form of ‘jihad’.

One video shared on Telegram by Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson], falsely alleging to show a group of Muslim men leaving a secret mosque in Birmingham to pray during lockdown. This video, along with other content, helped to push the narrative that Muslims were flouting social distancing rules. Islam

and Muslims have been associated directly with the causes of the pandemic, fitting well within broader far-right themes depicting Muslims as “parasitical” or alien to wider society.

ANTISEMITISM

The Community Security Trust (CST) records antisemitic incidents for the Jewish community. Its 2020 report included 1,668 antisemitic incidents for 2020, the third-highest total recorded, but a decrease of 8% from 2019 (the year with the highest-ever number of incidents). As with other reported hate crimes, high monthly totals were recorded in January, February, June and July, correlating with times when lockdown restrictions were not in place or eased.

Antisemites are infamous for their ever-evolving methodology, responding with agility to any opportunity to spread hate in a new social reality. Jewish online community events were notable victims of these targeted attacks, particularly those such as “Zoom bombing”, exploiting the sudden widespread reliance on online events.

The CST also recorded 41 incidents containing antisemitic rhetoric alongside references to COVID-19, ranging from conspiracy theories about Jewish involvement in creating and spreading the disease – or creating and spreading the ‘myth’ of COVID-19 for various malevolent and financial purposes – to actually hoping that Jewish people caught the virus and died from it.

As the CST report states: “Antisemitism follows events in the news cycle and public interest, almost irrespective of their relevance to the Jewish community.”

ANTI-GYPSY, TRAVELLER & ROMA HATE

Gypsies, Travellers and Roma (GTR) have been identified as the number one targets of online hate speech in the UK, accounting for 15% of racist or discriminatory slurs. There is limited awareness that many GTR communities are protected under the Equalities Act as ethnic minorities.

There were 172 reports made to GATE (Gypsy and Traveller Empowerment) Herts through its “Report Racism GRT” website between April 2019 to February 2020. A major peak in cases followed the broadcast of an April 2020 Channel 4 Dispatches programme, “The Truth About Traveller Crime”, leading to a surge of 45 reports for that month alone. In total, between February and May 2020, 92 additional cases of hate crime/hate speech were reported to the Report Racism GTR website.

In fact, 78% of respondents to a GATE-commissioned survey suggest that hate speech/hate crime incidents happen very often. Nearly one in five (18%) said this was “often” (only three percent of respondents indicated “sometimes”).

GRT hate crime is perhaps unique in the severity of its overt structural hate. For example, 94% of respondents to the same GATE survey reported exclusion and discrimination from, and within, services such as health and education. Meanwhile, 78% of respondents highlighted school bullying as a form of hate-related incident experienced by themselves and/or their children, demonstrating how victimisation through hate incidents begins in childhood for many in GRT communities.

“WE DEFINE DOMESTIC ABUSE AS AN INCIDENT OR PATTERN OF INCIDENTS OF CONTROLLING, COERCIVE, THREATENING, DEGRADING AND VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR, INCLUDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE, IN THE MAJORITY OF CASES BY A PARTNER OR EX-PARTNER, BUT ALSO BY A FAMILY MEMBER OR CARER. IT IS VERY COMMON. IN THE VAST MAJORITY OF CASES IT IS EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN AND IS PERPETRATED BY MEN.”
(WOMENS AID, 2021)



GENDER

One of the most disturbing impacts of the pandemic has been the violent knock-on effects for women and children who suffer from domestic abuse. In England and Wales, a woman is killed by her male partner or former partner every four days. Although not all victims of domestic abuse are women and children, it is a highly-gendered form of hate and is deeply rooted in patriarchal inequality.

In the year ending March 2019, the majority of defendants in domestic abuse-related prosecutions were men (92%), and the majority of victims were female (75%). This form of abuse often plays out in private and the United Nations has described the worldwide increase in domestic abuse as a “shadow pandemic” alongside COVID-19.

Domestic abuse is often a hidden crime, left unreported, therefore data held by police is likely to only be the tip of the iceberg. According to data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (2018) only 18% of women who had experienced partner abuse in the past 12 months reported it to the police.

In April, May and June roughly one-fifth (21%, 20% and 19%) of all offences recorded by the police were flagged as domestic abuse-related, which represents an increase of around five percentage points compared with the same period in previous years.

HOMOPHOBIA

As with all other impacted groups, LGBTQ+ people generally only report about 20% of hate crime that they experience. Even with this caveat, figures from all 45 police forces in the UK reveal that the number of reported homophobic hate crime cases almost trebled from 2014-15 (the year same-sex marriage became legal in England) to 2019-20. There was a 19% increase year-on-year in 2020.

2020 hate crime figures from the LGBTQ+ anti-violence charity, Galop, indicate that 80% of LGBTQ+ people experienced online abuse, and among those targeted, 50% had experienced online hate more than 20 times, with 60% threatened with physical violence.

Unsurprisingly, 40% reported using their online accounts less as a result of these threats, and 20% removed LGBTQ+ information from their profiles or left social media sites altogether.

Victims experienced a range of negative emotional responses to online victimisation, ranging from fear, anxiety and self-blame, to suicidal thoughts.

Galop surveyed the platforms where people received online hate: Facebook was the most common (58%), followed by Twitter (34%), while 19% of respondents were victimised on a comment section of a media outlet and 17% on Instagram. Hateful abuse was reported on a vast range of online spaces, with respondents listing sites as disparate as Reddit, Snapchat, Tumblr, Skype, along with gaming sites, Mumsnet, and Pinterest.

While lockdown may have meant that there were fewer opportunities for perpetration of physical attacks against LGBTQ+ people in 2020, there are few spaces online where they are not at risk of victimisation.

TRANSPHOBIA

Transphobic hate crimes have doubled in the past three years, although underreporting is likely to be a major issue.

In a 2020 Galop report, four out of five respondents said they had experienced some sort of transphobic hate crime. Meanwhile, one in four had also experienced physical assault or physical threat, while nearly one out of every five had experienced transphobic sexual assault or the threat of sexual assault. Only one in every seven had reported to the police (although seven out of 10 felt that police could help them).

Changes in the Gender Recognition Act, allowing for trans people to change their birth certificates and have their gender identity legally recognised without a medical diagnosis, sparked angry debate between some women's groups and trans activists. Concerns about the sometimes-toxic debate around transgender rights, raised by the former chair of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and seen in the polarisation between some women's rights and trans activists' groups, have sparked even greater numbers of transphobic narratives.

ABLEISM

Ableism can be understood as the discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities, based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. From 2019 to 2020 the reporting of disability hate crimes rose by nine percent, but only one in every 62 cases is charged, making this the lowest average annual conviction rate of all the hate crime strands.

As with many manifestations of hate during the pandemic, online hate against people with disabilities has risen over 46% in the last year. A recent study by disability advocacy group, Leonard Cheshire, has found that nearly 21 such crimes were reported to the police every day in England and Wales during 2019/20, and an average of 10 crimes per day involved an act of violence against a disabled person.

DID THE EVENTS OF 2020 CHANGE HATE IN THE UK?

As in so many other ways, 2020 was a year when even hate crime was impacted by the pandemic. From a rise in new groups being targeted, such as people of Chinese and southeast Asian descent, to highs

A Runnymede Trust survey, written by Zubaida Haque, Laia Becares and Nick Treloar, found:

ONE THIRD of black and ethnic minority groups (33%) are working outside of their homes, including 41% of Black African Groups, 36% of Black Caribbean and Pakistani groups (compared to 27% of white groups) – therefore increasing their exposure to COVID-19 (Runnymede Trust).

MORE THAN ONE-THIRD of black communities (34%) are in key worker roles.

HALF of Bangladeshi key workers (50%), 42% of Pakistani and 41% Black African key worker respondents reported they had not been supplied with adequate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment).

ALMOST DOUBLE the proportion of BAME doctors (64%) compared to white doctors have felt pressured to work in settings with inadequate PPE, where aerosol-generating procedures are carried out exposing them to risk of infection.

ONLY 40% of BAME doctors in general practice said they had sufficient PPE for safe contact with patients with possible or confirmed COVID-19 or those with non-COVID-19 symptoms. A far greater proportion – 70% of doctors who identified as white – said the same



and lows as the country moved between lockdown and loosening of restrictions, and through to the emergence of completely new ways to perpetrate hate crime (such as Zoom bombing), 2020 revealed worrying new hate crime trends.

Perhaps more worryingly, the backlash we saw to Black Lives Matter, so clearly manifested in the spike in reported hate crimes in July, has allowed the mask to slip on the overtly racist nature of the haters who are active in the UK. It will take an immense effort to undo the damage done both to the individual victims of hate, but also to the trust that all minority communities feel as a result. This is set against a backdrop where the inequalities of society have been radically exposed by the impact of COVID-19.

The trends in online radicalisation and belief in conspiracy theories will also have a long-term effect on hate in the UK, and the worrying trend of young people becoming radicalised via extremist content online needs urgent attention.

There is much to do for those tackling hate as we begin to emerge from the restrictions imposed on us all by COVID-19.

THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

Six months after Home Secretary Priti Patel promised to learn lessons from the Government’s ‘hostile environment’ policy, she and the Government stand accused of pursuing the same inhuman immigration policy. ROSIE CARTER explores a policy that never really went away.

THE GOVERNMENT’S efforts to make Britain a “hostile environment” for migrants, first introduced in 2012, was the basis for a series of policies to limit access to work, housing, health care, bank accounts and more for those without British citizenship. The aim was to push those without immigration status to leave the UK without the direct involvement of immigration officials.

These policies fuelled the Windrush scandal, in which hundreds of Commonwealth nationals living in the UK were wrongly targeted by immigration enforcement – with many then threatened with deportation and deprived of medical care. Others were forcibly removed from the UK to countries that they had long left behind, having arrived in the UK as children.

Moreover, research from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has shown that the hostile environment helped to foster wider racism and discrimination.

In response to the Windrush scandal, the Government published a review on their “Lessons learned” in September 2020, in which Home Secretary Priti Patel said she had “confronted these shameful findings head on”, that the Home Office would strive for “equality, fairness and people-focused policies”, and that her “resolve to deliver for the Windrush generation and their descendants is absolute”.

Yet it is hard to see any change of tack from the Home Office. ‘Mistakes’ from the Windrush scandal are still being made: in March 2021 Windrush victim Trevor Donald was wrongfully denied citizenship through a Home Office error. This year, the Home Office has also been widely criticised for the appalling treatment of asylum seekers, with people housed in unfit accommodation including multiple occupancy rooms in disused Army barracks where coronavirus outbreaks were common, despite the Home Office being aware of the risks this carried.

Moreover, the Home Secretary’s language appears to be getting harsher. In response to the arrival of those seeking asylum from across the Channel, Patel claimed that illegal migrant crossings had “plagued” governments for decades, while leaked proposals suggested her department was considering offshore detention facilities more than 4,000 miles away from the UK, as well as wave machines to ensure small boats could not reach British shores, while the Ministry of Defence was considering navy patrols of the Channel.



A 2013 Home Office poster campaign advising people not eligible to stay in the UK that they can be given help to go home

THAT NEVER WENT AWAY

“

Those defending the broken system - the traffickers, the do-gooders, the lefty lawyers, the Labour Party - they are defending the indefensible

”

– Priti Patel, Conservative Party Conference 2020



The divisive language employed by Patel has consistently stressed the ‘illegality’ of migrants reaching the UK through a ‘broken’ asylum system. But the language used by the Home Office has also blurred the lines between areas that are law, and those which cover a political agenda, through its targeting of immigration lawyers. Patel controversially used the term “activist lawyers” in September, leading to a number of Britain’s top lawyers writing to the Home Secretary to express their concern after a lawyer was attacked shortly after her comments were made.

Patel’s comments were echoed by the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, when he issued an attack on “lefty human rights lawyers” during a keynote speech to the Conservative Party conference in October last year, publicly accusing them of hampering the criminal justice process.

The verbal targeting of these lawyers has taken the hostile environment beyond the era of former Prime Minister (and Home Secretary) Theresa May, when Home Office vans drove around the streets of several London boroughs, telling migrants to “go home”. The campaign was later cancelled, following a public outcry. Patel’s repeated demonisation of immigration lawyers, especially those who have been successful in overturning deportation decisions and proving genuine asylum claims, has brought new dimensions to the Government’s immigration agenda.

Not just anti-immigration, the “activist lawyer” rhetoric also speaks to a broader Government agenda, in which the parameters of decency and democracy are set. Lumping immigration lawyers with criminals, with political opposition, and the progressive left more broadly, the term speaks to a divisive culture war in which those who stand up for migrants are framed as indecent and undermining those who seek fairness.

“Activist lawyers” are also tied to the Conservative government’s broader fight against the European Court of Human Rights, not just a Eurosceptic folly but an active attempt to undermine the rule of law when it does not fit with their agenda.

Ipsos MORI’s tracker of public opinion towards immigration finds that the proportion of Britons who want to see immigration reduced has fallen to lowest level since 2015. Yet the Government is continuing to use immigration as a political football, ignoring any consequences. The campaign against “activist lawyers” is not simply one to appeal to migration sceptic voters, but the continuation of a strategy to divide.

A perpetuation of wrongful decision making and harmful, dehumanising treatment of migrants is evidence enough, but the sharpening of anti-migrant language makes it clear that the Home Office is not serious about learning lessons raised by the Windrush scandal. Hostile words have consequences: they add legitimacy to xenophobia, which incubates the far-right.

HOW BLM CHANGED THE

Kneel for Floyd –
Black Lives Matter protest,
central London 31 May 2020.
Photo: Steve Eason



CONVERSATION ON RACE

ROSIE CARTER

LAST SUMMER, in the midst of a pandemic that was disproportionately impacting black and ethnic minority Britons and as the country was gripped by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, HOPE not hate commissioned a poll of Britons from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, weighted by ethnic background and region to be nationally representative of the UK's BAME population¹.

We wanted to better understand the mood of BAME Britons, often poorly represented by small sample sizes in national polls, and to pick apart differences in opinion between ethnicities, heritage backgrounds and religion, but also between generations, those born abroad and the UK born.

Our research reflected how the shared experiences of being a minority fostered a mutual empathy and solidarity, with the differences between ethnicities and generations reflected in how people understood and expressed common experiences of discrimination and racism. We saw support for the BLM movement across ethnicities and age groups, with widespread optimism and expectations for change that the protests would lead to lasting improvements for ethnic minorities in Britain, particularly among younger BAME Britons.

Nine months on, we decided to revisit the questions we asked in the summer, commissioning Focaldata to carry out an online poll of a representative sample of 1,014 BAME respondents between 10 and 14 January 2020, weighted to be representative of the UK's BAME population, to better understand how BAME expectations from the BLM movement have been realised.

THE STATE OF RACISM IN 2020

Racism is an everyday reality for those from minority and ethnic communities living in modern Britain. Our poll finds that around 40% of BAME Britons have experienced or witnessed racial abuse, racist violence or racism at work in the last 12 months.

More than one in 10 BAME Britons say that they have personally experienced racist violence in the last 12 months (11%), while fewer than half of all BAME Britons can say that they have not witnessed or experienced racist abuse (46%) or racism at work (48%) in their day-to-day lives over the last year.

Black respondents were more likely to report experiencing or witnessing racist abuse, violence or racism at work than those from other BAME groups. Almost one in five (17%) black respondents reported personal experiences of racial abuse and racism at work over the last year, while 13% had both experienced and witnessed racial abuse and 11% had witnessed and experienced racism at work.

Young people are the most likely to see violence driven by racism. Fewer than a third of 18-24 year olds (32%) could say that they had not experienced or witnessed racist violence in the last year.

It is unsurprising, then, that a majority of BAME Britons agree that black and Asian people in the UK face discrimination in their everyday lives (64%), with only 16% disagreeing and little difference between age groups. Black Britons were most likely to agree (67% overall agreed), compared to 62% of Asian respondents. BAME women were slightly more likely than BAME men to say that black and Asian people in the UK face discrimination in their everyday lives (f:67%, m:61%) suggesting the gendered nature of experiences of racism.

A smaller majority also agree that Britain is institutionally racist (54%); just 12% disagree. Black respondents were most likely to agree that Britain is institutionally racist (60%), with a third (31%) strongly agreeing, compared with 15% of Asian respondents, 21% of those from mixed backgrounds and 26% of those from other ethnic groups who strongly agreed. While older respondents were more likely to say that they did not think Britain was institutionally racist, they were also more likely than younger age groups to agree with the statement.

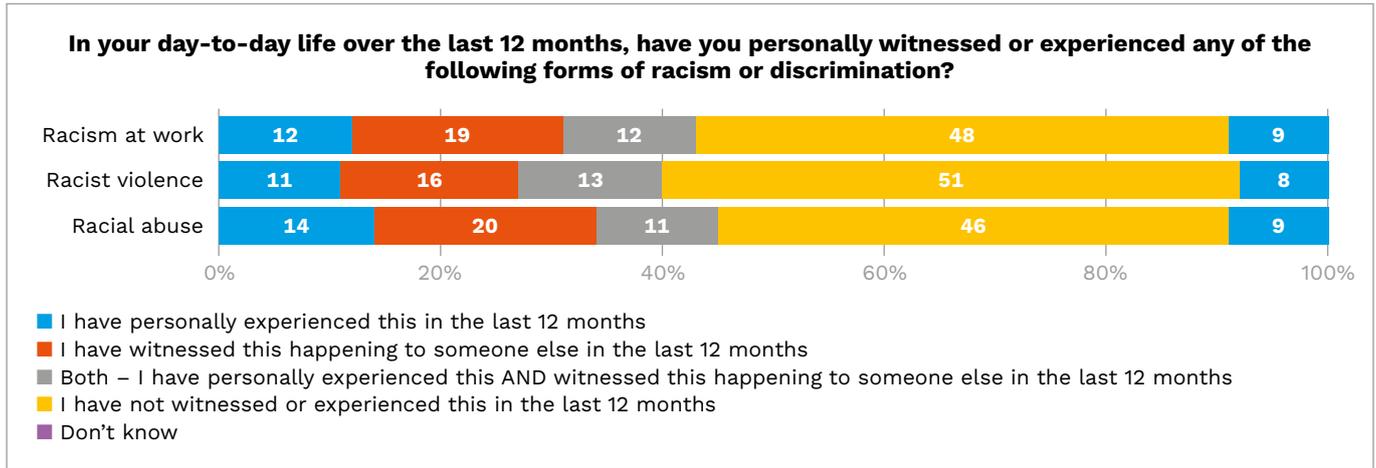
At the same time, 45% of respondents agree that Britain is one of the least racist countries in Europe (24% disagreed). Older respondents were more likely to agree (63% of over-65s vs. 38% of 18-24s) and Leave voters were also more likely to believe that Britain is a less racist place than other European countries (54%) than Remain voters (38%), suggesting that for some Euroscepticism ties to a perception of worse race relations in mainland Europe than in Britain.

While there is no single 'BAME' experience and different ethnic groups and generations have had very different experiences, our polling makes it clear that racism continues to shape the experiences of Black and minority ethnic people in Britain.

A SUMMER OF PROTEST

It is now almost a year since the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, while being arrested for allegedly using a counterfeit bill. The killing sparked protests that spread across the world, a response that galvanised long brewing resentment and anger at deep-rooted and systemic racism, anti-Blackness and white supremacy. In the UK, thousands joined protests, not just in London and the major cities, but in smaller cities, towns and even villages, to assert that Black Lives Matter.

Alongside calls for an end to police brutality and racism in the criminal justice system, an end to racial health disparities that have become so clear during the pandemic, and reforming the education system to deliver Black history, protesters chanted the names of those who had died at the hands of British police, but also those who had been failed by the Windrush scandal, who had lost their lives to coronavirus, and who were victims of the Grenfell fire. The movement also drew attention to Britain's colonial past and wealth that was built on the foundations of slavery.



The visual symbolism of Bristol slave trader Edward Colston’s statue plunged into the river Avon and graffiti on a statue of Winston Churchill in Parliament Square quickly became a focal point for media discussion and public response. While many of these conversations were not new, these discussions distilled the calls of BLM into a more simplistic conversation around the protection of statues and monuments.

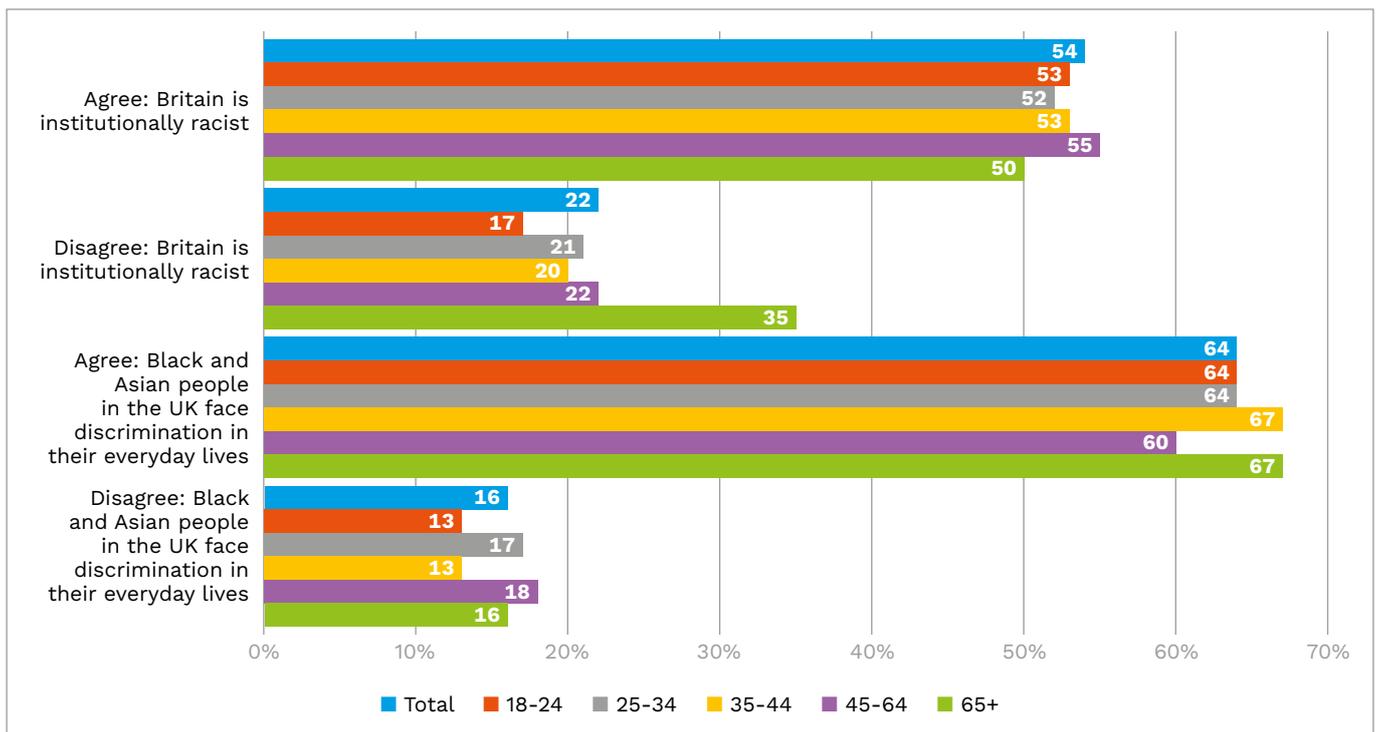
This was quickly exploited by the far right. The Democratic Football Lads Alliance (a collection of football hooligans) called a protest, ostensibly in defence of the monuments in London, which resulted in violent clashes with police.

And it was not just the far right attempting to derail the conversation. The statues narrative fed into a broader attempt to spark a ‘culture war’ on the political right, posing progressive values, or ‘wokeness’, as a cult: an epidemic, anti-western, totalitarian and even “cultural Marxist” (a far-right antisemitic conspiracy theory). Most recently, the Home Secretary took this line on the protests which she condemned

as “dreadful” and accused protesters of attempting to “rewrite history”².

Nonetheless, polling carried out over the summer by HOPE not hate found that the British public was ready for a more progressive debate on racism in the UK. A majority (65%) agreed that the debate around tearing down historical monuments – because the figures depicted were seen as racist – has distracted from important discussions on racism in Britain. Just 12% disagreed. We found that public understandings of structural racism were weak, and continue to centre on a racism of “intent”: a binary of “racist” or “not racist”, with far less awareness of systemic racism or discrimination in social and political institutions.

Yet our latest polling shows how nine months on, BLM has changed the conversation on racism in Britain. While many are unenthusiastic about the impact of the protests meeting expectations for change, and there is little faith in the Government’s response, BAME Britons – especially younger groups – have seen the messages of BLM taken on board, especially among white friends and colleagues.



HOW BLM CHANGED THE CONVERSATION

The Black Lives Matter movement has loudly and clearly brought long overdue conversations to the forefront of public consciousness, and our polling over the summer found that it had brought hope for change to many, as a majority (57%) of BAME Britons said they expected the protests to lead to real change.

In our January poll of BAME Britons, we found that support for the BLM movement has remained strong since the summer, as 61% – including 71% of black respondents and 56% of Asian respondents – said that they supported the protests. This support has fallen slightly since the summer, when 73% said they supported the protests. While BLM does not present a singular voice for people who have experienced racism, we found consensus in support across ethnic minorities, and overall opposition remains low (11% overall).

Our findings suggest that there has been a small increase in ambivalence among some who feel disillusioned with the movement, which has perhaps not triggered the societal changes they'd hoped for. While 39%, including 38% of black respondents, said that the movement had led to real change, many were pessimistic about the impact BLM has had on race relations in the UK. A majority across all ethnic groups felt that the BLM movement last year has not led to real change in Britain (61%).

This doubt is clear when asked if people feel the Government has taken racism more seriously as a result of the protests. A minority (27%) felt that it was taking racism more seriously, though most felt that it had made no difference (43%) and 19% felt the Government was in fact taking racism less seriously after the protests. And most (63%) do not expect Boris Johnson to deliver on his promise to tackle racism and inequality.

While most BAME Britons have seen little change in the lived realities of racism, and have little faith in the Government to act on the demands of BLM, it is clear that the protests have had an impact in shaping the

conversation on race and racism in Britain today.

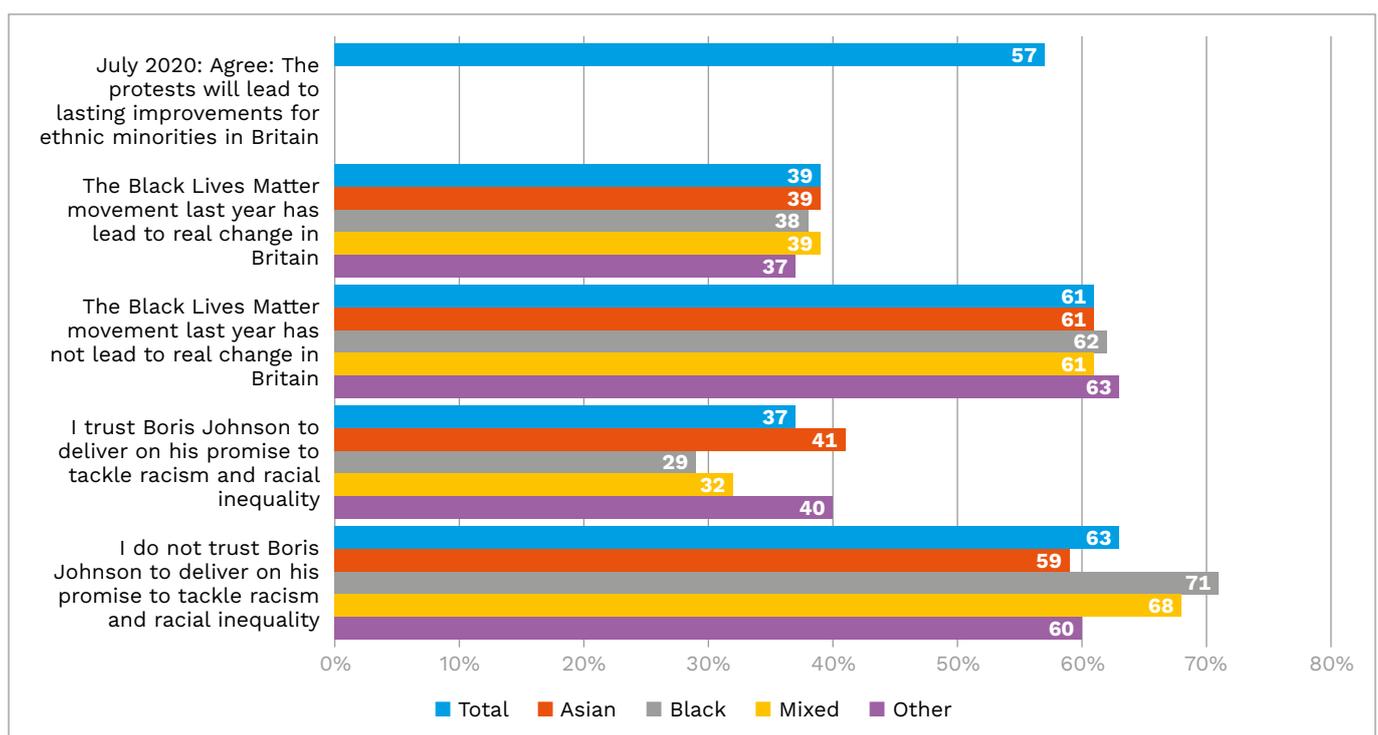
In the summer poll, just half of BAME Britons thought that the protests would make white people take racism more seriously (50%). While our latest poll shows that many are also doubtful about the response to BLM from media and white friends and colleagues, around a third said that white colleagues had taken racism more seriously (32%), while 38% felt the media was taking racism more seriously.

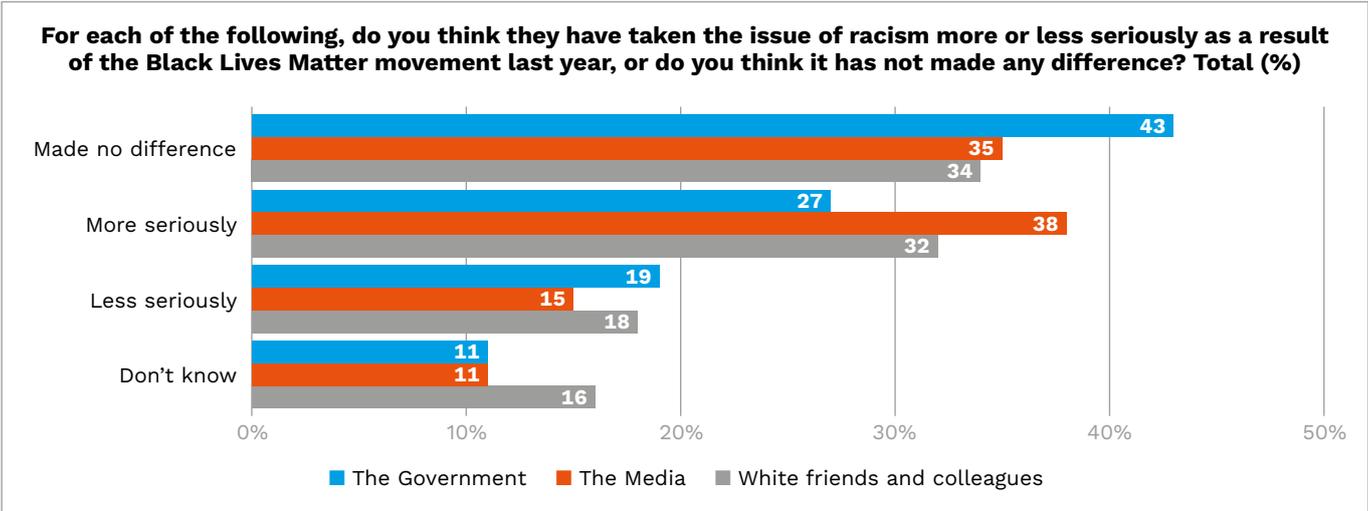
The role of the BLM movement in changing the conversation on race and racism in Britain, in particular in raising consciousness of anti-blackness, is reflected in our polling. Black respondents were more likely to have seen white friends and colleagues take racism more seriously (38%) than Asian respondents (30%). At the same time, black respondents were less likely to have seen the Government address the issue seriously (23% of black respondents; 30% Asian respondents).

And disappointment around the Government's response to BLM is not just proxy for political loyalties. Conservative voters were also sceptical about the Government's efforts; of those who voted Conservative in 2019, 38% said they felt the Government was taking racism more seriously, but 38% felt there had been no difference and 12% said they were taking racism less seriously.

A perceived lack of response from key actors shows when respondents are asked about how, if at all, racism has changed in Britain over the last year. The majority of BAME Britons felt that racism has in fact increased (26%) or stayed the same (42%) in Britain over the last 12 months. Just 16% said they felt it had decreased. Around a third of black respondents felt racism had increased (30%) while a quarter of Asian respondents (25%) said the same.

Our polling shows a mixed picture nine months on from the BLM protests. While support for the movement remains high among BAME Britons, hopeful expectations from the summer have not been met in reality, and there is little faith that the Government





will take any meaningful action to address racial disparities. Nonetheless, particularly among younger BAME Britons, there is a sense that BLM has had an impact in changing the conversation on racism in the UK, with many seeing a shift in how seriously racism is taken by white friends and colleagues as well as in the media.

A YOUTH SHIFT

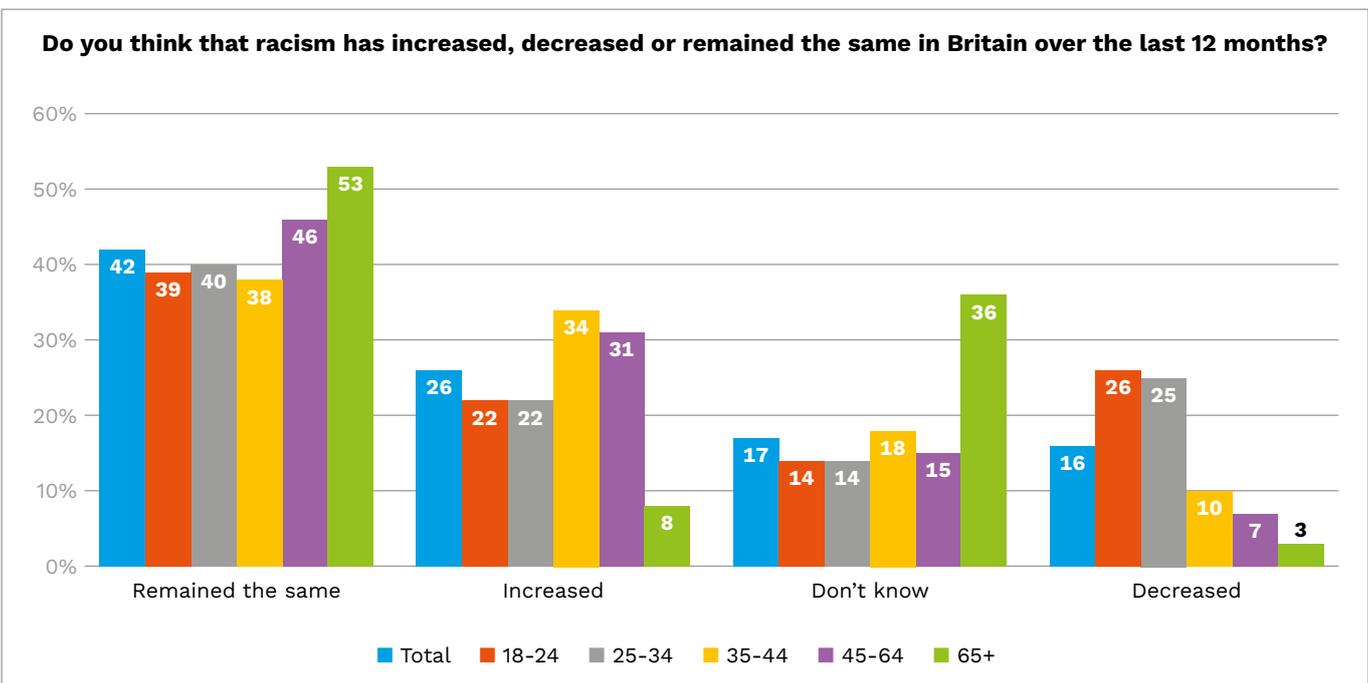
At the heart of the protests this summer were a new generation of activists, as young black Britons led BLM protests in towns and cities across the UK. Having grown up online, young Britons are engaging with activism in new ways, using social media to organise and amplify their voices. The ‘Fridays for Future’ school strikes around the world, led by young activists, had empowered many, offering a political awakening to shape a society for their futures, with racial justice at the core of calls for climate justice³.

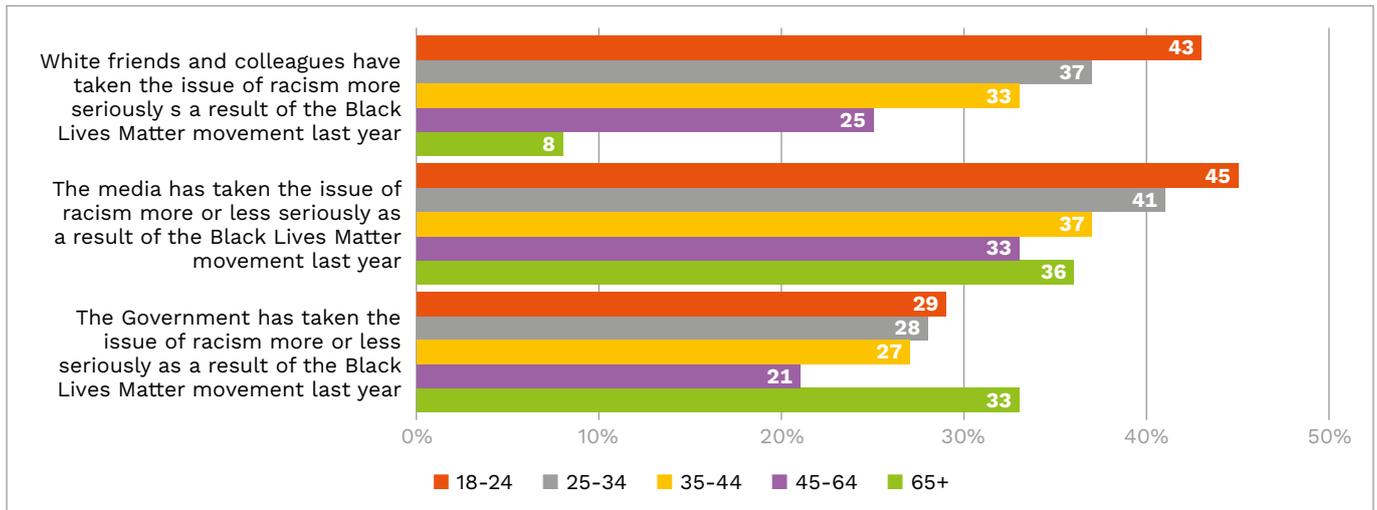
Large youth turnouts at the protests also reflected a difference in generational attitudes. Overall, younger people tend to be more socially liberal, and have a

more open view on issues such as multiculturalism and immigration, as well as more fluid understandings of gender and sexuality. Younger people also have a more complex understanding of how historical racism bears on systemic discrimination today than older people, who are more likely to focus on debates around statues as ‘political correctness gone mad’.

In a nationally representative poll of 2,104 people for HOPE not hate Charitable Trust by Panel Base between 17-18 June 2020, we found that 70% of 18-24 year olds supported the anti-racist BLM protests in response to the murder of George Floyd, but only 37% of those over-65 felt the same. Younger people were as likely as older age groups to agree that black and Asian people face everyday discrimination, but were far more likely to see racism as a structural issue than older cohorts⁴.

Given their outlook, perhaps it is not surprising that young BAME Britons are most supportive of BLM. In our January poll, younger BAME respondents remain the strongest supporters of BLM (70% of 18-24s support compared to 50% of over-65s), though even among young BAME people this support has fallen





since the summer, when support among 18-24s stood at 86%. A majority want more public discussion about racism: 55% felt that race and racism weren't spoken about enough compared to just 27% of over-65s.

Promisingly, younger people are more likely to have seen an impact of the protests than older age groups. In our BAME poll, just 3% of over-65s said that they thought racism had gone down in the last year, compared with a quarter of 18-24s (26%) and 25-34s (25%). This encouraging response from younger respondents may reflect that more of them said they had seen their white friends and colleagues and media take racism more seriously as a result of the protests, though it sits in contrast with the experiences of many others. Our polling also showed that fewer than a third of 18-24 year olds (32%) could say that they had not experienced or witnessed racist violence in the last year.

Despite this reality, our poll shows how the conversation on race has clearly changed for young BAME Britons. Younger respondents were more likely to feel that white friends and colleagues (43% of 18-24s) and the media (45% of 18-24s) had taken racism more seriously as a result of the protests.

Nonetheless, young BAME Britons were less likely to think that the Government had taken racism more seriously as a result, with 40% of 18-24s saying there had been no change in how the Government approached racism, and a quarter (25%) saying that they were in fact taking racism less seriously as a result of the protests.

While much of this reflects young BAME Briton's political views – less likely to be supportive of the Conservative government than older BAME groups – the Government's discourse around BLM certainly sits at odds with young BAME Britons whose understandings of structural racism are not shared. The Prime Minister responded to the protests by stating that UK is not “a racist country”, using the word ‘thuggery’⁵ to describe protesters, while Priti Patel most recently described the protests as “dreadful”, turning the conversation around BLM into one about the place of historical statues⁶.

While these attempts to push for a ‘culture war’ style of politics are cynical, the clear shift among young people, in recognising change in the media they consume, and among their white friends and peers, should offer hope. Young people have not only demanded change, they are creating it.

A MESSAGE TO THE COMMISSION ON RACIAL DISPARITIES

The BLM movement brought longstanding questions of race relations and racism in British society to the fore. But as the coronavirus continues to have a disproportionate and devastating impact on black and minority ethnic Britons, and the overwhelming economic impacts on BAME Britons becoming clear, the optimism for change that many felt in the summer could likely be replaced by greater anger and frustration, and the furthering of mistrust with the government and authorities.

In June the Prime Minister announced a new cross-party Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, to look at “all aspects of inequality – in employment, in health outcomes, in academic and all other walks of life”. Yet this announcement immediately came under criticism. Former Tory party chair Lady Warsi said she feared the commission would result in a “whitewash” that may simply search out “the answer that they want to hear: there's no such thing as racism”.

Indeed, the issues of systemic racism or discrimination in social and political institutions raised by the BLM movement risk being overlooked. Munira Mirza, who has previously criticised the concept of structural racism, was given the job of setting up the panel, while the commission chair Tony Sewell has also previously suggested that the notion of structural racism feeds a sense of “victimhood”.

This is the first government attempt to address the deep ethnic disparities that plague our society, but they have, for many, many years, been laid bare in repeated reports, inquiries, investigations, and in the lived realities of black and ethnic minority Britons.

The new commission must do more to listen, and respond to black and minority groups who have been clear about how about how racism shapes their everyday experiences, and our society as a whole.

NOTES

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WHITELASH: REACTION TO BLM



JOE MULHALL

THE BRUTAL MURDER of an African American man, George Floyd, by a white Minneapolis police officer on 25 May last year sparked an immediate response. It galvanised a long-brewing resentment and anger at deep-rooted and systemic racism, as well as broader societal anti-Blackness and white supremacy in both the USA as well as wider afield.

Inspired by the demonstrations which took place across America, elsewhere people took to the streets to show solidarity and raise awareness about racial injustice closer to home. Thousands gathered in Paris, London, Berlin and Amsterdam, and other cities, joining the chants of “I can’t breathe”.

For the far right, however, Floyd’s murder and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has been seized upon as an opportunity to talk about race in a more exclusionary and supremacist manner, pushing their existing political platforms to a wider audience.

Others in the far right, who have traditionally distanced themselves from open racial politics – promoting instead ‘cultural nationalism’ – have become more willing to display explicitly racial politics.

The most obvious manifestation of this phenomenon has been the emergence and spread of the “White Lives Matter” slogan in response to the growth of BLM support. First emerging in the US in 2015, it is only really after last year’s protests that “White Lives Matter” has been popularised among the European far right.

It denies structural and systemic racism and the need to highlight the value of non-white lives; instead, it allows the far right to push a racist agenda via the

use of an indisputably true statement – namely that white lives do indeed matter. But the requirement to explain and contextualise why one might oppose those who use the term “White Lives Matter” is a major advantage for the far right.

For those who understand racism as something that *only* occurs when there is direct intent, they are far more likely to personalise the issue and become defensive when challenged. Where there is cognitive dissonance over an understanding of historical racism and its bearing on systemic discrimination today, it is also easier for some people to distance themselves from the problems at hand and thus make them more likely to see nothing wrong with the use of a slogan such as “White Lives Matter”.

However, while some people genuinely but mistakenly believe that the BLM movement is being dismissive of white lives, many on the far right are wilfully promoting a misunderstanding the issue for political gain.

A SLOGAN OF THE FAR RIGHT

In the UK, the “White Lives Matter” slogan has been adopted widely by the domestic far right. The anti-Muslim organisation Britain First, for example, released numerous images of Lee Rigby, Emily Jones and Charlene Downes – all white murder victims – with overlain text reading “White Lives Matter”.

The hashtag #WhiteLivesMatter has also trended in the UK, though admittedly much of the traffic is in condemnation of its use. Similarly, the name of Lee Rigby, the British soldier murdered by Al-Muhajiroun-linked extremists in south London in 2013, also began to trend on Twitter. Many on the far right have sought

AND STATUE PROTESTS

KEY



Statue defenders/anti-BLM



White Lives Matter protests



Plymouth lads at war memorial

Aberdeen: BLM demo gets diverted to avoid 100-strong counter protest



Newcastle: Hundreds of hooligans and far-right activists fight the police

Glasgow: 4-500 football hooligans and Loyalists turn out to counter a BLM demo on Saturday 14 June. A few days later the same group attack a pro-asylum demo in the city

Sunderland: Hooligan counter-protest banned by police

Leeds: Seven arrests as hundreds of hooligans and far-right activists mobilise

Bolton: Police had to separate hundreds of pro and anti-BLM protestors

Cleethorpes: Scuffles break out

Nottingham: 200 far right, hooligans and bikers attend a White Lives Matter protest

Manchester: Burnley hooligans charter plan to fly a 'White Lives Matter' banner above a Man City v Burnley match

Hoddestone: Spurs hooligans shout racist abuse at BLM protest



London: 3-4,000 hooligans, veterans and far-right extremists join anti-BLM protest. Fighting breaks out with police. 155 were arrested and 29 people injured

Portsmouth: 2-300 hooligans and far right hold protest



to draw false equivalency between the two tragedies. Serial provocateur Katie Hopkins tweeted: “*Outrage. Available in any colour, As long as it is black #leerigby*”.

Prominent figures such as Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson] and groups such as Britain First, known primarily for their Islamophobia, switched their focus to race as part of broader plans to ‘defend’ various statues and memorials, in the wake of protests about links to slavery and colonialism. When a Burnley FC supporter was condemned for organising a plane to fly the White Lives Matter slogan over Manchester City stadium, Yaxley-Lennon likewise lent his support.

The most sustained use of the White Lives Matter slogan in the UK came from a new racial nationalist organisation called Patriotic Alternative (PA). Formed in 2019 by Mark Collett, former head of publicity for the British National Party (BNP), the group has quickly grown to around 18,000 followers on Facebook.

PA is a racist far-right organisation with antisemitism at its very core. It aims to combat the supposed “replacement and displacement” of white Britons by people who “have no right to these lands”. In this regard PA follows the broader ideology from many in the far right in recent years, rebranding white nationalist ideology as a defence of “indigenous” Europeans against their “Great Replacement” from non-Europeans.

On 9 August, PA held a day of action across the UK to coincide with International Indigenous People’s Day (IPD). The event involved repeating, on a national scale, a strategy the group employed on 4 July, when it displayed a White Lives Matter banner on the top of Mam Tor, a hill in Derbyshire. The image of the banner atop Mam Tor was intended to stir up controversy and in so doing bait the media and concerned members of the public into giving the marginal group free publicity. Though press coverage was only local, the event attracted attention on social media and was successful in bringing in new supporters to the group. Over 100 activists sent in images from 80 locations on 9 August, including some from overseas.

Similar stunts using the White Lives Matter slogan were seen across Europe last year, with reports of banners being unfurled at football games in the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Hungary and the Netherlands.

IDENTITARIAN RESPONSE

One of the most concerted and high-profile campaigns came from the Identitarian movement across the continent.

The international Identitarian movement started in France with the launch of Génération Identitaire (Generation Identity, or GI), the youth wing of the far-right Bloc Identitaire. It has since spread across Europe with affiliated groups, the most prominent of which, in addition to France, are based in Germany, Italy and Austria. At the core of identitarianism is the racist idea of ethnic-separatism, what they call “ethnopluralism”. Similarly, Identitarians also call for “remigration”, a coded term for the idea of repatriation of non-white people.

