

STATE OF HATE 2022

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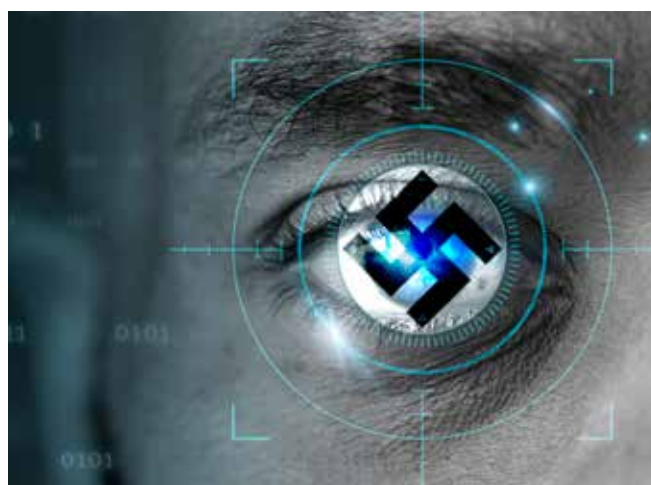


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EDITORIAL

WELCOME TO OUR **State of HATE 2022** report, the most comprehensive and analytical guide to the state of far-right extremism in Britain today.

This year's report comes at a time when the UK, and indeed the world, is in flux. Just as we appear to be moving beyond the COVID pandemic, people are facing a severe cost of living crisis that will cause intense hardship for many. And at a time when our own belief and trust in democracy is under strain, Russia has invaded its democratic neighbour Ukraine, pitting two diametrically opposed forms of government against one another and uniting the world in condemnation of Vladimir Putin.

Our report finds that the far right is now actively mobilising in ways not seen for several years, and we must be wary about opportunities for it to mount a resurgence over the coming year. After years in the political wilderness, and as Britain has been moving on from Brexit and COVID, an increasingly confident far right is back on the streets and back in our communities.

Far-right terrorism remains a growing threat, too. In 2021, 18 people were convicted of far-right terrorism related offences, a 50% increase on 2020.

State of HATE 2022 also details developments across the far-right political spectrum, revealing how the past year has led to an environment in which we will likely see the return of far-right activists back on the streets, standing in elections and exploiting the uncertainties created by economic hardship.

State of HATE 2022 explores how a mixture of political distrust, the impact of the pandemic and the associated growth in conspiracy and anti-authority beliefs, as well as the cost of living crisis, has created fertile ground for the growth of right-wing ideas and their increasing influence on more mainstream political and media narratives.

Exclusive polling commissioned by HOPE not hate shows that 80% of people now have less disposable income than they did a year ago, and 68% now believe that Britain is "going in the wrong direction". Worryingly, this report also shows that support for democracy and our institutions are weak.

The far right does not operate in a vacuum, so this

report explores racism and hate in society at large. As our exclusive polling of black and minority ethnic communities highlights, racism is a depressingly common feature of daily life for many people.

One of the most disturbing developments to come out of 2021 is how the further right – be it populist radical right or traditional far right – has overcome obstacles to spreading hate over social media by literally creating their own platforms. Far-right activists and commentators can now speak to hundreds of thousands of likeminded people without any restrictions. This may provide the far right with a better ability to exploit the economic and political difficulties Britain faces.

This **State of HATE 2022** report is our single most important publication of the year. In offering a snapshot of the far right in Britain today, it moulds our work over the coming year and helps us to determine our priorities. We end the report by highlighting some of the work we intend to do over the next 12 months to address some of the issues we highlight here.

We want this report to be a resource for all. Given its unique nature, to say nothing of its comprehensiveness, we would like to think it helps inform and directs the work of all those who want to build a better, more cohesive and progressive, Britain and British society.

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

If you are not yet a member of our fund, then please do sign up. For as little as the cost of a cup of coffee or a sandwich every month, you can help us continue to do the work that is needed. Work that, as this report highlights, will be increasingly needed over the coming year.

I admit that **State of HATE 2022** is sometimes difficult reading. But that in itself makes it so essential. The more we understand those who seek to spread division and hate, the better equipped we are to contain and defeat them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE FAR RIGHT

- The far right is now actively mobilising in ways not seen for several years, and opportunities exist for it to mount a resurgence over many levels.
- 2021 saw the UK's far right emerge out of their bedrooms and back onto the streets, leafleting, dropping banners and holding protests outside hotels and other asylum seeker accommodation.
- The far right is also getting back online, with the emergence of a functioning far-right alternative social media space.
- The far right has increasingly adopted anti-vaccine and anti-lockdown politics. Fitness, wellness and health have also become key, with extremists recruiting new members by framing fascism as a route to self-improvement. A radicalised conspiracy theory scene, growing mistrust in mainstream politics, a post-Brexit era and the rising cost of living crisis, are creating fertile grounds for its growth too.

COVID AND CONSPIRACIES

- We are witnessing the increasing radicalisation of the COVID conspiracy and anti-lockdown movements. More radical groups such as Alpha Team Assemble (focusing on physical action) have emerged, viewing street protests as an ineffective form of activism, instead carrying out combat training drills and promising “pure unadulterated defiance”. Last year also saw the growing influence of so-called “sovereign citizen” beliefs, seeking to justify adherents’ illegal behaviour. Conspiracy theories are still strong in society, too: a third of people (35%) believe that elites in Hollywood, governments, the media and other powerful positions are secretly engaging in large scale child trafficking and abuse; 20% believe that elites are encouraging immigration as part of a plot to weaken Europe.
- 18% also believe that COVID-19 has been intentionally released as part of a ‘depopulation’ plan orchestrated by the UN or New World Order.

TECH AND MEDIA

- As deplatforming of far-right activists has increased, many have moved across to alternative social media platforms where they are out of reach of regulators. Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) remains the best known far-right figure in the UK, with 57% of the British public having heard of him. He also had the biggest reach, with over 180,000 followers on the alternative platform GETTR, 155,000 followers on Telegram and 28,000 subscribers on the video sharing platform BitChute.

- There were some appalling examples of mainstream news outlets providing platforms to far-right figures during 2021 and beyond.

TERRORISM

- 18 far-right supporters were convicted of terror-related offences in 2021, double the number in 2020. Of the 18, six were teenagers.
- 76 far-right extremists have been convicted under terrorism legislation since the beginning of 2017. This compares to just 15 in the previous five years.
- Many convictions relate to the Telegram chat app, which has emerged as an important organising platform for the terror-advocating far right in recent years.
- Attempts at constructing weapons rather than acquiring industrial-made counterparts was a growing and potentially deadly trend last year.

RACISM

- Racism remains an everyday experience for many people of colour, with our exclusive polling revealing that more than half of respondents had witnessed (24%) or experienced (28%) racial abuse in the last year.
- Two-thirds of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds think black and Asian people face discrimination in their everyday lives.
- The majority of our BAME poll thought that Boris Johnson had failed to keep the promise he made to address racism in society at the height of the BLM protests. Only 17% thought he had.

DEMOCRACY

- Faith in democracy is low and political scandals, such as ‘Partygate’, are eroding trust in the political system.
- Over half of people (57%) are not satisfied with the way democracy is working in the UK, while 74% do not feel that politicians listen to them.
- A quarter (26%) say the British political system needs to be completely reformed, while over two-fifths (44%) think it needs major changes.
- 26% also support a system in which a strong leader can make decisions without interference from Parliament or the courts.
- The Government is embarking on a series of Bills that we believe will further centralise power, limit opposition and ultimately increase mistrust in the political system.

THE DANGER AHEAD

It's 2022 and with a cost of living crisis, anti-migrant sentiment, growing political distrust, the culpability of some mainstream media and conspiracy theorists pushing division, we face a widening threat from the far right, warn JOE MULHALL and NICK LOWLES.

2021 was the second year scarred by the turmoil and pain of the ongoing pandemic. For many, the last 12 months were no-better, and for some even worse, than the year that preceded them.

New COVID variants, rising deaths and more time locked inside were all compounded by pandemic fatigue. Yet the direction of travel in 2021 was generally positive, with the vaccine rollout providing incremental but perceptible improvements, increased freedom and a slow if uneven return to a recognisable normality.

In that context, and in many other ways, the far right reflects the society in which it exists. So, just as everyone else has emerged from lockdown excited about the opportunities reduced restrictions afford, so too has the far right. It is not that the far right is “back” – as it never went away – but that it is simply seeking to exploit the situation (as ever). The more versatile far-right groups have utilised the internet to continue their activism, disinformation and spread of hatred even at the height of the lockdown.

However, 2021 certainly saw the UK's far right emerge out of their bedrooms and back onto the streets. Whether it was groups like Patriotic Alternative or Britain First leafletting across the country, so-called ‘migrant-hunters’ filming and protesting outside asylum seeker accommodation, or most recently the return of Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) to street protests, the far right is active on the ground and in our communities in a way that has not been possible for some years.

The far right is also ‘back’ online. In recent years, many major social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, finally began to remove (‘deplatform’) major far-right organisations and individuals. In response, the far right has sought out social media platforms with more lax moderation policies, such as Telegram, which is now the most important social media outlet for far-right politics.

There have also been numerous attempts by the far right to create its own replacement platforms: albeit with limited success. 2021 was, though, the year in which a more functioning far-right alternative social media space emerged. A more viable alternative online space is emerging for deplatformed far-right activists, within which they can once again reach larger numbers of people on platforms such as GETTR, Odysee, BitChute and Gab.

These developments both online and off are worrying. Data increasingly shows that societal attitudes towards Brexit no longer define our identities, that ex-British

National Party (BNP) and UK Independence Party (UKIP) voters who switched to the Conservative Party in 2019 have become disillusioned with Boris Johnson, that ‘Partygate’ and government hypocrisy during the pandemic have increased distrust in the political process more broadly, while migration is once again a political issue, and that the cost of living crisis is going to hurt a lot of people and drive economic pessimism.

While the drivers of far-right growth are complex, and invariably the result of a combination of cultural and economic factors, the year ahead will likely be marked by growing economic pressures, which the far right will certainly seek to exploit. All of these provide an opening for the far right. Whether they will be able to seize such an opportunity is another matter, and one which must be guarded against.

RADICALISATION OF THE CONSPIRACY THEORY SCENE

With the health impact of the pandemic on the wane, its effect on our society will last well beyond our use of masks and hand sanitiser. One worrying unanswered question is the medium and longer-term effects of large numbers of people across society engaging with conspiracy theory content. However, in the short-term, the immediate danger emanates from the increasing radicalisation of the COVID conspiracy and anti-lockdown movements.

Having established large online networks and a prolific street movement in 2020, but with no actual impact on policy, there is an increasing sense of frustration within some contingents of these organised conspiracists. Figureheads such as Piers Corbyn and Kate Shemirani have used increasingly extreme, and in some cases violent, language and there have been further clashes at protests, including the targeting of test and trace sites.

More radical groups such as Alpha Team Assemble (which focus on physical action) have emerged, viewing street protests as an ineffective form of activism, carrying out combat training drills and promising “pure unadulterated defiance”.

We have also seen sections of the far right successfully meld with the broader conspiracist movement, which often places less emphasis on traditional political divides and instead focuses on a shared populism and identity as “truth seekers”, in opposition to the perceived ruling elites.

Among the most striking developments in the wider British conspiratorial milieu over the past year has been the growing influence of so-called “sovereign



Children with signs at an anti-lockdown demonstration, Trafalgar Square, London, 26 September 2020

citizen” beliefs. The danger posed by the infusion of such ideology into extreme conspiracy circles is that it provides an avenue by which adherents can justify illegal behaviour by convincing themselves of the legality of their actions.

As we have entered a phase of decreasing lockdown restrictions and widespread vaccine success, those still passionately involved in the conspiracy scene are a shrinking but increasingly radical rump.

Many of those who remain have progressed far enough down the “rabbit hole” to believe in so-called “superconspiracies”, which bundle together multiple conspiracies into a grand overarching conspiratorial narrative.

For many enmeshed in the conspiracy scene, the pandemic has ‘revealed’ the existence of a pernicious, or even all-powerful, group of conspirators pulling the strings behind world events and seeking to control society. The danger here is that, in the eyes of some believers, combatting this grand conspiracy requires more drastic action.

For some conspiracists, it is no longer merely about campaigning to lift lockdown regulations, but fighting an all-powerful oppressor, which (in their eyes) makes more extreme behaviour and tactics admissible. While this scene attracts people from across the political spectrum, there is a worrying degree of crossover with the far right, as detailed in this report.

FAR RIGHT MORE EXTREME

This increasing extremeness is actually mirrored within the wider far right. In a process with roots in the collapse of the BNP over the past decade, increasing sections of the British far right are becoming more openly and overtly extreme in their rhetoric.

While groups such as Britain First are still focusing on elections and Stephen Lennon continues to uphold the pretence that he is not racist, increasingly large sections of the broad far-right milieu seem comfortable to openly profess explicitly racial politics – and even veneration for Nazism, Hitler and the Third Reich.

Growing, if belated, attention by the police has likely increased the number of arrests and convictions, but does not on its own indicate a rise in the risk of violent attacks by the far right. Alongside exposures by groups such as our own, it is harder for neo-nazi terror groups to organise both online and off. However, terror-advocating material is more easily accessible than ever on various platforms, and the tone in many far-right channels is more explicitly fascist, and more commonly venerates violence and historical fascist leaders. The turned-up tone can still radicalise people and turn some towards violence on their “own”, outside of organised groups.

This development is part of a long trend among the more extreme elements of the far right, jettisoning

AN ELECTORAL THREAT?

The traditional far right and populist right has not mustered a serious electoral threat since the demise of the BNP in 2010 and UKIP in 2015. While that is unlikely to change in 2022, growing disillusionment with the Boris Johnson government and the cost of living crisis does provide the far right with opportunities for growth. After 2010, most BNP voters switched allegiance to UKIP, but after Brexit was delivered, most of the four million people who voted UKIP in 2015 switched their support to Boris Johnson's Conservative Party in 2019.

While some have remained loyal to the Conservatives, the declining influence of Brexit and disillusionment with the Johnson government has led many to look elsewhere. In HOPE not hate's State of the Nation poll, 10% of the Tory 2019 vote now back Labour, six percent (6%) back the Reform Party (formerly the Brexit Party), and a further 15% are now undecided.

While Britain First, For Britain and an increasingly far-right UKIP will probably poll poorly in the 2022 local elections, there is an opportunity for them (or a new right-wing party) to attract support from among anti-immigrant rhetoric voters, as well as a more libertarian anti-lockdown crowd. This opportunity is bigger now than for many years.



Sam Melia (front) leading an anti-refugee "flash" demonstration in Leeds

any faith in electoral or incremental progress and the increasingly widespread adoption of revolutionary beliefs. For many far-right activists, this is no longer about winning local councillors, but about the total overhaul of the system and the start of a race war.

For some far-right activists, the sheer unlikelihood of such a revolution materialising will be demotivating, but for others it spurs on ever more extreme and dangerous behaviour, which in part explains the continuously high number of terrorism-related arrests in the last year.

This increasingly widespread belief – in the most extreme far-right fringe – of an impending, perhaps even desirable, race war explains in part the rise of another trend within the current far-right scene. Fascist fitness groups, which have been growing across Europe for several years, have helped turn what was once an individual project of self-improvement into something ideological.

Some of those involved in the fascist fitness scene seem to have positive experiences that focus their energy on doing something that is not directly harmful to others.

However, these groups also mix extreme fascist ideology with self-improvement and camaraderie which can bring people in to the movement, to radicalise and associate positive change in their lives with fascism. Worryingly, others view it as



preparation for violence towards minorities, anti-fascists and race war.

There has been a similar growth in fitness groups within the increasingly aggressive anti-lockdown movement. While many of these are currently separate from the fascist fitness groups, there is an overlap in outlook and a potential new source of recruits for the far right.

TRADITIONAL FAR-RIGHT MOBILISING NARRATIVES

The less radical elements of the British far right, which are less overtly concerned with racial politics, have turned to increasingly traditional political issues during the past year. After many years focused on Brexit and then the COVID-19 pandemic, much of the far right has focused on “illegal” immigration, and on on-street grooming allegedly perpetrated by Muslim men of South Asian heritage.

Anti-immigration sentiment remained a key focus for the far right throughout 2021, strengthened by flash points such as the murder of MP Sir David Amess, the botched bombing attack in Liverpool and the British withdrawal from Afghanistan. Hotel accommodation used to house migrants has been another major target for anti-migrant content and outrage, especially by far-right activists falsely comparing homeless “indigenous” British people and veterans to the plight of the newer migrants.

The issue of cross-Channel migration by boats has been enthusiastically adopted by a resurgent Britain First. Since being registered as a political party, it has used the issue as a key campaign topic.

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For many far-right activists, it is no longer about winning local councillors, but about the total overhaul of the system and the start of a race war

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While British public opinion towards immigration as a whole has continued to improve, attitudes towards refugees and migrants have remained depressingly negative. According to HOPE not hate’s State of the Nation poll, nearly half of all Britons (44%) strongly or somewhat agreed with the view that asylum seekers pose a security threat to British people, with just 28% disagreeing. With such strong views on migrants and asylum seekers, it is not so much the far right creating these narratives as mining and exploiting them.

Meanwhile, after several years of legal woes, incarcerations, extended holidays, injunctions and bankruptcy, 2021 also saw the return of Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson). Despite a generally disastrous year that included lost trials and

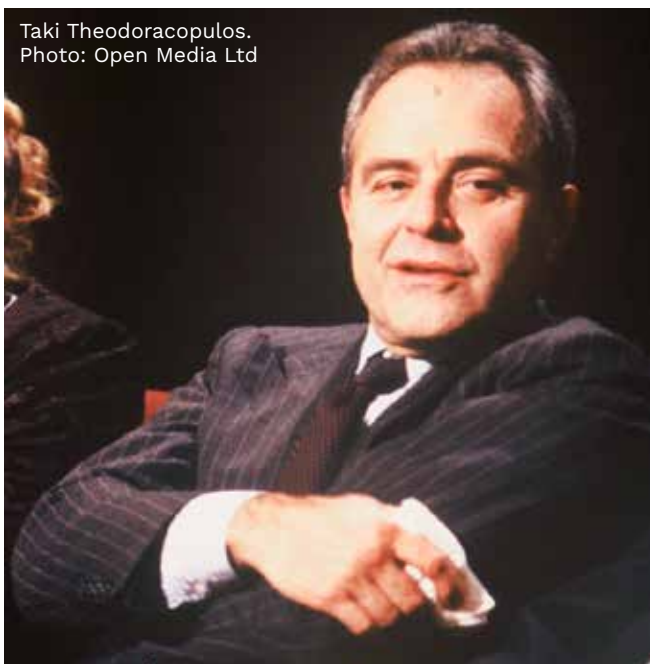
bankruptcy, he re-emerged towards the end of 2021 and started 2022 with a demonstration in Telford around the issue of on-street grooming – part of a very long history of minority communities being framed as a sexual threat by the far right.

The far right has always sought to racialise sexual violence and child sexual exploitation, in fact, whether it be the centuries-old blood libel or characterisation of Jews as paedophiles before the Second World War, to attacking African-Caribbean immigrants as rapists and pimps in the post-war period, and now painting Muslims as groomers of white girls.

This was a key element of the English Defence League’s (EDL) platforms – despite the prevalence of several serious sex offenders within its own ranks – and desperate to regain his relevance, Stephen Lennon has once again turned towards the issue. It will no doubt remain a salient topic within the wider movement for the foreseeable future.



James Delingpole.
Photo: Mises
Institute of Canada



Taki Theodoracopulos.
Photo: Open Media Ltd

“

Far-right figures will always find an audience for their ideologies online, but they should not be able to launder their reputations with the assistance of mainstream media outlets

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MAINSTREAMING AND NORMALISATION

Last year we also had several reminders to the on-going problem of violent misogyny in society. The murder of Sarah Everard at the hands of Met Police officer Wayne Couzens and numerous examples of aggressive sexist behaviour in the police, including rape, show how institutionalised violent sexism is.

We also witnessed two incidents of misogynist murders. Jack Davison, who killed five people in Plymouth, had an interest in the ‘incel’ [involuntary celibate] culture and Danyal Hussein stabbed to death two sisters in north London in a supposed demonic pact.

Of course, One of the most worrying phenomena of the last year was the increasing normalisation and mainstreaming of far-right individuals and narratives. The rise of several egregious examples highlights that this is a growing issue, and the cordon sanitaire that kept the far right ‘beyond the pale’ is crumbling. The results can be extremely dangerous.

Home Secretary Priti Patel’s rhetoric around cross-Channel migration is a case in point. Dehumanising talk about “floods” of migrants and alarmism about an “invasion” were once again amplified and subsequently picked up by right-wing media outlets. Patel used the inflammatory term “activist lawyers” to demonise those she said were frustrating the removal of migrants. Encouraged by Patel’s special advisors, media stories followed, which then led to far-right activists to protest at hotels and other accommodation centres.

There were also some appalling examples of mainstream news outlets providing platforms to far-right figures. *The Spectator* was one, providing space to controversial columnists such as Taki Theodoracopulos and James Delingpole, while talkRADIO and unsurprisingly the new TV station GB News also provided airtime to a raft of radical-right speakers.

As well as far-right individuals being platformed, there are also examples of the far right and elements of the right-wing mainstream media in accord around a certain topic, such as Islamophobia and transphobia. The relationship between media coverage of trans issues and far-right anti-trans views is complex. The far right’s antipathy towards trans people is inherent to its ideologies and a product of its view of gender, but it is clear that media attention to the issue has attracted the focus of the movement, and at times, been extremely helpful to it.

Of course, it is not just one way traffic. Just as far-right figures are increasingly being given more mainstream platforms, so some conservative-right thinking becomes more hardline and can act as normalising bridge to more extreme far-right narratives. We have seen this with Islamophobia over the years and more recently with anti-migrant sentiment. It is the conservative right which drives



these narratives, which are then picked up and can be weaponised by the far right on the streets, and in communities and online.

We are seeing the same play out with so-called “culture wars”, which are driven primarily by the conservative right, through politicians and certain media outlets such as GB News, *The Spectator* and *The Telegraph*. The concept that political correctness is silencing normal opinion and white men are being adversely affected by positive discrimination and gender politics not only taps into many traditional far-right narratives, but gives them a much larger audience with which to engage.

In recent years, there has been a growing and understandable clamour for social media platforms to do more to root out the proponents of racism and bigotry from their platforms. Yet such efforts are in vain if the same toxic figures can also be found in the pages and broadcasts of mainstream media. Far-right figures will always find an audience for their ideologies online, but they should not be able to launder their reputation with the assistance of mainstream media outlets.

GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

While it is important to focus on the specific dangers of the far right, these have to be understood in the context of some of the policies and statements put out by the Conservative government. There is a deeply troubling track record of echoing or even repeating such rhetoric. Worryingly, this is now manifest in a series of pieces of legislation that together advance a radical-right agenda.

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belief in and support for our democratic system is weaker than many imagine

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The Elections Bill, for example, seeks to end the full independence of the Electoral Commission. It also disenfranchises voters without ‘acceptable’ forms of ID and gives the power to a single individual – the Secretary of State – to define who is and is not a permissible campaigner in an election. The bill fundamentally changes the nature of voting and campaigning in this country and is being rushed through Parliament with minimal pre-legislative scrutiny and without consent from political parties across the House (as usually happens with changes to voting systems and democratic engagement).

Each of the measures in the Elections Bill on their own undermine the basic principles of a democracy in which voters can place their trust. However, when placed alongside the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the Judicial Review Bill, the University Free Speech Bill and the Nationality and Borders Bill, alongside the impending changes to the Human Rights Act and to the BBC, it is clear that this is a coordinated and centralised attack on our democracy and democratic institutions from the heart of this government.

These changes all seek to centralise power, riding roughshod over the parliamentary process to enact them. They also further erode trust in the political system, which is already at a low ebb following the Partygate scandal.

Worse still, as we explore later in this report, belief in and support for our democratic system is weaker than many imagine. The centralising of power, ignoring of rules and the deliberate and systematic undermining of our institutions, would eventually have very serious effects as people lose faith in the democratic process.

OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

The organised, traditional far right remains a relatively marginal force in British politics. It still struggles to clamber back to its feet after the collapse of the BNP, EDL and then UKIP. In some ways, with Brexit out the way and the post-pandemic world slowly emerging, the current far-right threat looks very traditional, with a combination of political parties and street protest groupings becoming animated around Muslims, immigration and standing in elections.

At the same time, the burgeoning conservative-right platforms will only further exacerbate the culture wars, aggressively push anti-migrant and Islamophobic agendas, drawing wider audiences from which the far right can – and will try – to recruit.

However, it is the growing economic difficulties that many people will face over the next year that offer the far right its best hope to expand. A recent report by the Bank of America suggested that British households could face the biggest annual decline in their living standards since the 1950s as inflation, energy rises and taxation rise and government benefits are withdrawn. With the poorest in society hit hardest, it is not difficult to see how the far right – in all its forms – could benefit.

Whether they do, remains to be seen, but the very fact that it is a possibility should concern everyone.

STATE OF THE NATION POLL

HOPE not hate’s annual poll of the nation reveals a nervous Britain, with many dissatisfied with the way things are going.

The British public enters 2022 in a nervous mood, disengaged from the political system, thinking the country is going in the wrong direction and already feeling the financial pinch.

That’s the findings of our annual State of the Nation poll, the results of which are used throughout **State of HATE 2022**.

The annual poll, conducted at the beginning of each year, shows a population ill at ease with the state and direction of the country.

Only six percent (6%) of those we polled say they are very satisfied “with the way democracy is working in the UK”, down from 11% who thought the same 12 months ago, and only another 31% define themselves as “quite satisfied”, down from 37% in 2021.

By contrast, 57% now claim they are not satisfied, with 20% considering themselves “not at all satisfied”. In our 2021 State of the Nation poll, just 46% declared themselves not satisfied.

Likewise, 74% agree with the statement that “politicians don’t listen to people like me”, with just 10% disagreeing.

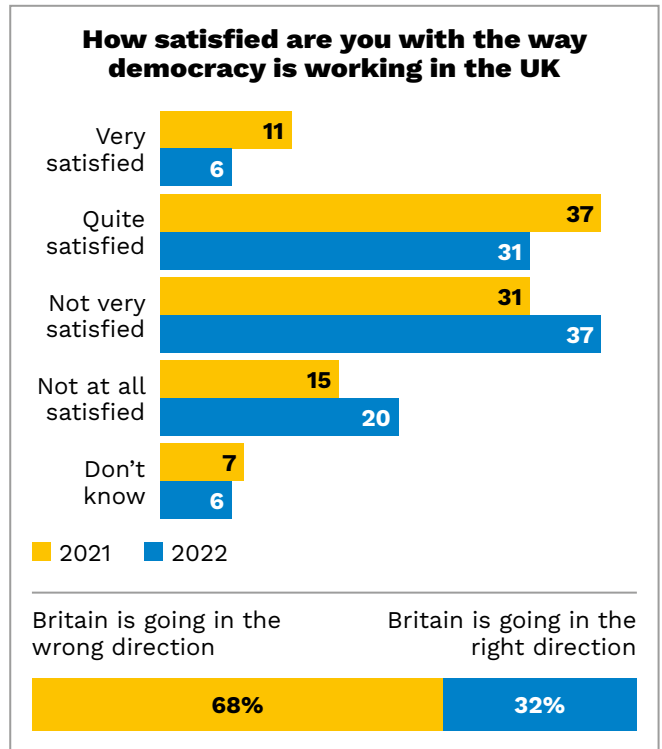
The economic pinch is starting to be felt. Four out of five respondents, 80%, say that they have “less disposable income after housing, food and fuel than a year ago”. Over two thirds of respondents, 68%, think Britain is going in the wrong direction, with just 32% thinking the opposite.

The rising cost of living is weighing heavily on people’s minds. Over half of respondents (56%) listed it as one of the three most important issues facing them and their families today. Next important was COVID-19 (39%) and then the economy (31%).

Brexit is not turning out as the Government had hoped, with 60% in our poll believing that Brexit has been bad for Britain. Even a third of 2019 Conservative voters think Brexit has been bad, as well as more than a quarter (27%) of those who voted Leave in the 2016 referendum.

The combination of Brexit failing to live up to promised expectations, the Partygate scandal and the rising cost of living explains the Conservative’s poor showing in the polls. Our State of the Nation poll puts the ruling party on 31% and Labour on 41%.

Only 61% of those who voted Conservative in 2019 say they would do so again, with 10% saying they would vote Labour, six percent (6%) switching their support to the Reform Party (formerly Brexit Party) and 15% undecided.



