

Xenophobia, Radicalism and Hate Crime in the UK (2020-22)

Dr William Allchorn

Introduction

Recent events in the UK relating to xenophobia, radicalism and radical right extremism suggest that racial and societal tensions are not going away any time soon. At the time of this report's completion in March of 2023, expressions of polarisation, stigmatisation and racialisation emerged in the UK's public life that have emboldened xenophobic, radical movements. First, and during the last weeks of February 2023, UK white supremacists¹ targeted a hotel housing asylum seekers in Knowsley – resulting in a riot between police and local people.² Secondly, and in reaction to book reading sessions under the initiative 'Drag Queen Story Hour', a wider campaign by UK radical right extremists was sparked in response with many key groups protesting against LGBTQ+ rights outside libraries up and down the UK.³ Thirdly, a record rise in migrants attempting to cross the channel has led to further mobilisations by radical-right organisations and solo-actors, who see such crossings as part of a broader "invasion". Both culturally and racially nationalist groups Britain First and Patriotic Alternative have been ratcheting up their rallies outside such centres in response.⁴ Meanwhile, in late 2022, one individual actually set fire to asylum accommodation in Dover before taking his own life shortly after.⁵

Likewise, neo-Nazism in the UK continues to inspire individuals to accelerate a 'race war' through violent means, as made clear in the most recent in a series of court cases. 20 far-right sympathisers were convicted of terrorist offences in 2022 alone and 49% of all terror arrests in the year to September 2022 were linked to suspected extreme right-wing terrorism.⁶ Such cases – also joined by solo-actor attempts⁷ – were symptomatic of a broader coalescing of individuals around an international radical right extremist terror ideology – sometimes dubbed as the accelerationist creed of 'Siege Culture' - who's clandestine nature on dark social media and dark

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

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

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

⁴ Dathan, M. & Kennedy, D., 'Migrant Hunts Double in One Year', *The Times*, 17 February 2022, online at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/migrant-hunts-double-in-one-year-grjf8p82c>.

⁵ BBC News, 'Dover migrant centre attack: Firebomber died of asphyxiation, inquest told', 8 November 2022, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-63552462>.

⁶ *Hope Not Hate*, 'State of Hate 2023: Rhetoric, Race and Resentment', February 2023, p. 59 online at: <https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/state-of-hate-2023-v7-1.pdf>.

⁷ *Ibid.*, PP. 60 & 61 for examples.

chat forums poses an increasing challenge for policymakers and law enforcement in the UK and elsewhere due to the terrorist potential therein.⁸

The wider context of these interventions and activities by radical right (and Islamist) extremist groups are covered in this bi-annual review. This includes discussion of the continuing 'mainstreaming' of racist and xenophobic views in both major UK parties, as well as the developing actions to address and counter it. An essential backdrop to these developments were anti-government and anti-authority sentiments stirred up during the COVID-19 pandemic that has seen the established radical right and the conspiracist fringe join forces on the streets in several cities in the UK to voice their opposition to the UK governments interventions. Sparsely attended during the pandemic period, 2022 saw a rise in street protests that is, at present, the biggest threat posed by the organised far right. As COVID-19 lockdown restrictions were lifted the movement has returned to the streets in a concerted and meaningful way, focusing on a range of issues. Moreover, with the cost-of-living crisis becoming increasingly severe, mistrust in mainstream politics growing, an energetic, committed and sometimes violent far-right movement ready to exploit the situation.⁹ This has resulted in a rise of 'lone actor' vigilantes and more radical, often street-based, movements to fill the void. The responses by the UK government, political parties, and policy practitioners are all central considerations in what follows; no less than six recommendations for practical action to counter rising xenophobia and radicalism can be found at the end of the conclusion to this report.

1. Overview of Legislation Protecting Minorities

The UK has a large array of legislation to combat racial and religious discrimination. Although also cast into some uncertainty by the actions of elite policymakers in the UK at the time of writing,¹⁰ the United Kingdom remains a signatory to the European Charter of Fundamental Human Rights, and has also acceded to all international agreements protecting the rights of minority populations in Europe. While codified rights for subjects are not enshrined in the constitution (that is, a single, authoritative document like in the United States), a number of authoritative charters and statutes govern democratic relations; including the landmark Magna Carta (1215) and the Bill of Rights (1689), through to the Great Reform Act (1832) and more recent the Human Rights Act (1998). The latter initiative has helped enshrine certain political, civil and social rights in the UK over the last generation, while providing a key form of protection for ethnic and religious minorities.

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

⁸ For more on this, see: Thorleifsson, C. & Düker, J., 'Lone Actors in Digital Environments', European Commission: Radicalisation Awareness Network, online at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-10/ran_paper_lone_actors_in_digital_environments_en.pdf.

⁹ Mulhall, J. , 'A Post-Organisational Far Right?', *Hope Not Hate*, 2018, online at: <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/research/state-of-hate-2018/online-radicalisation/post-organisational-far-right/>.

¹⁰ Elgot, J., 'Tory MPs to push for UK exit from European convention on human rights', *The Guardian*, 5 February 2023, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/feb/05/tory-mps-to-push-for-uk-exit-from-european-convention-of-human-rights>.

nationality, ethnic or national origin.¹¹ Furthermore, grounds for prosecuting acts of discrimination against racial and religious minorities were enhanced in 2006 with the adoption of the Racial and Religious Hatred Act, making it an offence to stir up hatred against persons on racial or religious grounds.¹² The 1976 Race Relations Act was, however, later subsumed and superseded by the 2010 Equality Act, which introduced nine key protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This helped to harmonise fully nine previous pieces of legislation in order to protect individuals from discrimination based on sex, age, religious belief, and disability.¹³ The net effect was to legislate against both direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation; including public and private places of work, but also leisure and travel.

Looking more specifically at safeguards against specific acts of discrimination, the 1986 Public Order Act, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Criminal Justice Act 2003 all have provisions against racial and religious harassment and hate crime. In terms of the former, Section 5 of the Public Order Act outlaws the use of threatening (or abusive) words or behaviour, as well as writing, signs or any other visible representation, which is threatening (or abusive).¹⁴ Moreover, Sections 18 and 19 of the Public Order Act stipulates that offences or written materials intended to stir up racial hatred, or that which has a likelihood of stirring up racial hatred, is outlawed.¹⁵ In terms of the latter, Sections 28-32 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Sections 145 and 146 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 allow prosecutors to apply for an uplift in sentence for those convicted of a hate crime.¹⁶

During the period under review, there were no substantial changes in anti-discrimination legislation in the UK. This did not, however, stop an appetite for reform to, and expansion of, anti-discrimination law; both nationally and in the UK's devolved Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland law-making bodies. The advent of Black Lives Matters protests in the UK in 2020 saw Boris Johnson's government extend his 'levelling up' agenda for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.¹⁷ Despite a commission on race and ethnic disparities being put together to review health, education, criminal justice and employment for BAME community members, little is known, however, about whether this will lead to concrete policies or guidelines to elevate the chances of BAME communities in the UK.¹⁸ Such attempts mirror the 'life chances' agenda of the UK's previous Prime Minister, Theresa May.¹⁹ On a slightly different

¹¹ UK Government. Race Relations Act (1976), online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/74/enacted.

¹² UK Government. Racial and Religious Hatred Act (2006), online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/1/contents.

¹³ UK Government. Equality Act (2010), online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents.

¹⁴ UK Government. Public Order Act (1986), Section 5, online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/64/section/5.

¹⁵ UK Government. Public Order Act (1986), online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/64.

¹⁶ UK Crown Prosecution Service. 'Hate Crime', online at: www.cps.gov.uk/hate-crime.

¹⁷ Tolhurst, A., 'Boris Johnson says his 'levelling up' agenda will tackle racial inequality in wake of Black Lives Matters protests,' *Politics Home*, 9 June 2020, online at: <https://www.politicshome.com/news/article/boris-johnson-says-his-levelling-up-agenda-will-help-tackle-racial-inequality-in-wake-of-black-lives-matters-protests>.

¹⁸ UK Government, 'Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities', Press Release, 16 July 2020, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities-16-july-2020>.

¹⁹ BBC News, 'UK must act against race inequality, Theresa May says', 10 October 2017, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41560927>.

note, and at the UK's central Westminster parliament, debates raged also about the legislation concerning the ability of transgender people to self-identify as such.²⁰ After a period of public consultation, however, no legislation was brought forward and transgender people will still need medical evidence of transition to another gender to be legally certified as such.²¹ On a more positive note (and at variance from the UK's Westminster Parliament), on 22 December 2022, the Scottish Parliament passed legislation to allow self-recognition of gender without medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria.²² Using Section 35 of the UK's 1998 Scotland Act, however, the UK's Westminster government blocked the bill from coming into law – citing the legislation's consequences for the operation of UK wide equalities protections.²³ Finally, 2020 saw the tortuous passage of a new Hate Crime and Public Order Bill by the Scottish Government. Again, however, concerns over attempts to lower the legal threshold for hate crimes - through a new “stirring up hatred” offence - were heavily criticised by free speech groups, meaning that the Bill (introduced in April 2020) has had a delayed gestation that might signal such legislation being dead on arrival.²⁴

2. Law enforcement procedures protecting minorities & curtailing extremism

The main safeguards against discrimination in everyday life and the workplace in the UK are the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and Tribunals Service. The former was set up on 1 October 2007 with particular powers to challenge discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights.²⁵ It was created out of three pre-existing equality organisations (the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission) and operates independently from the UK Government.²⁶ The latter service houses key institutions for recourse against discrimination within the workplace and against the state. In particular, Employment Tribunals and Asylum and Immigration Tribunals provide key legal fora for individuals feeling unfairly discriminated against based upon their religious, racial or ethnic background.²⁷

While hate crime is systematically recorded by a number of police constabularies, there still remains concerns with systemic underreporting and differences in recording practices across the UK. In the period under study, for example, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire Police suggested that, while official figures released in March 2021 a 9% increase in

²⁰ For more information, see this House of Commons Briefing Note (Number 08969, 22 July 2020): <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8969/>.

²¹ Murphy, S. & Brooks, L., 'UK government drops gender self-identification plan for trans people', *The Guardian*, 22 September 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/sep/22/uk-government-drops-gender-self-identification-plan-for-trans-people>.

²² Scottish Government, 'Gender Recognition Reform Bill passed', 22 December 2022, online at: <https://www.gov.scot/news/gender-recognition-reform-bill-passed/>.

²³ Crerar, P., & Brooks, L., 'Rishi Sunak blocks Scotland's gender recognition legislation', *The Guardian*, 16 January 2023, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/16/rishi-sunak-blocks-scotlands-gender-recognition-legislation>.

²⁴ Paton, C., 'Changes to Scottish Hate Crime Bill 'under active consideration'', *The Scotsman*, 27 October 2020, online at: <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/changes-scottish-hate-crime-bill-under-active-consideration-3016666>.

²⁵ Equality and Human Rights Commission. 'Who we are', online at: www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/about-us/who-we-are.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ HM Courts and Tribunals Service. 'About Us', online at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-courts-and-tribunals-service/about#our-tribunals.

hate crimes nationally, Wiltshire saw only a 4% increase.²⁸ Moreover, under-reporting was also noted at the sub-national level by Cumbria's Police force - with Cumbria Constabulary's hate crime lead noting that - despite record high figures nationally - local figures were still relatively low.²⁹ Looking more broadly and analytically, a lack of trust and confidence in the police is also a sizeable factor among minority communities in the UK more generally.³⁰ Moreover, comparisons between officially collated figures and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) also highlight the issue. Between March 2018 to March 2020, for example, 190,000 hate crimes were reported on the basis of race, religion, gender, disability, gender identity and sexual orientation. This is compared with the 105,090 hate crime offences recorded nationally by the police.³¹ Finally, the patchwork nature of hate crime statistics and how they are gathered in the UK sometimes makes it hard to ascertain the scale of the problem. In recent years, there has been criticism of intransigence by the UK government and police forces in recognising gender-based,³² ageist,³³ disablist³⁴ and transgender hate crime.³⁵

Turning from official reporting of hate crimes to court cases, we have seen an increase - during the reporting period - of sentences being awarded on the basis of hate crime offences in UK court. In UK Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) Q4 2021-2022 reporting period, the CPS data summary states that the proportion of hate crime convictions that saw a recorded sentence 'uplift' increased to 81% in Q4 2021/22, from 79% in 2020/21 and 77% in 2019/20.³⁶ This has resulted from a sustained effort to improve the CPS's quality of case work through meeting a 55% target in announced and recorded sentence 'uplifts' due to hate crimes set by the CPS in

²⁸ Wiltshire and Swindon PCC, 'PCC concerned hate crime offences are significantly under-reported', October 2021, online at: <https://www.wiltshire-pcc.gov.uk/my-office/opcc-news/2021/october-2021/pcc-concerned-hate-crime-offences-are-significantly-under-reported/>.