Part of the movement’s success has been its ability to mould extreme ideas into more moderate-sounding form. This is one reason why Identitarians and other far-right actors have pounced so rapidly on the “White Lives Matter slogan”. In June, GI activists in France held an anti-BLM counter protest and unfurled a huge banner reading: “Justice for the victims of anti-white racism: #WhiteLivesMatters”. Similarly, in Germany, GI activists sought to capitalise on a series of large BLM demonstrations across the country by launching a campaign called #NiemalsaufKnien [*Never on our knees*] in response to protestors and politicians kneeling in solidarity with the victims of racial violence.

The increased prevalence of more explicit racial politics and rhetoric is not merely anecdotal. Based on keyword matching in the tweets posted by far-right accounts monitored by HOPE not hate, we have observed a notable increase in tweets discussing race during the week of George Floyd’s death: a period that also become a flashpoint in the BLM movement.

Floyd’s death was on 25 May, a Monday. That week, and the following week, adjusted for total weekly tweet volume, there was a fourfold increase in tweets mentioning the keyword “white” compared to the previous two months. The same pattern was observed when looking at a set of 289 European Identitarian accounts in (mainly) the UK, France, Germany and Austria.

Although the movement more frequently used the keyword “white” (and its French and German counterparts) than the average far-right accounts overall, the week of Floyd’s death saw the amount of discussion increase by approximately 370%. In both the case of Identitarian accounts as well as the whole sample of far-right accounts, the relative amount of tweets matching the keywords remained elevated until 31 August, the end of the period measured.

This “re-racialisation” of the far right has been notably evident within the UK, though similar tactics have been observed across Europe. In seizing the BLM moment and seeking to mirror its success and co-opt the claim of being a persecuted minority, far-right activists have sought to portray theirs as a struggle for human rights and equality, shorn of overtly racist or crude epithets.

This tactic provides a serious challenge to those opposing this movement or seeking to moderate its activity on social media, as its lexicon ostensibly appears progressive, thereby requiring increased levels of context to reveal the reality of the prejudiced politics on display.

LIVESTREAM AGAINST THE MAINSTREAM



JOE MULHALL

IT WAS SUMMER 2019 and roughly 1,000 Tommy Robinson supporters were gathered outside the Old Bailey in London. Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (Robinson's real name) was facing trial over his amateurish breach of a reporting ban on a major sexual exploitation case in Leeds, and was likely to receive a custodial sentence.

As the baying crowds chanted “O Tommy Tommy!”, Yaxley-Lennon arrived wearing a t-shirt that read “Convicted of Journalism”. Upon being found guilty, he took to his Telegram account to declare: “Sentenced to prison for journalism.”

Among the aggravated crowd that day was Ezra Levant, founder of the far-right Canadian alternative media outlet Rebel News, who had travelled to London from Canada to cover the case. Some months earlier at a previous court appearance related to the same offence, he had run up to Yaxley-Lennon with a microphone and said: “When I first came and I saw the crowd of 1,500 chanting ‘Go Tommy Tommy’, I saw 50 cell phones live streaming and I thought that’s the journalist of 2018,” to which Yaxley-Lennon replied: “It’s the citizens journalists movement that’s on trial not Tommy Robinson.”

Also in the crowd during numerous demonstrations outside the Old Bailey was the unknown Robinson/Lennon sycophant Alan Leggett [aka Active Patriot UK], who livestreamed speeches and created montages

with his hero’s face in a love heart. By the end of 2020 Leggett had risen from obscurity to become one of the most significant figures in the British far right, whose “citizen journalism” about cross-Channel migration spearheaded an explosion of anti-migrant activism in the movement last year.

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA RISE

The British far right has always produced its own alternative media. Shut out by mainstream outlets, it has published countless newspapers and magazines during the postwar period. The longest running is *Candour*, first launched in 1953 by the doyen of British conspiratorial antisemitism, A.K. Chesterton, and released intermittently to this day by Colin Todd. Perhaps, the most successful far-right magazine since the War was John Tindall’s *Spearhead* magazine, which ran from 1964 until his death in 2005.

As the 20th century came to an end, many British fascists were enthusiastic early adopters of the internet, with organisations such as the British National Party (BNP) and key figures like David Irving eagerly carving out a space online. The appeal was obvious: websites allowed them to circumvent the gatekeepers of traditional media and reach audiences directly.

However, in the past decade, as social media became more ubiquitous, platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have allowed the far right to reach unprecedented numbers across the world, without the need of traditional or ‘legacy’ media. While there

is a continuity of politics within the British far right, the means by which such activists organise, operate, recruit, radicalise and attack has been fundamentally altered by the digital age.

In recent years HOPE not hate has increasingly talked of the threat posed by the ‘post-organisational’ far right, by which we mean thousands of individuals, all over the world, offering micro-donations of time and sometimes money to collaborate towards common far-right goals. While this has not replaced traditional far-right organisations, the advent of the internet and the explosion of social media has allowed for an alternative organising model to flourish, leading to the creation of a growing number of decentralised and transnational far-right movements, including those such as the alt-right.

While these post-organisational movements lack formally appointed leaders, they are directed by figureheads, usually determined by the size of their following on social media, who guide the movement and set the agenda.

In a trend that began years ago, but accelerated in 2020, the figureheads that are now directing much of the UK far-right scene have begun to self-identify as “journalists”. While post-organisational figureheads have accrued huge audiences by commenting on events from a far-right perspective, usually on YouTube, many are increasingly selling themselves as investigative journalists, bypassing the gatekeepers of the “corrupt” and “complicit” mainstream media and bringing “truth” straight to the people.

In an age when trust in traditional media outlets is low and increasing numbers of people get their information via social media, the rise of these far-right “citizen journalists”, who portray themselves as legitimate ‘news’ sources, poses a real danger.

GUERRILLA JOURNALISM

Often called participatory, guerrilla or even democratic journalism, the idea that individuals can take a DIY approach to the collection and dissemination of information has blossomed with the opportunities created by the internet.

It’s undertaken by those of all political persuasions, sometimes with remarkable results. It is especially valuable in countries with state-run or controlled media, where brave individuals using new technologies have exposed unreported or suppressed stories. However, as with the internet and social media more broadly, the concept of citizen journalists has been co-opted and exploited by the far right.

In the UK, the emergence of far-right citizen journalists was catalysed by the arrival of far-right alternative media more generally. In February 2014, Breitbart News launched its UK operation, headed by Raheem Kassam and James Delingpole. By 2016 the ‘news’ outlet was playing an important supportive role to UKIP and Brexit.

However, it was Ezra Levant’s Rebel Media that really began to reframe key far-right figures as ‘journalists’ with the recruitment of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [“Tommy Robinson”] in 2017. The Canadian platform was already well-known as the home of some of the biggest names within the international far right scene, including Gavin McInnes (co-founder of VICE), Lauren Southern, Jack Posobiec and Laura Loomer. However, with the recruitment of Yaxley-Lennon/Robinson, its importance in the UK rose significantly.

Paul Golding and Britain First activists on ‘patriot migrant patrol’ at beach near Dover to catch migrants crossing the Channel



During his period at Rebel, Yaxley-Lennon sought to reframe himself as a respectable journalist, eschewing the overtly violent thuggery of the EDL and simply reporting on events he felt were being ignored by the so-called ‘MSM’ (mainstream media). In a 2017 interview about the expansion of Rebel Media (for whom he would work for a time) into the UK, he argued: “The media steer clear of anything that gives a negative portrayal of Islam,” and talked of the “liberal elite agenda”.

Over the next few years he produced a raft of often inflammatory and racist videos. The deadly effect of this content was later exposed when the prosecution in the case of Darren Osborne, who drove his van into a group of Muslim worshippers outside Finsbury Park Mosque, revealed that he had watched a number of Yaxley-Lennon’s videos in the lead up to the attack.

Alongside opposition to Islam, the most discussed topic by Yaxley-Lennon in 2018 and early 2019 was “free speech”, or more specifically, the supposed suppression of free speech at the hands of “political correctness”. After years of unprecedented freedoms engendered by the internet, social media companies began to act to limit the harmful impact of the far-right online.

Their subsequent deplatforming from many of their social media outlets and accounts was met with outrage by figures like Yaxley-Lennon. The belief that “their” freedom of speech was being crushed further catalysed the rise of far-right citizen journalists, who saw it as their duty to create ‘unbiased’ content that amplified the ‘truths’ being espoused by Yaxley-Lennon and his allies, but supposedly suppressed or ignored by the MSM.

If “Tommy Robinson” was the early figurehead of the far-right citizen journalist movement in the UK, it was in 2020 that a small group of far-right figures,



proclaiming to be truth tellers and journalists, went from merely livestreaming far-right demonstrations and providing prejudiced commentary on national events to actually shaping the agenda of the UK far right.

ANTI-MIGRANT ACTIONS

In May 2020, HOPE not hate began to more closely monitor a small group of far-right activists who spent their days on the beaches and at look out points around the port of Dover. The city has long been an important spot for the far right, with its symbolic white cliffs and perceived role as an entry point for asylum seekers and migrants. Back in 2016 it played host to an anti-immigration demonstration that saw the worst far-right violence in decades and a subsequent raft of imprisonments which hampered the movement for some years after.

Since then, there have been sporadic visits to the South Coast by far-right activists from numerous groups, hoping to garner political capital from being “on the front line”. Chief among them has been Britain First, which in autumn 2019 launched “Operation White Cliffs”, which promised round-the-clock patrols but amounted to little more than a few photo opportunities, showing leader Paul Golding looking out to sea.

However, over the summer of 2020 a handful of figures spent large amounts of time filming the arrival of migrant boats and the various locations used to house arriving migrants. The key players in this band of ‘citizen journalists’ were long-time far-right activist and Tommy Robinson supporter, Alan Leggett [aka Active Patriot UK], former soldier Nigel Marcham [aka The Little Veteran], Facebook streamer Chris Johnson, For Britain activist Steve Laws and occasionally Christopher Batt [aka Tyrant Finder UK].

Despite the prejudiced lens through which they create their content, they constantly claimed that by broadcasting unedited livestreams they were bringing their viewers the unbiased truth. As Laws put it: “I’m a reporter from South East Kent covering the stories that the mainstream media manipulate. I show the truth, what’s actually happening, without any fabrications. No fake news here.”

Sometimes living out of cars or staying for long spells in a hostel, this group of activists, sometimes working together, sometimes alone, filmed the beaches of the south coast and ‘hunted’ arriving migrants. Their videos, which occasionally showed them chasing arrivals, quickly spread across far-right social media platforms and whipped anti-immigrant activists into a peak of anger. Each new video served to confirm the far right’s existing belief that Britain was being invaded. Some of this group, including Leggett, became members of the Workers of England Union, a far-right trade union set up by the English Democrats, in order to receive imitation press cards from the union’s bogus English Press Association. However, in early 2021 the Press Association, one of the UK’s main national news wires, obtained a High Court injunction to stop “fake” press cards being issued in its name to so-called “citizen journalists”.

The daily drip of anti-migrant content into far-right online spaces forced the issue up the agenda, until more formal far-right organisations such as Britain First and For Britain enthusiastically jumped on the issue with their own demonstrations and migrant hotel invasions. Here we saw post-organisational citizen journalists setting the agenda for traditional far-right parties.

Not one to miss an opportunity and with Brexit completed, Nigel Farage adopted the issue of cross-Channel migration in April. He first mentioned it on his LBC radio show and subsequently released a series of videos on his YouTube channel, later co-opting the citizen journalist approach by branding the content as ‘Nigel Farage Investigates’.

If Leggett, Laws and Marcham were central to creating far-right anger around the issue, Farage pushed it into the mainstream and it was subsequently picked up widely by right-wing traditional media outlets. The result was dangerous, with Home Secretary Priti Patel echoing the language of the extreme right when she spoke of “activist lawyers” who she said were frustrating the removal of migrants.

In 2020, in large part due to this small group of far-right citizen journalists, the issue of cross-Channel migration became the major topic discussed by the UK far right. While the far right has always created its own media content, last year saw it take major steps towards creating its own media landscape with its own platforms, populated by content created by its own ‘journalists’. Even the notorious conspiracy theorist and David Icke protégé, Richie Allen, who regularly hosts Holocaust deniers on his internet radio show, recently tweeted: “I’m an independent journalist! [...] I am a journalist and a damn good one.”

The phenomenon of far-right citizen journalists has resulted from the combination of longstanding far-right animosity towards mainstream media, the availability of increasingly affordable technology, and a conducive social media ecosystem. In the age of “alternative facts”, fake news and never-ending culture wars, we are only likely to see the continued rise of far-right citizen journalists in 2021.

TRUTH UNDER SIEGE

A disturbing new trend is for the far right to intimidate, abuse and threaten journalists, particularly women, writes NICK RYAN.

FOLLOWING YEARS of increasing threats, abuse and harassment, at the end of last year editors, unions and free press campaigners called for harsher legal penalties for those who repeatedly threaten or attack journalists.

They made the call following the successful prosecution of far-right activist (and Patriotic Alternative regional organiser) James Goddard, who was ordered to pay £780 in fines and costs and issued an indefinite restraining order, after threatening behaviour towards *The Independent's* home affairs and security correspondent Lizzie Dearden.

Editors had made a similar call in the wake of numerous examples of media harassment following anti-Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrations last summer, when editors across the country spoke out in the wake of online abuse and comments being made by readers, as well as attacks against photographers and news crews.

Telegraph reporter Ed Clowes said on Twitter that he had “never seen a protest so hostile to press”, describing one encounter with a protester, who he said grabbed his press badge, as “menacing”.

Meanwhile, *Leeds Live* reporter Ben Abbiss was threatened by a group of counter-demonstrators opposing a BLM protest he was covering. He was “hounded out” and given a police escort after being accused of being a member of Antifa. Beer was poured over him and he was threatened with being kicked down steps. A fellow reporter, Susie Beaver, was threatened the year previously, in which she was told she would pay “the ultimate price” for covering such a rally for the website.

Journalists covering Tommy Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, know full well how his supporters can react and have complained of intimidation from his followers.

At one point during his contempt of court hearings, a BBC camera crew outside the Old Bailey in central London was attacked and forced to leave by Yaxley-Lennon’s supporters, who branded them “BBC paedo scum”, and “fake news wankers”.

Dominic Casciani, the BBC’s home affairs & legal correspondent, wrote in response: “At every hearing in this saga, journalists have been abused. People have been spat at, had cameras attacked. A cameraman was punched. Today it was beer can throwing. Lies have been told about us, our reports and events in court.”

In August 2019, *Guardian* columnist and author Owen Jones was assaulted in a late night attack by a group of men who attacked him as he left a pub in London.

“They kicked me in the back, I was knocked down, then they kicked me in the head and back,” Jones said. Some of his friends were also hurt. “Three of them

were punched, my partner was punched in the end. They were only trying to defend me.”

Jailing the ringleader for two years and eight months last July, the judge ruled the attack was “wholly unprovoked... by reason of [Jones’] widely published left-wing and LGBTQ beliefs by a man who has demonstrable right-wing sympathies”.

Another man was also jailed last year for three months in Northern Ireland for sending Jones a threatening message on Instagram.

More recently, a survey by Newsquest Oxfordshire editor, Samantha Harman, who asked regional journalists about their experiences with online abuse related to their work, found that 84% want more to be done to tackle the problem.

Many said they had experienced anxiety or depression as a result, with 89% getting abuse on Facebook, 80% on their own sites and 67% on Twitter.

Former Society of Editors executive director, Ian Murray, said that the aggression and violence targeted towards journalists was unacceptable and called on politicians and civic leaders to speak out in support of the media.

“It is completely unacceptable that journalists going about their lawful profession should face such intimidation and it bears out fears we have expressed time and time again that the important role the media plays for society is being undermined by those who have strong voices and yet fail to use them.”

WOMEN AS TARGETS

There seems to be a disturbing trend of male far-right activists targeting female public figures. James Goddard already had a long track record of attacks and threats against the media before he was sentenced in November. In June 2019 he was found guilty of common assault against a press photographer, at one point telling him: “When there’s no police around here, I’m going to take your head off your shoulders.”

Goddard had “come to fame” by harassing former anti-Brexit MP Anna Soubry, calling her a Nazi and traitor, and chasing her down the street just a few yards from parliament. Before she was abused by Goddard at a court in March 2019, where he called her “vile” and “scum of the earth”, Dearden had already faced years of online abuse from various far-right activists, including threats to find out her home address, rape and murder.

Dearden has written of the effects of such abuse:

“In a deluge of abusive messages that lasted for several days [in 2018], I was called everything from a “traitor” to an “ugly motherf***er” and a “f***ing stupid bitch”.

“I tried to ignore the onslaught, until a relative alerted me that people had been trying to find out where I lived. “Right let’s get Lizzie Dearden’s address and take photos of her house with the address plus her family’s details,” said one of many similar posts.



Far-right agitator James Goddard, who has convictions for threatening behaviour and assault against journalists, following Guardian commentator Owen Jones, who was brutally attacked by a far-right thug in 2019. ©: George Cracknell Wright / Alamy Stock Photo

“I now spend a lot of time looking over my shoulder. Every work assignment comes with a mental threat assessment – who could be there? Could I be in danger? Is it worth the risk? The abuse arrives in emails and tweets, on Facebook and Instagram, and even through phone calls attempting to reach me at the office.”

A report published in November by the International Center for Journalists and the United Nations found that online violence against female journalists was “increasingly spilling offline, with potentially deadly consequences”.

A fifth of female journalists surveyed internationally reported offline abuse and attacks that they believed to be connected with online incidents.

“Online violence is the new frontline in journalism safety – and it’s particularly dangerous for women,” said the report.

In May last year, a newspaper reporter and her infant daughter were placed under police protection following dozens of threats of violence from far-right extremists.

Amy Fenton, former chief reporter at *The Mail* in Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria, faced threats of violence over her coverage of trumped-up grooming allegations in the town.

Far-right supporters of Yaxley-Lennon had targeted the town, accusing police and the media of a “cover up” when police found no evidence of grooming (a woman was later charged with several counts of perverting the course of justice over false allegations of rape).

“Over the last week I’ve received in excess of 100 death threats,” said Fenton in May. “Not only have they threatened to ‘throat punch’ me, slit my throat, and set me on fire, but they have involved the welfare of my little girl and that is beyond acceptable.” Two separate individuals have now been jailed over these incidents.

In the latest, and perhaps most grim example to come to light, in February this year sinister graffiti appeared in a number of locations in east Belfast, featuring the name of award-winning crime reporter Patricia Devlin scrawled alongside cross hairs.

It’s not the first time that Devlin, a highly-respected reporter on the *Sunday World* newspaper, has faced threats. Just two months earlier, she had faced serious threats from Loyalist paramilitaries and in October 2019, she was sent a message to her personal Facebook account, threatening to rape her newborn son. It was signed with the name of the neo-Nazi terror group, Combat 18.

Martin Bright, head of content at *Index On Censorship*, who knows Devlin, said:

“She’s had several death threats. And these are death threats that the police have reported to her. So it’s not just, you know, the sort of thing people say on social media. These are credible death threats to her and her child. Threats of the most appalling kind.

“We think that the position of Northern Ireland journalists is of real concern. The situation does seem to be escalating. Journalists are being directly targeted in a way that they weren’t even during the Troubles. And we’ve seen the death of one journalist [Lyra McKee] already, killed by dissident Republicans.”

In 2019, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) had already warned that media and camera crews were coming under attack on “an increased basis” from far-right activists, and police needed to take a strategic approach to dealing with the growing problem.

The union’s general secretary, Michelle Stanistreet, has called on law enforcement agencies to do more to tackle what she described as a “coordinated surge in violent extremism against journalists and media workers” as British politics becomes more polarised.

SECTION 3 – COVID AND CONSPIRACIES





COVID-19, CONSPIRACY THEORIES

DAVID LAWRENCE & GREGORY DAVIS

ON SATURDAY afternoon last year, 28 November, chaos broke out in central London. Hundreds of unmasked, impassioned protestors took to the streets for a “Unite for Freedom” demonstration. As police broke up the gathering, ugly clashes ensued.

Among the 155 people arrested that day was Piers Corbyn, a veteran conspiracy theorist and brother of the former Labour party leader, Jeremy Corbyn. Alongside him was Louise Creffield, the founder of Save Our Rights UK (SORUK), the main body behind the demonstration. SORUK had started as a Facebook group just half a year earlier, but by November had evolved into an energetic campaigning organisation.

While more dramatic, the 28 November demonstration was just one of scores of conspiracy theory-driven protests held across the UK during 2020, some of which brought upwards of 10,000 people out onto the streets, and became increasingly confrontational as

the year progressed. Crowds were notably diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity, with individuals from the countercultural left and fringe religious groups rubbing shoulders with far-right activists, and dog-eared veterans of the conspiracy scene mingling with those attending their first demo. These demonstrations are themselves only the most visible manifestations of a sprawling, multi-faceted British conspiracy theory scene that has grown exponentially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the enormity of the crisis became clear, British conspiracy theorists took a leading role in misattributing the origins of the novel coronavirus, linking it instead to the rollout of 5G technology, a Chinese weapons lab or alleging it to be a smokescreen for the imposition of totalitarian controls. As the UK emerged as a global leader in the race to develop a vaccine, British “anti-vaxxers” led the charge to dissuade others from accepting it, alleging that Bill Gates and other prominent public figures had secret plans to microchip, or poison, those who



AND THE FAR RIGHT

received the injection. This groundswell of anxiety has fed a constellation of newly-formed and longstanding organisations, campaigns, outlets and online spaces, which have broadly rallied together under an anti-lockdown, “anti-elite” and anti-vaccine agenda.

While conspiracy thinking fuels extremism of all kinds, far-right activists are attempting to exploit these networks, many of which lack organisational and ideological structure. And while conspiracy theories have always formed part of the social and political backdrop, the current fever pitch has led some individuals to extreme actions. For example, between April and May 2020, more than 70 5G masts in the UK were reportedly attacked. New iterations of longstanding notions now pose a danger to public health and to political and social cohesion. The question is: how did we get here?

THE CONDITIONS

Few situations highlight the need for accurate information as starkly as a global pandemic. Unfortunately, the crisis has engendered the ideal conditions for the spread of conspiracy theories: an unseen killer, massive economic instability, unprecedented new governmental powers, and, initially, rapidly changing official advice. Just when many people have most needed support, social distancing has separated communities, leading to an increased dependence on social media. Conspiracy theories can provide a framework for understanding bewildering events, as well as scapegoats.

It is, however, crucial to recognise that a crisis of trust in British institutions precedes the pandemic. Faith in politics and the media has been decaying for years, and HOPE not hate’s polling in 2019 found widespread pessimism among the British populace. This intense unease has proved fertile ground for opportunistic populists, who have relentlessly exploited fears about “traitors” and “globalists” within our political, legal and media institutions. This instinctive hostility towards traditional gatekeepers is fundamental to conspiracy thinking, which, like populism, employs a binary worldview that divides societies between corrupt elites and the pure people; unsurprisingly, our April 2020 polling found that the most conspiracy theory-minded individuals are those that distrust the state and political system the most.

This pre-pandemic landscape has enabled far right and conspiratorial networks to flourish, which, in turn, have facilitated the spread of COVID-19 conspiracy theories at a remarkable speed. For example, the Isle of Wight-based David Icke heads his own media empire, and his protégé, Manchester-based Richie Allen, boasts many thousands of listeners to his daily radio show. Conspiracist communities have long thrived on their own dedicated forums, but are also entrenched on all major social media platforms. In 2020, this milieu gained a new prominence by providing ready-made, simplistic false explanations as experts toiled to explain the spread of the virus. Most of the conspiracy theories that have taken hold

are updated versions of ideas that Icke and his ilk have been espousing for years.

THE THEORIES

Anti-5G notions are just the latest iteration of false beliefs about mobile phones that date back to the 1990s. These sit alongside broader fears about radio technologies stretching back more than a century.

Years prior to the pandemic, campaigners such as Tyneside-based Mark Steele were sounding alarms about the “baby killing” 5G technology on Facebook and at fringe political conferences. However, for some these longstanding ideas became plausible due to the rollout of the technology coinciding with the pandemic. They gained a major boost in March last year, when they were promoted by Icke just two days after the first UK lockdown commenced, when anxieties were particularly intense. From March to August in 2020, Icke gave five lengthy interviews on the alternative media platform London Real, during which (among a barrage of other false claims), he stated:

“If 5G continues and reaches where they want to take it, human life as we know it is over... so people have to make a decision.”

These videos received millions of views, and membership of anti-5G online spaces spiked. The Facebook group “Stop 5G UK” grew to almost 60,000 members prior to its deletion in April 2020, gaining 3,000 new members in a single day. Our April 2020 polling found that 8% agreed that the rollout of 5G internet was contributing to the spread of the virus, and, illustrating the reach of this content, 37% said they had seen articles or videos discussing the theory in the previous four weeks. By the time his page was deleted on 1 May, Icke boasted almost 800,000 Facebook followers. In every anti-5G Facebook group we examined, comments supporting the destruction of 5G infrastructure were widespread.

The UK anti-vaxx movement, which encompasses a wide variety of ideologies and motivations, has roots dating back to the first smallpox vaccine in the 1800s. In recent decades, false beliefs surrounding mumps, measles and rubella (MMR) jabs have found a wide reach, including in some alternative “wellness” communities that are sceptical towards mainstream medical practices and pharmaceutical industries.

For example, Kate Shemirani received national notoriety last year for her extreme anti-vaccine positions, referring to the NHS as the “new Auschwitz”. However, she had already established an audience as the “Natural Nurse in a Toxic World”, blending naturopathic medical advice with discourses about a sinister global elite.

Meanwhile, the faux-spiritual guru Sacha Stone uses the “New Earth Project”, which has 280,000 Facebook followers, to push the idea that “pollutants” such as electromagnetic radiation are the source of all illnesses. Stone also tells his followers that the COVID vaccine will insert a “nanochip” into recipients that

will allow “the Beast to take control of their soul”. Such claims tap into real fears: in April, the UK-based Facebook group “Collective Action Against Bill Gates. We Won’t Be Vaccinated!!” was established and gathered 190,000 members in just five months. HOPE not hate’s September 2020 poll found that 14% agreed with the claim: “A covid-19 vaccine will be used maliciously to infect people with poison or insert microchips into people”.

The likes of Shemirani, Stone and Icke tap into the “cultic milieu”, a term coined in the 1970s by British sociologist Colin Campbell, and used to refer to a diverse subculture encompassing forms of “New Age” spiritualism and occultism, paranormal beliefs and pseudosciences, including fringe alternative medicine/healing communities. This milieu is fluid and overlaps significantly with conspiracy theorist communities, with which it shares an outsider identity, an ethos of “seekership” and a scepticism towards established authority. The danger is that those attracted to Icke, Shemirani and Stone for their spiritual teachings or health advice will soon be exposed to the darker side of their ideologies.

The need to explain *why* telecom companies, healthcare providers and authorities are conspiring in this diabolical manner has driven attention towards “superconspiracy” theories, which provide an overarching explanation and motive. In particular, the pandemic has boosted the relatively recent QAnon conspiracy (discussed elsewhere in this report) and the more established New World Order (NWO) tradition. The NWO tradition has numerous permutations, but with the core belief that a secret global elite is controlling world events and intends to enslave humanity.

The anti-globalism, technophobia, and religious inflections of the NWO tradition proved particularly resonant in 2020. For example, lockdown and tracing apps have been viewed as early steps towards total control, and the contagion has chimed with literalist Biblical readings concerning plagues as divine judgment. Piers Corbyn, Icke, Shemirani, Steele, Stone and other leading figures all promoted (and promote) variants of the NWO theory. According to Google Trends, in March 2020, UK searches for “New World Order” reached their highest level for 15 years.

Meanwhile, HOPE not hate’s April 2020 polling showed that a remarkable 21% of people claimed to agree with the statement “Coronavirus has been intentionally released as part of a “depopulation” plan (Agenda 21) orchestrated by the UN or New World Order”. By September 2020, that figure sat at a considerable 17%.

RACISM AND THE FAR RIGHT

The spread of such ideas is concerning, in part because often-innocuous conspiracies have long acted as a gateway into conspiratorial antisemitism. The idea that Jews are behind various historical calamities has deep roots in conspiratorial traditions, in particular the NWO, and antisemitic tropes pervade the genre to the extent that, for some, the role of the supposed Jewish conspirators is implicitly understood, and does not need to be named. Others ignorantly regurgitate tropes, unaware they are racist, or turn a blind eye and deny such charges as a smear.

Regardless of the motivation, conspiracists with huge followings frequently stray into strongly antisemitic territory. David Icke, for example, has drawn from the notorious anti-Jewish forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, and Kate Shemirani has

supported the Committee of 300 theory, which has historically been used to spread the idea of Jewish world control. Sacha Stone blames the “Sabbatian Zionist Lurian Kabbalists behind the veil”, using code words for Jews. Piers Corbyn has rubbed shoulders with Holocaust deniers at conspiracist events, and Stand Up X, the UK’s most prolific conspiracy theory street movement, has promoted material from the Holocaust denier Max Igan on its website.

Conscious antisemites are actively breathing their poison into these networks; some have succeeded in winning over budding conspiracists. HOPE not hate’s polling has suggested a worrying degree of openness to antisemitism in the UK: in April 2020, 13% of people agreed that Jewish people have “an unhealthy control of the banking system”, while in September, 17% agreed that “Jews have disproportionate control of powerful institutions, and use that power for their own benefit and against the good of the general population”. Once one has internalised the existence of vast conspiracies, any historical fact is open to question, and over the past year we have witnessed dozens of individuals encountering Holocaust denial, often via (ostensibly) unrelated conspiracy theory Facebook groups, and appearing to accept it with little pushback.

“

Trapped in bubbles practically free from moderation and in close proximity to opportunistic extremists, conspiracy theory networks could become more extreme in the coming months

”

It is often unclear whether those promoting this denial are recent converts or dedicated far-right activists, but the swell of support for conspiracy theories has clearly opened potential new avenues for far-right recruitment, and many far-right actors have adopted a more explicitly conspiratorial rhetoric in order to exploit this. While those in the established UK far right were initially caught off-guard by the pandemic, within months they had broadly coalesced around a conspiracy theory-oriented, anti-lockdown narrative, although the figures of blame vary.

Predictably, the antisemitic far right quickly pointed to its traditional scapegoat. Nick Griffin, former leader of the British National Party (BNP), claimed the virus was a hoax concocted by an “Anglo-Zionist financial elite” in order to crash the economy and install authoritarian measures. Both Griffin and his former protégé, Patriotic Alternative (PA) leader Mark Collett, promoted videos of Orthodox Jewish people apparently flouting social distancing guidelines, in an attempt to blame the Jewish population as a whole for the actions of a minority.

Another early target was Chinese people, an idea encouraged by former US President Donald Trump. For example, ex-UKIP leader Gerard Batten promoted the idea that the disease was a Chinese bioweapon, claiming that the World Health Organisation had “helped China poison the world”. The nazi network, Hundred Handers, rolled anti-China stickers into its usual repertoire of antisemitism and Islamophobia.

Far-right activists also targeted Muslim and immigrant populations, suggesting that the pandemic was a consequence of mass migration and lax border

controls. For example, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson] borrowed the hashtag #germijihad from Indian Hindu nationalists, smearing Muslims as deliberate spreaders of the virus. Others have contextualised the disease within the “White Genocide” superconspiracy, which alleges that shadowy, often-Jewish elites are encouraging immigration into Western countries in an effort to destroy white populations. To this end, the Hundred Handers adopted the relatively anodyne slogan “Pubs closed, borders open”, which would later be repeated by more mainstream far-right influencers, such as Paul Joseph Watson.

More widely, the far right has used conspiratorial language to exploit distrust in the political system. Yaxley-Lennon and Watson, for example, adopted the slogan “COVID-1984” and in May 2020, the discredited provocateur Katie Hopkins appeared on a fringe conspiratorial broadcast and questioned whether a “powerful, malevolent force” had threatened Boris Johnson into instituting a lockdown. In presenting themselves as underdogs in the fight against corrupt elites, these far-right ideologues and groups hope to tap into pools of potential support among the conspiratorially-minded.

THE STREET MOVEMENT

The energy that built online quickly spilled into UK streets, but it was not until late summer that a broad, conspiracy theory-driven, anti-lockdown street movement truly emerged, after the initial Coronavirus outbreak had subsided but frustration with restrictions remained high. At their peak, events on 29 August and 26 September, headlined by Icke, drew crowds of over 10,000 to London’s Trafalgar Square, the largest conspiracy theory-driven protests in recent memory.

The first notable protest occurred on 25 April, when roughly 40 people gathered in Glastonbury town centre to hear Piers Corbyn, who would emerge as the face of the movement, deny the existence of the pandemic. In May, momentum started building in earnest when the newly-formed groups Save Our Rights UK (SORUK) and Stand Up X (SUX) turned out small crowds in Brighton and London. On 16 May, several small rallies took place around the country, with the confrontational event in Hyde Park, London attracting widespread publicity after Corbyn and 18 others were arrested. By late August, demonstrations were a regular occurrence, with events occurring most weekends in various locations.

The movement has become markedly fluid, and while SORUK, SUX, and Corbyn’s own campaign, Stop New Normal, have emerged as its central pillars, numerous organisations, campaigns and projects operate in this space. One striking example is *The Light*, a so-called “truthpaper” launched in September 2020, that quickly established a volunteer network capable of distributing tens of thousands of copies across the country, pushed through letterboxes and handed out at protests.

Approaches vary between the groups. For example, SORUK denies being a conspiracy theory group, claiming to be a “human rights organisation”, an attempt to appeal to more mainstream lockdown sceptics. SUX refers directly to the “New World Order” and Bill Gates’ supposed scheme to microchip the populace. While rifts have opened among erstwhile comrades – most notably, Shemirani labelled SORUK founder Louise Creffield an “infiltrator”, resulting in competing demonstrations – overall, a diverse array of groups have united under an anti-lockdown, anti-elite message.

From the beginning, far-right activists have been a presence at such events. Jeff Wyatt, former deputy leader of the anti-Muslim For Britain party, was an early, active member of SUX, and former UKIP figure David Kurten has re-emerged as an anti-vaxx campaigner, addressing thousands alongside Shemirani in September. These events have also hosted nastier elements. A fascist flag flew over Trafalgar Square on 29 August, and committed nazis, including figures from the Racial Volunteer Force and prominent Holocaust deniers, including James Thring and Nick Kollerstrom, have been spotted at protests. Such figures are undoubtedly a small and potentially divisive minority, but their shared conspiracism has opened opportunities for increasing influence, especially as the aforementioned deniers are longstanding fixtures of the UK’s conspiracist scene.

As autumn set in, mass arrests and scuffles with law enforcement became routine. On 19 September, Shemirani told the 2,000 gathered at her “medic-focused” anti-vaxx event in London, that riot police were “dirty dogs”, before 32 were arrested after scuffles with the police. On 24 October, 18 were arrested at a huge London march. Less than two weeks later, 190 were detained in the capital, and a further 155 at the “Unite for Freedom” event three weeks after that. Piers Corbyn has been arrested nine times since the start of his COVID-19 activism, but while he and other figureheads have remained defiant, police actions appear to be taking a toll, leading the loose movement to diversify strategies.

A CHANGE IN FOCUS

By the start of 2021, such protests had reached saturation. Miserable weather and police intervention saw dwindling crowds – heavily outnumbered by police – and events either ended in arrests or simply petered out. Regular demonstrations have halted, while the movement builds towards a large 20 March 2021 event in London.

SUX and SORUK have emphasised online community building and campaigning, with the former establishing a group of “Keyboard Warriors” to “lobby” selected companies and public figures. The pivot back to online activism is noteworthy, as belated bans on mainstream platforms have encouraged SUX and other groups to migrate to alternatives, particularly the messaging app Telegram. While this will inhibit the spread of toxic ideas to new audiences, Telegram has entrenched far-right extremist subcultures. Trapped in bubbles practically free from moderation and in close proximity to opportunistic extremists, conspiracy theory networks could become more extreme in the coming months.

A clear example of far-right infiltration occurred in January, when – inspired by Italian anti-lockdown activists – a UK “Great Reopening” campaign emerged, urging businesses to break lockdown rules by opening on the 30th of that month. The campaign was organised via dozens of coordinated Telegram channels and groups, boasting many thousands of members, and was backed by some of the pillars of UK conspiracism, including Corbyn, Icke and SUX.

However, the Great Reopening was also supported by the fascist Patriotic Alternative (PA), which observed “a perfect opportunity for PA supporters and activists throughout the country to demonstrate some leadership and help co-ordinate the local

groups in their own area". PA activists and other fascists duly spammed Telegram groups associated with the venture with antisemitic content. The "Great Reopening" was, predictably, a flop – few businesses proved willing to face the fine – but was noteworthy for the speed of its growth and the ease with which far-right activists penetrated its networks.

Notably, conspiracy theorists are also targeting the 6 May UK elections this year. Piers Corbyn hopes to challenge "the monstrous impositions of the New World Order" by running for London Mayor. Giving a taste of what we can expect, he was arrested yet again in February 2021 for distributing leaflets likening vaccination efforts to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Also running for the position is David Kurten, representing his microscopic new Heritage Party, while Brian Rose of London Real, on the fringes of the conspiracist scene, has support within it due to his interviews with Icke. While posing no credible electoral threat, Corbyn and Kurten will do their level best to use their platforms to misinform and sow division.

THE ROAD AHEAD

For now, while the temperature remains high, the UK's COVID conspiracy scene will likely lose some momentum as infection rates fall, lockdown measures ease, and social media bans continue to limit reach.

However, the past year has seen dedicated new networks form and thrive, and many activists will not readily relinquish the causes to which they have given considerable emotional investment. The economic and social fallout of the pandemic is only in its early stages, and experience has shown that anxieties induced by economic hardship can be exploited by extremist actors. As the bite deepens, we will continue to see people turning to conspiracy theories to make sense of a chaotic world, and activists will be ready to take their hand.

While it is impossible to know when conspiracy theorists will act on their beliefs, in extreme cases such false notions can motivate disruption, harassment, and even violence. The EU's counter-terrorism chief has expressed concern about the potential of "new forms" of conspiracy-theory driven terrorism in the wake of the pandemic. The risk stands that something worse than scuffles with police and 5G tower arsons *could* occur in the UK. Conspiracy theories are symptoms, as much as causes, of a cynical outlook on politics and society. The responsibility for combatting their spread does not lie solely with social media companies. In order to regain trust, deep societal changes are required, and these will only occur with serious structural, political and financial commitment.



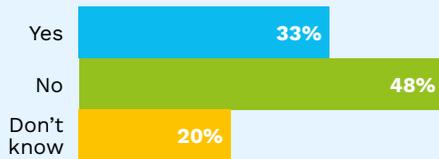
BRITONS AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES

A recent HOPE not hate poll explored people’s awareness of conspiracy theories and then whether they believed in them or not. While relatively small numbers think these theories are definitely true, when combined with those who think they might be true, the picture becomes more concerning.

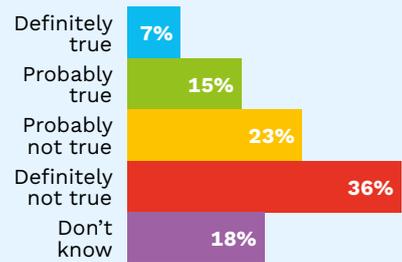
This, and the large proportion of people having seen or read about these conspiracies over the past 12 months, highlights the extent to which these ideas are spreading on social media and the large pool of potential followers for conspiracy theorists to exploit.

Q45.1 Over the past 12 months, can you remember reading any articles or seeing any videos relating to the following stories?...

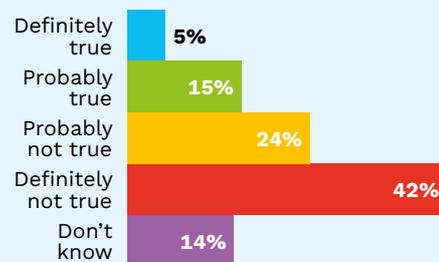
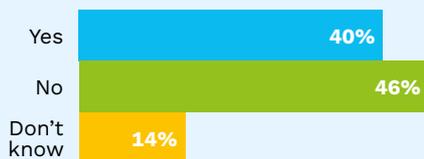
Elites in Hollywood, governments, the media and other powerful positions are secretly engaging in large scale child trafficking and abuse



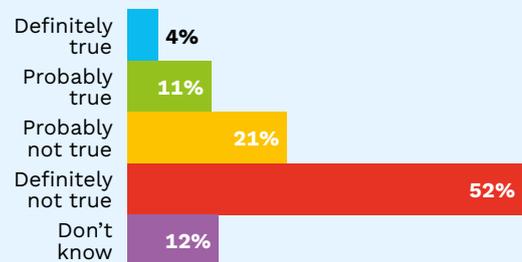
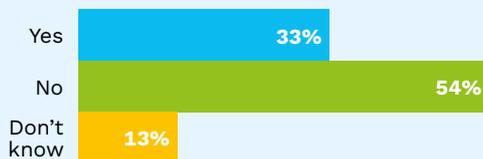
Q46.1 For each of the following statements, please tell us whether you believe them to be true or false....



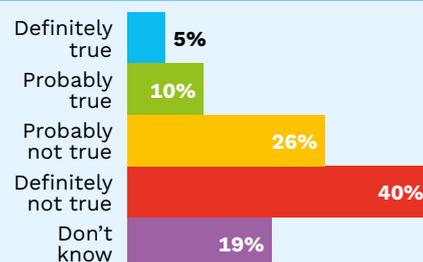
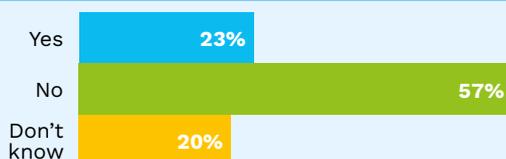
Coronavirus is a bio-weapon intentionally spread by the Chinese state



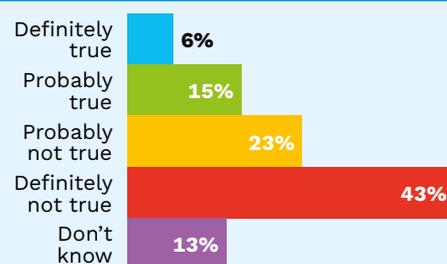
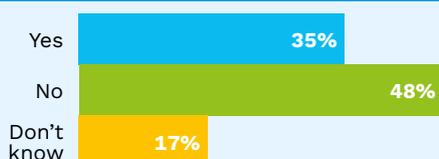
The Covid-19 vaccine will be used maliciously to infect people with poison



Elites are encouraging immigration as part of a plot to weaken Europe



Coronavirus has been intentionally released as part of a “depopulation” plan orchestrated by the UN or New World Order



1,492 people were surveyed for a Focldata poll during 25-26 February. It was a nationally representative poll, weighted by age, gender, region and education.

CONSPIRACY THEORY SCENE



STAND UP X

2020 SUMMARY

Stand Up X (SUX) is the most energetic conspiracy theory street movement in the UK. Throughout 2020 the group held scores of protests across the UK, primarily driven by an anti-lockdown, anti-vaccine, and anti-5G agenda.

SUX launched in May, borrowing the anti-elite slogan of the Occupy Movement, “We are the 99%”, and bringing together veteran conspiracy theorists (such as Piers Corbyn), far-right activists (such as Jeff Wyatt), and first timers. SUX quickly generated news coverage, most notably at a 16 May protest in Hyde Park, at which Corbyn and Wyatt were arrested alongside 17 others.

Initially focussed on London, SUX has developed local groups across the UK and has held anti-lockdown events in Basildon, Bristol, Brighton, Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham, Bournemouth, Birmingham, Hull and Norwich among other cities, often with several events organised on a single weekend. The group also contributed to the large Trafalgar Square events of August and September, which brought upwards of 10,000 to the streets. As the year progressed, events were increasingly marred by clashes with the police and arrests; SUX were involved in a huge central London protest on 24 October, which saw 18 arrests, and a 28 November event which descended into chaos, with 155 arrests.

SUX’s 40,000 strong main Facebook group was deleted in early September, and whilst it retains dozens of national and regional Instagram pages, the group primarily organises via the messaging app Telegram, where it has established a network of more than 40 local and national groups.

Whilst outwardly presenting an ambivalence to QAnon, SUX supported the hundreds-strong “Save Our Children” marches in Liverpool and Manchester on 22 August, and the theory remains popular with sections of supporters. During 2020 the SUX website has linked to known antisemites, including David Icke, Richie Allen, and Holocaust denier Max Igan.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

SUX will remain a pillar of the UK conspiracist milieu, but is likely to diversify its strategies. In mid-January, partially due to dwindling numbers at events, the group signalled a pivot away from street protests and towards community outreach, and has organised a group of “Keyboard Warriors” to “lobby” companies and public figures. Street actions will remain a core tactic, however, especially as lockdown restrictions ease and weather improves.

SAVE OUR RIGHTS UK

LEADERS: LOUISE CREFFIELD AND VINCE DUNMALL

2020 SUMMARY

Save Our Rights UK (SORUK) is a large anti-lockdown campaign headed by Louise Creffield and Vince Dunmull. Founded as a Facebook group in April, SORUK expanded throughout the year to become a pillar of the conspiracist scene in the UK, both online and offline.

The group held their first protests in Brighton in May, going on to collaborate with Stand Up X and Piers Corbyn for street demonstrations throughout the year. The group co-organised the “Unite For Freedom” demonstrations in Trafalgar Square on 29 August and 26 September, both attended by upwards of 10,000 people, and addressed by David Icke, gaining international press interest. Creffield was at the centre of a rift in the anti-lockdown movement, however, due to a fallout with Kate Shemirani, who labelled Creffield an “infiltrator”.

As restrictions against demonstrations hardened, events were increasingly marred by clashes with the police and arrests. A large demonstration in central London on 24 October saw 18 arrests, and a 28 November event descended into chaos, with 155 arrests. Creffield was among those arrested.





Louise Creffield and Vince Dunmall

SORUK's website is designed to appeal to more mainstream lockdown sceptics than other similar groups, avoiding more outlandish conspiratorial claims. In November, the group interviewed Tory MP Desmond Swayne, a fact that would gain SORUK a slew of negative press in early 2021 when the story came to light. As well as disseminating propaganda online, SORUK has also sought to legally challenge lockdown measures and organised social media and letter writing campaigns, lobbying MPs and journalists.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Despite starting 2021 with more protests, for the time being SORUK is prioritising other forms of activism, and in January, the group launched its own subscription-funded social media site, "Autarki". The group remains among the most organised conspiracy theory groups in the UK, however, and will likely remain a significant spreader of misinformation throughout 2021.

PIERS CORBYN/STOP NEW NORMAL

2020 SUMMARY

Stop New Normal (SNN) is the anti-lockdown, anti-vaccine campaign brand of Piers Corbyn, the leading conspiracy theorist and brother of the former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. Corbyn's tireless campaigning throughout the year, in which he organised and headlined dozens of events around the country, solidified his place as the face of the conspiracy theory-driven anti-lockdown movement in the UK.



Piers Corbyn. Photo: YouTube

Corbyn's first protests took place in Glastonbury in April, but he first burst into the public eye after his arrest, alongside 18 others, at a confrontational Stand Up X protest in Hyde Park, London, on 16 May, an action for which he would eventually be found guilty for breaching emergency health regulations. He has so far been arrested eight further times for his campaigning, and has been given significant fines. This has enabled Corbyn to portray himself as a martyr; Sky News has reported he has received roughly £45,000 in donations since he began his anti-lockdown activism.

Corbyn had a central role in organising large conspiracy theory events in central London throughout the year, including the 29 August event, for which he was fined £10,000. This led to an appearance on Good Morning Britain, an opportunity he used to spread COVID-19 mistruths to a large viewership.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Corbyn has announced his intention to stand for London Mayor in May, claiming that he will be challenging "the monstrous impositions of the New World Order". His run for office has not softened his ugly politics, as he was arrested in February 2021 for distributing leaflets in London that likened COVID-19 vaccination efforts to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. Corbyn will fully exploit his platform as a candidate to sow lies, fear and division.

RICHIE ALLEN

2020 SUMMARY

David Icke's Manchester-based protégé Richie Allen continued to run his online conspiracy show throughout 2020, which functions as a platform for a variety of conspiracy theorists, including prominent Holocaust deniers and dedicated antisemites.

Allen did his best to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic, including offering Vernon Coleman, a British conspiracy theorist who had become popular for spreading mistruths about the pandemic, a regular slot on his show. During 2020, he hosted antisemites such as Mark Collett, Kevin Barrett, Paul Craig Roberts, Gilad Atzmon, and James Fetzer. He also hosted Brexit Party founder and former leader, Catherine Blaiklock.