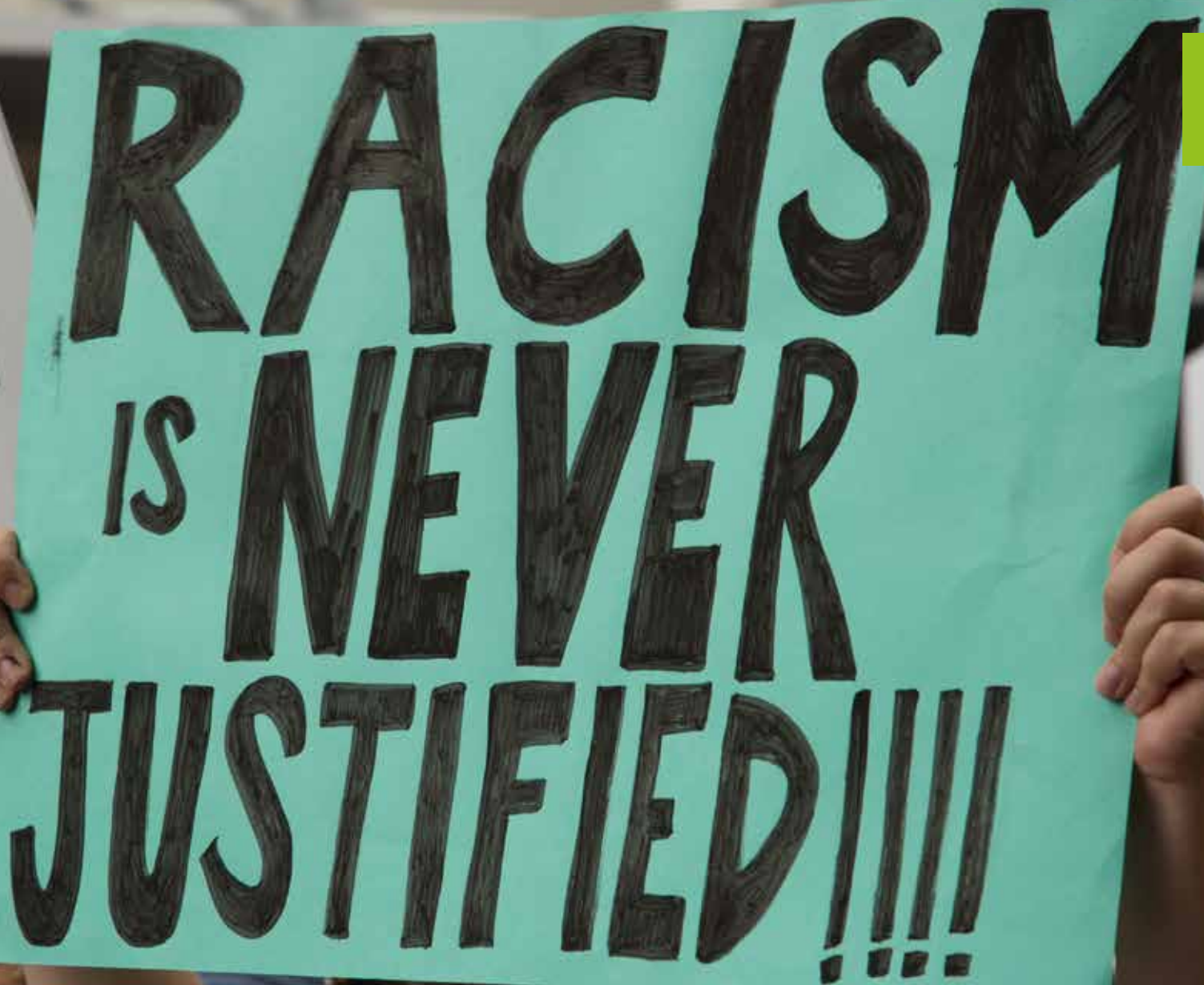
Attitudes towards racism in the UK are quite mixed. Just over half of people (54%) believe that black and Asian people in the UK face discrimination in their everyday lives, compared to 21% who disagree. Only a third of people (31%) think Britain is institutionally racist, with 37% believing it is not.

More people (46%) think immigration has been good for Britain, than those who don’t (30%). Likewise, 43% think Britain has a responsibility to help protect migrants that are arriving in England across the channel, with 36% disagreeing.

However, opinion is much more negative when Britain’s racist and imperial past is considered. Sixty percent (60%) think “white people are unfairly made to feel guilty over historical racism”, with just 20% disagreeing. Over half (55%) think “the British Empire is something we should be more proud of”, while a quarter (26%) believe it is something we should be more ashamed of.

Despite his political silence for much of the last two years, Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) remains a widely-known figure. Over half of Britons (56%) have heard of him, down just one percent (1%) when we last asked this question in a poll three years ago. Two-thirds of those between the ages of 25 and 34 had heard of him. However, only 6.2% of Britons have a favourable opinion of Lennon, and he remains a polarising, disliked figure.

SECTION 2 – HATE IN THE UK



**RACISM
IS NEVER
JUSTIFIED!!!!**

HATE CRIME 2021

Hate crimes are universally rising across the board, and despite better recording methods, are almost certainly being underreported, say JEMMA LEVENE and LIRON VELLEMAN.

While most of this report is focused on the perpetrators of hate, it is important to consider those who are most impacted by hate: the victims of hate crimes.

Consistent with other crimes, hate crimes are hugely under-reported, but the National Crime Survey shows a further rise in reported hate crimes to the year ending March 2021 (the most recent available figures). There have been some improvements in standardisation of data collection across police forces, although the figures have been skewed by the introduction of new software which has meant that Greater Manchester Police's (GMP) figures could not be included in overall totals.

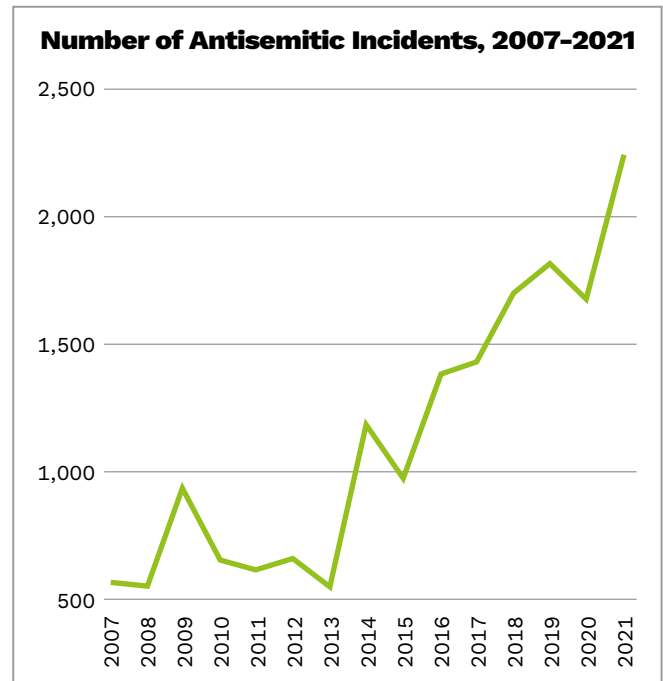
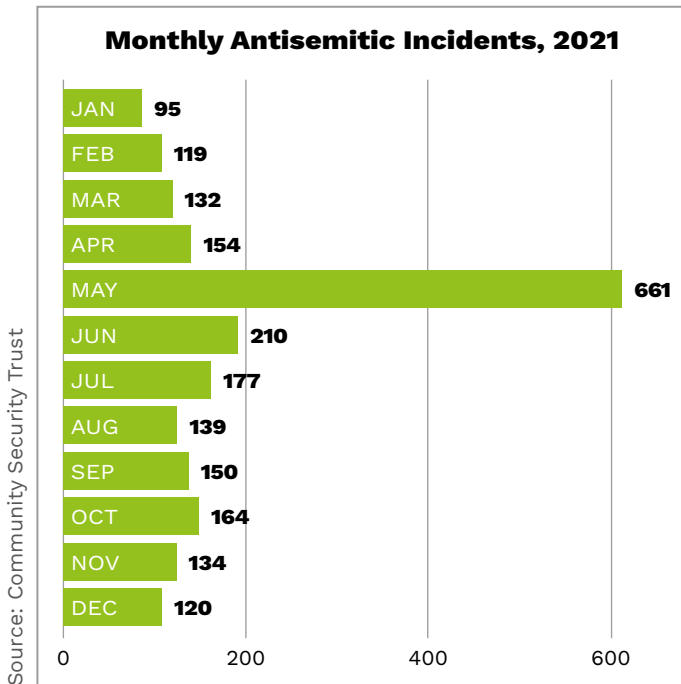
From March 2020-2021, there were 114,958 offences where one or more of the centrally monitored hate

crime strands were deemed to be a motivating factor. This represented a nine percent (9%) increase on figures for 2019/20. Including GMP, there were 124,091 offences. According to independent charity Victim Support, there was a nearly 11% increase in the number of people seeking support after experiencing a hate crime in the year to October 2021.

Reported crimes led to 10,679 prosecutions and 9,236 convictions. As we highlighted last year, there continues to be a need for better training on hate crime identification across police forces and better support for victims. Hate crimes and incidents impact not only those directly targeted by the crime, but the victim's wider community as well, fuelling fear, anger and suspicion.

Police have arrested four men in connection with a video which appeared to show antisemitic abuse being shouted from a car in north London.





The year-by-year increase in reported hate crimes since 2011 might be in part due to improvements in reporting. But what is clear is that there have been successive spikes in hate crimes following trigger-events. Notable among these were the 2016 Brexit referendum, terrorist attacks with fatalities in the UK and beyond, and most recently a huge spike in racist hate crimes in a backlash to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020.

Figures from the Community Security Trust, a charity which provides security and safety advice to the British Jewish community, revealed a similar spike in antisemitic hate crime in May 2021 during the escalation in the conflict involving Israel and Gaza. There was also evidence of a spike in racist hate crime immediately following the final match in the men's Euros 2020 football tournament.

RACISM

As in previous years, the clear majority of hate crimes recorded in the National Crime Survey were racially motivated, accounting for 74% of offences. These types of hate crime increased by 12% in total between the year ending March 2020 and the year ending March 2021.

According to Victim Support, hate crimes motivated by race and nationality rose by 73% in late March, in the week following the easing of the first lockdown. A significant spike in religiously-motivated hate crime was recorded in July 2020, following the murder of George Floyd and the BLM protests, and this would have contributed to part of the reported rise over the year.

ANTISEMITISM

The CST defines an antisemitic incident as any malicious act aimed at Jewish people, organisations or property, where there is evidence that the act has antisemitic motivation or content, or that the victim was targeted because they are (or are believed to be) Jewish.

CST's annual Antisemitic Incidents Report noted

there were 2,255 reported anti-Jewish hate incidents nationwide in 2021, the highest annual total that it had ever recorded (since 1984) and a 34% increase from 2020.

The record figure includes a dramatic spike in anti-Jewish hate reported during and after the escalation in violence in Israel and Gaza in May 2021. This is consistent with other hate crime figures, which peak when there are so-called trigger events.

The CST report includes 176 violent antisemitic incidents in 2021, the most recorded in any year and an increase of 76% from 2020, though long lockdowns in 2020 meant that face-to-face attacks were significantly reduced. Three of these violent incidents were serious enough to be classified as 'Extreme Violence', involving potential grievous bodily harm (GBH) or a threat to life.

Over a third of the antisemitic incidents recorded in 2021 were related to Israel and/or with evidence of anti-Zionist motivation alongside anti-Jewish hatred; 502 incidents were recorded by CST where the offenders used far right or Nazi-related discourse including Holocaust celebration.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

In the year ending March 2021, where the perceived religion of the victim was recorded, 45% of religious hate crime offences were targeted against Muslims, a slight proportional decrease on the previous year. The false reports portraying British Muslims as "super-spreaders" of the virus seen in 2020 gained less traction in 2021, as conspiracy theorists turned their focus on China.

There were no significant trigger events that caused a spike in Islamophobic hate crime in the reporting period, although anecdotal evidence suggests there was an increased targeting particularly of Somali Muslims following the murder of the Southend MP David Amess in November.

The marking of the month of Ramadan led to some attacks on Muslim communities – for example in Ilford, east London, where eggs and stones were

A wide-ranging survey of Muslim healthcare professionals in the NHS reveals a startling and deeply worrying level of anti-Muslim abuse, discrimination, and Islamophobia, exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The report, *Excluded on the Frontline: Discrimination, Racism and Islamophobia in the NHS* was co-authored by Dr Hina J Shahid, a GP who chairs the Muslim Doctors Association and Hira Ali, who co-founded The Grey Area project and currently leads on its Diversity & Inclusion work.



hurling at a mosque. An arson attack on the Didsbury Mosque near Manchester, around the time of the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, was foiled by passing members of the public, who used their coats to put out the flames.

As well as incidents of antisemitism (some perpetrated by Muslims) during the conflict in Israel and Gaza in May, there were some incidents of Muslims and other pro-Palestine protestors being targeted in the UK, the worst of which involved a car being driven into a crowd at a protest in Nottingham, causing serious leg injuries to one man.

GENDER/MISOGYNY

Despite clear evidence of misogynistic hate crimes taking place at an alarming rate, misogyny is still not officially seen as a hate crime by the Government, or the judiciary and most police forces in the UK. However, since 2016, a number of police forces have begun to record misogyny as a hate crime.

The murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 by a serving police officer and further details emerging of the murders of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman reignited the conversation about recognising crimes



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*there were 114,958 hate crime offences
between March 2020-21*
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motivated by hatred of women. This has renewed calls for misogyny to be recognised as a hate crime. This would mean that crimes motivated by misogyny would be specifically recorded as such by police forces and would bring sex and gender-based hate crime in line with the other five categories of hate crime, added to the list of aggravating factors in sentencing in the court system.

In March 2021, the Government agreed to require all police forces in England and Wales to undertake a trial period of recording misogynistic hate crimes which was due to begin in the Autumn. However, to date no measures have been brought in.

The incidents this year, the levels of sexism and racism exposed by messages between officers in the Charing Cross Police Unit, the officers taking photos with the bodies of murdered women Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, and the shockingly low conviction rates for domestic abuse, rape and violence against women, have led to an all-time low level of trust in the police by women.

This is particularly true for black, Asian and minority ethnic women, LGBTQ+ women and women with disabilities. The campaign continues for misogyny to be recognised as a hate crime in the UK, and this must happen alongside a root and branch culture shift in policing if it is to have any positive impact at all.

ANTI-GYPSY, TRAVELLER & ROMA HATE

Because anti-GRT (Gypsy, Roma, Traveller) hate crimes are included in the broader category of racist discrimination, and because members of the GRT communities feel unsupported by mainstream services, and in some cases have limited knowledge of where and how to seek support, the Report Racism GRT hub run by GATE Herts is a crucial point of information on anti-GRT hate.

There has been growing awareness in GRT communities of the usefulness of reporting incidents, which has contributed to a significant increase in reports made (435 in the year between October 2020-21). The biggest group of hate crimes recorded is online hate, with discrimination being the second. GRT individuals still regularly experience denial of access to services that other groups take for granted, and GRT children are also victimised disproportionately, Gate Herts reports that COVID-19 has seen GRT communities being abused for

traveling during the pandemic while at the same time being moved on by local authorities and the police.

Incidents continue to peak following any negative media coverage of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma.

HOMOPHOBIA

According to Home Office statistics, homophobic hate crime grew by seven percent (7%) from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021 and the yearly case numbers have more than doubled in just four years. This is still only a snapshot of the overall picture of hate crime against LGBTQ+ people in the UK, due to the level of underreporting of all hate crimes.

In its 2021 Hate Crime report, the LGBTQ+ anti-violence charity Galop found that only 13% of respondents to their survey reported their experience of LGBTQ+ hate crime to the police. However, hate crime is a regular reality for LGBTQ+ people in this country, with 64% of Galop survey respondents saying they had experienced anti-LGBTQ+ violence or abuse in the past year, with more than a third experiencing it at least weekly.

Victims have experienced a range of abuse over the past year, most commonly verbal abuse and online abuse but also many have experienced harassment, physical and sexual violence, blackmail and damage to their property. These incidents have profound effects on individuals and they often require emotional support, practical assistance and advice but one of the key issues facing the LGBTQ+ community in the UK is the lack of local support services.

TRANSPHOBIA

Hate crimes against transgender people have also seen a rise in the past year, with a three percent (3%) increase from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021, totalling over 2,000 hate crimes.

Such hate crimes are severely underreported, with 88% of transgender people not reporting incidents of the hate crime they were subject to. In particular, transgender people experience violence, threats of physical and sexual harassment as well as verbal abuse, threatening behaviour and online abuse.

While hate crimes against transgender people have always existed, the 400% recent increase in coverage of trans issues in UK press and toxic debates in the mainstream have contributed to a wider societal division on trans issues and is likely to have led to a higher level of hate crimes perpetrated in the past year.

DISABILITY HATE CRIME

There were 9,208 disability hate crimes reported to English and Welsh police forces in the year to 31 March 2021 – roughly around 25 reported every day, continuing an upward trend in reporting, at a rate of nine percent (9%). Victim Support also reported a 22% increase in the number of people seeking support for disability hate crime in the year to October 2021.

Really worryingly, the rate of prosecutions for disability hate crime has dropped by nearly half in the last two years, even as cases recorded continue to rise.

Despite the campaigning of disabled rights groups like Inclusion London, disabled people find it particularly difficult to have the crimes perpetrated against them recorded as hate crime, with incidents often recorded as anti-social behaviour instead. Combined with the fact that routes to reporting hate crime are not always accessible for those with disabilities, the

Number and proportion of religious hate crimes recorded by the police¹, by the perceived targeted religion, year ending March 2021

Numbers and percentages		England and Wales
Perceived religion of the victim	Number of offences 2020/21	% 2020/21
Buddhist	23	0
Christian	521	9
Hindu	166	3
Jewish	1,288	22
Muslim	2,703	45
Sikh	112	2
Other	351	6
No religion	174	3
Unknown	926	16
Total number of targeted religions	6,264	
Total number of offences	5,948	

Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office. Figures exclude Nottinghamshire.

1. In some offences more than one religion has been recorded as being targeted, therefore the sum of the proportions does not add to 100%.

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economic downturns create an environment where tensions between different groups rise, and where minority groups are blamed for the misfortunes of others

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official figures for disability hate crime are particularly misleading and conceal multiple inequalities which increase the traumatic impact on victims.

CONCLUSION – 2022 LANDSCAPE

The draft Nationality and Borders Bill, and the media coverage given to it, could lead to a rise in hate crimes in 2022, in a similar way to the outcome of the Brexit Referendum in 2016. Another concern in 2022 is the UK's approach to its Afghan refugee scheme, which is already being undermined by the Home Office, could lead to increased local resentment and antagonism.

As up to 20% of Afghan Muslims are Shia, there is also a possibility of tension between different factions from within UK Muslim communities.

All our data over the last decade shows that economic downturns create an environment where tensions between different groups rise, and where minority groups are blamed for the misfortunes of others.

And finally, as we go to print, all eyes are on Ukraine. A refugee crisis seems likely, and there is a concern about refugees being targeted for attacks, as well as heightened hostility to Russians and other Eastern Europeans living in the UK.

RACISM AND RESISTANCE

Despite action taken to combat racism in sport, HOPE not hate's polling of black and minority ethnic Britons suggests there is still a long way to go before racism is stamped out in, or around, sport.

2021 showed football at its best and its worst. It was a year that black players were subjected to disgusting abuse, but it was also a year that the sport, and its supporters, stood up strongly against racism.

From the moment 19-year-old Bukayo Saka's penalty kick was saved by the Italian keeper and England lost the Euro 2020 Championship (which was played last year, after a pandemic delay), we all knew the abuse would start. And it did, both for those who missed penalties but also to other black players in the team, too. In fact, the racist abuse directed at England's black players had been there since the beginning of the tournament.

While police have not yet released figures for the time period, our research team tracked and recorded racist hate online during the delayed Euros 2020 football tournament. We monitored abusive tweets against all England players, alongside manager Gareth Southgate, tracking the ways abuse differed from player to player.

Despite scoring three goals during the tournament, Raheem Sterling was the second most targeted player after team captain Harry Kane, and much of the abuse against Sterling was of a racist nature. In fact, he received half of all racist abuse that was identified during the first three matches.

Even though the England team had a remarkably successful tournament, occasional missteps by players led to small spikes in abusive posts online. However, the loss in the Euros final amplified this pattern, and the players who missed their penalties received more abuse than we had recorded during any other game during the tournament.

Much of this was racist,

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Raheem Sterling received half of all racist abuse that was identified during the first three matches

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and the amount of vile racist slurs spiked enormously during the last minutes of the game. By the end of the game, terms like the “n-word”, as well as monkey and banana emojis – which had only been recorded a handful of times in previous games – exploded in use.

Off the field, Victim Support also reported a spike in referrals following the Euros 2020 final.

A BEAUTIFUL IRONY

But there was a reaction to all of this.

In a beautiful irony, the racist abuse led to an outpouring of anti-racist sentiment. Hundreds of thousands of people shared anti-racist imagery on their social media platforms. Thousands of bunches of flowers and messages of support were left by a defaced mural of Marcus Rashford, another player who missed a penalty. Some of the racists responsible for the slew of abuse were arrested and others named and shamed.

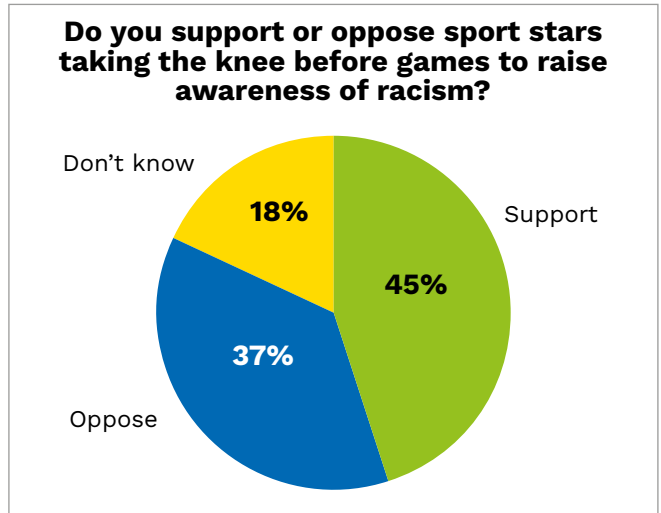
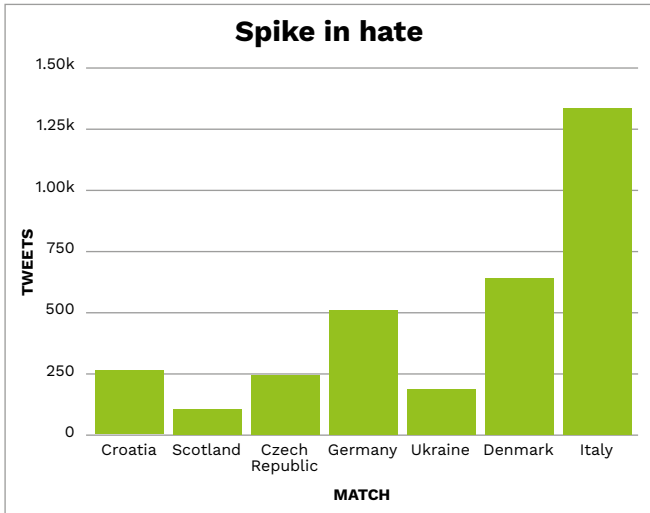
Public attitudes changed too.

Polling by HOPE not hate last July showed the seriousness with which the public now took racism in football.

Almost three-quarters of respondents said that racism in football was a serious issue (just 21% said it was not). Interestingly, an overwhelming number of women (80%) were more likely to think it was a serious issue than men (67%), with over a third of people (36%) thinking there was more racism in football today than



Raheem Sterling
Photo: Кирилл
Венедиктов



compared to 20 years ago. A quarter (24%) thought there was less, while over a quarter (26%) thought it was at the same level.

The public were also strongly in support of action being taken against the racist perpetrators, both through the courts and by being banned from football grounds.

Even before the Championships began, racism in football was a controversial issue. After the murder of George Floyd in the USA, British footballers began ‘taking the knee’ to demonstrate their opposition to racism in the sport and society generally. They were rounded upon by some fans and by Government ministers, who attacked the players as part of their wider attempt to deepen culture war divisions in society.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson refused to support players taking the knee, while Home Secretary Priti Patel even said that she did not support “people participating in that type of gesture politics” and that it was acceptable for fans to boo players. The Government quickly and humiliatingly backtracked in the face of popular outrage.

In our 2021 poll, a clear majority of people – 59% – said that Government ministers were wrong to say that fans had the right to boo players, with just 26% believing they were right.

Seven months on from the Championships and public opinion is still firmly supportive of players taking the knee. In our State of the Nation poll, 45% support the action, with 37% opposing it.

STILL A PROBLEM

While it is encouraging that there is widespread support for those players who have been racially abused, racism remains a problem in sport. England players Raheem Sterling and Jude Bellingham were both racially abused during England’s World Cup qualifier game against Hungary in September last year, as fans made monkey chants and threw cups of beer at the players. And West Ham fans were arrested after they were filmed on a flight to Belgium singing an explicitly antisemitic song at a Jewish passenger.

The cricketing world was also rocked, following former Yorkshire county cricketer Azeem Rafiq’s allegations of institutional racism within the sport. His brave testimony to a Parliamentary select committee that he had “lost my career to racism” triggered others to come out and condemn institutional racism in English cricket, with many sharing horrific accounts of how explicit racist language had become commonplace, while others had their careers cut short.

In our poll of those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, a third of respondents said they felt there was more racism in sport now than there was 20 years ago (31%). Only a quarter felt there was less racism in sport (24%), and 28% felt that not much had changed over the last two decades.

Black respondents were slightly more likely to feel that there was more racism in sport today (34%) than those from other ethnic backgrounds – perhaps unsurprising, given the explicitness of anti-black racism in sports, including that experienced by England footballers.

But there was also encouragement for those raising awareness of the problems. Overall, 61% of respondents said they supported sports stars taking the knee before games to raise awareness of racism (17% opposed), with the same proportion (61%) saying that Government ministers were wrong to say that fans should be allowed to boo footballers for taking the knee (16% said they were right).

While 2021 was a year where many sports clubs and sporting bodies pledged to take action on racism in sport, the fact our poll has found that so many people of black and minority ethnic backgrounds feel the problem has got worse highlights how far there is to go.





EVERYDAY HATRED

In a year when an official Government report claimed that there was no institutional racism, black and ethnic minority Britons found racism and discrimination all too commonplace. ROSIE CARTER reports.

The reality of life experienced by black and ethnic minority Britons in 2021 is quite different from that given in a report commissioned by the Government as its response to rise of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in 2020.

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, chaired by Tony Sewell and which published its report in March 2021, rejected the premise that the UK had a systemic problem with racism and claimed that it should be a “model” for other countries in their response to racism. Yet polling conducted by Focaldata on behalf of HOPE not hate over the Christmas period, shows that this rosy picture of racial relations and racial harmony is not shared by the majority of Britons of black and ethnic minority heritage.

It is no great surprise that in our poll, the majority of people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds see that black and Asian people face discrimination in their everyday lives (67% agree), with female respondents more likely (72%) than male respondents (61%) to agree, highlighting different intersectional experiences.

Black and Black British respondents are also most likely to say that black and Asian people in the UK face discrimination in their everyday lives (75%) than Asian and Asian British (65%), or those who see themselves as of mixed or multiple heritage (72%), and those from other ethnic minority groups (51%), highlighting the engrained and explicit nature of anti-black racism in the UK.

Our poll is the third we have done in the last two years. Our first was commissioned in the summer of 2020, in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic and as the country was gripped by the emergence of the BLM movement.

In January 2021, we revisited some of the same questions, to look at how, if at all, things had changed. We found support for the BLM movement had sustained, and the movement had had a huge impact in changing the conversation on race and racism in Britain, in particular in raising consciousness of anti-blackness. But we also found widespread disappointment around the Government’s response to BLM, and cynicism around its pledges to address racism in Britain.

The polls were designed to better understand the mood of Britons of black and minority ethnic heritage, often poorly represented by small sample sizes in national polls, and to pick apart differences in opinion between ethnicities, heritage backgrounds and religion. Our initial poll reflected how the shared experiences of being a minority fostered a mutual empathy and

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

In January 2021, we revisited some of the same questions to look at how, if at all, things had changed. We found sustained support for the BLM movement, which had had a huge impact in changing the conversation on race and racism in Britain, in particular in raising consciousness of anti-blackness. But we also found widespread disappointment around the Government’s response to BLM, and cynicism around its pledges to address racism in Britain.

EXPERIENCES OF RACISM IN 2022

A year on, we have repeated our poll. The results would seem to suggest there has been an increase in racist violence, abuse and racism in the workplace and public institutions over the last year. Overall, 18% of respondents said they had personally experienced racist violence during the past year, while 28% said they had witnessed it. In our poll from January 2021, 11% of respondents reported having experienced racist violence, while 16% had witnessed it, and 13% had both witnessed and experienced racist violence over the previous 12 months.