²⁹ Rawlinson, O., 'Police say hate crimes 'underreported' after figures rise in Cumbria', News & Star, 12 October 2022, online at: <https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23040777.police-say-hate-crimes-underreported-figures-rise-cumbria/>.

³⁰ Skellington, D., 'Race and hate crime go unreported because people believe police will do little', Open University, 20 May 2014, online at: www.open.edu/openlearn/people-politics-law/politics-policy-people/society-matters/race-and-hate-crime-go-unreported-because-people-believe-police-will-do-little.

³¹ UK Home Office, 'Hate crime, England and Wales, 2019 to 2020', Gov.UK Website, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020#police-recorded-hate-crime>.

³² Grierson, J., 'Misogyny 'should become a hate crime in England and Wales'', *The Guardian*, 23 September 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/sep/23/misogyny-hate-crime-england-wales-law-commission>

³³ Grierson, J., 'Review of UK hate crime law to consider misogyny and ageism', *The Guardian*, 16 October 2018, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/16/review-of-uk-hate-law-to-consider-misogyny-and-ageism>.

³⁴ Bowcott, O., 'Victims of disability hate crime are still being let down, report claims', *The Guardian*, 21 May 2015, online at: www.theguardian.com/society/2015/may/21/disability-hate-crime-police-probation-prosecutors-failing-victims-report-claims.

³⁵ Butcher, R., 'More than a third of all trans people suffered hate crimes in 2017, research suggests', *The Independent*, 19 January 2018, online at: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/trans-hate-crimes-stats-figures-2017-more-than-third-a8166826.html.

³⁶ UK Crown Prosecution Service, 'CPS data summary Quarter 4 2021-2022', online at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/cps-data-summary-quarter-4-2021-2022#:~:text=Overall%2C%20the%20volume%20of%20police,to%208805%20in%202021%2D2022>.

2016 – as part of their 2017-2020 Hate Crime Strategy.³⁷ Looking further into the data, however, a more mixed picture emerges for the current reporting period. Since 2016/17 to 2020/21 the number of annual prosecutions has been falling with 2019/20 representing the largest percentage decrease in that period.³⁸ The CPS also reported that in Q4 2021/22, there was a 10% decrease on the previous year in the number cases received by the police compared to the previous year.³⁹ The cases went from 10,969 in 2020/21 to 9,836 in 2021/22. Finally, the total percentage of convictions vs. non-convictions has increased slightly steady (from 81.9% to 83.3% Quarter on Quarter at the end of 2022), with completed convictions slightly increasing also (by 4.1% on the previous Quarter).⁴⁰

Moving from hate crimes to acts of terrorism and extremism, the UK has robust procedures for identifying individuals on the road to radicalisation and more downstream measures to proscribe terrorist organisations. Part of the UK government's CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy, Prevent allows for a multi-sector response to individuals referred to them.⁴¹ Participation in the Channel process - as part of this - is voluntary and individuals are often paired with a mentor as well as mental health, employment and housing experts to provide a holistic solution out of extremism; not just tackling the ideological basis of their extremist engagement but also social, economic and psychological push and pull factors that informed their choice to go down a particular radical pathway in their first place.⁴² Added to this, there are non-governmental de-radicalisation programmes (such as EXIT UK) – mainly run by former extremists – that provide training, education and mentorship services.⁴³

Prevent has been widely criticised for stigmatising the Muslim community and has recently been put under independent review.⁴⁴ Despite public debates that have shown the toxicity of the Prevent 'brand', opinion polls actually show strong support for the programme (58% in favour in 2020)⁴⁵ and it is often cited by international bodies as a gold standard in government programmes to prevent violent extremism.⁴⁶ Moreover, and as Channel caseloads show for the second year running,⁴⁷ radical right extremism outstrips Islamist extremism as one of the

³⁷ UK Crown Prosecution Service, 'Hate Crime Strategy, 2017-2020', online at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/CPS-Hate-Crime-Strategy-2020-Feb-2018.pdf>, p. 3.

³⁸ UK Crown Prosecution Service, 'CPS data summary Quarter 4 2020-2021', online at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/cps-data-summary-quarter-4-2020-2021>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ UK Crown Prosecution Service, 'CPS data summary Quarter 4 2021-2022', online at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/cps-data-summary-quarter-4-2021-2022#:~:text=Overall%2C%20the%20volume%20of%20police,to%208805%20in%202021%2D2022>.

⁴¹ For more on the UK's CONTEST strategy, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest>.

⁴² See this Channel case study as an example: <https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/the-channel-programme>.

⁴³ See EXIT UK's website at: <https://exituk.org/>.

⁴⁴ UK Home Office, 'Independent review of Prevent', Documents Page, 16 September 2019, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/independent-review-of-prevent>.

⁴⁵ ICM Polling Unlimited, 'Perceptions of the UK Counter-Terrorism programme, "Prevent"', August 2019, online at: <https://www.icmunlimited.com/our-work/understanding-perceptions-of-the-uk-counter-terrorism-programme-prevent/>.

⁴⁶ Ware, J., 'Prevent isn't 'rotten' – it's working', CapX, 25 March 2017, online at: <https://capx.co/prevent-isnt-rotten-its-working/>.

⁴⁷ Home Office, 'Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme', April 2021 to March 2022', 23 January 2023, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals->

“fastest growing problems” for counter-terror officials in the UK.⁴⁸ This has been shown in relation to several high profile cases of solo-actor and groupuscular radical right extremists being caught in the planning stages of a terror attack and has given the UK the infamous mantle of seeing highest number of radical right extremist terror attacks and plots in Europe in 2019, according to Europol’s figures.⁴⁹ Moreover, it was also joined by a metastising incel-inflected terrorism picture during the reporting period, with a sharp uptick in referral cases to the UK Prevent counter-terror programme from 2021-2022.⁵⁰

Finally, and on the note of discriminatory practices in law enforcement, one sizeable story that has been debated in the reporting period is the trial use of facial recognition technology and stop and search techniques in the UK. In March 2020, for example, the UK’s Equalities and Human Rights Commission pleaded with police forces and the UK Home Office to halt the public use of facial recognition technology as it was deemed to amplify racial discrimination and stifle free expression.⁵¹ In particular, evidence has been found that because the technology has mainly be trained on Caucasian faces the algorithms used in identification “disproportionately misidentify black people and women” and therefore potentially “replicate and magnify patterns of discrimination in policing”.⁵² Such an issue came to a head in summer of 2020 when police were warned not to use facial recognition at UK Black Lives Matter protests due to such inaccuracies.⁵³ Turning to the second issue of stop and search, a wave of debates on the issue of police halting minorities for suspected criminal activity crested again in the UK amidst broader BLM activity. In October 2020, for example, the Metropolitan Police were found to have incurred multiple errors while using the practice,⁵⁴ and – in the same month – statistics released by the UK’s Office for National Statistics showed that black people were eighteen times more likely to be stopped under Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.⁵⁵

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

[referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2021-to-march-2022/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2021-to-march-2022.](#)

⁴⁸ Dodd, V. & Grierson, J., ‘Fastest-growing UK terrorist threat is from far right, say police’, *The Guardian*, 19 September 2019, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/sep/19/fastest-growing-uk-terrorist-threat-is-from-far-right-say-police>.

⁴⁹ Dearden, L., ‘UK saw highest number of far-right terror attacks and plots in Europe in 2019, Europol says’, *The Independent*, 23 June 2020, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/terror-attacks-far-right-islamist-europe-uk-stanwell-2019-a9581921.html>.

⁵⁰ Dodd, V., ‘Large rise in men referred to Prevent over women-hating incel ideology’, *The Guardian*, 26 January 2023, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/26/large-rise-in-men-referred-to-prevent-over-women-hating-incel-ideology>.

⁵¹ Grierson, J., ‘Review of UK hate crime law to consider misogyny and ageism’, *The Guardian*, 16 October 2018, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/mar/12/halt-public-use-of-facial-recognition-tech-says-equality-watchdog>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Boland, H., ‘Police warned not to use facial recognition at UK Black Lives Matter protests’, *The Telegraph*, 11 June 2020, online at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2020/06/11/police-warned-not-use-facial-recognition-uk-black-lives-matter/>.

⁵⁴ Dodd, V., ‘Met police criticised for multiple errors in stop and search practice’, *The Guardian*, 28 October 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/28/met-police-criticised-for-multiple-errors-in-stop-and-search-practice>.

⁵⁵ Vikram, D., ‘Black people nine times more likely to face stop and search than white people’, *The Guardian*, 27 October 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/27/black-people-nine-times-more-likely-to-face-stop-and-search-than-white-people>.

Much recent scholarship in the UK has been devoted to focusing upon xenophobia and its links to so-called ‘trigger events’ during the reporting period. In November 2019, a study by Cardiff University’s HateLab found that 2013 Woolwich terror attacks, 2016 EU Referendum and subsequent 2017 terror attacks led to an increased hate speech online and hate crimes offline – mainly in the 24-48 hour window after such events.⁵⁶ Moreover, another earlier study came to similar conclusions – suggesting that the EU referendum led to a significant increase in hate crimes equivalent to the Manchester and London terror attacks, controlling for other factors.⁵⁷ In addition, a London-focused criminological study found that online anti-Black and anti-Muslim hate crime in the post-Brexit era were predictors of racially and religiously aggravated hate crimes in the offline world.⁵⁸ Finally, this maps onto qualitative findings of studies into hate crime published during the moment prior period under consideration – suggesting that Donald Trump’s presidency and ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks in European countries such as France, Germany, Sweden also played a part in anti-immigrant hate crime attacks.⁵⁹

Looking more broadly at xenophobic attitudes in the UK during the reporting period, figures published by the World Values Survey found that negative perceptions of immigration and its importance as an issue have actually decreased until the end of the reporting period. In fact, positive feelings toward migrants from other EU states and outside the EU rose markedly in the UK – in 2009, 65% of Britons thought that when jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to people of this country over immigrants but this has since more than halved, to 29% in 2022⁶⁰ – whilst the UK (21%) is least likely to think immigration increases unemployment – far behind countries including Germany (36%) and Australia (36%) and the US (33%).⁶¹ This may be unsurprising in light of the more authoritarian and right-wing populist line adopted on immigration first by Theresa May and Boris Johnson since the June 2016 EU Referendum result and the promise of “taking back control” of the UK’s border subsequent to the referendum result. Reported attitudes towards the EU itself in recent years have also started to differ with recent voting patterns, with a plurality (57%) wishing to re-join the EU and 43% of respondents wishing to remain apart from it.⁶² The explanation lies in the views expressed by those who did not vote (i.e. younger cohorts coming of voting age). They were more than twice as likely to say they would have backed Remain as they were to state they preferred Leave.⁶³

⁵⁶ Williams, M. & de Reya, M., ‘Hatred Behind the Screens: A Report on the Rise of Online Hate Speech’, November 2019, Mischon Academy, online at: <https://www.mishcon.com/upload/files/Online%20Hate%20Final%202025.11.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Devine, D., ‘The UK Referendum on Membership of the European Union as a Trigger Event for Hate Crimes’, SSRN, March 2018, online at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3118190.

⁵⁸ Williams, M.L., Burnap, P., Javed, A., Liu, H., & Ozalp, S., ‘Hate in the Machine: Anti-Black and Anti-Muslim Social Media Posts as Predictors of Offline Racially and Religiously Aggravated Crime’, *The British Journal of Criminology*, 60 (1): 93–117, January 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azzo49>.

⁵⁹ Awan, I. & Zempi, I., ‘“You all look the same”: Non-Muslim men who suffer Islamophobic hate crime in the post-Brexit era’, *European Journal of Criminology*, 17 (5): 585–602, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1477370818812735>.

⁶⁰ Kings College Policy Institute, ‘UK attitudes to immigration: how the public became more positive’, February 2023, DOI: 10.18742/pub01-115.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² What UK Thinks EU, ‘Post-Brexit Poll of Polls’, *National Centre for Social Research*, online at: <https://whatukthinks.org/eu/opinion-polls/poll-of-polls-uk-eu/>.

⁶³ Curtice, J., ‘Public Attitudes on Brexit: Past, Present and Future’, *UK in a Changing Europe*, 21 June 2021, online at : <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/public-attitudes-brexit/>.