In October, Allen was in the news after a prominent anti-lockdown advocate, Dr Martin Kulldorff of Harvard medical school, appeared on the show, and in November he hosted Tory MP Desmond Swayne, a fact that would gain both of them a slew of bad press when it was exposed by HOPE not hate early in 2021.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Allen will continue to provide one of the biggest online platforms for conspiracy theorists and conspiratorial antisemites in the UK, and has already hosted Holocaust denier Max Igan on his show this year. Allen seems intent on expanding his empire, launching a new website early in the year with a renewed focus on text.



CONSPIRACY THEORY SCENE (CONTINUED)

DAVID ICKE

2020 SUMMARY

David Icke, Britain's most famous conspiracy theorist and antisemite, effectively exploited the COVID-19 pandemic to gain a new prominence in 2020.

On 18 March, just days after the first lockdown was announced in the UK, Icke's first interview with Brian Rose of the London Real website was released, during which a largely unchallenged Icke claimed that the health crisis was being used as a pretext for totalitarian controls, and that Israel was using the pandemic to "test its technology", among a multitude of further falsities. The video, which was deleted by YouTube, received millions of views, as did the four further interviews Icke and Rose recorded between April and August. On 8 April, one of the interviews was aired on the local TV channel London Live, leading OfCom to take action against the channel. HOPE not hate polling that month found that 51% of respondents had heard of Icke, with 12% having read a text by Icke or watched one of his videos in the last six months.

In May, following consultation with HOPE not hate, Icke was banned by Facebook, where he had nearly 800,000 followers and was perhaps the single largest promoter of COVID denial on the platform. His YouTube

channel was removed in May, ending one revenue stream, and was suspended by Twitter in November, although he remains on Instagram.

Despite these setbacks, the virus was lucrative for Icke. In August, he released a 700 page book *The Answer*, delving into COVID-19, and in October, *The Times* reported that his video streaming service, Ickonic, has recorded an annual revenue rise to £400,000.

Despite his more eccentric theories, Icke's longevity has seen him widely embraced by the conspiracy theory-driven, anti-lockdown movement in the UK, and he was the headline figure at protests in August and September, which each attracted upwards of 10,000 attendees. Throughout the year, his son Gareth became an increasingly visible and active figure, speaking at events around the country, although he lacks his father's talent for communication.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Icke will continue to be a major figure spreading COVID-19 mistruths and conspiratorial antisemitism in the UK, and a significant figure internationally, although he is likely to continue to delegate speaking duties to his son and focus instead on content production.

David Icke giving a lecture in Budapest October, 2018.
Photo: Elekes Andor





THE LIGHT

PUBLISHER: DARREN NESBITT

2020 SUMMARY

The Light is a so-called “truthpaper” that began publication in September, producing four issues before the end of the year, and establishing itself as a significant voice in the conspiracy theorist alternative media in the UK.

The Light is run by a Manchester-based “flat earther” Darren Nesbitt (AKA Darren Smith, AKA Daz Nez), who claims it is funded through donations, advertising and subscriptions, and depends upon volunteers for distribution. Nesbitt told *The Guardian* that the paper has a print run of 100,000 copies; whatever the true figure, it has certainly achieved an impressive reach across the UK for such a new publication.

The group also used its networks to deliver hundreds of thousands of COVID-denial leaflets.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The Light has continued regular publication in 2021, and looks set to solidify itself as a fixture of the British conspiracy theory scene. In January the group promoted content from neo-Nazi Mark Collett, highlighting the dangers of large conspiracy theory disinformation networks.



KATE SHEMIRANI

Kate Shemirani, addresses a crowd of conspiracy theorists at a rally in Trafalgar Square.
Photo: Salim Fadhley

2020 SUMMARY

In 2020, the registered nurse, conspiracy theorist and vlogger Kate Shemirani emerged as a central but divisive figure in the anti-vaccine movement in the UK. From the start of the pandemic, Shemirani, who styles herself as the “Natural Nurse in a Toxic World”, spread COVID-19 mistruths to her sizeable online following, as well as broader New World Order theories. Shemirani became notorious for her extreme statements, calling the NHS the “new Auschwitz” and, in July, earned herself an 18-month suspension from practising nursing.

She was a key speaker at the 29 August protest that brought upwards of 10,000 people to Trafalgar Square, London. She was at the centre of the rift in the anti-lockdown movement, too, during which she accused Louise Creffield of Save Our Rights UK of being an “infiltrator”, resulting in Shemirani organising her own Trafalgar Square event on 19 September, a week prior to Creffield’s larger demonstration.

Shemirani addressed the 2,000 attendees at her “medic-focused” anti-vaccination event using inflammatory rhetoric, claiming that “our government has declared war on the people of the UK” and labelling riot police as “dirty dogs”. After clashes with the police and 32 arrests, the *MailOnline* ran a feature on her asking: “Is this the most dangerous woman in Britain?”

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Social media bans have impeded Shemirani’s reach, but she has continued her activities, collaborating with Kevin Corbett under the banner of “The Medical Revolutionaries”. She is a divisive figure, however, which may prevent her from being a major presence at large rallies as she was able in 2020.

LIFE AFTER Q?

After a rollercoaster year, the global QAnon phenomenon enters 2021 in a state of crisis and upheaval.

GREGORY DAVIS & DAVID LAWRENCE

AT THE START of 2020, few commentators were treating QAnon as anything more than a curiosity, a troubling but insignificant sideshow in the grotesque carnival of Trump's presidency and his wider "MAGA" (Make America Great Again) movement.

The central conspiracy at the heart of QAnon, which held that Donald Trump was engaged in an existential struggle with a shadowy elite of Satan-worshipping paedophiles, appeared so bizarre that it was hard to imagine that it could become a credible threat to US democracy. Yet the perfect storm of a global pandemic and the US presidential election was to provide both a huge boost of support and an existential challenge to the movement.

Today, QAnon enters 2021 in a state of upheaval and disarray.

It is too early to know exactly what the end of Trump's presidency will mean for the global QAnon movement and its UK presence. Some adherents are currently keeping the faith, still hoping that the new President, Joe Biden, will be removed from office by the military and Trump reinstated. Others have become utterly disillusioned with the constant promises of assured and imminent victory.

Most worryingly, HOPE not hate has identified a coordinated effort by the extreme right in the UK and USA to reach out to QAnon supporters at this moment of vulnerability, hoping to hijack their anguish and convert them to an even more anti-democratic and antisemitic worldview.

GROWTH OF QANON IN THE UK

In the UK, the growth of interest in QAnon was part of a wider surge of interest in conspiracy theories during the pandemic, as an anxious population looked to social media for explanations about the sudden calamity that had turned their world upside down.

QAnon was ready-made to profit from these anxieties, turning its well-established and prolific networks of misinformation to providing alternative explanations for the pandemic. A July report by the Institute of Strategic Dialogue (ISD) found that global membership of QAnon Facebook groups increased by 120% in March 2020, and that between 23-25 March, posts on Twitter containing keywords relating both to COVID-19 and to QAnon increased by 422%.

As a superconspiracy, QAnon is able to provide an overarching narrative that can incorporate any number of preexisting fears and conspiracy theories, including those surrounding the pandemic, lockdowns and vaccines. This narrative, with its 'heroic' protagonist (ex-)President Trump and a nemesis in an imagined

global cabal of Satan-worshipping paedophiles, also provided a simplistic moral lens through which to view events that otherwise felt impossibly chaotic and arbitrary.

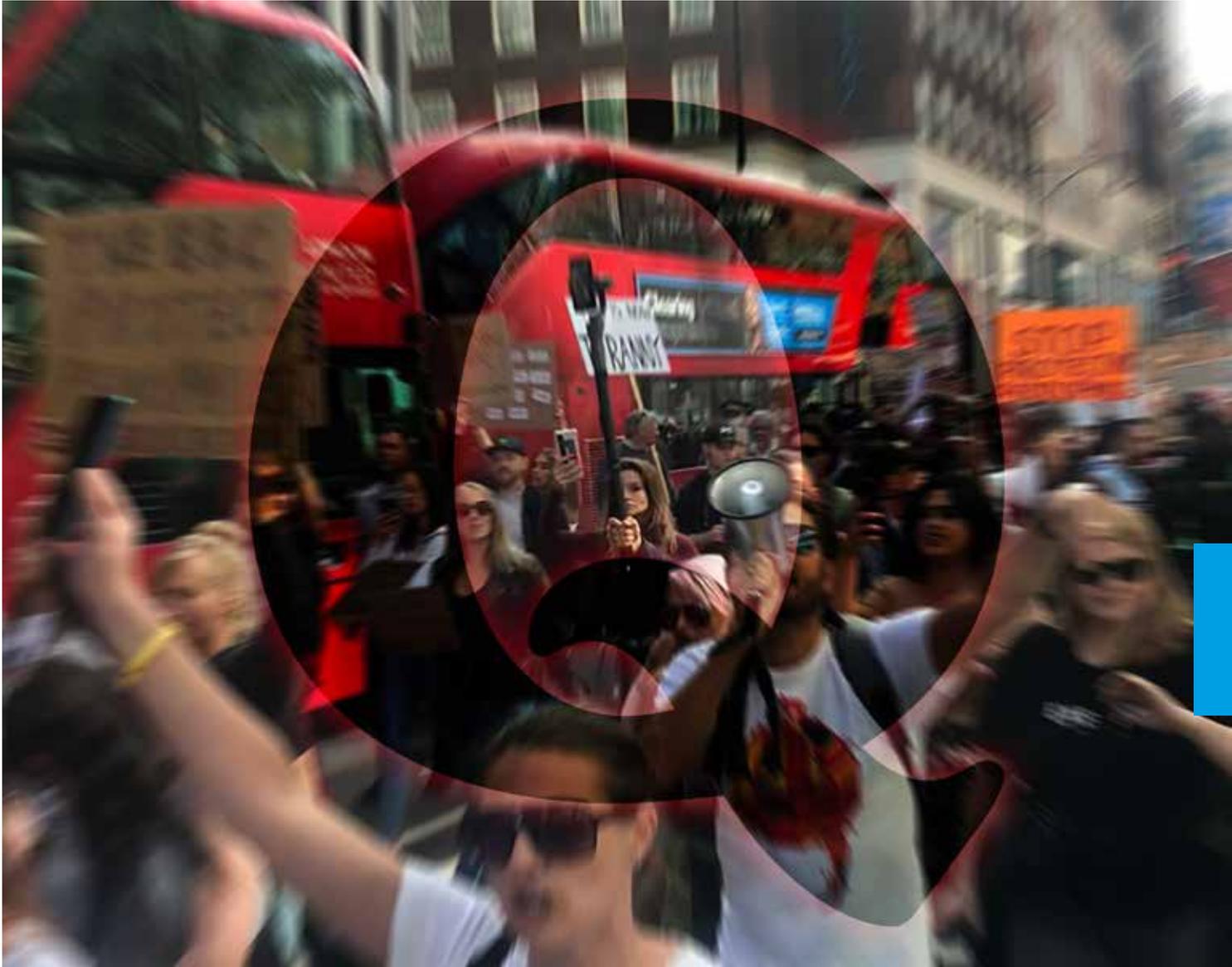
Later in the summer, the insidious spread of QAnon into the UK escaped its home on social media and emerged onto the streets. The arrival of more distinct and novel elements of the ideology could be seen at street protests in August and September in 2020, as protesters chanted accusations of paedophilia at London's Disney store, at the BBC headquarters and Buckingham Palace. Groups with anodyne names and slogans like "Save Our Children UK" and "Freedom For The Children" were in fact motivated by the belief that a shadowy cabal at the highest levels of society was engaging in child abuse on a mass-scale. QAnon slogans and symbols became a visible presence at protests for a number of issues, including anti-migrant, anti-lockdown and veterans' rights.

British QAnon influencers also began to play increasingly significant roles in the global movement throughout the year. The Oxford-educated computer scientist Martin Geddes was a very early adopter, one of few Brits to have followed QAnon since its emergence on the 4chan imageboard in late 2017. His quasi-intellectual contributions to the QAnon narrative canon had gained him 83,500 Twitter followers at the start of 2020, a number which would soar to 250,000 before his account was removed in the belated Twitter crackdown following the storming of the US Capitol by enraged Trump supporters in early January 2021.

Spanish-based British entrepreneur Charlie Ward arrived far later to the party, starting his YouTube channel in April 2020, a period of explosive growth for QAnon in the UK. Whereas Geddes had stuck closely to the hyper-partisan US-centric form of the theory that we have termed "Orthodox QAnon", Ward represented the eclectic strand of the movement, inviting guests onto his channel to weave in the Trump vs Cabal narrative with a huge variety of tangential theories, including UFOs and New Age spirituality.

Another who embodies this eclectic strand is Simon Parkes, whose role as an influencer had garnered little attention prior to the US presidential election in November, but who has since grown his YouTube account to an astonishing 670,000 subscribers (from 50,000 in early 2020) by offering relentlessly optimistic analysis of the tumultuous days. A former Whitby town councillor, Parkes had previously received publicity for his 2012 claim to have been adopted at birth by a 9ft green alien.

It was this development of eclectic strands of QAnon that facilitated its spread around the world and within the USA. Whereas "Orthodox QAnon" adhered closely to the content of messages from the eponymous Q and focused intently on the political machinations of Washington DC, these newer strains emerging focused extensively upon elements only briefly touched upon by Q – or never mentioned at all (such as UFOs or New Age spirituality). These new strains also universalised the core US-centric elements of the theory; UK



activists linked allegations of child abuse by prominent figures such as Jimmy Saville and Prince Andrew to the idea of a global paedophilic elite.

SOCIAL MEDIA BANS

As the movement expanded and evolved, however, its successes would cause ever greater alarm and scrutiny from wider society.

The social media platforms that had been the cradle and springboard of the movement came under increasing pressure to address the toxic presence of QAnon, both for the intensely violent rhetoric about mass executions but also its central role in disseminating harmful misinformation around COVID-19. Facebook was the first to take comprehensive action against the movement as a whole, announcing on 6 October that it would seek to remove all QAnon-oriented pages and groups from across Facebook and Instagram, a significant escalation of its previous measures.

This loss of access represented a significant blow to QAnon in the UK, as almost every group and page that we had been monitoring on Facebook and Instagram removed in the weeks that followed Facebook's announcement. However, Twitter and YouTube

continued with a piecemeal approach, announcing waves of suspensions that removed specific accounts but failed to remove QAnon's dangerous presence on their platforms. Only after the shocking scenes at the US Capitol on 6 January was Twitter spurred to a similar crackdown.

As a result, the QAnon community began to migrate across to various lightly-moderated alt-tech platforms in the second half of the year, such as Telegram, Gab and Parler. While this severely limits the ability of QAnon to proselytise to the vastly larger pool of users on mainstream platforms, it also immerses those who make the transition into an even less moderated, and far more toxic, environment found in the lawless terrain of "alt-tech".

CRISIS

At the very core of all strands of QAnon is the belief that Donald Trump, as President, has been leading a fight against an abominably evil cabal, and also that he was destined to be victorious and initiate a new era of justice and peace. Posts from the shadowy "Q" constantly assured the movement that "patriots are in control" and that evildoers would imminently face justice in 'The Storm', a judgement day of mass arrests

and military tribunals. Having strung its followers along for three long years, constantly assuring them that such an event was imminent, this narrative became increasingly implausible after the US election.

While QAnon believers had long expected supposed election fraud from the Democratic Party, they also believed that such schemes would be vanquished by President Trump. The election results thus set off a scramble for new narratives, which settled on the idea that Trump had allowed the election ‘fraud’ to take place in order to reveal the scale of the Cabal’s wrongdoing to the public.

This story was then adapted with the suggestion that every party who failed to overturn the result, from state officials to the Vice President, were implicating themselves as Cabal members. This new twist only bought a small amount of time, however; it still relied on the result being overturned prior to Biden’s inauguration, which did not occur.

This now leaves QAnon at a dangerous crossroads: an increasingly desperate support base has been moved en-masse to websites largely populated by extremists, some of whom seek to radicalise them further.

QANON AND THE BRITISH FAR RIGHT

Attitudes to the Trump Presidency, and therefore QAnon, represent an ideological fault line for the far right in the UK. While many British activists cheered on Trump’s brand of divisive populist nationalism, it has

not satisfied the demands of ardent antisemites, who regarded his support for Israel and failure to address the “Jewish Question” as unforgivable. For the latter group, QAnon’s perpetual exhortation to “trust the plan” represented an equally unforgivable passivity.

In some ways QAnon is particularly well-suited for adoption by established right-wing reactionary movements. Its intense hatred of liberal elites and shadowy globalist cabals has pervaded British right-wing rhetoric for decades, while its pretence of saving children from abuse has a natural appeal to those who have long sought to portray the far right as leading a crusade to defend children and families (often focusing on certain communities while ignoring others).

This overlap between the themes of QAnon and the far right has seen several prominent populist figures with large online followings flirt with, or openly adopt, the conspiracy. These include Gerard Batten, the former UKIP leader and veteran anti-Muslim activist. In April, Batten tweeted approvingly of the Pizzagate film *Out of Shadows*, and in July, he wrote:

“The BBC attacking QAnon tells you there must be something in it. We know the Deep State organised the Russiagate coup against Trump, & failed. We know Epstein ran a pedo ring to compromise powerful figures. How much else will prove true?”

Other far-right figures also adopted the language of QAnon without formally endorsing it. Prominent anti-

QANON: AN EXPLAINER

QAnon is a conspiracy theory movement which claims that President Trump is engaged in a secret war against a cabal of powerful Satanic paedophiles. This cabal is predominantly made up of liberal politicians and celebrities who are allegedly kidnapping, torturing and even cannibalising children on a vast scale.

The movement began on 28 October 2017, when a user of the 4chan message board, later identified as “Q”, claimed to have insider knowledge that Hillary Clinton would be arrested the following day. This kind of false lead would become an unintentional trademark for Q, who claimed in further posts to be a Trump insider with high-level security clearance [at time of writing, Q’s identity remains unknown]. Nonetheless, Q has made almost 5,000 subsequent posts (known as “Q drops”), cryptic messages outlining this narrative. As users of 4chan refer to each other as “anons”, the name “Q-Anon” emerged first as a name for the anonymous poster and later the movement as a whole.

Q, who has moved from 4chan to its successor sites 8chan and then 8kun before going silent in December 2020, has gained an army of enthusiastic devotees who place faith in the supposed “Plan” to take down the cabal, as well as a cottage industry of influencers who decode Q’s cryptic messages and speculate on the progress of Trump’s secret war.

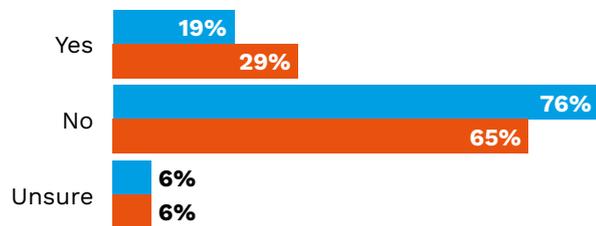
Q tells his followers that they represent a “digital army” whose role is to lay the groundwork for the eventual “Great Awakening”, details of which are so shocking that the population at large cannot be informed of them without the elaborate pantomime of gradual revelation.

Much of QAnon ideology draws from the pre-existing “New World Order” (NWO) tradition, which for decades has alleged that a secret elite is controlling events across the globe for the purpose of world domination. A more recent precursor is the “Pizzagate” theory that emerged ahead of the 2016 Presidential election, which alleged that Democratic politicians were trafficking children for use in paedophilic rituals.

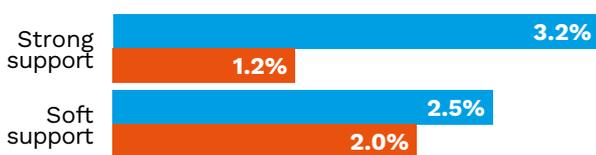


SUPPORT FOR QANON IN THE UK DROPS SUBSTANTIALLY DESPITE GROWING AWARENESS OF THE CONSPIRACY THEORY

Have you heard of Qanon?



To what extent do you support or oppose Qanon?



■ September 2020 ■ February 2021

The September poll was a survey of 2,000 UK adults conducted by Hanbury Strategy.

The February poll was a survey of 1,492 UK adults conducted by Focaldata

Muslim activist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson] began to appropriate QAnon terminology through 2020, repeatedly referring to the “Great Awakening”, while stating that he was merely keeping an “open mind” to the theory. Katie Hopkins has similarly flirted with it, appearing on livestream with the eccentric QAnon promoter John Mappin, as well as posting images to her Instagram account using phrases such as “The Storm Is Coming”, another key QAnon slogan.

One fringe group that endorsed the theory is the Nottingham-based British Street Commandos (BSC), a pseudo-military outfit in which former English Defence League leader Tim Ablitt has been active. The group produced a poster for an “All Lives Matter” demonstration featuring QAnon iconography, and members of BSC attended a 22 August “Justice for All” rally, also advertised as the “Great Awakening” march, which brought as many as 1,000 onto the streets of Nottingham.

Despite the movement’s baked-in antisemitism, however, QAnon has limited appeal to those on the British far right whose overriding obsession is race and the so-called “Jewish Question”. Mark Collett, arguably the most influential neo-Nazi currently active in the UK, released a video the day after Joe Biden’s inauguration lambasting QAnon’s failure to address shifting racial demographics and “the disproportionate amount of power that Jewish individuals hold within the power structures that [Q] constantly criticised.”

At the same time, supporters of Collett’s fascist Patriotic Alternative (PA) movement and other hardline antisemites were seeking to directly bring a message to QAnon supporters. On the same day as

Collett’s video was released, a minor British QAnon promoter revealed to his followers he had “reached the end of the road” with QAnon following Biden’s inauguration, but that he had been speaking to a “bunch of nationalists” in a group chat who “go on and on about the fucking Jews, and I just get so fucking bored of it, because I don’t think it matters if these people are fucking Jewish [...] But they had some very good points.” He then reeled off a series of far-right talking points about the “displacement of the native population” by migrants.

The “nationalists” he was referred to were actually virulently racist and antisemitic activists, who had flooded into his QAnon-inspired anti-lockdown Telegram group in a coordinated effort to radicalise its members to their toxic ideology. “To those feeling betrayed by Trump and Q, there is an alternative. It’s called White nationalism,” said one. “We are the truth, the solution, and like family. Collectivise racially.”

These new members had encouraged the vlogger to join them in the chat group after he declared that the inauguration of Biden represented the “final straw” for his belief in QAnon.

Others have gone even further in their efforts to groom QAnon supporters to their cause. On 11 January this year, one British fascist set up a Telegram chat group designed to appeal to Trump’s desolate supporters, pretending to be an American in his opening message: “Good day patriots. I have been a registered Republican for 30 years and a Trump supporter since 2016. However I have realized that our movement as Patriots is bigger than every one person, bigger than any Party.”

But when announcing the creation of his group in private chats with his neo-Nazi comrades, he was clear about his true intentions: “This is basically all we need in order to transform Telegram into one of the most efficient propaganda tools we have right now”. In another message, he laid out the strategy for his “subtle, effective redpill mission”, telling them that “the idea is we need to scrap n*gger this and n*gger that and simply brand being patriotic as being race-realist”.

LIFE AFTER Q

However the future plays out for QAnon, it seems clear that its impact on the UK and the world will be long lasting. The failure of its central narrative poses a significant challenge to the movement’s promoters, but the corrosive effect of its social cohesion, public health and political participation will continue to pose a threat whether QAnon survives in any recognisable form or not. It is also clear that many will seek to emulate, co-opt and exploit QAnon for their own purposes, for motives ranging from personal profit to political extremism.

The extent to which fascists will be able to exploit the crisis in QAnon is hard to measure, given the diversity that exists within the movement. For those who arrived at such beliefs through their devotion to Donald Trump and his MAGA movement, his defeat via a supposedly stolen election will pose an immense psychological blow and might well leave them vulnerable to grooming from the far right. Yet those who were engaged with eclectic forms of the movement that focused more on alleged child exploitation or New Age spirituality may well be able to adapt their ideologies to continue through the post-Trump era.

UNMASKED: THE QANON ‘MESSIAH’

HOPE not hate can reveal that Berlin-based artist Sebastian Bieniek is the creator of a strange new religion targeting QAnon believers – and seems to be casting himself as its Messiah.
By GREGORY DAVIS

ON 12 FEBRUARY this year, HOPE not hate revealed the existence of a huge and mysterious social media network that was targeting QAnon conspiracy followers via the Telegram messaging app.

The so-called Sabmyk Network, which now has over one million subscribers across 136 channels in English, German, Japanese and Korean, posts a constant stream of QAnon content copied from other sources, interspersing it with posts about a previously unknown pseudo-religious narrative: the “Sword of Shawunawaz”, the “Atmumra Dynasty” and a Messianic figure called “Sabmyk, the Orion King”.

The network is worrying on multiple levels. It had amassed a huge audience over the course of just a few weeks, adding new channels and tens of thousands of followers on a daily basis. The largest channel in the network, the Great Awakening Channel, has over 134,000 subscribers and posts shared across the network regularly receive over 200,000 views.

Despite their near-identical content – each shares almost every post from the others – many of the channels are also deceptively branded to target different countries and demographics. The vast majority have names and profile images that identify them as QAnon-based, but the first channel to catch our attention was named and branded to resemble the anti-Muslim group Britain First, while others targeted evangelical Christians or UFO enthusiasts.

Alongside the anti-vaccine, COVID-denial and antisemitic conspiracy theories that are sadly

ubiquitous on regular QAnon social media, the Sabmyk mythology promoted by these channels appears to be entirely new, leaving significant questions about the purpose behind its creation.

Our initial reporting on the topic drew an angry response from a channel in the network, which lambasted HOPE not hate as a “dirty propaganda machine” and suggested that our investigation was ordered by George Soros, the billionaire philanthropist who serves as a hate-figure for QAnon and the wider far right. As one post said:

“They try to split us now from @SABMYK , but we are not that stupid as you think Soros! We are QAnon #WWG1WGA !!! THIS IS SPARTA and THIS IS @SABMYK ! We stay together! You can’t divide us!”

The toxic content, unknown ideology, calculated and deceptive marketing and huge audience amassed by this network made it vital to unmask the person or persons behind it, to better understand their intentions.

Now HOPE not hate can reveal that the person behind this operation is the German artist and photographer Sebastian Bieniek, an obsessive self-publicist with a long history of social media manipulation.

BIENIEK’S WEB OF FANTASY AND DECEPTION

The mythology behind the Sabmyk element of the network had been seeded on social media over the course of 2020, supposedly the work of a 55-year-old female Iranian artist living in Germany called “Ameli Achaemenes”. A Facebook profile in her name was set up in 2018, followed in 2020 by a string of websites and Facebook pages relating to aspects of the Sabmyk mythology: the so-called “Atmumra Dynasty”, the “Sword of Shawunawaz”, etc. The only apparent photo of Achaemenes showed what appeared to be a woman with her face covered by a niqab.



Fake news and toxic conspiracy theories promoted by Sabmyk channels



Sebastian Bieniek
Photo: Reza
Mahmoudidschad

But further research revealed that Achaemenes was herself a fictional creation, one of a dizzying array of false identities and social media accounts created by Sebastian Bieniek over the course of more than a decade. Another of his characters that we discovered in the course of this investigation was “Vincent Van Volkmer”, supposedly an 87-year-old artist who attends exhibitions and anti-lockdown protests dressed as a bee, complete with painted latex face mask to conceal his identity.

Achamenes and Van Volkmer were two of at least four fictional artists invented by Bieniek; the two others, “Arthur Sosna” and “Elias Maria Reti”, also have multiple social media accounts and fictional biographies but seemingly do not appear anywhere in person. The amount of work that has gone into creating all four characters is impressive, with glossy well-produced websites, detailed biographies and a distinct artistic style for each. Bieniek sells artworks under all four names through a string of Ebay accounts, a trade which appears to be fairly lucrative: the six accounts we have identified have made sales totalling €24,000 in the past three months alone.

Yet even this is not the full extent of Bieniek’s strange obsession for deceptive roleplay. Along with dozens of social media accounts and websites for his characters, Bieniek has created countless false identities to promote his own career as a painter, photographer and performance artist.

His German Wikipedia page has been deleted at least four times, most recently in January 2021, and an investigation by Wiki editors in 2019 concluded that Bieniek had used at least 30 fake ‘sockpuppet’ identities to create and edit pages about himself in 44 different languages over the previous decade. Notably, those same accounts had also been used to create and edit a Wikipedia page for one of his artist alter egos, “Elias Maria Reti”.

But it is Facebook where Bieniek achieved his earliest and greatest success in viral marketing. His main page has an impressive 430,000 likes, a number which dwarfs that of many genuinely acclaimed artists on the platform. This too was reached by deceptive means: in 2011 Bieniek wrote a book called *RealFake* that detailed his campaign to deceptively promote his own work.

A review of the book said it revealed how Bieniek had:

“...built up over the last three years, an empire of fake profiles. Then he linked up the profiles to each other [...] Within a short time, he communicated with thousands of people around the world and they became - without being aware of it - his fans too.”

FROM SELF-PROMOTION TO SABMYK

It is hard to know exactly where Bieniek’s artistic expression ends and his obsessive egotism begins. His performance art plays up to a boastful public persona, such as a video in which he stares into the camera while repeating the phrase “I am the winner” over and over. Yet his decade-long anonymous pursuit of a Wikipedia presence appears to be less of a performance and more a reflection of his deep-seated desire for attention and recognition.

It is clear, however, that the mythology he originally invented as part of the backstory for his “Ameli Achaemenes” character has developed into a far more sinister project, one for which the endgame is unclear. In recent weeks the channels have made a series of posts detailing the “Signs of Sabmyk”, the means by which believers will be able to identify the anointed Messiah of this pseudo-religion.

One such post claimed that Sabmyk would have “17 v-shaped scars” on his arm, the result of a “prophetic ceremony at the age of 24”. In a now-deleted section of Bieniek’s website, the origin of this cryptic statement becomes clear: the “prophetic ceremony” in question is a gruesome art exhibit that Bieniek put on in 1999 called ‘Hand Without A Body’, which involved the then-24 year old artist cutting v-shaped wounds into his arm for 16 days in a row.

This discovery indicates that Bieniek (perhaps) sees himself in the role of the messianic Sabmyk, a worrying but perhaps predictable development given his track record. It is unclear what Bieniek’s long-term goals are for this project, and whether he believes any of the conspiracy theories and misinformation that he is pumping out to a million subscribers. Yet it is important to note that the QAnon movement itself might have begun in a similar fashion. The person who first posted as the eponymous “Q” has never been positively identified, but it seems likely that their original motivation was a desire for attention and personal entertainment, rather than a plot to create a globally influential conspiracy movement.

HOPE not hate will be providing the full list of Bieniek’s accounts to social media platforms and calling for them to be removed on the basis of inauthentic and coordinated platform manipulation. But the successes of his project to date is a chilling reminder of the opportunities for deception and manipulation that exist on social media, particularly the unregulated badlands of alt-tech platforms like Telegram.

THE QANON SCENE

FREEDOM FOR THE CHILDREN UK

FOUNDERS: LAURA WARD AND LUCY DAVIS

2020 SUMMARY

Freedom for the Children UK (FFTCUK) is a QAnon-driven protest movement. Founded in July 2020 as a Facebook group by Laura Ward and Lucy Davis, from August to September 2020 FFTCUK held fortnightly marches across 17 different cities and towns in the UK, attracting significant press attention in the process.

The group eschews the iconography of “orthodox” QAnon in its official branding, which has enabled it to attract both ardent QAnon believers and those who appear to be highly-impassioned campaigners against genuine child exploitation.

After building a significant following online, FFTCUK launched its first wave of actions on 22 August, in coordination with international demonstrations under the slogan “Save Our Children”. Protestors gathered in Aberdeen, Bristol, Dundee, Huddersfield, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester,

Newcastle, Newport, Orkney and York. While most demonstrations were tiny, the Liverpool, Manchester and London demonstrations attracted hundreds, and a video of the London march, during which supporters chanted “paedophile” outside Buckingham Palace, went viral online.

FFTCUK went on to hold a series of simultaneous demonstrations on 5 and 19 September, but poor attendance on the latter date caused the group to halt street actions. In November, the group’s main Facebook group of 13,000 members was deleted, a blow from which it has not yet recovered, although Davis has continued promoting material via Instagram.

FFTCUK was one of a number of groups involved in a 12 December “Save Our Children” protest in London, but it is a diminished version of its former self.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

For the time being FFTCUK persists primarily as an online brand, and is likely to resurface in some form as the weather brightens and lockdown measures ease. However, it is no longer the hive of activity it once was.



The “Stand Up For The Children” event at Hyde Park, London, 5 September 2020. PHOTO: HOPE not hate



MARTIN GEDDES

2020 SUMMARY

Martin Geddes was an early adopter of QAnon and one of the most popular QAnon influencers in the world. He has benefitted from the growth of interest in the conspiracy theory, growing his Twitter following to 250,000. In December, in a bid to further capitalise on interest, he released a book, *Open Your Mind to Change: A Guidebook to the Great Awakening*, receiving significant downloads and purchases in the aftermath of the 6 January 2021 attack on the Capitol in America.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

While he maintains his faith in QAnon, 2021 is likely to be a year of declining influence for Geddes. He suffered a heavy blow in January this year, after his Twitter account was deleted during sweeping bans on the platform, and while he has relatively large followings on alternative platforms such as Gab and Telegram, his visibility is diminished.



CHARLIE WARD

2020 SUMMARY

Charlie Ward, a British vlogger living in Marbella, Spain, emerged last year as a major European voice in the QAnon scene. Ward first began promoting QAnon in March 2020, when interest in the movement began to spike around the world.

Ward represents the more eclectic strand of QAnon, promoting a wide range of guests from pre-existing and tangential conspiracy theories, and during 2020,

he hosted anti-5G campaigners, New Age spiritualists and Black Hebrew Israelites. Ward has also done more than perhaps anyone else to popularise the claims of New Zealand individual Joseph Gregory Hallett, who styles himself as King John III and claims to be the true heir to the British throne.

By mid-September, Ward's channel had reached 170,000 subscribers. After it was removed by YouTube, he moved across to the video hosting site Bitchute where, as of mid-February 2021, he had over 106,000 subscribers. Styling himself as an entrepreneur, Ward also launched his own website, complete with an "Insiders Club" available via subscription.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Ward has lost credibility in the eyes of many QAnon supporters for his repeated false predictions. We may see him opportunistically shifting focus to other popular conspiracy theories.



SIMON PARKES

2020 SUMMARY

Parkes is a British conspiracy theorist who jumped on the QAnon bandwagon and experienced a remarkable boom in popularity in late 2020 and early 2021.

Prior to 2020, Parkes was best known as a former Labour councillor in Whitby, Yorkshire, who made a number of outlandish claims in relation to his alleged abduction by aliens. He also runs a New Age website called "Connecting Consciousness".

Despite gaining little attention prior to the US presidential election, his ascent to becoming a preeminent QAnon influencer came when he began to offer supposed intelligence from secret sources that detailed Trump's inevitable overturning of the US election results, offering a hopeful narrative for an increasingly desperate community. His YouTube account grew from 50,000 to an astonishing 670,000 in the tumultuous days following the election, and his channel on the video hosting site Bitchute became the single most subscribed channel on the site by mid-January.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Like Ward, Parkes has been discredited in the eyes of many QAnon supporters for his repeated false predictions, although he has continued promoting the conspiracy and still commands an enormous viewership.

FROM CLIMATE DENIAL

DAVID LAWRENCE charts the worrying growth of “Green” nationalism within the modern far right, which can have devastating consequences.

LAST YEAR, a newly formed group calling itself “Local Matters” (LM) began distributing leaflets and dropping banners in town centres across the north of England, urging the public to “Stop Global Abuse – Shop Local”.

LM described itself as a group of “activists agitating for radical, cross-spectrum policies for an environmentalist, regionalist, direct-democratic England,” outlining its views in a document, *Localism: Manifesto for a Twenty-First Century England*, which it claims was “printed in England using recycled paper”. The group’s propaganda encouraged the home-growing of vegetables, and railed against global corporations for greenhouse gas emissions, among other environmental concerns.

Beneath this inoffensive green sheen, however, lies something nastier. LM is spearheaded by former members of Generation Identity, a European far-right network that promotes “identitarianism”, a form of racial segregation. In an email obtained by the anti-fascist group Red Flare and published by *VICE*, co-founder Charlie Shaw describes LM as “a political project with a softer face [...] The ideas are certainly identitarian, but it’s [sic] presentation removes any interest that a group like Hope Not Hate or Antifa might have”.

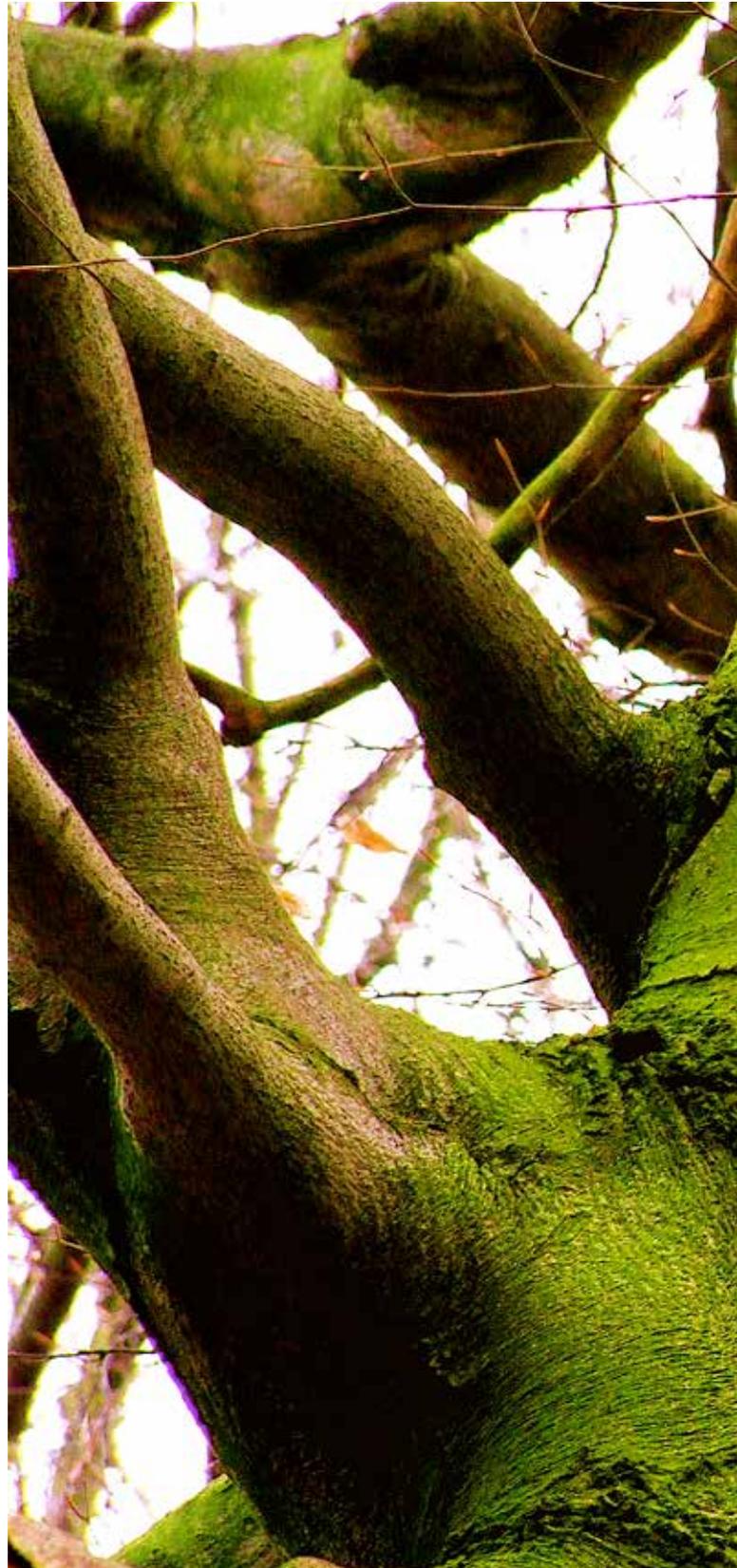
Unsurprisingly, the group blames overpopulation – and in particular immigration – for the UK’s environmental decline, proposing a solution: “Comprehensively put a stop to immigration in its entirety.” While LM is a microscopic effort, its selective environmentalism points to a wider trend. As public concern over the looming ecological catastrophe builds, the radical and far right in the UK, as elsewhere, are seeking to rebrand themselves with a green tinge.

Right-of-centre groups have historically been closely associated with the denial of anthropogenic [human-caused] climate change, despite the human role in global warming no longer being a matter of contention among the wider scientific community. However, forms of “green nationalism”, focusing primarily on conservation rather than climate action, are in vogue.

Particular strains of green thought have deep roots in far-right traditions, and longstanding anti-globalist, ruralist and environmental politics have been revitalised in the hope of capitalising on the popular sentiment and protest movements of the moment. In doing so, elements of the far right seek to justify their hatreds, and to redirect legitimate concerns for vital causes towards anti-minority sentiment.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE POPULIST RIGHT

In the UK and across the globe, much of the populist radical right continues to reject the scientific



TO BLOOD AND SOIL



Photo: Roel Wijnants at Flickr.com

consensus on climate change, a position often inflected by conspiracy thinking, anti-progressivism and contrarianism.

Most visibly, global far-right figurehead and former US President, Donald Trump, sought to undermine transnational efforts to combat climate change, and has spread conspiracy theories on the matter, for example alleging global warming to be a Chinese plot to undermine American industry. Meanwhile, a 2019 study by the climate think tank adelphi found that a majority of European right-wing populist parties espoused ideas that conflicted with the scientific consensus on ongoing, human-induced climate change.

In the UK, Nigel Farage, the just-retired leader of Reform UK (formerly the Brexit Party) and a close Trump ally, has long expressed such scepticism, telling the European Parliament in 2013: “We may have made one of the biggest and most stupid collective mistakes in history by getting so worried about global warming.” Numerous leading figures of his various vehicles have taken similar or more extreme stances, and under his leadership UKIP pushed for repealing the Climate Change Act.

There remains an audience for this position. While HOPE not hate’s 2019 polling found that 74% of Britons agreed that “the world is facing a climate emergency”, 19% agreed that “there is no evidence that humans are influencing the Earth’s climate”. This group leans right, and is significantly more prone to conspiracy thinking. The overwhelming majority of climate deniers also agreed that climate change “is a propaganda campaign by mainstream media and global elites”, and were far more likely to support the statement “Jewish people have an unhealthy control over the world’s banking system” than society as a whole. This group also had more negative attitudes towards immigration and Muslim populations.

The knee-jerk rejection of climate science among sections of the right stems, in part, from the perception that climate change activism is dominated by liberal/left progressives and “elites”. Conspiratorial thinking is fuelled by an instinctive distrust of established authorities and official narratives which, on the radical and far right, coincides with a deep hostility towards left-wing positions, and oftentimes a contrarianism towards the mainstream. Efforts to combat climate change have therefore been portrayed as a left-wing, globalist scam to weaken the sovereignty of the nation, restructure society, and suppress the freedoms of ordinary people.

For example, the anti-Muslim UKIP splinter group, For Britain, states:

“The Far Left are extremely keen on the Climate Narrative, as part of the agenda is dismantling capitalism and wealth redistribution. As we have seen with the Black Lives Matter movement, it is foolish to take the narrative at face value, particularly when a cause is hijacked by Marxists and Communists”.

Particular scorn is heaped on radical environmental movements, most recently the global environmentalist campaign Extinction Rebellion (XR) and teenage environmental activist Greta Thunberg. The far-right conspiracy theorist and former UKIP figure and InfoWars editor, Paul Joseph Watson, claims:

“Greta is just a human shield for the real agenda of the people who pull her strings. Neo-feudalism disguised as environmentalism. The raw lust for power and control disguised as right on hipster activism.”

A GREEN SHIFT

Despite this strong tradition, populist parties are increasingly adopting selected green policies as public concern swells. Nigel Farage appears to have softened his stance on global warming, for example, while remaining highly critical of environmental movements. In 2019 his Brexit Party promised to “Invest in the Environment” by “planting millions of trees to capture CO2”, and introducing new recycling policies.

On the populist extremes, the fascist British National Party (BNP), long claiming to be the UK’s “only true green party”, has moderated its former unequivocal rejection of human-caused climate change:

“The BNP accepts that climate change, of whatever origin, is a threat to Britain. Current evidence suggests that some of it may be man-made; even if this is not the case, then the principle of ‘better safe than sorry’ applies and we should try to minimise the emission of greenhouse gases and other pollutants.”

However, the adoption of green policies does not necessarily entail the relinquishing of climate contrarianism. UKIP’s 2020 manifesto makes an explicit division:

“We should separate the dogma of anthropogenic (man-made) climate change from conservation – care for and protection of the environment. There are environmental emergencies – not least deforestation and marine plastic pollution – **but there is no climate emergency.**”

The denial of climate change allows for the denial of responsibility, which is instead placed on immigrants and progressive politicians. UKIP’s manifesto continues:

“The most significant threat to the Green Belt, and the UK environment in general, especially England, is unsustainable population growth, which is predominantly fuelled by uncontrolled mass migration”.

The blaming of immigration for overpopulation, and therefore environmental destruction, is near-ubiquitous across radical and far-right groups that delve into green issues.

LOCALISM, NATURE MYSTICISM AND THE RACIST RIGHT

UKIP, like the BNP, applies a “localist” approach to environmental concerns defined by a narrow conservationism. As my colleague Patrik Hermansson explains, localism: “...selectively focuses on the national context while disengaging from transnational cooperative projects, and expresses opposition to climate action more generally”.

There is ample reason to support conservationist efforts in the UK, which has suffered some of the



Logo of the Reich Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and the Blood and Soil ideology

most severe cases of deforestation and declining biodiversity in the Western world. However, radical and far-right localist approaches tend to be highly selective in order to advance protectionist and nativist goals, and can play into very ugly politics indeed.

Local Matters (LM) defines its localism primarily through anti-globalism. However, a core facet of the Identitarian ideology that underpins LM is “ethnopluralism” – the idea that different cultures and ethnic groups should not mix in order to “preserve” them. The more overtly fascist Patriotic Alternative (PA) has also adopted localist approaches, using “The Great British Clean-Up!” litter picking campaign to push its agenda, stating:

“Nationalism and conservationism go hand in hand. It makes sense that those of us who love our nation would want to keep our land looking clean and tidy”.

Far-right localism taps into a certain regressive romanticism as well, aiming to return to an idealised past rather than working towards a sustainable future, and views the landscape not only as a point of national pride, but intimately entwined with British identity. Darker, but related forms of nature mysticism rooted in the *völkisch* movement of the late 19th century were adopted in Nazi Germany, giving rise to the “*Blut und Boden*” (Blood and Soil) doctrine expounded by “Reich Peasant Leader” Walther Darré, which emphasised a mystical connection between race and land.

In far-right thought, modernity and its urban and industrial aspects are associated with liberalism, which constitutes an assault not only on landscape and wildlife, but on nation/race itself. Therefore, national and racial health can only be restored through ruralisation and the adoption of a barrage of regressive and racist policies.

Shades of this doctrine can be detected in Patriotic Alternative’s manifesto, which states:

“The UK’s beautiful and rich natural environment is part of our ancestral inheritance. A strong connection to the natural world is integral to our physical and mental health”.

In engaging in green politics, far-right groups and individuals present themselves as the defenders of the nation/race: “Our land is steeped in our history and only we can preserve it,” PA pronounces elsewhere. Alongside litter picking efforts, PA has adopted countryside hiking as a key activity, functioning as a form of exercise and community building, but also in the hope of reconnecting with the land.

Overall, the Blood and Soil mantra remains popular among the British extreme right. An article on the PA website names Walther Darré as part of “a rich pedigree” of far-right environmentalist thought. The small National Mountaineering Initiative group use it as a primary slogan, as did the National Action (NA) splinter Scottish Dawn, and the Hundred Handers propaganda campaign, which is headed by PA’s Yorkshire organiser Sam Melia, himself formerly involved in National Action.

Unsurprisingly, such ideologies are steeped in antisemitism and racism, with Jews and immigrant populations portrayed as cosmopolitan, rootless, urbanising people, devoid of respect for, or spiritual connection with, the land, and so posing an intrinsic threat to nature and rural traditions.

This rhetoric often overlaps with the “White Genocide/ Great Replacement” conspiracy theory, which alleges that sinister, often-Jewish elites are encouraging migration into the West as part of a plot to destroy the white race. An article on the PA website titled “*Ecocide*” takes aim at George Soros, a frequent target of antisemitic conspiracy theory, and his “co-conspirators”:

“few have done more to damage both the ecological and human equilibrium that has sustained the planet for millennia. By means of their NGOs, they have ferried invasive species across the Mediterranean [...] Actions that have culminated in national governments spending billions to cement over bucolic landscapes in their rush to build accommodation for the “New Europeans” and tarmac over ancient woodlands to provide them with roads to aid their rapid access to social security offices, mosques and community centres where they can congregate and displace the indigenous species.”