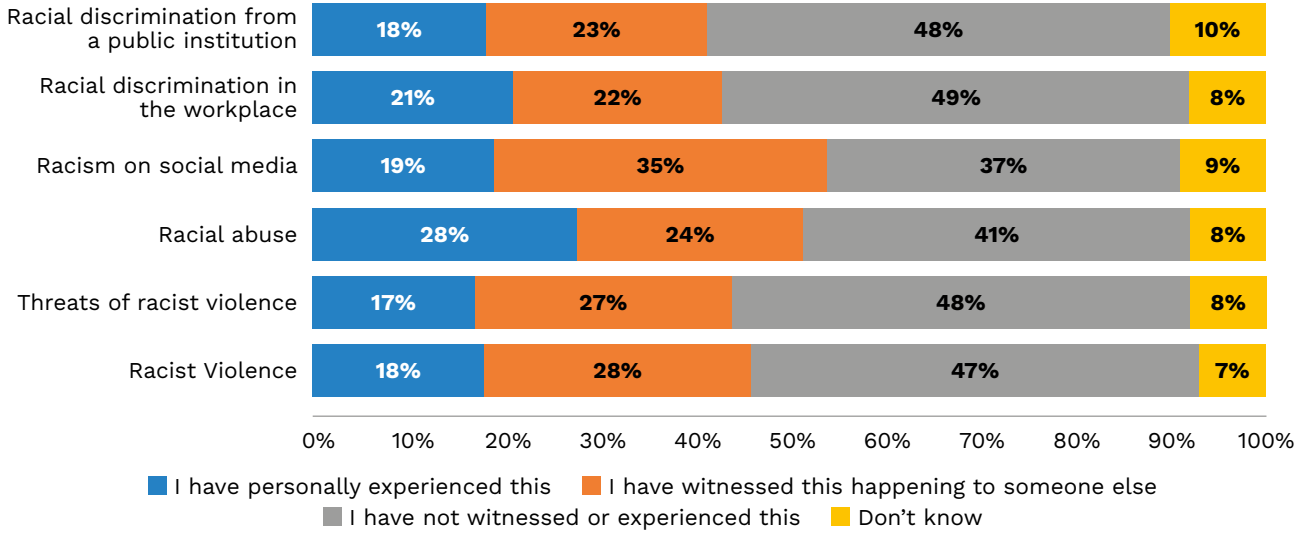
And overall, just as many respondents had experienced racist violence directly (18%) as had experienced threats of racist violence (17%), while almost a third (27%) had witnessed such violence.

More than half of respondents (52%) had witnessed (24%) or experienced (28%) racial abuse in the last

“BAME”

The usefulness of the administrative term ‘BAME’, is highly contested, and often hides the heterogeneity of ethnic minorities, and fails to capture the complex reality of identities. However, we specifically sampled individuals under the ‘BAME’ banner, not only because is polling standard to do so, but this was the only way that we are able to poll representative samples of ethnic minority people from different backgrounds in order to ensure the heterogeneity of different groups was represented.

Over the last 12 months, have you personally witnessed or experienced any of the following forms of racism or discrimination? All respondents



12 months. And while experiences of racially aggravated violence were higher among 18-24s, racial abuse was experienced and witnessed by large numbers across all age groups.

Among 18-24s, fewer than a third (32%) of respondents could say they had neither witnessed nor experienced racist violence in the last 12 months; while 43% said they had witnessed this happen to someone else, but one in five (20%) said that they had personally experienced it. And more than one in five male respondents said that they had personally experienced racist violence in the last year (21%), while 15% of female respondents said the same. The highest reports of personal experience of racist violence came from respondents in the North East (28%), Yorkshire and Humberside (29%).

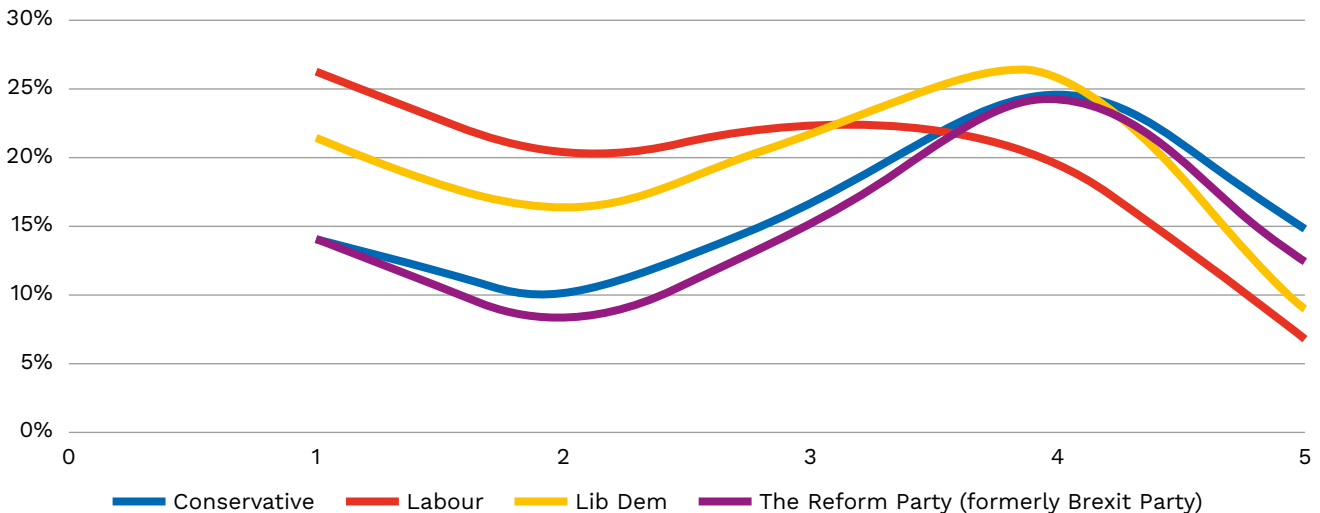
The depth of explicitly anti-black racism and anti-Muslim prejudice is profound. Black and mixed race respondents were both more likely to report having

personally experienced racist violence (21-22%), while around one quarter of BAME Muslim respondents said that they had personally experienced racist violence in the last 12 months (23%), and 30% said that they had witnessed racist violence towards another.

Despite 10 years of attempts by social media companies to regulate and moderate hate speech, and statements saying they would do more to address racism and support racial justice following the global response to George Floyd's murder, our poll finds that overall one in five (19%) respondents had personally experienced racism on social media, while more than a third (35%) had witnessed it. Among young people (18-24s), more than a quarter (27%) had personally experienced racism on social media and half (48%) had witnessed racism online.

And overall, despite many working from home as a precaution to stop the spread of COVID-19, fewer than half of respondents said that they had not

On a scale of 0-5, to what extent do you think the following political parties are racist? (where 0 is not racist and 5 is very racist)



experienced racial discrimination in the workplace (49%). Just as many said they had not experienced racial discrimination from a public institution (48%). Again, Black Britons were most likely to have personally experienced racial discrimination in the workplace (28%) or from a public institution (23%) than respondents of other minority ethnic heritage. Depressingly, 2021 has been another year of empty promises to take action on racism, putting to shame the Government's claim of outright rejection of institutional racism, and Britain's claim to be a model when it comes to addressing racism.

TWO YEARS ON FROM BLM

More than two years since the killing of George Floyd by a white police officer in Minneapolis sparked a global movement against police violence and structural racism, the impact of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the UK remains significant to Britain's black and minority ethnic populations.

Support for BLM has remained constant during this time, and a majority of respondents in our poll (59%) maintained that the BLM movement spoke to their concerns about racism in Britain – just 14% disagreed. Black respondents were most likely to feel their concerns were represented by the BLM movement: 77% agreed, while just eight percent (8%) did not.

Black respondents were also more optimistic about the impact of the BLM protests – half (50%) agreed that they had led to lasting improvements for ethnic minorities in Britain, compared to 45% of all BAME respondents. And black respondents were slightly more likely to think that white people had taken racism more seriously after the protests (51% agreed with this statement). Overall, 49% of BAME Britons felt that white people had taken racism more seriously after the protests.

At the same time, there was a strong feeling that many white people had responded poorly. Half (51%) agreed that white people often played the victim when called out for racism, while a third were unsure (34%) but only 15% disagreed. Black respondents were most likely to agree that white people often played the victim: 63% agreed, with more than a third (36%) in strong agreement.

RACISM IN POLITICS

After the last General Election in 2019, just 10% of Members of the House of Commons and only 6.6% of Members of the House of Lords were from ethnic minority backgrounds, both of which are below the overall proportion of the population. Perhaps it is unsurprising, then, that just a quarter (25%) of respondents agreed (and just 7% strongly agreed) with the statement “people like me are well represented in political discussion”. Female respondents were even less likely to feel represented: just 21% agreed, with six percent (6%) agreeing strongly (29% of male respondents agreed and 9% of those strongly).

But there are many other reasons for people of black and minority ethnic heritage to feel that they are not well represented in politics. While the far right's electoral success has sharply declined in recent years, racism within the main political parties has become a focal point of national discussion, including explicitly anti-Muslim prejudice in the Conservative Party and antisemitism in the Labour Party.

When our poll asked how racist each person perceived

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BAME GROUPS

When asked about the impact of the pandemic, it is clear that many people from BAME backgrounds are struggling.

The financial impact of the pandemic has disproportionately impacted people from BAME communities. When we carried out comparative polling in early 2021, more than a third of BAME respondents were more likely to say they had had their hours reduced, lost their job, or struggled financially to meet basic living costs, and black respondents were twice as likely to say they had applied for Universal Credit than white respondents, and more than twice as likely to say that they had lost their job than white respondents.

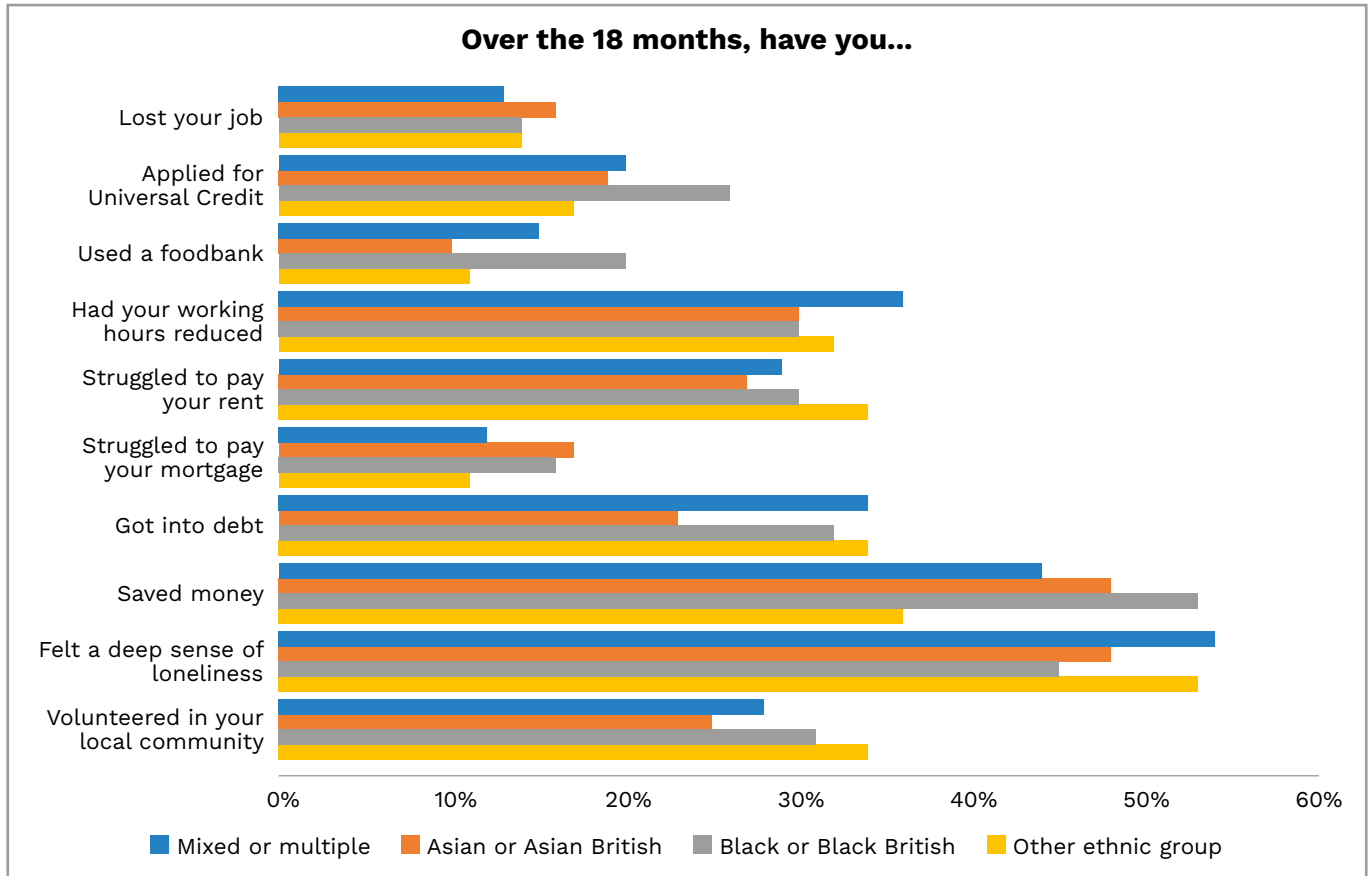
A year later, the impact of the pandemic on people from BAME backgrounds has, if anything, worsened. The vast majority are feeling the pinch, with three quarters of respondents (74%) saying that they had less disposable income after housing, food and fuel than a year ago. Only a quarter (26%) said they were doing better.

More than a quarter (26%) of black respondents also said that they had applied for Universal Credit, while one in five (20%) said that they had used a foodbank in the last 18 months. Sixteen percent (16%) of respondents who described themselves as Asian or Asian British said they had lost their job in the last 18 months, while around a third of people across different BAME backgrounds said they had seen their working hours reduced or struggled to meet rent or mortgage payments.

With the cost of living rising substantially, all of these impacts will be felt even more, with people from BAME backgrounds more likely to have disproportionately high living costs as they are more likely to pay a ‘poverty premium’, more likely to be in precarious and low-wage work, private rental accommodation, and more restricted or costly access to credit, banking and insurance.

Clearly, action needs to be taken to build security for those facing the sharpest effects of the pandemic, and the disproportionate impact for people from BAME backgrounds must be addressed.





Recent allegations by the Conservative MP Nusrat Ghani that she was sacked from a ministerial role for being Muslim have revived calls for action against Islamophobia in the party

the main political parties to be, respondents generally saw Labour as the least racist party, while the Conservatives and Reform parties were seen as more. In fact, more respondents felt that the Conservative Party was “very racist” than the Reform Party (formerly Nigel Farage’s Brexit Party).

Policies may have had some sway here, including Priti Patel’s hardline stance on immigration, and in her attempts to pass the new Nationalities and Borders Bill. Clause 9 of the bill is causing particular controversy, as it means six million people with dual nationality, or who were born outside the UK, could be stripped of their British citizenship without fair warning. Post the Windrush debacle, this would most likely impact Britons of black and minority ethnic

heritage, sending a message that those who are not white and British do not hold the same sense of belonging in the UK. More than a third (38%) of our poll agreed with the statement: “The British immigration system is racist”, though 37% neither agreed nor disagreed, and a quarter (25%) disagreed.

Moreover, the impact of Islamophobia exposed in the Conservative Party has clearly stemmed their appeal with Muslim voters. More than one in five (21%) of Muslim respondents scored the Conservative party a 5 (very racist). Recent allegations by the Conservative MP Nusrat Ghani that she was sacked from a ministerial role for being Muslim have revived calls for action against Islamophobia in the party.

HOPE not hate’s polling from autumn 2020 found that found that almost half of Conservative Party members believed Islam was “a threat to the British way of life”; more than a third of card-carrying Tories also believed that Islamist terror attacks reflected a widespread hostility to Britain among the Muslim community; and nearly six in 10 thought “there are no-go areas in Britain where sharia law dominates and non-Muslims cannot enter”.

Indeed, until parties are ready to take meaningful action on racism within their own ranks, people of black and minority ethnic heritage will continue to feel misrepresented by our political system.

Methodology

Focaldata’s polling of 1082 respondents of black and minority ethnic heritage carried out between the 17 December - 04 January 2022. Data was weighted to be nationally representative of the GB BAME adult population - weighted to age, gender, region, ethnic group, and religion.

BORIS JOHNSON HAS FAILED TO DELIVER

At the height of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised to address the issue of racism in society, saying:

“We who lead and who govern simply can’t ignore ... an anger and a widespread and incontrovertible, undeniable feeling of injustice, a feeling that people from black and minority ethnic groups do face discrimination: in education, in employment, in the application of the criminal law.”

Johnson’s pledges to address racism in society have, however, met with much criticism. He has since whipped up a distracting culture war about statues and symbols, commissioned the Sewell review (which made claims in March 2021 that institutional racism was not a problem in Britain), overlooked the existence of many other existing reviews on racism in the UK, and failed to condemn those fans booing the England football team for “taking the knee” during the Euro 2020 competition last year.

The Government-commissioned report on racism, delivered by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities and chaired by Tony Sewell, claimed that the UK should be seen as an international exemplar of racial equality, that issues of race and racism were becoming “less important” in explaining social disparities, and that the UK had become a “more open society” where children from many ethnic communities performed as well or substantially better than white pupils in compulsory education.

Much of the Commission’s report focused on advances in education through the generations, with children from minority ethnic communities outperforming their white peers, which had “transformed British society over the last 50 years into one offering far greater

opportunities for all”. But the report also promoted harmful myths, framing poor academic performance by white working class boys as a problem of “status deficit” and that white and male groups felt they were overlooked in favour of an equalities agenda.

The majority of our BAME poll also felt that Johnson had failed to act. Just 17% of BAME respondents felt that Boris Johnson had kept his promises, made at the height of the BLM protests, to address racism in society, while 57% said he had not. And of those who voted Conservative in 2019, 43% said that Johnson had not been successful in meeting his promise of addressing racism – only one in five felt he had (22%).

Indeed, the majority of Britons of black and minority ethnic heritage reject the findings of the Government’s Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, which claimed the “idealism” of “well-intentioned young people” claiming the dominant feature in society is institutional racism achieves little “beyond alienating the decent centre ground”.

Overall in our poll, 52% agreed that Britain was institutionally racist (while 27% did not feel strongly about the statement, and 22% disagreed). And despite the Commission’s claims that institutional racism was an opinion of young people, our poll found no significant age differences in those who felt Britain was institutionally racist – 53% of over-65s and 56% of 18-24s agreed it was.

It is clear that when communities are listened to, the premise in the Commission’s report that the UK should be seen as an international exemplar of racial equality, and that issues of race and racism are becoming “less important” in explaining social disparities, is even more of an insult to those who experience racism.

The Prime Minister Boris Johnson records his Black Lives Matter message inside the White Room of No10 Downing Street.
Photo: Andrew Parsons / No 10 Downing Street



HATE, HARASSMENT



Anti-immigrant protest in Dover
Photo: Alisdare Hickson / flickr

ENT AND

HOTELS

SAFYA KHAN-RUF exposes how far-right activists are attempting to exploit anti-migrant tensions.

“People are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture.” Margaret Thatcher made this inflammatory remark in 1978. Fears over migration are not a new phenomenon in Britain. Forty-four years later, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is still promising the country will not return to “uncontrolled immigration”. Meanwhile Home Secretary Priti Patel’s controversial Nationality and Borders Bill attempts to criminalise people who manage to reach the UK irregularly. The same Bill could theoretically also deprive the citizenship rights of millions of minority-ethnic Britons.

The Bill came into Parliament as concerns grew over the number of people making the treacherous journey aboard small boats to the UN from the Continent, via the Channel. More than 28,300 people used this route in 2021 – triple the number of the year before, according to Home Office statistics, but still a tiny number when compared to many other European countries. The highest number of arrivals in a single day was 1,185 (compared to 416 in 2020). Despite this increase, the UK’s small boat arrivals are a fraction of the number of migrants arriving in Europe, with more than 120,000 people coming to Europe via the Mediterranean by land and sea in 2021, according to data from the UNHCR, the UN’s refugee agency.

Despite the comparatively small number of people involved, migration remained a national story for much of the year, often discussed in discriminatory and alarmist terms. Optimistic Brexit assurances about reducing migration have not materialised – and the daily drip feed of anti-migrant content in major newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* has contributed to a hardening of attitudes.

Unsurprisingly, immigration has also been a central issue for the British far right and supporters have been active in this area. It is also now attracting attention from far-right groups who had not seriously engaged with the issue before now. Far-right anger has been directed towards migrant accommodation, too, with a rising number of filmed visits to suspected migrant housing.

Several events during 2021, such as the attack by a failed asylum seeker in Liverpool or a planned resettlement scheme, have been seized on by the far right to serve their anti-migrant and dehumanising narratives. Social media content is regularly posted by anti-migrant “citizen journalists”, filming migrants arriving on boats or harassing hotel staff where they suspect migrants are being housed. Far-right groups

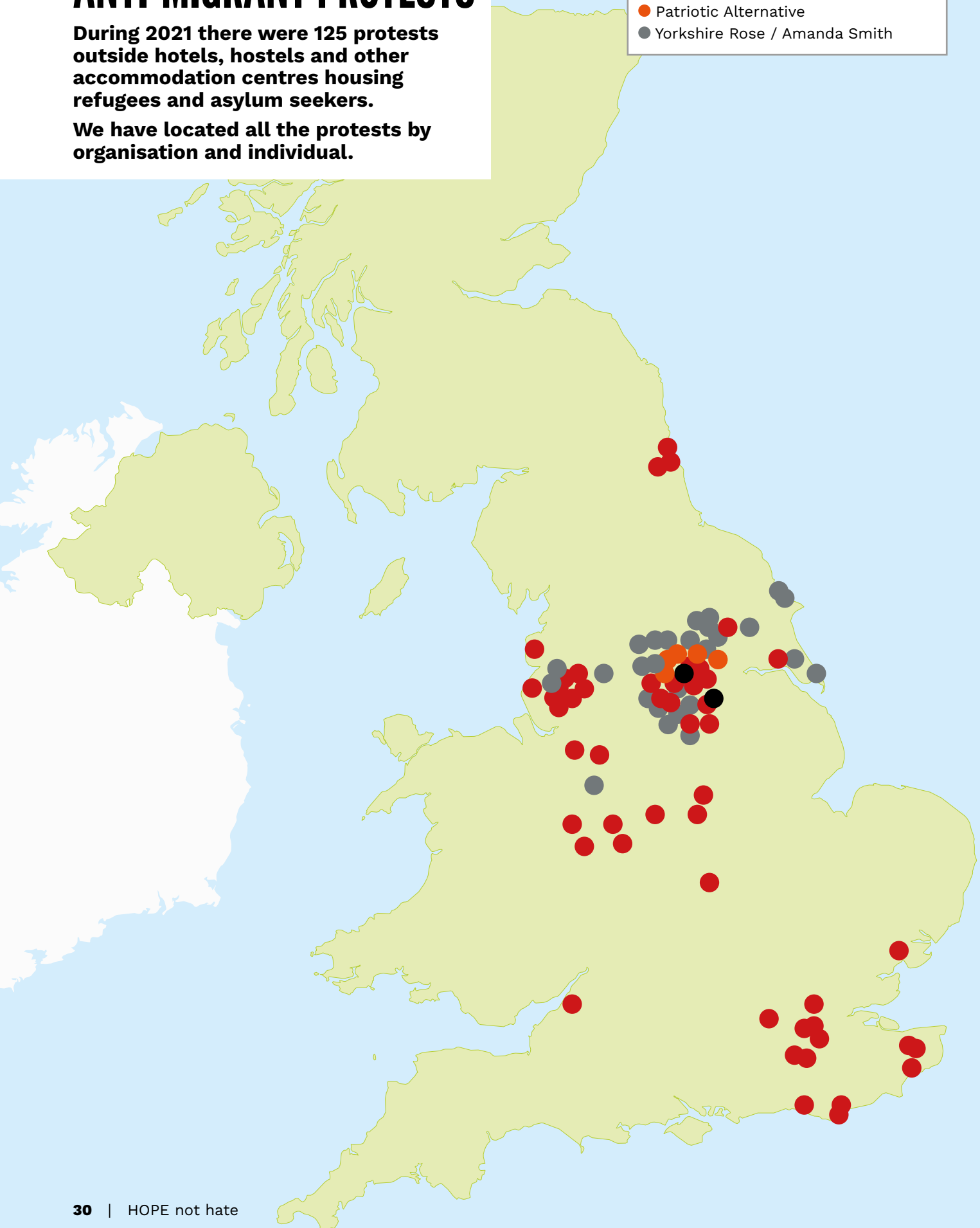


ANTI-MIGRANT PROTESTS

During 2021 there were 125 protests outside hotels, hostels and other accommodation centres housing refugees and asylum seekers.

We have located all the protests by organisation and individual.

- Active Patriot
- Britain First
- Patriotic Alternative
- Yorkshire Rose / Amanda Smith



have also dropped banners in certain locations, calling for an end to immigration and doing their best to stir up community tensions.

Dover remains one of the key areas for migrant arrivals and therefore one of the most popular destinations for anti-migrant activists. For several in the far right, filming the arrival of such migrants makes up the bulk of their online content. This is then shared widely on various messaging boards, accompanied by hundreds of angry and racist comments.

“

Dover remains one of the key areas for migrant arrivals and therefore one of the most popular destinations for anti-migrant activists.

”

Interest and mobilisation across these groups surges after certain events. One such example was a demonstration in Dover on 29 May 2021, which received support from more extreme segments of the far right, including the British Nationalist Socialist Movement. Just 60 people attended the actual event, but the organisers declared it a success after they managed to bring the roads around the port area to a standstill for several hours.

FLASHPOINTS

The far right often justify their hatred of immigrants by citing attacks. These incidents serve as flashpoints that increase online far-right activity and self-reinforce their narrative about ‘violent foreign males’ supposedly ruining the United Kingdom.

When Emad Al Swealmeen blew himself up with a home-made bomb in Liverpool, he was the ideal perpetrator for such mythological far-right narratives. An Iraqi-born, failed asylum seeker who converted to Christianity, his attempted attack (which failed after he blew himself up inside a locked taxi outside a hospital) last November was quickly linked by the far right to the influx of people arriving in Dover. The fact the Al Swealmeen lied when trying to claim asylum confirmed every far-right suspicion. Within the scramble of misinformation post-attack, asylum seekers were all tarred with the same brush on far-right social media platforms.

Perhaps the best-known of the self-proclaimed “migrant hunters” is Alan Leggett (aka Active Patriot). Leggett regularly demonises arriving migrants. He tried to capitalise on the botched Liverpool bombing by attempting to film the house of the suspected attacker – he was blocked by police – and also confronting journalists reporting on the issue. A video of him going on an anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim rant was widely shared across far-right and conspiratorial online spaces.

More generally in the far right, the linkage between migrants and terrorism has been framed in three ways. First, as a warning of how dangerous migrants arriving in small boats can be – homogenising a desperate community with the actions of an attacker. Second, as a criticism of the government for its failure to remove asylum seekers whose claims have been rejected (despite this government’s relentless efforts to create a more hostile environment for those seeking asylum).



Alan Leggett (aka Active Patriot).
(below) Steve Laws
Photos: Telegram



Third, as highlighting the perceived dishonesty of the BBC and other mainstream media outlets over their reporting of the attack: discrediting reputable news sources is a recurring tactic for the far right.

Failed asylum seekers are not the only targets for the far right. When Sir David Amess MP was stabbed to death by Ali Harbi Ali, a British man of Somali origin, Somalis in the UK were targeted by threats and abuse. Steve Laws, another “migrant hunter” known for his filming of migrant boats, was one of the many who “othered” the killer and likened him to an invader.

Laws ran (and lost) as a UKIP candidate in Amess’ former seat. Since then, he has continued to push associations between terrorism and asylum seekers – trying to whip up outrage that asylum seekers continue to arrive in the UK despite raised terror threat levels. He supports the ‘Great Replacement’ conspiracy, a white nationalist belief that states ethnic white populations are being demographically and



Nigel Farage
Photo: flickr /
Gage Skidmore

culturally replaced with non-white, and specifically Arab and sub-Saharan Muslim populations, through mass migration and demographic changes.

General Islamophobia is also rife across Laws' Telegram channel and he has repeatedly used degrading language such as "invaders" and "swarm" to describe migrants. He also helped organise an anti-migrant demonstration in Dover in May 2021 and his video content has been shared online by many far-right groups.

The fact that Sir David Amess' murder was followed a day later by the anniversary of Samuel Patty's death further inflamed the far right. Patty, a French schoolteacher, was stabbed and beheaded by a refugee from Chechnya in 2020 for having shown cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in a class on freedom of speech. Many anti-migrant far-right figures used Patty's death to claim further proof that new migrants were dangerous.

More generally, though, the far right in the UK has exhibited simmering resentment towards the French. Anti-migrant activists have become adept at using ship-tracking software to track French and British vessels engaged in policing and rescuing migrant boats. This has led to increased anger towards the French, who far-right activists claim are being given millions of pounds by the British government while escorting migrant boats into British waters.

Another clear source of anger for the far right has been the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme, which was designed to offer sanctuary for up to 20,000 "vulnerable" people after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in 2021. The primary messaging from groups such as Britain First and For Britain has been the cost to British taxpayers. In doing so, they are reviving and refining similar attacks used during the Syria crisis, using Islamophobic narratives of a "Muslim takeover of Europe" and framing refugees as potential terrorists or sexual predators. For Britain focused on the unemployment migration would cause and criticised the Conservative government's Operation Welcome that would supposedly "bring in tens of thousands of undocumented Afghans". Meanwhile, the nazi group Patriotic Alternative has pushed a "Write to your MP" action for its followers, to express concern about the proposed resettlement of Afghan migrants in the UK.