Turning to the theme of anti-Muslim prejudice in British society more broadly, several opinion polls conducted in the period under review have fleshed out trends regarding anti-Muslim prejudice. In January 2022, a poll of over 1,667 people conducted by the University of Birmingham found that 25.9% of the British public felt negatively towards Muslims when compared to 8.5% for Jewish people, 6.4% for black people, and 8.4% for white people.⁶⁴ For example, Support for prohibiting all Muslim migration to the UK is 4-6% higher for Muslims than it is for other ethnic and religious groups (18.1% support) and Britons are almost three times more likely to hold prejudiced views of Islam than they are of other religions (21.1% of British people wrongly believe Islam teaches its followers that the Qur'an must be read 'totally literally').⁶⁵ Moreover, in a separate study conducted by the UK anti-fascist collective, Hope not Hate, 30% of the 20,000 respondents believed it probably or definitely true that "parts of many European cities are under the control of Sharia Law and are 'no-go' zones for non-Muslims".⁶⁶ Added to this, anti-Muslim attitudes within the UK's Conservative party were investigated in 2022 – with one Conservative councillor tweeting "It seems like an invasion where eventually we will have complete no go areas within all of the major towns and cities where there is a high population of Islamic immigrants / communities".⁶⁷

Finally, the reporting period also saw polling attitudes towards sexual minorities that was both concerning and illuminating. Research by Ipsos Mori found that the majority of Britons (60%) believe that people from LGBTQ+ communities face at least a fair amount of discrimination (16% say they face a great deal).⁶⁸ Of the nearly 1,200 people polled, half of Britons are supportive of LGBT-inclusive sex education in schools, although around one in five are against.⁶⁹ With regards to the transgender community, recent polling conducted on behalf of Stonewall, a UK-based LGBTQ+ charity, found that attitudes towards transgender individuals was overwhelmingly positive – with respondents reporting a high level of respect and admiration towards transgender individuals when compared with disgust, pity, fear, resentment & envy.⁷⁰ Moreover, transgender issues and debates were ranked low in the public consciousness – with transgender individuals finishing rock bottom of a closed list of 16 issues that the public felt most strongly about, with just 2% of the general public identifying transgender issues as their top concern. Finally, researchers found that the size of the population who hold actively negative views towards transgender individuals was relatively small and broadly consistent across communities. For example, when looking at the 8% of the population who admit to feeling 'disgust' about trans people, some 52% of them also feel disgust about lesbians, 62%

⁶⁴ Stephen H. Jones and Amy Unsworth, 'The Dinner Table Prejudice Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain', University of Birmingham, January 2022, online at: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-artslaw/ptr/90172-univ73-islamophobia-in-the-uk-report-final.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Hope Not Hate, 'State of Hate 2023: Rhetoric, Race and Resentment', February 2023, p. 13 online at: <https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/state-of-hate-2023-v7-1.pdf>.

⁶⁷ Ibid. P. 28.

⁶⁸ Shrimpton, H., 'Sexual orientation and attitudes to LGBTQ+ in Britain', *Ipsos Mori*, 26 June 2020, online at: [ipsos.com/en-uk/sexual-orientation-and-attitudes-lgbtq-britain](https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/sexual-orientation-and-attitudes-lgbtq-britain)

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Kelley, N. & de Santos, R., 'TAKE PRIDE REPORT Publicsentimenttowards lesbian,gay,biandtrans peopleintheUK–June2022', London: Stonewall, online at: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/take_pride_-_june_2022.pdf

about gay men, and 56% about bi people – thus suggesting that that transphobia continues to be a strong predictor of lesbophobia, biphobia and homophobia.⁷¹

4. COVID-19 Pandemic and its impact on the level of Xenophobia and the Radicalization in the UK

Like in other Western nations, Covid-19 and its spread were largely associated in the UK with an uptick in Sinophobia and anti-East Asian sentiments. In the United Kingdom, the most well publicised is the case of Jonathan Mok, a student from Singapore who was attacked at the height of Sinophobic fervour in Oxford Street, London, on February 24 2020; his perpetrators shouting “I don't want your coronavirus in my country” at him.⁷² In terms of official data and studies conducted into hate crime and victimisation, one national study – using a victimisation survey (n=393) - found that following the first known case of COVID-19 in the United Kingdom, Chinese/East Asian persons had a higher likelihood of being hate crime than members of any other ethnic minority groups.⁷³ Specifically, victimization reported by Chinese/East Asian participants reached its highest level in March 2020 (before lockdown); it then dropped significantly after an initial relaxation of restrictions in May 2020. Looking more locally at concentrations of Chinese and East Asian populations in London, another study – based on Metropolitan Police Crime Recording data - did indeed also find that hate crimes against Chinese people increased between January and March 2020 (i.e. after the first emergence of Covid-19 and up to the UK's national lockdown).⁷⁴ Examining the later months, through the first UK lockdown and beyond, the results from the study also showed that the pandemic had an enduring effect on hate crimes against Chinese people beyond the immediate months in which Covid-19 first appeared – sustaining the pre-lockdown surge into late summer 2020. In terms of broader xenophobic attitudes, one survey conducted during the early phases of the pandemic bore out this negative trend in Sinophobic sentiment. According to a June 2020 poll, 76% of British Chinese had received racial slurs at least once, and 50% regularly received racial slurs, a significantly higher frequency than experienced by any other racial minority.⁷⁵

Finally, some far right-wing social media users took the opportunity of the pandemic to spread Islamophobic conspiracy theories and fake videos of Muslims flouting social distancing

⁷¹ Ibid. P.16

⁷² See Chiu A. (2020, March 20). ‘Trump has no qualms about calling the coronavirus the “Chinese Virus.” That’s a dangerous attitude, experts say.’ *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/03/20/coronavirus-trump-chinese-virus/> and the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council: <http://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/stop-aapi-hate/>. See also Gover A., Harper S., Langton L. (2020). Anti-Asian hate crime during the COVID-19 pandemic: Exploring the reproduction of inequality. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45(4), 647–667. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12103-020-09545-1>; Tessler H., Choi M., Kao G. (2020). The anxiety of being Asian American: Hate crimes and negative biases during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45, 636–646; & Vachuska K. (2020). *Initial effects of the coronavirus pandemic on racial prejudice in the United States: Evidence from Google trends*. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/bgpk3>

⁷³ Sandy Schumann, Ysanne Moore, ‘The COVID-19 outbreak as a trigger event for sinophobic hate crimes in the United Kingdom’, *The British Journal of Criminology*, 2022;, azac015, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azac015>.

⁷⁴ Gray, C., & Hansen, K. (2021). Did Covid-19 Lead to an Increase in Hate Crimes Toward Chinese People in London? *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 37(4), 569–588. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10439862211027994>

⁷⁵ YouGov, "YouGov Survey Results" (PDF). *YouGov*. June 2020. Retrieved 21 February 2020, online at: <https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/6pg6wifadp/YouGov%20Racism%20BAME%20June%202020%202.pdf>.

measures and being prone to spreading the virus.⁷⁶ This proclivity for victimisation was further born out by health statistics – with Public Health England (2020) finding that ethnic minority groups were more than four times more likely to die from Covid-19 than British White people.⁷⁷ Moreover, in addition to being more likely to die, ethnic minority groups were also 54% more likely to be fined for breaking lockdown rules than White people.⁷⁸ There is therefore a growing body of evidence to suggest that Covid-19 and racism are intrinsically linked⁷⁹ and highlight a clear need for further work to unpick the mechanisms that lie behind this connection so that future interventions can be put in place to protect the vulnerable in crisis situations like Covid-19.

Turning to the Covid-19 pandemic and radicalisation in the UK, some dissensus has emerged about the potential for isolation, lockdowns and crisis acting as a ‘perfect storm’ for heightened extremism in society as a whole. Disconfirming the hypothesis was a study on hateful extremism during the pandemic – commissioned by the UK’s Commission for Countering Extremism and conducted by Ipsos Mori and Rand Europe. What the study found was that – though the pandemic had created feelings that could be exploited by extremists – that participant generally blamed individuals rather than particular ethnic or religious groups, were resilient to disinformation and conspiracy theories circulated about the virus and that critical thinking was evident – even in the rare cases where people bought into blame narratives.⁸⁰ Moreover, official counter-terror statistics surrounding individual radicalisation during the pandemic tended to confirm this trend - with the number of people being supported through the government’s anti-radicalisation programme falling to 4,915 in the year ending March 31 2021 (a drop of 22%

⁷⁶ Awan, Imran (24 April 2020). "Coronavirus: conspiracy theories and fake videos fuel rise in Islamophobia". *The Conversation*, 24 April 2020, online at: <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-and-fake-videos-fuel-rise-in-islamophobia-137107>.

⁷⁷ Public Health England, ‘Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19’, London: Department of Health, August 2020, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908434/Disparities_in_the_risk_and_outcomes_of_COVID_August_2020_update.pdf.

⁷⁸ Busby M., Gidda M., ‘BAME people fined more than white population under coronavirus laws’, *The Guardian*, 26 May 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/26/bame-people-fined-more-than-white-population-under-coronavirus-laws> & Rawlinson K., Quinn B., ‘Police investigate alleged coronavirus-linked attack on London student’, *The Guardian*, 3 March 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/mar/03/police-investigate-alleged-coronavirus-linked-attack-on-london-student-jonathan-mok>

⁷⁹ Coates M. (2020). Covid-19 and the rise of racism. *British Medical Journal*, 369, Article m138, online at: <https://www.bmj.com/content/369/bmj.m1384>; Egede L., Walker R. (2020). Structural racism, social risk factors, and Covid-19—A dangerous convergence for Black Americans. *New England Medical Journal*, 383, Article e77, online at: <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp2023616>; Godlee F. (2020). Racism: The other pandemic. *British Medical Journal*, 369, Article m2303, online at: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m2303>; & Newburn T. (2020). #BlackLivesMatter: What difference might COVID-19 make to the cause? Online at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/blacklivesmatter-covid19/>.

⁸⁰ Hannah Shrimpton, Joe Wheeler, Imogen Drew, ‘Exploring the intersection between hateful extremism and COVID-19’, London: Home Office, 2 July 2021, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exploring-the-intersection-between-hateful-extremism-and-covid-19/exploring-the-intersection-between-hateful-extremism-and-covid-19-accessible-version>.

compared to the previous year).⁸¹ Finally, this picture tended to differ at the group level of radicalisation – with the pandemic seeing “quite significant spikes in extremist activity and also conspiracy theories”.⁸² Indeed, a report written by the UK’s Commission for Countering Extremism concluded that extremists of all ideological stripes used the pandemic to engage in disinformation and fake news about minority groups which have been used by sympathisers to incite hatred, justify violence and to divide communities, and that the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 could cause further long term instability, fear and division in Britain that might outlast the immediate pandemic period.⁸³

5. Armed conflict in Ukraine and its impact on the level of Xenophobia and Radicalism in the UK

Russia holds a confused position in the hearts of the UK far right. On the one hand it retains an unshakeable Cold War legacy as a military rival, one that must be countered by an armed and assertive West. Yet accusations of Russian meddling in the election of President Trump and the Brexit Referendum have also fostered a degree of pro-Russian sympathy among the UK far right. The pro-Trump faction in particular has worked to portray Putin as a bogeyman, a paranoid obsession of liberals keen to explain away their electoral failures. Furthermore, Putin’s illiberalism and strongman reputation can be held in contrast to the perceived weakness and “wokeness” of the Biden administration, European Union and, increasingly, Boris Johnson’s government. These conflicting tendencies can be seen by the varied responses of the UK’s far right to the Ukraine conflict.

The larger response has, however, been one of support for Ukraine and a demand for tougher action from Western governments. For example, former UKIP and Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage described the invasion as “part of [Putin’s] Greater Russia dream. It poses huge challenges to the West and will cause even more division. We have to decide on our red line”. Farage’s Reform UK successor, Richard Tice, went further by calling for ““shock & awe” sanctions against Putin & his oligarch friends especially here in the UK. Sanctions must hit them very hard, make them much poorer.” Yet pro-Russia sympathies have also been on display. While UKIP has not made a recent statement on events, an article uploaded to its website on January 25th headlined “Britain should stop meddling in Ukraine” put the argument that the EU and NATO’s involvement in Ukraine represented “an attempt to snatch Ukraine out of the Russian sphere of influence”. David Kurten, leader of the tiny Heritage Party, has gone further with an unashamed endorsement of Putin, referring to a poll of his Twitter followers to declare that: “9 times as many people trust Putin the current duplicitous, deceitful and despotic leaders who bring shame upon the West.”

Turning to radical and extreme Islamists, the war in Ukraine has become something of a cause celebre for its adherents to rally around – with overall support of Russian aggression led by Vladimir Putin. Early in the war in 2022, for example, there were reports of ISIS praising the war

⁸¹ Counter-Terror Policing, ‘Pandemic causes fall in Prevent referrals, despite the extremist threat to children increasing’, 18 November 2021, online at: <https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/pandemic-causes-fall-in-prevent-referrals-despite-the-extremist-threat-to-children-increasing/>

⁸² Morris, R., ‘Researchers warn of rise in extremism online after Covid’, *BBC News*, 30 December 2022, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-61106191>.