This vicious passage misapplies ecological concerns about the impact of “invasive” species to immigration, a common far-right tactic. For example, the red squirrel, which has declined in the UK in part due to the introduction of its American grey cousin, has become a British far-right mascot, used by PA and various “Trad” (Traditionalist) projects. The Hundred Handers has used the slogan “White Brits a Minority by 2066/Preserve an Endangered Species” in posters emblazoned with the branding and typeface of Extinction Rebellion (XR).

This latter case points to a less common, but longstanding far-right tactic – infiltrating, or otherwise subverting, legitimate environmental movements and radical subcultures. The Hundred Handers’ appropriation of XR branding simultaneously aims to insert fascist talking points into environmental discussions, and to smear XR with association to hateful politics; other such posters produced by the group read “House the World/Destroy the Environment”, and “Save the World. Sink the Boats”.

In recent years, former leading members of NA have sought to infiltrate branches of the direct action wildlife protection group, the Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA). Marginal far-right actors have sporadically attempted to infiltrate the HSA since the 1980s, as well as other radical groups.

ECO-FASCISM AND VIOLENCE

Several of the slogans used by the Hundred Handers are also used by a loose accelerationist, eco-fascist subculture that has emerged across the globe in recent years. This advocates a genocidal revolution in the face of looming ecological collapse.

Strains of eco-fascism draw on “deep ecology”, a current of thought that regards humans as just a part of global ecosystem and no more important than any other. One extreme deep ecologist is the late Finnish fisherman Pentti Linkola, who followed the Malthusian theory that overpopulation has brought us to the cusp of an “imminent ecological holocaust”.

Linkola’s answer was drastic depopulation and the installing of brutal dictatorships to safeguard the planet. The first English translation of Linkola’s work was published in 2011 by Arktos Media, the premier alt-right publisher, which is registered in the UK, and has since become a key influence on modern eco-fascist thought.

Eco-fascists promote violent direct action, drawing influence from a terroristic style of extreme-right politics that has proliferated online, and on the messaging app Telegram. Drawing on Blood and Soil traditions, Jews and immigrants are viewed as parasites and invaders, and are particular targets for violence: “Love Nature, Kill Non-Whites” and “Save a Seal, Club a Kike” are common slogans.

While extremely marginal, there have been eco-fascist attempts to organise in the UK. In 2019, a short-lived, cross-border eco-fascist group, The Green Brigade, emerged, combining Nazism with the desire to destroy “the system that exploits our land, animals and people”. The group has been linked to the arson of a mink farm in Sölvesborg, Sweden. Activists have also distributed posters in London and Scotland.

The violent rhetoric of proliferating eco-fascist online spaces may seem overblown, but there is good reason to treat it seriously. Both the Christchurch and El Paso terrorists, who murdered scores of victims in twin attacks in 2019, framed their murderous hate crimes as solutions to environmental issues. The El Paso killer even named his manifesto *The Inconvenient Truth*, an apparent reference to Al Gore’s 2006 environmental documentary, and the Christchurch killer explicitly identified himself as “an Ethno-nationalist Eco-fascist”. His heinous attack took place on 15 March, coinciding with a global school strike to protest climate change, headed by Greta Thunberg.

WE MUST REMAIN VIGILANT

Growing public concern for environmental issues is both welcome and long overdue. However, we must remain vigilant of the bigoted fringe that seeks to corrupt noble causes, shift blame towards minorities, and divert good intentions into destructiveness of another kind.

At best, the radical right and far right’s green sheen provides a softer face to divisive politics. At worse, it can elevate gutter prejudices and violent impulses to a sacred mission to defend one’s spiritual home.

SECTION 4 – TERRORISM



THE DISTURBING RISE OF YOUNG NAZI TERRORISTS

With increasing numbers of young neo-nazi extremists now being prosecuted and jailed under terrorism legislation, NICK LOWLES reflects on 25 years of often-ignored nazi terrorism.

A 16-YEAR-OLD boy became Britain's youngest person involved in terrorism in February this year, after he admitted 12 offences including downloading a bombmaking manual when he was just 13 years old.

The court heard how the teenager, who hasn't been named because of his age, was the British leader of the now-banned nazi terrorist group, the Feuerkrieg Division (FKD). The court also heard how he was actively promoting terrorism from the age of 13.

This alarming case highlights a growing threat posed by far-right terrorism in the UK, centring on the young age of many of those now being convicted.

Twelve more far right activists or sympathisers were convicted of terror offences during 2020. Six were teenagers. Four were convicted of being members of a proscribed organisation, in this case the nazi-terror group National Action (NA). Seven were convicted of preparing or encouraging acts of terrorism, or being in the possession of terrorist documents.

In total, 59 far-right activists or sympathisers have been convicted of terror-related offences since the beginning of 2017, with a further 11 awaiting trial.

The steady trickle of far-right sympathisers going through the courts is reflective of the growing far-right terrorist threat. Last October, the new Director General of MI5 warned that violent right-wing terrorism was now a major threat facing the country, with eight of the 27 serious terrorist plots stopped in the final stages in the last three years linked to neo-fascist and racist groups.

That threat, he added, was now second only to the threat from Islamist terrorism, and the trend was likely to continue in the near future, with worrying numbers of young people attracted to extreme far-right ideology and increasing evidence of international links between groups (including with those in the US).

His remarks echoed those of the UK's top counter terrorism police officer, Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner, Neil Basu, who in November said that a surge in online extremism, coinciding with COVID-related isolation, had created a "perfect storm" for radicalisation.

He revealed that 17 children, some as young as 14, had been arrested on terrorism charges in the past 18 months alone. Over the same time period, more than 1,500 children under the age of 15 were referred to the Prevent counter radicalisation programme.

"We are seeing more young people being drawn towards terrorist activity," he said.

"That is a relatively new and worrying trend in the UK, because just a few years ago we were not seeing anyone that young amongst our casework."

25 YEARS OF FAR-RIGHT VIOLENCE

HOPE not hate has reviewed convictions over the past 25 years and identified 110 cases where far-right activists or sympathisers have been convicted of terrorism, extreme political violence and offences which would most likely be tried under terrorist laws today.

It is clear that far-right terrorism is nothing new and, if anything, the severity of past incidents were perhaps greater than those going through the courts today.

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59 far-right activists or sympathisers have been convicted of terror-related offences since the beginning of 2017

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In 2000, David Copeland was convicted for planting three nailbombs which killed three people and injured over 200 others the previous year. In 2010, Ian Davidson a support of the nazi Aryan Strike Force, was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment after being found guilty on three counts of possessing information useful in committing or preparing terror acts, after making ricin and planning to overthrow the Government. In the same year, BNP member Terence Gavan was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment after being caught with a weapons cache at his home. The court heard how he planned to attack addresses linked to the 7/7 bombers.

Two years before, Martyn Gilleard was sentenced to 16 years after weapons, home-made bombs and terrorist literature was found at his home. Of course, more recently, Thomas Mair was given a life sentence for the dreadful murder of Jo Cox MP.

There has, however, been a dramatic increase in people being convicted of terror-related offences in



C18 leader Will Browning regularly produced magazines and CDs encouraging terrorism and murder.

recent years. Our analysis shows that between 1997-2001 there were eight people convicted who fit our criteria. Since the beginning of 2017, 59 people have been convicted and another 11 are awaiting trial.

There are a number of factors at play here that might explain this increase in numbers of cases. The expansion of terrorism legislation (particularly with the 2000 and 2006 Terrorism Acts) has dramatically increased the chances of people being convicted under terrorism provisions of the law. There is also a much greater willingness on the part of the authorities to use terrorism legislation against the far right, it seems.

In 1997, Combat 18 (C18) leaders Will Browning and Charlie Sargent were sent to prison for producing the notorious *'Black Mag'*, possibly the most extreme nazi publication ever produced in this country. Despite containing designs to make bombs, hit lists and the open encouragement to commit terrorism, the pair were convicted under the Public Order Act.

There is no doubt that these people would have been convicted under terrorism legislation if they published such material today.

Will Browning's band No Remorse produced *Barbecue in Rostock*, unquestionably the most extreme and violent nazi album ever produced, as it openly encouraged the murder of immigrants and Jewish people. At the time we argued that publication of this album presented a perfect opportunity for the authorities to take down a key chunk of the C18 network, a chance to prosecute the band and those involved in the album's promotion and distribution. Our pleas fell on deaf ears, and the only person prosecuted was the C18 supporter who took the master tape into the CD pressing plant.

Compare that to the wholesale rounding up of the National Action network after it was banned by the Home Secretary in December 2016.

Fifteen of the 110 people we have identified have been convicted of membership of a proscribed organisation (in this case all from National Action), a mechanism that had not been used against the far right before. While National Action openly glorified the murder of Jo Cox in 2016, something that contributed to its banning,

it was not as openly violent or as involved in extreme violence as C18 or even the much smaller Aryan Strike Force a few years later.

It is also quite apparent that the rise in recent convictions can partly be explained by increased police (and now MI5) attention. "Seek and you will find", one person involved in the decision to switch the monitoring authority over to the Security Services told me.

A NEW GENERATION

There are, however, some obvious differences between those being convicted now and those a few years ago. Most obviously, age. The people being convicted now are younger than those convicted at the beginning of the century. The average age of those convicted



The Christchurch murder heralded a new wave of nazi terrorism across the globe.

between 1997 and 2001 was 34, while between 2002 and 2006 it was 38. Over the last four years the average age has dropped to 28.

More significantly, though, it is the number of teenagers being convicted that really stand out. In the entire 1997-2016 period, there were just six teenagers convicted who met our criteria. Over the past four years there have been 12, six of whom were convicted in the last 12 months alone.

In addition to nazi terrorists, there have also been several teenagers convicted in recent years for plotting mass killings, similar to some of the school shootings that have become depressingly common in the US. There have also been three young people convicted of plotting murder who describe themselves as “incels” - “involuntary celibates”.

A NEW CHAPTER

The formation of National Action in 2013 heralded a new phase of nazi terrorism in the UK. Set up largely by former young British National Party activists, it was the first hardline nazi group in the UK created by young people, for young people and it was the first to fully embrace the online world, both to disseminate its propaganda but also to organise.

Its striking and dramatic imagery, the dark clothing of its supporters and well-produced videos proved to be fantastic recruiting tools for as many as 150 young men (and a handful of women) who were drawn to the group during its short existence (it was banned in December 2016).

While National Action was heavily influenced by American James Mason, author of the *Siege* (which has become a key text for young nazi terrorists across the world), the group also proved an inspiration for those behind the founding of the Atomwaffen Division.

Another new feature has been the sadistic nature of more recent, and younger, convicted nazis.

The glorification of rape and sexual violence, especially among those linked to the now-banned Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD), a successor to National Action, is a new departure and certainly not something we have seen over the last 25 years. Much of this has to do with the influence of the nazi-satanic Order of Nine Angles (O9A) and its affiliated Tempel ov Blood, but it also reflects a growing and violent misogynistic trend amongst some young people in society.

Several of those recently convicted of terrorism, as well as some of those awaiting trial, have been caught in the possession of child pornography and even videos of boys being raped.

INTERNATIONALISATION OF NAZI TERROR

The extreme far right has always had an international element, be it William Pierce’s *The Turner Diaries* or the true-life story of The Order influencing hardline nazis across Europe in the 1990s, or indeed how organisations like Combat 18, the Hammerskins and Blood and Honour grew international chapters. But what we have witnessed in recent years is something quite different – and that’s the formation of proper international organisations that cross borders.

The first of these was probably the Atomwaffen Division, a group founded in the US but which has since spread abroad. The Feuerkrieg Division (FKD) and more recently the National Partisan Movement (see our special report) recruited internationally into a single organisation.



The Sonnenkrieg Division combined nazi terrorism with the O9A’s rape culture.

The exponential growth of the internet, 24-hour news and encrypted messaging platforms have completely changed the way the far right organises. Gone are the traditional political organisations, with their branches, membership cards and weekly offline activity, and instead we have increasingly nimble, short-lived networks where people come and go but share a common – hateful – outlook.

This has enabled the violent far right to react quicker to events across the world and to see themselves increasingly as part of an online community, sharing a common vision and modus operandi. What begun with Norwegian mass killer and terrorist Anders Breivik – the posting up of a 1,500 page manifesto to the internet shortly before he started his 2011 killing spree – has been adopted by other far-right murderers since. Brenton Tarrant, the Australian who massacred 51 people in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019, took it to another level by livestreaming the attack, part of the increasing ‘gamification’ of terror.

This was not only copied in subsequent far-right terrorist attacks, but Tarrant’s video inspired several others to commit violent attacks of their own. In the UK, four people convicted of terror-related offences either stated that their motivation was to carry out a similar attack on Muslims, or were found in possession of Tarrant’s video when arrested.

Vincent Fuller was one such individual. A 50-year-old man from Surrey, he responded to the Christchurch assault by attacking Bulgarian national Dimitar Mihaylov. Several witnesses heard Fuller screaming abuse during his “rampage”, including one who

ORDER OF NINE ANGLES

Many of Britain's nazi terrorists have been directly or indirectly influenced by the highly secretive Satanist group, the Order of Nine Angles (O9A).



Formed in 1972 by David Myatt, the O9A is unquestionably the most extreme Satanist group in the world and seeks the overthrow of modern society and the formation of a new National Socialist order.

Myatt became involved in Combat 18 in the mid-1990s, at the time writing manifestos encouraging terrorism and a strategy of tension through killings and violence. He sided with the Sargents in the internal C18 war which led to the murder of Chris Castle, and went on to lead the National Socialist Movement.

Several National Action members were also in O9A.

The Sonnenkrieg Division was formed after members of System Resistance Network rejected the O9A's Satanism. Four SKD people convicted of terrorism all had links to the O9A.

O9A members ran the US nazi terror group, the Atomwaffen Division. More recently, its supporters ran the RapeWaffen channel on Telegram.

Last year HOPE not hate launched a campaign to have the O9A banned, due to its long history of encouraging terrorism.

reported him saying: "All Muslims should die. White supremacists rule. I'm going to murder a Muslim." He was convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to 18 years in prison for attempted murder.

It is perhaps not surprising that so many people around the globe were influenced by the Christchurch attack. Research from Facebook suggests that the attack video was uploaded 2.7 million times, and while they were able to remove 2.4 million, that still left hundreds of thousands of versions in circulation.

The Christchurch attack also heralded the emergence of social media app Telegram as the principle platform for nazi terrorists. According to the US anti-extremist network SITE, of a selected sample of 374 far-right channels and chat groups on Telegram operating in late 2019, almost 80% were created between Tarrant's 15 March attack and 30 October.

SITE also found that the number of users on these far-right channels grew from 65,523 in May 2019 to 142,486 by the end of October.

LONERS

The types of people being drawn into far-right terrorism has also changed over the years. Whereas once most of those (almost all men) convicted were older, working class and had a background in violence, today's terrorists are younger, more likely middle class and appear to have few friends or social networks.

The father of convicted SKD terrorist Harry Vaughan worked at the House of Lords, while Vaughan himself

	No of far right activists/ sympathisers convicted	Average Age	No of teenagers
1997-2001	7	34	0
2002-2006	11	38	2
2007-2011	18	34	2
2012-2016	15	31	2
2017-2021	59	29	12

went to the elite Tiffin Grammar School in Kingston upon Thames. The father of convicted terrorist Luke Hunter was formerly a senior officer with Counter-Terrorism Command and his mother had a senior role at Johnson & Johnson. Oskar Dunn-Koczorowski went to a high-flying school in west London.

Several of the teenage nazis recently convicted appear to be on the autistic spectrum or suffer some other social disorder, so it would seem as though their involvement may be – at least partly – driven or affected by their feeling of isolation and social awkwardness.

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More significantly, though, it is the number of teenagers being convicted that really stand out

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This perhaps explains another attraction for today's young nazi terrorists: how they can earn notoriety, even "martyrdom" for their actions.

The 1999 London nailbomber David Copeland shared many similarities with today's terror terrorists. He was short in stature, shy, had few friends and was convinced people thought he was gay. While he dressed up his attack as a desire to spark a race war, it was clear that his personal troubles partly shaped his actions. However, far from being feted as the saviour of the white race – as he hoped – he was shunned by a British far right which was clearly worried about being held legally responsible for his actions.

Today's terrorists have no such problem. In the worldwide community in which they operate, with its hundreds of channels and thousands of adherents, there are always many who will celebrate and congratulate those promoting or carrying out terror. Some have even created a scoring system to mark the success of attacks.

POLICING

There has clearly been a sea-change in the approach by the authorities towards far-right terrorism.

In April 2020, as a consequence of the review of the Security Services by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, David Anderson QC, following the 2017 terrorist attacks, the Security Services (MI5) became the primary lead for monitoring and investigating the far right.

While cases are passed on from MI5 to counter-terrorist police to investigate and bring to trial, the

involvement of MI5 is a major shift in approach and a world away from the private views of the Service's previous Director General, who was strongly opposed to covering the far right threat.

There is also clearly a willingness by the authorities to intervene earlier and stop those advocating terrorism from propagating their views and encouraging others. This again is a marked improvement on the situation from 25 years ago, when groups like C18 were allowed to propagate their violence with apparent impunity.

It is legitimate to ask if we would have had the same level of nazi terrorism, especially the sadist strand that we have witnessed recently, if the police had cracked down earlier. The former leader of the nazi occult, David Myatt, openly wrote long tracts promoting and encouraging terrorism. He would latter lead a group that included London nailbomber David Copeland.

If Myatt had been stopped back then and help accountable for his writings then maybe, just maybe, the O9A would have folded and they would not have been around to spread their poison today.

LENIENT SENTENCES

While more far-right activists and sympathisers are being convicted, there is some disquiet as to the sentences being handed down in some of the more recent cases.

Harry Vaughan was given a suspended sentence despite his prominent role in the Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD), a successor to National Action, his open encouragement of terrorism, the sharing of terrorist and bomb-making manuals and his possession of two videos of young boys being raped.

Luke Hunter might have been imprisoned for four years, but he ran a Telegram channel that openly and repeatedly encouraged terrorism, personally produced videos for terrorist organisations and was linked to terrorist groups across the world. It was a pretty light sentence.

CRACKDOWN BUT NOT ENOUGH

While we applaud the growing crackdown on far-right extremism, we cannot simply – or only – legislate against hate. Of course, deplatforming and taking down the worst online channels are important tools in containing nazi terror, but this doesn't in itself address why people are drawn to it.

The arrests and convictions of so many young terrorists does not, yet, seem to have deterred more teenagers from becoming embroiled in this poisonous arena. While more experienced hands are no longer organising in groups – to prevent being proscribed – younger extremists are clearly less cautious, as we have seen with our exposés of The British Hand and the National Partisan Movement.

It would appear that we are still on an upward trajectory, so more young people are likely to be drawn into far-right nazi terrorism over the next few years. Action must be taken, but lessons from past mistakes also need to be learned. Police action must obviously play a central role in disrupting these groups, but more work needs to be done to understand and discourage young people from getting drawn into these groups in the first place. The police, social media companies and civil society all have a role to play.

BRITAIN'S NAZI TERROR GROUPS

1991 – 2000 COMBAT 18 (C18): Imported the US theory of race war into the UK. Was behind several attempted bombing campaigns and murders at home and abroad.



1998 – 1999 NATIONAL SOCIALIST MOVEMENT (NSM): Emerged out of C18, the NSM was led by David Myatt and counted London nailbomber David Copeland as a member.



2002 – 2005 RACIAL VOLUNTEER FORCE (RVF): Led by former C18 activist Mark Atkinson, the RVF was born after C18 stopped public activity.



2008 – 2009 ARYAN STRIKE FORCE (ASF): A small group based in the north of England, the ASF included several members later convicted of terror offensives.



2013 – 2016 NATIONAL ACTION (NA): Beginning of the new wave of young nazi terrorists, the NA was banned as a terrorist group in December 2016.



2017 NS131: A short-lived group, created by those who wanted to keep National Action going albeit it by under a different name. Banned September 2017.



2017 SCOTTISH DAWN: Created by Scottish National Action supporters. Banned September 2017.



2017 - 2018 SYSTEM RESISTANCE NETWORK (SRN): Created by former NA members in Wales, SRN was banned February 2020 after being considered an alias for NA.



2018 – 2019 SONNENKRIEG DIVISION (SKD): Born out of a split from SRN, SKD was dominated by the nazi-occult ideology of the Order of Nine Angles. Banned in February 2020.



2018 – 2020 FEUERKRIEG DIVISION (FKD): Set up by a 13-year-old in Estonia, four FKD-linked young people have been convicted of terrorism in the UK. Banned in July 2020.



2020 THE BRITISH HAND: Set up by a 15-year-old boy, the short-lived The British Hand collapsed after being exposed by HOPE not hate last year.



NAZI TERRORISTS

A total of 12 people who were in far right groups or influenced by far right ideology were convicted on terror-related charges in 2020.



LUKE CROMPTON

Crompton (30) was given a two-year community order for encouraging terrorism, for posts on social media which were “deeply offensive”

and “dripping with hate and contempt for Jews, Muslims and black people”.



GEORGE FOWLE

Fowle (17) was given 20 months in a young offenders institution, suspended for two years, for preparing acts of terrorism. A court heard that he had an “extreme right-wing and racist mindset” and downloaded instructions for making explosives.

terrorism. A court heard that he had an “extreme right-wing and racist mindset” and downloaded instructions for making explosives.



ALICE CUTTER

Cutter (23) was convicted of membership of National Action, a proscribed terrorist organisation, and sentenced to three years imprisonment.

three years imprisonment.



MARK JONES

Jones (25) was convicted of membership of National Action, a proscribed terrorist organisation, and sentenced

to five years and six months imprisonment.



GARRY JACK

Jack (24) was convicted of membership of National Action, a proscribed terrorist organisation, and sentenced to

four years and six months imprisonment.



CONNOR SCORTHERN

Scorthern (19) was convicted of membership of National Action, a proscribed terrorist organisation,

and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment.



HARRY VAUGHAN

Vaughan (18) was sentenced to two years detention in a young offenders institution, suspended for two years, after being convicted

of 14 terror offences and two of possessing indecent images of children. He was active with the Sonnenkrieg Division.



PAUL DUNLEAVY

Dunleavy (16), was sentenced to five years and six months in prison for preparing acts of terrorism and possessing terror manuals. Dunleavy was a member of the Feuerkrieg Division (FKD).

manuals. Dunleavy was a member of the Feuerkrieg Division (FKD).



FILIP GOLON BEDNARCZYK

Bednarczyk (26), from Luton, was sentenced to four years in prison after admitting one count of possessing

explosives and seven counts of possessing terrorist documents.



LUKE HUNTER

Hunter (23) was sentenced to four years and two months imprisonment after being convicted of four counts of

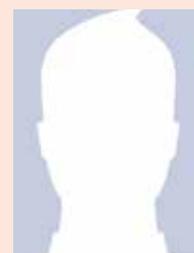
encouraging terrorism and three of disseminating terrorist publications.



RUSSELL WADGE

Wadge (58), who had an interest in Nazi Germany and white supremacy, was convicted of five offences under the Poisons Act

and sent to prison for 12 months.



JACK REED

Convicted for 6 years for preparing acts of terror. Also sexually abused a young girl to dehumanise himself to

violence. Was 16 at the time of his arrest

■ One nazi teenager has been convicted in 2021 and a further 11 are awaiting trials

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INVESTIGATION:

'FOR THE FUTURE, BY THE FUTURE'

A HOPE not hate investigation into the National Partisan Movement reveals an international far-right youth group engaging in hate crime and acquiring weapons.

PATRIK HERMANSSON



IN NOVEMBER last year a new far-right channel appeared on Instagram and Telegram. At first glance, most of its content looked indistinguishable from other far-right groups we monitored on Telegram. However, on closer inspection, the US-based group, calling itself the National Partisan Movement (NPM), explicitly said it was recruiting and accepting new members between the ages of 14 and 19. Central to the group's messaging was the rejection of older generations of fascist leaders.

An early post on its Instagram account had the following caption:

“We are a group who specializes in white identity for the future, by the future. We aren't [sic] run by old men who do not have your best interest in mind, so if you are looking for that, do not join this group. It is for members of GenZ.”

The messaging was clear: young people only [Gen Z – “Generation Z” – refers to those born between the late 1990s and the early 2010s].

While shocking, it was not the first time we had come across this problem. In September last year, HOPE not hate exposed an entity called The British Hand, a terror-advocating youth group that primarily recruited its (young) members via Instagram. Likewise, when investigating this new group, we found this same pattern of using Instagram as a recruitment and outreach platform (Telegram was simultaneously used for organising and for the group's internal chat). Clearly, when it comes to attracting terrifyingly young people into the far right, Instagram is becoming the platform of choice.

While the NPM is led by a 15-year-old boy from America, most of its members reside in Europe. In total, the group counts just over 70 members. The youngest is 12. Approximately 15 members are based in Sweden, which is the group's second most active country after the US, though importantly the NPM's second- and third-in-command are also based there. These two men, Filip and Thomas, 17 and 18, respectively, have previously engaged with the Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement and eco-fascist activism. In the UK the group has at least eight members. These members have promoted material from proscribed Nazi terror group National Action.

The young age of the NPM's membership is deeply worrying. Vulnerable young people are being exposed to a diet and environment of constant hatred. Yet the group is not solely made up of teenagers. There are also a smaller number of older members in their late 20s. One of these is the well-known American fascist Colton Williams, who has previously been a part of the Nazi Traditionalist Workers Party in the US. He acts as an “advisor” to the group and promotes fascist literature to its young members.

A HATEFUL ONLINE GROUP

The NPM is but the latest example of an internationally-connected, violence-romanticising, far-right group led by young people, organising actions both online and off.

HOPE not hate has followed the group for some time and observed messages from its internal chat, regional chats, Snapchat groups and regular voice calls between members and leaders. The online infiltration has given us a better insight into this type of youth-oriented, far-right group, several of which have appeared in the last few years.



The internal Telegram chat of the NPM pings hundreds of times per day. Since the members are spread from North America to Eastern Europe, the group covers at least nine time zones, and messages arrive in a steady stream at almost all hours. Members are organised into “squads” – smaller groups – but most activity takes place in the main chat group as well as on Snapchat, where the messages disappear after they have been read.

New members are vetted via a questionnaire and in some cases a video call. The vetting process was made more stringent while we were inside the group, requiring new members to join a video call with one or two of the leaders, answering questions and showing at least part of their face. Once inside, members were then asked to join various chat groups and regular voice calls during which the leaders and members discussed upcoming plans. In these voice calls, we were introduced to the organisational structure of the NPM. It was divided into “platoons” and “squadrons”. These discussions also featured regional leaders reporting on the actions they had undertaken during the last week and what they planned on doing in the near future.

As a new member you were given two main rules, the breaking of which would supposedly lead to expulsion: first, do not share any personal information that could identify you, and second, do not “fed post” (send messages or express ideas that are illegal and could attract law enforcement's attention). The group's leaders were adamant that they did not want to follow the path of far-right terror groups. Specifically, Atomwaffen Division was singled out as a bad example by leader Thomas. One member wondered why the NPM could not “take a more aggressive [sic] position like feuerkrieg [sic], MD [Misanthropic Division] or AWD

NPM'S USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Like the British Hand – which HOPE not hate exposed in September 2020 – the National Partisan Movement makes use of multiple social media accounts and platforms, and uses them for different purposes, cherry-picking between their features to make the most of their strengths.

Telegram's group chat and voice call feature, combined with relative anonymity, is used for organising, while Instagram's wide use in their target age range and focus on visual media makes it useful for propagandising. Its direct messaging function is often used for the first steps of a recruitment before this continues on Telegram or over a Discord video call.

With its ephemeral messages Snapchat is used by several of the NPM's regional groups for less serious chatter, such as sly images of teachers in the classroom and talking about video games. But it is also utilised for the most extreme conversations, too. Using Snapchat, one member shared a video of an execution. Most of the Swedish members post pictures of their own faces here as well. The short-term nature of disappearing messages gives them a feeling of security. The service also notifies participants if someone takes a screenshot of the conversation, thus providing another means by which to root out potentially disloyal fellow members.

Instagram plays a central role in the organisation and is the source of recruitment for many of the NPM's members. While some individual members' accounts have been banned from the platform, the official recruitment account has been active for several months at the time of writing. This follows a trend observed by HOPE not hate. Coverage of terrorist groups on social media has, for good reason, recently centred around chat app Telegram and video-sharing sites such as YouTube. The largely unmoderated Telegram has been fertile ground for the emergence of explicitly violent groups in Europe and North America.

Instagram is useful for spreading propaganda in the form of simple images and videos, plus the platform's recommendation feature prominently directs those peripherally connected to the group's main account if one starts following a member or other similar accounts. The Swedish and American members have launched multiple Instagram accounts and screenshots shared in the chat group show conversations taking place with new recruits via Instagram's direct messages.

[Atomwaffen Division]" but was quickly shut down by leader Thomas, who said: "Idk [I don't know] abt [about] you but me tom [sic] and Filip don't want 10 years in prison."

However, this rhetoric of non-violence is as thin as a sheet of paper, and even after just a few hours in the group, we saw how the leaders also expressed outright genocidal ideas, with a clear desire to use violence expressed by some members.

Despite deriding Atomwaffen, an accelerationist neo-nazi group in the US that advocated terror and was linked to several murders, Thomas has engaged in a Telegram chat connected to Atomwaffen's latest iteration in Europe and recruited members from it. Other members of the NPM have also been active in this chat, including a 14-year-old from Kentucky who sent a horrifying Snapchat video of what appears to be an execution of a black man and posted a link and screenshot of it in the NPM group, urging others to join his group.

Despite the age of many of its members, posts in the group regularly express antisemitism, Holocaust denial and support for mass murderers. One member wrote on 4 March 2021: "The extermination of any other non-white race is necessary Heil Hitler ! Heil Breivik ! Heil Brenton Tarrant!" [referring to the 2019 Christchurch mass murderer]. Other participants shared clips of the proscribed British nazi terror group National Action and memes depicting mass murder.

Within the confines of the private group chat, hate has been directed towards black people, Jews, Muslims, trans and gay people in a similarly extreme manner. A short video posted by one member showed a man in a skull mask and glasses looking into the camera and announcing: "The real tragedy of Pulse nightclub was that too many got away", referring to the shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida in 2016 where 49 mostly Latinx and gay people were killed.

One of the first videos on the NPM's Telegram channel showed a group of masked figures setting fire to, then stomping on, a Pride flag, and the conversation in the group frequently ventures into anti-trans hate. One member asserted that transgender folks are "not people" and posted a picture of a noose which he captioned: "Send this to blacks and trannies."

Despite the pretence to eschew violence, in truth the NPM is a viciously extreme and openly violence advocating group.

FROM ZOOM BOMBING TO IMPROVISED WEAPONS

As an organisation that was formed during the global pandemic, with its plans for offline meet-ups mostly hindered by social distancing rules, it is perhaps no surprise that the majority of the NPM's actions have been online-focused.

"Anyone wanna raid my friends [sic] class on google meet?" one American member wrote and another responded: "Are there any n****s in your class?". It's a regular occurrence in the group that someone will call for a "raid" of an online classroom of their own school (or that of a friend who has shared login details) to lessons conducted via one of the many different video conferencing tools in use.

Called "Zoom bombing", this involves hijacking video calls to share upsetting material through the video or via the chat function. Since the spring of 2020, it is something that has begun happening frequently as schools, religious, civic society and local government





An NPM member in Texas posing next to a poster and graffiti by a British member

groups move to online meetings. For the far right, targets are often minority communities and the raids are intended to cause fear and distress, but it can also be used in order to spread far-right propaganda and normalise their ideas.

This practice shows how far-right groups are exploiting features and vulnerabilities that come with online platforms to spread hate, in a situation today where more and more events take place online. For the NPM it means that its members can join in abuse online wherever they are based. These “raids” happen several times a week and Swedish, Dutch, British and Finnish members might join in the raid against a school on the East coast of the US.

Zoom bombing should not be discounted merely as an advanced form of prank calling, but as an invasive and harmful tactic, in-part because it targets people in spaces that are supposed to be safe. It clearly demonstrates how there is no clear boundary between hate and threats spread online and offline.

However, the NPM’s activities are not merely isolated to the online world.

Posting, stickering and graffiti is done by members in the UK, US and Sweden in the hope that it will raise interest in the group.

More serious is the case of one member bragging about having vandalised a transgender support centre in Ontario, Canada, throwing rocks through its front window and painting graffiti on its facade. The Canadian member bragged about going back to the centre a few days after the first attack, this time doing nazi salutes in front of its security camera and continuing to vandalise the building.

Members have also discussed acquiring weapons. One American member explicitly wrote that he was planning to buy a weapon at an upcoming gun show and asked for advice from other members. There is no minimum age to own a rifle or shotgun in Kentucky where he was based, but the fact that the boy had a picture of Brenton Tarrant, the mass shooter who killed 51 people at two mosques in New Zealand in 2019, as his profile picture makes the prospect more threatening. He had also previously shared Tarrant’s video recording of his live shooting to the group. Upon acquiring this information we reported the individual to the relevant authorities in America.

Similarly worrying is a British member who has posted pictures of himself holding an airsoft rifle and shared posts to the group from Defense Distributed, a project



A British member poses with an airsoft rifle

that makes instructions available on how to 3D print weapons and how to modify non-lethal weapons, such as airsoft rifles, to make them deadly.

GROOMING THE YOUNG TO HATE?

Many of the NPM’s members are brought in by peers of a similar age, or join of their own accord after seeing the propaganda. But inside NPM there are adult far-right activists who play a role in educating them in fascist ideas. Even between the teenagers there is a large age gap, ranging from as low as 12 up to 17 and 18. This comes with power inequalities.

Colton Williams, a 28-year-old American who was previously a regional leader of Matthew Heimbach’s Traditionalist Worker Party (TWP), is an active member in the organisation, despite falling outside of the accepted age range. Williams has spent several years engaging with violent segments of the far right in the US and is described by the NPM’s leader as an “advisor” to the group. He later started his own organisation, the Legion of Saint Ambrose, after several conflicts with Heimbach. Notably, he was more hardline than even Heimbach on racial “purity” and disagreed with the inclusion of members he considered to be “race-mixers”. In private chats in the TWP he also encouraged other members to rape women and appeared at the violent Unite the Right demonstration in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017 – where anti-racist protester Heather Heyer was murdered by a white supremacist – and took part in the street fighting there.

The NPM chat messages show how Williams discussed ideology with the much younger members, urging them to read key Fascist and National socialist texts such as Mussolini’s *Doctrine of Fascism* and Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. He also forwarded messages from other violent Telegram groups into the chatroom. Williams did not just suggest literature but also told the adolescents in the group that periodic fasting was an important part of improving their physique, which is then taken on



THE BRITISH HAND

The British Hand was a terror advocating far-right group led by a 15-year-old from Derby that appeared last summer. The group recruited via Instagram and Telegram where it urged young people to join its ranks. To his fellow members, the leader presented himself as older than he actually was in order to gain their respect. Despite being very young, the group’s members were discussing how to acquire weapons and how to hide their political views in order to enlist in the military. In private chats, the leader urged his group members to commit violent attacks on migrants in Dover and said that he himself was planning an attack soon. The British Hand also glorified previous far-right terrorists, including now proscribed National Action. Following HOPE not hate’s exposé three people related to the group were been charged with terror-related crimes.



by several of them who later describe that they have begun fasting.

Worryingly, Williams is not the only older far-right activist in the NPM who guides the group’s teenage members. Another is a 26-year-old from Lisbon, Portugal whose username is “Hatred”. About a week after joining the NPM, he shared a picture of the Order of Nine Angles (O9A) and Temple ov Blood texts. O9A is a nazi-satanist group, while Temple ov Blood is a US offshoot but still closely connected to the mother organisation.

Both organisations have served as inspiration for some of the most extreme nazi terror groups of the last decades. Temple ov Blood was an important influence on Atomwaffen Division (AWD) and some of its texts were made into required reading for the group. The picture shared by “Hatred” depicted *Hostia*, *Iron Gates* (two O9A books) and *Siege* (written by James Mason and widely circulated through AWD circles). *Iron Gates* opened with the depiction of a murder of a child and was found in the possession of the recently convicted leader of the Feuerkrieg Division in the UK.

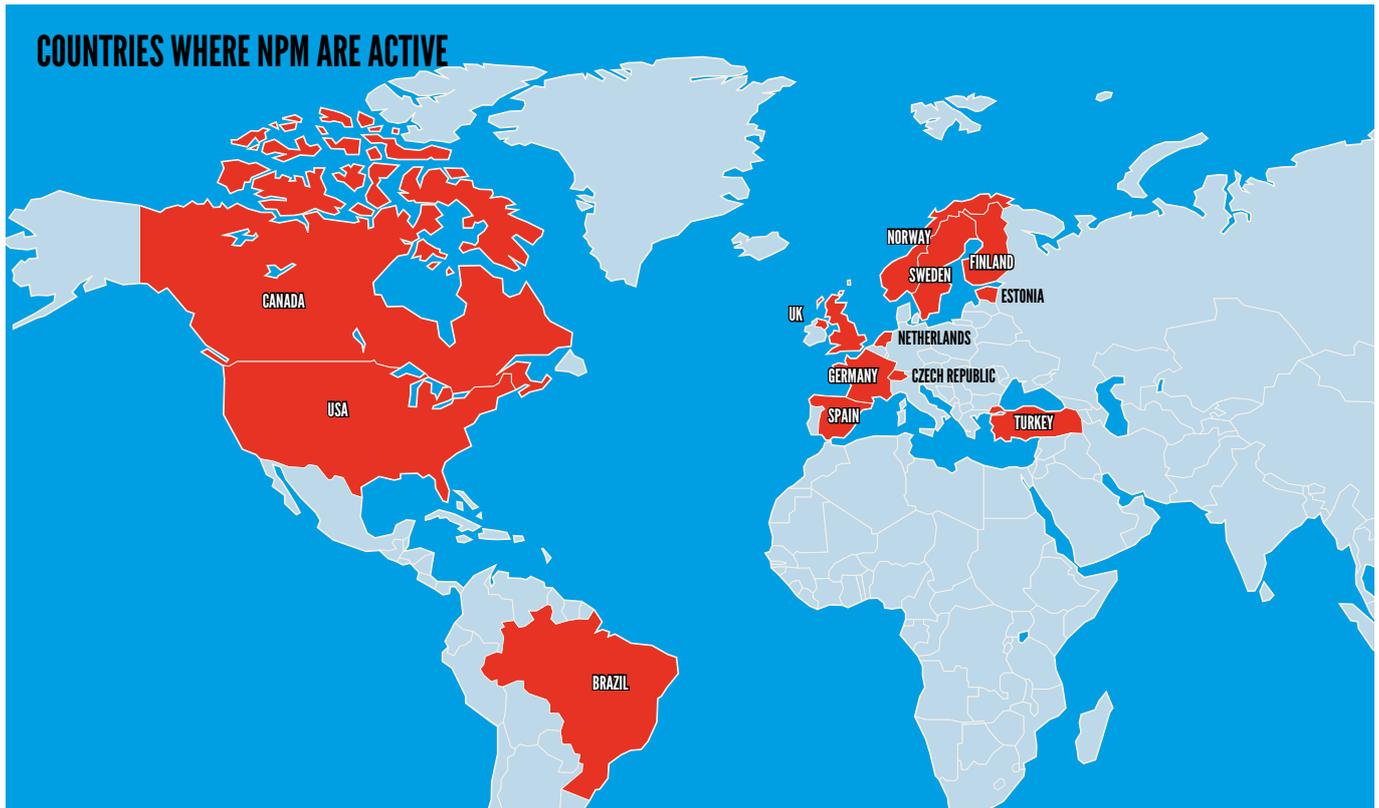
Despite of, or possibly because, they were being led by a 15-year-old, these older members gained outsized importance in the group and have been looked up to by many of the younger members. They are at a clear advantage, which they have used to influence the group in a violent direction.



TAKING YOUTH GROUPS SERIOUSLY

Monitoring violence-endorsing far-right groups online today comes with many difficulties. Basic details – such as country of residence for a user – can be hard to come by. To judge the severity of threats in contexts that are inundated with them, and inundated with irony, is not straightforward. These aspects are only made harder by groups run by young people.

It is easy to discard their engagement with extreme far-right ideas as a “phase”, driven more by a need to rebel than genuine ideological conviction. Professor Cynthia Miller-Idriss of American University, who has studied far-right youth culture, argues that expressing far-right ideas and taking on its language “may provide agency for youth who feel constrained or let down by the adult world” and that “far-right engagement



may thus be thought of as a mode of resistance and cultural subversion” for young people.

Factors other than ideology can indeed pull young people to the extreme right and it is also an understandable assumption that many will then move on from the political views they held as children. Young people also usually have a lower capability to acquire weapons than adults and might exaggerate their extremism in order to gain respect from other members of a group.

However, their capacity for violence is far from non-existent. Events in recent months have shown that even when violent ideas are expressed by minors, they should be taken seriously and not simply brushed over. A boy from Cornwall was convicted in February 2021 for being the leader of the Feuerkrieg Division in the UK, a terror-advocating group that put up propaganda in the south of England but organised primarily on Telegram. The boy was 13 when he committed his first terrorism offence and while he never committed an actual attack, he recruited members to the group, including 17-year-old Paul Dunleavy who was jailed for preparing acts of terrorism in November last year.

At the same time, these young people are victims themselves. Children as young as 12 or 14 do not have the agency or experience of an adult and as in the case of the NPM, are also partially fed ideology by older and more experienced individuals. Groups like the NPM make it easier for children and teenagers to find others that share similar views to themselves. They form spaces where very young people, already with some level of conviction towards far-right ideas, can solidify those through a constant stream of material passed between, and from, peers as well as more experienced participants.

However, it is not an easy task to accurately judge the severity and risk of groups like the NPM. Its outside image is harsh and threatening, with social media

profiles filled with stylised silhouettes performing nazi salutes in front of a snow-clad landscape and with bold slogans demanding action. Inside the secret chat group, however, the conversation is often juvenile and awkward. Someone asks if anyone has ever had a girlfriend. Conversations of undue Jewish control in the media get interrupted because someone’s parents ask them to come for dinner. Another shares a picture of a botched attempt to scribble the NPM logo on a lamp post, captioned: “i did my best”.

Often in the group’s voice calls they use language that sounds more threatening in writing than when spoken by the prepubescent voice of a 15-year-old. Which makes it sound like these are boys trying to make their lives more into the video games they play, than a fascist utopia they’ve actually read or heard about. The fact that several of the members still use their real names or recently stopped doing so is an indication that many of them are still new to this world. Another case of naiveté is that of the 14-year-old member writing in the main chat asking for help to buy a weapon.

On the other hand, their lack of experience is not a reason to discard their intent. There is a risk that what they lack in credibility they may try to make up for with action. They might feel a need to prove themselves, within the group and the wider movement, and in some cases might not fully understand the consequences of doing so.

The NPM and its members are aspiring to be noteworthy fascists and that desire takes them on a path to violence. Genuine and deep ideological conviction or understanding is not necessarily required to take action on one’s ideas and commit violence, as we have already seen in the case of the transgender support centre. However speedy their radicalisation has been or how genuinely they hold their beliefs, they have created a group where one is encouraged and directed to act on their hate.

TELEGRAM: STILL ACCOMMODATING TERROR

Telegram is continuing to allow terror-advocating, far-right groups to operate on its platform. This has to end says PATRIK HERMANSSON.

TELEGRAM is a mainstream chat app with approximately 500 million users spread across the world. It is a direct competitor to more well-known platforms such as WhatsApp.

While not distinctly “far right” in nature, it has been used extensively by the most violent elements of the far-right movement, in part because of its lax moderation. There is also a widespread perception that it has strong protections for user privacy. Its ‘channels’ feature also function as a replacement to a Twitter or Facebook feed and allows one to send one way messages to tens of thousands of people.

In last year’s *State of HATE* we put a spotlight on Telegram and the terror-advocating groups that organise on the platform. Since then, Telegram has continued to be at the centre of several investigations involving such dangerous networks, including the National Partisan Movement we’ve exposed in this year’s report.

The platform is tied to multiple arrests and convictions over the last year in the UK as well as internationally. A US soldier who was part of the “Rapewaffen Division”, an Order of Nine Angles (ONA)-connected Telegram group that promotes sexual violence and terrorism – which we also covered in last year’s report – was arrested after he shared the location of his unit with the intent of getting them ambushed and killed.

The extreme nature of the content available on Telegram is often of magnitudes worse than that found on other mainstream social media platforms. It is easy to find pro-genocide Telegram channels, or those which encourage members to attack minorities in the UK or to sabotage infrastructure such as power stations. Previous far-right terrorists have been glorified on these channels and their writings frequently shared. Neo-nazis have also discussed how to make and acquire weapons over Telegram.

Despite having taken action against Islamist groups promoting and recruiting for terrorism, Telegram has been unresponsive to calls from ourselves and other organisations to deal with the problem of far-right and even illegal content. In March 2020, HOPE not hate provided a list of 90 publicly-accessible Telegram channels that called for terrorism and violence. A year later less than one third of these had been taken down.

It’s unacceptable that there are thousands of terror-advocating channels left on the platform, including several which have already been brought to Telegram’s attention. Among those left up but included on our list includes chats related to groups



which now have members convicted under terror legislation. At the same time, many new chats have appeared during the last year.

Worryingly, most chats taken offline were removed for reasons other than actions by Telegram (e.g. due to internal conflicts in a group or because the author had left the movement for fear of legal reprisal). Telegram has begun blocking access to individual channels on certain platforms, such as Apple and Microsoft devices, referring to the terms of service of these companies’ app stores. But it has not removed the chats themselves and they are still available via the web and desktop apps. This indicates that Telegram seems aware of the nature of these chats, but has made a decision to keep them online.

Telegram continues to fail to take action against the cruel subculture operating through its software. As my colleague David Lawrence pointed out last year, it is crucial to recognise that Telegram is just one part of a wider underground ecosystem exploited by far-right extremists. Those within this system are conscious that they may soon be forced to find a new home online.

As one popular channel posted over a year ago:

“This won’t last forever though, none of this stuff we’re doing on Telegram will. Eventually there will be a ban, a leak, an arrest, and we’ll have the option of finding our next Twitter/ Discord/Telegram or we can begin to take things into our own hands.”

However, this ban has yet to take place – in some cases, to the far right’s own surprise.

KEEPING AN EYE ON THE TERRORISTS

HOPE not hate has had a busy year tracking and challenging far-right terrorists and the platforms which host them.

LUKE HUNTER

In December, 23-year-old Luke Hunter was convicted of four counts of encouraging terrorism and three of disseminating terrorist publications, after being caught running a Telegram channel which openly advocated and encouraged terrorism. HOPE not hate had been monitoring Hunter for several months and passed details of his extremism to police before he was charged.

TELEGRAM

In last year's *State of HATE* report we highlighted how Telegram was now the platform of choice for far-right extremists and terrorists. As a consequence of our research, the owner of Telegram contacted the editor of *WIRED* magazine promising to clean up the platform. Unfortunately, while some of the problematic channels have been removed, most have not.

BITCHUTE

In July we published a report on the social media video platform, Bitchute. *Bitchute: Platforming Hate and Terror in the UK* revealed how the platform exists to circumvent moderation of mainstream platforms and is an increasingly important hub for terrorist

propaganda, incitement to racist violence and COVID-19 misinformation. A police investigation into Bitchute has been launched as a result of our report.

THE BRITISH HAND

In August, we exposed a new teenage terror group, The British Hand, which had up to 20 followers and was led by a 15-year-old from Derbyshire. As a result of our exposé, three people have now been charged with terror-related offences.

ORDER OF NINE ANGLES

HOPE not hate launched a campaign to convince the Government to proscribe the nazi occult group, the Order of Nine Angles, as a terrorist organisation. We revealed that four people recently convicted of terror-related offences had links to the secretive group. While the campaign is ongoing, several MPs raised the matter in the House of Commons and we had a meeting with the Security Minister to push the case.

INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

HOPE not hate CEO Nick Lowles gave three hours of evidence to the Intelligence and Security Committee, in what was its first hearing in their investigation into the ever-evolving threat of far-right extremism.



SECTION 5 – ONLINE HATE





THE GREAT MIGRATION:

An unprecedented year of deplatforming has seen thousands of far-right activists and conspiracy theorists move from mainstream platforms to the unmoderated terrain of "alt-tech".

GREGORY DAVIS

AN UNPRECEDENTED year of deplatforming has seen thousands of far-right activists and conspiracy theorists move from mainstream platforms to the unmoderated terrain of alt-tech.

2020 was the year in which ever-growing pressure on social media companies prompted belated action: an unprecedented number of far-right influencers and professional conspiracy theorists were banned from Facebook and Twitter in 2020 and early 2021, seeking out new homes, along with their devotees, on effectively unmoderated "alt-tech" platforms.