Nigel Farage also unsurprisingly waded in to claim a failure by the Home Secretary, saying: "You may as well put a sign on the White Cliffs of Dover saying everybody welcome and you won't be deported." He used his platform on GB News to make alarmist claims about waves of Afghan refugees, and thousands of others making bogus claims to be Afghans, all descending on the UK.

Farage represents a midpoint between the mainstream and the far right. Migration has become one of his main talking points and on one occasion he hired a boat

“

Tracking and analysis by HOPE not hate has found at least 125 hotel visits by anti-migrant figures in 2021 and this could even increase in 2022.

”

and sailed into The Channel to film migrant vessels. He received some pushback after unwisely criticising the RNLI (the charity which provides lifeboats and crews across the UK) for its work helping some of those vessels in distress. This became a national news story and, following a campaign by HOPE not hate and others, led to a great increase in donations to the organisation. However, within the far right it is worth noting that Farage's claims are widely accepted and promoted, and expertly packaged to promote indignation and anger.

HOTELS

In addition to general anger against migration, there is a more focused opposition to the housing of migrants in hotel accommodation around the UK.

According to official statistics there are currently up to 16,000 asylum seekers in temporary accommodation, including hotels, hostels and disused military barracks across the UK, while they await longer-term housing. The overall number of people staying in asylum-related facilities has tripled in the past 10 years to 64,000. Anti-migrant activists have attempted to generate outrage by comparing the accommodation provided to "foreigners" with the situation of homeless British people, especially military veterans.

Tracking and analysis by HOPE not hate has found at least 125 hotel visits by anti-migrant figures in 2021 and this could even increase in 2022. It is important to note that while the official aim of these videos is to confront and harass migrants, less than 15% of the recorded visits in 2021 included a confrontation. The activists often just filmed hotel buildings while mouthing monologues, or sometimes attempted to enter and were stopped by security guards.

Amanda Smith, an anti-migrant activist going under the name "Yorkshire Rose", is by far the most prolific YouTuber here. Her channel (with just under 2000 subscribers) mostly consists of videos where she films herself visiting hotels she suspects are housing asylum seekers, then harasses staff, security guards and anyone she suspects of being a migrant. In January 2021, she and Alan Leggett (aka Active Patriot) were arrested for causing alarm and distress during one such incident, and she claims they were banned from the area as part of their bail conditions.

A Britain First activist, James White, was also convicted of assaulting a security guard at a hotel housing asylum



Amanda Smith (aka Yorkshire Rose) with Stephen Lennon

RECORDED MIGRANT ACCOMMODATION VISITS IN 2021 (%)



seekers. The incident occurred on 29 August 2020 and came during one of the many protests and hotel “invasions” carried out by Britain First. White was found guilty of assault in his absence in 2021, after failing to attend his trial.

Britain First has often used the issue of hotels in this context to promote its other divisive messages, for example around grooming scandals. Britain First supporters held a small protest in September last year at the Britannia Hotel in Standish near Wigan. They made allegations that male refugees at the hotel were sexually harassing schoolgirls, claims that police said were baseless. It is not the first time the far right has made such false claims. Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson), the former leader of the English Defence League, has also pushed out the issue. He posted a video on 10 September saying: “All that matters is our children’s safety,” which was viewed over 30,000 times.

Leggett has also pushed the “migrants are sexual predators” narrative. He released a documentary in December 2021 about so-called “Muslim grooming gangs” (Steve Laws helped edit it), which he toured across seven northern towns. From the start of the tour in Rotherham to its end in Rochdale, there were few audiences for the film, which Leggett broadcast via a portable screen in public locations. However, his subsequent filming of his actions on his Telegram channel were then widely shared in far-right circles.

Other content-creators regularly covering the migrant issue include Christopher Batt (aka Tyrant Finder UK) from the West Country and Chris Johnson whose videos are widely shared, including by Stephen Lennon.

COUNTERING ANTI-MIGRANT ACTIVISTS

Several of the anti-migrant activists have been taken to court over their actions in 2021, with mixed success. The largest case was brought against Steve Laws, Tracey Wiseman (aka XxTWxX), Alan Leggett and Nigel Marcham (aka Little Veteran) by Dover Harbour Board. The latter two signed an undertaking stating they would not intimidate asylum seekers or enter the docks without permission, under the penalty of jail time and a fine. Marcham, who was a key player in the anti-migrant scene in 2020, announced in December 2021 that he was tired of confrontations with Dover police and that he would now only be focusing on his real passion, which was helping homeless veterans.

Leggett on the other hand did not seem fazed by the ruling, while Steve Laws refused to sign the undertaking and his case will continue in 2022 (Laws has been to court several times in 2021 including being

found not guilty of breaching the peace in January, and being found guilty for stealing and joyriding a dinghy that had originally been used by asylum seekers to cross The Channel – although he has appealed the latter and the case will resume in 2022.)

Most anti-migrant activists film themselves before and after court, giving monologues about their brave actions, as well as painting themselves as victims being persecuted for protecting their country. This is often accompanied by details of how supporters can donate to their cause.

The issue of cross-Channel migration will likely continue to garner headlines and cause debate and discussion. However, it is vital that the hysterical and prejudiced voices of the far right are not legitimised or normalised in this delicate and difficult issue. When the mainstream media interviews an anti-migrant and far-right activist, for example, they should reveal his or her affiliations and should merely describe them as a “commentator” – as was the case for Steve Laws when he was interviewed by talkRADIO last year.

Far-right citizen journalists repeatedly claim to be telling the “real truth”. In the age of alternative facts and the crumbling of political integrity, this rhetoric is seductive and increasingly dangerous. It must not become the new norm.

Britain First, planned to patrol the English Channel



TRANSPHOBIA AND THE FAR RIGHT



PATRIK HERMANSSON reveals how the extreme right is actively exploiting anti-trans focus in the mainstream press and elsewhere.

The far right believes that the world can be structured into strict hierarchies and categories. This worldview seeps through every segment of their belief system and is expressed in different ways: through concepts such as nationalism, a desire for strong leaders and perhaps most clearly in racism. It is also present in the far right's view on gender, and recently this has come to be expressed through attacks on the rights of transgender people.

In recent years transgender people have become an important target of far-right hate, both here in Britain and internationally. Anti-trans views include fear, dislike or mistrust of people who are, or who are perceived to be, transgender or non-binary, as well as denial of their identity, abuse and vilification of trans people.

Such beliefs now comprise a large part of far-right propaganda, as well as social media content and, worryingly, regular and direct calls for violence. Hate against trans people has united the broader far right in a way few other issues have done. From more mainstream figures and parties that usually avoid explicit references to race, to explicitly fascist and racist groups, transphobia has become a central focus.

Anti-trans views span the entire far right.

The fascist group Patriotic Alternative has published multiple blogs on transgender people over the last year. It also reviewed the anti-trans, antisemitic book *The Transgender Industrial Complex* and hosted the book's authors in one of its "book club" livestreams. Mark Collett, the organisation's leader, has also regularly broadcast transphobic messages on Telegram.

Meanwhile, the anti-Muslim activist Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson), who has 155,000 followers on Telegram, has also made anti-trans politics a central part of his agenda in recent years. In December 2021 alone he posted 14 transphobic posts and additional anti-LGBT+ posts, frequently using the slur "tranny". In one post he wrote: "It's not natural, biological men can't have babies, they are not supposed to have babies."

It should be no surprise that the far right almost universally opposes transgender rights. Far-right ideologies have at their core strongly patriarchal gender norms, no matter the gender of the ideologue. Views on gender reflect the far right's view of the world as one of strict and unchangeable categories, framed in many cases as dictated by "nature" (a theme referenced by Lennon's quote).

Gender, in the view of the far right, is intrinsically linked to biological traits and should determine one's place in a social hierarchy. Ultimately the traditional gender roles and the subjugation of women is justified in terms of ensuring the reproduction of the nation.

Emancipatory struggles, whether in migrant rights, feminism or the movement for transgender equality, challenge these boundaries and are therefore clashing with this core tenet of far-right ideologies.

Because this strict view on gender as binary and biologically defined is shared across the far right, so too has opposition to the movement for transgender equality. This opposition is shared almost universally across the far right's, usually conflicting, segments.

MAINSTREAM MEDIA COVERAGE OF TRANS ISSUES

What has changed in recent years is the focus on the issue outside of the far right: in mainstream media, culture and politics. The newspaper regulator, the Independent Press Standards Association (IPSO), found a 400% increase in the coverage of trans issues between 2014 and 2019. A report by Mermaids, a charity supporting transgender, nonbinary and gender-diverse children and their families, similarly found that mentions of transgender children in British press were 23 times as common in 2018-19 compared to 2012 and that a majority of the coverage was negative.

The far right has noticed. Activists regularly parrot critical articles from the mainstream media or share positive press coverage in condescending or ridiculing ways. Last year Patriotic Alternative published several articles on its website based on reporting in the mainstream press. One article titled “Transgender Inmates Over-Represented in Prison Sexual Assaults”, linked to two *Telegraph* stories and one *Daily Mail* article to make its case. The piece also called gender confirmation surgery “body mutilation.”

Finding ways to insert themselves into ongoing debates and salient issues in mainstream media is an effective tactic by far-right activists, allowing them to access new audiences by showing agreement with one or the other side in issues that receive media attention. There is some evidence that this has already led to overlaps between movements, as well as a potential slip road into far-right politics.

The American far-right “citizen journalist” Andy Ngo, who frequently posts anti-trans content on his social media, attended a conference organised by British group LGB Alliance in October as a member of the press. LGB Alliance is an anti-trans campaign group formed in October 2018. Ngo had left his job as editor of *Quillette* after it was revealed that he knew that the far-right group Patriot Prayer was planning violence without reporting it. Attending and reporting from the LGB Alliance conference exposed both Ngo's and LGB Alliance's audiences to one another. Another case reported by Trans Safety Network is that of Harry Miller, a police officer critiqued for transphobic tweets, who later went on to join far-right organisation Hearts of Oak.

However, the far right's attention to the topic in the media should not be seen as purely tactical. Specific themes in the mainstream media's portrayal of trans issues have struck a chord with far-right views on gender. A common theme in media coverage is the portrayal of trans people being a threat – primarily towards children and, especially in the case of trans women, as a threat particularly to cis¹ women. There have been numerous media-led debates and columns discussing the topic of trans women's access to women-only spaces such as bathrooms and changing rooms, often with a critical party arguing that it would give (what they define as) “men” a possibility to commit sexual violence. This focus discards the



Hearts of Oak, an alliance of far-right and libertarian activists, including Tommy Robinson

fact that trans people are disproportionately affected by sexual violence themselves.

These narratives fit with existing far-right discourses and feed into common anxieties. There is an enduring figure in far-right discourse of a hypersexualised black or Muslim rapist. This trope serves the far right by posing white men as protectors of (white) women. This in turn strengthens the status of white men and entrenches traditional, patriarchal gender roles. There is a direct link between this existing idea of a sexual threat and how the far right speaks of trans people today.

Media coverage that portrays transgender people in a negative light is therefore often shared by the movement's activists, and transgender people are framed as a threat to cis women and children in the same way that black or Muslim men often are. Lastly, the idea that trans people (and the LGBTQ+ movement more broadly) harms children additionally frames them as some sort of direct “threat” to the future of the nation.

An example of such a convergence of twisted views is shown by Hearts of Oak, an alliance of far-right and libertarian activists, including Tommy Robinson. The organisation heavily promotes Robinson's project “The Rape of Britain”. While he has claimed to expose the sexual exploitation of children by predominantly Muslim men, he has also made multiple videos targeting trans people. In one speech titled “THE TRANS TIME BOMB!!!”, he argued that gender-neutral children's books and LGBTQ+ education in school causes mental health issues, calling it child abuse and comparing it directly to sexual grooming.

“THE ALL-POWERFUL TRANS MOVEMENT”

The far right's rhetoric around trans people is similar to that of many other groups that it targets. It uses a similarly contradictory language to justify its hate. Transgender people are simultaneously ridiculous and threatening, weak and powerful, depending on context.

Depicting trans people as powerful and dangerous serves to legitimise hate and obscures the fact that transgender people face a remarkable amount of persecution. Research by LGBTQ+ hate crime monitoring organisation Galop found that in 2020 as many as four out of five trans people had experienced a hate crime in the previous 12 months, and that one in four had experienced a transphobic physical assault or the threat of physical assault.



Shon Faye notes in her recent book *The Transgender Issue* that the rhetoric about trans people has changed in recent years. She writes:

“We were no longer portrayed as the ridiculous but unthreatening provincial mechanic who was having a ‘sex swap’; now, we were depicted as the proponents of a powerful new ‘ideology’ that was capturing institutions and dominating public life.”

While Faye writes about mainstream media, the far right has adopted a similar language fed by conspiracy theorist thinking. It does not focus on individual trans people but views the transgender equality movement as a monolithic, powerful and disruptive force with a secretive agenda. This has fed existing far-right conspiracy theories which can incorporate anti-trans narratives.

“Cultural Marxism” is a theory alleging that (usually) Jewish people promote progressive ideologies through their supposed influence in cultural and political institutions, and are working to smuggle communism into Western culture, to brainwash populations and undermine the West. LGBTQ+ rights and feminism are some of the most common issues attributed to cultural marxism. Promotion of these causes, many segments of the far right believe, will lead to the breakdown of order, a weakening and the corruption of society, through the weakening of white men and lower birth rates. In its fascist interpretation, LGBTQ+ people, as well as other minority groups, are seen as impurities that need to be removed for the good of the nation.

Trans rights are a central target for those adhering to this idea. In countless messages in antisemitic chat groups on Telegram, trans-rights are described as a “jewish agenda”. One message by Patriotic Alternative leader Mark Collett exemplifies the conspiracy theory: “The New York Jewish Week asks: Were Adam and Eve black transgender refugees?”

Other groups do not reference it explicitly. The Traditional Britain Group (a far-right discussion group) used the phrase “trans tyranny”, while the nazi hooligan group Pie and Mash squad wrote during Pride month in Brighton in June that trans people “now enjoy supremacy in the city. Just another loud minority

calling the shots for the silent majority”. Britain First wrote on its Telegram channel in November: “Don’t mess with the all-powerful trans movement! They are very, very powerful and exercise a disproportionate influence on society!”

CALLS FOR VIOLENCE

Trans people are now one of the primary targets of violent far-right groups. Some of the most extreme fascist groups are also virulently anti-trans and in some cases they have turned their ideas into action.

In March 2021, HOPE not hate infiltrated and exposed the fascist and terror-advocating group, the National Partisan Movement. The group’s internal chat used directly threatening language. One member asserted that transgender folks are “not people” and posted a picture of a noose which he captioned: “Send this to blacks and trannies.” Going even further, one member bragged about planning to vandalise a transgender support centre in Ontario, Canada. He was encouraged by other members to throw rocks through the centre’s front window and paint graffiti on its facade outside. Meanwhile he sent pictures of his attack back to the group.

There is little sign of far-right groups and organisations losing interest in this topic, and that presents a serious threat to transgender people. This is unlikely to change as long as the issue remains intensely reported on in mainstream circles.

However, the relationship between media coverage of trans issues to far-right anti-trans views is complex. The far right’s antipathy towards trans people is inherent to its ideologies and a product of its view of gender, but it is clear that media attention on the issue has also attracted the focus of the movement. That both positive and negative coverage in mainstream press is being exploited by far-right social media activists suggests they know it will rile their supporters. In this regard, negative press coverage and disproportional focusing on issues such as bathrooms and trans athletes have likely not been beneficial.

1 ‘Cis’ is short for ‘cisgender’, which means someone’s identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

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SECTION 3 – ANTI-LOCKDOWN AND COVID CONSPIRACIES



A protest against COVID-19 vaccines, in London, on 18 September 2021. Photo: Mx. Granger



CONFRONTING

The radicalisation of the conspiracy protest movement should concern us all, warns DAVID LAWRENCE.

On 18 December 2021, just days after MPs voted to pass a new set of COVID-related restrictions, Piers Corbyn, brother of the former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, told a crowd of several hundred gathered outside Downing Street that they needed to “get a bit more physical” with “lying MPs”.

Corbyn, the face of the UK’s conspiracy theory-driven, anti-vaccine protest movement, told his followers that they need to:

“...hammer to death those scum who have decided to go ahead with introducing new fascism [...] We’ve got to get a list of them [...] and if your MP is one of them, go to their offices and, well, I would recommend burning them down, OK. But I can’t say that on air.”

The following month, a group of roughly 200 people

met in a park near Walsall, Staffordshire, under the banner of “Alpha Men Assemble”, and underwent combat drills overseen by Danny Glass, a former soldier in the Royal Fusiliers. According to an undercover reporter for the *Daily Mail*, under the watchful eye of the police the organisers presented themselves as a law-abiding, non-violent group, but when out of earshot Glass stated his intent to “take it to the Old Bill”, with another organiser discussing “hit[ting] vaccine centres, schools, head teachers, colleges, councillors and directors of public health in every area”. Figures associated with the group were present when an angry mob hurled abuse at Labour leader Keir Starmer at a protest near Parliament in February.

Around the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing government counter-measures have catalysed the spread of numerous conspiracy theories, disseminated by a constellation of organisations, campaigns, outlets, online spaces and individuals. These networks have generated an outpouring of false information, variously linking COVID-19 to the rollout of 5G technology, a

Piers Corbyn. 13th June 2020



THE “CABAL”

Chinese bioweapon or denying the existence of the disease altogether, alleging it to be a smokescreen for totalitarian controls and the microchipping/poisoning of the population via vaccines.

In the UK, the spread of such notions has given rise to a prolific protest movement, with hundreds of demonstrations across the country, some of which brought upwards of 10,000 people onto the streets of London. This broad coalition is loose, multifaceted and fluctuating, consisting of individuals from across the political spectrum and stretching from the edges of the mainstream to the political extremes. Many followers are unaligned to any clearly delineated ideology or organisation, but share a populist worldview and an outsider identity that positions them as heroic “truth seekers”, standing together against a sinister elite.

A RADICALISING MOVEMENT

As 2021 progressed, sections of this broad coalition became increasingly radical and aggressive. After two years of energetic protest with no tangible impact on policy, an increasing sense of frustration has fed into a confrontational ethos, the normalisation of violent language and the emergence of new, militant groups that have vowed to prepare for a “global war against governments”, posing a threat not just to public health but also to political and social cohesion.

There are numerous drivers behind the increasing radicalisation. With lockdown restrictions easing and widespread vaccine success, those still passionately involved in the scene are a shrinking but increasingly radical rump. Many of those who remain have progressed far enough down the “rabbit hole” into believing in ‘superconspiracies’, which bundle multiple conspiracy theories together into a grand overarching conspiratorial narrative.

For many in this scene, the pandemic has “revealed” the existence of a pernicious, or even all-powerful, group of conspirators pulling the strings behind world events and seeking to control society. The danger here is that, in the eyes of some believers, combatting this grand conspiracy requires more drastic action. It is no longer merely about campaigning to lift lockdown regulations, but about fighting an all-powerful oppressor, which, in their eyes, makes more extreme behaviour and tactics admissible.

ONLINE ALIENATION

The radicalisation of sections of the anti-vaccine milieu stems, in part, from its toxic online environment. Over the past 18 months, sweeping bans from mainstream platforms have forced or encouraged the conspiratorial networks that flourished during the pandemic to migrate to alternatives, such as the video

hosting sites BitChute and Odysee, the Twitter clone Gab and the messaging app Telegram.

The latter platform in particular has become central to the organisation and propagandising of the UK’s conspiratorial milieu, providing anonymity and protected messaging but also enabling the extensive spread of content. Telegram hosts countless public channels and private chat groups that promote various conspiracy theories, ideologies and campaigns, many of which are locally focused.

For example, in January 2021, a UK “Great Reopening” campaign emerged that urged businesses to break lockdown rules by opening their doors. It was organised via dozens of coordinated regional Telegram groups that quickly gained thousands of members. While the campaign itself was a failure, the groups continue to function as hubs for sharing propaganda and promoting local and national actions.

“
followers ... share a populist worldview and an outsider identity that positions them as heroic “truth seekers”, standing together against a sinister elite
”

Even though this online isolation inhibits the spread of toxic ideas to new audiences, one side effect is that it has further detached conspiratorial communities from mainstream views and values, paving the way for further polarisation. As we have documented elsewhere, platforms such as Telegram and Gab are also home to pre-existing, entrenched extremist subcultures, some of which advocate for political violence. Trapped in bubbles practically free from moderation and in close proximity to a variety of extremists, the risk of cross-pollination with other extreme belief systems has intensified, including antisemitism and sovereign citizen-style beliefs.

DEHUMANISATION AND VIOLENT LANGUAGE

On platforms such as Telegram, an intense hostility has built towards those deemed responsible for the crisis, often dehumanised in extreme terms. Figures active in political, media and health institutions are frequently portrayed as cannibalistic Satanists, supernatural puppeteers and even literal demons, often with special predilection for abusing/enslaving/murdering children. Such highly emotive narratives raise the stakes of their struggle to a kind of spiritual war between Good and Evil, thereby (supposedly) justifying promises of violent retaliation. For example, one noticeable theme in many such

online spaces is that of a coming “day of judgement”, often in the form of a Nuremberg-style trial and the subsequent execution of perceived perpetrators. “They stole two years from the entire planet and mandated a lethal injection, the people on tv need to hang..” wrote one member of a Birmingham-based Telegram group. Another told fellow members of a British group:

“Yiu [sic] need to go after the killers, the killers are Uk gov, USA and Australian governments, the homes and offices of all persons involved in this Genocide must be surround, and the perpetrators dragged out into street, stripped and trial on the spot, and hanged from lamposts”.

While violent language does not necessarily lead to violent action, the endorsement of violence is a significant advance in the course of radicalisation. In extreme cases, it can result in action. Recent exploratory studies have highlighted points of intersection between conspiracy thinking and violent

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experience has shown that anxieties induced by economic hardship can be exploited by extremist actors

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extremism: for example, Abdul Basit has argued that both phenomena tend to be rooted in desires to overcome feelings of powerlessness, a deep distrust of government institutions, political infrastructure and mainstream narratives, and a polarised “us versus them” worldview.

In Basit’s view, while “establishing a direct causal-link” between conspiracy theories and violent extremism is difficult, “the former’s role as enabler, multiplier and facilitator of the latter is undeniable”. A recent study by Federico Vegetti and Levente Littvay, based on US survey data, observed that those more prone to conspiracy beliefs are also

British conspiracy theorist Kate Shemirani, a former nurse, addresses a crowd of hundreds of conspiracy theorists at a rally at London’s Trafalgar Square.

Photo: Salim Fadhley



more likely to endorse political violence, arguing that conspiratorial narratives “help people channel their feelings of resentment towards political targets”, thereby “fuelling radical attitudes”.

Such observations are particularly concerning as fantasising about bloody retribution has spilled into the offline arena. For example, on 24 July last year thousands gathered in London’s Trafalgar Square for a rally compèred by former (struck-off) nurse Kate Shemirani, who called for the collection of the personal data of NHS staff. She went on to state:

“At the Nuremberg trials, the doctors and nurses stood trial and they hung. If you are a doctor or a nurse, now is the time to get off that bus. Get off it and stand with us, the people, all around the world they are rising”. On 20 October, a week after the murder of Sir David Amess MP, Piers Corbyn was among a small group of protesters who erected a gallows in Parliament Square.

ESCALATING ACTIVITY

Radicalisation stems, in part, from a loss of faith in traditional channels of participation. While numerous anti-vaccine activists stood for office last year, disappointing results may have exacerbated an existing disillusionment with the electoral system.

For example, Piers Corbyn ran for London Mayor in May but came 11th, with just 0.8% of the vote. The newly-founded Freedom Alliance, which claimed to be “the political arm/ wing of the freedom community”, stood over 100 candidates in various elections last year, but failed to win a single seat. David Kurten, a former leading UKIP member and current leader of the conspiratorial Heritage Party, similarly yielded dismal results. The consistent battering received by more mainstream lockdown-sceptic groups, such as Reform UK, suggests that campaigning politically against COVID measures simply does not garner support. For some prone to conspiracy thinking, this has confirmed suspicions that the system is rigged and more contentious means must be pursued.

By the beginning of 2021, the weekly street protests held around the country were also yielding diminishing returns. While huge demonstrations in London over the past two years have boosted the morale of the wider protest movement, many demonstrations outside the capital had small turnouts, with crowds sometimes outnumbered by police. Regular street demonstrations did continue across the UK, but the broad protest movement diversified its activism as well, with some contingents escalating forms of “direct action” as the year progressed.

One such tactic was to aggressively and directly confront supposed culprits. For example, during the summer a network organised on Telegram (under the name “Official Voice”) targeted the offices of media outlets; in August, ugly clashes with police ensued after activists attempted to storm the White City building in London that was previously home to the BBC. A fortnight later, a group pushed into the central London office of ITN Productions, engaging in heated confrontations with the police and hurling abuse at Channel 4 News anchor Jon Snow, who was labelled a “fucking rat cunt” and a “paedophile”.

Activists also clashed with police outside the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency headquarters in September, leaving four officers injured. In December, Piers Corbyn was present at a demonstration in Milton Keynes that ended with the

storming of a test-and-trace centre, where staff were abused and equipment was stolen.

Others in this movement have sought to intimidate perceived enemies at their homes, delivering “notices of liability for harm and death” to politicians, journalists and celebrities who have publicly supported vaccines. These actions are in part inspired by “sovereign citizen” ideology: the notion that laws passed by Parliament are inherently illegitimate, and that the people are only bound to observe a confused misinterpretation of English common law. For example, in October a group of several dozen people visited the home of the television doctor Hilary Jones, with one activist telling him “we will be here for you, you will have nowhere to hide”.

Another notable development is the emergence of militant anti-vaccine networks that view street demonstrations as ineffective, and thus promise more radical action. Foremost among them is Alpha Men Assemble/Alpha Team Assemble, a group that, as outlined in a subsequent article in this report, is attempting to establish a hardcore of activists and has attracted the involvement of a number of far-right individuals, with potentially dangerous outcomes.

POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE

It is impossible to know when conspiracy theorists will act upon their beliefs. Acts of criminality cannot be taken as representative of a diffuse milieu numbering many thousands of people. However, there is a very real risk that acts of vigilante violence, whether coordinated or unplanned, by groups or lone actors, *could* stem from the fringes of the scene in coming months.

In September 2020, Gilles Kerchove, the EU’s counterterrorism chief, expressed his concerns that “new forms” of conspiracy-theory driven terrorism would emerge in the wake of the pandemic. Sadly, it appears as though such fears are warranted. In December last year, German police uncovered an alleged plot to assassinate the governor of Saxony by an anti-vaccine group communicating on Telegram. In January this year, a conspiracy theorist was jailed after brandishing a flaming torch and livestreaming himself shouting outside the home of the former Dutch foreign minister; the same week, one of Italy’s foremost immunology experts was sent a bullet alongside a letter threatening her family.

UK authorities are cognisant of such dangers, but face new challenges. As Milo Comerford of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue told *The Guardian*, traditional counter-extremism approaches are “geared towards threats from organised groups with clear political objectives”. The amorphous, post-organisational nature of the anti-vaccine movement means it is harder to monitor and predict, despite the abundant anger that is fostering.

As lockdown measures become a thing of the past, the UK’s conspiracy theory-driven protest movement may contract, but it will not simply disappear. New networks have formed and thrived, and many activists will not readily relinquish the causes to which they have given considerable investment, and potentially lost friendships, relationships and jobs to support. The economic and social fallout of the pandemic will continue for years yet, and experience has shown that anxieties induced by economic hardship can be exploited by extremist actors. The result may be a scene that is smaller but more volatile, and primed for disruption, harassment and even violence.

COURTING THE CONSPIRACISTS

How successfully have far-right activists exploited anti-vaccine groups and protests? DAVID LAWRENCE finds a mixed picture.

Despite an uneven and somewhat confused response in the early days of the pandemic, over the past two years the British far right has coalesced with a rare degree of unanimity around a conspiracy theory-driven, anti-lockdown, anti-vaccine agenda.

The far right's relationship with the wide spectrum of COVID-19 conspiracy theories is varied, spanning from rejection and ambivalence to cynical co-option and genuine belief. In any case, throughout 2021 large sections of the far right actively targeted the UK's broad conspiratorial milieu in an attempt to exploit distrust in the political system and to steer fear towards a hatred of minorities.

While such attempts have yielded mixed results, some far-right figures and groups have successfully inveigled their way into the UK's anti-vaccine protest movement, presenting opportunities for recruitment and new avenues for the spread of racism and antisemitism.

OPENNESS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The UK's loose anti-vaccine movement is a "big tent" made up of individuals from across the political spectrum, and lacks ideological and organisational structure, rendering it vulnerable to advances from the far right. Individuals with differing beliefs have often been able to find common ground in a shared populist worldview and outsider identity, downplaying or dismissing traditional left-right political distinctions as artificial divides imposed

by elites. This outlook has enabled some notorious far-right figures to find tolerance and even a degree of acceptance within the conspiratorial milieu, thereby reaching new audiences.