⁸³ Commission for Countering Extremism, ‘COVID-19: How hateful extremists are exploiting the pandemic’, London: Home Office, July 2020, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906724/CCE_Briefing_Note_001.pdf

'crusaders against crusaders' and seeing it as a vector for destroying 'enemies of Islam' in the West more broadly through a bloody and long-drawn out military campaign.⁸⁴ Moreover, more localised groups and factions in the UK expressed similar delight at Ukrainian difficulties – seeing it (again) as a sign of the chickens of Western foreign policy interventions coming home to roost and saw the war as “exposing the hypocrisy and blatant double standards of the West” compared to its prior withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq.⁸⁵

Finally, there was a sharp uptick in manifestations of the anti-Russian sentiment in UK society after the beginning of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. Since the invasion commenced, ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking immigrants from post-Soviet states in the UK reported rising instances of open hostility and discrimination towards them.⁸⁶ This hostility was not just towards Russian people⁸⁷; it has also been seen directed towards businesses and business elites as well.⁸⁸ Sanctions imposed by the UK government and boycotts of Russian products became the norm – despite the lack of evidence that such strategies are effective and sustainable in the long-term at deterring Russian aggression.⁸⁹

In many senses, then, the treatment of Ukrainian refugees has on the whole been positive and solidaristic – backed by UK government schemes for resettlement and housing in the report period.⁹⁰ There has, however, been criticism in some circles as to the positive treatment of Ukrainians versus non-white refugees during the earlier so-called Refugee Crisis in 2015.⁹¹ In particular, the more generous approach to Ukrainian resettlement has been contrasted with that of the harsher treatment of cross-channel migration, which has reached record numbers during the reporting period.⁹² ‘Stop the Boats’ has become a key target of new Prime Minister

⁸⁴ Newman, J., ‘ISIS praises Ukraine war as 'crusaders against crusaders' and says it hopes it will destroy 'enemies of Islam'’, *Daily Mail*, 9 March 2022, online at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10593271/ISIS-praises-Ukraine-war-crusaders-against-crusaders-destroy-enemies-Islam.html>.

⁸⁵ Hiz Bu’Tahrir, ‘OUR ROLE IN THE UKRAINE WAR IS TO EXPOSE THE PROPAGANDA’, Hiz Bu’Tahrir Britain, 2 March 2022, online at: <https://www.hizb.org.uk/viewpoint/our-role-in-the-ukraine-war-is-to-expose-the-propaganda/>.

⁸⁶ Gladkauskaite, S., ‘Russophobia on the rise in Britain’, *The Breaker*, 20 September 2022, online at: <https://www.thebreaker.co.uk/russophobia-on-the-rise-in-britain/> & Mercer, D., ‘Russians assaulted, threatened and abused in UK as hate crimes linked to Ukraine war surge’, *Sky News*, 3 March 2023, online at: <https://news.sky.com/story/russians-assaulted-threatened-and-abused-in-uk-as-hate-crimes-linked-to-ukraine-war-surge-12821923>.

⁸⁷ Orla, B., ‘Russians in the UK face hate speech, verbal abuse as war rages in Ukraine’, *The World*, 14 March 2022, online at: <https://theworld.org/stories/2022-03-14/russians-uk-face-hate-speech-verbal-abuse-war-rages-ukraine>

⁸⁸ Bottaro, G., ‘Ban on Russian bank deposits over £50,000 is illegal, warn finance chiefs’, *The Telegraph*, 31 March 2022, online at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/03/31/ban-russian-bank-deposits-50000-illegal-warn-finance-chiefs/>.

⁸⁹ Haas, R., ‘Economic Sanctions: Too Much of a Bad Thing’, Brookings Institute, 1 June 1998, online at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/economic-sanctions-too-much-of-a-bad-thing/>.

⁹⁰ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, ‘Homes for Ukraine’ scheme launches’, London: HM Government, 14 March 2022, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-launches>.

⁹¹ Venturi, E. & Vallianatou, A.I., ‘Ukraine exposes Europe’s double standards for refugees’, Chatham House, 30 March 2022, online at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/03/ukraine-exposes-europes-double-standards-refugees>.

⁹² *BBC News*, ‘Channel migrants: Almost 1,300 migrants cross Channel in new record’, 23 August 2022, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-62644946>.

Rishi Sunak's government and includes forced repatriation for what is being framed as illegal migration – despite there being no legal asylum route available.⁹³

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

The United Kingdom has often been seen as an exceptional case when it comes to the success of radical right parties. One key trope within the UK literature on radical right-wing extremism was its abject failure to make any appreciable impact upon UK electoral politics. In his 1996 chapter in a co-edited book regarding the 'Failure of British Fascism', for example, Roger Griffin likened the UK radical right to an "ugly duckling" in comparison with some of its European brethren.⁹⁴ Limited by a First-Past-the-Post electoral system and a political consensus in respect of "moderation, a hatred of fanaticism, an aversion to demagoguery, uniforms and overt racism",⁹⁵ the UK's radical right – according to Griffin – has been left to "scratch around indefinitely without ever coming out as a swan".⁹⁶ It was therefore recognised that the post-war anti-fascist consensus and a strong civic culture had immunised the UK and its political institutions from all forms of radical right extremism – acting as a firewall against extremist representation in the UK Parliament and municipal elections.⁹⁷

Such an anti-fascist consensus and exceptionalism to radical nationalist groups and parties has, however, been sorely tested over the past two decades. During the 2000's, the neo-fascist British National Party (BNP) started to moderate its ideology away from a more extreme form of paligenetic nationalism (i.e. national rebirth after a period of moral decadence) towards a radical right populist stance – expressing nativist and nationalist scepticism in the areas of immigration, welfare and the European Union.⁹⁸ This was typified at the 2005 UK General Election when the BNP's manifesto included pledges to withdraw from the EU, to bring back grammar schools, cut immigration, and increase security.⁹⁹ The result of this moderation was significant electoral success for the party – winning more than 50 Council seats, two seats in the European Parliament and one on the devolved Greater London Assembly. Largely due to infighting over finances and the divisive character of its chairman, Nick Griffin, the party's electoral bubble burst after failing to gain Parliamentary representation at the 2010 General Election – returning the party to the electoral wilderness and quickly spiralling into irrelevance. At the 2017 General Election, for example, the party was unable to score more than 4,500 votes

⁹³ Tubakovic, T., et al 'The UK's "stop the boats" policy shows a failure to learn from Australia's mistakes', LSE Politics and Policy Blog, 10 March 2023, online at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/the-uks-stop-the-boats-policy-shows-a-failure-to-learn-from-australias-mistakes/>

⁹⁴ Griffin, R., 'British fascism: The ugly duckling', In: L. M. Cronin (ed.) *The Failure of British Fascism: The far right and the fight for political recognition*, London: Palgrave, 1996, pp. 141-165.

⁹⁵ Goodwin, M.J., 'The Extreme Right in Britain: Still an "Ugly Duckling" but for How Long?' *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No.2, 2007, p.242.

⁹⁶ Griffin, R. Op Cit. p. 163.

⁹⁷ Eatwell, R., 'The extreme right and British exceptionalism: the primacy of politics', In: Hainsworth, P. (ed.) *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream*. London: Pinter, 2000, pp. 172-192.

⁹⁸ Copey, N., 'Changing course or changing clothes? Reflections on the ideological evolution of the British National Party 1999–2006', *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 41, No.1, 2007, pp. 61-82.

⁹⁹ Meyjes, T., 'Some of the BNP's 2005 election pledges are now mainstream policy', *The Metro*, 27 April 2017, online at: <http://metro.co.uk/2017/04/27/some-of-bnps-2005-election-pledges-are-now-mainstream-policy-6599296/?ito=cbshare>.

– down from just over 500,000 seven years prior.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, at the 2019 General Election, the party suffered a further fall from grace – losing its only Lancashire-based councillor to retirement¹⁰¹ and only fielding one councillor in North East London who received 510 votes, thus coming last.¹⁰² The organisation is now largely inactive with no active campaigning during the reporting period.¹⁰³

As the BNP star rose and began to wane, a new party, the UK Independence Party (UKIP), came to take its place in the UK – again testing the UK’s resilience to extremist parties. For most of its history, UKIP was electorally irrelevant. Founded in 1993 as a way of converting Conservatives to hard Euroscepticism, its early attempts at electoral breakthrough were thwarted by infighting and stronger Eurosceptic opponents (such as James Goldsmith’s Referendum Party). Briefly successful under the leadership of Robert Kilroy-Silk in 2004, it wasn’t until Nigel Farage, a former City banker and one of UKIP’s first MEPs, assumed the leadership for a second time in November 2010 that the party took off, transforming UKIP from a single-issue movement into an ideologically broad-based, far-right party able to fuse anti-EU politics with socially conservative, anti-migrant, and anti-elitist messages.¹⁰⁴ Becoming an insurgent actor in British politics it came first, ahead of all other mainstream parties, in the 2014 European Elections – in the process, scoring over 4 million votes at the 2015 General Election. Witnessing key defections from the UK Conservative Party in 2014, it was thus able to gain Parliamentary representation for the first time.

Owing to the exit of Farage and seeming lack of purpose after the 2016 Brexit vote to leave the EU, however, the party has also entered the electoral wilderness and became more ideologically extreme in the monitoring period. It returned just under 600,000 votes at the 2017 General Election and 22,817 at the 2019 UK General Election.¹⁰⁵¹⁰⁶ In the interim, the party also lost nearly all of its Council seats at the May 2018 UK local elections.¹⁰⁷ In this atmosphere, questions are rightly being about the relevance and electoral viability of the party going forward¹⁰⁸ – with former UKIP leader, Nigel Farage, using the vehicle of his new Brexit and Reform parties to further frustrate Conservative attempts to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and successfully

¹⁰⁰ *BBC News*, ‘BNP vote increases, but fails to win seat’, 7 May 2010, online at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8667231.stm.

¹⁰¹ Pidd, H., ‘As the BNP vanishes, do the forces that built it remain?’, *The Guardian*, 2 May 2018, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/may/02/bnps-last-district-councillor-bows-out-but-insists-party-will-rise-again>.

¹⁰² 2019 General Election Results, ‘Hornchurch and Upminster Results’, online at: <https://candidates.democracyclub.org.uk/elections/parl.2019-12-12/>.

¹⁰³ P.125.

¹⁰⁴ Goodwin, M. and Ford, R., *Revolt on the Right: Explaining Support for the Radical Right in Britain*, London: Routledge, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ *BBC News*, ‘Election Results’, May 2017, online at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2017/results.

¹⁰⁶ *BBC News*, ‘Election Results’, December 2019, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2019/results>.

¹⁰⁷ Walker, P., ‘Ukip general secretary says party is “like the Black Death”’, *The Guardian*, 4 May 2018, online at: www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/may/04/black-death-ukip-almost-wiped-out-in-english-local-elections.

¹⁰⁸ Mance, H. and Tighe, C., ‘Ukip contests local elections as questions swirl over its survival’, *The Financial Times*, 16 April 2018 online at: www.ft.com/content/e76d6798-3e5a-1e8-b7e0-52972418fec4.

negotiate a transition treaty going into 2020.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, UKIP has gone through six leaders and slowly ensconced itself with more fringe far-right individuals (such as Tommy Robinson, Mark Meecham and Carl Benjamin) and outfits (such as the Democratic Football Lads Alliance) associated with the UK's established extreme radical right.¹¹⁰ Drivers for radicalisation within the mainstream UK far right tend to be anti-Muslim prejudice and anti-elite sentiments – layered with a sense of victimhood and being shut out of mainstream political conversations.

In parallel with the developments at the party-political level has seen the rise of culturally nationalist¹¹¹ street movements and neo-Nazi terror cells in the UK – especially in the period after the BNP's collapse. In June 2009, the anti-Islam English Defence League (EDL) street movement emerged as a strident voice against what it saw as the “creeping effects” of ‘Islamisation’ in UK public life.¹¹² Able to mobilise thousands of loyal foot soldiers for its events and emerging as the result of Islamist extremists demonstrating at the homecoming of UK troops in the Bedfordshire town of Luton, it hosted over fifty major demonstrations up and down the UK until the exit of its founder, Tommy Robinson, in October 2013.¹¹³ The EDL continues to be active – hosting 13 major demonstrations in 2017, 3 in 2018 and 1 in 2019 – but the scale of its demonstrations has dropped significantly – with its best turnout in the some 200 activists in 2018.¹¹⁴ The current reporting period has seen the group largely go into abeyance with only more extreme EDL splinter groups (such as the North East Infidels and Pie n Mash squad) active.¹¹⁵

Yet the EDL is not the only street-based movement to emerge in the wake of the BNP's collapse. In May 2011, another anti-Islam protest movement and political party, Britain First, emerged on the UK culturally nationalist scene. Led by a former BNP Councillor, Paul Golding, Britain First has gained notoriety for its ‘Mosque Invasions’, ‘Christian Patrols’, and demonstrations held in areas with sizeable Muslim populations in the UK that are explicitly designed to provoke minority communities. Despite garnering a significant online following (nearly 2.3 million Facebook followers), it was in fact offline actions by the group caught up with the movement in 2017 – with both leaders facing time in prison for conducting a Cardiff ‘Mosque Invasion’ in November 2016¹¹⁶ and an aggressive leafleting campaign against an Asian-owned takeaway

¹⁰⁹ Sabbagh, D. & Parveen, N., ‘Farage party's relaunch marked with low-key anti-lockdown protest’, *The Guardian*, 8 November 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/nov/08/nigel-farage-reform-party-relaunch-marked-low-key-anti-lockdown-protest>.