These platforms included Gab and video service BitChute, plus extremely lightly-moderated services such as Telegram. While any move to reduce the quantity of hate speech and harmful disinformation spreading on mainstream platforms is hugely welcome – and overdue – this migration comes with its own risks.

Many of these alt-tech platforms have a pre-established toxic userbase, dominated by those who have previously been unwelcome on mainstream platforms. This means that while someone like David Icke can reach far fewer people with his dangerous misinformation and antisemitism following the removal of his YouTube account, his committed supporters who follow him on its smaller rival BitChute will now be exposed to far more extreme and radicalising content alongside his videos.

RECENT DEPLATFORMING

The individual who has suffered the greatest loss of mainstream access over the past year is perhaps veteran conspiracy theorist and antisemite David Icke. He lost his Facebook and YouTube accounts in early May 2020, following a campaign by HOPE not hate and the Centre for Countering Digital Hate, removing an audience of 780,000 followers on Facebook and 900,000 subscribers on his YouTube channel. This was followed by his removal from Twitter in early November, leading to the loss of a further 382,000 followers.

Although Icke retains his 233,000 Instagram followers, his alt-tech replacements for YouTube and Twitter illustrate the results of being removed from mainstream platforms. His accounts on BitChute and Gab currently have 80,500 and 17,500 subscribers, respectively, less than 10% of his old following on the mainstream equivalents of YouTube and Twitter.

Katie Hopkins' removal from Twitter in June was another significant blow, losing her 1.1 million followers



David Icke.
Photo: Stefano Maffei



Katie Hopkins
Photo: YouTube

THE RISE OF ALT-TECH



PATRIOTIC ALTERNATIVE

Before being deplatformed by Facebook and Twitter in early 2021, the racial nationalist group Patriotic Alternative used an array of different platforms for different purposes.

- Facebook and Twitter for moderate content, to recruit and propagandise.
- YouTube for livestreams to talk to existing supporters, raise money via ‘super-chats’ and encourage activist interaction via the chat function.
- DLive for more extreme livestreams.
- Bitchute as a video archive.
- Open Telegram channels for chat that is too extreme for Twitter.
- Closed Telegram channels for regional organising, planning and much more extreme discussion.

overnight. For someone like Hopkins, whose entire persona and celebrity has been built around trolling and outrage, Twitter was a particularly useful outlet that allowed her to engage with, and offend, wider society in a way that the politically self-selecting userbases of alt-tech platforms cannot.

Another to lose almost their entire mainstream presence in recent months was the racial nationalist group Patriotic Alternative, which lost its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts in quick succession in February 2021. While leaders Mark Collett and Laura Towler have retained their YouTube channels, the attempt to present a polished face of fascism online has been severely hampered by the loss of access to mainstream social media – the group’s attention-seeking publicity stunts will be visible only to those who seek it out on BitChute and Telegram.

Successive waves of bans took place against QAnon supporters from summer 2020 onwards. On 6 October, Facebook strengthened its previous ban on QAnon accounts that promoted violence to include all QAnon content, calling it a “violence-inducing conspiracy network”. This would eventually include 3,300 pages, 10,500 groups, 510 events, 18,300 Facebook profiles and 27,300 Instagram profiles.

In the latter half of 2020, HOPE not hate’s reporting was responsible for the removal of 75 QAnon Twitter accounts with a combined 1.1 million subscribers. It is a measure of how important mainstream platforms are to bad actors that they continually created new accounts in the days following a ban: in just one example, we reported five separate accounts for the promoter known as Inevitable ET, and he is believed to have been banned at least 20 times in total over the years.

HOW DOES THE FAR RIGHT USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

There is often a misconception that far-right groups and individuals begin their online journey on major social media platforms and then – as they are deplatformed from each in turn – work their way down until their only option is bespoke far-right platforms (such as Gab).

While this is sometimes the case, more often the situation is more complex. Far-right individuals and organisations use different platforms for different purposes – and they do so simultaneously. Thus, deplatforming serves to prohibit them from engaging in *certain* types of activity, but not all. By understanding what the far right does on each of these different platforms, we can better understand the effects (and efficacy) of deplatforming.

At HOPE not hate we split the social media space into three overlapping and fluid categories.

Mainstream Platforms – Facebook/Twitter/YouTube

These platforms have long been key to the spread of far-right ideas and have been used by far-right individuals and organisations to organise, recruit and grow. However, on the whole, these platforms no longer welcome far-right extremists and have increasingly taken steps to remove them.

Co-opted Platforms – Telegram, Discord

These platforms are not created by the far right but are heavily used by them, often because of their looser moderation policies or because they are too small to have the required resources to deal with the issue when it has emerged. Far-right groups and individuals have essentially co-opted these platforms.

Bespoke Platforms – Gab, Bitchute

These platforms have been created by the far right, for the far right and often have little or no moderation. They are part of a growing ecosystem of far-right online spaces designed to avoid the moderation of now appearing on other platforms.

DESTINATIONS

There is now a vast array of alternative platforms used by the far right.

BITCHUTE

The British video-sharing platform BitChute has been one of the main beneficiaries of the



great migration of far-right accounts, going from 20 million visitors in April 2020 to 57 million by January 2021. Popular among far-right activists and conspiracy theorists alike, the platform has a reputation for allowing extreme content and incitement to hatred to flourish on its platform. It is likely to come under considerable pressure this year, however, as British video-hosting websites are brought under the regulatory remit of regulator Ofcom for the first time.

RUMBLE

This Canada-based video sharing platform received just 800,000



monthly visitors until August 2020, when prominent US Republican political figures began to advocate using its use, claiming that YouTube had a bias against conservative voices. Rumble experienced a sharp rise in popularity, receiving 132 million monthly visitors by January 2021. The site appears to have less extreme racist content than its rival BitChute, but has a stated policy of refusing to remove misinformation, rejecting the idea that its moderators can act as “arbiters of truth”.

GAB

Gab is a US-based micro-blogging site touted as a rival to Twitter. The site’s founder, Andrew Torba, actively courts far-right users and the site has been linked to a number of terrorist attacks, including when the Tree of Life synagogue shooter announced his planned attack on the



site. Although it saw a major spike in traffic from late 2020 onwards, reaching 50 million users in January 2021, it is unclear how many will continue to use the platform once publicity dies down. The poor functionality and lack of mobile app is a severely limiting factor to a Twitter-type site, particularly when COVID-19 restrictions ease and users spend more time on the move.

TELEGRAM

The Telegram messaging app is an example of a co-opted service: used for secure communication by an estimated 500 million users worldwide, it is nonetheless home to some of the most extreme racist and terrorist content. Far-right users are attracted to the service’s extremely lax moderation and commitment to user privacy, and it provides a much slicker user experience than sites like Gab and Parler.



PARLER

US-based Parler was set up in 2018 and quickly became popular with American conservatives after endorsements from Candace Owens, co-founder of the right-wing student movement, Turning Point, alongside other US political figures and commentators. It was reported that Parler’s owners had entered negotiations to offer then-President Trump a financial stake in the company in exchange for him making it his primary social media outlet, but the deal did not come to fruition.



The platform faced a crisis following the riot in Washington DC on 6 January, which had been extensively trailed and promoted in advance on Parler. The site had its app withdrawn from both the Google and Apple app stores, and was barred from using Amazon Web Services, causing the site to disappear from 9 January until 15 February this year.

INSTAGRAM: A PLATFORM FOR FAR RIGHT RECRUITMENT AND PROPAGANDISING



INSTAGRAM is emerging as the platform of choice for young nazis to radicalise teenagers. There is no question that it has become a hub for recruiting young people to extreme far-right groups – the only question is whether Instagram is ready to take serious action to end this.

There are clear warning signs which already stand out about the way the in which the platform is being used to promote, and organise, hate.

HOPE not hate has exposed two violent far-right groups active in the UK in the last year that use Instagram as their primary recruitment platform. The British Hand, which we exposed in September, emerged and recruited most of its members via Instagram. Members of The British Hand are now awaiting trial for terrorism offences.

The National Partisan Movement has also used Instagram to build an international network of mostly teenage members. Their radical and extreme propaganda lives on Instagram even today, drawing young people – vulnerable and hateful alike – deeper into this potentially violent network, with some members specifically saying they found the group via an Instagram recommendation.

While these groups also used other apps for their internal communication, Instagram was the primary platform of choice for their propaganda and recruitment.

A combination of factors make Instagram an attractive platform for far-right recruitment.

■ FOCUS ON VISUAL MEDIA

Instagram's focus on visual media aligns well with the content produced by groups such as the National Partisan Movement and The British Hand, whose messaging usually consists of a few simple words combined with striking imagery. A post can often be as simple as a picture of graffiti, combined with a short caption urging the reader to join up.

■ A RECOMMENDATIONS-DRIVEN PLATFORM

Recommendations are central to Instagram. Not only is there a dedicated tab – “Explore” – where images and videos are recommended from accounts a user

might be interested in; new users to follow are also presented regularly to users after one follows a new account, in stories and in the news feed. In internal chat messages of the National Partisan Movement, new members have claimed that they found the group via these recommendations.

■ INSUFFICIENT MODERATION

Instagram has not been focused upon in terms of moderation as much as other large social media platforms, including Facebook, which is owned by the same parent company. There are multiple National Partisan Movement accounts that have been active for several months on Instagram. There are numerous cases of people being banned on Facebook but remaining on Instagram.

■ DIRECT MESSAGES

Direct messages on Instagram make it easy to strike up a conversation with almost anyone, and The British Hand and the National Partisan Movement begin their recruitment process here. Sometimes they will send a message to a user they think might agree with their ideas; at other times recruits will get in touch after seeing their call for new members.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Instagram has allowed itself to become fertile ground for recruitment and propagandising by violent extreme-right groups.

Perhaps more than any other platform it relies on recommendations to retain users' attention, which makes it possible for a small but extreme group to grow quickly and reach new audiences. As a platform with a large number of young users, Instagram needs to take greater responsibility as a result.

INSTAGRAM MUST:

- Publicly commit to ridding its platform of violent far-right groups
- Urgently commit to reviewing how far-right extremism was promoted by the Explore tab
- Increase investment in moderation on the platform.

CAMPAIGN: TAKE ACTION

NICK LOWLES

THE BRITISH public are demanding social media companies do more to crack down on hateful content on their platforms, according to new polling from HOPE not hate.

While four out of five people (78%) believe that “social media companies should do more to reduce hate on their platforms”, almost as many (68%) do not trust these same companies to decide what is extremist content or disinformation on their platforms.

Such is the strength of feeling about online hate and extremism, three-quarters of respondents (73%) believe that social media companies “should be held legally responsible for the content on their sites”. A similar number, 71%, believe that social media companies “have a responsibility to prevent harmful content being displayed on their platforms.”

There is also a lot of anger about the impact of ‘Fake News’ and ‘disinformation’. When asked whether it did or did not undermine democracy, 75% said it did, whilst 14% said it did not.

While there was support for social media companies to do more across all age groups, there was a greater demand for action among older people than there was among younger people. When asked whether social media companies should do more to reduce hate on their platforms, 60% of 18-24 year olds said yes, compared to 92% of those above 65.

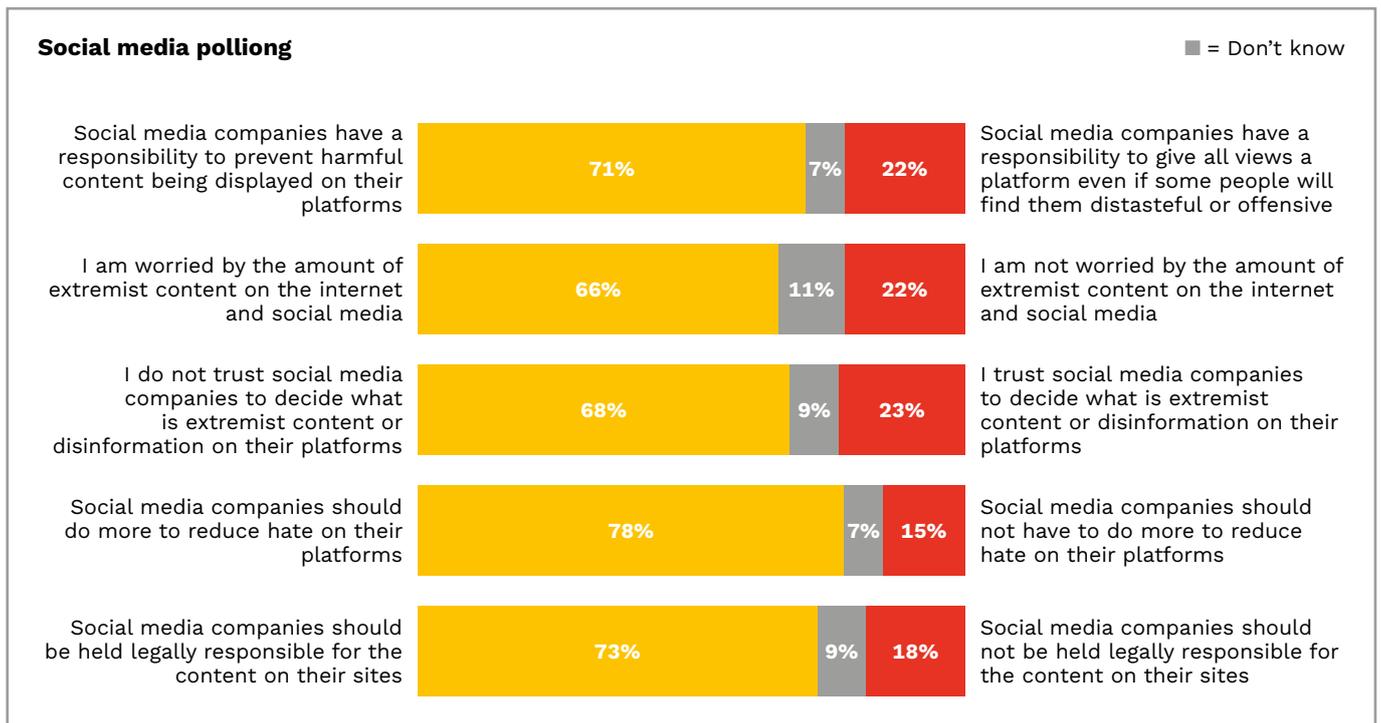
Likewise, when asked whether they trusted social media companies to decide what is extremist content or disinformation on their platforms, just 50% of 18-24 year olds agreed, compared to 84% of those over 65.

There is also consensus across the political spectrum, with people who voted Conservative in the 2019 General Election if anything even more keen for social media outlets to crack down on hate. Seventy-one per cent of Conservative voters were I am worried by the amount of extremist content on the internet and social media (compared to 66% of the population generally) and 84% felt social media companies should do more to reduce hate on their platforms (compared to 77% of Labour voters).

With the rise of violent extremism amongst young people, we also asked who is primarily to blame when a teenager is radicalised by content they see online. Just under half, 44%, pointed the finger at the people making the content, a third blamed the social media companies hosting the content, and just 13% blamed the young people themselves.

This polling confirms some polling conducted by HOPE not hate in September last year which graphically showed how the public demanded a crackdown on hate on social media. We gave respondents 10 policy ideas and asked them to choose the three they thought would be most effective in the fight against extremism.

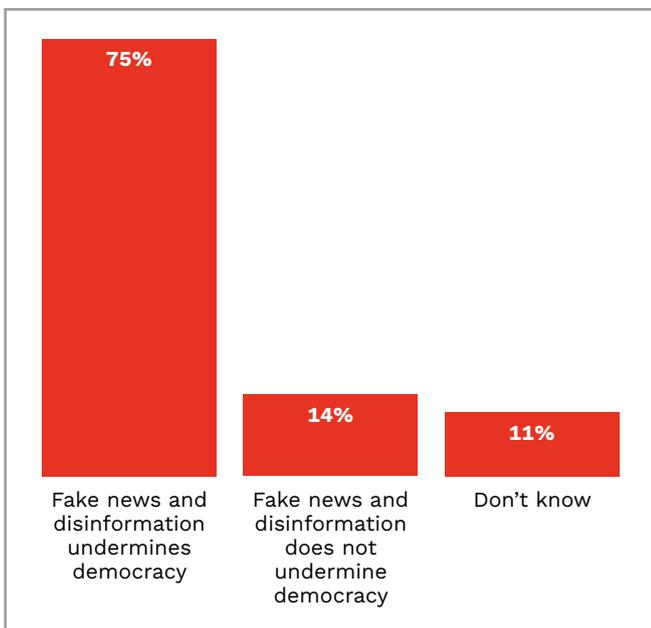
“Make social media companies remove extremist material more quickly” was picked by 62% of



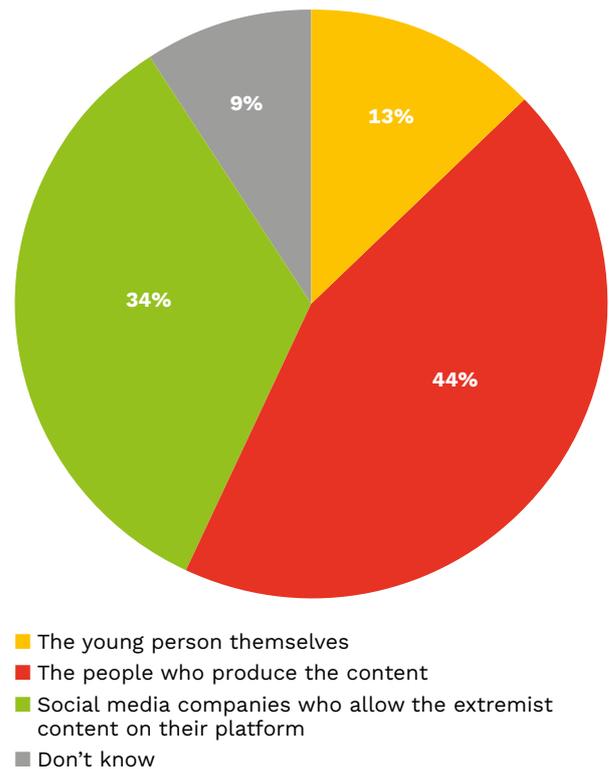
OR WE WILL

respondents, ahead of giving the police greater powers and resources (40%) and longer prison sentences for extremists (35%).

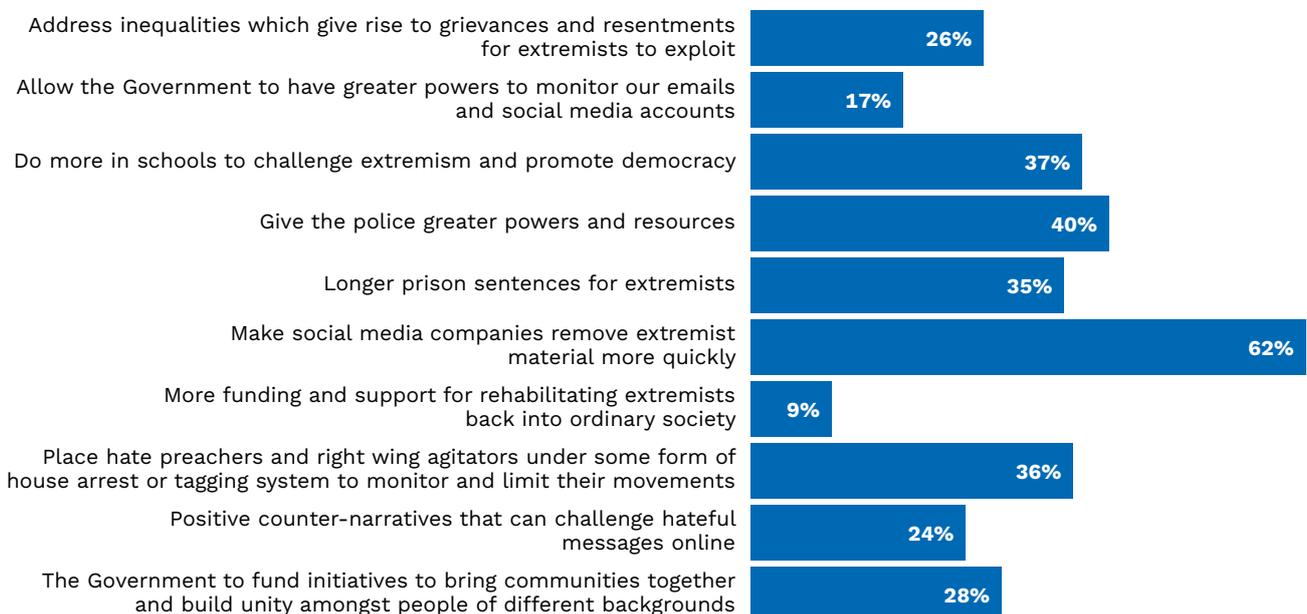
These findings should really be a wake up call for all social media companies to do more to clean up their own platforms – because it is quite clear that if they don't then the British public will strongly support action being taken to force them.



Q36 Who is primarily to blame when a teenager is radicalised by the content they see online?



Which of these policies would do most to help the fight against extremism?



BRITISH MOVEMENT: EXTREME

HOPE not hate is calling on Telegram and police to act over extreme antisemitic material being posted by a British neo-nazi.

HOPE NOT HATE can reveal that veteran nazi Tim Ryan [see below] is behind the deeply offensive and disgustingly antisemitic British Movement Telegram channel.

The British Movement is one of the few openly National Socialist groups still active in the UK today and its Telegram channel is unquestionably the most hardline racist and antisemitic Telegram group emanating from the British far right.

The cartoons, photos and writings it contains are among the most extreme and offensive that have been openly distributed in the UK, perhaps since the heyday of the neo-nazi group Combat 18 (C18) in the late 1990s.

While the now-proscribed and more recent nazi-terror groups, National Action and Sonnenkrieg Division, produced sexually graphic and violent images, these were less overtly political and mainly produced for internal consumption.

By contrast, the BM now openly produces antisemitic and racist material on its Telegram group which is accessible for anyone to view.

Legal advice obtained by HOPE not hate suggests that this material contravenes three laws.

THE BRITISH MOVEMENT

Formed in 1968, the British National Socialist Movement ("British Movement", or BM) is one of the few openly National Socialist groups still operating in the UK. Led for many years by nazi godfather Colin Jordan, the BM today is led by Huddersfield-based Steve Frost and Bolton-based Benny Bullman.

While a mere shadow of its heyday self from the early 1980s, the BM has been surprisingly resilient and remains active during a period when many far-right groups have folded.

It has active units in south London and Kent, South Wales, the East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humber, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Its activists hold meetings, host white power concerts, coordinate leafleting and postering sessions for activists and attend demonstrations and protests. It also produces a quarterly magazine and regular newsletters.

While the BM is avowedly racist, antisemitism is at the core of its ideology and hatred.

The group has a close relationship with the openly-nazi Swedish organisation, the Nordic Resistance Movement.

TIM RYAN

Tim Ryan, now in his fifties, has been an active nazi for over 30 years, first with the BM and later with



C18. He was known for carrying a knife and earned a reputation as an extremely violent thug. He was close friends with fellow C18 activist Mark Carter, who later had his leg amputated after being shot by alleged drugs dealers in Stonebridge Park, where both he and Ryan lived.

In the late 1990s Ryan was sentenced to four years in jail, after a firearm was found hidden in his mother's garden.

Since coming out of prison, Ryan has remained in the Sargent faction of C18 and is especially close to Rob "The Pig" Hilton, Steve Sargent's sidekick and formerly a leading member of London UDA (Ulster Defence Association).

In recent years, Ryan has become increasingly active in the BM, helping to run its South East London operation. He now lives in Lewisham and works as a painter and decorator for John Bellamy [aka Burnley], the drummer in the original No Remorse nazi skinhead band.

TELEGRAM HATRED

The British Movement launched its Telegram channel on 27 August 2019 and first posted a statement on BM values and policies. Since then it has posted thousands of messages, as many as 15 a day.

Many of these are also deeply offensive. HOPE not hate has identified over 140 highly offensive antisemitic cartoons, images and slogans posted on the site – many, far too extreme to reproduce here – produced by the BM since the beginning of 2020 alone.

These include cartoons of Jewish people controlling the world, President Trump and the British Parliament as Jewish puppets, as well as Jews controlling and encouraging immigration into the UK.

ANTISEMITE EXPOSED



COVID-19 has been incorporated into the BM's antisemitism, with Jewish people being depicted as both behind the pandemic but also benefiting from it.

Another common feature is the idea that Jewish people are promoting immigration in order to dilute the 'white race', and controlling and directing the actions of black people.

In early March 2020, the BM posted a cartoon of a wooden Trojan Horse entering the gates of Europe. Inside the horse was a black man, a Muslim and the coronavirus. The wheels of the horse were shown as Stars of David.

In another, a caricature of a Jewish man rubbing his hands was embedded in an image of the coronavirus, with the words "Stay Home, Stay Safe – While We Steal Everything" around the image.

Last summer's Black Lives Matter protests provoked a similar response, both directly but also as a spur to reproduce general vile racist cartoons. One depicted a frothing-mouthed black man on all fours like an animal, with a Jewish man telling a white blond-haired woman: "Don't worry Miss, he's really harmless."

Holocaust denial is another regular feature of the BM Telegram page, with several postings dismissing the Holocaust as a lie. While denying the Holocaust is not illegal under British law, the cartoons and comments contained on the Telegram channel are deeply offensive and stir up racial hatred.

The BM Telegram channel also glorifies Adolf Hitler and the Nazis, posting several highly antisemitic articles by the Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels. This includes reproducing Goebbels' *The Jew*, a deeply antisemitic article which sets out the Nazi's hatred of Jewish people.

There can be no defence for posting such offensive

LEGAL OPINION

HOPE not hate has sought legal opinion and been advised that the British Movement Telegram site breaks three laws:

1. Section 19 of the Public Order Act 1986

19 Publishing or distributing written material.

(1) A person who publishes or distributes written material which is threatening, abusive or insulting is guilty of an offence if —

- (a) he intends thereby to stir up racial hatred, or
- (b) having regard to all the circumstances racial hatred is likely to be stirred up thereby.

(2) In proceedings for an offence under this section it is a defence for an accused who is not shown to have intended to stir up racial hatred to prove that he was not aware of the content of the material and did not suspect, and had no reason to suspect, that it was threatening, abusive or insulting.

(3) References in this Part to the publication or distribution of written material are to its publication or distribution to the public or a section of the public.

2. 29C of the Public Order Act 1986

Publishing or distributing written material

(1) A person who publishes or distributes written material which is threatening is guilty of an offence if he intends thereby to stir up religious hatred.

(2) References in this Part to the publication or distribution of written material are to its publication or distribution to the public or a section of the public.

3. s.127 of the Communications Act 2003

127 Improper use of public electronic communications network

(1) A person is guilty of an offence if he —

- (a) sends by means of a public electronic communications network a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character; or
- (b) causes any such message or matter to be so sent.

and racist material. While Telegram is registered abroad, the fact that the material is being placed online by Britons, on a channel promoting a far-right British organisation and accessible to everyone, means that the offensive material is under the jurisdiction of British law.

We also believe it is incumbent on Telegram to remove the British National Socialist Movement channel from its platform and for police to investigate Tim Ryan.

SECTION 6 – MAINSTREAM HATE



DENIALISM MUST END

Exclusive polling for *State of HATE 2021* has revealed the extent of public dismay about inaction and indifference to complaints of racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism. LIRON VELLEMAN and MATTHEW MCGREGOR review another year in which poison infected the mainstream.

THE LAST FEW years have seen a slew of antisemitic revealed incidents inside the Labour Party, with Jewish members and the wider Jewish community decrying anti-Jewish racism, and the wall of denial that greeted them.

After years of these disgraceful scenes, one thing is clear: according to exclusive new polling commissioned by HOPE not hate, the public sees the racism occurring inside both the Conservative and Labour parties.

Given the number of reported incidents in both parties, it is hardly surprising that the public has noticed.

Most media coverage has focused on the Labour Party's problems with antisemitism and the Conservative Party's problem with Islamophobia, as well as both parties' failure to deal with these issues. The public is generally aware of both issues.

- By a margin of 34% to 22% those polled said that they agreed that “the Labour Party has a problem with antisemitism”. Among Labour voters, 36% said they agreed the party has a problem with antisemitism, while 26% disagreed.
- By a margin of 28% to 26%, those polled said they agreed that “the Conservative party has a problem with Islamophobia”. In contrast with Labour voters, Conservative voters are less likely to see that the party has a problem with Islamophobia: 20% of Tory voters agree there is a problem, while 41% disagree.

Both parties' inability to address the problem – or in the case of the Conservatives even accept there is a problem – have led to wider questions being asked about their commitment to ridding their ranks of the poison of racism. We asked the public about other areas.

- By a margin of 29% to 26%, those polled said that they agreed “the Labour Party has a problem with Islamophobia”. Labour voters also agreed with this statement by a margin of 32% to 29%.
- Labour voters are split on whether the party had a problem with racism generally, with 32% agreeing and 33% disagreeing.
- By a margin of 27% to 25%, those polled narrowly disagreed with the statement “the Conservatives have a problem with antisemitism”. Among Conservative voters, those who disagreed did so by a margin of 40% to 20%.
- Conservative voters disagreed with the view that the Tories had a problem with racism by a margin of 40% to 20%.

Whether the public is aware of these problem matters to some extent – but whether awareness is high or low, leaders in both parties should be committed to ridding their ranks of hatred or hostility towards ethnic minorities. The painful reality is that their record here in (in both parties) has been mixed.

CONSERVATIVES IN DENIAL.... AND DELAY

In last year's *State of HATE* report, we reported on the disappointing approach of the Conservative Party in dealing with issues of Islamophobia. There were also worrying levels of Islamophobic sentiment from within its membership. A year on, and very little has changed.

In May 2020, the Conservative Party announced the terms of reference for its independent investigation into discrimination, particularly in terms of how it dealt with complaints. Widening the scope to include all forms of discrimination seemed to suggest it was minimising the issue of Islamophobia, a move described by the Muslim Council of Britain as a “dismiss[al of] all the issues of the toxic culture of racism that have been raised by the Muslim Council of Britain.”

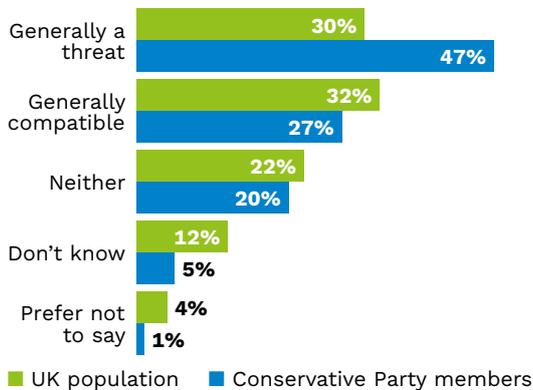
The investigation, run by Professor Swaran Singh, limited its scope to a narrow focus on the complaints process, seeking only submissions from a specific group of people. Despite this narrow focus, the report is still yet to be published, over 15 months since the investigation was announced.

HOPE not hate did not sit idly by. Instead, we delivered a submission to the inquiry, condemning the Conservative Party for its ‘Deep Roots of Islamophobia’. This submission covered three key areas central to the issue of Islamophobia in the party.

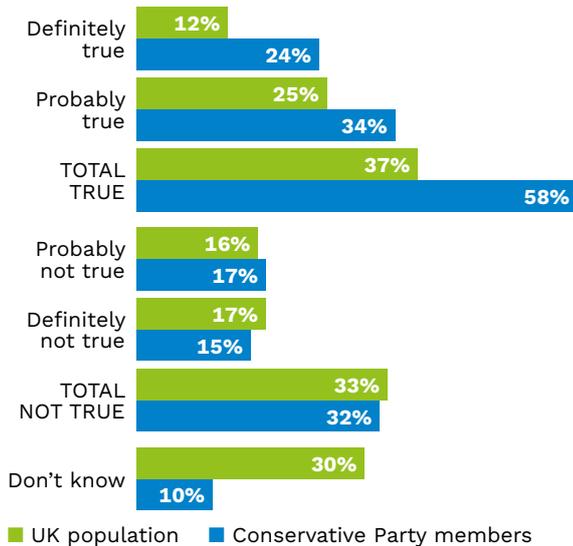
Firstly, our exclusive polling showed that there was widespread suspicion, prejudice and hostility towards Muslims among Conservative Party members. There also appeared to be an attitude of complete denial towards the issue.

The poll found that there continued to be widespread suspicion, prejudice and hostility towards Muslims among Conservative Party members. It found that 57% of party members had a negative attitude towards Muslims, with 21% registering a very negative attitude. This is more than twice the number of those with negative attitudes towards Hindus or Jewish people. Half of Conservative Party members believed that Islam was “a threat to the British way of life”, while 58% believed that “there are no go areas in Britain where Sharia law dominates and non-Muslims cannot enter”. This figure rose to 66% of those who

Do you think Islam is generally compatible with the British way of life or generally a threat to the British way of life?



“Do you think the following is true or untrue? There are no go areas in Britain where Sharia law dominates and non-Muslims cannot enter”



backed Boris Johnson in the 2019 Conservative leadership election.

A third of Tory members thought that Islamist terrorists reflected a widespread hostility to Britain among the Muslim community, compared to 53% who thought it was wrong to blame all Muslims for the actions of a violent minority.

Secondly, our report analysed the existing disciplinary structures within the Conservative Party and made recommendations to aid the attempts to fix the issue of Islamophobia within the party.

These recommendations included calling for a fully independent process for complaints and disciplinary issues, training for members about Islamophobia and understanding British Muslims, and a commitment from the leadership of the Conservative Party to promote a more positive image of Muslims to members and the wider public, as well as commitment to call out anti-Muslim prejudice wherever it was found.

Finally, the report highlighted case studies of councillors, MPs and activists who were subject to complaints but either faced no disciplinary action or were allowed back in after a short suspension.

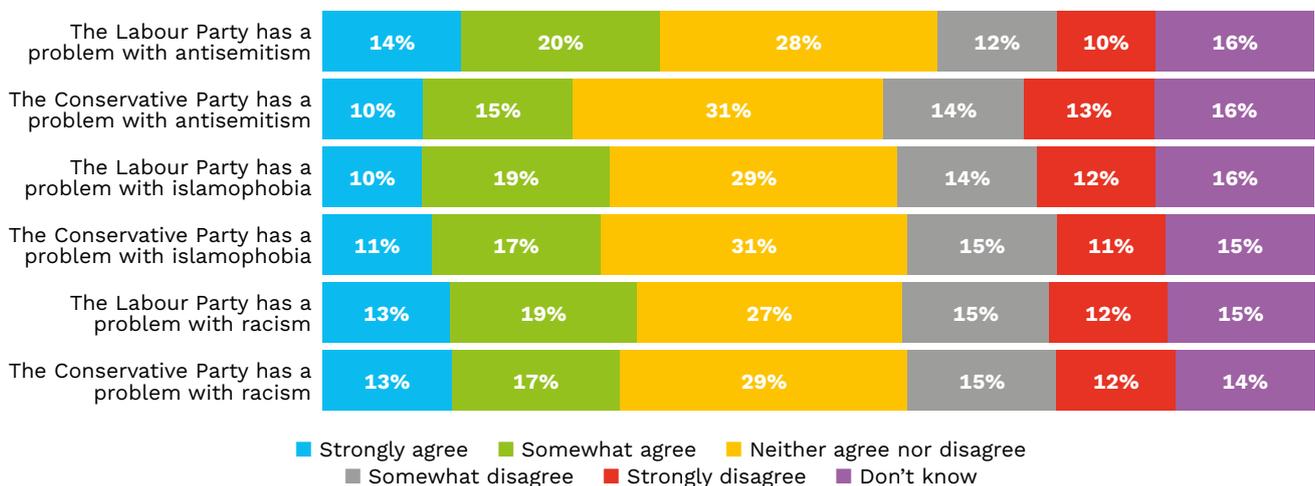
Unfortunately, neither the independent investigation, nor the Conservative Party, responded to our submission. Without any progress on the investigation, it is easy to see why the public believes the Conservative Party still has a deep-rooted problem with Islamophobia.

LABOUR ACTS ON ANTISEMITISM... BUT ACTIONS NEED TO MATCH THE WORDS

2020 brought the proof of HOPE not hate’s long warnings: the Labour Party was responsible for unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination in dealing with issues of antisemitism. As our **State of HATE** reported last year, there had been an unprecedented investigation by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to investigate the party that had first set it up.

The EHRC report outlined in stark terms the failure of the Labour Party to tackle the issue of antisemitism, the lack of leadership shown by those in positions of power, and political interference in the complaints

Manistream poison





Boris Johnson
Photo Chatham House

Keir Starmer
Photo Jeremy Corbyn

process. The EHRC even went as far to say that the culture of antisemitism in the Labour Party was at odds with the commitment to a zero tolerance of antisemitism, something that “could have been tackled more effectively if the leadership had chosen to do so.”

The election of Keir Starmer as leader of the Labour Party in April was greeted with a sense of relief by many Jewish groups and those allies who had been consistently raising issues of antisemitism in the Labour Party. Starmer used his acceptance speech to apologise specifically to the Jewish community. However, it was clear that words alone wouldn't be enough to tackle both the procedural and the cultural issues that existed in the party.

While clear steps have been taken by Labour in terms of enforcement of disciplinary processes and issuing clearer guidelines for local party officials, the party is now working through a legally-enforced action plan subsequent to the EHRC report findings.

The proof of whether actions will match the warm words from Keir Starmer and other leadership figures will be found by the extent to which the Action Plan is implemented and whether groups such as the Jewish Labour Movement, as well as other Jewish communal bodies, are confident that the Labour Party is able to tackle the issue of antisemitism and work towards creating a more tolerant culture.

The need for the party to change, so that people of all communities feel welcome, is by no means limited to the issue of antisemitism. This year also saw the release of a report by the Labour Muslim Network (LMN), spelling out the negative experiences of many Muslim members in the Labour Party. The fact that the party responded quickly, and positively, was welcome. Meetings between the party and LMN have resulted in an action plan being put in place. The hope is the leadership will tackle these issues in the party.

At the same time, issues of anti-black racism have not received the same clarity of response. The Forde Inquiry, which was tasked by the Labour Party to investigate the leaking of the party's internal

antisemitism report, which many felt showed evidence of anti-black racism from staff members, has stalled, while many in black communities have raised concerns, ranging from the poor response to the Black Lives Matter protests last year to the lack of diversity among senior staff around Keir Starmer.

Labour must learn the lessons of recent years and move quickly and efficiently to tackle the cultural and procedural issues of Islamophobia alongside its efforts to combat antisemitism, anti-black racism and other forms of discrimination raised by Labour members.

TIME FOR ACTION

Victims of racism in the Conservative Party and in Labour, as well as other mainstream parties, have been let down by those parties. Hostile environments have left scars and excluded those who would exercise their democratic rights. Denialism has compounded that pain.

The Labour Party's reaction to the EHRC report has been encouraging, but there can be no plaudits for simply doing the “right thing”. Meanwhile, the Conservative Party continues to pretend it doesn't face the same problems with racism, and instead has attempted to score cheap political points against Labour for its issues. If you're only against racism when it is happening in other political parties not your own, you're not anti-racist – you're an opportunist.

The poison of racism in any political party is a threat to us all. Everyone, regardless of their background, should be free to exercise their democratic rights in the party of their choice. That fact that so many people have faced racism, hostility and gaslighting when they have tried to do so, is shameful.

HOPE not hate will continue to monitor Labour's progress on implementing the EHRC report. We will praise progress when it is made and call out failures if they occur. For Labour, the road is long but the journey has begun. The same cannot be said of the Conservatives. They must end their denialism, investigate properly – and fully – and commit to take real action.

SECTION 7 – GROUPS/INDIVIDUAL PROFILES





NAZI GROUPS



BRITISH MOVEMENT (BM)

MEMBERSHIP: (EST) 70

LEADERSHIP: STEVE FROST (LEADER), BENNY BULLMAN

OTHER LEADING ACTIVISTS: TIM RYAN, PAUL ILLINGWORTH, JORDON PONT

AREAS OF ACTIVITY: EAST MIDLANDS, WEST YORKSHIRE, GREATER MANCHESTER, LONDON, SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

2020 SUMMARY

The British Movement has proved remarkably resilient, especially when so many other traditional nazi groups have folded in recent years. Obviously the COVID-19 pandemic has severely limited its ability to hold any activities during 2020, but the group did expand its online output, both through its Telegram and Twitter channels but also with an irregular podcast.

While Steve Frost remains the party leader, the real driver behind the BM these days is Benny Bullman. His recent move from the East Midlands to Bolton is likely to see an upsurge in activity in the north west over the coming period.

Tim Ryan has taken over operations in south London and injected a new lease of life into what was always one of the group's most important branches. Paul Hirons, from Heanor in the east Midlands, organises the annual Sunwheel festival, a weekend of music, chat and drink, though because of the pandemic this did not happen last year.

The BM maintains a strong grip on the Blood and Honour music scene.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The British Movement could well grow in 2021 as it incorporates members of other nazi parties that have recently collapsed. However, there are rumours of a possible merger with the National Front (NF), though it's hard to see the BM old timers, who have been with the group for 40 years, agreeing to give up their party name. More likely is that the BM will simply try to poach the few remaining NF members left.



Steve Frost



Will Browning (blue cap)

COMBAT 18 (C18)

MEMBERSHIP: (EST) 10

LEADERSHIP: WILL BROWNING

AREAS OF ACTIVITY: LONDON, SOUTH EAST



2020 SUMMARY

Combat 18 had a disastrous 2020, with several of the already-dwindling army of supporters leaving and even falling out publicly with Will Browning. Darren Wilkinson, once a loyal lieutenant to Browning, appears to have shifted allegiances to the Order of Nine Angles, while Essex-based chef Jamie Gwillam very publicly walked away.

Some of the group's troubles were over the revelation that one of Browning's oldest and closest friends, Oxford-based Matthew Osbury, had had two children with a black woman. While Browning stood by his friend, others like Oldham-based Jason Wilcox, were vitriolic in their abuse.

Another old-timer who appears to have walked away from C18 is Essex-based Al Mounsey, who had been a key player in the C18-linked music scene.

Perhaps none of this will bother Will Browning too much, as he continues to split his time between The Netherlands and Jersey.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Further decline.



David Myatt



ORDER OF NINE ANGLES

MEMBERSHIP: (EST) 20

LEADERSHIP: DAVID MYATT, RICHARD MOULT, RACHEL STIRLING

OTHER LEADING ACTIVISTS: CRAIG FRASER, RYAN FLEMING, GARRON HELM

AREAS OF ACTIVITY: OXFORD, WILTSHIRE, SHROPSHIRE, YORKSHIRE

2020 SUMMARY

The highly secretive Order of Nine Angles (O9A) is a nazi occult group which increasingly defines itself as 'post-satanist'. It is organised on a decentralised basis, where 'Nexions' (branches) operate with apparent autonomy, although follow a central doctrine and 'Satanic guide'. HOPE not hate is aware of at least five Nexions in the UK.

Despite its publicly-declared decentralised state, the O9A has an inner circle made up of those who have been together for over 20 years. This sits alongside an older guard, the veteran members David Myatt and Richard Moulton.

O9A had a quiet 2020, partly due to the arrest and imprisonment of several of its younger adherents for terror-related offences. This included those involved with the Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD), an offshoot of National Action.

Last summer Leeds-based Ryan Fleming was released from prison after being convicted of abusing a teenage girl with learning difficulties, only to be sent back to prison for engaging with another minor online. During his spell out of prison, Fleming returned to O9A activity.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

O9A's prospects in 2021 will depend on whether the group is proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the British government. Plans are already being laid inside O9A to go-to-ground if this is the case.

BLOOD AND HONOUR (B&H)

MEMBERSHIP: 300

LEADERSHIP: ROB TALLAND

OTHER LEADING ACTIVISTS: BENNY BULLMAN, SIMON DUTTON, DAVE BRADDON

AREAS OF ACTIVITY: EAST MIDLANDS, YORKSHIRE, SCOTLAND, LONDON



2020 SUMMARY

Last year was very quiet for Blood and Honour, the umbrella group that runs most of the white power music scene. The pandemic meant that there were no live concerts during the year, though *Stigger* and Benny Bullman's *Whitelaw* put on online events.

Rob Talland [aka Ginger Rob] has tried to withdraw from the commercial side of B&H, though this appears more to do with concerns about being held financially liable by the taxman and other investigative authorities than anything else.

Like the gigs, there was also no sign of the *Blood and Honour* magazine, which historically has been produced by Simon Dutton.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Blood and Honour might have a slight revival in 2021, as normal life returns and there is a desire to meet up again and more people attend any gigs it might try to hold.

Benny Bullman's *Whitelaw*

SPOTLIGHT ON PATRIOTIC ALTERNATIVE

PATRIOTIC ALTERNATIVE

LEADER: MARK COLLETT

DEPUTY DIRECTOR: LAURA TOWLER

2020 SUMMARY

Patriotic Alternative (PA) is a neo-nazi, racial nationalist group created in 2019 by Mark Collett, former head of publicity for the British National Party (BNP), and Laura Towler, a vlogger and former editor at the far-right site, Defend Europa.

During 2020, PA predominantly focused on building its presence online, pushing materials through an active blog, social media channels and Telegram groups, and offline via a small number of campaigns and regular community-building efforts.

Throughout the year the group was very active around the UK, undertaking hikes, banner drops, leafleting sessions and online get-togethers. It also held a conference in March 2020, although a planned autumn conference was postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Unsurprisingly for a racial nationalist organisation, PA's primary activism in 2020 revolved around responding to last year's Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrations. Its campaign was centred on displaying the far-right slogan "White Lives Matter", first at an action at Mam Tor, Derbyshire, on 4 July and later on a national scale, holding a day of action on Indigenous People's Day (IPD) on 9 August. The result was images of roughly 80 locations displaying the slogan, alongside related phrases, from just over 100 activists.

The most active areas appeared to be London and the south-east of England, with strong representation also in the north west and Wales. There were also a handful of pictures submitted from abroad, including by the fascist groups Nordic Resistance Movement in Denmark and Action Zealandia in New Zealand.

As well as anti-BLM activism, PA also tried to exploit far-right anger about cross Channel migration. In August the group projected the PA logo and slogan "White Lives Matter" onto the famous White Cliffs of Dover.

The group also has a separate anti-migration website, 'We Were Never Asked', which makes no direct reference to PA.

Following the IPD and anti-migration campaigns, it appeared that PA was managing to unite much of the traditional, fascist far right in Britain, which had been splintered and in decline for some time. These events saw involvement from the nazi hooligan group the Pie & Mash Squad, as well as British National Party activists. They also managed to soak up elements of the younger, online far right associated with Groyppers UK and vlogger Jakes & Latte, as well as former members of the anti-Muslim party For Britain and the now-defunct street movement Generation Identity, alongside former supporters of the anti-Muslim activist, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson]. That said, many on the British far right have been

at pains to distance themselves from PA, due to its extremeness. There have also been a number of internal fights, most notably with Lucy Brown and far-right vlogger Nick Cotton [aka Unwashed], who in a 9 August livestream lambasted PA and especially Mark Collett for its inability to handle dissent. Describing "a huge learning curve" after attending his first PA conference, he said he had come to view the group as "cult-like".

As with most far-right organisations, last year's lockdown restrictions severely curtailed PA's ability to organise and carry out stunts. However, the group has criticised the lockdown and continued to meet for leafleting sessions, group hikes and various events in contravention of restrictions. PA also focused heavily on online get-togethers, including a film club, online gaming and a baking competition. One especially sinister development is the group's attempt to exploit homeschooling during the pandemic, with the creation of a far-right syllabus and educational resources.

With this softer style activism over the past year, PA has sought to present itself as a credible nationalist organisation. However, while more professional than most groups on the UK scene, PA has been hindered by its status as a nazi organisation. Collett has a long, documented history of extreme racism and support for Hitler's Third Reich, and the group's Yorkshire Regional Organiser, Sam Melia – who is also Laura Towler's husband – was formerly involved in the now-banned neo-nazi group, National Action.

HOPE not hate has also become aware that PA's South West branch included Dean Morrice from Somerset, who was charged with terrorism and explosive offences in August last year. Morrice was in the branch's Telegram group, whose admins erased its message history after he was arrested. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that key PA figures have come under increasing scrutiny: for example, both Collett and Towler had their bank accounts frozen in October.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

2021 got off to a bad start for Patriotic Alternative. After many months of detailed conversations between HOPE not hate and tech platforms, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter finally removed Mark Collett, Laura Towler and Patriotic Alternative's pages in February, though some of the regional pages remain. This has left the group with its Telegram channel at present, which is small. However, Collett and Towler both continue to have large and influential YouTube channels.

In the early months of 2021 PA again started some low-level activism, such as leafleting, banner drops and hikes. As COVID-19 restrictions are lifted we are likely to see much more public activism from the group, as well as stunts designed to attract media headlines and social media clicks.



The group may have already reached a ceiling of support. Its (accurate) neo-nazi label, and the history of extremism from its leader, make the organisation unattractive to many even on the far right. While the group has grown quickly into one of the major players on the UK far-right 'scene', it is unlikely to achieve a significant growth in support in the coming year.