For example, former leader of the fascist British National Party (BNP), Nick Griffin, has stated that despite what he observes to be the "left-wing tendency" of anti-lockdown groups on Telegram, he has been "astounded by the absolute lack of pushback" he has experienced, observing that "they take you at face value, and if you're opposed to lockdown, that's absolutely great. And that's a huge step forward."

In Griffin's view, the broad anti-lockdown movement has brought together "two very different and previously hostile alternative trends in society", uniting "the far right, the antisemites and all the rest" with "people who used to be on the left, and that's a very, very interesting development". As one of the UK's foremost Holocaust deniers, Griffin has predictably used this opportunity to further explicitly racist and antisemitic COVID-conspiracy narratives, claiming for example that the virus is a hoax concocted by an "Anglo-Zionist financial elite" to crash the economy. In Griffin's view, once one has adopted a conspiratorial mindset, "the full radicalisation process, I think, is only a matter of a few nights on the internet away".

As detailed at length in our 2021 report *Antisemitism in the Digital Age*, written in conjunction with EXPO in Sweden and the Amadeu

Nick Griffin



Sam Melia and Mark Collett of Patriotic Alternative at a “Freedom Rally” in Leeds, January 2022

Antonio Foundation in Germany, the spread of COVID-19 conspiracy theories has indeed opened new paths towards Jew-hatred and Holocaust denial. This is due in part to the deep roots of antisemitism within many longstanding conspiratorial traditions, such as the “New World Order”, which have been revitalised during the pandemic.

Many of the UK’s leading conspiracists, such as David Icke, frequently veer into strongly antisemitic territory, despite their self-identification as supposed anti-racists. As scholar Michael Barkun has argued, extreme views are attractive to some conspiracy theorists due to those views’ taboo status. The fact that antisemitic and racist views espoused by the likes of Griffin can earn deplatformings and societal condemnation is perversely interpreted (by a minority) as a sign of their legitimacy, as this pushback is understood as an attempt by the “elites” to suppress forbidden knowledge.

One notable example is *The Light*, a monthly so-called “truthpaper” that, since its founding in September 2020, has achieved a remarkable spread in the UK. Editor Darren Nesbitt (aka Darren Smith) addressed *The Light*’s editorial policy in its January 2022 edition:

“The bankers own all the major parties, all public discourse and all mass messaging and education [...] In a blatant bit of Orwellian

thought control by language manipulation, all ‘conspiracy theories’ are now further automatically labelled “far-right conspiracy theories” or “right-wing extremist” - terms repeatedly used in the corporate media as pejoratives for those who question the morals and direction of the military-technological-pharmaceutical-government complex, which makes perfect sense when you realise the same group of people own all the media too”.

Nesbitt’s view explains why *The Light* has increasingly featured contributions from leading far-right figures, including Anne Marie Waters and Robin Tilbrook, leaders of For Britain and the English Democrats, respectively. Last year *The Light* also carried a plainly antisemitic article from the Holocaust denier John Hamer and another from the pseudonymous far-right activist “Lasha Darkmoon”, who suggested that the masses have been brainwashed against questioning the Holocaust.

A NATURAL FIT

On social media, *The Light* has also repeatedly promoted Mark Collett, leader of the fascist Patriotic Alternative (PA), a group that did more last year than perhaps any other far-right organisation in the UK to court the anti-vaccine milieu.

Hoping to act as a “beacon”, PA produced anti-vaccine leaflets and actively canvassed anti-lockdown demonstrations across the UK, with members frequently spamming anti-vaccine groups with PA’s content online. Figures aligned with PA have also dedicated countless hours to the topic on social media, variously speculating that the vaccine will be used to reduce the population, to inject men with oestrogen, and much else.

Far-right groups like these have naturally gravitated towards COVID-19 conspiracy narratives, in part, because they are easily subsumed into their own overarching conspiratorial worldview. PA’s central ideology is the “White Genocide” conspiracy: the belief that Jewish (or Jewish-controlled) subversives embedded in positions of power are orchestrating a sustained campaign to weaken and ultimately eradicate “indigenous” Brits by encouraging immigration and promoting progressive causes. COVID-19 conspiracy theories are easily assimilated into this grand antisemitic narrative, with Collett viewing the pandemic as a guise to “bring in a police state, that primarily is used to crack down on white people”.

PA’s aim is to steer COVID anxieties towards its core antisemitic outlook. In October 2021 Mark Collett hosted Piers Corbyn, the face of the UK’s anti-vaccine protest movement, on his online show. After introducing him as someone with whom he “agrees on a lot of things”, Collett attempted to push Corbyn into overt antisemitism, at one point explicitly asking if he was “aware of the Jewish question”. Corbyn responded: “I’m not quite sure what that means. I’m not a Holocaust denier, in case that’s leading up to that”, offering to discuss it “more fully” with Collett elsewhere. Collett’s interaction with Corbyn’s was celebrated as a victory by many UK fascists.

Conspiracy theories are malleable and easily moulded to people’s existing viewpoints, and are also a versatile form of propaganda that can be used to target scapegoats, even if this results in incoherent and conflicting positions. The anti-Muslim group Britain First (BF) offers a particularly galling example.

Prior to the pandemic BF had promoted vaccines as a means to attack British Muslims. In July 2019, the group produced an article alleging that Muslim parents were refusing to allow the flu vaccine to be administered to their children in the belief that the ingredients were not halal, suggesting that those children should be taken into care on the basis that: “Public health absolutely must take priority over ‘Muslim sensitivities’”. The article was met with outraged support from BF’s followers, with comments variously expressing anger at the parents for their supposed irresponsible parenting, as well as hoping that the children in question might die of preventable illnesses.

This stance quickly shifted, however, with the onset of the pandemic. By April 2020, PA supporters appeared overwhelmingly hostile to vaccines, claiming on Telegram that jabs would “kill more people than the pandemic”, that they were created by “Bill killer Gates and Nazi Globalist George Soros”, and that the vaccine would contain microchips or interact with 5G radiation to poison people. Official BF channels railed against “Covid tyranny”, the “plandemic” and the vaccine, while simultaneously stoking anger about “Covid-ridden migrants entering our country illegally”.

It is often difficult to discern the degree to which the far right’s engagement with COVID-conspiracies is rooted in sincere belief or mere expediency. For example, in the early days of the pandemic, the anti-Muslim extremist and convicted fraudster Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson), warned followers of the dangers of the disease but, predictably, used it as a means to target Muslim populations, adopting the hashtag “#germjihad” from Hindu nationalists to smear Muslims as spreaders of the virus.

Mimicking his associates in the US, over the course of 2020 there was a noticeable uptick in his use of conspiratorial language, attacking China as well as political and media institutions, claiming that “CCP CHY-NA and CORPORATE MEDIA and our POLITICAL ELITES” were complicit in “the greatest HOAX and COVER UP of our time”. While stoking this anger, he was selling anti-Chinese and anti-lockdown merchandise to his followers via his website.

A MIXED PICTURE

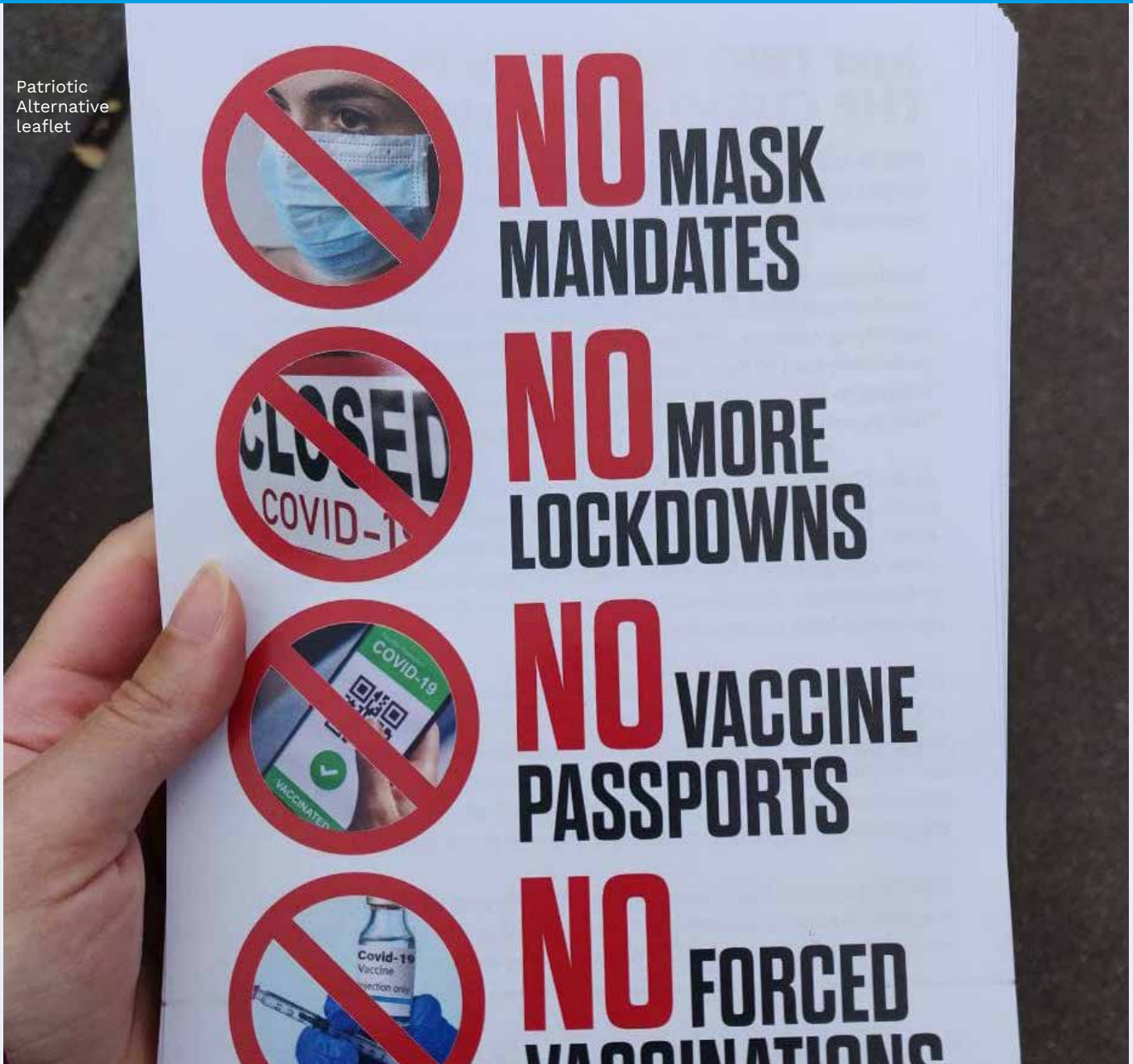
Adopting conspiratorial language is not a straightforward path to growth, however. It may result in further alienation from the mainstream; over 90% of over-12s have received at least one dose of the vaccine, and polling suggests that a decisive majority supported all three national lockdowns. Staunch anti-vaccine positions may prove off-putting to some potential supporters who otherwise agree with far-right viewpoints, such as anti-immigrant sentiment.

Many far-right groups have sought to distance themselves from the eccentric extremes of the anti-vaccine scene, and warned their followers against drifting too deep into conspiratorial waters. For example, in December Mark Collett stated: “My worry is that if ethno-nationalists hitch their wagon too strongly to some of these things, we’ll end up making ourselves not only lose sight of the real issue, but potentially make ourselves look quite silly”.



The Light has also repeatedly promoted Mark Collett, leader of the fascist Patriotic Alternative, on social media

Patriotic
Alternative
leaflet



Activists from PA's West Midlands branch, who have actively canvassed anti-vaccine demonstrations in the region, complained that those who “feel incredibly strongly about the whole COVID agenda” tend to be “freaks” and “nutcases”, agreeing that for the “majority” of COVID-deniers: “trying to recruit them probably just isn't a good idea [...] our battles are intertwined, but it might just be better for them to fight their battle, and we fight ours.”

Additionally, the tolerance that many far-right elements have experienced within the conspiratorial milieu is far from uniform, and overt racists and antisemites do often receive pushback both online and offline (albeit unevenly). Fascistic elements have also bristled at the broad protest movement's self-presentation as anti-fascists and as a “resistance” akin to Second World War anti-Nazi groups – one such example being the adoption of the “White Rose” moniker by a large anti-vaccine propaganda campaign (somewhat ironic, as the group appears to have adopted its modus operandi from the Nazi propaganda network, the Hundred-Handers).

Friction has also resulted from the co-option of Holocaust imagery by COVID-deniers to liken their

own perceived plight to that of Jews in Nazi-occupied territories. While trivialising the Holocaust in this way is itself a form of antisemitism, it is also offensive to apologists for the Nazi regime.

In the case of PA, its overtures towards the conspiratorial milieu ultimately do not appear to have significantly swelled its membership. Simon Crane (aka Si Borg), regional organiser of PA's flagship branch in Scotland, observed that while Scottish activists “generally get quite a good reception” at anti-lockdown events, “I think we all thought they'd be rich pickings in the anti-lockdown groups. There's been a few guys come over, but probably not as many as we'd thought.”

That is not to say, however, that the efforts of PA and similar groups have been fruitless. As we have explored at length elsewhere, Holocaust denial documentaries and other forms of antisemitism are an increasingly common feature in many large conspiratorial online spaces. It is certainly true to say that, to some extent, the far right have played a role in normalising Jew-hatred and other forms of racism within the conspiratorial milieu. As sections of the anti-vaccine protest movement shift into more radical territory, the dangers of this influence have heightened.

SOVEREIGN CITIZENS: AN EXPLAINER

By **GREGORY DAVIS**

Among the most striking developments in the wider British conspiratorial milieu has been the growing influence of “sovereign citizen” beliefs. Long confined to the fringe of the conspiratorial scene, sovereign citizen ideology is the belief that the current legal architecture of the state is illegitimate and can be rejected by the invocation of an older, superior legal authority.

The term “sovereign citizen” emerged from the USA and generally refers to individuals who interpret the US Constitution as granting them the freedom to disregard any federal or state laws they disagree with. The idea emerged from white supremacist groups, but variations have been adopted by a diverse range of fringe groups, from militant black nationalists to Christian fundamentalists.

Sovereign citizen beliefs are tailored to specific legal contexts; the ideas used by American sovereign citizens therefore differ to those in the UK, where such beliefs usually rest on a confused understanding of English common law, while the German *Reichsbürger* movement holds that the existing German state is illegitimate by claiming that the Second Reich was never formally dissolved.

These ideologies share a fundamental misunderstanding of the very nature of law and the judicial system. Adherents operate under the belief that the existing legal system is hopelessly corrupted and illegitimate, but at the same time believe that they can compel this system to recognise the legitimacy of their preferred legal framework.

Such beliefs pose a variety of risks. Believers often find themselves in predictable legal jeopardy, emboldened to take actions that they wrongly believed to be lawful. One example is Sinead Quinn, a Bradford hairdresser who was fined £6,000 for ignoring orders to close her business during the November 2020 lockdown, reportedly in the belief that the Magna Carta allowed her to do so,

More worrying is a recent trend of activists seeking to impose their beliefs on others. The past year has seen a number of groups citing such beliefs as a legal underpinning for intimidating behaviour towards institutions such as hospitals, vaccination clinics and media outlets that have reported on the pandemic.

SOVEREIGN CITIZENS IN THE UK

Sovereign citizen-style ideology in the UK long predates the pandemic. Sometimes referring to

Davey Russell of the ‘White Pendragons’, gate-crashed a Fabian Society conference.



themselves as “Freemen-on-the-land”, supporters claim to be bound only to an idealised misconception of English common law, the ancient form of law based on judicial precedent and tradition, as opposed to what they see as the illegitimate statute laws laid down by Parliament and wrongfully enforced by the courts.

The ideology has found supporters among the traditional far right. Longstanding advocate Graham Moore (aka Daddy Dragon) has invoked the ideology in support of far-right groups such as the English Democrats and the White Pendragons, a short-lived group best known for attempting a “citizens’ arrest” of London Mayor Sadiq Khan in 2018 with a makeshift gallows in tow. Moore has recently launched the English Constitution Party, which holds that common law is the only valid legal system of England.

More recently, it has become a common feature of the UK’s increasingly militant anti-vaccine movement. The Alpha Team Assemble group, which has received press attention for its combat training and worrying statements, describes itself as “free thinking Men and Women living as sovereign beings under common law”, while founder Danny Glass has described common law as “very important” to the movement.

This scene was hugely energised when activist Mark Sexton filed a lengthy criminal complaint against the vaccine programme at Hammersmith Police Station, receiving a crime reference number in acknowledgement. This routine process prompted self-described “Common Law constables” to believe that they could shut down vaccine centres themselves, pending the outcome of a “major criminal investigation.”

Adherents often use lengthy pseudo-legal documents to threaten public institutions for complying with



Graham Moore (aka Daddy Dragon)

COVID regulations. One such document, uploaded to a sovereign citizen Telegram channel and intended to be presented to police officers, explicitly threatened vigilante action if their demands were not met: “if current serving police constables will not defend the sovereign People of the realm, whilst continuing to serve treasonous usurping forces, then it leaves no option but for The People to police and defend the realm themselves”.

The dangers posed by the infusion of sovereign citizen-style ideology into extreme conspiracy theorist circles is that it provides an avenue by which adherents can justify illegal behaviours by convincing themselves of their legality. Most people consider themselves as law-abiding and respectable; a framework which allows activists to retain that self-image while carrying out illegal acts thus risks greater propensity for vigilantism and violence as it spreads through radicalised conspiracy movements.



ALPHA TEAM ASSEMBLE

One of the newest militant anti-vaccine groups has already been infiltrated by the far right, says DAVID LAWRENCE.

As an insurgent mindset has spread into sections of the UK's conspiracy theory-driven protest movement, we have witnessed the emergence of militant anti-vaccine networks that eschew street demonstrations in favour of radical direct action.

Foremost among them is Alpha Team Assemble (ATA), originally known as Alpha Men Assemble, an outfit that has received much media attention in recent months for its combat training sessions and worrying statements of intent. As HOPE not hate can reveal, a number of far-right activists have also inveigled their way into the group, raising questions over its future direction.

ALPHA TEAM ASSEMBLE

ATA surfaced on Telegram in December 2021, adopting an alarmist tone and promising “no more words just pure unadulterated defiance”, as well as a “global war against governments”. It quickly amassed a sizeable following online, gaining over 8,000 subscribers on its Telegram channel; this channel was then abandoned

after an internal dispute, and the group's current official channel stands at over 1,000 subscribers, alongside 20 local groupings.

Instructing attendees to wear black clothing, ATA's first event drew several dozen activists for a “self defence training session” in a park in Leeds on 19 December. It was followed by a meeting nine days later in Littlehampton, West Sussex, at which roughly 100 individuals performed combat drills. The biggest meeting so far took place in a park near Walsall, Staffordshire, on 8 January, at which an estimated 200 people gathered and were subjected to drills by Danny Glass, founder of the group and a former Royal Fusilier.

According to an undercover reporter for the *Daily Mail*, under the watchful eye of the police the organisers presented themselves as a law-abiding, non-violent group, but when out of earshot Glass stated his intent to “take it to the Old Bill. It's not for the faint hearted, but we're going to go and fucking do 'em”. Another organiser discussed “hit[ting] vaccine centres, schools, head teachers, colleges, councillors and directors of public health in every area”.

After extensive negative press attention, ATA has toned down its public rhetoric, voicing its intent to operate within the law, and stating that it has “nothing to do with the right or the left”, and that any obvious



displays of “racism, bigotry or hate” online would result in bans. Despite these words, however, some marginal far-right activists have successfully inserted themselves into the group.

INDEPENDENT NATIONALIST NETWORK

Among these figures is Richard Lumby, a former British National Party organiser and now the unofficial leader of the Independent Nationalist Network (INN), a small group that split away from Patriotic Alternative (PA) in 2021.

Lumby told INN members in January that the group’s “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.” To this end, INN members including Lumby and former PA activist “Anglo Joe” attended the ATA meet in Staffordshire in order to “make connections”.

On 15 January, Anglo Joe wrote in INN’s small internal chat group that he had: “Just got off the phone with Danny Glass, really positive stuff”, claiming that they had “agreed to move forward shoulder to shoulder”. Glass subsequently joined INN’s internal chat, stating that he was “not a political person at all but feel it’s time for all of us to connect and support each other”. After a series of friendly messages, Glass invited members to attend a future meet in the Midlands:

“Be good to see the blokes that came to our last one and please bring some friends, and the the honour you showed us by standing with us and saying what you did, people would have you believe anything about someone with a bias opinion, the video I saw Joe made and the



Photos: Alpha Men Assemble / Telegram

messages I received from Richard say to me exactly what you are, the things I’ve seen are what I call proper, we are all each others people that need to stand together to preserve our difference of opinion”.

Such links are concerning in light of the unalloyed extremism of some figures associated with INN. 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 (ONA).

In February, Barnes joined ATA chat groups and inquired about any forthcoming meet-ups in Dudley. While he is not known to have attended an ATA event, the fact that it has attracted figures with his extreme fascistic worldview is a worrying sign.

Whilst INN remains a tiny group, more significant far-right outfits are making overtures towards ATA. For example, ATA’s East Midlands chat group has been repeatedly spammed with the propaganda of Patriotic Alternative, the largest and most active fascist organisation in the UK, including encouraging members to “get involved today”.

FAR RIGHT AFFINITIES

More worryingly, a number of ATA figures attended a January demonstration in Telford organised by the anti-Muslim activist and serial criminal Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson), with a number of members of ATA Telegram groups writing supportively of both Lennon and the event. “Tommy Robinson is a friggin hero” stated one comment in ATA’s West Midlands group, with another claiming:

“He’s the heart of England. Fuckin brave man. We all need to united. Every single one of us that have the same hearts ! Millions n millions. It would be mint to move the meet to Telford. Swamp the fuvkin dump.”

While ATA did not officially endorse Lennon or the demonstration, there was clearly a degree of crossover in their supporter bases.

Although it is unclear whether far-right elements will exert any meaningful influence on ATA, the group is still in its infancy and is currently aiming to establish small groupings of dedicated activists, rather than a mass movement. The evident far-right sympathies within ATA are concerning, especially as the group may yet morph into more clandestine – and potentially more dangerous – iterations.



CONSPIRACY BELIEF: POLLING

Worrying numbers now believe many of the main conspiracy theories that have been circulating during the pandemic.

A worrying number of people have seen and believe many of the main conspiracy theories that have been circulating over the last two years, polling by HOPE not hate has discovered.

Half of respondents in our poll (50%) have seen content over the past 12 months claiming that “Coronavirus is a bio-weapon intentionally spread by the Chinese state”, while 38% have seen or read content claiming that “elites in Hollywood, Governments, media and other powerful positions are secretly engaging in large scale child trafficking and abuse”.

A third of respondents have seen or read content claiming that the “COVID-19 vaccine will be used maliciously to infect people with poison” and, perhaps more bizarrely, 35% have seen material claiming that “Coronavirus has been intentionally released as part of a ‘depopulation’ plan orchestrated by the UN or New World Order”.

If that was not bad enough, the proportion of people believing these conspiracies is alarmingly high. One in 12 people (8%) say that it is definitely true that “elites in Hollywood, Governments, media and other powerful positions are secretly engaging in large scale child trafficking and abuse”. A further 28% think it is probably true.

Six percent (6%) think it is definitely true that “Coronavirus is a bio-weapon intentionally spread by the Chinese state”, with a further 23% thinking it is probably true.

Most worryingly, 5% think it is definitely true that “Coronavirus has been intentionally released as part of a ‘depopulation’ plan orchestrated by the UN or New World Order”, with a further 13% thinking it is probably true.

In some cases, attitudes are worse now than a year ago. In our 2021 State of the Nation poll, seven percent (7%) definitely believed that elites “are secretly engaging in large scale child trafficking and abuse,” and 15% thought it was probably true. Today, the figure is eight percent (8%) and 28%, respectively.

Likewise, last year five percent (5%) definitely believed that COVID-19 was “a bio-weapon intentionally spread by the Chinese state” and 15% thought it probably true. Today the figure is six percent (6%) and 23%, respectively.

Young people are much more likely to come across and believe in these conspiracies. Over half (52%) of 18-24 year-olds definitely or probably believe that “elites in Hollywood, Governments, media and other powerful positions are secretly engaging in large scale child trafficking and abuse.” One in five (20%) definitely or probably believe that “COVID-19 vaccine will be used maliciously to infect people with poison” and 25% definitely or probably believe that “Coronavirus has been intentionally released as part of a ‘depopulation’ plan orchestrated by the UN or New World Order”.

“

once you start believing in one conspiracy then you are more likely to believe in others

”

Men are more likely to believe in conspiracies than women, with the only exception being the claim that “elites in Hollywood, Governments, media and other powerful positions are secretly engaging in large scale child trafficking and abuse,” where similar numbers believe it to be true.

Those who voted Leave in the 2016 Referendum are two or in some cases three times as likely to definitely believe in the five conspiracies polled, but Remainers are marginally more likely to believe that children being trafficked.

However, there is a clear correlation between attitudes to the COVID vaccines and conspiracies.

A quarter of Britons (25%) do not believe the COVID vaccines are safe. Of those, 49% believe that elites are “secretly engaging in large scale child trafficking and abuse”, and 44% believe “Coronavirus is a bio-weapon intentionally spread by the Chinese state”. Almost two in five (38%) believe that “Coronavirus has been intentionally released as part of a ‘depopulation’ plan orchestrated by the UN or New World Order”.

The more right wing someone is, the more likely they are to believe in these conspiracies. Just under half of those who voted for the Brexit Party in the 2019 General Election believe that elites are involved in large scale child trafficking and abuse, while 49% believe that “elites are encouraging immigration as part of a plot to weaken Europe”.

There is also a strong correlation between those who view Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) positively and a belief in conspiracy theories. Over half (51%) believe that elites are involved in large scale child trafficking and abuse, 50% believe that COVID “is a bio-weapon intentionally spread by the Chinese state” and 39% believe that it has been “intentionally released as part of a ‘depopulation’ plan orchestrated by the UN or New World Order”.

Conspiracies are often dismissed as a bit of a harmless joke and viewed with a sense of amusement by many. However, once you start believing in one conspiracy then you are more likely to believe in others, and often these can be far more dangerous and politically extreme. It is probably no coincidence that far-right activists and networks are becoming more involved in the anti-vaccine and anti-lockdown movements than they were in 2020, and leading COVID-related conspiracy theorists are voicing and/or sharing more extreme antisemitic and traditional far-right tropes and memes.

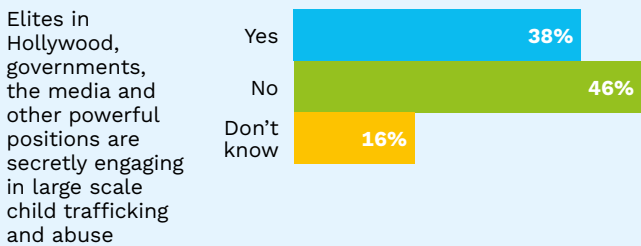
Disinformation and conspiracies undermine democracy. They deliberately encourage distrust in society and help foster a sense of anger and righteousness that can be destructive and extreme.

BRITONS AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES

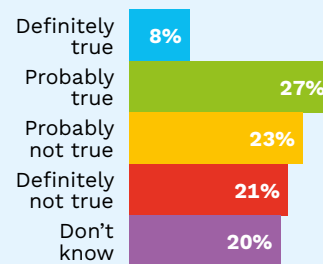
A recent HOPE not hate poll explored people's awareness of conspiracy theories and then whether they believed in them or not. While relatively small numbers think these theories are definitely true, when combined with those who think they might be true, the picture becomes more concerning.

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

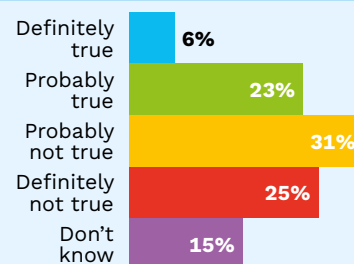
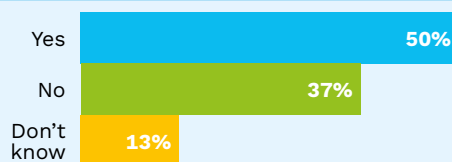
Q45.1 Over the past 12 months, can you remember reading any articles or seeing any videos relating to the following stories?...



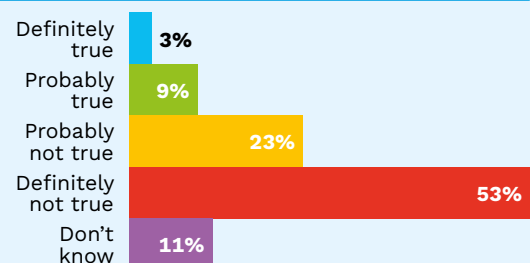
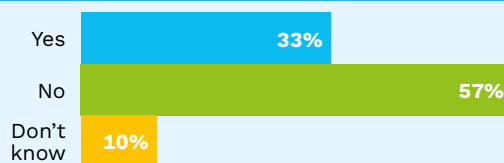
Q46.1 For each of the following statements, please tell us whether you believe them to be true or false....