¹¹⁰ Allchorn, W., ‘Towards a new ‘populist’ party? UKIP's interim manifesto and the future of the UK radical right’, LSE British Politics and Policy Blog, 5 October 2018, online at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/ukip-interim-manifesto/>.

¹¹¹ See footnote 1 above for a full explanation of this.

¹¹² EDL Website. ‘Mission Statement’, online at: www.englishdefenceleague.org.uk/mission-statement/.

¹¹³ Goodwin, M.J., ‘The Roots of Extremism: The English Defence Leagues and the Counter-Jihad Challenge’. London: Chatham House, March 2013, online at: www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/189767.

¹¹⁴ *Hope not Hate*, ‘2018 State of Hate: Far Right Terrorism on the Rise’, January-February 2018, online at: www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/State-of-Hate-2018.pdf, p.19.

¹¹⁵ *Hope Not Hate*, ‘State of Hate 2023: Rhetoric, Race and Resentment’, February 2023, P.108, online at: <https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/state-of-hate-2023-v7-1.pdf>.

¹¹⁶ Pasha-Robinson, L., ‘Paul Golding: Former Britain First leader jailed for eight weeks’. *The Independent*, 15 December 2016, online at: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/paul-golding-jailed-britain-first-leader-8-weeks-high-court-injunction-mosque-a7477046.html.

restaurants in May 2017.¹¹⁷ As of spring 2018, the movement and its leaders have been banned from Facebook and Twitter and its operations have largely been relegated to Northern Ireland.¹¹⁸ The litany of criminal charges – including terrorism – lodged against its leaders has fractured and limited the groups largely confrontational form of activism – though it has seen a renaissance of late. With a 2016 civil injunction lifted on the UK mainland, it has started a recruitment drive, a return to its vigilante actions (this time conducting 81 visits to asylum hotels alone in 2022 on the cross-channel migration issue)¹¹⁹ as well as contesting local electoral contests (posting three candidates in the UK's May 2022 local elections).¹²⁰

In addition to Britain First, several other significant extreme-right nationalist movements have emerged in the post-2010 period. Founded in 2013, the neo-Nazi group National Action (NA) has quickly established itself as one of the most violent and concerning movements to ever emerge on the UK extreme right. Uncompromising adherents of National Socialism and outspoken admirers of Hitler, the group came to public attention in 2014 after one of its members was convicted for racially aggravated harassment of a Liverpool Labour MP, Luciana Berger who is Jewish.¹²¹ In June 2015, things took a more sinister turn when NA activist Zack Davies was convicted of the attempted murder of a Sikh Doctor with a claw hammer and a machete.¹²² Moreover, in Summer 2019, one of NA's more senior activists, Jack Renshaw, was found guilty of preparing an act of terror and given a life sentence for plotting to kill a West Lancashire MP, Rosie Cooper.¹²³ After the proscription of the group as a terrorist organisation in December 2016, news came to light of the group's persisting activities under the pseudonyms Scottish Dawn and NS131.¹²⁴ Arrests and ongoing trials of individuals connected with National Action and its various offshoots are continuing – with serving soldiers and more than a dozen other individuals subsequently having been through court.¹²⁵ Both National Action itself and its subsequent offshoots (such as the System Resistance Network and Sonnenkrieg division) have recently been proscribed – making membership, using the name, and activism within such movements a criminal offence. More specifically, former members of National Action have been

¹¹⁷ Doherty, S., 'Britain First's leaders "shouting and banging" outside a Ramsgate home "left a toddler traumatised"'. *Kent Live*, 31 January 2018, online at: www.kentlive.news/news/kent-news/britain-firsts-leaders-shouting-banging-1141962.

¹¹⁸ Cellan-Jones, R., 'Facebook bans Britain First pages', *BBC News*, 14 March 2018, online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-43398417>.

¹¹⁹ *Hope Not Hate*, 'State of Hate 2023: Rhetoric, Race and Resentment', February 2023, P.93, online at: <https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/state-of-hate-2023-v7-1.pdf>.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, P.96.

¹²¹ *Press Association*, 'Racist troll guilty of harassing Labour MP with antisemitic posts', *The Guardian*, 7 December 2016, online at: www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/dec/07/racist-troll-guilty-harassing-labour-mp-luciana-berger-joshua-bonehill-paine.

¹²² *BBC News*, 'Lee Rigby revenge attacker Zak Davies given life sentence', 11 September 2015, online at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-east-wales-34218184.

¹²³ *BBC News*, 'Jack Renshaw: MP death plot neo-Nazi jailed for life', 17 May 2019, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-48306380>.

¹²⁴ Cockburn, H., 'National Action: Neo-Nazi group's aliases 'Scottish Dawn' and 'NS131' banned under terrorism laws, says Home Office'. *The Independent*, 28 September 2018, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/national-action-neo-nazi-scottish-dawn-ns131-banned-terrorism-laws-home-office-british-soldiers-west-a7971906.html>.

¹²⁵ *Hope not Hate* 'National Action', February 2017, online at: www.hopenothate.org.uk/research/the-hate-files/national-action/.

charged with various offences, including terror offences,¹²⁶ being part of a proscribed organisation,¹²⁷ the making of a pipe bomb,¹²⁸ sex offences¹²⁹ and a number of assassination attempts.¹³⁰ Drivers at the more extreme, racially nationalist end of the UK far right tend to be around a sense of ethnic marginalisation,¹³¹ broader processes of social fragmentation, isolation & disintegration,¹³² and the attractiveness of violence¹³³ as social empowerment¹³⁴, all enabled by fringe social media platforms (e.g. Telegram and Fascist Forge) and esoteric forms of ‘accelerationist’ and ‘Siege’ neo-Nazism on the Internet.

Added to this, and in terms of specific organisational developments, 2020 saw the reporting of the emergence of two UK groups on the racially nationalist end of the far right spectrum. One that came to prominence was the biologically racist Patriotic Alternative whose activities have mainly been restricted to leafletting, vlogging and ‘prepper’-type outdoors activities around issues of ‘white marginalisation’ and a ‘white lives matter’ discourse.¹³⁵ They have become one of the key actors on the racial nationalist scene in the UK – taking the place of the English Defence League as one of the most active street groups. Several of their activists hark from other far-right groups and two of its key organisers have been charged with terrorism and incitement charges for distribution and circulation of racist and terroristic materials. Eschewing party politics, Patriotic Alternative describe themselves as undertaking a form of community activism that has proven successful during and after the pandemic – with the group boasting over 5000 members. Whilst the real magnitude is closer to 300-500 committed activists, the groups use of more indirect soft recruitment tactics (e.g. film nights, baking competitions and gaming livestreams) has allowed it to attract a younger audience.

The other more sinister group to appear on the UK’s racial nationalist scene in the reporting time period is the Independent Nationalist Network (INN). Set up by former BNP organiser Richard Lumby as a splinter of PA in 2021, Lumby told INN members in January that the group’s

¹²⁶ Dearden, L., ‘National Action: ‘Miss Hitler’ contestant and three fellow neo-Nazis convicted of terror offences’, *The Independent*, 18 March 2020, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/national-action-neo-nazi-terrorist-miss-hitler-alice-cutter-trial-a9345291.html>.

¹²⁷ Press Association, ‘Four UK neo-Nazis jailed for membership of National Action’, *The Guardian*, 9 June 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jun/09/four-uk-neo-nazis-jailed-for-membership-of-national-action>.

¹²⁸ *BBC News*, ‘Neo-Nazi pipe bomb teenager admits terror offence’, 16 July 2018, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-44848985>.

¹²⁹ Dearden, L., ‘Jack Renshaw: Neo-Nazi paedophile who plotted to kill Labour MP jailed for life’, *The Independent*, 17 May 2019, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/jack-renshaw-trial-jail-sentence-rosie-cooper-labour-neo-nazi-a8918206.html>.

¹³⁰ See references above.

¹³¹ McClaren, L. & Johnson, M. ‘Resources, Group Conflict and Symbols: Explaining Anti-immigration Hostility in Britain.’ *Political Studies*. 55: 709-732, 2007; Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, P. 205; & Rydgren, J., ‘The Sociology of the Radical Right’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 33, 2007, P. 249.

¹³² Druxes, H. and Simpson, P.A., ‘Introduction: Pegida as a European Far-Right Populist Movement.’ *German Politics and Society* 34 (4): 1-16, 2016 & Hartleb, F., *Lone Wolves: The New Terrorism of Right-Wing Single Actors*, SAGE Press, 2020, P.112.

¹³³ Treadwell, J. & Garland, J., ‘Masculinity, Marginalization and Violence: A Case Study of the English Defence League’, *British Journal of Criminology*. 51 (4): 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azr027>.

¹³⁴ Abbas, Tahir. "Ethnicity and Politics in Contextualising Far Right and Islamist Extremism." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 3 (2017): 54-61.

¹³⁵ Murdoch, S., ‘Patriotic Alternative: Uniting the Fascist Right?’, *Hope not Hate*, 17 August 2020, online at: <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2020/08/17/patriotic-alternative-uniting-the-fascist-right/>.

“main direction” would be “the resistance against the global cabals”, promising to “get involved in the groups that are taking it to them, particularly on the vaccine issue, the COVID-passports etc.”¹³⁶ Most concerning, however, is the INN’s links to overtly neo-Nazi and sovereign citizen movements in the UK – placing it firmly on the extreme right. For example, a recent addition to the group is the Dudley-based Andrew Barnes, who identifies as a lifelong National Socialist and has previously expressed support for a number of Nazi terrorist groups, including Atomwaffen Division (described by Barnes as “the way forward”) and National Action (described by Barnes as “excellent”), both of which have been banned in the UK under anti-terror laws. Barnes has also agreed that the Christchurch killer Brenton Tarrant is “a good lad” and has expressed support for the Nazi-occult network, the Order of the Nine Angles (O9A).¹³⁷

In addition to this, and in terms of other developments on the racially nationalist side of the radical right scene, there have been several high profile prosecutions and arrests of national socialist inspired individuals planning to carry out solo-actor forms of terrorism. For example, in December 2018, two neo-Nazi teenagers – linked to the now proscribed Sonnenkrieg Division – were arrested for signalling their intent to kill Prince Harry.¹³⁸ Moreover, in September 2019, a Nazi-obsessed High Wycombe teenager who said it was his dream to plan a terror attack and vowed to fill London’s streets with blood was been jailed.¹³⁹ Such attempts have not gone unabated recently. For example in October 2020, a man was accused of radical-right extremist terror plot to kill solicitor at law firm that represented migrants.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, in November 2020, a teenage neo-Nazi Satanist was been given a suspended sentence after admitting to attempted terror offences.¹⁴¹ Added to this, key leaders within National Action – who have been evading court action since proscription – were successfully indicted on proscription and terrorism charges in 2021 and 2022.¹⁴² We also saw the total convictions rise to a record number in 2022 – up to 20 compared with 18 in 2021.¹⁴³ With almost half of those being prosecuted for right-wing terrorism in 2022 being teenagers, it is therefore no surprise that radical-right terror referrals

¹³⁶ *Hope Not Hate*, ‘State of Hate 2023: Rhetoric, Race and Resentment’, February 2023, P.51, online at: <https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/state-of-hate-2023-v7-1.pdf>.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Cox, J., ‘Two teens and 21-year-old arrested over Neo-Nazi group ‘that called for Prince Harry to be shot’’, *The Sun*, 6 December 2018, online at: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/7911585/neo-nazis-arrested-prince-harry/>.

¹³⁹ Wareham, S., ‘Nazi-obsessed High Wycombe teenager who dreamt of planning a terror attack is jailed’, *Bucks Free Press*, 22 September 2019, online at: <https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/news/17919337.nazi-obsessed-high-wycombe-teenager-dreamt-planning-terror-attack-jailed/>.

¹⁴⁰ Dearden, L., ‘Man accused of far-right terror plot to kill solicitor at law firm that represented migrants’, *The Independent*, 23 October 2020, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/terror-attacks-uk-solicitors-duncan-lewis-migrants-cavan-medlock-b1249349.html>.

¹⁴¹ Williams, T., ‘Teen neo-Nazi satanist spared jail after admitting terror offences’, *The Metro*, 2 November 2020, online at: <https://metro.co.uk/2020/11/02/teen-neo-nazi-satanist-spared-jail-after-admitting-terror-offences-13523592/>.