MARK COLLETT

Mark Collett is the founder and current leader of Patriotic Alternative.

He is the former head of publicity for the British National Party (BNP) and chairman of its youth branch, the Young BNP. Originally from Rothley, Leicestershire and now based in Leeds, Collett said of his hometown in 2002 that: "... it was worse than Leeds. Blacks everywhere, sari shops, jewellers, Indian restaurants. I hated that."

In the same year, he featured in an episode of a documentary series made by Russell Brand for UK Play, while Collett was a student at the University of Leeds. In the show he called gay men "AIDS monkeys", "bum bandits" and "faggots", said that immigrants coming into the UK were making it a "cesspit", and spoke admiringly of Ian Stewart, lead singer of the neo-nazi band, Skrewdriver.

In 2002, Collett also featured in another documentary, *Young, Nazi and Proud*, this time from Channel 4. In it, he declared his support for Hitler and Stalin alongside numerous other extreme statements, including describing AIDS as a "friendly disease" because "blacks and drug users and gays have it". The public embarrassment of the documentary led to the

BNP removing Collett's membership, though he was later reinstated.

A further documentary aired by the BBC in 2004, *The Secret Agent*, seeing Collett again making extreme statements, including calling asylum seekers "cockroaches", and claiming that Asian men "don't go out mugging Asian grandmas, they don't go stabbing each other, they don't go trying to solicit sex off little Pritesh or little Sanjita, they go straight to the whites, 'cos they are trying to destroy us and they are the racists."

In 2010 Collett was arrested and questioned by police following statements made to them by Nick Griffin and others in the BNP, alleging Collett was threatening to kill Griffin, although the BNP later decided to take no further action.

Since then and until launching PA, Collett had focused on building a persona online, including regularly collaborating with former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, and establishing his own YouTube channel, 'This Week on the Alt-Right', which he hosted from 2017-2019.

He did, however, get involved in pro-Brexit activism in 2016, photographed behind a Vote Leave-branded stall in Leeds alongside Jack Coulson, a National Action (NA) member at the time who has since been convicted for making a pipe bomb, and Wayne Bell [aka Wayne Jarvie], a violent thug and a prominent member of NA before the group was banned in December 2016.

In 2017 Collett published a book, describing the Holocaust as the: "...alleged extermination of six million Jews," and declaring: "...when it comes to the notion of white guilt, nothing is pushed more strongly."

SPOTLIGHT ON PATRIOTIC ALTERNATIVE (CONTINUED)

Collett also wrote: “National Socialism is an ideology of discipline and order that seeks to establish a perfect homogenous society that is centred on national unity. As such National Socialism scorns social divisions and selfish individualism. National Socialism is an ideology that strives for excellence and pushes individuals within society to better themselves – not just for the sake of individual greatness but instead to improve society as a whole. Discipline, order and excellence made National Socialism one of the few true threats to the enemies of the West [...]”

During this period he gained occasional mainstream attention, including in January 2018 when Fox News host Laura Ingraham retweeted Collett and in June of the same year when the-then Republic Congressman Steve King, notorious for his far-right flirtations, also retweeted him. More recently, in July 2020 American YouTube channel PragerU quote-tweeted Collett, and this PragerU tweet was itself retweeted by President Trump’s son, Donald Trump Jr. For this reason, Collett’s suspension from Twitter in early 2021 will have come as a huge blow.

LAURA TOWLER

[AKA LAURA TYRIE, AKA LAURA MELIA]

Laura Towler, from Yorkshire, is deputy director of Patriotic Alternative.

A former army cadet and politics graduate, she is the central figure in PA alongside Mark Collett. She is also the founder of Grandma Towlers Tea, a company created to raise funds for PA.

Towler first made a name for herself in 2017, as an editor for the white nationalist site Defend Europa. She maintains a self-titled YouTube channel, which has over 57,000 subscribers and over 3.5 million views. She has also featured on other far-right vlogs, including those from white nationalist Colin Robertson [aka Millennial Woes], and alongside alt-right figurehead Richard Spencer and pseudoscientific ‘race scientist’ Edward Dutton.

Despite having been involved in far-right activism for a relatively short period, she has expressed some extreme positions. In an interview to Defend Europa in January 2020, she said that though she had “mixed feelings” about Britain’s empire, she was: “... very proud that my tiny island was able to wield such power” and that: “We civilised a lot of people.”

When asked about “the Anglo power structure and Jews”, she said: “I admit that we have issues” and that “the same could be said for most European nations.”

Regarding the Second World War, she told the interviewer: “I’m not a fan of Churchill and I think our involvement in the war was unnecessary.” Asked who her idol was, she replied: “Sir [Oswald] Mosley!” The interviewer also asked Towler her thoughts on Kai Murros, a Finnish far-right activist who has called for violent far-right attacks in the UK. Towler replied: “Kai Murros is incredible.”

In 2020, Towler married Sam Melia, a regional organiser for PA who was previously involved in the now-banned neo-Nazi group National Action.



PATRIOTIC TALK

RUN BY: CHRIS MITCHELL

Patriotic Talk is a livestream show closely tied to Patriotic Alternative (PA). It streams multiple times per week, and features prominent members of PA as well as activists aligned to it. Leader Mark Collett is regularly on the show alongside international guests, such as former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard, David Duke.

Chris Mitchell, PA’s Regional Organiser for the East of England, is responsible for the channel. He is known in the far right for “groypping” (a form of far-right activism where someone calls into talk radio shows and tries to introduce the audience to far-right ideas, or tricking political opponents into expressing far-right ideas as a way to ridicule them). Mitchell previously ran a YouTube channel that gained notoriety for publishing recordings of these efforts. Also part of the





group is Nathaniel Bennett [aka Natty], and Kris Kearns [aka Charlie Big Potatoes], a British fascist based in Alicante, Spain.

The Patriotic Talk livestream is one of the most influential such streams among the UK far right and broadcasts many hours of footage per week. Episodes usually consist of a conversation between the hosts and guests about mainstream current events and conflicts within the far right. Unsurprisingly, the hosts are heavily antisemitic and racist, and for periods over the last year their attention has been focused on criticising the COVID-19 lockdowns and the Black Lives Matter movement. Reports from activities and upcoming events by PA are also common, and the hosts occasionally conduct “groyplings” and harassment campaigns while live on the show, as entertainment to the viewers.

The livestream also occasionally has an “after show” where the hosts hand over the show to less prominent, and often younger, activists in the British far right. These have included PA alternative activists and YouTubers under the age of 18. A Telegram group chat is also connected to the show, which is among the larger gatherings of racial nationalists online in the UK.

GRANDMA TOWLER'S TEA

RUN BY: LAURA TOWLER

Grandma Towler's Tea is a tea brand run by Laura Towler, Patriotic Alternative's deputy leader. It is used to raise funds for the organisation. The project was conceived after Towler tweeted in June 2020 that she was “chuffed that Yorkshire Tea hasn't supported BLM,” and the well-known tea brand responded by saying: “Please don't buy our tea again” (explaining that they took time to educate themselves before reacting to BLM and the death of George Floyd). Other tea brands responded in support of Yorkshire Tea and Towler subsequently decided to launch her own tea, “for customers who are fed up of brands and products bowing down to woke capital” in November 2020.

The brand's website states that: “Although Grandma Towler's is a separate entity to any other organisation, profits from the sales of Grandma Towler's tea will be invested back into projects that help our people and our communities,” indicating strongly that any funds raised through tea will be used to fund the activities of Patriotic Alternative.

KEY PATRIOTIC ALTERNATIVE ACTIVISTS

CHRIS MITCHELL

REGIONAL ORGANISER FOR EAST OF ENGLAND

Mitchell is regional organiser for East of England and host of the Patriotic Talk livestream. He is a prolific social media activist and also runs the far-right “Patriotic Groyppers” project.



SAM MELIA

REGIONAL ORGANISER FOR YORKSHIRE

Melia is regional organiser for Yorkshire and a former activist for the now-proscribed nazi terror group, National Action. Melia also heads the Hundred Handers network, which produces racist stickers and posters and urges activists in the UK and abroad to print and put them up. He is husband to Laura Towler.



JAMES GODDARD

REGIONAL ORGANISER FOR NORTH WEST

Goddard is the regional organiser for North West of England and previously the leader of the Yellow Vests UK. In 2019, he was fined £300 after being convicted of assaulting a photojournalist at a demo in Manchester. In 2020, he was fined again and given a restraining order after abusing the *Independent* journalist, Lizzie Dearden.



THEO WILMOT

REGIONAL ORGANISER FOR SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

Wilmot is the regional organiser for South East of England and grew up in Northampton. Patriotic Alternative is his first engagement in the organised far right. In August 2020 he was an active participant and organiser of the group's White Lives Matter banner campaign.

NICK HILL

REGIONAL ORGANISER FOR LONDON

Hill is the regional organiser for London and is based in Catford. Operating under the pseudonym Cornelius, his real identity was revealed in November 2020, following an infiltration by the Antifascist Research Collective.



TRADITIONAL FAR RIGHT

Adam Walker



BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY (BNP)

MEMBERSHIP: (EST) 100

LEADERSHIP: ADAM WALKER (CHAIR), CLIVE WALKER (DEP)

OTHER LEADING ACTIVISTS: DAVID FURNESS

AREAS OF ACTIVITY: NONE

2020 SUMMARY

The party began updating its online news section again during lockdown, though many believe this splurge was related to the party's obsession with cashing in the many wills and bequests that were set up by party members during the BNP's heydays.

Website updates aside, the BNP actually withdrew from any further activity in 2020, with those formerly close to the party citing Clive Jefferson's poor health as the reason. There has been no public sighting of either Jefferson or Walker since the now-constitutionally contested and hastily arranged 2019 AGM, we believe.

The leadership won one small battle last year, when a court ruled preliminarily in their favour in a case bought by a former member and employee of the party, questioning the legality of the 2019 AGM.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

There are small claims and legal matters rumbling on with regard to the party's constitution. Forecasts in 2014 that the BNP was in line for some £8 million in bequests have been adjusted to simply a trickle.

NATIONAL FRONT (NF)

MEMBERSHIP: 24

LEADERSHIP: TONY MARTIN (CHAIRMAN)

OTHER ACTIVISTS: JOHN JONES, MAC MCELHINNEY, CHRIS JACKSON

AREAS OF ACTIVITY: NONE

2020 SUMMARY

The deaths of Eddy Morrison and Richard Edmonds were significant blows to the NF's already limited organisation. Although Morrison and Edmonds were engaged in a bitter feud at the time of Morrison's death in June, Morrison was potentially one of the more capable organisers available and widely known in Yorkshire.

Only a month before his death, Richard Edmonds had performed a solitary insult to the memory of Commonwealth war dead at the Cenotaph in central London. He looked in such incredible poor health, it was almost painful to watch. A small group running the party's office in Hull walked away leaving the party without current access to its website or bank accounts.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The condition and quality of membership of the National Front is ever decreasing, and Chairman Tony Martin's increasing state of confusion and declining grip on reality is likely to lead to some in the British Movement to seek a merger.



Tony Martin



Paul Golding

BRITAIN FIRST (BF)

MEMBERSHIP: APPROX 500

LEADERSHIP: PAUL GOLDING (LEADER), TIMOTHY BURTON (TREASURER), ASHLEA SIMON (PUBLIC RELATIONS)

OTHER ACTIVISTS: SAM COCHRANE, ANDREW FRAIN, STEVE SARGENT

AREAS OF ACTIVITY: YORKSHIRE, KENT, LONDON, SUSSEX, MANCHESTER, EAST & WEST MIDLANDS, WALES, NORTHERN IRELAND, NEWCASTLE, ESSEX

2020 SUMMARY

Not a great year for Britain First, as Paul Golding's love life and notorious paranoia caused division and angst among the remaining faithful.

Golding was convicted under terrorism laws in May and although he wore it as a medal of honour and a useful excuse to fundraise, his paranoia and relationships caused more extreme and pressing headaches.

After being forced out of Northern Ireland at the behest of Loyalist paramilitaries, Golding moved to the north-west of England where he quickly began a relationship with Ashlea Simon, the former partner of political rival James Goddard.

Moving the party HQ to Simon's home on the outskirts of Manchester, Golding managed to antagonise a small but well-organised group of activists, 'The Manchester Collective,' that had gravitated toward Britain First during the previous two years.

Not long after Golding's conviction, a series of childish spats and public rows led to the acrimonious departure of chief of staff Andrew Edge.

Although many of Edge's more extravagant claims cannot be reported for legal reasons, Britain First's reaction merely confirmed Paul Golding as

a problematic paranoid. His response had been to launch a series of bizarre and dramatic denunciations of dozens of former members and supporters as "HOPE not hate plants."

To compound this evident idiocy further, Golding and Simon also stage-managed a series of financially-rewarding stunts to convince gullible supporters they were living in some kind of private compound surround by a hostile conspiracy comprised of HOPE not hate "assets", and Counter Terror police.

There is no denying that the hotel invasions launched by Britain First against the housing of refugees and asylum seekers were popular among its supporters. Not only did these grab some desperately needed headlines but it confirmed Britain First was still the only far right group capable of mounting such operations.

Still not registered with the Electoral Commission since being struck off in 2017, a supposed but unlikely legal challenge to the Commission is still the obsession for Britain First's main begging emails, though there appears to be an also endless supplement of other causes for which the organisation needs money. The launch of its supposed 'navy' (a small boat donated by a supporter from Kent) was quietly abandoned, and it would seem sunk, due to other fundraising priorities.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Never one for great judgement, Golding's decision to associate so openly with former members of Combat 18, such as Steve Sargent and Andy Friar, is strange even for him. In preparation for what many observers assume will be a year fraught with further legal and personal trauma, not only are bank accounts now open and operating in Russia and the United States, former party chairman Tim Burton has been either elevated or demoted to the position of Treasurer. Never has a poison chalice been so stupidly received.

TRADITIONAL FAR RIGHT (CONTINUED)

NEW BRITISH UNION (NBU)

MEMBERSHIP: 20

LEADERSHIP: GARY RAIKES

AREAS OF ACTIVITY: NONE

2020 SUMMARY

The joke has obviously worn thin and become apparent for self-declared Führer Gary Raikes. Raikes was forced to bemoan the increasingly sporadic and poor quality of his own online magazine *The Blackshirt*, after the editor upped and left and joined another organisation. Obviously, it's as arduous to read the self-inflating nonsense as it was to put it together.

There was a rumour that, temporarily, the NBU did manage to entertain some waifs from a series of Terrorgram groups, but they quickly abandoned the party upon realising little existed outside Raikes' imagination.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The NBU will stumble on.

THE LINK

LEADER: MICHAEL WOODBRIDGE

2020 SUMMARY

The Link is an organisation formed in 2018 by Michael Woodbridge to "aid victims of State anti-race laws".

Woodbridge is a British fascist who was a regular attendee at The London Forum. The Link aims to support perpetrators of hate crime (which The Link also calls "thought crimes"). The organisation has promoted British nazi Jeremy Bedford-Turner, previously leader of The London Forum, and urged activists to send letters and support to him while incarcerated.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The organisation will continue to operate relatively quietly and support some of the most extreme far-right activists in the UK.

NORTH PACK

2020 SUMMARY

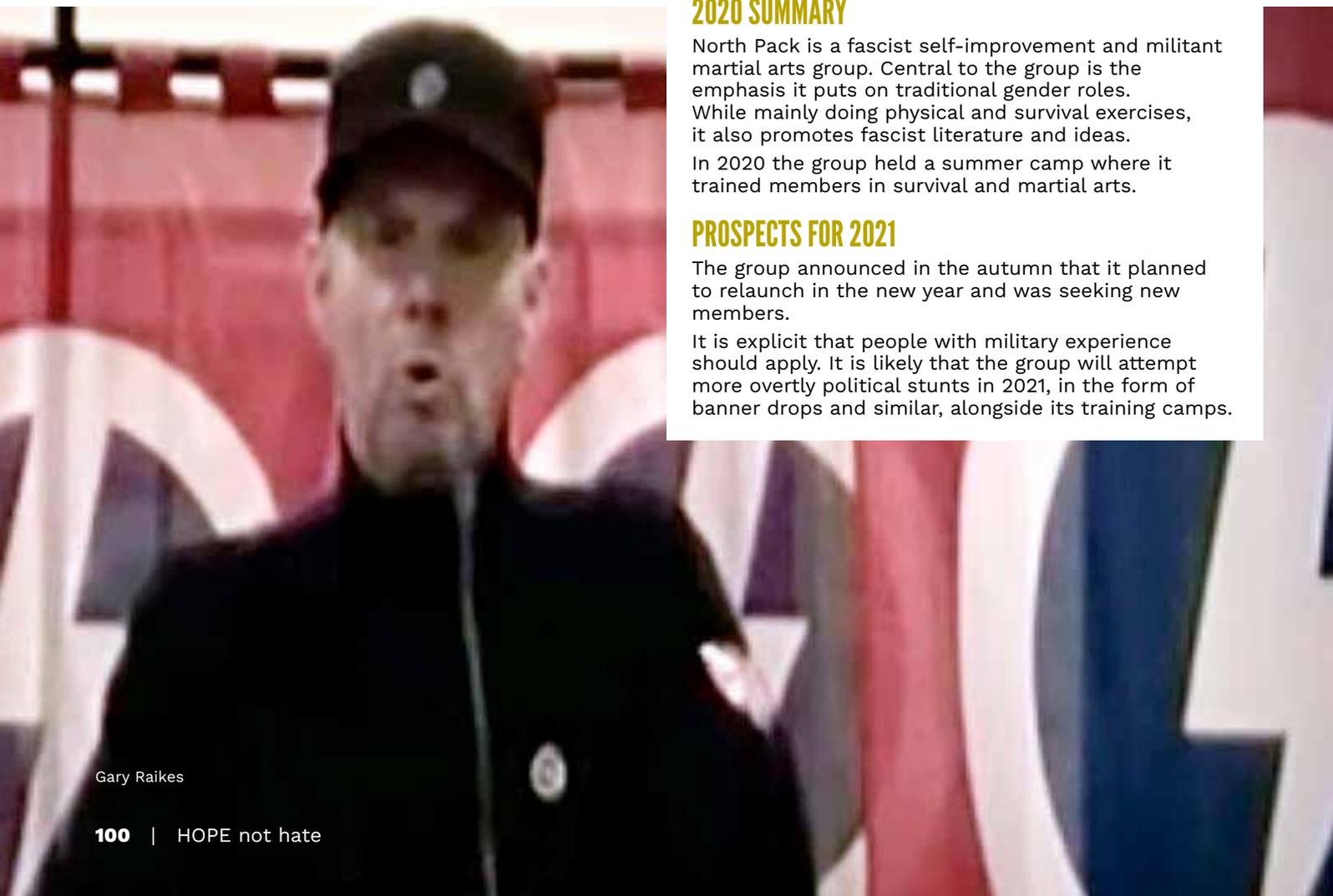
North Pack is a fascist self-improvement and militant martial arts group. Central to the group is the emphasis it puts on traditional gender roles. While mainly doing physical and survival exercises, it also promotes fascist literature and ideas.

In 2020 the group held a summer camp where it trained members in survival and martial arts.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The group announced in the autumn that it planned to relaunch in the new year and was seeking new members.

It is explicit that people with military experience should apply. It is likely that the group will attempt more overtly political stunts in 2021, in the form of banner drops and similar, alongside its training camps.



Gary Raikes



Anne Marie Waters

FOR BRITAIN

LEADER: ANNE MARIE WATERS

2020 SUMMARY

For Britain is a far-right political party led by the anti-Muslim activist Anne Marie Waters.

2020 was a hard year for the party, with lockdown restrictions significantly curtailing its activity. However, it continues to be one of the few far-right parties in Britain that has a proper network of national branches. It is also one of the only such parties to have elected councillors.

A central plank of its 2020 campaigning was the issue of cross-Channel migration. With much of the UK far-right focusing on the topic, Waters was keen to make political capital from it, too. The Epping branch had been campaigning on the issue for some time, with notorious far-right activist Eddy Butler making several inflammatory videos about the Bell Hotel in the area, which housed migrants during the summer.

Joining Butler in one video was Julian Leppert, one of For Britain's only elected councillors. The video, published in July, made incorrect claims that petty crime in the area had increased and that supplies for a local foodbank were being diverted to feed the asylum seekers. The claims were refuted by the charity running the foodbank and by the police. Leppert found himself in more trouble after *The Guardian* newspaper asked if he was advocating a whites-only enclave on the edge of London, to which he replied: "Ideally, yeah." After numerous complaints to the local council, an investigation concluded that the council's code of conduct had been breached.

In August Waters held a poorly attended demonstration outside a hotel in Cheshire that was housing migrants, and then a second event in Dover that drew barely 20 people. She also attended a BBQ on Shoeburyness beach organised by the party's Southend branch.

Unable to do much campaigning on the ground, For Britain and Waters focused heavily on producing social media content, especially YouTube videos. It also held its November annual conference online, with speakers including Waters, Mike Speakman (committee member), Hugo Jenks (spokesperson), Michael

Schreiner (international member), Myriam Sohail (For Britain councillor), Julian Flynn (researcher), David Vance, Amy Mek (RAIR Foundation USA), the US anti-Muslim activist Robert Spencer, and Paul Burgess (For Britain's climate change specialist).

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The party is already focusing heavily on May's local elections, prioritising Waters' own campaign in Hartlepool, for which she has already released a website and taken out a full page advert in the local newspaper. The party is unlikely to make much headway at the elections but will use them to rally supporters and raise money, if possible.

In a period when the UK far right has few credible electoral options, For Britain will continue to be a problem, but there appears little room for it to grow.

BRITISH FREEDOM PARTY (BFP)

LEADER: JAYDA FRANSEN

OTHER NOTABLES: NICK GRIFFIN, STEVE SQUIRES

AREAS OF ACTIVITY: BELFAST, GLASGOW, LONDON

2020 SUMMARY

Griffin and Fransen share a mutual dislike of Britain First leader Paul Golding, but beyond that there is little bonding these two.

Griffin edits the old BNP-style newspaper *Britannia*, which he has filled with articles about himself and far-right figures he dislikes. As far as we are aware, thousands of copies of *Britannia* went undelivered in both Glasgow and Belfast, despite the highly questionable offer of 'Covid Exemption' lanyards with every copy. Somewhat karmically, their backer Jim Dowson was later hospitalised with COVID.

The introduction of former London BNP organiser (and pornographer) Steve Squire to the party leadership was worth both a ripple of laughter and applause.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

This vanity project cannot last.

HOLOCAUST DENIERS

MICHÈLE RENOUF

2020 SUMMARY

Michèle Renouf is an Australian-born former model and a leading international Holocaust denier who continues to split her time between the UK and Germany.

In 2020, Renouf faced prosecution for a speech she held in Dresden in 2018. Videos of the rally showed her claiming that the only Holocaust perpetrated in Europe was against German civilians through Allied bombing. These charges were later dropped in October 2020, which she and the denial movement celebrated as a victory.

She was also interviewed in various podcasts and blogs across the wider Nazi movement following the end of her court case, notably by Nordic Frontier, the English language podcast of the Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement. Her conflict with fellow denier Alison Chabloz continues to be a topic of debate and splits the denial movement.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Renouf will continue to be a central figure within both the 'traditional' far right and Holocaust denial scenes in the UK and continental Europe. She will likely continue to promote herself and her ideas through the attention from her recent legal 'victory'.

NICK KOLLERSTROM

2020 SUMMARY

Nick Kollerstrom is a former honorary research fellow at University College London (UCL) who was dropped by the university in 2008, after he was exposed engaging in Holocaust denial. In 2014, he released a book, *Breaking the Spell: The Holocaust: Myth and Reality*, published by Germar Rudolf's Holocaust denial publishing house, Castle Hill Publishers.

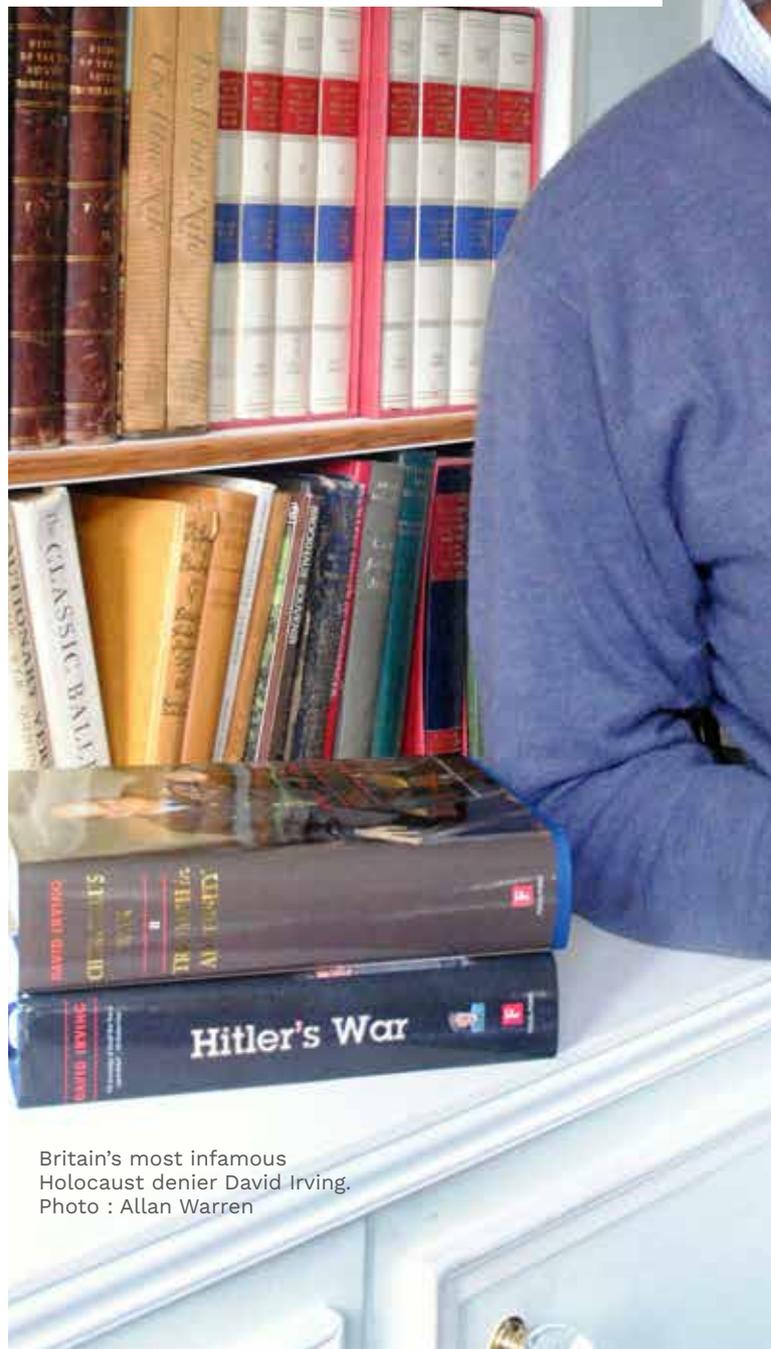
In 2020 Kollerstrom focused his energy on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and published a book, *The Great British Coronavirus Hoax*. In October last year, he also attended a large conspiracy theory-driven anti-lockdown demonstration in central London. He continues to write for his obscure blog, almost exclusively producing various forms of COVID denial content. He occasionally covered other topics, one article suggesting that then-presidential candidate Joe Biden did not exist.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Kollerstrom will likely attempt to relaunch meetings of his conspiracy discussion group, Keep Talking, and promote various different conspiracy theories on his blog and in other outlets that might give him a platform. His focus on COVID is likely to continue.



Nick Kollerstrom with Michèle Renouf



Britain's most infamous Holocaust denier David Irving.
Photo : Allan Warren



DAVID IRVING / FOCAL POINT PUBLICATIONS

2020 SUMMARY

David Irving remains Britain's most infamous Holocaust denier. While he once enjoyed some mainstream recognition for his publications on Nazi Germany, he was discredited after he began minimising Hitler's and the Nazi regime's responsibility for the Holocaust. Focal Point Publications is the publishing outfit established by Irving in 1980, which is now used to reissue and publish his disgraced books.

2020 saw Irving finally publish his biography on Heinrich Himmler, a project he has been promising to publish since at least 2015. In May, Irving inadvertently became the centre of a small media scandal when Michael Gove was discovered to own a copy of his book, *The War Path*. Otherwise it has been a quiet year for Irving, his guided tours in Poland and speaking engagements put on hold. This is partially due to the pandemic, but also a sign of his age and steadily decreasing influence in the movement.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

While Irving remains a pillar of the traditional, pseudo-academic denial scene, he is becoming increasingly irrelevant alongside the diminishing influence of the scene as a whole. He is likely to continue publishing his frequent newsletter with blatantly racist news commentary, but has not announced any new projects for this year or upcoming publications via Focal Point Publications.

ALISON CHABLOZ

2020 SUMMARY

Alison Chabloz is a musician, blogger and Holocaust denier from Glossop in Derbyshire.

Her legal troubles continued in 2020 due to antisemitism and Holocaust denial expressed online and in podcasts. Because of the ongoing proceedings, she spent much of the year under bail conditions, limiting her from posting content online relating to the Holocaust or Jews. She did, however, engage more actively in far-right chat rooms on Telegram relating to, among others, Patriotic Alternative.

Limited, however, in what she could post online, Chabloz instead produced and published several songs ridiculing and denying the COVID-19 pandemic. Several of these were also heavily transphobic.

She remains a divisive figure in the scene, often starting conflicts with other activists, such as her ongoing conflict with fellow Holocaust denier Michèle Renouf. In 2020 this continued with several sharp comments and blogs by Chabloz and her confidant Ian Millard.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Due to her confrontational and divisive nature, Chabloz is likely to become an increasingly isolated figure. However, the ongoing legal troubles allow her to paint herself as a martyr and it's likely she will continue to try to make political capital from them. That said, the legal issues will also continue to dog her and limit her effectiveness.

STREET MOVEMENTS

DEMOCRATIC FOOTBALL LADS ALLIANCE (DFLA)

MEMBERSHIP: SEVERAL HUNDRED

AREAS OF ACTIVITY: LONDON, NEWCASTLE, LEEDS, BIRMINGHAM, PLYMOUTH

2020 SUMMARY

The Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA) continued its steady decline during 2020, increasingly irrelevant following a decision to step back from confrontation by its southern leadership and of course as a result of COVID.

DFLA units across the country enthusiastically took issue with the summer's Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, offering "protection" of statues and harassing anti-racists across the country in what they saw as a show of strength for British history. Hundreds turned out in places such as Portsmouth, Birmingham and Plymouth, and violence broke out in Leeds and Newcastle.

However, the London/South East leadership was more lukewarm in its support. While they registered their support for the defence of monuments, they were at pains to stress that they supported the cause of equality and that their protests were not driven by racism. Their calls for restraint were largely ignored by their supporters and the widespread violence at the London BLM protest led to the DFLA leadership denouncing the violence and calling for an end to the protests.

This decision, coupled with the leadership's support for groups supporting victims of grooming, has led to most of its activists drifting away.

Splits within the DFLA network were further widened when a few football firms voiced their support for the BLM protests. Birmingham City's hooligan group, the Zulus, actually led a BLM march in Birmingham in honour of one of their former leaders, Trevor Smith, who was shot dead by police in 2019.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

While the DFLA stumbles on, it is unlikely to have anywhere near the same national resonance it has had in previous years. However, it is likely to remain a serious threat at a local level and could potentially re-emerge if there was another terrorist attack.



ENGLISH DEFENCE LEAGUE (EDL)

MEMBERSHIP: N/A

LEADERSHIP: NOMINALLY ALAN SPENCE

2020 SUMMARY

Plenty of former EDL activists are still active in a number of social media (mainly Facebook) and street-based conspiracy theory groups. Despite sporadic sightings of very old EDL banners and facemasks or hooded tops, the organisation is now dead. The only newsworthy item of note was former chairman Alan Spence's son (and fellow EDL member) Stuart, fleeing the scene of a serious accident to avoid arrest and also being caught for burgling a shop.



Shane Calvert

THE INFIDELS

MEMBERSHIP: LESS THAN 20

LEADERSHIP: SHANE CALVERT, JOHN SHAW

AREAS OF ACTIVITY: BLACKBURN

2020 SUMMARY

No longer three different branches of the same brand, incarceration, lockdown and death have severely curtailed the Infidels over the last few years. Neither capable or willing to improve its social media output, the Infidels brand has quietly fallen into disrepair, but not necessarily a terminal situation.

During 2020's Black Lives Matter and counter demonstrations Calvert and Shaw mooted the idea of "getting the gang back together", though their plans came to nothing. Calvert still manages to present himself as an upstanding member of the Blackburn community, after being a poster boy for a male suicide campaign despite his past and current views. Similarly, Shaw has taken to running a children's football team in Leeds without apparent concern despite his links to Loyalist paramilitaries, drug dealing and animal abuse. Midway through 2020 well-known Infidel and 'wife beater', Shaun Jones, was released from prison which sparked some concern of a potential upsurge in violent activity but, as yet, the Infidels presumably feel there is no political gain to a full return to activity.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The appearance of former members of Combat 18 within Britain First has piqued the interest of Calvert and one or two others that previously aspired to align themselves with the violent nazi group.

BRITISH STREET COMMANDOS / FOOTBALL FIRMS UNITED

MEMBERSHIP: 2-300

LEADING MEMBERS: STEVE CRISPIN, DOYLAN

ACTIVITIES: LONDON, NOTTINGHAM, DOVER, FOLKESTONE, BRISTOL, LEEDS, GLASGOW, PETERBOROUGH, ALDERSHOT

2020 SUMMARY

The British Street Commandos could have constituted a serious threat as a street-based group, but instead is mainly active on social media where it concerns itself with topics such as the desecration of statues. Although it did manage to put a number of supporters onto the streets to attempt confrontations with BLM activists, the group failed to capitalise on its initial promise as a successor to the EDL or Football Lads Alliance.

A planned attack on a young trade unionist based in Hull, organised via two specific WhatsApp groups (one linked to West Ham fans and the other to Millwall), was only thwarted through the intervention of HOPE not hate, much to the anger of Steve Crispin. This drove a massive wedge in the group. HOPE not hate helped jail Crispin back in 2012, when he photographed his vicious attack on a young Muslim man during an EDL demo in Dagenham.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The drug-fuelled paranoia at the heart of the BSC/FFU means that it is unlikely to fill the void left by the demise of the DFLA and EDL.



Steve Crispin

IDENTITARIANS

IDENTITY ENGLAND

LEADER: CHARLIE FOX (AKA CHARLIE ROBERTS)

2020 SUMMARY

Identity England is a tiny Identitarian organisation made up of the few remaining activists from the defunct UK branch of Generation Identity and its now-defunct successor organisation, The Identitarian Movement.

Discussions about creating a new Identitarian organisation had been happening behind the scenes for some time, but the group formally launched in October 2020 with a banner drop over Westminster Bridge in London. Since then it has done little beyond putting up the odd poster. It has failed to attract a following on social media and has made no impact on the British far right.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

COVID-19 restrictions have curtailed Identity England's ability to do public stunts in 2020, but as these restrictions lift we are likely to see more public activism, including banner drops and leafletting. However, the group is extremely unlikely to gain any traction and will continue to be a small group of uninfluential far-right activists.

IDENTITY SCOTLAND

2020 SUMMARY

This is a tiny Identitarian organisation based in Scotland, with links to Identity England. The group's website domain name was bought in December 2019 but its Twitter and Telegram channel were both launched in July 2020.

Identity Scotland's 2020 activism was confined to hanging a cheap handmade 'It's OK to be white' banner on the gates of the Scottish Parliament and an anti-

migration banner on the closed Glasgow offices of SNP MP Humza Yousaf.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

This one-person operation had no impact in 2020 and will almost certainly remain an irrelevance in 2021.

LOCAL MATTERS

LEADER: CHARLIE SHAW

2020 SUMMARY

Local Matters is an Identitarian front group set up in 2020 by former members of the UK branch of Generation Identity and led by its former north-west leader, Charlie Shaw.

While the group claims to exist to promote "policies for an environmentalist, regionalist, direct-democratic England", leaked documents obtained by Red Flare show that it is actually "a political project with a softer face; a face so soft that numerous members, including myself, have it on their CV. The ideas are certainly identitarian, but it's presentation removes any interest that a group like Hope Not Hate or Antifa might have."

The group has distributed leaflets and put up posters in Liverpool, Leeds, Rochester, dropped a banner against Primark in the Trafford Centre in Manchester and run a campaign against a new KFC restaurant in Snodland, Kent. It also held a small camping event in August and released a poorly-written manifesto.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Local Matters has had almost no impact in 2020, its ability to hold events curtailed by COVID-19 restrictions. As yet its Patreon account has attracted just 10 supporters. A plan to attract new people towards Identitarianism via this front group has been exposed and it is unlikely to grow much from now on. As such, it is very unlikely to have any impact in 2021.



ANTI-MUSLIM

THE 4 FREEDOMS LIBRARY

2020 SUMMARY

4 Freedoms is an online ‘counter-jihad’ discussion forum run by Alan Ayling [aka Alan Lake].

The forum remains very small, with just a handful of posters producing the vast majority of the content, Ayling among them. Most chat rooms have less than 20 members. The forum underwent no developments of note in 2020, with membership now closed to new members.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

If it continues to exist, it is unlikely to undergo any changes of note in 2021.



Alan Lake

GAVIN BOBY

2020 SUMMARY

Gavin Bobby is a planning lawyer and self-styled “mosque buster” who founded The Law and Freedom Foundation to prevent planning applications for mosques. His website claims that he has successfully blocked 40 out of 62 mosque applications he has opposed.

In 2020 he claims to have been involved in four cases, winning three including the refusal of planning permission for a mosque in Basildon and Westminster. He is also the lawyer advising one of the main campaigns against the proposed Markaz Islamic Centre in Golders Green, London.

Throughout 2020 Bobby collaborated with a host of far-right extremists. In May he was a guest on the Patriotic Weekly show run by the neo-nazi Mark Collett and far-right extremist ‘No White Guilt’. In August he was a guest on the YouTube channel of the racial nationalist extremist ‘Dangerfield’.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Over the past year Bobby has shown himself to be comfortable mixing publicly with the more extreme end of the British far right. While he is certainly not as high profile as he once was, he continues his activism and will likely pop up when high-profile (or contested) mosques are being built in the UK.

Gavin Bobby Photo YouTube



DISCUSSION GROUPS

TRADITIONAL BRITAIN GROUP

PRESIDENT: LORD SUDELEY

**VICE PRESIDENT AND TREASURER:
GREGORY LAUDER-FROST**

2020 SUMMARY

The Traditional Britain Group (TBG) is a London-based discussion group that hosts far-right gatherings, dinners and conferences.

The TBG's ambitions were curtailed by lockdown measures, which forced it to cancel all of its planned 2020 events, including its October annual conference, usually a key calendar date for the "highbrow" end of the British far right.

TBG Vice President Gregory Lauder-Frost and former British National Party figure Andrew Moffat appeared on the "Millenniyule" YouTube show of Colin Robertson (aka Millennial Woes) at the end of the year, in lieu of its usual Christmas party.

The group remained a significant British far-right presence on social media, however, and continued to produce articles for its website.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The TBG is gearing up for reopening in 2021, likely holding its main conference in May and its annual dinner to October (instead of more typically the other way around). It will continue to be an important meeting point for far-right elitists in the UK and, increasingly, Europe.

LONDON SWINTON CIRCLE

2020 SUMMARY

The London Swinton Circle is a splinter from Alan Harvey's Swinton Circle (now renamed the Patriotic Forum). The group's leader, Allan Robertson, died of a stroke in February 2020, and lockdown measures have curtailed offline meetings. The group has continued to produce its online magazine.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Whether the group can continue to organise in any meaningful sense without Robertson is unclear. In any case, it will continue to wield little influence on the wider far right.

Lord Sudeley speaks at a Traditional Britain Group Conference.
Photo: YouTube

VORTEX LONDINIUM

2020 SUMMARY

After emerging as an active far-right group in London in 2018, Vortex Londinium (VL), the UK-based branch of the Italian fascist group CasaPound, ground almost to a halt in 2020, due both to the COVID-19 pandemic and the group's central organiser, Francesco Susinno, relocating to Cyprus.

VL's activity mostly consisted of making appearances on RadioBandieraNera, an Italian-language fascist broadcast, on a semi-regular "Londinium Calling" slot.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Despite the loss of key figures, a number of VL activists remain in the UK and attempts are being made to keep the brand alive. We may see the group re-emerge, albeit in another form, as lockdown restrictions ease.



Alan
Harvey



PATRIOTIC FORUM/SPRINGBOK CLUB

CHAIRMAN/ORGANISER/SECRETARY: ALAN HARVEY

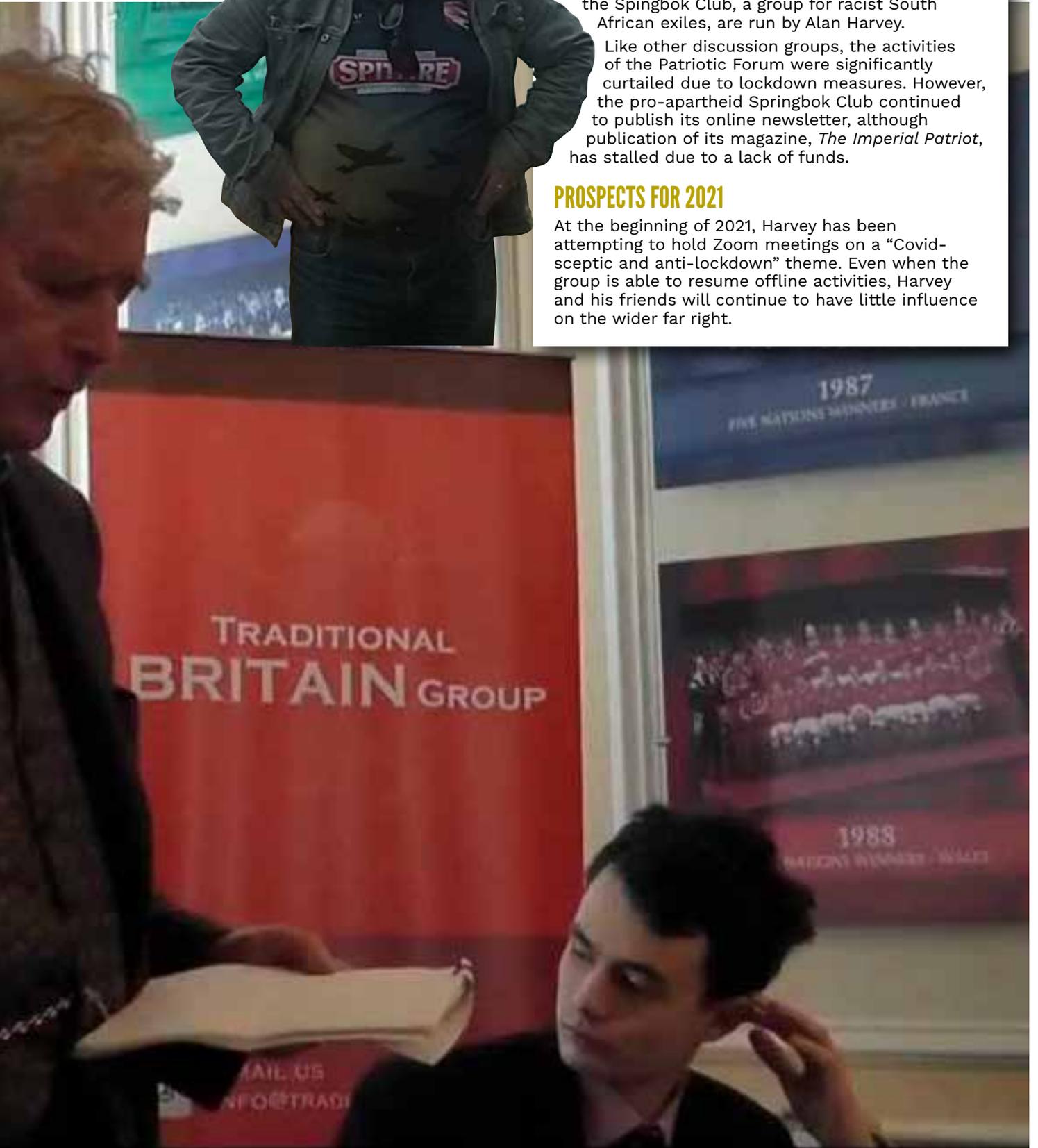
2020 SUMMARY

Both the far-right discussion group known as the Patriotic Forum (formerly The Swinton Circle) and the Spingbok Club, a group for racist South African exiles, are run by Alan Harvey.

Like other discussion groups, the activities of the Patriotic Forum were significantly curtailed due to lockdown measures. However, the pro-apartheid Springbok Club continued to publish its online newsletter, although publication of its magazine, *The Imperial Patriot*, has stalled due to a lack of funds.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

At the beginning of 2021, Harvey has been attempting to hold Zoom meetings on a “Covid-sceptic and anti-lockdown” theme. Even when the group is able to resume offline activities, Harvey and his friends will continue to have little influence on the wider far right.



FAR RIGHT ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AND ‘CITIZEN

BREITBART LONDON

EDITOR: OLIVER JJ LANE

2020 SUMMARY

Breitbart London is the British arm of the American far-right website formerly run by Steve Bannon. In 2020 it made little impact in the UK, continuing a decline in relevance that mirrors that of its US operation. With former editor Raheem Kassam having left the organisation in 2018, James Delingpole is the only prominent writer left and there is little original reporting on the site.



PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Breitbart London will continue to be read by some on the British far right, but it will need a strong new selling point to reverse its decline. At the moment, any uptick seems unlikely.

POLITICALITE

LEADER: JORDAN JAMES

2020 SUMMARY

Politicalite is a radical-right “news” website that in the past has vocally supported far-right figures including Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson].



2020 started off in a confusing fashion for Politicalite. In December 2019, editor Jordan James declared that he would put the site on hiatus and launch a new platform called Lion News on 13 January. The new site did not materialise, however, and James reactivated Politicalite without further explanation.

Politicalite continued to offer a stream of radical-right and culture wars commentary. In August the site declared that it was making editorial changes and did not want to be considered “far right”, but James continued to publish offensive Islamophobic posts subsequent to that point.

PROSPECT FOR 2021

In January 2021 it was again announced that Lion News would be launched in Spring 2021 with former UKIP activist Jay Beecher at the helm, though with Politicalite continuing to operate. Beecher and James fell out in summer of 2020, so the success of the former may depend on their ability to work together.

KATIE HOPKINS

2020 SUMMARY

Katie Hopkins is one of the UK’s best known far-right commentators, infamous for her purposefully outrageous and explicitly xenophobic outbursts.

In 2020 she was among the earliest and most enthusiastic COVID-deniers in the UK far right, sticking fairly consistently to the claim that the disease was no worse than flu and public health measures were a hysterical overreaction, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Hopkins also continued her pivot towards US politics in 2020, making frequent trips to the US to cover the Trump campaign and promoting baseless claims of election fraud, including flirting with the QAnon conspiracy theory (while not directly endorsing it).

Hopkins has continued to promote her bread-and-butter fare of beliefs around inciting Islamophobia. These included a tweet in which she falsely linked Finsbury Park Mosque to a violent incident that occurred two streets away, for which she was later forced to issue a rare apology after the mosque brought legal action against her.

2020 also saw considerable disruption to her social media activity with the long overdue suspension of her Twitter account, which with 1.1million followers was by far her largest social media account. However, she tripled her number of Instagram followers and established large followings on the alt-tech platforms Parler and Gab.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The loss of Hopkins’ Twitter account is a significant blow to her ability to stir outrage and impact mainstream conversations. Search term analysis on Google Trends reveals flatlining interest since the ban. While she still enjoys a significant following on Instagram, Parler and Gab, Hopkins’ influence is likely to dwindle further through 2021.



JOURNALISTS'

VILE NEWS / SCUM MEDIA

LEADERS: LUCY BROWN & NICK COTTON

2020 SUMMARY

Vile News and Scum Media are far-right news and cultural collaborations that feature political commentary, music and visual arts from a variety of far-right activists.

Both outlets are the project of former Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson] associate Lucy Brown and livestreamer/DJ Nick Cotton [aka Unwashed]. Both spent much of 2020 embroiled in interminable and bitter disputes with fellow far-right activists, particularly those aligned with the group Patriotic Alternative, which might explain why the project has, as yet, had no impact whatsoever.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Cotton and Brown's excommunication from the Patriotic Alternative circle has severely limited the viability of Vile/Scum, and the projects will need to be realigned with an alternative subsection of the wider far right in order to retain any relevance.