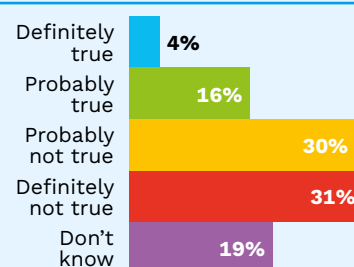
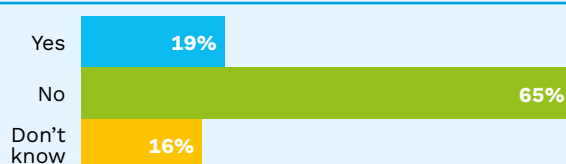
Coronavirus is a bio-weapon intentionally spread by the Chinese state



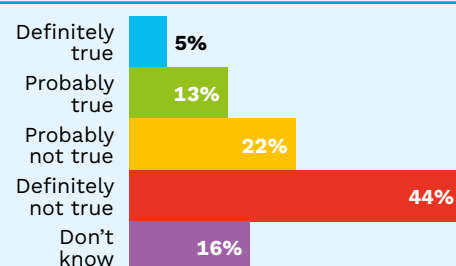
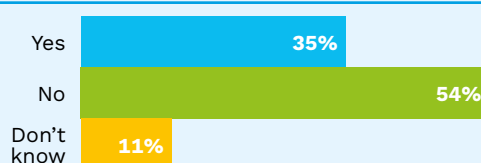
The Covid-19 vaccine will be used maliciously to infect people with poison



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



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



All polling data within this release has been collected from a nationally representative sample of 1,500 adults between 24 and 25 January 2022 via Focaldata. Focaldata is the research data platform that seamlessly combines sampling, scripting, fieldwork and data processing into a single intuitive tool. The data is representative of the GB population

A FAKE UNION PLAYING ON FEARS

MATTHEW COLLINS discovers the conspiracy theorists and far-right politicians behind the Workers of England Union.

In normal circumstances, it might appear unusual for a trade union to receive an endorsement from the Eurosceptic think tank, the Bruges Group. After all, it counts union busters Margaret Thatcher and Norman Tebbit among its past and current presidents.

But that's the situation with the Workers of England Union (WEU), a union that has become increasingly popular with anti-vaxx activists and even the far

right self-declared 'migrant hunters'. With the WEU heavily dominated by the English Democrats, the endorsement of the Bruges Group is not such a strange endorsement after all.

The Bruges Group has commended the WEU's campaign to recruit care home workers affected by the November 2021 vaccination law, which made it mandatory to get a COVID-19 vaccination before entering a care home in a professional capacity.

According to the Bruges Group: "the large trade unions and professional associations have failed to protect their members from the threat of dismissal. In fact, Unison and the Royal College of Nursing support vaccination in the belief that it protects patients and



The English Workers Union office in Bury, Lancs
Photo: Matthew Collins / HOPE not hate



(left) Nigel Marchman, aka the Little Veteran (right) A WEU 'Journalist' in action

staff. This is despite mounting evidence that infections occur as frequently in the vaccinated as in the unvaccinated.”

The Bruges Group produce no hard empirical or scientific evidence to back this up this claim, though there are of course plenty of faux scientists on social media that espouse similar views.

The Bruges Group has found likeminded fellow travellers in the WEU. This is most definitely not in the long term interests of working people, as both it and the WEU are invested in attacking and trying to undermine the established and Trade Union Congress (TUC)-recognised unions.

Followers of WEU on its Facebook page claim they have been encouraged by the vaccine ‘exemption certificates’ distributed by the union. The WEU is at pains to point out that this is a ‘self-certification’ certificate which doesn’t actually state why the certified person is exempt. It is therefore unclear what actual legal rights they carry, if at all, unless the employer feels forced to accept it.

There are health authorities who are currently refusing to recognise these self-certification certificates. One authority in particular has refused to bow to the WEU: Rotherham Doncaster and South Humberside NHS Trust. The Trust employs some 3,700 people in mental health and learning disability services, as well as district nurses and health visitors – frontline staff confronting the reality of COVID head on.

The WEU claimed in late January that the Trust had “consistently failed to state why WEU members Self-certificate [sic] isn’t compliant” and even suggested that the its refusal was evidence enough to show “it [their self-certification certificate] is compliant” (with government legislation).

However, it is in the sections of the health industry without strong legal and scientific guidance where the WEU appears to have been most active. It has

issued threats to employers in care homes with small numbers of employees, often working under conditions and contracts established with recognised unions such as Unison, GMB and Unite.

In the run up to and post-the government legislation last year, the WEU issued a standard DIY warning letter for “NHS Trust employees and those in the health sector but not employed by an NHS Trust” to send their employer a warning they would not enter into discussions about being either vaccinated or about their future employment.

The caveat is of course in the small print from the website where these letters can be downloaded: *“neither the above nor any information posted on this website constitutes legal advice. It must not be relied upon as such and specialist legal advice should be taken in relation to specific circumstances”*.

This is in stark contrast to the larger trade unions, which do offer verified legal and health advice. Much of WEU’s advice, it declares, simply comes from “non-clinical” NHS staff.

The WEU has thrown its weight behind an increasingly unstable and bewildering anti-vaxx and anti-lockdown movement. Much of this movement is anti-scientific and driven by fear, conspiracy and confusion. The WEU has even taken out advertisements in such places as *The Light Paper*, whose founder is an exponent of the Flat Earth conspiracy theory.

As well as baffling employers and others with a myriad of faux science and legal jargon, the WEU has pushed the idea of non-existent rights of employees under spurious notions of “common law” which, according to the WEU’s General Secretary Stephen Morris, has been around for “1700 years”.

Our own advice, from a proper employment law solicitor, is that this is a dangerous and harmful tact. Common Law is simply a development through procedure and has absolutely no precedent over

laws passed by Parliament. Neither do “English law”, the Magna Carta or “Roman Law”, all of which the anti-vaxx and anti-lockdown movement, to varying degrees, rely upon to intimidate and confound vulnerable people.

CONSPIRACIES ARE NOTHING NEW HERE

Conspiracy and far-right extremism are nothing new to either the WEU or the English Democrats, its *alma mater*.

The WEU first came to our attention more than a decade ago, as the searm of the English Democrats (ED). The ED had gone from the absolute fringe of the far right to become the bolt-hole for former British National Party (BNP) members. Some 400 former British National Party (BNP) members, including Eddy Butler and Chris “I don’t hate Hitler” Beverly, a former BNP councillor from Leeds, took up prominent positions in the ED after leaving the BNP.

Writing in May 2012, HOPE not hate noted the ED had “recently established a trade union-wing, the Workers of England Union (WEU), which was originally conceived in 2005 but eventually launched on 7 September 2009.”

The WEU claims not to be related to any political party or movement, stating its aim is to protect, support and represent all working people in England. It pledges to campaign for English workers against cheap foreign labour and to represent the “indigenous” English.

The use of threats, fraud and intimidation are hardly foreign concepts to the parent party, the English Democrats. As well as being linked with the dubious former BNP fundraiser Jim Dowson and his ‘Midas’ fundraising enterprise, in 2017 the deputy leader, Steve Uncles, was jailed for electoral fraud after submitting fake nomination forms.

The English Democrat leader, Robin Tilbrook, is also the in-house solicitor for the WEU. He has 15 directorships listed with Companies House in London, including Trade Union Congress for England, Confederation of English Business, and ‘Lawyers for Liberty’, for which only Tilbrook is listed as Director and is also listed as ‘dormant’.

Lawyers for Liberty was cited by *Private Eye* as last year as being behind an anonymous campaign to encourage parents to fill in complaint forms about schools that required students returning after “the great lockdown” to wear masks. These complaints were then followed up by legal-looking letters from the aforementioned Lawyers for Liberty, where the small print once again was far more revealing. “Lawyers for Liberty are not a law firm” it said, and the legal-looking letter of complaint “should not be construed as legal advice”.

Other legal ventures launched by Tilbrook have included ‘The People’s Brexit’, which in 2020 crowdfunded £80,000 in an attempt to overturn the Coronavirus Act 2020 and all

lockdown rules. While Tilbrook’s own legal firm owned the case, the QC who signed off some of the legal letters was Paul Oakley QC, the former immigration spokesperson for the UK Independence Party (UKIP).

The WEU laughingly claims it is “not affiliated to any political party”. And although it is true that the English Democrats – like Workers of England Union – rarely function in the manner their name should suggest, it is disingenuous bordering on dishonest to even suggest WEU is not another front for the dishonest activities of the ED.

WHO’S BEHIND IT ALL?

The General Secretary of the WEU is Stephen Morris, a perennial losing candidate for the ED in Greater Manchester. A former branch official for Unite, Morris has based the WEU in a tiny office near his home in Bury, Lancashire.

It is concerning that Morris and the WEU have targeted the health sector while it is already under great duress, not just from government cuts, overwhelming COVID admissions to hospitals, but also the constant threat the NHS faces from private profiteers.

In a 2017 flash interview for the BBC as part of his candidature for Manchester Metro Mayor, Morris stated he wanted “social health care with a business strategy”, among other things.

The WEU 2019 returns to the certification officer showed the union had only 1197 members and an income of £116,000. Over £89,000 of that income was spent on administrative costs, just under half of which was salaries. It showed a mere benefit to members of £6,000.

Earlier this year, the Press Association news wire service won an injunction against the WEU, after complaints from HOPE not hate and the National Union of Journalists, for issuing press cards to “citizen journalists” – a social media phenomena of untrained and unregulated ‘news gatherers’ who were attempting to use and abuse the privileges afforded

to those with properly accredited press cards.

The use of these fake cards came to the attention of anti-fascists when a number of far-right activists produced WEU press cards while attempting to



(left) WEU General Secretary Stephen Morris (right) Robin Tilbrook solicitor for the WEU
Photos: YouTube



The WEU took out a full page advert in the conspiracy newspaper *The Light*

antagonise real journalists and trade unionists covering far-right demonstrations and gatherings. The fake ID cards were issued by the WEU under the guise of the 'English Press Association', which does not exist except under the auspices of the WEU. The card could be considered solely for the benefit of people who spread conspiracy theories and fake news on social media.

The High Court heard the cards were "instruments of deception" which allowed WEU members to "misrepresent themselves as being affiliated with or employed by PA". Seventeen members of the union had bought these cards, despite there being no evidence that any were engaged in professional journalism.

ANTI-UNION FRIENDS

The Workers of England Union is also affiliated to the Taxpayers Alliance (TPA), another libertarian, anti-union organisation, which supports the slashing of public services and massive tax cuts for the rich. Among the TPA's policies are the freezing of all welfare benefits for two years, scrapping national pay bargaining in the public sector and abolishing the pensions 'triple lock'.

By supporting, or having the support of, such organisations as The Bruges Group and TPA, the WEU is no friend of public sector workers.

The WEU was represented in court by Robin Tilbrook, who described himself as the "Chairman of WEU", even though it had "no party political affiliations". The court heard the WEU was considering using the name 'English Media Group' in future. Interestingly, though not entirely surprisingly, the 'English Media Group' surfaced late last year when far-right fellow travellers Alan Leggett, Nigel Marcham, Steve Laws and Tracey Wiseman were in court in Dover for their activities related to refugee arrivals. Laws is better known as "the migrant hunter" and Marchman as the foul-mouthed reprobate "the tiny veteran". Again, the WEU described all four as "journalists". They are not.

People who are members or supporters of the WEU appear to be either delighted by being represented by self-certification and common law, or frustrated by their inability to contact either the union or representatives.

The WEU is part of a concerted conspiracy to confuse workers, bully vulnerable care home employers as well as working to undermine the sanctity of both journalism and the trade union movement. It is no surprise it is not a member or affiliate of the TUC, where it would be open to scrutiny, regulation and proper legal and employment training. Instead of inconvenient or unpalatable facts, it relies upon the strength of fear and conspiracy and sadly, the patronage of racists.

SUPPORTER AFFILIATION

- 1 Each affiliate will receive a **copy of any HNH publications** throughout the year, including our revamped, **quarterly magazine**.
- 2 Each affiliate will receive a **10% discount on training** and workshops delivered by HNH.
- 3 **Invitations** to national and regional HNH events

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CONSPIRACY THEORISTS AND GROUPS

DAVID ICKE

2021 SUMMARY

David Icke is the UK's most famous conspiracy theorist and antisemite and retained his status as a figurehead for the global COVID-denial scene during 2021.

This included continuing to headline large anti-vaccine demonstrations in London, including a July event in which he told a crowd of thousands that "demons who have been manipulating human society, and the human mind, from the shadows for aeons" had fabricated the virus.

Icke's son, Gareth, also gained further prominence in the UK's anti-vaccine scene, playing a leading role in street protests.

Icke's online reach has been hindered by bans from most mainstream social media platforms since 2020, but he has continued to propagandise through Instagram (262,000 followers), and the messaging app Telegram (44,000). The size of his audience is concerning given his promotion of antisemitism: for example, in June 2021 Icke posted an audiobook version of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, a notorious early 20th century antisemitic forgery that outlines a Jewish plot to destroy the West.

Icke also continued to develop his own website and video-streaming service, Ickonic, which features a weekly show from his son, and in June published a 450-page COVID-denial book titled *Perceptions of a Renegade Mind*.

2022 PROSPECTS

Icke will continue to be a major figure in spreading COVID-19 mistruths, online and off, although he is likely to continue to delegate speaking duties to his son and primarily focus on content production. He will also likely continue to spread Jew-hatred. In January 2022, he repeatedly promoted highly antisemitic propaganda, alleging that Communism was the product of a Jewish scheme.



RICHIE ALLEN

2021 SUMMARY

Throughout 2021, David Icke's protégé Richie Allen continued daily broadcasts of his online show, which functioned as a platform for a variety of conspiracy theorists, including prominent Holocaust deniers and dedicated antisemites.

Allen continued to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic, hosting leading figures in the UK's anti-vaccine movement such as struck-off nurse Kate Shemirani, and Piers Corbyn, Gareth Icke and David Kurten. Other guests on Allen's show included the anti-Muslim social media personalities David Vance and Brian Silvester, the climate change deniers Christopher Monckton and James Delingpole, the antisemites Kevin Barrett and Max Igan, and the UK's most influential neo-nazi figure, Mark Collett.

In October, days after the murder of David Amess MP, Allen also hosted the Islamist hate preacher Anjem Choudary, following press reports that Amess' killer may have been radicalised by Choudary's online content.

2022 PROSPECTS

Despite now being banned on most mainstream platforms, Allen will continue to provide one of the biggest online platforms for conspiracy theorists and conspiratorial antisemites in the UK.



David Icke
Photo Stefano Maffei



PIERS CORBYN

2021 SUMMARY

Piers Corbyn, the conspiracy theorist and older brother of the former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, remained for many the face of the UK's anti-vaccine movement. He headed confrontational protests around the country and as a result generated extensive press coverage.

True to form, he was apprehended once again in February for distributing leaflets likening vaccination efforts to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Corbyn stood in the London mayoral election in May under the banner "Let London Live", claiming he would challenge "the monstrous impositions of the New World Order". He placed 11th, with 20,600 votes (0.8%).

In July, his credibility in the anti-vaccine movement was undermined somewhat when a pair of YouTubers posing as AstraZeneca shareholders offered him a fake £10,000 bribe and encouraged him to target rival vaccine manufacturers Pfizer and Moderna instead. In the exchange, which was secretly filmed, Corbyn appeared to accept the bribe, which was later revealed to be 'Monopoly' money.

In October, a week after the murder of Sir David Amess MP, Corbyn led a small group of protesters who erected a gallows in Parliament Square. In December, Corbyn was again arrested after he told a demonstration that they needed to "get a bit more physical" with those who supported restrictions and "take down lying MPs". He added that they needed to:

"...hammer to death those scum who have decided to go ahead with introducing new fascism [...] We've got to get a list of them [...] and if your MP is one of them, go to their offices and, well, I would recommend burning them down, OK. But I can't say that on air."

Corbyn also featured at a rally in Milton Keynes in December, during which some protestors stormed a test-and-trace centre.

He continued to rub shoulders with far-right conspiracy theorists, most notably in October when he appeared on the podcast of neo-Nazi Mark Collett, who is a fellow COVID-19 conspiracist.

2022 PROSPECTS

Piers Corbyn will continue to be a central organiser of the UK's anti-vaccine movement. He may decide to contest the London local elections in May with his Let London Live party: while posing no credible electoral threat, it would present further opportunities for offline propagandising.

KATE SHEMIRANI

2021 SUMMARY

After attracting national notoriety in 2020, former nurse and conspiracy theorist Kate Shemirani continued to be a visible – but divisive – figure in the anti-vaccine movement in the UK.

Despite being permanently struck off the Nursing and Midwifery Council register last year, in April Shemirani launched the British Nursing Alliance (BNA) alongside Kevin Corbett, for "qualified nurses" to "speak out" against the supposed COVID conspiracy. The dedicated BNA group on Telegram has amassed over 10,000 members and is flooded with conspiratorial content, including antisemitic propaganda.

Shemirani was a key presence at large street demonstrations in London. There was extensive press coverage following her inflammatory speech to a crowd of thousands at a July event in Trafalgar Square. She asked for the details of NHS staff who worked during the pandemic to be collected, going on to state:

"At the Nuremberg Trials, the doctors and nurses stood trial and they hung. If you are a doctor or a nurse, now is the time to get off that bus. Get off it and stand with us, the people, all around the world they are rising".

Her comments lead to her own son telling the media that she should face prosecution.

Shemirani continued involvement in Save Us Now, a "political movement" headed by the Tyneside-based 5G conspiracy theorist Mark Steele.

2022 PROSPECTS

Shemirani will continue to be a highly visible but controversial figure in the anti-vaccine movement, and gain further notoriety for her particularly extreme rhetoric.



Kate Shemirani speaking at Trafalgar Square. Photo Salim Fadhley



THE LIGHT

PUBLISHER: DARREN NESBITT

2021 SUMMARY

The Light, a so-called “truthpaper” founded by Manchester-based “flat earther” Darren Nesbitt (aka Daz Nez), has become a significant voice in the UK’s conspiracy theorist alternative media.

The paper produced 12 issues last year, focusing primarily on COVID-denial but increasingly delving into other conspiratorial waters, such as those surrounding climate science. In January 2022, a post in an internal chat claimed that 250,000 copies of the most recent issue had been printed; whatever the true figure, *The Light* has a reach across the UK, distributed by a large number of volunteers organised on Facebook and Telegram.

Notably, the outlet has increasingly featured contributions from far-right elements, including a friendly interview with Anne Marie Waters of the anti-Muslim political party, For Britain, in May last year, as well as articles penned by Waters in its October and December issues.

The Light also featured an article co-written by Robin Tilbrook, leader of the far-right English Democrats, and a full-page advert from David Kurten, the former leading UKIP member who currently fronts the Heritage Party. In addition, it carried articles from the Holocaust denier John Hamer, including a plainly antisemitic piece exonerating Colonel Gaddafi, and published the pseudonymous “Lasha Darkmoon”, who suggested that people had been brainwashed by shadowy elites from questioning the Holocaust.

The Light continued to be a significant producer and promoter of conspiratorial content online, too. Its Telegram channel (18,000 subscribers) repeatedly promoted content from Patriotic Alternative leader, Mark Collett, with prominent figures from the fascist organisation regularly spamming *The Light’s* Telegram group with content.

2022 PROSPECTS

The Light shows few signs of slowing. It will likely continue to broaden its focus away from just COVID-denial and into other conspiratorial traditions, and quite possibly further into far-right and antisemitic territory, helping to introduce antisemitism to new audiences.

THE WHITE ROSE

2021 SUMMARY

Describing itself as “a global network of independent activists”, The White Rose (TWR) is a conspiracy theory-driven, anti-vaccine propaganda campaign that, since launching in the UK in November 2020, has enjoyed a remarkable, international spread.

Despite taking its name from a German WWII-era resistance movement, the group appears to have adopted its modus operandi from the defunct, virulently antisemitic neo-nazi propaganda engine known as the Hundred-Handers. It has created centralised archives of sticker designs that can be printed with cheap home label-making machines, for example, though claims it is “not in anyway [sic] affiliated with the hundred handers”, and has “no political stance”.

While most of TWR’s alarmist propaganda revolves around denying the existence of COVID-19, the group has produced stickers that make reference to the New World Order, a longstanding conspiratorial tradition rife with antisemitic tropes, and uses language associated with QAnon.

TWR has a large Telegram channel (over 60,000 subscribers) and a dedicated chat group of more than 10,600 people. Remarkably, it has roughly 200 local groups on Telegram, spanning almost 40 countries. While the official mission statement claims that it “condemns racism of any kind”, antisemitic content can be found on its chat groups.

2022 PROSPECTS

TWR’s decentralised activists will continue to plaster town centres with dangerous disinformation.



Photo: Jowan in pensans.



Alpha Men Assemble Photo:Telegram

ALPHA TEAM ASSEMBLE

LEADER: DANNY GLASS

2021 SUMMARY

Alpha Team Assemble (ATA) – originally called Alpha Men Assemble – is a newly-formed, radical anti-vaccine activist group. Founded by conspiracy theorists disillusioned with the UK’s street movement, ATA eschews demonstrations for “direct action”, promising “pure unadulterated defiance” against the government.

The group launched in early December 2021 with a channel on the messaging app Telegram, adopting a highly alarmist tone. ATA quickly amassed over 8,000 subscribers; this channel has since been abandoned after an internal dispute, and the group’s current official channel has over 1,000 subscribers, alongside 20 local groupings.

Instructing attendees to wear black clothing, ATA held its first public meeting in a park in Leeds on 19 December, with roughly 60 activists meeting for a “self defence training session”. This was followed by an event in Littlehampton, West Sussex, on 28 December, at which roughly 100 individuals performed combat drills. The biggest meeting so far occurred in a park near Walsall, Staffordshire, on 8 January, at which an estimated 200 people undertook drills overseen by Danny Glass, a former Royal Fusilier.

While the group claims to be law-abiding, a journalist for the *Daily Mail* who attended the Staffordshire meeting reported that one group member, Sam Goody, stressed the need to “hit vaccine centres, schools, head teachers, colleges, councillors and directors of public health in every area”, with Glass claiming they intended to “take it to the Old Bill”.

Although ATA claims that it has “nothing to do with the right or the left”, some far-right activists have been attracted to the group, with a handful of figures from the tiny Independent Nationalist Network (INN) attending an event, including the INN’s unofficial leader, Richard Lumby.

2022 PROSPECTS

Part of ATA’s founding aim was to create new networks and select a hardcore of activists. Following the extensive press interest around ATA, the group will likely morph into more clandestine – and potentially more dangerous – iterations, which will seek to cause disruption over the coming year.



MARTIN GEDDES

2021 SUMMARY

One of the earliest and most prominent British proponents of the QAnon conspiracy, Martin Geddes, dramatically lost his Twitter account – which had a following of over 250,000 – when it was deleted in the aftermath of the Capitol Hill riot in Washington DC on 6 January.

Geddes’ following on Telegram is now less than 10% what he once had on Twitter.

While many of his contemporaries have left much of the utterly discredited QAnon mythology behind, Geddes has remained steadfast to the original incarnation of Q, eagerly anticipating “The Storm” and a military coup to return Trump to power.

2022 PROSPECTS

Geddes is unlikely to retake a central role in the QAnon movement, which has largely moved on without him.



CHARLIE WARD

2021 SUMMARY

Spain-based QAnon promoter Charlie Ward has continued to promote a highly eclectic range of conspiracy theories and dubious financial advice to his large audience via a BitChute channel and his website. His guests range from spiritual/wellness gurus to more extreme characters, such as the Holocaust denier John Hamer and radical anti-vaxxer Kate Shemirani.

2022 PROSPECTS

Despite facing derision and accusations of grifting from many other QAnon promoters, the popularity of Ward’s channel will continue to attract fringe and extreme guests with something to sell.



SIMON PARKES

2021 SUMMARY

Having experienced a staggering rise in popularity in the weeks following the 2020 Presidential election, the longtime eccentric spiritualist and more recent QAnon adopter, Simon Parkes, now has one of the largest surviving YouTube followings (656,000+) in the movement.

Parkes achieved his huge boost by offering concrete assurances from his “inside sources” that the election would be imminently overturned, at a time when many other QAnon promoters were left disoriented by the result and the disappearance of Q. While his content is still highly engaged with, many of his followers have become hostile to his continually abandoned predictions and promises.

PREDICTIONS FOR 2022

In recent months Parkes has produced far fewer of his “news updates” and more content pushing dubious products and services to his audience. This will likely see diminishing returns over the year ahead.



SECTION 4 – TECH & FAR RIGHT

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THE RISE OF FAR-RIGHT 'ALT-TECH'

As deplatforming has increased, far-right activists have moved across to alternative social media platforms. Should we be worried? Possibly, says JOE MULHALL.

In October 2021, the former chief spokesman for Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, Jason Miller, travelled to Europe for a meeting. At lunchtime on Tuesday 21 October, at the Spreegold restaurant in Berlin, he was joined by several other figures.

These included Lutz Bachmann and Siegfried Daebritz from the German anti-Muslim group PEGIDA, well-known anti-Muslim agitator Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) from the UK and Matthew Tyrmand of the US-based far-right activist group, Project Veritas. They met, according to the far-right website *Gateway Pundit*, to plan the "defence of the West".

Jason Miller had travelled across the Atlantic to encourage some of the best known far-right extremists in Europe to join his new social media platform, GETTR. A few weeks later Matthew Tyrmand, his international co-ordinator, described the purpose of GETTR as a "right platform for ideas to proliferate and to win in the battle of ideas and help save western civilisation".

Before the meeting had even ended, Stephen Lennon made a video encouraging his supporters to join the new social media app: "I've asked lots of questions today to know that it is going to be a free speech platform that we can all use, so watch this space."

In another message on his Telegram channel, he said: "I'm loving this platform. No censorship, seamless, and big things coming down the road. The future is brighter at Gettr. A real alternative to the censorious far left echo chamber known as Twitter."

By 22 December Lennon had accrued 50,000 followers on the new platform, rising to 100,000 by 4 January, 150,000 by 14 January and by February this year he had reached over 180,000 followers. This was in addition to his 155,000 followers on Telegram and 28,000 subscribers on the video sharing platform BitChute. In one GETTR livestream he excitedly said: "Just watch the numbers continue to rise on the alternative platforms, we're getting our voice back."

While significantly less than the one million followers he had on Facebook back in 2019, Lennon's rapid growth on alternative social media platforms begs the question whether so-called 'alt-tech' has finally become a genuinely viable option for the deplatformed far right?

WHAT IS ALT-TECH?

In recent years far-right activists and movements have been faced with an increasingly important problem: namely, being hugely dependent on internet platforms while not being in control of them. For most

of the postwar period far-right activists were actively marginalised from mainstream discourse, making it difficult for extremists to reach large audiences.

For this reason, the far right were enthusiastic early adopters of the internet, quickly seeing it as an opportunity to disseminate their ideas while by passing the gatekeepers of the mainstream media. The subsequent advent of social media afforded them previously unimaginable opportunities: not just the dissemination of information to huge new audiences, but also providing a means by which to network within a movement and across ideological and national boundaries.

However, following numerous waves of deplatforming and increasingly effective content moderation practices on the more mainstream social platforms, far-right activists once again found themselves being marginalised from public debate.

WHAT ARE THESE NEW PLATFORMS?

With this increasing marginalisation, far-right figures began to migrate to alternative and usually smaller platforms, but still eventually finding themselves removed or falling into obscurity. The solution appeared obvious, if not simple: they needed to create their own alternative technologies that they used and also controlled.

The result is that there are now broadly three categories of social media platforms used by the far right.

The first are **mainstream platforms**: those that are widely used by all across society, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and TikTok. While these platforms all have an extremism problem, they generally have terms and policies that prohibit extreme and discriminatory behaviour, even if they don't always enact them as consistently as necessary. Where possible the far right want to remain on these platforms, as they afford huge audiences beyond existing supporter bases. This is where they want to propagandise and recruit.

Next are **co-opted platforms**: those not created for or by the far right, but which have become widely used by them, either because of loose policies, a lack of moderation, or a libertarian attitude towards deplatforming and content removal. Most notable is Telegram, which is an enormous social media app with over one billion downloads globally. Due to its consistent failure to remove extremist activity, it has become a crucial hub for the contemporary far right. The danger for the far right with these platforms is that they may eventually choose to clean up their act and remove illegal or harmful content, making them insecure homes in the long term.

The final category is **bespoke platforms**: a growing group of platforms, created by the far right or by people consciously courting extremists. Many of these are essentially clones of major platforms, but featuring little or no moderation. The best known are Gab, BitChute and most recently, GETTR.



Lutz Bachmann, Jason Miller, CEO of Gettr, Tommy Robinson and Siggí Daebritz in Berlin
Photo: Twitter

For some on the far right, particularly those who have been widely deplatformed, alt-tech platforms are replacements, as close to a straight swap as they can manage. Gab and GETTR replace their deleted Twitter accounts, while BitChute or Rumble replaced their lost YouTube channels.

However, for many of these people, alt-tech is supplementary. They use an array of platforms simultaneously and for different purposes. Take the fascist group Patriotic Alternative (PA), for example. Before a recent set of bans, they used Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to propagandise and recruit, while simultaneously employing Telegram, BitChute and DLive for organising or presenting more extreme content. The group used a range of platforms simultaneously and for different purposes, with activists consciously adopting a different tone for each.