¹⁴² BBC News, ‘National Action: Ben Raymond jailed for eight years’, 3 December 2021, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-59519211> & Counter-Terror Policing, ‘National Action co-founder Alex Davies jailed for more than eight years’, 7 June 2022, online at: <https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/national-action-co-founder-alex-davies-jailed-for-more-than-eight-years/>

¹⁴³ *Hope Not Hate*, ‘State of Hate 2023: Rhetoric, Race and Resentment’, February 2023, P.6, online at: <https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/state-of-hate-2023-v7-1.pdf>.

overtook that of Islamist extremists in the period under consideration and continue to be the most sizeable area of terrorist concern for policymakers and practitioners in this space.¹⁴⁴

7. Radical and Extremist Islamist Groups in the UK

Turning to what some see as the mirror image of extreme-right nationalist groups in the UK,¹⁴⁵ radical Islamist groups have also been a problematic feature of the extremist scene in the UK over the last two decades and more recently. Mobilising a critical response to Western foreign policy interventions abroad, perceived illiberal security interventions at home and in some cases demanding the overthrow of democracy itself, several such groups have been proscribed by the UK Government for their fostering and support of domestic and international terrorism.¹⁴⁶ Prominent examples include Al-Qaida and Al-Muhajiroun – with the latter implicated in a 2007 fertiliser bomb plot, a May 2013 case of domestic terrorism against a serving British army soldier, a terror attack involving a truck at London Bridge in June 2017 and the 2019 London Bridge stabbing attack. Like with National Action and its offshoots, Al-Muhajiroun has tried to change its title in order to get around proscription measures – going under the names ‘Islam4UK’, ‘Need4Khilafah’ and ‘the Shariah Project.’ Such attempts have however been largely thwarted by the UK Government – with the Home Office banning subsequent iterations of these groups.

Aside from providing foment for violent extremism, Al-Muhajiroun has also shown potential to create the polarising conditions needed for other forms of extremism to exist in the UK. Interestingly, and in a case of cumulative extremism where “one form of extremism can feed off and magnify other forms [of extremism];¹⁴⁷ the English Defence League and its subsequent round of street protests across the UK emerged out of localised opposition to an Al-Muhajiroun protest in the South Bedfordshire town of Luton. Moreover, and in the period just before the one under study, it was found that earlier Islamist terror attacks in 2017 at least provided some tactical basis for Darren Osborne’s June 2017 Finsbury Park Mosque terror attack – with the use of cruder vehicular attacks becoming a key modus operandi in a broader range of terror attacks by the UK far right.¹⁴⁸ Drivers for radicalisation among Islamist groups in the UK tend to revolve around grievances in relation the UK foreign policy, the adherence to fringe Salafist interpretations of Islam and (again) the perceived victimisation of fellow Muslims by the UK state.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Wood, P., ‘Counter terror referrals for far-right extremism outweigh Islamist extremism for second year running’, *The I Newspaper*, 26 January 2023, online at: <https://inews.co.uk/news/government-counter-terror-programme-jump-covid-pandemic-2107867>.

¹⁴⁵ See Abbas, T., ‘Ethnicity and politics in contextualising far right and Islamist extremism’, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 11 (3): 54-71, 2017; Ebner, J., *The Rage: The Vicious Circle of Islamist and Far-Right Extremism*. London: IB Tauris, 2017; & Feldman, M., ‘From Radical Right Islamophobia to ‘Cumulative Extremism’: A Paper on the Shifting Focus of Hatred’, London: Faith Matters, 2012.

¹⁴⁶ UK Home Office, ‘Proscribed Terrorist Organisations’, 17 July 2020, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/901434/20200717_Proscription.pdf.

¹⁴⁷ Eatwell, R., ‘Community Cohesion and Cumulative Extremism in Contemporary Britain’. *Political Quarterly*. 77 (2): 205, 2006.

¹⁴⁸ Veilleux-Lepage, Y., ‘The Extreme Right’s Legitimation of Vehicle Ramming’, Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right Insight’s Blog, 26 August 2018, online at: <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2018/08/26/the-extreme-rights-legitimation-of-vehicle-ramming/>.

¹⁴⁹ Allan, H., Glazzard, A., Jespersen, S., Reddy-Tumu, S., & Winterbotham, E., ‘Drivers of Violent Extremism:

Another key group of note on the UK's radical Islamist scene is the more tactically moderate, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT). Part of a wider transnational pan-Islamic movement to re-establish the 'Islamic Khilafah' and finding its ideological basis in a radical critique of Western democracy, Hizb ut-Tahrir UK was established pre-9/11 to mobilise young Muslims to its "radical, but to date non-violent Islamist" cause on University campuses in the early 1990s.¹⁵⁰ Courting controversy for its "anti-semitic, anti-western and homophobic views",¹⁵¹ HT has been considered for proscription on several occasions in 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2015. However, and largely due to successful ideological moderation and counter-tactics after the 2005 London Bombings, the organisation has never received a UK Government ban. This therefore cuts to the quick of legal versus normative restrictions around such groups – with many ministers hesitant to ban HT UK due to its largely non-violent nature.¹⁵² It also comes amidst news just before the reporting period (2017) that Indonesia has been the latest of thirteen Arab and non-Arab countries to ban HT for threatening "national unity".¹⁵³

Criticised for unfairly targeting and stigmatising the UK's Muslim community at the start of the UK government's attempts to combat Islamist extremism early on in the twenty-first century, there have however been several additional security measures to deal with this variety of extremism by the UK state. For example, while the UK government can't close a private religious institution, the UK's 2015 Counter-Extremism Strategy bestowed a duty on the UK's education regulator Ofsted to inspect Islamic schools (or 'Madrassas') for signs of extremism.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, and under the strategy, the UK government also commissioned the Home Office's Extremism Analysis Unit to investigate links between international funding and Islamist groups in the UK.¹⁵⁵ In addition, and going back a bit further, Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000 has been criticised for allow police officers to engage in religious profiling in the post-9/11 environment, allowing officers to interrogate individuals on subjects as varied as the number of times a day they pray, the names of mosques they attend, their understanding of the term jihad, their knowledge of Muslim community groups and organisations.¹⁵⁶ Finally, and while extremist literature cannot be banned in the UK,¹⁵⁷ the government and law enforcement do keep a track

Hypotheses and Literature Review', *Royal United Services Institute*, 16 October 2015, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0899d40f0b64974000192/Drivers_of_Radicalisation_Literature_Review.pdf.

¹⁵⁰ *The Guardian*, 'Background: the Guardian and Dilpazier Aslam', 22 July 2005, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2005/jul/22/theguardian.pressandpublishing>.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Morris, N., 'PM forced to shelve Islamist group ban,' *The Independent*, 18 July 2005, online at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20060719172827/http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/articleu83364.ece>.

¹⁵³ *Al-Jazeera*, 'Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia banned 'to protect unity'', 19 July 2017, online at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/07/indonesia-hizbut-tahrir-group-banned-protect-unity-170719050345186.html>.

¹⁵⁴ HM Government, 'Counter-Extremism Strategy', UK Home Office, 19 October 2015, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470088/51859_Cm9148_Accessible.pdf, p.14.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 18 & 19.

¹⁵⁶ Choudhury, T. & Fenwick, H., 'The impact of counter-terrorism measures on Muslim communities', Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report 72, 2011, online at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-72-the-impact-of-counter-terrorism-measures-on-muslim-communities.pdf>, p.VII.

¹⁵⁷ The key exception to this is Government-run institutions. For example, UK prisons have been made to remove extremist literature from their libraries based on popular anxieties around Islamist extremist radicalisation. See: PTI, "Extremist' books allowed in UK prison libraries till recently', *Financial Express*,

of literature circulated among Islamist extremists (and other extremist groups in general), including works by Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam, Abu Mohammed al-Maqdissi, Abu Musab as-Suri, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Usama bin Laden and Anwar Al Awlaki.¹⁵⁸

One high profile case - in relation to Islamist Extremism - that has continued to animate much public debate and press attention during the reporting period is that of Shamima Begum. A British-born woman, Begum entered Syria to join the terror group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISL) at the age of 15 along with two other school friends at Bethnal Green Academy in London. Begum married a fellow ISIL member 10 days after her arrival and had three children who all died young. In 2019 UK Home Secretary Sajid Javid announced that he had made an order depriving Begum of British citizenship.¹⁵⁹ Under international law the UK government could not deprive her of British citizenship if such deprivation would leave her stateless.¹⁶⁰ However, the UK government contended that Begum was a dual national, also holding citizenship of Bangladesh, and was not therefore made stateless by the decision. What made the case murkier still was that in August 2022 it was revealed that Begum had helped to travel to Syria to join the Islamic State by a Canadian intelligence agent.¹⁶¹ On 22 February 2023, it was reported that the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) had ruled that the revocation of her citizenship was lawful.¹⁶² This sparked a series of debates in the UK about the extent to which foreign fighters fully appreciate or know their role in foreign conflict and the extent of activity needed in order to provide full scale activism for the cause.

8. Radical and Extreme Left Groups in the UK

Far-left politics in the United Kingdom have existed since at least the 1840s, with the formation of various organisations following ideologies such as Marxism, revolutionary socialism, communism, anarchism and syndicalism. Following the 1917 Russian Revolution and developments in international Marxism, new organisations advocated ideologies such as Marxist-Leninism, Left Communism and Trotskyism. Following the 1949 Chinese Revolution, further international developments from the 1960s led to the emergence of Maoist and later Hoxhaist groups. Political schisms within these tendencies created a large number of new political organisations, particularly from the 1960s to the 1990s. The mid 1990s onwards saw a series of far-left joint initiatives to build "alternative electoral vehicles" in the "political space outside of Labour" following Labour's continuing realignment to the political centre and crackdown on entryism. The latter had resulted in Militant's open turn and split in 1991 and the proscription of Socialist Organiser in 1990.

28 July 2016, online at: <https://www.financialexpress.com/world-news/extremist-books-allowed-in-uk-prison-libraries-till-recently/332189/>.

¹⁵⁸ HM Government, 'Prevent Strategy', June 2011, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf, p. 46.

¹⁵⁹ *BBC News*, 'Shamima Begum: What is her legal status?', 21 February 2019, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47310206>.

¹⁶⁰ *BBC News*, 'Shamima Begum: IS teenager to lose UK citizenship', 20 February 2019, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47299907>.

¹⁶¹ Dugan, E. & Sabbagh, D., 'Shamima Begum 'smuggled into Syria for Islamic State by Canadian spy'', *The Guardian*, 31 August 2022, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/aug/31/shamima-begum-smuggled-into-syria-for-islamic-state-by-canadian-spy>.

¹⁶² Saddique, H., 'Shamima Begum loses appeal against removal of British citizenship', *The Guardian*, 22 February 2023, online at: <https://amp.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/feb/22/shamima-begum-loses-appeal-removal-british-citizenship>.

The first of these attempts at reorganisation were the Socialist Labour Party (1996), led by Arthur Scargill, a left-wing (rather than far-left) party which was nevertheless the site of competing struggles for far-left influence, and subsequent splits. This was followed by a succession of left-wing campaigns, coalitions and parties, and some also labelled as far-left, including Respect (2004) and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (2010). None of these achieved an electoral breakthrough, and with the ascendancy of Jeremy Corbyn to leadership of the Labour Party in 2015, the majority of groups to the left of the Labour Party (both left-wing and far-left) paused their activity. Some smaller groups such as Workers Power and Alliance for Workers' Liberty then dissolved or deregistered in order to enter or publicly support Labour.

Beyond engagement with street-based and campaign-based extra-parliamentary activity, there is very little in the way of active or relevant far left radicalism in the UK during the current reporting period. Most organisations cleave to more mainstream elements of the Labour Movement, are relegated to the fringe (such as the Socialist Worker's Party, Communist Party or Workers Party) or occupy a space within eco-radical groups. In this latter sense, there has been a large-scale increase in activities – with groups like Extinction Rebellion, Insulate UK and Stop Oil! performing acts of civil disobedience in order to bring policymakers attention to the impending global climate crisis. Finally, there is also a fusion at the street protest movement level with anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations (such as Stand Up to Racism and Unite against Fascism) but these have been largely dormant since the heyday of the English Defence League some ten years ago. When it comes to the Ukraine, the UK's opposition leader Sir Keir Starmer has taken a decidedly strident internal stance – threatening to to expel apologists for Vladimir Putin from his Labour party, after nearly a dozen of them signed a letter criticising NATO's role in the Ukraine crisis in February 2022.¹⁶³ Politicians on the far left and populist right in the UK have expressed sympathy for Putin's claim that NATO expansionism was forcing him to take action in Ukraine – including former Labour leader and 'Stop the War' campaigner, Jeremy Corbyn.

9. Hate Crime

Since 2007, hate crime has been administratively defined in the UK as “any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic.”¹⁶⁴ British police officers can flag instances of hate crime (alongside other forms of crime) based upon one or more monitored strands that include race or ethnicity; religion or beliefs; sexual orientation; disability; and transgender identity.¹⁶⁵ While race and religious hate crimes might factor as a motivation for a wide number of offences (for example, harassment, assault and criminal damage), racially and religiously aggravated offences in the UK are defined separately by law.¹⁶⁶ Both racially and religiously aggravated and non-aggravated offences, however, appear on the hate crime database under the first and second strands. Moreover, hate crime can extend to individuals who are wrongly targeted if they perceive that they have received abuse under the five monitoring strands.