THE REALITY REPORT [TRR]

LEADER: VINNIE SULLIVAN

Alexander Sangmoore (left) and Vincent Burke [aka Vinnie Sullivan]

2020 SUMMARY

The Reality Report is a collective of far-right "citizen journalists" founded by Vincent Burke [aka Vinnie Sullivan]. Having previously been aligned with "Tommy Robinson" and then the Democratic Football Lads Alliance, Sullivan and TRR have become increasingly antisemitic and racist over the course of 2020, mirroring a shift towards explicitly racial politics seen within the far right more generally.

The group also engaged in the harassment of staff at hotels used to house migrants, while group member Alex Sangmoore created a Telegram channel in November to document supposed evidence of electoral fraud in the USA, illustrating a willingness to exploit a variety of grievances.

The collective still has well under 1,000 subscribers on YouTube while its Telegram channel has just over 7,000 followers, showing just how limited its audience is.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Despite the loss of all of its Twitter accounts in February 2021, the group's opportunism and willingness to pick fights with fellow far-right activists will likely continue to find an audience within the far right this year.

FAR RIGHT ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AND ‘CITIZEN JOURNALISTS’ (CONTINUED)



**LOTUS EATER MEDIA/CARL BENJAMIN
[AKA SARGON OF AKKAD]**

2020 SUMMARY

Last year the misogynistic vlogger and former UKIP candidate Carl Benjamin [aka Sargon of Akkad] launched his own company, Lotus Eater Media.

In February, Benjamin spoke at the launch of Hearts of Oak, but while listed as a “contributor” on the group’s website, his involvement in the floundering venture seems to be limited. That month Benjamin also held an event in London, featuring Mark Meechan [aka Count Dankula]. Benjamin’s “speech” consisted of reading a list of what he called “hate facts”, a series of spurious, out-of-context statistics about various minority groups.

In November, Benjamin officially launched a new platform, “Lotus Eater Media”, with a slick website, new office and several staffers. He described the platform, which hosts daily podcasts, articles and “premium content” on hot button “culture war” issues, as a “safe space for people who are afraid of being persecuted” by bans on mainstream platforms.

Censorship has been an issue of increasing concern to Benjamin, who believes that he, like other Trump supporters, is at risk of being treated as “basically the same as ISIS” online during the Biden presidency.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Lotus Eaters appears to have successfully built a subscriber base, although time will tell if it is a wise investment for Benjamin, who has put a significant amount of his own money into the project. His rhetoric may become even more extreme, now he is less concerned about moderation on mainstream platforms. As lockdown measures ease, he will likely organise further live speaking events.

PAUL JOSEPH WATSON/SUMMIT NEWS

2020 SUMMARY

The vlogger and conspiracy theorist Paul Joseph Watson continued to churn out his brand of inflammatory, conspiratorial culture war politics to a large audience, primarily through his YouTube videos and articles on US conspiracy theory channel InfoWars, as well as his own site, Summit News.

Watson did his level best to exploit fears about the COVID-19 pandemic, and continually slammed the UK government’s lockdown measures from his parents’ home in Spain. Among the various conspiracy theories he pushed last year was the “Great Reset” theory, which he claims will usher in the “technocrat control of human behaviour”. Despite these efforts, Watson’s YouTube viewership dropped significantly from 2019.

He also suffered a number of bizarre public meltdowns, engaging in long, abusive Twitter rants against various public figures, including broadcaster Piers Morgan and his onetime ally Lauren Southern, repeatedly telling his followers how “popular” and “attractive” he is.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Of course, Watson also spread false claims about the 2020 Presidential election, and with Trump now out of office, will likely seek to exploit right-wing anxieties about the Biden administration. Early in the year, he has already begun pushing for Trump’s 2024 campaign.



Paul Joseph Watson
Photo: Tyler Merbler



Photo: OFFICIAL
LEWEB PHOTOS

MILO YIANNPOULOS

2020 SUMMARY

The career of UK-born, Florida-residing anti-Mulsim activist Milo Yiannopoulos disintegrated yet further during 2020.

Banned from all major social media platforms, he failed to significantly grow his audience on lightly-moderated alternatives such as the messaging app Telegram. He continued producing content for the website censored.tv, alongside other fading far-right alternative media figures, to a small audience.

Free from moderation, Yiannopoulos has become more extreme as time has worn on, or perhaps is simply more open about his extremeness. In an apparent bid for relevance, early in the year he attempted to jump on the far right “groyper” trend, but found the far-right subculture unreceptive.

He took Trump’s presidential loss particularly hard, taking to the “free speech” platform Parler to vent his frustrations: “BURN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY TO THE FUCKING GROUND. Trump’s [Supreme Court] appointments were pointless. We defended a selfish clown for nothing.”

He continued: “I lost everything helping to put Trump in office. My life and career were completely destroyed. Was it worth it? No. I feel utterly betrayed. I will have vengeance.”

In a further message he wrote: “There are only two options now. Secession or war. Secession is preferable. The South must rise again.”

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Once an effective far-right troll, Yiannopoulos is now a much-diminished and isolated figure, and will very likely slide ever deeper into insignificance as the year wears on. In February, he was even given a temporary ban from Parler. He will struggle to recover from the blows he has endured over the past few years.

ALAN LEGGETT [AKA ACTIVE PATRIOT UK]

2020 SUMMARY

Alan Leggett is a long-term far-right activist and big supporter of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson]. However, in 2020 he became one of the most important far-right figures in the UK, standing at the forefront of the anti-migrant campaign that gripped the movement last year.

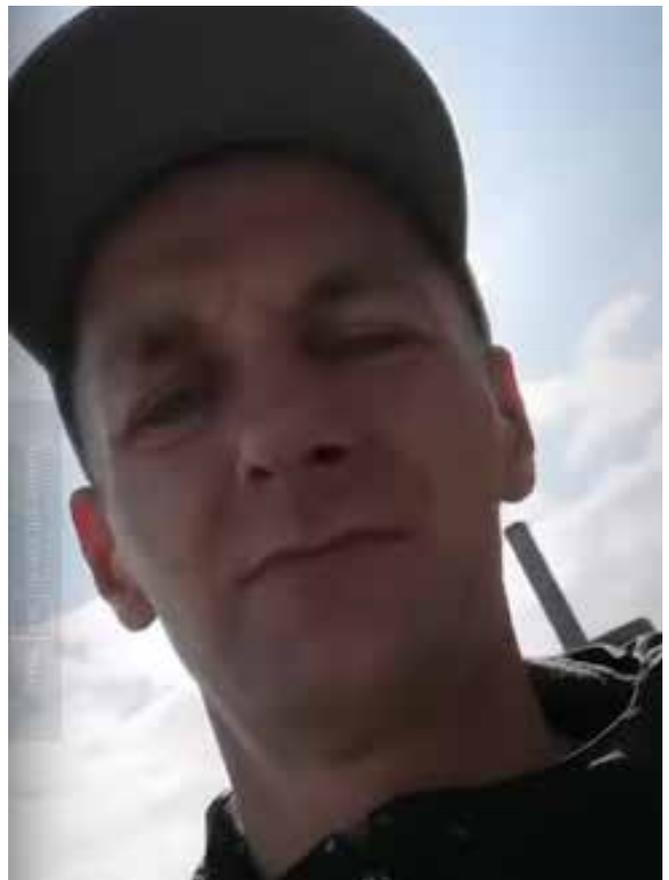
He made a name for himself for producing long livestreams from Dover of migrant boats arriving from across the Channel. His videos often involved confronting arriving migrants and asylum seekers. He also made videos outside hotels and former barracks housing migrants.

Starting the year with 37,000 subscribers on YouTube he rose to 52,000 by the end of 2020, with individual videos regularly racking up tens of thousands of views. He also rose to nearly 16,000 followers on Twitter. Much of his viewership comes via Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, who has taken to referring to him as “our man on the ground” and regularly promotes his videos.

2020 also saw a litany of legal problems for Leggett, who was regularly arrested for a range of offences including breach of the peace. While successfully defending himself in some cases, strict bail conditions curtailed his ability to engage in some of his activities.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Leggett continues to face a number of legal issues which could see him spend periods restricted by bail conditions or perhaps even a spell in prison. However, he will continue to be the go-to person within the far right on the issue of migration and asylum seekers.



FAR RIGHT ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AND 'CITIZEN JOURNALISTS' (CONTINUED)

**STEPHEN YAXLEY-LENNON
[AKA TOMMY ROBINSON]
AND TRNEWS**



2020 SUMMARY

AFTER A disastrous 2019, 2020 started on a high for Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson], receiving the Sappho Award (for the “journalist who combines excellence in his work with courage and a refusal to compromise”) from the counter-jihadist Free Press Society in Denmark.

However, 2020 in general proved to be another year of dwindling relevance and influence beset with legal problems and arrests for Yaxley-Lennon. This was reflected in the decline of his website TR News, which became less and less active following the departure of its main content creator Avi Yemeni, who left to join Rebel Media in Canada.

As has been the case over recent years, much of Yaxley-Lennon’s year was taken up by ongoing legal battles and criminal proceedings, and even more arrests. In June, he was arrested in Barrow after assaulting a man who had spat at him. Then on 1 November he was arrested for breaking coronavirus restrictions at Speaker’s Corner in London’s Hyde Park, after he had organised a badly-attended rally in solidarity with the controversial anti-Islam speaker, Hatun Tash (Tash had been assaulted earlier that month at the same location while carrying an image of the Prophet Muhammad).

Also in November, Yaxley-Lennon received 300 hours of community service after an earlier violent assault against an individual who allegedly sexually assaulted his daughter at the Centre Parks theme park. These cases and others have proved a serious drain on Yaxley-Lennon’s resources. He lost the first stage of his court battle with a teenage Syrian refugee who had accused him of libel. In a video released on Zero News on 11 November, Yaxley-Lennon said he had been hit with a legal bill of £60k for the Syrian school boy case and his legal fees were £380,000. He also claimed to have costs of £7,765 for the Centre Parks trial and costs of £3,191 for the Barrow case plus £2,000 for his own lawyers.

However, despite his ongoing legal troubles, Yaxley-Lennon still managed to find some time to continue his ongoing far-right activism. He spent much of the year travelling the country working on various documentaries that have, as yet, not made it to air.

In the summer, he made headlines as part of the far-right backlash to widespread Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrations. Known primarily for his Islamophobia, Yaxley-Lennon switched his focus more explicitly towards race and whiteness as part of a broader plans to ‘defend’ various statues and memorials, in response to protests about their links to slavery and colonialism.

He also released an irate video about protestors defacing the statue of Winston Churchill in Westminster, calling for people to attend an upcoming far-right demonstration: “If you’re a lad or you call yourself a lad, and you’re a football lad and you go to football and you give a shit at all about our country, our history, our culture, our identity, I expect you are going to be in London next Saturday.”

However, he later pulled out, after realising his vocal opposition to BLM was undermining his claims of not being racist. Despite this, when a Burnley FC supporter, Jake Hepple, was condemned for

organising a plane to fly a ‘White Lives Matter’ banner (a term popularised by the far right) over Manchester City stadium, Yaxley-Lennon lent him his full backing.

Over the summer Yaxley-Lennon also spent an extended period in Marbella, Spain, claiming he had to flee attacks on his home and family. While he teased that he might make the move permanently, he eventually returned to the UK and continued with his far-right activism.

With lockdown in full effect, Yaxley-Lennon has moved in an increasingly conspiratorial direction, sharing anti-lockdown and even vaccine-sceptic content. On numerous occasions he has also used the language specifically associated with QAnon conspiratorial beliefs. Unsurprisingly, he has attempted to exploit the Coronavirus crisis by spreading anti-Muslim politics, too. He adopted some of the language used by Hindu nationalists in India, including the hashtag #germjihad to promote the smear that Muslims were spreading the Coronavirus, either deliberately or through failure to adhere to lockdown. He also falsely predicted that the lockdown would be lifted in time for the Muslim festival of Eid, in an attempt to portray the government as bending to the preferences of the Muslim community. He strongly objected to the call to prayer being broadcast during Ramadan from certain mosques.

Mimicking his associates from the US anti-Muslim movement, his pronouncements became increasingly anti-Chinese during the pandemic, making content attacking China and selling racist anti-Chinese t-shirts.

However, for much of late 2020 and early 2021, Yaxley-Lennon was heavily preoccupied with events surrounding the US election, obsessively posting pro-Trump material and pushing fake news about election fraud.

In November last year, he appeared on Daniel Thomas’ [aka Danny Tommo] YouTube show The Right View alongside US leader of the Proud Boys, Enrique Tarrío (who was later outed as a “prolific” informer for the FBI). Despite Joe Biden being inaugurated as planned in January, Yaxley-Lennon has continued to regularly post US-related content.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Yaxley-Lennon has faced several years of declining influence beset by legal problems. With large sections of the far right distancing themselves from his operation, he lacks the support that he once had and is unlikely to get that back. It now looks increasingly like his most influential days are well behind him. He also has numerous ongoing court cases that will continue to drain his time and resources, and in March 2021 declared bankruptcy. With that said, he still remains one of the biggest names on the UK far right and is well known abroad. He still has the ability to raise money and cause trouble. It seems likely in 2021 that some of the documentaries he has been working on will eventually see the light of day. If the lockdown measures ease and the pandemic becomes less all-consuming, he is likely to return to his longstanding preoccupation with so-called ‘grooming’ gangs.

FAR RIGHT ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AND ‘CITIZEN JOURNALISTS’ (CONTINUED)



Nigel Marchant



Steve Laws

**NIGEL MARCHANT
[AKA THE LITTLE VETERAN]**

2020 SUMMARY

Former soldier turned far-right citizen journalist, Nigel Marchant has been a key player in the anti-migrant scene during 2020. From Simonsbath in Milton Keynes, he accompanied Alan Leggett to Dover to film the arrival of cross-Channel migrants and asylum seekers.

At the end of 2019 his YouTube channel had just 2,160 subscribers, but by the end of the year this had risen to well over 13,000, with the biggest jump coming between August and October when those in the far right were most animated by the issue of migration.

In September, Marchant organised a demonstration in Dover which attracted just 400 protestors from across the far right. Despite the low attendance, the event managed to bring the port to a halt and Marchant was arrested on the day.

Towards the end of the year he directed much of his energy to building a camp near Bath for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Marchant has built a name for himself and he is likely to continue to split his time between anti-migrant activism and issues related to veterans’ welfare.

STEVE LAWS

2020 SUMMARY

Steve Laws is an anti-migrant activist from Folkestone on the south coast. He was a member and activist of the anti-Muslim For Britain Party, but has spent much of 2020 focusing specifically on the arrival of migrants

and trying to become a “citizen journalist”.

In September he launched a YouTube channel and at the very end of 2020 he launched his own website where he publishes articles about migrants.

He is a close ally of Alan Leggett, accompanying him to his numerous court cases over the past year.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

As 2020 progressed Laws’ rhetoric became increasingly extreme and he seemed more willing to engage with far-right groups and individuals. With his new website he is clearly taking his ‘journalism’ more seriously and will likely continue to try to boost his profile within the far right.

HUGH THORNE [AKA BASED WELSHMAN]

2020 SUMMARY

Hugh Thorne is a British YouTuber and far-right activist who has been engaged with a range of groups and projects over the years. He was arrested while filming Yellow Vest protests in Paris in 2019 and has worked closely with Alan Leggett [aka Active Patriot UK].

In 2020 Thorne produced anti-lockdown and police overreach content, but also aligned himself with the anti-migrant activists objecting to and filming migrants coming across the English Channel. He appeared in a video by Leggett and published multiple videos about the Penally camp (former barracks) where migrants were housed. On Telegram he also criticised the Black Lives Matter movement and posted content meant to denigrate black people.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Thorne will continue to latch onto the most salient topics in the far right and produce content for his YouTube channel and other social media accounts.

LITTLE BOATS 2020

LEADER: JEREMY DAVIS

2020 SUMMARY

Little Boats 2020 is an anti-migrant vigilante group launched in August 2020. It is led by Jeremy Davis, a wedding DJ. Launched alongside an overall rise in focus of migrants coming across the Channel, the group aims to film and confront migrants. It has published videos and images of migrants in the Dover area. The group, which sometimes refers to itself as a “flotilla”, has bragged about conducting two boat patrols at night in the Channel. The group is closely aligned to Steve Laws, another anti-migrant activist. In November 2020, the group was the subject of a BBC article which was widely criticised for being too uncritical of the group.

SUMMARY OF 2021

Little Boats 2020 will continue to produce anti-migrant propaganda and receive attention on social media as the topic of Channel crossings continues to animate the far right. If the numbers of people crossing the Channel increases as the weather improves, we can expect to hear more from and about this group.



PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Voice of Wales has had numerous videos deleted from its YouTube channel in February 2021. However, having had increasingly high-profile far-right activists on the platform, including Katie Hopkins, the group is likely to continue to grow its viewership in 2021. In early 2021 Dan Morgan was billed as UKIP Wales’ Education spokesperson, suggesting the YouTube channel may support UKIP in the upcoming elections.



VOICE OF WALES

FRONTED BY: DAN MORGAN AND STAN ROBINSON

2020 SUMMARY

Voice of Wales is a YouTube channel formerly known as Leavers of Swansea, which produced far-right content attacking progressives and the Labour Party in Wales and the UK.

Dan Morgan is believed to have been involved in the For Britain Movement and with the Democratic Football Lads Alliance in south Wales.

In 2020 it gained notoriety for livestreaming from the Penally army camp where migrants were housed in the latter part of the year. Since then, Voice of Wales has been part of the far right that has mobilised against migrants in the UK. The group regularly interviews other important activists in this segment of the far right. Guests on the channel have included members of the Proud Boys group from the USA.

The YouTube channel now has nearly 9,000 subscribers and has registered more than 350,000 views.

TOM FURY / ZERO NEWS

2020 SUMMARY

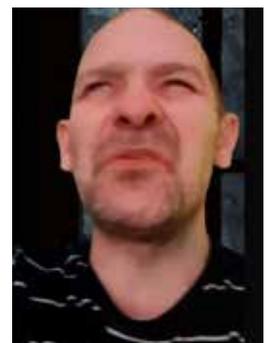
Zero News is run by Tom Fury, a far-right ‘citizen journalist’ closely aligned with Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson]. He is also a member of The For Britain Movement.

Fury runs multiple YouTube channels focusing on different issues. His main channel publishes livestreams of himself and guests commenting on current events from a far-right perspective, focusing on multiculturalism and more recently the ongoing lockdowns. He has also published multiple anti-trans videos. Zero News regularly republished Yaxley-Lennon videos during 2020, too.

Fury appeared as Yaxley-Lennon’s cameraperson for TRNews in Hyde Park in November 2020.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Tom Fury and Zero News will continue to produce far-right YouTube videos related to current events. His dedication is unlikely to wind down and might result in more collaboration between the two far-right activists.



FASCIST SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

Colin Robertson
Photo: Millennial Woes



COLIN ROBERTSON [AKA MILLENNIAL WOES]

2020 SUMMARY

Colin Robertson is Scottish YouTuber and frequent speaker at far-right events across the UK and Europe. During 2020 he failed to regularly publish the gloomy monologues on YouTube that helped initially propel him to 'fame', but started the year moving closer to Mark Collett's group, Patriotic Alternative, speaking at the organisation's Spring Conference in March and appearing on livestreams connected to the group.

However, in April Robertson posted on Telegram that he would take a break from the movement to focus on "personal improvement", a claim he's made many times before. On a livestream the next day, Patriotic Alternative leader Mark Collett distanced himself from Robertson.

Robertson was then accused of being the perpetrator of a serious sexual or indecent assault on a female member at some point over the weekend of the

Patriotic Alternative conference. He remained silent for most of the remaining period and did not resume activity until late in the summer, beginning his videos again in December.

He also hosted his annual "Millenniyule" video series, interviewing 55 figures from the US and British far right. This included activists such as Americans James Allsup and Paul Gottfried, Frodi Midjord of the Scandinavian Scandza Forum and Gregory Lauder-Frost from the Traditional Britain Group. But there were also many notable omissions, especially from the British far right.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Robertson will likely continue to sporadically make videos and continue with projects such as Millenniyule, "ask me anything" livestreams and interviews on his channel. However, based on his low output over the last year and personal updates stressing the large effort his work requires, he is unlikely to return to regular production of his more in-depth discussion videos around far-right ideas.



MORGOTH'S REVIEW

2020 SUMMARY

Morgoth's Review is a racist blog run by the pseudonymous Geordie blogger, "Morgoth". Since its founding in 2014 it has become well-read among the British alt-right for its commentary on cultural and political issues. The comments section functions as a far-right discussion board, routinely receiving hundreds of comments on its blogs.

Since 2019 Morgoth has moved away from blogging and instead produced more videos for his YouTube and BitChute channels. In 2020 his video channels did not grow as much as the previous year but unlike many other openly racist far-right activists he avoided being banned. During the year he also appeared frequently on other far-right activists' livestreams.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Morgoth will continue to be a significant British alt-right activist on social media, and his blog an important alt-right and ethno-nationalist platform.

ON THE OFFENSIVE

2020 SUMMARY

On The Offensive is a YouTube channel run by "Hugh", a British man based in Vietnam. He spoke at the Patriotic Alternative Spring Conference in March and appeared on Colin Robertson's "Millenniyule" video series. He has more or less stopped publishing videos to his YouTube channel and instead uses Telegram to distribute shorter videos and news commentary. His analysis is often conspiracy-oriented, alleging (for example) that the 2020 US Presidential election was fraudulent. The channel is also filled with blatantly racist videos and transphobia.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

He is likely to continue to make appearances in person at far-right conferences, if possible. He is unlikely to return to mainstream video sharing sites but will continue with his news commentary and shorter clips on Telegram, alongside appearing in other far-right activists' livestreams.

THE HUNDRED HANDERS

LEADER: SAM MELIA

2020 SUMMARY

The Hundred Handers is a loose network of far-right activists who print out offensive stickers from a centralised archive and place them in public places, photos of which are then posted on the group's Telegram channel.

The group's founder, Sam Melia, prided himself on the secrecy of its operation until he was unmasked by a HOPE not hate investigation as a Nazi activist based in Yorkshire, who had previously been involved with National Action, Generation Identity and For Britain. It was later revealed that Melia had married the deputy leader of Patriotic Alternative, Laura Towler, and is currently serving as that organisation's regional organiser for Yorkshire.

In April, two men were arrested on suspicion of racially aggravated public order offences after offensive stickers were posted in Sheffield, and the group attracted small amounts of publicity when its stickers were noticed by local media at various points in the year. The Hundred Handers' Telegram channel has fewer than 5,000 subscribers: a number that has remained fairly static over the past year. This suggests that its campaign is not reaching a sizeable new audience or attracting much interest from the wider far right, despite being advertised on every sticker.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

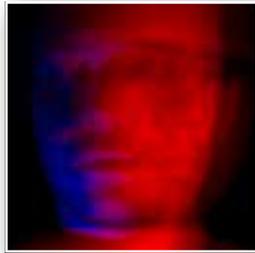
The group's sticker archive has not been updated since November 2020 and posts to the channel have become less frequent. Given Melia's role in Patriotic Alternative and the resulting lack of momentum behind the campaign, it is likely that The Hundred Handers will continue to dwindle this year.



Sam Melia
Photo:
HOPE not hate

FASCIST SOCIAL MEDIA 'INFLUENCERS' (CONTINUED)

**DANIEL ATKINSON
[AKA THE ICONOCLAST]**



2020 SUMMARY

With both a YouTube channel and semi-regular magazine, The Iconoclast was an anonymously-run, far-right brand that achieved notable popularity until the identity of the man behind it – Daniel Atkinson – was exposed by *The Observer* newspaper in June 2020. This led to the removal of Atkinson's YouTube account, with its 260,000 subscribers, and prompted him to announce his retirement from the scene on a number of occasions over the following months.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

It is unclear whether Atkinson's most recently declared hiatus will continue, given that he has made similar announcements at various points in 2020. However, his BitChute channel appears to have been deactivated, and his radio silence since early January 2021 is hopefully a sign that he will not be returning to the scene any time soon.

EDWARD DUTTON [AKA THE JOLLY HERETIC]

2020 SUMMARY

Edward Dutton is an English YouTuber and proponent of pseudoscientific 'race science' based in Finland. During 2020, he posted videos multiple times per week on what he considered societal issues, often focusing on progressivism and multicultural society. His explanations for these issues tend to fall back on biological differences between different groups of people. Dutton also frequently appeared on livestreams and in interviews held by other far-right activists.

Despite his extreme and offensive opinions he claimed on his website that he secured a position as "Professor of Evolutionary Psychology at Asburo University" in Łódź, Poland in 2020. Despite its name, this is not a real university but a privately-run business school.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Dutton will likely continue his production of YouTube videos.





WAY OF THE WORLD

2020 SUMMARY

Way of the World is an anonymous, antisemitic and blatantly racist YouTuber with a sizeable following. His videos have racked up tens of thousands of views on YouTube, commenting on current events as well as covering broader ideological questions. The tone is usually dark, near-apocalyptic, as he talks over news footage portraying the world in a state of decline.

Despite his racist language he has not been banned from mainstream platforms such as YouTube and Twitter. In 2020 he also branched out and started a Telegram channel on which he regularly posts racist content, often highlighting supposed criminality by people of colour and immigrants.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Way of the World will most likely continue his seemingly successful format on YouTube and other platforms, as long as he is permitted to do so.

JAKES & LATTE

2020 SUMMARY

Jakes & Latte is a channel on YouTube which hosts debates and interviews with far-right activists. It prides itself on “bridging the gaps between factions” of the far right in the UK, but most guests are from the more extreme racial nationalist end of the political spectrum.

During 2020 notable guests have included no less than three videos with Holocaust denier Alison Chabloz, leader of Patriotic Alternative Mark Collett, and Daniel Atkinson [aka The Iconoclast].

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

In late December 2020 Jakes & Latte went on a hiatus and deleted several social media accounts. Others were changed to reflect an ideological shift towards describing himself/itself as “Neo-Reactionary”, an obscure ideology that rejects egalitarianism and favours a return to monarchy. If Jakes & Latte returns it is likely taking a different direction.

NICK COTTON [AKA UNWASHED]

2020 SUMMARY

Nick Cotton is a prolific YouTuber, producing daily videos with interviews and antisemitic and racist news commentary. Despite multiple warnings he has remained on the platform.

Cotton has had an active but challenging year. He appeared at the Patriotic Alternative Spring Conference and got involved in Lucy Brown’s SCUM/VILE news project. He also attended the conspiracist anti-lockdown demonstration with David Icke in London in August and produced a video in which he supported the QAnon conspiracy theory.

However, it was also a year of conflict for Cotton. In August he had a falling out with Chris Mitchell from the Patriotic Alternative-connected livestream, Patriotic Talk. Cotton was in turn accused of a litany of crimes, as well as being a HOPE not hate spy.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Cotton will continue to produce content for SCUM and his own YouTube channel but is increasingly detached from Patriotic Alternative, which is also the main actor in the racial nationalist scene in the UK. This means he will likely struggle to grow his audience.

PUBLISHERS

HERITAGE AND DESTINY

EDITOR: MARK COTTERILL

2020 SUMMARY

Heritage & Destiny (H&D) continues to be Britain's leading non-party racial nationalist publication. The magazine produced six bi-monthly editions last year, with a regularity unusual for other nationalist publications, featuring news articles, updates on the racist scene in the UK and book reviews.

H&D continues to run an extremely outdated website that sporadically updates with articles from the magazine and an ever-increasing number of obituaries, reflecting the magazine's ageing readership.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The magazine will continue to publish and be influential in older nazi and far-right circles, although it is unlikely its small readership will increase. January 2021 sees the publication of its hundredth edition, an achievement not managed by most far-right publications.

A.K. CHESTERTON TRUST / CANDOUR MAGAZINE

EDITOR: COLIN TODD

2020 SUMMARY

Candour magazine, Britain's longest-running fascist publication, has long been in decline and is now an irrelevance on the far-right scene.

The magazine's editor, Colin Todd was sentenced to two years in prison on a charge of actual bodily harm, for an attack in January 2019. Despite this, two poor quality editions of *Candour* were still produced in 2020. The March edition claimed that Todd was released after serving one year in prison, while the November edition claimed he was to serve the whole two years and was due to be released in December 2020. Strict bail conditions have curtailed his ability to be involved with the magazine. The magazine and Trust have been run by Rob Black in Todd's absence.

The year ended with the Trust launching a new website, which hosts a regularly updated blog.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Candour will struggle on through 2021, with its 874th edition due in March. However, it is nothing more than a legacy project and will continue to have no impact on the British far-right scene.



(left) Gregory Lauder-Frost and Daniel Friberg



ARKTOS MEDIA

CEO: DANIEL FRIBERG

HEAD OF ARKTOS UK: GREGORY LAUDER-FROST

2020 SUMMARY

Launched in 2010 by Daniel Friberg, Arktos Media has become the most important purveyor of European New Right and alt-right literature in the world. The publisher is registered in the UK, though much of its operation is based in other countries.

Friberg remains CEO, while John Bruce Leonard is editor in-chief, Tor Westman is chief marketing officer and Gregory Lauder-Frost of the Traditional Britain Group is the head of Arktos UK.

In 2020 Arktos published a range of texts from major far-right, fascist, Identitarian and conservative figures, including new editions and translations of older texts.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Arktos will continue to be one of the leading far-right publishers in the world, producing high quality products by leading racist, fascist and far-right writers.

LEAGUE ENTERPRISES: STEVEN BOOKS / LEAGUE OF ST GEORGE

2020 SUMMARY

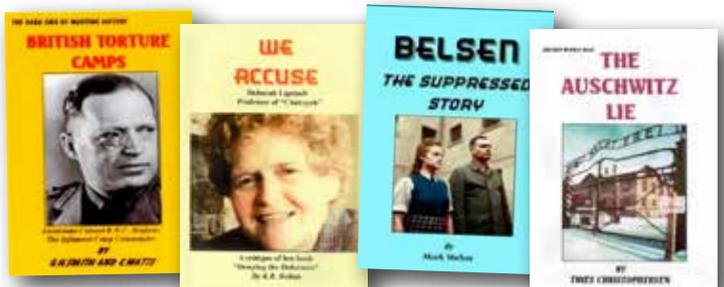
League Enterprises / Steven Books is the commercial arm of the long-standing nazi League of St George. The organisation continues to publish extremely low quality reprints of obscure fascist pamphlets, as well as selling far-right books by other publishers such as Sanctuary Press.

It remains a primary distributor of printed material related to racism, Holocaust denial and fascist books and pamphlets in the UK. It also hosts a series of Oswald Mosley speeches on SoundCloud.

The League's website is updated very infrequently, usually with obituaries.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Steven Books will continue distributing fascist and other far-right books.



BLACK HOUSE PUBLISHING / SANCTUARY PRESS

DIRECTOR: JANET ELAINE SLATTER



2020 SUMMARY

In 2011, Janet Slatter launched Black House Publishing, named after the British Union of Fascists HQ, the 'Black House'. Until recently, it published reissued versions and reprints of fascist, nazi, Third Position and right-wing literature from authors including Oswald Mosley, Oswald Spengler, and Australian far-right author Kerry Bolton.

However, in March 2019 Slatter launched Sanctuary Press alongside Black House and moved much of the explicitly fascist and Mosley books to the new concern. In 2020 both continued to sell a range of far-right and antisemitic books and were advertised in far-right magazines.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

It is unlikely that there will be any notable changes.

HISTORICAL REVIEW PRESS

2020 SUMMARY

Despite the death of founder Anthony Hancock in 2012, the HRP continues to exist. Its website continues to sell a variety of fascist, far right and Holocaust denial literature, much of it produced by other publishers such as Castle Hill.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Like much of the traditional Holocaust denial scene, HRP is a shell of its former self. It will likely continue to be a place that antisemites and Holocaust deniers can buy existing literature, but is unlikely to offer anything new or significant in 2021.

CASTLE HILL PUBLISHERS

LEADER: GERMAR RUDOLF

2020 SUMMARY

Castle Hill Publishers (CHP) is a UK-based publisher of Holocaust denial literature, set up in 1998 by the convicted German Holocaust denier, Germar Rudolf. Based in Hastings, East Sussex, it publishes a large catalogue of denial literature. In 2014, it merged with the American Holocaust denial organisation, CODOH (Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust), and is now part of the CODOH website. The sales from CHP is now what supports all of CODOH's activities.

In 2020, Castle Hill released roughly 18 books, though some of these were the same edition published in English and German. It also published eight new editions of older works. Many of its books are also available to download for free.



MJOLNIR MAGAZINE

EDITOR: DAVE YORKSHIRE

2020 SUMMARY

Mjolnir, a project which began as a "White Eurocentric arts magazine", again failed to produce a single issue in 2020. Dave Yorkshire has instead continued to run the Mjolnir blog which published just 31 articles in 2020. He also continued to produce the "Mjolnir at the Movies" YouTube series, which is viewed in the low hundreds.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

The *Mjolnir Magazine* continued to be an irrelevance in 2020 and whether another hard copy ever materialises remains to be seen.



OSTARA PUBLICATIONS

DIRECTOR: ARTHUR KEMP

2020 SUMMARY

Set up in 1999 by Arthur Kemp, former foreign affairs spokesman for the British National Party, to publish his own book *March of the Titans: The Complete History of the White Race*, Ostara Publications has since expanded to publish a range of extreme far-right and antisemitic texts including a number of works by Adolf Hitler.

In February 2020, Kemp official dissolved the company, Ostara Publications Limited, though the website remains online.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Having dissolved the company last year there is a chance this tiny concern will collapse in 2021. Even if it doesn't it will still be an irrelevant small publisher of extreme content.



The CODOH Forum grew slightly in 2020, rising to 1,861 members by December, up from 1,700 in 2019. However, in October it claimed to have had a record 1,512 people active on its forum at one time, double its previous figure.

After being removed from YouTube and Vimeo, it moved to Bitchute in 2019 and by the end of 2020 had uploaded 871 videos (with a total of 301,793 views). A major blow came in 2020 when Facebook finally changed its policy on Holocaust denial and deleted the organisation's page (it still has a Twitter account). In a web post, it claimed to be hiring someone specifically to manage its social media output. Last year, CODOH ran a series of 'campaigns', including one against the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's celebration of the liberation of Auschwitz.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Castle Hill remained pretty active in 2020, bucking the trend of the traditional, pseudo-academic Holocaust denial scene more generally, and indications suggest that it will continue to be a leading creator and distributor of Holocaust denial content.

POPULIST/RADICAL RIGHT

LEAVE.EU

LEADER: ARRON BANKS



2020 SUMMARY

Despite its communications chief Andy Wigmore previously saying that Leave.EU would wind up its operations once the UK had left the EU, Aaron Banks' website appears intent on continuing its divisive and unpleasant campaigning. In an ironic twist, the site has had to be re-registered (under the name of an Irish citizen, Sean Power) in order to keep its .EU domain name, after the UK's exit from the EU.

The organisation now focuses largely on immigration and culture war issues, such as supposed bias from the BBC, the Black Lives Matter protests and what it perceives as "woke culture". It has repeatedly used its platform to amplify the Home Secretary Priti Patel's attacks on "activist leftie [immigration] lawyers", a campaign that has continued despite condemnation by the Law Society and a violent attack on a West London law firm in September.

Arron Banks is a longtime ally of Nigel Farage, a relationship that was strained by Leave.EU's endorsement of the Conservative Party in the 2019 General Election. Since then, the group has remained somewhat non-partisan, expressing support at various points for the Conservative Party, Reform UK and Laurence Fox's Reclaim Party.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Whether Leave.EU continues throughout 2021, with Brexit now settled, is an open question, but for now seems likely. It will likely continue to produce similar content.



REFORM UK

LEADER: NIGEL FARAGE

Photo: Gage Skidmore



2020 SUMMARY

Following the Brexit Party's significant impact – yet disappointing results – from the 2019 General Election, the party started 2020 in a state of hibernation.

Nigel Farage announced that the party was "mothballed" but ready to be reactivated in case the government "made a mess of Brexit". Having spent much of the year tentatively sounding out new causes, the party announced its return in early November as Reform UK (formalised in January 2021), citing opposition to lockdown as its "single most pressing issue".

Having launched the party with lockdown-scepticism as its flagship policy, Farage was free to cautiously declare that the government's trade deal signed with the European Union in December was acceptable and admit that the "Brexit wars are over". Other priorities include overhauls to the democratic process in the UK (including the abolition of the House of Lords), introduction of proportional representation and a written constitution for the United Kingdom.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Reform UK's prospects for making headlines in 2021 were dealt a significant blow by the surprise announcement that Farage was stepping down as leader in March 2021. Thanks to the complete lack of internal democracy in the party, he was immediately succeeded by deputy leader Richard Tice, with former MEP David Bull taking up the deputy position. Neither man has anywhere near Farage's public profile or popularity.

The party intends to stand 1,000 candidates in the 2021 local elections, and claimed to have received over 3,000 applications just 11 days after its November relaunch. As with its predecessor party, Reform UK charges prospective candidates a £50 administration fee for vetting applications, a process that did not prevent the Brexit Party from fielding a bizarre and troubling list of PPCs in 2019.

Given the enduring popular support for COVID restrictions and optimism about the vaccine rollout, Reform UK is likely to require a new flagship policy in order to make any impact on the political landscape. Constitutional reform is generally popular but is unlikely to be a mobilising policy at a local level, particularly in the wake of the pandemic. The success of the party is likely to depend on whether Tice is able to harness a new grievance and raise its profile in the way that Farage has done over the years..

Neil & Christine Hamilton
Photo: Euro Realist



UNITED KINGDOM INDEPENDENCE PARTY (UKIP)

LEADER: NEIL HAMILTON



2020 SUMMARY

2020 was another depressing and turbulent year for the UK Independence Party (UKIP), with the party languishing in the polls and suffering yet another acrimonious leadership dispute.

Having received a total of just 22,817 votes for its 44 candidates in the 2019 General Election, the party started the year in bad shape. In June it elected

Freddy Vachha as leader, only for him to be replaced just three months later by veteran former 'cash for questions' MP, Neil Hamilton. The traditional infighting that has dogged UKIP since the Brexit referendum continued, with both Hamilton and Vachha accusing the other of illegal actions.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

UKIP has perhaps seen a slight uptick in support since Hamilton took over, though it is still polling at significantly less than 1%. It is hard to see a successful future for a party so thoroughly tainted by bigotry, incompetence and internecine struggles, particularly in competition with newer parties such as Reform UK and Reclaim, both of which are likely to fight on similar turf around culture wars and populism.

POPULIST/RADICAL RIGHT (CONTINUED)



Photo: London Assembly

5 STAR DIRECT DEMOCRACY

LEADER: JOHN REES-EVANS



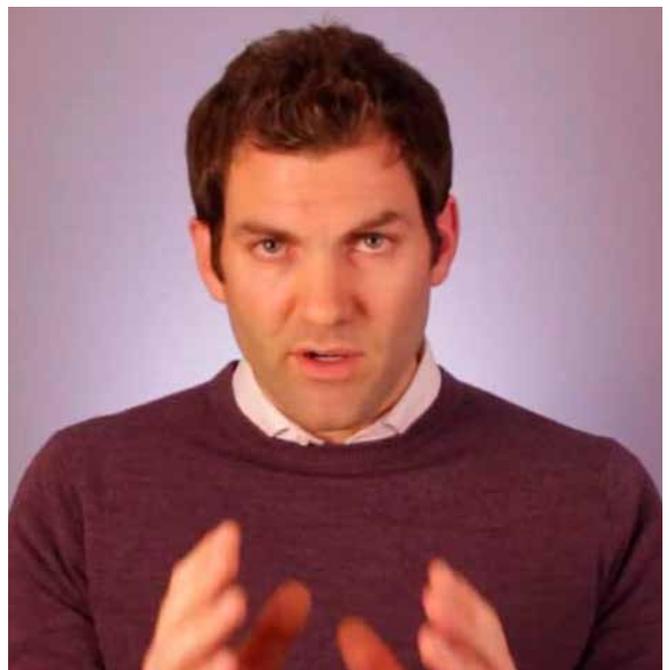
2020 SUMMARY

The party, formerly known as the Democrats and Veterans Direct Democracy Party, changed its name to Five Star Direct Democracy Party in April 2020. The UKIP splinter achieved its best ever results in the 2019 local elections, with two councillors being elected to Barnsley borough council, but both have since defected: one to the Labour Party and the other, Victoria Felton, now sits as an independent and stood as a Brexit Party candidate in the 2019 General Election, where she failed to be elected but attained the party’s highest constituency vote share. The party’s General Secretary, Ian Gorman, also stood as a candidate for the Brexit Party without relinquishing his position, as part of what appeared to be an unpublicised electoral pact between the parties.

The party has promoted numerous conspiracy theories about COVID-19 and vaccines, including suggesting that Bill Gates might have some responsibility for creating the pandemic. In November, Party Secretary and Holme Valley parish councillor James Dalton faced disciplinary action for a series of hateful and abusive tweets directed at members of the public and fellow councillors, which also caused his Twitter account to be suspended.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

It is unclear how many candidates the party will seek to stand in the local elections, although the collapse of its Barnsley branch and complete lack of publicity for its candidate for London Mayor, Neville Watson, do not bode well. The party is also active in Wales and in Northern Ireland, where it is seeking to capitalise on Unionist dissatisfaction with the terms of the Brexit trade deal and regulatory border in the Irish Sea.



HERITAGE PARTY

LEADER: DAVID KURTEN



2020 SUMMARY

The Heritage Party was launched in October 2020 by London Assembly member David Kurten, once elected for UKIP but more recently representing the Brexit Alliance with another former UKIP member, Peter Whittle.

Kurten had already announced his intention to stand as an independent candidate in the postponed London Mayoral race, and his party aims to field candidates in the local elections, too. Describing itself as socially conservative, the party’s manifesto is primarily concerned with divisive issues such as removing hate crime laws, curtailing immigration, rolling back environmental legislation and fostering national pride and “traditional family values”.

Kurten has also attracted controversy throughout 2020 for his conspiracy theories, COVID-denial and anti-vaccine social media posts, which have drawn criticism from across the political spectrum, as well as attending a number of anti-lockdown protests in London.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

It is unlikely that Kurten or the Heritage Party will make inroads in the Mayoral and local elections. Kurten’s anti-lockdown messaging will appeal to a small demographic for which a number of other parties and candidates will be competing.

'Hearts of Oak'
Launched in
London
Photo: YouTube



HEARTS OF OAK

LEADERS: ALAN CRAIG AND PETER MCILVENNA

2020 SUMMARY

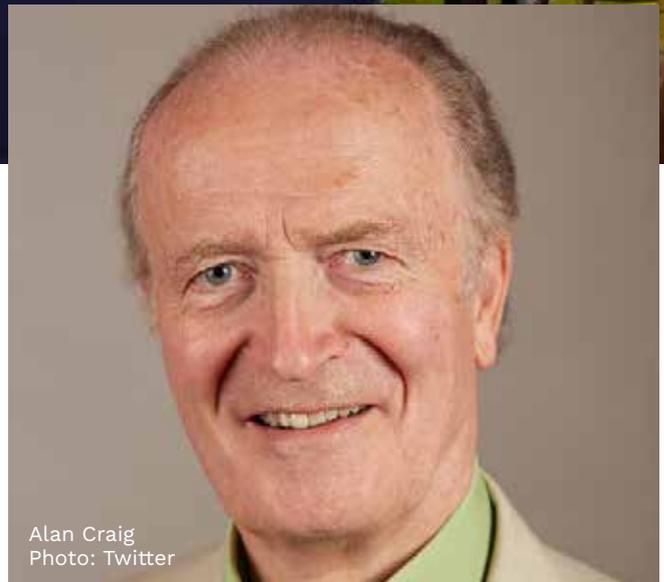
Launched in February 2020, Hearts of Oak is a self-described “populist, anti-establishment movement” that brought together a diverse group including Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson], various former UKIP figures and evangelical Christian activists. The group announced that it would campaign on immigration, political correctness and protecting children from the “LGBTQ agenda”.

Disrupted soon after its launch by the pandemic, the group’s only notable public event of the year was a protest in Westminster to demand the deportation of “grooming” gang members. The event was a disappointment, with just only around 100 protestors attending and Yaxley-Lennon’s planned live appearance replaced with a pre-recorded message.

The majority of the group’s activism is now done via its YouTube channel, which includes regular appearances from the likes of Carl Benjamin, David Vance and Gerard Batten. Despite starting in January 2020 it has accrued over 15,000 subscribers and over 700,000 views.

PROSPECTS FOR 2021

Hearts of Oak has had an underwhelming first year considering the many high profile names attached to the launch of the group. However, it has carved out a voice within the far right and will likely to continue to create content that is well viewed, especially on the topic of Muslims and grooming gangs.



Alan Craig
Photo: Twitter



Peter Mcilvenna
Photo: Twitter

SECTION 8 – THE FUTURE OF THE UK



A DISUNITED KINGDOM?

Brexit might be done, but huge troubles lie ahead. NICK LOWLES explores the pending constitutional crisis that could soon envelop Boris Johnson's leadership.

The United Kingdom is facing a triple whammy from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit and the resulting constitutional crisis that could follow a Scottish National Party (SNP) victory in May's Scottish Parliament elections – the combination of which is likely to see huge political and economic upheaval and possibly an upsurge in nationalism.

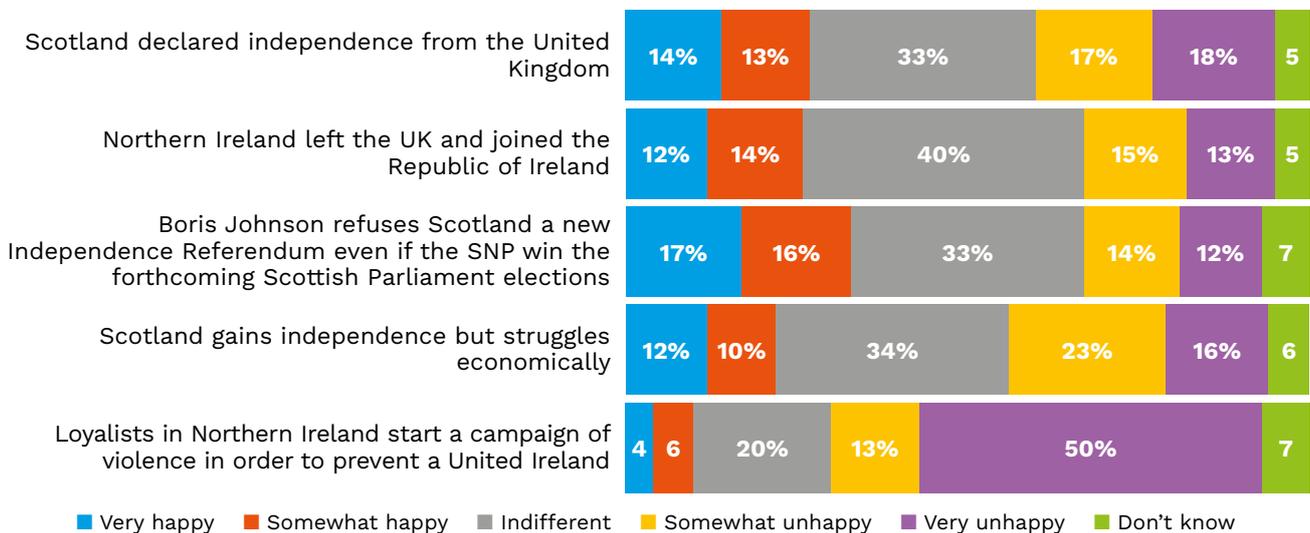
COVID-19 has already had a crippling effect on the British economy, with unemployment rising to 1.74 million (5.1%), eight million furloughed and the economic output of the country dropping by 9.9% during 2020, the worst decline in 300 years. However, the worst is still to come. In the short-term, everyone is expecting unemployment to soar as the furlough scheme begins to be phased out over the summer, with estimates ranging from 2.2 – 3 million out of work, and many shops and businesses in the hospitality sector likely to fold.

In the longer term, the Government will seek to reduce the huge debt it has racked up during the pandemic through tax rises, public spending cuts and reductions in benefits – the impact of which could be frightening. Coming on the back of 10 years of austerity, any further reduction in Government spending is likely to eat into frontline services, many of which have already been stripped to the bone.

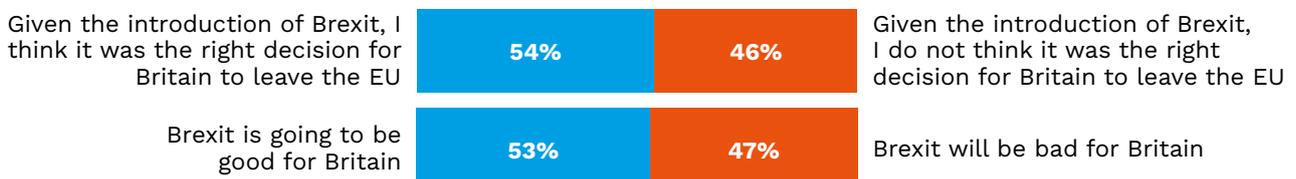
If this was not bad enough, add in the economic impact of Brexit and the forecast is especially grim. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) recently estimated that output would be 4.5-5% lower in 2024 than the Office of Budget Responsibility's (OBR) own forecast made in 2020. The IFS estimated that this drop was equivalent to an annualised GDP loss of £109 billion – a huge reduction in the size of the British economy.