THE PROBLEM WITH ALT-TECH

While not new (the far-right Reddit alternative Voat was launched back in 2014), the creation of alt-tech and bespoke far-right platforms has not, generally, been successful. Most have had short lifespans and soon collapsed, or lapsed into semi-dormancy. Even the ones that have survived have suffered from far-right ghettoisation.

Part of the appeal of social media for the far right was the ability it afforded them to attack victims, as well as trolling “normies”, plus to propagandise and recruit new activists. While their own platforms provide a safe-haven of sorts, the possibility of unmoderated speech is not enough of a reason, in itself, to continue to engage. Other issues are more practical in nature, reflecting the quality of the platforms themselves. The polish of mainstream services like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube has ultimately made the general user picky and impatient when it comes to competing platforms; the user experience on alt-platforms is noticeably worse than mainstream alternatives.

There is also the issue that even so-called ‘free

speech platforms’ invariably have to remove some illegal speech. While many often don’t, the ones that are looking to attract larger and (somewhat) more mainstream audiences will begin to do so, at which point their core users may begin to feel betrayed.

All of this is compounded by the issue that a well-constructed platform is of no use if the domain name is seized or its hosting is shut down. That’s why a question remains: who controls the infrastructure services on which the modern web relies? That still remains a hurdle for the many in the extreme right.

A VIABLE OPTION?

However, while many of these issues remain a problem, the last few years have seen the emergence of a far more viable alternative online space for far-right activists. Whether it is video sharing platforms such as BitChute or Odysee, or Twitter clones like Gab or GETTR, the quality, reliability and user experience has increased dramatically.

Prominent figures such as Stephen Lennon, who already possess an international following, have managed to build up significant followings on these alternative platforms. Lennon regularly livestreams on GETTR to thousands of people all over the world, something not possible since being deplatformed by Twitter in 2018.

Thankfully most other UK far-right groups and individuals have continued to struggle to build large audiences on alternative platforms, especially the thuggish anti-Muslim group Britain First, which once had more than two million likes on Facebook but now have under 2,000 followers on GETTR.

While debates continue to rage about the efficacy of deplatforming, it is still the case that the far right will reach far fewer people on alt-tech platforms than they did on major social media outlets. However, over the last few years, the alt-tech online space has developed rapidly and is becoming an increasingly viable alternative – something that should worry us all.

ALT-PLATFORMS USED BY THE FAR RIGHT

BITCHUTE

BITCHUTE

The British videosharing platform BitChute was launched in 2017 as a “censorship-free” alternative to YouTube.

It was one of the main beneficiaries of a great migration of far-right accounts from more popular platforms, growing from 20 million visitors in April 2020 to 57 million by January 2021.

Popular among far-right activists and conspiracy theorists alike, the platform has a reputation for allowing extreme content and incitement to hatred to flourish. Influential users include David Icke, a prolific spreader of COVID misinformation and antisemitic conspiracy theories.

In June 2021, BitChute changed its Terms Of Service and added restrictions on sharing of content that was deemed as incitement to hatred. However, antisemitic and other content can still be easily found on the platform.

GAB

Gab is a US-based micro-blogging site touted as a rival to Twitter. Since its launch in 2016, high-profile users have

included former Breitbart News writer and polemicist Milo Yiannopoulos, ex-British National Party leader Nick Griffin and Australian neo-Nazi Blair Cottrell.

The site’s founder, Andrew Torba, actively courts far-right users and the site has been linked to a number of terrorist attacks, including when the Tree of Life synagogue shooter announced his planned attack on the site. Gab was also used in the storming of the United States Capitol attack on 6 January 2021, to figure out which tools to use to pry open doors, while Gab users filmed themselves entering offices.

Torba claims that Gab experienced a +40% increase in traffic on 6 January and has refused to hand user communications to the US committee investigating the storming of the capitol. In 2021, he also claimed that Gab has 15 million unique monthly visitors. As of August 2021, he personally had more than three million followers on the platform. However, there is some doubt as to the number of active users on the site and Torba has been accused of giving misleading statements on the number of users, or just refusing to answer.




Andrew Torba

Germany hit Gab with a €30,000 fine in September 2021 for not naming a contact person for questions about the deletion of criminal content. Torba has objected to the fine and asked for financial support to combat it. Torba has also announced Gab’s online infrastructure will be upgraded. Also in late September 2021, he announced that the site’s online infrastructure would be upgraded to “preserve a parallel Christian society on the internet for generations to come”.

In January 2022 Torba announced that Gab would sponsor the America First Political Action Conference (AFPAC) run by white nationalist commentator Nick Fuentes. Torba has also entered into a partnership with Fuentes’ livestreaming service.



PARLER

Apple and Alphabet Inc.’s Google previously said they removed Parler (in January 2021) from their respective app stores because the company hadn’t taken adequate measures to address a proliferation of threats to people’s safety.

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

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

Parler resumed its service after moving domain registration to Epik, a web hosting company known for hosting far-right websites. A version of the app also returned to Apple Inc’s App Store in May 2021 after Parler changed some of its content-moderation practices. George Farmer, chief executive of Parler, claims that its monthly active user base is “somewhere between 700,000 to about a million”. Parler announced that it would expand their business into non-fungible tokens (NFTs) in late 2021.

GETTR

The microblogging platform GETTR was founded by Jason Miller, a former Donald Trump aide, in July 2021, and is described as a Twitter clone.

The site was officially targeted at American conservatives but extreme content is rife, with racist, antisemitic and terrorist propaganda readily available. By November 2021, GETTR said it had almost three million total users and almost 400,000 daily average users. As of January 2022, the company said it had increased to four million users.

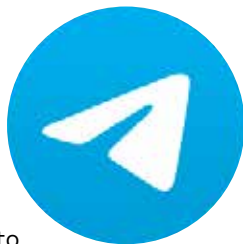
A Stanford Internet Observatory study found that GETTR had very few mechanisms for detecting violent content, pornography or child exploitation imagery.

Brazil is GETTR's second-largest market and there has been some growth in Europe too. Far-right French Presidential candidates Marine Le Pen and Eric Zemmour have both created accounts. In January 2022 there was a spike in new membership, with over 500,000 new users joining after podcaster Joe Rogan joined the platform.

RUMBLE

This Canada-based video sharing platform increased sharply in popularity, after prominent US Republican political figures began to advocate its use in 2020, claiming that YouTube had a bias against conservative voices. Rumble's monthly user count increased from 1.6 million monthly users in July 2020 to 31.9 million by the end of the first quarter of 2021.

When former President Donald Trump joined in June 2021, Rumble experienced a surge in popularity. He now has 1.12 million subscribers on the site and Trump Media & Technology Group also announced a "wide ranging" agreement with Rumble in December 2021.

TELEGRAM

The Telegram messaging app is an example of a co-opted service: used for secure communication by an estimated 550 million users worldwide, it is nonetheless home to some of the most extreme racist and terrorist content. Far-right users are attracted to the service's extremely lax moderation and commitment to user privacy, and it provides a much slicker user experience than sites like Gab and Parler.

There has been some pushback on far-right usage in 2022, with Germany's Federal Criminal Police (BKA) accusing Telegram of failing to respond to requests to delete far-right content while interior minister, Nancy Faeser, from the Social Democrats, brought up the possibility of banning Telegram in Germany because of the on-going problem of far-right content.

ODYSEE

Video-hosting platform

Odysee was launched at the end of 2020 as a decentralised alternative to Youtube. CEO Jeremy Kauffman said this was to recapture the freedom of internet. Odysee creators also run LBRY, a blockchain-based file sharing network.

Odysee's guidelines ban pornography and the promotion of violence and terrorist content. Rule-breaking content can be delisted, which leaves channels (user pages) in place but cannot be searched or found while browsing. However the creators cannot delete the channel or prevent it from being shared since it is based on a blockchain.

The creators claimed in January 2021 that their user sign-ups had increased by 250% from the previous month. By April, Odysee was hosting 10 million videos, the most-viewed being one that falsely challenging the safety of COVID-19 vaccines. *The Guardian* reported in May 2021 that many videos on the platform promoted antisemitic conspiracy theories, glorified Adolf Hitler and depicted meeting by extremist groups including the neo-nazi Nordic Resistance Movement.

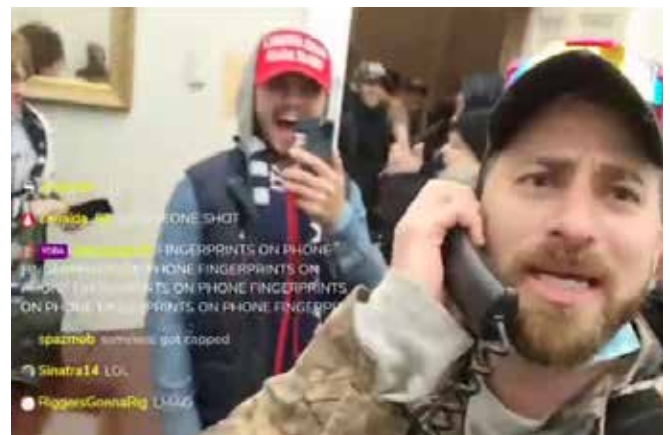
DLIVE

DLive is a decentralised livestreaming service

founded in America in 2017. It was purchased by BitTorrent in 2019 and the site reported five million active users that year. It has become a popular alternative to YouTube and Twitch among white nationalists, conspiracy theorists, neo-nazis and other extremists due to lax enforcement of its guidelines.

In August 2020 a whistleblower said that DLive was "turning a blind eye" to hate speech and misinformation on the platform. In August 2020, eight of DLive's top 10 earners, according to a social media analytics website, were far-right extremists or conspiracy theorists.

During the 6 January attack on the United States Capitol, DLive streams were online, streaming users' involvement. These included Tim Gionet (aka Baked Alaska), who earned more than \$2,000 from tips that day.



Tim "Baked Alaska" Gionet talks on a telephone as right-wing extremists storm the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

SECTION 5 – FAR RIGHT TERRORISM



THE GROWING FAR-RIGHT TERROR THREAT

The violent far right is part of a complicated landscape, one in which increasing numbers of young people are being sent to prison, say PATRIK HERMANSSON and NICK LOWLES.

The threat of far-right terrorism remains high in the UK. There were 18 far-right sympathisers convicted of terror-related offences in 2021, a 50% increase on the previous year. This comes as the number of referrals to the government's Prevent counter-terrorism programme relating to far-right extremism exceeded those for Islamist radicalisation for the first time.

While there were no serious terrorist attacks carried out by far-right extremists last year, this probably owes more to early interventions by the authorities rather than a lack of seriousness and intent.

In what is now a clear police tactic, far-right activists are being arrested and networks disrupted at a far earlier stage than might have been the case in the past. With more and more far-right sympathisers being caught and convicted with possession of material useful for a terrorist act, Counter-Terrorism Police (CTU) clearly believe this early intervention prevents more serious plots developing.

The combination of the police and security services taking the far-right threat more seriously, this process of early intervention – combined with the growing threat itself – has seen 76 far-right extremists convicted under terrorism legislation since the beginning of 2017. This compares to just 15 in the previous five years.

The age of those being convicted is getting ever younger, too. The average age of those convicted since 2017 is just 28. There have also been 18 teenagers convicted during this period. In the 2012–2016 period, the average age was 31 and there were just two teenagers.

Several other patterns can be seen among the cases over the last year. Many convictions relate to the Telegram chat app, which has emerged as an important organising platform for the terror-advocating far right in recent years. While many arrests relate to *relatively* minor terror-related crimes that might not have been prosecuted under terror legislation a decade ago, a growing focus on improvised weaponry is a worrying and potentially deadly trend.



National Action (NA), the group proscribed at the end of 2016, still makes itself felt. Among those convicted last year was NA co-founder, Ben Raymond, who was given an eight-year sentence in December. He became the 17th person convicted of membership of the group, whose former spokesperson once planned to murder an MP (before being exposed by HOPE not hate and sentenced to life in prison). Proscription of the far-right terror group continues to lead to arrests and convictions years after its breakup. Benjamin Hannam, a Metropolitan Police officer, was found guilty for membership in NA in April. Andrew Dymock, who led the NA splinter group Sonnenkrieg Division, was also convicted on 15 offences and jailed for seven years in July.

TELEGRAM REMAINS CENTRAL

Telegram continues to be at the centre of the terror-advocating far right. The platform's extremely lax moderation practices, relative anonymity, combined with social media-like features, have made it attractive across the far right. And over the last years, it has been used extensively by far-right terror groups.

There have been multiple arrests and convictions in the last year relating to Telegram. Three members of The British Hand, a terror-advocating group that sprung up on the platform in the summer of 2020 (and was exposed by HOPE not hate in the same autumn) were convicted in 2021. Another case is Ben John, who used the platform to access terror material.

Michael Nugent, 38, was also convicted in 2021 after being caught sharing explosives and firearms manuals in extreme-right online chat groups on Telegram.

The Feuerkrieg Division was the first nazi group originating on Telegram to be proscribed in the UK in 2020, and in February this year the first prosecution on the basis of membership in the organisation took place.

As long as Telegram fails to decisively take action against fascist groups on its platform, it will likely remain the app of choice for the movement. Because of its social media features and good support for video, it functions as an outreach and recruitment platform as well as an organising and private communication platform for many extremists.

The platform has dramatically lowered the barrier of entry to fascist and terror-advocating groups, too. The multitude of chatrooms focused on fascism and

normalisation of extreme language, to a large part driven by a perceived sense that it was a secure platform has inevitably led many to cross the line into activities that can be prosecuted under terror legislation. Naivety, combined with rapid radicalisation, explains some of the arrests of young, far-right supporters using the platform. Combined with an increasing focus on Telegram and far-right terrorism more broadly, this has driven up the number of arrests.

This does not mean that these groups do not present a real threat. They provide spaces for radicalisation, and the groups help motivate individuals to take action. Matthew Cronjager is a clear example in point. As a member of The British Hand, the 18-year-old took part in a chat group that traded in extreme and violent anti-Muslim rhetoric. He later started his own fascist Telegram group and was eventually convicted for plotting to kill an Asian classmate.

“
Arrests do not seem to have seriously deterred far-right terrorism
”

The movement has increasingly taken notice and begun to look for alternatives to Telegram. However, many move back onto Telegram because of its user friendliness and the existing network that is active on the platform. Instead, many groups have begun to make background checks harsher and more extensive in an attempt to stave off both police and anti-fascist infiltrators.

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

Attempts at constructing weapons rather than acquiring industrial-made counterparts is a growing and potentially deadly trend. Matthew Cronjager had plotted to shoot a classmate using a 3D printed weapon. Additionally, an ongoing trial of three men from West Yorkshire who belonged to a Telegram group called “Oaken Hearth”, glorified nazi terrorists and had begun 3D printing parts of a gun. The group also experimented with other kinds of homemade weapons, including producing napalm.

OVERLAPPING HATREDS

Some forms of extreme violence can be difficult to categorise. Danyal Hussein was convicted last October for the murder of two women in Wembley the year previously. Hussein did not support the far right, but his murder was motivated by satanism and misogyny. The teenage murderer had signed a contract in blood with “the mighty king Lucifuge Rofocale”, in exchange for sacrificing “only women” every six months.

The double murder was at least partially inspired by an American satanist and, at one point, Temple ov Blood supporter, Matthew Lawrence (aka E.A. Koetting).

The leader of the Temple ov Blood, an American chapter of the nazi-occult group, the Order of Nine Angles, was in direct contact with Andrew Dymock, the British leader of the Sonnenkreig Division, who was also convicted last year.

Year	No of far right activists / sympathisers convicted	Average Age	No of teenagers
1997-2001	8	34	0
2002-2006	11	38	2
2007-2011	18	34	2
2012-2016	15	31	2
2017-2021	76	28	18

Improvised weapons have attracted attention from violent far-right groups in the UK and Europe in the last years because access to industrial weapons is challenging. The most notable example is Stephan Balliet, who attacked a synagogue and a Turkish restaurant and killed two people in Halle, Germany in 2019. The attacker explicitly aimed to “Prove the viability of improvised weapons”, according to a letter released before his attack.

While construction of functional weapons remains relatively difficult, even if one has access to a 3D printer, it still requires knowledge of materials and how to assemble the pieces and access to, or skills to make, ammunition. However, instruction manuals – and in the case of 3D printing schematics compatible with commercial 3D printers – for building firearms as well as explosives are being constantly improved and becoming easier to access than ever before.

Telegram, again, has become an important platform for distributing these manuals. The platform has channels explicitly focused on distributing weapons manuals and schematic files for 3D printers. In the case of printing, these channels are often not explicitly far-right, but rather run by libertarian-leaning US organisations that hold gun ownership as an essential right. However, on this side of the Atlantic, they have come to be shared extensively by the fascist far right.

“

The violent far right is part of a growing and more complicated landscape

”

Ben Styles, currently on trial related to building a machine gun in his garage in Leamington Spa, allegedly had manuals to convert blank bullets (which can be bought legally) into functioning live ammunition. Styles was also active on Telegram and had allegedly sent messages in support of the mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand and written: “I hope the holocaust is real next time”.

Separately, older weapons manuals are circulating that describe how to build weapons rather than 3D print them. An especially popular variant is the “Luty”, a submachine gun that can be constructed by easily accessible components. It was designed by English anti-gun control activist Philip Luty in the 1990s. Balliet, the shooter in Halle in 2019, used a Luty.

Easy access, combined with ever-increasing violent rhetoric in far-right Telegram groups, has helped spread the idea of improvised weapons in the far right. It is important to understand that these are not always shared with the explicit intent of the receiver

using them, but rather as a way to demonstrate extremeness and elicit a reaction from others in the group. However, the effect is that these manuals are more and more readily available across Telegram, also in chats that are not explicitly terror advocating.

EXTREMISM IN THE FORCES

A worry development last year was the conviction of a serving Metropolitan Police officer, Benjamin Hannam, who was convicted of membership in National Action (NA) in April. Hannam joined the police in 2018, despite two years of involvement in NA and a successor group, NS131, and after his school teacher had reported him for racism. Despite all that, Hannam passed the police vetting system.

HOPE not hate criticised the Met for allowing Hannam to join the force in the first place. Not only was the vetting system quite outdated, as Hannam was only asked if he had been in the British National Party, but the fact that he was unknown to the police despite being active for so long should be a major cause for concern. The Met defended the vetting system, but admitted that it could never be 100% correct.

However, while Hannam’s case was the most extreme, it was only the most high profile of a growing number of men in uniform caught with far-right links. An investigation by *The Guardian* last year found 16 serving soldiers had been referred to Prevent over the previous couple of years because of their alleged links to far-right activity.

In 2018, lance corporal Mikko Vehvilainen was convicted for being a member of the of National Action. He was one of four soldiers arrested.

The following year, HOPE not hate revealed that two naval personnel, including one who was due to work on a Trident nuclear submarine, were active members of the far-right group Generation Identity. Despite the Navy promising to take action, HOPE not hate learnt that both remained in post two years later.

LOOKING AHEAD

The violent far right is part of a growing and more complicated landscape, also involving related movements like anti-vaccine activism and violent misogyny – sometimes linked to the incel (involuntary celibate) movement online, which at times has overlapped with the far right but is motivated primarily by extreme, and sometimes conspiracy theory-minded, misogyny. The shooter who took five people’s lives in Keyham, Plymouth, in August 2021 had expressed incel-related views.

While it is positive that far-right terrorism is increasingly taken as a serious threat by police and legislators in the UK, we cannot simply rely on arrests, convictions and legislation against hate and violence.

Arrests do not seem to have seriously deterred far-right terrorism, either, especially among young people, and while prison sentences take likely violent individuals off the streets, more needs to be done to turn them away from the ideology and, most importantly, to dissuade them from going there in the first place.

More work needs to be done to understand and discourage people from being drawn into violent ideologies. This is a task that likely requires civil society, local community and state to all do their part – as well of course as tech companies themselves.

NAZI TERRORISTS

A total of 18 far-right activists were convicted on terror-related charges in 2021.

BEN RAYMOND

Raymond, 32, was found guilty of being a member of National Action, a banned terrorist organisation he helped create in 2013. Raymond was also convicted of possessing a manifesto by the Norwegian terrorist Andrews Breivik and a guide to homemade detonators. He was jailed for eight years.



OLIVER BEL

Oliver Bel, a former Cambridge University student, was jailed after being found guilty of possessing a document containing information useful to terrorism. The police were alerted to Bel's activities after he was exposed by HOPE not hate. Police found The Anarchist Cookbook in his possession, which contained instructions on how to build a bomb.



BEN HANNAM

Benjamin Hannam, a Metropolitan Police officer, was convicted of being a member of National Action. The 22-year-old was also convicted of possessing documents useful to a terrorist and of fraud over lies on his police application. He was jailed at the Old Bailey for four years and four months.

BRITISH HAND (DERBYSHIRE)

A 16-year-old schoolboy from Derbyshire was convicted for disseminating a terrorist publication. The police investigation to the arrest and conviction of this boy was triggered by a HOPE not hate exposé of The British Hand, of which the boy was the leader. He received a two-year youth referral order.

BRITISH HAND (KENT)

A 16-year-old boy, from Kent, who was a member The British Hand, was convicted for disseminating a terrorist publication called the White Resistance Manual. The boy was given a one-year youth referral order.



MATTHEW CRONJAGER

Matthew Cronjager, from Essex, was convicted of planning terrorist acts after the court heard he wanted to shoot an Asian friend. The 18-year-old, from Essex, was part of The British Hand and, tried to get hold of a 3D printed gun to kill his teenage target, whom he likened to a cockroach.

DEAN MORRICE

An ex-Army driver was sentenced to 18 years in jail for multiple terror offences, including stockpiling explosive materials. Dean Morrice, 34, from Paulton, Somerset, was convicted of 10 terrorism-related offences. He even recorded himself strumming a guitar in time to the gunshots of fatal mosque shootings in Christchurch.



ANDREW DYMOCK

Andrew Dymock was sentenced to seven years in prison after being convicted of 12 terror offences, including encouraging and funding terrorism. Dymock was leader of the now-banned Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD), having previously been in National Action and System Resistance Network.

UNNAMED

A boy from Cornwall was given a 24-month youth rehabilitation order after being found guilty of downloading bomb-making manuals. He became the British head of the now-banned Feuerkrieg Division (FKD). He was just 13 when he committed his first offence.

BEN JOHN

22-year-old Ben John was convicted of a terrorist offence for having a copy of *The Anarchist Cookbook* on a computer hard drive, one of 78,000 far right documents he possessed. His case caused controversy when trial Judge ordered him to read classic literature as part of a two-year suspended sentence. This was later squashed for being too lenient and John was sent to prison for two years.

**JOHN NIMMO**

John Nimmo, 32, was jailed for 10 years after admitting seven offences including encouraging terrorism and distributing material likely to stir up religious hatred. He also admitted possessing and disseminating terrorist material, possessing a prohibited firearm and breaching a Criminal Behaviour Order linked to a previous offence. He had previously been imprisoned for sending abuse online aimed at former Labour MP Luciana Berger, among other victims.

**SAM IMRIE**

24-year-old Sam Imrie was jailed for seven-and-a-half years for terrorist offences after he posted messages on social media saying he was planning to set fire to the Fife Islamic Centre. Imrie, who idolised right-wing mass killers and hated Muslims, was convicted on two charges of breaching the Terrorism Act.

ROBERT GREGORY

24-year-old Robert Gregory was jailed for four and a half years after being found guilty on two counts under the Terrorism Act. Content relating to the manufacturing of a bomb was found on his mobile phone.

**NICHOLAS BROCK**

53-year-old Nicholas Brock was jailed for four years after being found guilty of three counts of possessing materials which could be of use in preparing terrorist acts. Police also found a hoard of Nazi-era daggers, far-right literature and a framed Ku Klux Klan certificate in Brock's bedroom in Berkshire.

**UNNAMED**

A 16-year-old from Newcastle, who called himself Hitler and set up accounts on multiple social media platforms which glorified extreme right-wing violence, was given a 12-month intensive referral order. He had pleaded guilty to four counts of inviting support for National Action, a banned neo-Nazi organisation. He also admitted three counts of encouraging terrorism and four of stirring up racial and religious hatred.

UNNAMED

A 17-year-old from Gloucestershire was sentenced to a 12-month referral order after admitting 11 counts of collecting material of use to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism contrary to section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

Far-right symbols such as swastikas were found scratched into a desk in his bedroom. Detailed guides explaining ways of killing someone were also found on his phone.

MICHAEL NUGENT

Michael Nugent, 38, was sentenced to three-and-a-half years imprisonment after pleading guilty to five counts of dissemination of terrorist publications and 11 counts of possessing information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism. He was caught sharing explosives and firearms manuals in extreme right wing online chat groups on Telegram. His sentence was later increased to five years after being challenged by the Attorney General.

**DANIEL LISTER**

Daniel Lister, from York, admitted two counts of possessing terrorist documents and one of possessing a prohibited weapon, namely a stun gun. Also had far right material in his possession.

THE FAR RIGHT WRESTLES WITH UKRAINE



Anti-terrorist operation in eastern Ukraine
Photo: Ministry of Defense of Ukraine

The invasion of Ukraine has ignited fierce debate among many on the far right, including those supportive of Vladimir Putin’s aims.

As Russian forces roll into Ukraine, the UK’s broad radical right and far right have paid close attention to the emerging crisis, and have responded in an uneven fashion.

While Putin’s authoritarianism and illiberalism have made him a darling of the European and American far right over the last decade, others in the further right milieu view the offensive as an assault on Ukrainian sovereignty and an affront to the West as a whole, making it a divisive issue among the various currents of the radical right and far right.

The initial responses to this fast-moving situation have been conflicting and shifting. While some have quickly taken a hard position, others will be waiting to see how the situation plays out in Ukraine and among British public opinion, before tailoring their stances accordingly.

THE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT

Russia holds a confused position in the hearts of the radical right. On the one hand, Russia 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 radical right.

The pro-Trump faction in particular has worked to portray Putin as a mere bogeyman, a paranoid obsession of liberals keen to explain away their electoral failures. In the US, figures like Fox News’s Tucker Carlson have gone so far as to echo Putin’s words, claiming Ukraine was “not a democracy” and asking “Has Putin ever called me a racist?” Putin’s illiberalism and strongman reputation is held up by those on the populist radical right as a contrast to the perceived weakness and “wokeness” of the Biden administration, the European Union and, increasingly, Boris Johnson’s government.

These conflicting tendencies have manifested in the varied responses of the UK’s radical right to the Ukraine conflict. The predominant theme has 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 has perviously said that Putin was the world leader he most admired as an operator. His Reform UK successor, Richard Tice, went further by calling for “‘shock & awe’ sanctions against Putin & his oligarch friends esp here in the UK. Sanctions must hit them very hard, make them much poorer.”

Yet pro-Russia sympathies have also been on display, too. A day after ascribing the war to Putin’s expansionism, Farage backtracked somewhat by instead calling it “a consequence of EU and NATO expansion” which amounted to “pok[ing] the Russian bear with a stick”. 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 a similar argument.

It said that 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 the [sic] current duplicitous, deceitful and despotic leaders who bring shame upon the West.”

Despite their longstanding sympathies towards Putin, some commentators further to the right have publicly avoided taking a clear position on the conflict, instead opportunistically using it to attack mainstream political and media institutions. For example, the Battersea-based propagandist Paul Joseph Watson slammed the “legacy media”, the Biden administration and the Ukrainian government for their perceived “wokeness” and inability to withstand Putin’s strength.

Trump-supporting figures such as Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) have followed suit. Lennon has previously made some soft criticisms of Putin, but generally has attacked liberal politicians and the media for claiming that: “This would never have happened if Trump was in power, the Dems and left have pushed for this for years to take the heat off them”. He later added: “I remember mainstream media saying President Trump would cause world war 3. Not aged well has it you GLOBALIST WEF SCUMBAG PRESS???”

THE FASCIST FAR RIGHT

Since the early 2010s, large sections of the far right have come to consider Russia as a counterweight to American imperialism and liberalism, viewing Putin’s push back against progressive ideals and his anti-Western rhetoric, including opposition to NATO, as a bulwark against globalisation and (for some) alleged Jewish influence.

This has fed an instinctive support of Putin’s actions in Ukraine among large contingents of the traditional far right, some of which staunchly defend the offensive, with others proffering a more qualified support, arguing that Putin was the lesser of two evils.

Mark Collett, leader of the UK’s largest fascist organisation, Patriotic Alternative, has taken a pro-Russian stance, claiming:

“NATO’s role in Eastern Europe is to facilitate American imperialism – something which I wholeheartedly oppose. Where ever American imperialism takes root, with it comes an entire range of social poisons that attack the moral fabric of the nation – feminism, the LGBT agenda, attacks on the traditional family and of course, anti-white rhetoric and policy [...] Whilst the last thing I want to see is white people killing other white people in another pointless war, I completely understand Russia’s position on this matter; as Russia is simply attempting to secure their security and national interests by preventing NATO expanding ever-closer to their borders.”

Collett’s statement has been widely circulated on Telegram and echoed by his bitter enemy Nick Griffin, former leader of the British National Party (BNP), who took aim at the “criminal/Zionist regime in Kiev” and

Photo: Ministry of Defense of Ukraine



claimed the pro-Ukrainian right wing are serving a “neo-con [neo-conservative] agenda”. Some far-right groups have downplayed the notion of a Ukrainian identity and refused to recognise the legitimacy of the nation, viewing it as a part of Russia artificially separated by malign forces, thereby justifying Putin’s aggression.