¹⁶³ Pickard, J. & Parker, G., 'British politicians put on spot by Ukraine invasion', *The Financial Times*, 25 February 2022, online at: <https://www.ft.com/content/0e691bac-76e3-4631-ac98-d81051d4f762>.

¹⁶⁴ O'Neill, A., 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2016/17'. London: HM Government, 17 October 2017, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652136/hate-crime-1617-hosbi717.pdf, p.2.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p.3.

Finally, hate crimes based on age, gender and terrorist incidents are excluded from officially reported figures, as they are not deemed specific enough in nature to constitute a hate crime offence.¹⁶⁷

The 2020-2023 period saw several upticks in hate crime activity in the UK. During May, June and July 2020, there were unprecedented increases in both racially or religiously aggravated and non-aggravated public fear, alarm or distress offences - following the Black Lives Matters protests and far-right groups' counter-protests in England and Wales following the death of George Floyd on the 25 May in the USA.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, in January and February 2020, the number of offences was higher than the previous year - this was due to increases in Sinophobic sentiments but also was driven by general crime recording improvements and a greater proportion of victims coming forward. As the Figure 2 below suggests, extraneous events (outside of the reporting practices and surges in more general levels of crime) also influenced an uptick in racially-motivated hate crime offences - with the 2016 Brexit referendum and 2017 UK Islamist terror attacks seeing 62,685 and 71,251 offences recorded between March 2016 - March 2017 and March 2017 - March 2018, respectively.¹⁶⁹ The largest spike in hate crime occurred immediately after the 2016 EU Referendum and 2017 terror attacks - with just over 5,500 and 6,000 offences recorded in July 2016 and June 2017.¹⁷⁰ Finally, it has been noted subsequent releases of hate crime statistics in the past two years since have - with record levels of crimes reported - mainly been driven by improvements in crime recording by the police and greater confidence in victims (especially from sexual minorities) coming forward to report incidents.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Full Fact, 'Hate crime in England and Wales', 17 October 2017, online at: <https://fullfact.org/crime/hate-crime-england-and-wales/>.

¹⁶⁸ UK Home Office, 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2019/20', London: HM Government, 28 October 2020, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020>.

¹⁶⁹ UK Home Office, 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2017/18', London: HM Government, 16 October 2018, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748598/hate-crime-1718-hosb2018.pdf & UK Home Office, 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2018/19', London: HM Government, 15 October 2019, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839172/hate-crime-1819-hosb2419.pdf

¹⁷⁰ UK Home Office, 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2018/19', London: HM Government, 15 October 2019, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839172/hate-crime-1819-hosb2419.pdf, p.14..

¹⁷¹ UK Home Office, 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2021/22', London: HM Government, 06 October 2022, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022>.

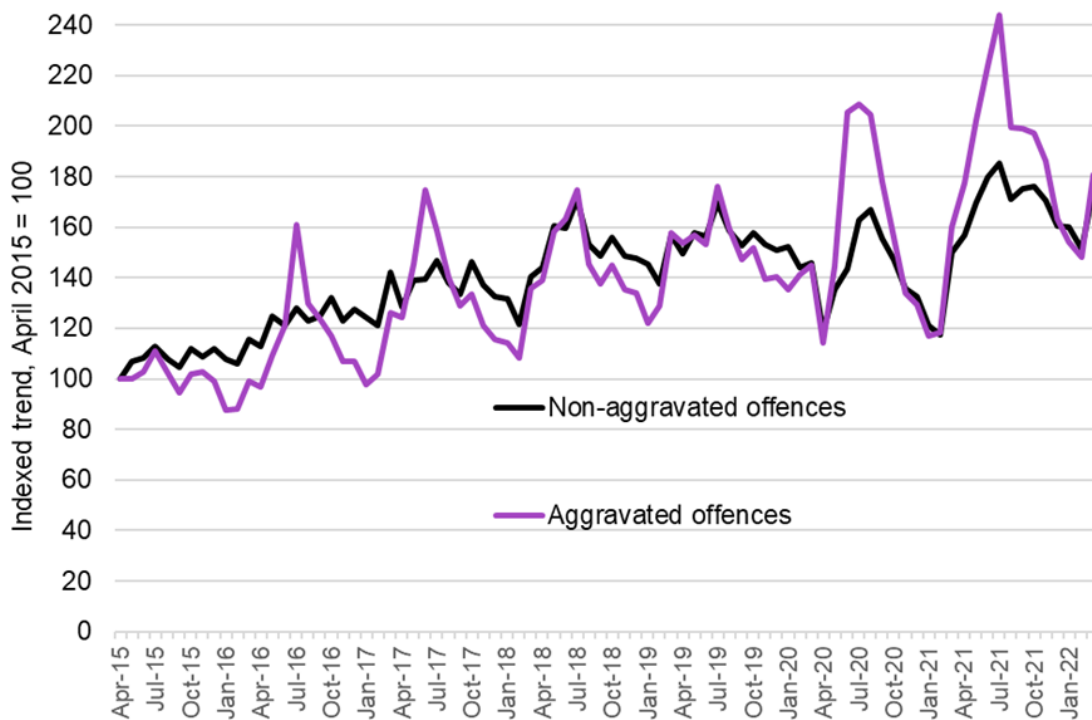


Figure 1: Number of Racially or Religiously Aggravated Offences recorded by the UK Police by month, April 2015 – March 2022 (Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office)

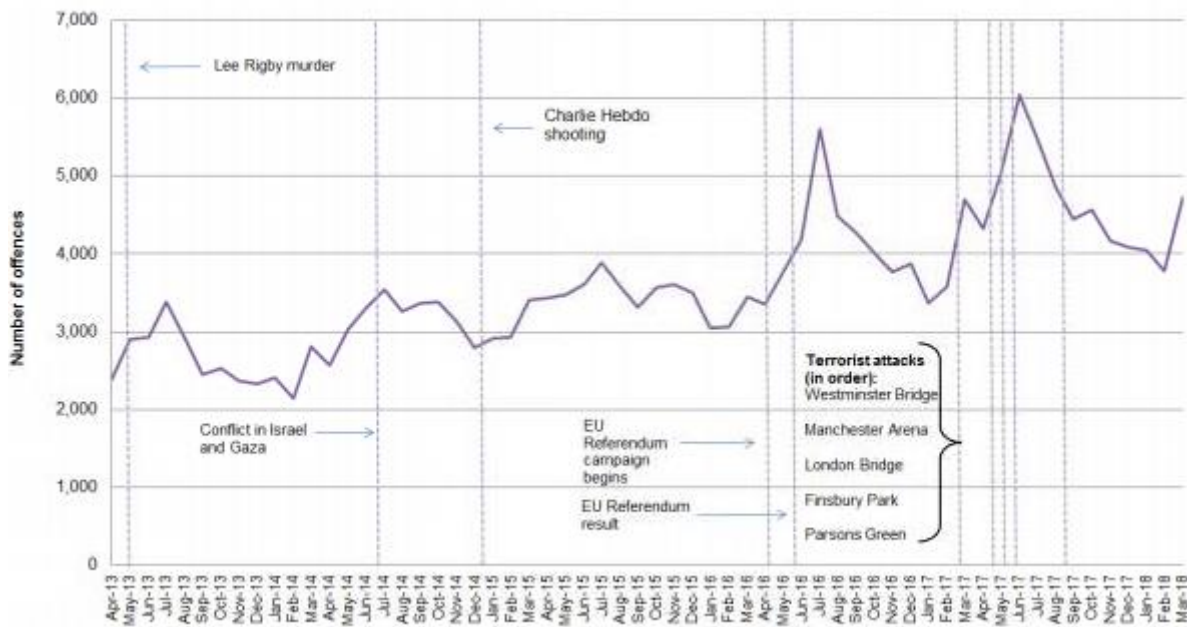


Figure 2: Number of Racially or Religiously Aggravated Offences recorded by the UK Police by month, April 2013 – March 2018

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

Looking beyond officially reported statistics, hate crime reported to third party recording agencies also saw an appreciable uptick in antisemitic, homophobic and anti-Muslim hate crime in the period under consideration. The Community Security Trust (CST), a body specifically set up to protect the UK Jewish community in 1984, reported that it had also recorded its highest annual total of antisemitic incidents in January - December 2021.¹⁷² In particular, the CST found recorded 173 antisemitic assaults and 82 incidents of Damage and Desecration of Jewish property.¹⁷³ In particular, the CST found that these record figures were related to the volume of anti-Jewish reactions to the escalation of conflict in Israel and Palestine in 2021. In May, the month when the conflict peaked, CST recorded its highest ever monthly total of 661 antisemitic incidents.¹⁷⁴ 2022 saw the CST record a return to what they call a post-2016 'new normal' in year on year figures – with a 27% decrease to 1,652 anti-Jewish hate incidents recorded nationwide.¹⁷⁵

Other third party organisations also highlighted the record rise of homophobic hate crime during the period under review. In February 2022, the gay rights charity, Stonewall, responded to the release of Home Office statistics that showed doubling in hate crimes based on sexual orientation from four years prior.¹⁷⁶ Lisa Power, one of Stonewall's Founders, described the uptick as "happen[ing] all too often".¹⁷⁷ Moreover, in December 2021 as a result of Freedom of Information requests by the UK's Press Association, it was found that police forces recorded 2,389 homophobic and 371 transphobic offences in June 2021, the highest number of any calendar month in three years.¹⁷⁸ Such a rise in offences came after the lifting of all lockdown measures in England and was seen as an expression of attribution of blame and intolerance towards minority communities in the UK.¹⁷⁹

Finally, and turning to expressions of Islamophobia during the reporting period, officially reported Islamophobic hate crimes in England and Wales remained stable as the most common religiously aggravated form of hate crime in the UK (42%), according to Home Office statistics.¹⁸⁰ The number of religious hate crimes recorded by police and targeting Muslims was 3,459 in the year ending March 2022, showing a 3% decrease over the previous year and a further

¹⁷² Community Security Trust, 'Anti-Semitic Incidents: Report 2021', 2022, online at: <https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/f/f/Incidents%20Report%202021.pdf>, p.5.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. P.4.

¹⁷⁵ Community Security Trust, 'Anti-Semitic Incidents: Report 2022', 2023, online at: <https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/e/6/CST%20Incidents%20Report%202022.pdf>.

¹⁷⁶ Stonewall UK, 'Stonewall Response to increase in anti-LGBT hate crime figures', Press Release, online at: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/media-statements/stonewall-response-increase-anti-lgbt-hate-crime-figures>.

¹⁷⁷ BBC News, 'LGBT tolerance 'going backwards' as hate crimes up', 4 February 2022, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-60257602>.

¹⁷⁸ Chao-Fong, L., 'Recorded homophobic hate crimes soared in pandemic, figures show', *The Guardian*, 3 December 2021, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/03/recorded-homophobic-hate-crimes-soared-in-pandemic-figures-show>.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ UK Home Office, 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2021/22', London: HM Government, 6 October 2022, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022> & UK Home Office, 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2020/21', London: HM Government, 12 October 2021, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021>.

7% drop on the year prior.¹⁸¹ Whilst a statistical decrease was recorded and anti-Semitic hate crime increased, an uptick in incidences of Islamophobic rhetoric were also anecdotally reported as a result of prejudice animated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, a recent study carried out by Imran Awan, Professor at Birmingham City University, and Roxana Khan-Williams concluded that Islamophobic online ‘cyber hubs’ were being formed which linked Muslims to the spread of COVID-19 in the form of spreading anti-Muslim memes and sharing fake news stories.¹⁸² Moreover, key far-right figures in the UK spread misinformation to their followers in order to stir-up Islamophobia – with former EDL leader Tommy Robinson posting an old video which showed worshippers leaving a mosque in Birmingham during lockdown and far-right influencer Katie Hopkins issuing a potentially incendiary tweet that “like India, UK too should physically assault British Muslims praying in public.”¹⁸³ Finally, and perhaps most worryingly, the decrease in official statistics masks perhaps the true extent of actual Islamophobic hate crime. For example, there was no third-party recording during the time period – with Tell MAMA not issuing their usual bi-annual reports during the time period.¹⁸⁴

10. Conclusions

Mainly owing to the incidence of several ‘trigger events’ (such as xenophobic public pronouncements by politicians, terror attacks and large-scale migration events), the period under study has shown a troubling increase in religious and racial intolerance in the UK. In stark contrast, the electoral fortunes of radical right parties remain at an all-time low. As shown above, what, however, explains this apparent paradox is the organisational fragmentation and marginalisation of the UK radical right, radical left and radical Islamists by mainstream forces. In particular, repeated Government proscriptions and, for the radical right, the ability of the Conservative Party to adopt socially conservative policies and be seen as the most competent deliverer of a ‘hard’ Brexit immediately after the June 2016 Referendum has ensured that the Tory party is the main beneficiary of the radical right’s electoral collapse. The uptick in hate crime after several pronouncements by senior politicians (e.g. Russophobic comments by Tom Tugendhat and anti-Muslim comments by the aforementioned Conservative Councillor) and international events (e.g. BLM protests and COVID-19) can therefore be seen as part of a hardening of popular racism in the UK.