In fact, UK exports of goods to the EU plunged by 40.7% in January 2021 during the first month after Brexit. John Van Reenen, from the London School of Economics, has predicted that the long-term economic impact of Brexit will be twice that of the COVID-19 pandemic, and equivalent to at least £2,000 per person.

How would you feel if the following happened?



Which of these statements do you most agree with, even if you don't agree with either entirely?



INDEPENDENCE CLAIMS BOLSTERED

One of the consequences of Brexit is that it has made the likelihood of Scottish independence greater, given that the Scots voted strongly to remain in the EU. A recent poll for the *Sunday Times* found 49% support for independence among Scottish voters, as opposed to 44% who wished to remain part of the UK.

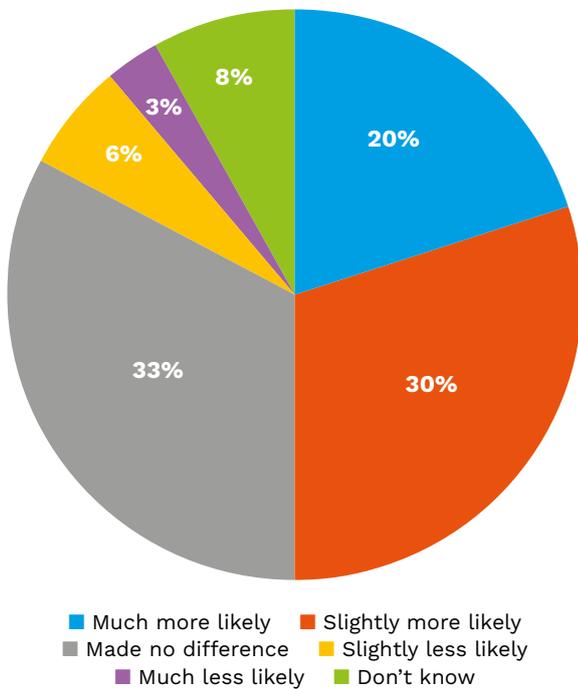
There was a slightly larger margin between those who wanted a referendum within the next five years (50%) and those who did not (43%). Three out of four Scottish voters thought Scotland would be independent within 10 years.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has repeatedly ruled out allowing a second independence referendum so soon after the 2014 “No” vote. However, a strong SNP victory in May, particularly one that is held on a platform to hold a new vote, will cause a huge constitutional crisis, the outcome of which is anyone’s guess.

What is not discussed as much as it should be is the knock-on effect of Scottish independence, especially in Northern Ireland where there is already growing tension over the impact of the Brexit trade arrangements, which have effectively put a border in the Irish Sea.

Indeed, polling by Focaldata for HOPE not hate found that 44% of people in Northern Ireland thought that

Do you think Brexit has made the break-up of the United Kingdom more or less likely to happen, or has it made no difference?



BREXIT JOY

The euphoria of leaving the EU is evident in our polling, as opinion in favour of Brexit has grown since the UK has left. Perhaps it is because the negative Brexit forecasts are being obscured by the pandemic, but our polling has found that the majority of Britons think it was both the right decision to leave the EU and also that Brexit will be good for Britain.

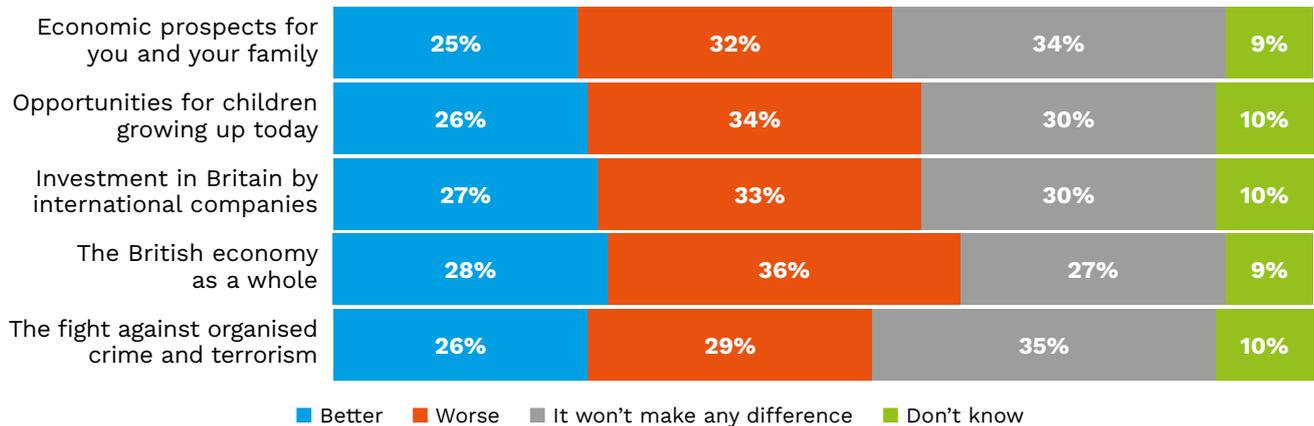
Just over half of people polled (54%) thought “it was the right decision for Britain to leave the EU”, compared to 46% who do not. A similar proportion of people (53%) think Brexit will be good for Britain, as opposed to 47% who think it will be bad.

When asked about specific areas of British life and economy, more people thought that these individual areas would get worse under Brexit than get better, however, the gap between the two was much lower than when we asked these similar questions before Brexit happened.

Whether this positive outlook remains as the economic situation worsens and a constitutional crisis grows, remains to be seen.



Do you think that each of the following will be better or worse for Britain now that we have left the European Union, or do you think that it won't make much difference?



Scottish Independence would make a referendum on the future of Northern Ireland more likely, with just 33% disagreeing.

While the majority of people in Northern Ireland would currently vote to remain part of the United Kingdom if a referendum was held today, there is clearly a growing number of people who want a united Ireland or at least a new federalist system whereby power and decision making is shared between London and Dublin.

Any hint of a united Ireland is likely to send sections of the Unionist and Loyalist communities apocalyptic and will strengthen the hand of those who desire to take up arms to prevent this from happening.



DISUNITED KINGDOM?

The belief that Brexit will likely lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom is shared by half (50%) of Britons, in our own HOPE not hate polling, with 9% thinking it is less likely and 33% believing it will make no difference. Among Scots, the increased likelihood of Brexit leading to Scottish Independence rises to 57%, but it is only 40% among Welsh voters.

Whether Boris Johnson will be able to resist the will of the Scottish people in wanting a new independence referendum might be influenced by public opinion. Our polling shows that a minority of Britons would oppose Scotland or even Northern Ireland breaking away.

Just over a quarter of Britons (27%) say they would be happy if Scotland went

independent, while 35% say they would be unhappy. A third of respondents, 33%, claim to be indifferent.

In a remarkable turn of events, only 40% of Conservative voters are unhappy at the thought of Scotland going independent, a stunningly low figure given that this is meant to be the Conservative and Unionist Party. A quarter of 2019 Tory voters would be happy to see Scotland go, while 30% remain indifferent.

When asked about the possibility of Northern Ireland leaving the UK and joining together with the Republic, only 28% said that they would be unhappy. A quarter (26%) said they would be happy, with 40% claiming to be indifferent.

Worryingly, 10% of people said that they would be happy if “Loyalists in Northern Ireland start a campaign of violence in order to prevent a United Ireland”. Age appears to be a key factor in those who claim to be happy with this outcome, with 23% younger people – who will not remember the Troubles – being happy, compared to just 2% of those aged 65 and over.

And in more bad news for Johnson, only a third of respondents say they would be happy to see him refuse the Scots a new referendum. A quarter (26%) said that they would be unhappy with him blocking a new referendum, rising to 44% in Scotland.

Those opposing Scottish independence will point to the economic impact on the country if it breaks away. A recent study from the London School of Economics and City University of Hong Kong found that the Scottish economy would shrink by at least £11 billion a year if it became independent and left the UK’s common market, more than doubling the damaging impacts of Brexit.

Obviously the SNP has refuted these findings, saying they ignore the economic benefits of independence. Clearly there will be some economic hit, and added to the fact that just under half of Scottish people will oppose leaving the UK, there are clearly the ingredients for resentment and anger.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Not only could this all greatly destabilise Scotland, but it could have an unintended consequence of increasing English nationalism, as many react to rising Scottish nationalism and tensions.

Where the Scotland question goes remains to be seen, but its general direction should be known after this May’s Scottish elections. A clear SNP victory, especially if it gets over 50% of the vote as well as a strong majority in the Scottish parliament, will set the UK on a constitutional crisis. Johnson will undoubtedly try to reject a new referendum, but without the strong support of the British public he might not be able to hold out for long.

Even if he does relent and give Scotland a new referendum, that might still only be the beginnings of a much deeper and potentially confrontational unravelling of the United Kingdom.

Boris Johnson rode to power on the promise of delivering Brexit, which he has achieved much to the happiness of his supporters. However, the consequences of the deal he stuck with the EU could ultimately lead to the unravelling of the United Kingdom.

SPECIAL REPORT: NORTHERN IRELAND RETURNS TO THE BRINK

MATTHEW COLLINS



THE FUTURE of the Good Friday Agreement, which provided the platform for peace in Northern Ireland over the last 20 years, is under huge strain. In March this year, Loyalist paramilitary groups informed the British and Irish governments that they were withdrawing their support for the Agreement in protest at Northern Ireland's Irish Sea trade border with the rest of the UK.

While the letters to the British and Irish leaders called for “peaceful and democratic” opposition to current arrangements, there is a suggestion that the letter from the Loyalist Communities Council (an umbrella group that represents the interests of Loyalist groups, the UVF, UDA and Red Hand Commando) was written because they themselves are under internal pressure from younger, more militant Loyalists.

David Campbell, the LCC chairman, wrote in the letter:

“We are concerned about the disruption to trade and commerce between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom that is occurring, but our core objection is much more fundamental.”

Campbell said that the Northern Ireland Protocol had breached safeguards in the Good Friday Agreement designed to protect the status of both Catholic and Protestant communities and patience within the Loyalist community was at its lowest ebb since 1985, when Unionists and Loyalists staged mass rallies against the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Campbell added:

“Please do not underestimate the strength of feeling on this issue right across the unionist family ... accordingly, I have been instructed to advise you that the loyalist groupings are herewith withdrawing their support for the Belfast agreement until our rights under the agreement are restored and the protocol is amended to ensure unfettered access for goods, services, and citizens throughout the United Kingdom. If you or the EU is not prepared to honour the entirety of the agreement then you will be responsible for the permanent destruction of the agreement.”

While there appears little overall appetite for an imminent return to armed conflict, some Loyalists have openly spoken about returning to armed action and ignoring the consent principle in the GFA if the status of Northern Ireland being part of the UK continues to be put at risk.

In a rare interview in 2019 with HOPE not hate, the UVF's East Belfast Battalion made it very clear, both on and off the record, that it was prepared to fight any idea of a “united Ireland”. They and others believe a military campaign in the Republic would dull any appetite there for a united Ireland. Anger at the Brexit deal, which keeps Northern Ireland within the EU trading club thereby creating some boarder checks with Britain, has been seen as a further sign among Unionists and Loyalists that Irish unification was increasingly likely.

ANGER OVER BREXIT

Anger over the Brexit deal extends well beyond the paramilitary groups. An exclusive poll conducted by Focaldata for HOPE not hate found that 63% of people in Northern Ireland were opposed to the Brexit plans as they now stood, while 69% thought Brexit was going to be bad for the province.

More worryingly for those who want Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom, more people think Brexit makes a referendum on the future of Northern Ireland more likely than those who think it is less likely or won't make any difference.

Opinion is split on whether Brexit makes a united Ireland more likely, with 44% believing it does, while 18% think it is less likely and 26% who say it will not make any difference.

A game changer could be if the SNP wins May's Scottish elections and moves towards independence. Almost half of people in Northern Ireland (44%) think Scottish independence will make a referendum on the future of Northern Ireland more likely, with just 33% disagreeing.

While the polling shows there is increasing anger and tension in Unionist and Loyalist communities about Brexit and the new sea border, there appears little actual appetite to escalate the frustrations towards military actions – at least at the moment.

To understand the situation in Northern Ireland today, it is important to reflect back on how the Loyalist community has acted and reacted over the last 30 years.

LOYALISM IN REFLECTION

On 13 October 1994 the Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC) issued a statement announcing a ceasefire by Loyalist paramilitaries.

The statement, issued on behalf of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and Red Hand Commandoes (a small affiliate of the UVF) included a sincere and “true and abject remorse” for the deaths of innocent people.

Then-British Prime Minister John Major's government would enter into “torturous” negotiations with the UDA's (now defunct) political wing, the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP). The UDP's representative went into those discussions believing and publicly claiming that Loyalists deserved a larger share in any financial and community-based inducements, due to having gone to the negotiating table before Republicans. It was a naivety which would perhaps come to define the Northern Ireland Office's relationship with Loyalists for decades to come.

The UVF also sent two political negotiators, both former combatants, with one in particular being marked by civil servants as “impressive”.

The hopes of the paramilitary negotiators, having seen the seamless transition from the armed approach of

24%

THE AGREEMENT IS MAINTAINING PEACE AND STABILITY AND IS WORKING WELL

40%

THE AGREEMENT IS NOT PERFECT BUT IT IS BETTER WE HAVE IT THAN NOT

15%

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT HAS BEEN FLAWED AND IT NEEDS TO BE RE-NEGOTIATED

9%

THE AGREEMENT SHOULD BE ABOLISHED

12%

DON'T KNOW

LOYALIST PARAMILTARIES

THE ULSTER DEFENCE ASSOCIATION (UDA)

The previously strong apparatus of “companies” (small groups or cells within a Brigade) and overall organised structure appears to no longer hold firm, as antagonisms between UDA personalities and groups openly exist. The ‘mainstream’ faction, under the leadership of south Belfast UDA, has tended to operate more openly under the name Ulster Political Research Group (UPRG).

In February 2021 the intended victim of a drug-related shooting in the Belfast heartland of Loyalism, the Shankill Road, identified the UDA as behind seven shots fired at his home which injured another person. The local UVF has also made public demands for the UDA on Shankill Road to return a pistol stolen from its arms dump.

Given the state and nature of the UDA, it would be difficult to describe the UDA as the organisation it purports to be. In South East Antrim, there exists considerable internecine activity with regard to the use of the name and the objectives of the two or three groups using the name ‘Ulster Defence Association’.

In October 2019 members from ‘the UDA’ were present at a meeting called by East Belfast UVF to discuss the mounting discomfort over what was termed the “Brexit betrayal”.

In January 2021, East Belfast’s James “Jimmy” Birch represented the UDA’s ‘mainstream tendency’ along with members of other ‘mainstream’ Loyalist paramilitary leaders in talks with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) permanent secretary Madeleine Alessandri and three other officials.

Because paramilitary organisations and membership are illegal, these meetings are held under the auspices of the ‘Loyalist Communities Council’. The Government would appear to have a policy of favouring factions from one illegal paramilitary group over another.

In February 2021 it was reported that (unnamed sources within) the UDA were ‘assessing’ their options with how best to respond to mounting anger in the PUL community about the Irish Sea border and Northern Ireland Protocol. It is hard to gauge either how much will there be to launch a violent ‘offensive’ to display their anger and the ability to gauge a paramilitary operation.

The UDA has been implicated (along with the UVF) in the intimidation and threats of workers at sea ports instigating the new protocols.



ULSTER VOLUNTEER FORCE (UVF)

The UVF has managed to navigate ‘post-conflict’ with only one significant but short-lived split (the Loyalist Volunteer Force) and it is alleged the UVF has had the same leadership and chief of staff since the mid 1970s.

Instead of dismantling as it planned to in 2006, the UVF’s leadership declared in 2007 that it was moving to a ‘demilitarised’ state. Its subsidiary, the Red Hand Commandoes, applied to be removed from the list of proscribed groups in 2019, which the government rejected outright.

The UVF manages dissent brutally and has been blamed for over 30 deaths (all Protestants) since 2004. It has on a number of occasions entered into bloody feuds with the UDA and one appears to be on the Shankill Road with a faction no longer recognised by the UDA itself.

Much of what the UVF has said publicly since its ceasefire in 1994 and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 has been conciliatory, perhaps with its faded electoral ambitions in mind and in check.

The UVF’s main body lost a significant amount of its territory and influence after the Good Friday Agreement to younger and more ambitious members in the east of Belfast – some of whom had previously been in the UDA.



UVF East Belfast show of strength



The 'East Belfast Battalion' of the UVF stresses it is not at odds or outside of the main body of the organisation, but it displays a much higher profile and an autonomy that appears at odds with the rest of the UVF. It also flatly refuses to acknowledge the UVF's own political wing, in favour of its own candidates.

Throughout the Troubles, the UVF was estimated to have only around 500 members. East Belfast UVF, however, is estimated to have as many as 3,000 members, although journalists stress that figure would include people under duress and many are unable to afford the fee to buy their way out.

East Belfast UVF has been singled out as a separate entity by law enforcement and paramilitary monitoring bodies a number of times, and for criticism and allegations of criminality and murder, though this has not stopped the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) holding consultations with it over issues such as bonfires and parades.

Far from winding down its military, East Belfast UVF seems intent on increasing it. It has been able to accomplish this through younger, more media savvy operators and a public mouthpiece through which it provides commentary on the peace process, Brexit and the everyday affairs in Northern Ireland.

Very much 'populist' bordering on far right, it outright rejects the UVF's political wing, the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), as "wankers" and has attempted on at least two occasions to run its own community workers as independents in council and Assembly elections.

In February 2021, the East Belfast UVF leadership sent word to a number of individuals that they were going to be "put out" of the community. Eleven family members took shelter in the Ballymac Friendship Centre as an (alleged) UVF show of strength, led by their commander, named locally as Stephen Matthews, sent 60 masked men on a 'patrol' of the area close to where the family was living.

Four men aged between 33-56 years of age, including Matthews, were subsequently arrested on suspicion of terrorism and other related offences. In a subsequent court appearance, an unnamed registered charity claimed it was responsible for this show of strength and the court also heard there was community support for the actions. No further evidence was provided to confirm this. The alleged UVF members were all denied bail.

If the removal of the East Belfast UVF leadership were to create a vacuum, it has been suggested that the main body of the UVF, based on the Shankill Road, may move to take back control in East Belfast.

the IRA to Sinn Fein's ballot box strategy, was they too would be weighed as political representatives with political views and not merely as bag men negotiating the surrender of arms in the run up to the Good Friday Agreement. They fell and failed at the feet of the hegemony of 70 years of 'Big House' Unionism.

Twenty seven years on from those talks and 23 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, no representative of any Loyalist paramilitary political wing sits in the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont. Yet as was once said of the IRA, the Loyalist paramilitaries never really went away.

The UVF and Red Hand Commandoes, responsible for some 500 deaths during the period of the Troubles, would go on to assume a 'non-military existence' only in 2007. Their statement recognised the mainstream Republican offensive had ended and concluded "and thus the union remains safe".

Despite still being an illegal organisation responsible for over 400 deaths, the leadership of the UDA was invited to join the Queen at a war memorial in Dublin in 2011.

While bewilderment and outrage greets every initiative that involves either the inclusion or consultation with paramilitaries, their ongoing existence is not a matter or question of governments or the Protestant Unionist Loyalist (PUL) community simply tolerating their existence.

The inability of Loyalists to shift mainstream Unionists' interests and allegiances towards their working class communities remains the most significant reason the power in some PUL communities still derives from the paramilitaries. Similarly, it may be argued, many funding grants and initiatives from a wide range of statutory and philanthropic bodies are made to community representatives and organisations still linked to paramilitary organisations or staffed by former paramilitaries.

The peace process has allowed or encouraged this period of 'transition' to 'normality', but it appears to be an inexhaustive process and while paramilitaries, contrary to arrangement or agreement, continue to recruit it will have to be inexhaustible.

CRIMINALITY AND MURDER

The 'demilitarising' and 'transitioning' of Loyalist paramilitaries has done little to dull their organisations' ardour for criminality and murder. There is also acknowledgment even from within the organisations' themselves that there is widespread criminality and drug dealing by those associated with them.

The UDA in particular – coincidentally organised on a not-dissimilar model to New York's five mob families – has both a 'mainstream' faction, which engages with the peace process and government initiatives, and an equal amount of renegade 'Brigades' and companies that litter Northern Ireland with the victims of their criminality.

Similarly, the UVF (the oldest paramilitary group in the entire island of Ireland) has since the Good Friday Agreement become the largest paramilitary group and presents a both conciliatory and confrontational approach in its relationships. It has also killed some 30 Protestants since the 1994 ceasefire.

To agree a ceasefire was one thing for the Loyalist paramilitaries; holding it was another, but the decommissioning of weapons was enough to split factions of the organisations (similarly with Republican



groups). Accepting the structures of the Good Friday Agreement was never an agreement on their part that one day they should hold their hands up and acquiesce to a united Ireland.

Their refusal to go away, disband and fade into the new society is more rooted in the part-governance of the province by Sinn Fein (who Loyalists openly decry are the IRA) than *just* simply the benefits of largess and crime being paramilitaries brings.

It's rooted in the belief that "England" would eventually abandon Northern Ireland in the same way it had abandoned control over the Free State [the Irish Free State established in 1922].

THE "ENGLISH" GOVERNMENT

The UVF's negotiator marked as "impressive" by British civil servants back in 1994 was David Ervine, who would for a short time represent the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), the UVF's political wing, at Stormont. During an interview with this writer 10 years later, Ervine would opine such was the "English" [never British] habit of abandoning people or places, that the future of Northern Ireland was only ever secure in the hands of the European Union and not in the care of the "English" government. Had Ervine lived longer (he died in 2007 aged 53), Loyalism would probably look and survive far differently today. He died not long before the UVF declared the Union safe.

In 2017 the DUP entered into an agreement which saved Prime Minister Theresa May in a hung parliament. It also ensured Brexit would be accomplished, despite 55% of Northern Irish voters voting to Remain.

The DUP was particularly conscious that the majority of Protestant voters in Northern Ireland voted Leave (60%) and not just Theresa May's party was Conservative & Unionist, but also weighed significantly by the fear that Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party could win an election and force through a united Ireland. Contrary to what many believe, senior figures in both the UDA and UVF [PUP] have stated they were in favour of and voted for Remain. Given the overall nature of the Brexit campaign, where complexities were

abandoned for questions over loyalty and patriotism, many PUL voters felt Brexit would necessitate a stronger border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

REALITIES OF BREXIT

Since 2017 the realities of Brexit have antagonised both Republicans and Loyalists. The increasing push for the introduction of the Irish language Act by Sinn Fein in the North, and the party's increasing electoral success in the Republic, have surpassed irritation and antagonism and some of the more extravagant fears of Unionists feel increasingly about to be realised.

The introduction of a sea border between Britain and Northern Ireland this year was not without consultation, but it seems to have blindsided both Unionists and Loyalists who demanded a 'full Brexit' and all the composite difficulties it entailed. For the DUP in particular there has been a massive haemorrhaging of electoral support linked to the Irish Sea border and the new Northern Ireland Protocol.

Such is the slump for the DUP, Sinn Fein could even take the post of First Minister in next year's Assembly Elections. A poll result that would almost certainly hasten the unification of Ireland.

The sense of panic and anger in the PUL community has seen a shift to the right in polling intentions which would further damage the DUP and, worse still, the intimidation and threats of workers at ports tasked with enacting border checks. As David Ervine prophesied, for many there, it feels as though the English have abandoned Northern Ireland. The hurt and pain is even more tangible than Peter Brooke's [former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland] pronouncement in 1990 that Britain had "no selfish strategic interest" in the province.

The British government has been consulting with Loyalist paramilitaries since the beginning of 2021, a "consultation" to gauge both their anger and, no doubt, any willingness to return to war. It is, of course, a consultation that worries and infuriates many, even if it does have a practical purpose.

The initial noises were that although angry, there was no will to return to conflict. Though the UDA did (ominously) say it would be prepared to take its dissatisfaction "to Dublin", the scene of some of Loyalism's worst atrocities.

The paramilitaries also argue that any border between Northern Ireland and Britain is in direct breach of the Good Friday Agreement. They also conceded that perhaps they would not want a firm border between the Republic and Northern Ireland, much though they may once have thought.

The DUP's MP for East Antrim, Sammy Wilson, was reported to have written to colleagues in early March about the use of "guerrilla warfare" to undermine both the Sea border and the protocol. He refused to apologise.

In early March, the Loyalist Communities Council, which supersedes the Combined Loyalist Military Command, told both the British and Irish governments it was no longer recognising and was "renouncing" the Good Friday Agreement. While this is not a declaration of intent to return to conflict, it does provide further fuel to mounting unease and discomfort on the issue as to how those that swore to defend Northern Ireland will respond to another of its long list of darkest hours.

ANXIOUS AND OPTIMISTIC

As revealed in brand new HOPE not hate polling, Northern Ireland is looking ahead to an uncertain future writes NICK LOWLES.

THE PEOPLE of Northern Ireland face an increasingly uncertain future as they grapple with the impact of the pandemic, the effects of the new Brexit trading rules and a degree of uncertainty over their long-term constitutional future given provision for a possible referendum on the status of the region if a majority express a preference for a united Ireland.

One in six in the region, who responded to a poll conducted by Focaldata for HOPE not hate in February this year, said that they had lost a relative or close family friend to COVID-19, while 13% had lost their job. The financial strain is clear, with 20% saying they had struggled to pay their rent during the pandemic, another 15% had struggled to pay their mortgage, while 40% had dipped into their savings to get by.

Another one in seven (14%) said that they have used a food bank in the past year, while 39% had also felt a deep sense of loneliness.

The impact of the pandemic has been compounded by the consequences of new Brexit trading rules, which keep Northern Ireland in the EU single market while creating new checks on goods moving between the region and the rest of the UK. There have been reports of disruption to supplies of food and other goods, as well as to online deliveries. This is due to a combination of factors, including increased bureaucracy, new checks on the movement of goods and the unpreparedness of the British suppliers.

GLOOM OVER BREXIT

Almost two thirds of people (63%) questioned in our poll oppose the new Brexit protocol, while even more

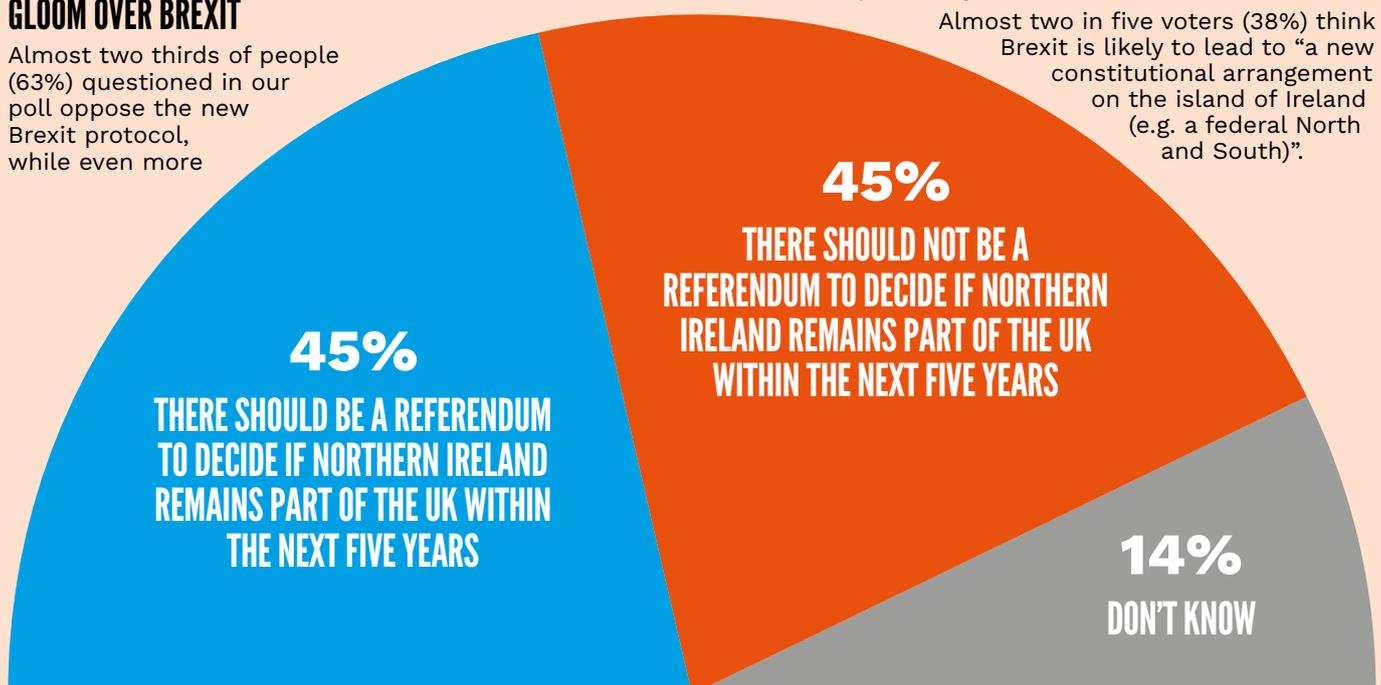
(69%) think Brexit will be bad for Northern Ireland. This may not be surprising given that a majority of people voting in the 2016 Referendum from Northern Ireland opted to stay in the EU. Given a major mobilization amongst Unionist and Loyalists, it would not seem that almost twice as many Protestants (82%) oppose the current arrangements than Catholics (48%), but Catholics are more likely to think that overall Brexit will be bad for Northern Ireland as compared to Protestants.

Opinion is evenly divided among those who voted Leave in the 2016 EU Referendum and those who voted for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in the 2019 General Election. Only 52% of Leave voters think Brexit is going to be good for Northern Ireland, with 48% thinking it will be bad. Among DUP voters, 49% think it is going to be good while 51% think it will be bad.

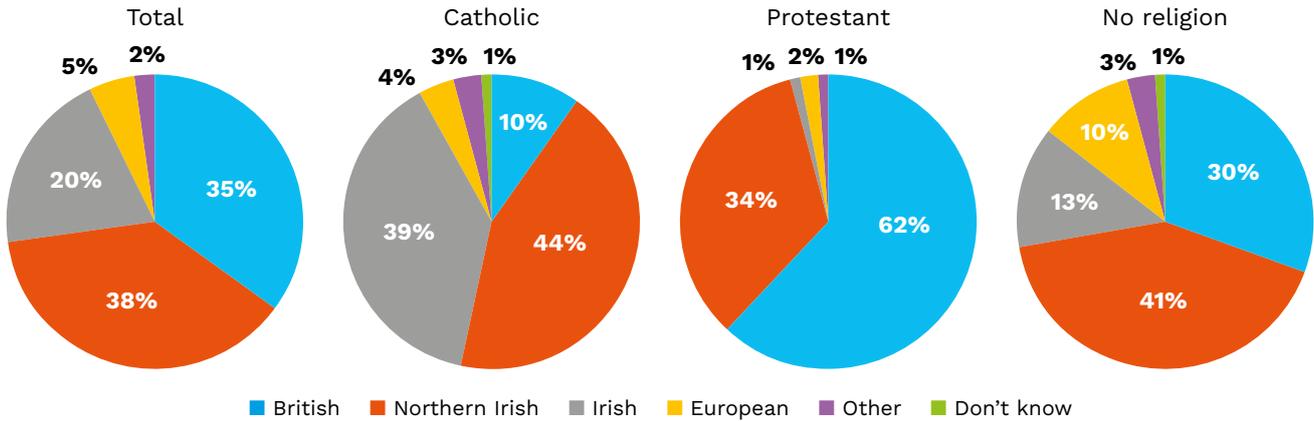
The gloom over Brexit is clearly evident in our polling. Two-and-a-half times as many people think Brexit will be worse for the “economic prospects for you and your family” and for “the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole” than think it will be better. Twice as many people think “opportunities for children growing up today” will be worse than better, while a slightly bigger margin think Brexit will be worse for inward investment. This is at odds with the view of some economic forecasters who view the Northern Ireland Protocol as positioning Northern Ireland with the opportunity to trade in both the UK and the EU Single Markets.

The consequences of Brexit also loom large over the very future of Northern Ireland, with 44% believing it will make a united Ireland more likely, compared to 18% who say less likely and a further 26% who say it will make no difference. A majority of Catholics (56%) think Brexit makes a united Ireland more likely, compared to just 31% of Protestants.

Almost two in five voters (38%) think Brexit is likely to lead to “a new constitutional arrangement on the island of Ireland (e.g. a federal North and South)”.



How do you describe yourself?



THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Opinion is evenly split on whether there should be a referendum on the future of Northern Ireland, with 43% saying that such a referendum to decide if Northern Ireland remains part of the UK should be held within the next five years, with the same number saying that it should not.

Among Catholics, this support for a referendum is at 63%, while for Protestants it is just 23%.

A clear majority (55% to 31%) expect the people of Northern Ireland to vote to remain part of the UK in any future referendum. However, when offered three potential futures for Northern Ireland, only 46% would choose to stay in the UK under present arrangements, with 22% wanting to join a united Ireland and 15% opting for Northern Ireland to enter into an Irish all-island arrangement with powers negotiated between North and South.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, 79% of Protestants want Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK and only 3% want to become part of a united Ireland. Conversely, 41% of Catholics want a united Ireland, with a further 23% wanting a new federalised system with powers shared

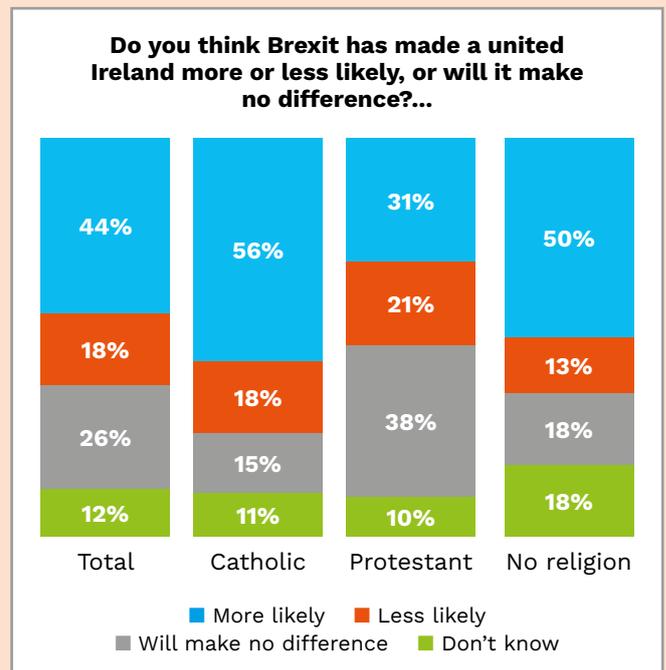
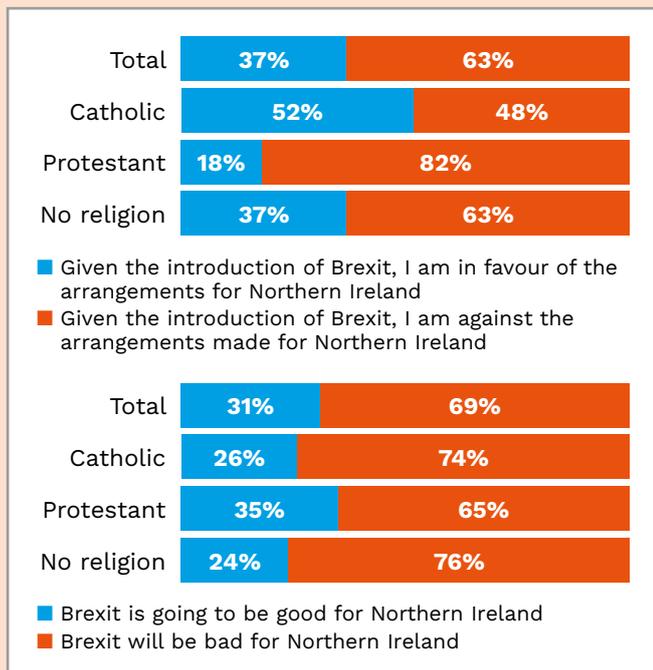
between North and South. Interestingly, 17% of Catholics said that they wanted to remain part of the UK.

Only a third of people in the province have confidence in the ability of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to fairly respect, serve and protect the interests of all communities equally in Northern Ireland, with 36% saying they have little or no confidence. Among Catholics, 28% have confidence and 41% say they do not. Among Protestants, the figures are reversed, with 43% having confidence and 27% having little or no confidence.

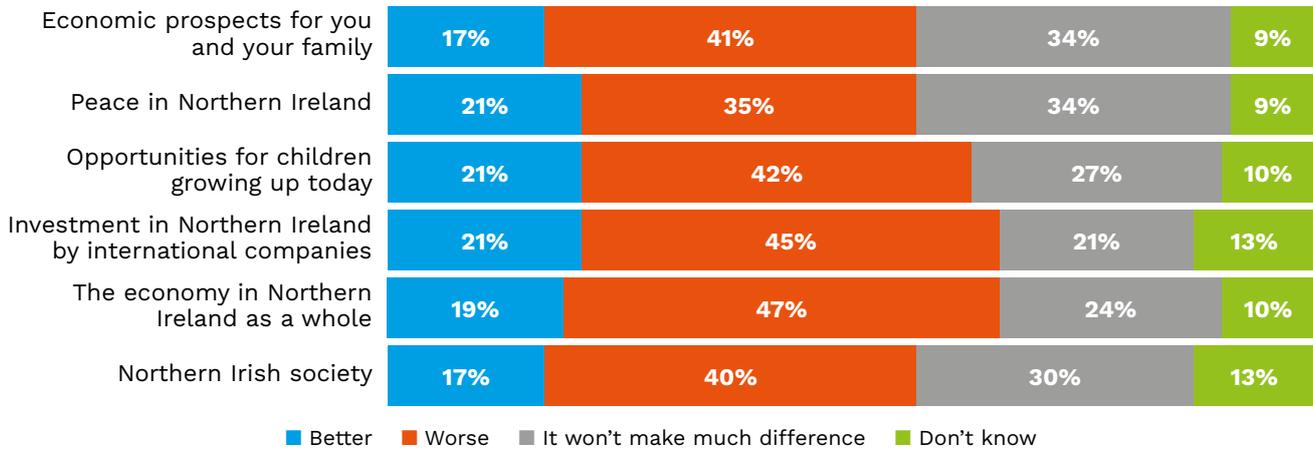
GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

There is even less confidence in the ability of British Prime Minister to re-negotiate a better Brexit arrangement for Northern Ireland with the European Union, with only 8% expressing a strong degree of confidence.

Perhaps more significantly though, there remains strong support for the Good Friday Agreement, even if many people do not think it is perfect. A quarter of respondents (24%) think the Agreement is maintaining peace and stability and is working well, while 40% believe "it is not perfect but it is better we have it



Do you think that each of the following will be better or worse for the people of Northern Ireland now the UK has left the European Union, or do you think it won't make much difference?



than not". A further 15% want the Agreement to be renegotiated but only 9% want it to be abolished altogether.

The support for the Agreement amongst Catholics remains strong, with 78% being supportive, broken down into 35% believing that it is working well and 43% expressing the view that it is not perfect but it is better that it is there than not. The opinion amongst Protestants is more divided. Only 12% think it is working well, while 40% say it is not perfect but it is better it is there than not – still a majority of 52% accepting the importance of maintaining the Agreement. A fifth of Protestants (22%) believe that the Agreement should be renegotiated and 14% want it abolished altogether; three times the number of Catholics who hold the same view.

SOCIAL CHANGES

In October 2019 sections of the Offences against the Person Act 1861 were repealed, paving the way for legal abortions to be carried out in Northern Ireland by a 'registered medical professional' (In the vast majority of circumstances, it was a criminal offence in Northern Ireland to have or perform an abortion), with new rules coming into effect in March 2020.

This has not stopped many campaigning against abortion and earlier this year a DUP lawmaker proposed a new bill to restrict abortions once more. However, by a margin of two to one, the people of Northern Ireland are opposed to attempts to add new restrictions to abortion rules.

There is also widespread agreement (62%) that there is 'greater acceptance of people from the LGBT+ community and identity' than there was five years ago.

The people of Northern Ireland are a lot more positive about the contribution that migrants and minority ethnic communities make to society than the UK population overall. Concerns were expressed by a clear majority (60%) of people that immigrants face racism in Northern Ireland (just 14% disagree). There are still some 23% of respondents who have negative attitudes to migrants.

It is also clear that there is greater positivity shown in attitudes towards refugees and Muslims, as well as towards the Irish Traveller community – which often is met by more negative opinions (27% expressed negative attitudes compared to 34% positive. The remaining 39% don't have an opinion or don't know.

NORTHERN IRELAND IS CHANGING

Northern Ireland is changing and while a minority of the population is growing increasingly anxious over the future, the majority are embracing – or at least accepting – that things are changing. A clear majority of people (59%) are optimistic about the future, a higher level than the UK as a whole.

It remains to be seen how Brexit and possible Scottish independence will impact on politics of Northern Ireland, but it is clear that anxiety about the future is growing among a significant minority, especially within the Unionist and Loyalist communities.

While support remains strongly in place for the Good Friday Agreement, there are some warning signs. As is now common across all polls HOPE not hate carries out, we asked people a number of questions about the state of democracy, their feelings towards political parties and their attitudes to violence.

The top words chosen to describe Northern Ireland today – by those opposed to the Good Friday Agreement – are **Weak** (28%), **Welcoming** (24%), **Angry** (22%) and **Fearful** (22%).

Among those who want to see the Good Friday Agreement abolished, three-quarters believe that none of the main political parties speak for them, almost 50% higher than for the population as a whole and 20% view former English Defence League leader Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [aka Tommy Robinson] positively, compared to just 6% of all respondents.

More worryingly, 49% of this group agree that "violence can sometimes be necessary to defend something you strongly believe", with 25% strongly agreeing with the statement – though of course this does not suggest that these people want a return to violence in Northern Ireland.

It is clear that the impact of Brexit and the forthcoming Scottish elections will have a big influence on the politics of Northern Ireland as well questions over the future of the constitutional position of the region. But it is also important that more work is done to bolster cross-community engagement, reduce displays of single identity territoriality in local communities and effort made to develop and increase the sense of a shared Northern Irish identity – all of which are highly popular among both Catholic and Protestant communities.

THE NEED FOR HOPE

JEMMA LEVENE & NICK LOWLES

READING A report like this can give an impression of overwhelming grimness, with British society awash with hateful and divisive characters. However, that would be a total misrepresentation of where we are right now. For everything that is included in this report, it's vital to acknowledge that 2020 also brought out the best in our communities and in our nation.

For most the onset of the pandemic meant an opportunity to get involved in supporting the vulnerable in our families, streets and communities. Not to mention the absolute superstars who, by dint of their jobs, put themselves on the frontline for all of us – from everyone working for the NHS to care workers, supermarket staff, delivery drivers, public transport workers and the emergency services.

When our children and grandchildren learn about the COVID-19 pandemic in years to come, there will be much to teach about solidarity and about how our country can pull together in a crisis.

It is also important to remember what is good about our country. HOPE not hate Charitable Trust's recent **European State of HATE** report, produced earlier this year in conjunction with Expo (Sweden) and Amadeu Antonio Foundation (Germany), found that the UK had the least negative attitudes towards immigrants, Muslims and Roma of any of the eight European countries surveyed.

Our own polling for this magazine, finds similar results. Almost **half of Britons** (43%) have a positive attitude to Muslims, compared to just 22% who have a negative attitude. A slightly **bigger number** (49%) have a positive attitude to refugees and asylum seekers, compared to 29% who have a negative attitude. And 35% of people have a **positive attitude** to people from the Traveller community, as opposed to 29% who are negative.

Compare this to Italy and France: in Italy, 67% have a negative attitude towards Roma, and 62% in France, while only 6% in both countries had a positive attitude. In Germany, 39% hold a negative attitude towards the Roma, compared to just 12% who take a positive view.

None of this is to say that there are not still big problems that we all have to tackle in the UK, as this report clearly shows. However, it is vital that we harness the good to overcome the bad – **HOPE has to beat hate.**

HOPE can both be a great antidote to hate as well as acting as a mobiliser. We came up with the name 'HOPE not hate' back in 2004 precisely for this reason. Our polling in areas where the far-right British National Party (BNP) was winning local elections made it clear that even in these areas, a majority of people rejected the politics of hate. But highlighting the BNP's politics of hatred was not enough alone to win people over. We needed to offer an alternative – an alternative vision – and HOPE gave us that.

"HOPE" gave us an alternative worldview to the vision of hate offered by the BNP. HOPE suggested a world where people came together in solidarity, collaborated

HOPE NOT HATE VISION

Our vision is for a world without hatred. That means exposing and challenging hate, engaging with the communities who are susceptible to the extreme right, and challenging and addressing the issues and policies which give rise to hatred.

HATE
HOPE
HATE

and overcame their problems through dialogue. Not the conflict, competition and anger encapsulated by the BNP.

We have tried to carry that positive vision ahead in everything we do. Our education work challenges prejudice in the classroom. Our community work seeks to bridge divides. And our policy work attempts to address some of the underlying issues that create the conditions that extremists then exploit.

Even our research and campaigning offer hope. By exposing, challenging and confronting extremists, we hope to reduce their ability to spread hate. By ensuring they are beaten at the ballot box, we are aiming to create a space for those with more positive and inclusive policies to step forward.

When we look at challenging and overcoming the hate and extremism highlighted in this report, it is important to understand that there is no single solution or simple remedy.

Many people are drawn to extremism because of other factors affecting their lives, factors often outside their immediate control. Some will not understand, or accept, that what they are doing is wrong or needs changing. There are, of course, a few who are very dangerous and for them arrest and potentially imprisonment is often the only solution.

Just as there are multiple reasons why people are drawn into extremism, so there are numerous ways that extremism can be combatted. Some cases will require legal intervention, including arrests and imprisonment, but most extremism needs to be addressed in other ways, addressing the concerns and grievances (real or imagined) that give it oxygen, challenging disinformation and conspiracies that sour the political landscape, and bringing communities together to break down barriers and misconceptions.



It is a combination of all these, coupled with a message and vision of hope, that are required to defeat the nihilism of hate.

It is for this reason that we are increasingly concerned about the noises coming out of Government which seem to suggest it is about to deprioritise counter-extremism work inside communities, instead preferring to tackling online hate and hate crime. While these are important issues that must be addressed, they cannot be done at the expense of community engagement and more localised initiatives that bring divided communities together and push extremists to the margins.

Of course, you can criminalise the key perpetrators of hate and deny them the online platforms to propagandise and spread their extremist poison, but this does nothing to address the underlying issues that give rise to extremism in the first place.

Tougher laws and increased enforcement can certainly be part of any strategy to defeat extremism: they cannot be the main plank of an anti-extremism strategy. You can't legislate hate away, not least because such approaches have a habit of backfiring in the longer term. People become more alienated from the system and over-focusing on a legalisative approach can play into the "cancel culture" and "thought police" narrative which is already so persuasive in the extremist mindset.

HOPE not hate is set up to reflect a myriad of approaches – research, education, community engagement and policy work – that we feel are proven and necessary to truly combat extremism. We also believe that it is the combination of these different elements that makes us stronger and more effective.

HOPE must lie at the heart of this strategy: the promise and vision that hate can be replaced with something better. It is, after all, the absence of hope that makes many people so susceptible to hate. And with the threats highlighted in this report, coupled with the economic impact of the COVID pandemic, Brexit and a possible constitutional crisis, the need for HOPE, and we think "HOPE not hate", is required more than ever.

GET INVOLVED IN BUILDING HOPE

There are myriad ways to get involved in resisting hate and building hope. If you've been inspired or energised by reading this report, maybe one or some of these might appeal to you:

- 1. Join our email list:** Stay informed with all our latest news, reports and campaigns.
- 2. Host a training for your workplace or community group:** Whether you want to explore better conversations on difficult issues, understand the contemporary far right, or perhaps explore issues around everyday racism and prejudice, we have a training package for you.
- 3. Report hate:** Reducing hate in society benefits us all. We always recommend reporting any hateful content you find online to the relevant platform, and any hate incident, online or off, to us, the police or the online reporting system True Vision, plus specialist support services (such as Galop, the Community Security Trust, Tell Mama and Report Racism GRT).
- 4. Join a local HOPE not hate group (or build your own):** Our local groups are involved in all kinds of activism in their areas. As well as being a great way to pool resources with like-minded people, you can share our research and help your local community.
- 5. School talks & webinars:** If you have children in school, or work in the education sector, then book one of our interactive workshops for students or training sessions for teachers and staff.
- 6. Join the HOPE Action Fund.** Support our work by making a small monthly contribution to HOPE not hate.

■ **For information on any of the above, follow the updates on our website and social media platforms, and contact us: info@hopenothate.org.uk**



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