Overall, despite these troubling trends (not least the continuing issues of Islamophobia and antisemitism in the main Conservative and Labour parties), however, the climate of humanitarian norms and safeguards against discrimination has largely held. According to the recent surveys, positive popular attitudes towards migrants from within and outside EU states has risen markedly in UK, whilst concerns over immigration seem to have evaporated in the wake of the 2016 EU referendum. As a recent study at King’s College London has shown, this may be less a signal of the ease at which the UK people accept foreigners at the individual level

¹⁸¹ UK Home Office, ‘Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2019/20’, London: HM Government, 28 October 2020, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020>.

¹⁸² Birmingham City University, ‘COVID-19 sparks online Islamophobia as fake news and racist memes are shared online, new research finds’, 20 April 2020, online at: <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/news-events/news/covid-19-sparks-online-islamophobia-as-fake-news-and-racist-memes-are-shared-online-new-research-finds>.

¹⁸³ Chib, E., ‘Islamophobia and the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK’, *Observer Research Foundation*, 20 May 2020, online at: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/islamophobia-covid-19-pandemic-uk-67037/>

¹⁸⁴ See: <https://tellmamauk.org/category/reports/>.

and more a reaction to their demands on greater immigration restrictions being met at the policy level (though there is a small element of regret in there).¹⁸⁵ Moreover, the UK has a developed system of equality and anti-incitement laws that has gone some way in safeguarding ethnic or religious minorities from threats by radical right groups and ideologues. Additionally, awareness of hate crime reporting, as well as the methodologies for capturing hate attacks, have also improved substantially over the last handful of years. Whilst underreporting remains a substantial challenge, victims from religious, racial and sexual minorities have become more confident in reporting crimes motivated by prejudice and open hostility, based upon their protected characteristics.

In sum, then, while this report shows that there has been concerning upticks in hate crime, xenophobia and radicalism over the period of reporting, strong, organised forms of hatred have become more fractured and continue to have decreasing bearing on popular attitudes.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, awareness and reporting of such instances has increased. Government and third-party organisations should therefore actively focus their attention on building on this strong foundation – making the recording of hate crime, xenophobia and radicalism even more prevalent and continuing to curb hate groups where criminal intent is evident, thus going some way to explaining the ‘immigration positivity vs. hate crime increase’ paradox. This will help the protection of minorities and prevent the spread of radicalism in the years to come. There also needs to be greater unity between individuals on either side of the political divide in order that radical groups do not seize on the opportunity of division of key social and cultural issues to further their own ethnical and cultural supremacist agendas.

ii. Recommendations

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

- A. One of the key stumbling blocks for better reporting of hate crimes in the UK has been the online space. Unlike other European countries (like France, Germany and Belgium), the UK does not have a legislative framework for bringing internet companies to bare on online harms that might have real offline consequences. Better online intervention and regulation in the UK - as well as international agreements and conventions to sanction internet companies for inaction- would help mitigate the propagation of hate speech online. The UK already has such an online harms bill ready for consideration but – at the time of writing – there are significant delays to its enactment.¹⁸⁷ The writer of this report encourages the UK government to bring forward such legislation and for social media companies to be bolder in their approach of sanctioning individual acts of hate speech and extremism where they exist on their platforms.
- B. An additional legislative stumbling block when it comes to racial and religious hatred in the UK is the lack of a government-back definition for a particular type of prejudice that

¹⁸⁵ Duffy, B., ‘New poll shows British people have become more positive about immigration,’ *Open Democracy*, 26 May 2018, online at: <https://theconversation.com/new-poll-shows-british-people-have-become-more-positive-about-immigration-95813>.

¹⁸⁶ Or their policy agendas have been subsumed by the prevailing anti-elitist populism, authoritarianism and cultural national of the current Conservative government.

¹⁸⁷ *BBC News*, ‘Online Harms bill: Warning over ‘unacceptable’ delay’, 29 June 2020, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-53222665>.

has sadly become too prevalent in the past twenty years: anti-Muslim prejudice. Whilst many extra-parliamentary organisations have put pressure on the UK government to accept a version (similar to International Holocaust Remembrance Association definition of antisemitism),¹⁸⁸ concerns over infringement of free speech and (even) rendering counter terror operations within the Muslim community ineffective have been suggested as key barriers to change.¹⁸⁹ However, the adoption of such a definition – that included free speech provisions – by authorities would better enable UK government, law enforcement, online companies and statutory bodies in policing anti-Muslim criminality and prejudice – especially in the wake of xenophobic mobilisations and domestic terror attacks. Inroads have been made in sidestepping the aforementioned free speech issues attached to the use of Islamophobia and it is the author’s opinion that a definition using the very specific, core concept of ‘anti-Muslim hatred’ should be adopted to circumvent the mislabelling of legitimate criticism.¹⁹⁰

- C. Staying on the issue of definitions, one thorn that continues to prevent better responses to radical-right extremism in the UK is the lack of a clear conceptualisation of what constitutes radical (i.e. acceptable) and extreme (i.e. problematic) representations of this particular ideology. Whilst German Basic Law is very clear that the ‘radical’ right (hostile to, but accepting of, the democratic order) and ‘extreme’ right groups (who reject liberal democracy and aim to overthrow the system, often through violent means) should be treated separately, there is no such similar statute in the UK. The closest that the UK government has come to seizing such a challenge is defining what it means by extremism as part of its own 2015 Counter-Extremism Strategy (i.e. “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”), but even then this is vague and has been criticised in many quarters as unhelpful.¹⁹¹¹⁹² Due to the expansive nature of the definition, the Government’s Commission on Counter-Extremism has helpfully proposed a new category to the government’s recommended definition of ‘extremism’ to ‘hateful extremism’ (or “Behaviours that can incite and amplify hate, or engage in persistent hatred, or equivocate about and make the moral case for violence; beliefs that are hateful, hostile or supremacist and which target specific groups as posing a threat to the wellbeing, survival or success of the majority; and which

¹⁸⁸ Khan, O., ‘Evidence to All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims’, online at: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/policyResponses/Islamophobia%20APPG%20presentation%202018.pdf>.

¹⁸⁹ Dearden, L., ‘Proposed Islamophobia definition ‘would undermine counterterror operations and threaten free speech’, police tell prime minister’, *The Independent*, 15 May 2019, online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/islamophobia-meaning-definition-terror-operations-theresa-may-appg-british-muslims-a8914686.html>.

¹⁹⁰ Allchorn, W. & Feldman, M., ‘A Working Definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred – Summary’, Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right, 15 May 2019, online at: <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2019/05/15/a-working-definition-of-anti-muslim-hatred-summary/>.

¹⁹¹ HM Government, ‘Counter-Extremism Strategy’, UK Home Office, 19 October 2015, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470088/51859_Cm9148_Accessible.pdf.

¹⁹² Commission for Countering Extremism, ‘Independent adviser calls for overhaul of extremism strategy’, 7 October 2019, online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/independent-advisor-calls-for-overhaul-of-extremism-strategy>.

causes – or is likely to cause - harm to individuals, communities or wider society.”).¹⁹³ I, like others who have written on this subject, still think that such a categorisation simply adds another definition rather than tackling the specific threat of extremism – and for that matter radical right extremism - itself.¹⁹⁴ The upshot of this is that we in the UK need better national and international definitions of extremism that adopt the radical/extreme distinction but also maps the broad constellation of groups that make up specific extremisms. For example, in case of the contemporary radical right, a definition that encompasses all the ideological variety within this extremist milieu (an example Bjørgo and Ravndal’s (2019) conceptualisation of cultural, ethnic and racial nationalism) would help to provide a more nuanced and targeted approach when tackling the sources of grievances that animate such groups in the offline and virtual space.¹⁹⁵

- D. Descending from the macro to the micro level, better community-based initiatives are needed in order to tackle both the polarising, stigmatising and racialising barbs that have become seized upon by UK extremist groups at a local level.¹⁹⁶ Beyond COVID-19, efforts at fostering community contact through shared initiatives and cultural events – based on the findings of experiments into group contact theory¹⁹⁷ - might be the best avenues to combat forms of religious and racial prejudice as well as the need to combat forms of disadvantage that stop minorities from accessing official resources or facilities. Moreover, greater responsiveness by local officials and politicians to those at the ‘tipping point’ of supporting radical nationalist or Islamist groups might help offset their feelings of being ‘shut out’ from the prevailing systems of the state. Added to this, experts, policymakers and public officials need to be very careful in the language that they use to label different communities and radical groups when engaging in local initiatives. For example, it may be unhelpful to use ‘white working class’ or ‘Islamist’ for such varied communities, with different social and faith backgrounds, as stigmatisation through can lead to further radicalisation. Instead, a more nuanced picture of ‘community’ needs to be held in mind that captures the complexity of issues and vulnerabilities at play that might lead someone down the road of extremism and similarly mainstream actions that can hold zealots in a cycle of radical activism.
- E. The penultimate and linked recommendation - at a more cultural level – is elite rhetoric around issues of race and religion. In the UK (and arguably further abroad), there is need in our current moment to be far more tempered in our public racial and religious

¹⁹³ Commission for Countering Extremism, ‘Challenging Hateful Extremism’, October 2019, online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874101/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf, p. 10.

¹⁹⁴ Allen, C., ‘The UK’s “Hateful Extremism” report: more muddled thinking on an already over-crowded pitch’, 18 October 2019, online at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/hateful-extremism-and-radical-right-we-need-new-definitions/> & McCann, C., ‘Hateful extremism and the radical right: we need new definitions’, *Open Democracy*, 17 December 2019, online at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/the-hateful-extremism-report-more-muddled-thinking-on-an-already-over-crowded-pitch/>.

¹⁹⁵ See: Bjørgo, T. and Ravndal, J.A., ‘Extreme-Right Violence and Terrorism: Concepts, Patterns, and Responses’, ICCT Policy Brief, September 2019, online at: <https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2019/09/Extreme-Right-Violence-and-Terrorism-Concepts-Patterns-and-Responses-4.pdf>.

¹⁹⁶ See for an expanded version of these recommendations: Allchorn, W., *Anti-Islamic Protest in the UK: Policy Responses to the Far Right*, London: Routledge, 2018.

¹⁹⁷ See: Allport, G., *The Nature of Prejudice*, Addison-Wiley, 1954 & Gaertner, S. & Dovidio, J.F., *Reducing Intergroup Bias: The Common Ingroup Identity Model*, Psychology Press, 2001.

discourse, in order to reduce potential tensions or a 'licence for hate' that might occur from malformulated comments. Recent campaigns by UK parliamentarians have suggested that "a politics of hate and division has emboldened racist and sexist abuse on a scale neither of us thought we would ever see again".¹⁹⁸ By signing a code of conduct or pledge to use more responsible and compassionate language, elites can show their effort and part in reducing attacks against religious and racial minorities that often spike in response to corrosive comments from the very top.

- F. A final and related suggestion would be around better research and funding for programmes that mitigate the harmful effects of radical-right extremist narratives that circulate in the online space. Whilst in its infancy, research has shown that such counter-narratives need to be emotive, powerful and change-oriented in order to be effective among their target audiences.¹⁹⁹ They also need to be inserted in tricky to navigate (and sometimes closed) online 'echo chambers' by practitioners and researchers to scope out the possibility of such actions puncturing the sort of group think that legitimises prejudicial (and sometimes violent) ideations against particular minorities.²⁰⁰ Such tools may be crucial in the future to mitigate polarisation and stop people venturing down the path of extremism in the first place.

¹⁹⁸ Whannel, K., 'Mass MP walkouts 'could combat hate speech' in Parliament', *BBC News*, 3 March 2020, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-51725597>.

¹⁹⁹ See: Allchorn, W., 'Expert Workshop Report', Hedayah/CARR Radical Right Counter-Narratives Collection, online at: <https://www.cn-library.com/login/>; Briggs, R. & Feve, S., 'Review of Programs to Counter Narratives of Violent Extremism', London: ISD, 2013; Tuck, H. & Silverman, H., 'The Counter Narrative Handbook', London: ISD, 2016; Reynolds, L & Tuck H., 'The Counter Narrative Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook', London: ISD, 2016; Silverman, Stewart, Amanullah and Birdwell, 'The Impact of Counter Narratives'. London: ISD, 2016; & Hedayah/ICCT, 'Developing Effective Counter-Narrative Frameworks for Countering Violent Extremism'. Hedayah/ICCT: Abu Dabi/Hague, September 2014.

²⁰⁰ See: Braddock, K. & Horgan, J., 'Towards a Guide for Constructing and Disseminating Counternarratives to Reduce Support for Terrorism', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 39(4), 2015, p.392 & Braddock, K., *Weaponized Words: The Strategic Role of Persuasion in Violent Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.95-96.