THE INTERNATIONAL NAZI FRINGE

However, staunch pro-Russia views are far from uniform among the extreme right. Many have expressed dismay at the conflict between “white” nations, blaming Putin’s actions on a Jewish scheme.

One nazi channel on the messaging app Telegram claimed that: “This war is so fucking stupid, whenever you see two White nations at war with each other, you’ll find a jew sitting at the top.” Another claimed that the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy “and the other Jews who provoked this war are going to hide in Poland. While the Nationalist minded white Ukrainians spend themselves in a probably futile resistance against Russian forces. That’s how it always is, Whites die while Jews hide.”

While deriding the Ukrainian establishment and especially Zelenskyy, many international nazi and fascist groups have backed Ukrainian forces, primarily on the basis of right to independence and self-determination, and thrown their support behind the fascist militia Azov Battalion, which has fought against Russian-backed forces since 2014 and has long been admired by fascists around the globe. The group was described on one Telegram channel as “some of the toughest and proudest Aryan men alive. This is our Folk, and they need our support”.

Putin’s claim that his “special military operation” in part aims for the “denazification” of Ukraine (a ludicrous claim, given that Ukraine’s president is Jewish and lost family in the Holocaust) has fortified this position for

some. In the words of one American nazi:

“Putin’s official reasoning for invading Ukraine is to “Demilitarization and Denazification”. So again if you’re NS [National Socialist] and you’re supporting Putin who is literally invading a country with a listed reason of destroying NS groups like Azov Battalion then you’re pretty fucking retarded [...] or you’re a state actor.”

Fascist attitudes towards Azov have been complicated by allegations that Israel has supplied the group with arms, leading some within the conspiratorially-minded far-right extremes to view the group as part of a Jewish agenda, splitting the formerly widespread support of the group. One fascist wrote in hope that Russian forces are “wiping out the azov jews”.

Despite this, some support for Azov remains among the international extreme fringes. In chat groups associated with the Misanthropic Division, an international Azov support and recruitment group, small numbers of individuals have even discussed joining Azov and fighting in the ongoing conflict. However, Azov has scaled back international recruitment efforts in recent years due to negative publicity it has garnered, meaning that the Misanthropic Division lacks a clear purpose outside being a brand that individual fascist activists associate themselves with.

A MIXED PICTURE

Of course, the radical right and far right have never been a monolith, featuring a diversity of views on a wide range of issues. However, the crisis in Ukraine, viewed variously in terms of a conflict over self-determination, Western imperialism, globalism and liberal values, is a particularly evocative and complex topic for the far right, and may well prompt further quarrels and even splits in the coming weeks and months.

CONSPIRACY THEORISTS RESPOND TO UKRAINE

Conspiracy theorists view disparate events as interconnected, and the Ukraine conflict was immediately absorbed into their existing narratives, explains DAVID LAWRENCE.



Conspiracy theories tend to revolve around global events and to spike in turbulent times, and so it is unsurprising that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has prompted a blizzard of disinformation and false claims across social media. This includes a variety of conspiratorial notions that question the existence of the invasion, allege it to be a diversion from a larger, more sinister global plot, or praise Putin's actions as a resistance against the evils of a "New World Order" (NWO).

Conspiracy theories are rooted in an instinctive distrust of political and media institutions, and a contrarianism towards mainstream narratives. For some, the very fact that the media is reporting an issue or event raises suspicions about its validity, and the broad mainstream condemnation of Putin's actions has engendered some pro-Russian sympathies. For example, one widely spread post simply lists a number of figures who "support Ukraine", such as George Bush, Joe Biden, George Soros, Hillary Clinton, and Roman Abramovich, and asks: "Now do you understand?"

Some conspiracy theorists have adopted a broad, anti-elite view of the conflict. As one large channel on the messaging app Telegram, popular among conspiratorial communities, states:

"It is a global war against you. To the extent that wars are being waged between the elitists, they are only being waged to determine which group of elitists get to rule over you and in what way [...] A choice between the two wings of the same bird of prey is no choice at all."

Others are stridently partisan, positioning the Ukrainian establishment, and especially President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, as stooges of globalist plot. One claim circulated on Telegram alleges that George Soros, long portrayed as a sinister global puppeteer in various conspiracy theories, "helped" Zelenskyy become President by "brainwashing the country". Others claim the country is in the grip of the Rothschild family:

"Ukraine is under full Illuminati control [...] The countries [sic] government consists of Luciferian president and many of their current politicians have been hand picked after being trained by the schools of Kissinger and Schwab, who of course are all also puppets themselves of the even richer and more powerful Rothschilds etc"

Both Soros and the Rothschild family are perennial targets of conspiratorial antisemitism, a longstanding tradition that is often expressed in coded terms in contemporary conspiracy theories.

Conspiracy theorists tend to view seemingly disparate events as interconnected, and the conflict was immediately absorbed into existing, overarching narratives concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and the sinister NWO supposedly responsible for the crisis.

Putin's aggression is therefore interpreted as a fightback against this global conspiracy, with one claim circulating even contending that Russian forces had destroyed a number of US bioweapons labs in Ukraine, which according to some theorists were the likely source of the next "plandemic".

SECTION 6 – MAINSTREAM HATE



MAINSTREAM POISON

Politicians, particularly from the Conservative Party, are failing to tackle racism and prejudice – even within their own ranks – as LIRON VELLEMAN and NICK LOWLES attest.

Racism and prejudice continued to blight the political mainstream last year. The Conservatives came under attack for their appalling response to the continuing Black Lives Matter (BLM)-inspired protests, on-going charges of Islamophobia and a deliberate and provocative use of culture war politics to wind up a political base and to anger opponents.

Labour is still grappling with the legacy of ongoing antisemitism, is attacked for its continued failure to address anti-black prejudice and Islamophobia within the party, and has been widely condemned for some of its literature in the Batley & Spen by-election last summer.

In 2020, at the height of the BLM protests, Prime Minister Boris Johnson made a promise to address racial inequality and discrimination in Britain, but from the very moment he announced his commission, led by educationalist Tony Sewell, we feared the worst.

Sadly, our instincts proved correct, as the Sewell Review claimed that institutional racism was not a problem in Britain, overlooking the existence of many other existing reviews on racism in the UK, and trumpeting the success of integration and black and Asian achievement in this country.

Even the Government appeared slightly embarrassed by the report and little has been heard of it since.

There was no mistaking the motive of some Conservative politicians when they vocally criticised footballers for “taking the knee” before matches. Home Secretary Priti Patel said the gesture, associated with the BLM protest against racism, amounted to “gesture politics” and outrageously said football fans had a right to boo the England team if they did so.

To the delight of the right-wing media platforms such as GB News, even Boris Johnson refused to condemn fans who booed the England team.

These ministers were roundly condemned and their position became embarrassingly untenable the better the England team did in the competition. By the end, and after the disgusting racist abuse directed at black players after England lost in the final, Johnson even had the audacity to claim that no-one in the Government supported the booing of players.

Tory Islamophobia resurfaced as an issue last year, too, as Conservative MP Nusrat Ghani revealed that said she was told her faith was “making colleagues uncomfortable” when she lost her job as a transport minister. Even though her account was backed up by some of her colleagues, the party only agreed to an inquiry after the public outcry.

Few people have faith in this inquiry, especially given the reaction to the Singh Investigation into discrimination and racism within the party. While

the report did highlight major shortcomings into how complaints were addressed, it failed to tackle the root cause of the problem – which was the deep-seated prejudice among many Conservative Party members.

HOPE not hate submitted evidence to the inquiry, including polling of Tory members that showed widespread suspicion, prejudice and hostility towards Muslims among Conservative Party members, including almost 60% admitting to having negative attitude towards Muslims and 47% believing that Islam was “a threat to the British way of life”.

Labour has had its own share of problems during 2021, as it continues to work through the issue of antisemitism within the party. Much has been done to progress through the Action Plan made between Labour and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which had investigated the party, including clearing the caseload of disciplinary cases in relation to antisemitism.

However, issues of anti-black racism and Islamophobia have continued to be raised over the past year. At time of this report going to press, the Forde Report, from an inquiry into a leaked report into antisemitism where issues of racism were raised, was still unpublished, which a number of black MPs and leading members have suggested gives the impression that the party does not take racism seriously.

In the Batley and Spen by-election in July last year, Labour was accused of “dog-whistle racism” by Navendu Mishra MP, for producing a leaflet showing a photo of Boris Johnson alongside Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the quote “Don’t risk a Tory MP who is not on your side”.

Finally, Labour also suspended the whip from Bermondsey and Old Southwark MP Neil Coyle after it was reported that he made a number of racist comments to British Chinese reporter Henry Dyer. Whilst Labour were swift to react and take action, it exemplified a worrying mainstreaming of Sinophobia that cannot be allowed to be accepted into public discourse.

As **State of HATE 2022** goes to press, it has been announced that Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, has appointed Paul Collier as an advisor. The Oxford University professor once claimed that immigration had made indigenous British people a “minority” in London, even though 63% of Londoners were born there.

Collier also claimed minorities born in the UK could only consider themselves to be indigenous if they properly integrated into society. Hardly a positive sign from the Government as our country enters a potentially difficult year ahead, when political and communal bonds will be tested by many challenges.

WORDS HAVE POWER

JOE MULHALL explains how far-right ideas and conspiracy theories are entering the mainstream – in some cases propelled by politicians.



When Boris Johnson wrongly accused Opposition leader Keir Starmer of having failed to prosecute media personality and serial paedophile Jimmy Savile, many people reacted with a slight sense of bemusement. At first hearing, it sounded like a strange *non sequitur*, perhaps something ‘shot from the hip’, just part of the usual back and forth of Prime Minister’s Questions.

However, for those of us who research and monitor the far right, it was instantly recognisable. The baseless accusation linking Starmer (as former Director of Public Prosecutions) to Savile has long been widely shared in the darker corners of the internet, pushed by pernicious conspiracy theorists and far-right extremists. So to hear it fired across the despatch box was rather shocking.

Despite circulating in these darker recesses for several years, the disinformation about Starmer had recirculated this January, with major far-right figures such as Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) sharing it with his 155,000 subscribers on Telegram. The post whipped Lennon’s supporters into conniptions, with one simply posting the image of a noose in response.

It was no surprise that Johnson’s attack was celebrated by the far right, and depressingly predictable when Starmer was then angrily confronted by a mob days later, outside Parliament, some of whom aggressively repeated the baseless slur as they attempted to harass him and fellow MP, David Lammy. Disinformation has consequences.

When parroted by the Prime Minister, such words are deeply concerning. But the creep of far-right rhetoric and conspiracy theories into mainstream politics is nothing new, with numerous troubling incidents taking place over recent years.

For example, in 2019, while addressing a meeting of the Eurosceptic Bruges Group, the Conservative MP (and now Attorney General) Suella Braverman made use of the phrase “cultural Marxism”. Later in 2020, a group of 28 Tory MPs and peers published a letter in *The Telegraph* that referred to “cultural Marxist dogma”.

So-called “cultural Marxism” is a theory that asserts that the Left, often supposedly led by Jews, has been engaged in a decades-long plot to undermine and overthrow traditional Western values by infiltrating cultural institutions and brainwashing populations. Braverman’s words and that of

other Conservative MPs showed how a far-right antisemitic conspiracy theory could break out of the confines of extremist use and gain traction among parliamentarians.

SO HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN?

It is important to understand how the mainstreaming and normalisation of far-right rhetoric actually occurs. While there are examples of senior politicians engaging directly with far-right ideas – such as when a photo emerged of Levelling Up minister Michael Gove’s shelves stocked with books by the French fascist philosophers Guillaume Faye and Alain de Benoist; or when Minister for Brexit Opportunities Jacob Rees-Mogg addressed a meeting of the far-right Traditional Britain Group; and Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries retweeted Tommy Robinson – things are often not so *direct*.

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It is unlikely that Boris Johnson was scrolling through Tommy Robinson’s Telegram channel and came across the Savile slander

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It is unlikely that Boris Johnson was scrolling through Tommy Robinson’s Telegram channel and came across the Savile slander, for example. Rather, conspiracy theories and talking points circulate within far-right spaces, and the ones that gain the largest traction are spread incrementally via increasingly mainstream hosts, until they are picked up by people who often have no idea where they originate. Far-right disinformation spreads osmotically from nasty corners of the internet, up towards right-wing commentators and media and then, in some cases, all the way into Parliament.

The best recent example of this has been some of Home Secretary Priti Patel’s rhetoric around cross-Channel migration. In early 2020, HOPE not hate began to closely monitor a small group of far-right activists who spent their days on the beaches and at lookout points around the port of Dover. Their videos, which occasionally showed them chasing and harassing migrants on the beaches and at their accommodation, quickly spread across far-right social media platforms and whipped anti-immigrant activists into a peak of anger.

The daily drip of anti-migrant content into far-right online spaces forced the issue of cross-Channel migration up the agenda within the movement. Started by solo far-right activists – so-called “migrant hunters” – the issue was soon adopted by more formal far-right organisations such as Britain First, which began to enthusiastically campaign around the issue.

Former UKIP leader Nigel Farage then joined in and began to discuss it on his LBC radio show. This was the moment the specific rhetoric around cross-Channel migration by boats escaped the confines of the far right and entered the mainstream once again, having dropped down the news agenda. Dehumanising talk about “floods” of migrants and alarmism about an “invasion” were once again amplified and subsequently picked up widely by traditional rightwing media outlets. The result was dangerous, as Patel began echoing the language of the far right when she spoke of “activist lawyers”, who she said were frustrating the removal of migrants.

Photo: Number 10 / flickr



NO-GO ZONES?

Sadly, some far-right conspiracy theories gain such traction that they become widely believed, most notably the fallacious “Muslim no-go zones” conspiracy. Polling carried out by YouGov on behalf of HOPE not hate has found that 58% of Conservative party members believe there are “no-go zones” in Britain where “sharia law dominates and non-Muslims cannot enter”. Here we see an unsubstantiated belief, pushed by the far right, and subsequently widely taken up by an influential section of the populace.

Too often people think of the far right as a tumour that hangs off the right side of the body politic: something to be cut off the host body. In reality, it is better understood as a gangrenous limb that, when left untreated, poisons the rest of the body.

Boris Johnson’s unfounded attack on Keir Starmer is merely the latest example in a worrying trend of the mainstreaming of far-right talking points. It is absolutely no surprise that his comments have since been widely applauded by many inside the British far right, and led to the mobbing of Starmer in the streets outside Parliament.

In a climate when far-right hostility towards politicians has become increasingly aggressive, and in the wake of the tragic murders of Joe Cox and David Amess, everyone needs to remember that words have power. The *cordon sanitaire* that kept the far right ‘beyond the pale’ is crumbling and the results could well be extremely dangerous.

PLATFORMING HATE

GREGORY DAVIS reveals how parts of the British media are providing platforms to toxic far-right views.

At HOPE not hate we monitor far-right activists wherever they can be found, from public street protests to closed groups in the dark corners of the internet. The most worrying place to encounter them, however, is in our mainstream media, presented as participants in a legitimate political debate.

The term ‘platforming’ refers to mainstream media outlets giving space for far-right activists to present a sanitised version of their politics, largely neglecting to challenge their rhetoric or to provide essential context about their histories and controversial beliefs.

Perhaps the worst mainstream offender in terms of platforming the far right is the long-established political magazine, *The Spectator*. Despite its promotion of far-right talking points and columnists like Taki, Rod Liddle and James Delingpole, *The Spectator* can still draw the great and good to its annual summer parties.

Among the various instances of such platforming was a softball interview in November 2021 with French Presidential candidate Éric Zemmour by deputy editor Freddy Gray. It drew some criticism for its failure to highlight or address the most damning elements of Zemmour’s rhetoric and history. Using Zemmour’s statement “Immigration is war” as its headline, the piece gave him a platform to propound incendiary far-right rhetoric, such as declaring that: “It is by destroying our cultures, our history, that they make a clean sweep of all that and allow a foreign culture, history and civilisation to come and replace it”, to which was offered no pushback or critique.

In fact, despite noting that Zemmour was “echoing the Great Replacement theory”, Gray’s sole response was to quip that “somebody, probably David Aaronovitch, will no doubt accuse *The Spectator* of giving a platform to nativism or white supremacism merely by speaking to him”. He did not think it worth mentioning that the Great Replacement theory is frequently cited as a motivating factor by mass killers who have slaughtered civilians in New Zealand, Germany, Norway and the United States. Nor did he mention either of Zemmour’s convictions for inciting hatred against racial or religious minorities.

This dangerous narrative around immigration is not limited to *The Spectator*’s interviewees. In August last year, regular columnist Lionel Shriver wrote her own alarmist diatribe, disingenuously titled “Would you want London to be overrun with Americans like



THE
SPECTATOR



Anti-Muslim Canadian commentator Mark Steyn.
Photo: manningcentre

me?”, in which she used a string of phrases that could have been lifted directly from an extreme-right blog. According to Shriver, immigration constitutes “incursions by foreigners so massive that the native-born are effectively surrendering their territory without a shot fired”, promoted only by those who believe that “evil European cultures deserve to be subsumed”.

The Spectator’s sister publications in the USA and Australia have offered their pulpit to notorious far-right figures in recent years, with *The Spectator USA* providing a guest column to the Proud Boys founder Gavin McInnes and its Australian counterpart giving space to the ‘alt-lite’ activist Lauren Southern on two occasions in 2020.

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The Spectator’s sister publications in the USA and Australia have offered their pulpit to notorious far-right figures in recent years

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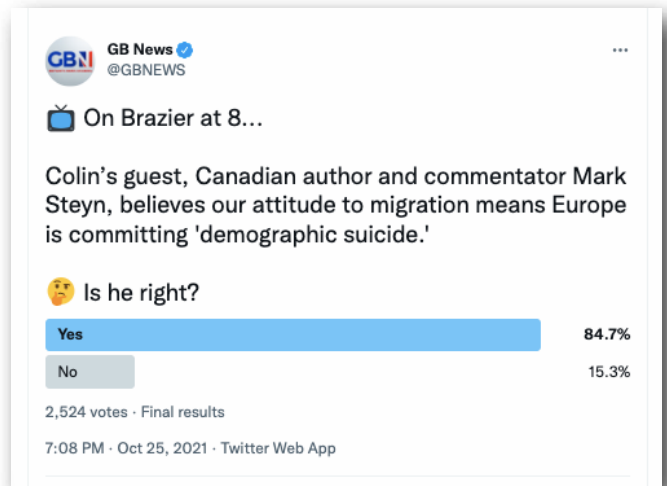
Airings of such views are not limited to *The Spectator*. In October 2021, the newly formed GB News channel invited the anti-Muslim Canadian commentator Mark Steyn on to its primetime show to discuss immigration. The hard-right leaning channel’s Twitter account trailed his appearance by asking viewers if Steyn was right to say that “our attitude to migration means Europe is committing ‘demographic suicide’”, to which 85% of respondees answered “yes”. Steyn then used his appearance to argue that immigration was destroying the idea of a “socially coherent society”, citing the example of a “nice chi-chi gay couple living next door to a big bearded Mullah with however many wives”.

Steyn did not use the opportunity to share his darkest views about Europe’s future. In a horrific passage from his 2006 book *America Alone*, he casually described the genocide of Bosnian Muslims as an understandable reaction to demographic change, stating that “in a democratic age, you can’t buck demography except through civil war. The Serbs figured that out as other Continentals will in the years ahead: if you can’t outbreed the enemy, cull ‘em.”

Yet Steyn’s appearance on GB News was clearly not an unfortunate error of judgement: his guest appearance was promptly followed by the announcement that he would occasionally guest host Nigel Farage’s show and then, as of January 2022, his own daily primetime talkshow.

Some of the most striking examples of a semi-mainstream figure platforming fascists this year came via the podcast of regular *Spectator* columnist and former Breitbart London executive editor James Delingpole. Delingpole describes himself as having been “redpilled” by the pandemic, a process which appears to have involved him embracing increasingly extreme conspiracy theories and their politically extreme proponents. Delingpole’s podcast has hosted unsavoury guests since it launched in 2019, with the fringe “race scientist” Edward Dutton among his earliest guests, but a rising number of guests associated with the traditional far right have appeared on the show in the past year.

The most extreme of his recent guests was “Morgoth”, an anonymous blogger and video producer from North Tyneside whose offerings combine pseudo-intellectual conspiracy theories with vicious racism, antisemitism and Islamophobia. Delingpole offered Morgoth an



embarrassingly craven introduction, describing him as “one of the smartest people on the planet” and praising him for having been “much further down the rabbit hole than me” at an earlier stage. Other guests during 2021 included QAnon promoter Charlie Ward, neo-reactionary Ralph Masilmani and the then-Patriotic Alternative member Josh (aka Richard Lionheart). Delingpole’s hand of friendship towards the established far right was reciprocated in December with his own appearance on the ‘Millenniyule’ series of livestreamed interviews by Colin Robertson (aka Millennial Woes).

Other outlets have similarly platformed far-right activists, often without providing any context to their audience. The anti-migrant campaigner Steve Laws was invited on to talkRADIO in September 2021 and described simply as “social commentator”, a term that neither Laws nor anyone else had used to describe him up to that point. As HOPE not hate has detailed at length, Laws is far-right activist who has promoted the ‘Great Replacement’ conspiracy theory and even reposted a meme carrying the slogan “There is no political solution” – a rallying cry for extreme-right accelerationists who seek to overthrow society by violent means.

In recent years there has been a growing and understandable clamour for social media platforms to do more to root out the proponents of racism and bigotry from their platforms. Yet such efforts are in vain if the same toxic figures can also be found in the pages and broadcasts of our mainstream media. The political marginalisation and electoral failure of the British far right is not an immovable fact of life, but an ongoing process of resistance that is at perennial risk of collapse. Far-right figures will always find an audience for their toxic message online, but they should not launder their reputations with assistance from the mainstream.

HYPERLOCAL POLITICS: NEW CHANNELS

By **DAVID LAWRENCE**

Since the collapse of the British National Party (BNP) post-2010 and the splintering of UKIP after the 2016 Brexit referendum, the UK's electoral populist right and far right has become scattered and organisationally weaker, resulting in a messy and complex landscape.

Many populist right and far-right elements have withdrawn from politics, or pursued non-electoral forms of activism online or on the streets. Others have joined mainstream parties, in particular Boris Johnson's Conservatives, or launched their own minor parties with national ambitions. However, some have continued to participate in electoral politics by standing as independents or by joining, or founding, "hyperlocal" parties focused on a specific region or town.

The organised far right in the UK remains in the electoral wilderness, but while the climate has shifted, the anger and dissatisfaction that was once exploited by the BNP and UKIP has not simply disappeared. Small, locally-focused electoral efforts play an important role in our political system, but in some cases they have provided new channels for divisive politics, and the means by which a handful of far-right elements have won council seats in recent elections.

WHAT ARE THEY?

Hyperlocal candidates often have limited success, especially at parliamentary level, but they can play a much-needed role in our democracy, enabling engagement for those who feel unrepresented by the major parties. Hyperlocal groups, which are often politically mixed and without whips, tend to play on a sense of local authenticity and present themselves as "non-political" alternatives to the established parties.

Many local politicians may appeal to a positive sense of local pride –but they can also tap into a rich vein of resentment towards the political establishment, as well as reactionary impulses and, sometimes, a hostility towards minoritised ethnic communities.

Interest in hyperlocal politics has swelled in recent years. According to Democracy Club, there were at least 167 registered parties "whose focus is on a county-sized area or smaller" as of February 2021. The group also calculated that 1,015 minor party candidates contested the 2019 local elections, growing to 1,787 in 2021.

Of course, the success of such groups has fluctuated with the changing political climate. The 2019 local elections, which took place in a climate of intense Brexit anxiety and disillusionment with the major parties, saw a remarkable surge towards independents and small parties, with 15% of the seats in England won by groups other than the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats or Greens. The 2021 local elections broadly saw a return to the two party dominance, with wins in England for independents and small parties dropping to 6%. Among them, however, were a handful

of victories for far-right and divisive elements, who were able to squeeze in during a broadly disastrous round of elections for traditional far-right parties.

THE LEGACY OF UKIP AND THE BNP

The political fringes are volatile, with new groups and alliances frequently forming and dissolving, and members often moving between them. One development that has had significant ripples on the local level in recent years is the collapse of UKIP, an outfit that previously harnessed the right-wing populist vote in the UK, but following the Brexit referendum has cycled through a series of incompetent and increasingly extreme leaders and spiralled into electoral irrelevancy. During this process, whole branches defected *en masse* to form local groupings. An early example happened in January 2018, when all 17 councillors in UKIP's flagship branch abandoned ship to form Thurrock Independents (which, after a series of defections and losses, currently has just three sitting councillors).

Chunks of the current and former UKIP membership joined the newly formed Brexit Party in 2019. While many councillors and campaigners defected to the Conservatives after Farage "mothballed" the vehicle in the wake of the 2019 General Election, others established their own independent groupings. Only a handful of these have joined Reform UK, the rebranded Brexit Party. After its launch in November 2020, having lost both its primary campaigning point (Brexit) and its talismanic leader (Farage), it has proved incapable of uniting its target demographics as UKIP and the Brexit Party once did.

One group that has continued UKIP's toxic legacy at the local level is the Rotherham Democratic Party (RDP), which until last year boasted 12 councillors and was the official opposition to Labour on the council. The RDP, which persisted with UKIP through the entire premiership of the veteran anti-Muslim activist Gerard Batten, has distributed leaflets claiming that the former Labour leader had applied for the town to be a "reception centre for immigrants" and suggesting that Labour had encouraged an influx of Roma residents in order to swell support for the party. The group fielded 40 candidates in the 2021 elections, but successfully defended just three of its council seats.

Smaller UKIP offshoots can still exert a meaningful influence on local politics, however. The Heavy Woollen District Independents (HWDI) was founded in 2017 by Aleksander Lukic, formerly the Chairman of UKIP's Dewsbury, Batley and Spenningsdale branch, who currently holds a council seat in Kirkstall. While HWDI remains tiny, at the 2019 General Election the party's Batley and Spenningsdale candidate, well-known local figure Paul Halloran, came third with a sizeable 12.2% of the vote after running a right-wing, anti-Labour campaign. After a "meeting of minds" with the actor-turned-reactionary politician Laurence Fox, Halloran has indicated he will represent Fox's Reclaim Party at the next General Election.

FOR THE POPULIST RIGHT AND FAR RIGHT

The fascist National Front (NF) and its successor, the BNP, are now political non-entities and are widely recognised as toxic brands, but hyperlocal politics has offered a way by which some can attempt to sidestep their former parties' notoriety. This is not new; for example, a pair of ex-NF councillors, including the party's former deputy chairman Graham Williamson, have sat on Havering council as independents since 2014. Nor are such attempts always successful. Former BNP candidate Richard Bates, who founded the Active for Westhoughton group in 2020, received just 1.2% of the vote in Bolton this May.

However, last year independent politics did allow a far-right candidate to slip through the net when Pete Molloy, once a leading figure in the BNP, was elected as an independent councillor in County Durham (Spennymoor Division) last May. The views of Molloy, who headed up the BNP Veterans Group for ex-servicemen, have not diluted since he left the party in 2014; in November last year he was found to have breached council standards after targeting Muslims and posting white supremacist conspiracy theories on social media, as well as having "bullied and disrespected" two council officers.

POISONING THE DEBATE

At worst, hyperlocal politicians can tap into historic tensions and contribute to the poisoning of the political discourse. While often poorly resourced, such groups can have dedicated activists and can dominate local community Facebook groups, stoking strong anti-council sentiment that can spill into aggression towards councillors and local politicians.

For example, in Oldham, an area of high dissatisfaction with mainstream politics and a history of racial tensions, the Failsworth Independent Party (FIP) benefited from a bitter online campaign against Labour figures. The latter were accused of corruption, fraud and of allowing "Asian cartels" and on-street grooming groups to operate in the town without challenge, often in conspiratorial language. The sustained campaign was spearheaded by Raja Miah, a well-known local figure linked to the hyperlocal party Proud of Oldham and Saddleworth (POS), and who hosted FIP figures, including the group's co-founder Kath Wilkinson, on his show. In an area in which local news outlets have declined, Miah's claims were spread in community Facebook groups, including in a local residents' group co-run by Kath Wilkinson and her husband Mark, and in a separate group run by Stephen Walsh, a man who was convicted for affray during the Oldham race riots. The campaign took particular aim at Sean Fielding, the Labour council leader, who claimed the accusations led to abuse in the street and his family's personal

Pete Molloy



HYPERLOCAL PARTIES TO WATCH OUT FOR:

Independent Residents' Group, Havering: This group of six councillors includes two former members of the National Front (NF), David Durant and Graham Williamson, the latter of whom is the former deputy chair of the fascist group. Both Durant and Williamson were also involved in the BNP-linked union, Solidarity.

Rotherham Democratic Party: The RDP was formed by ex-UKIP members in 2020 after a period aligned to the Brexit Party. Figures involved in RDP have continued to promote anti-immigration and anti-Roma views. The group has currently has three councillors.

Spennymoor and Tudhoe Independent Group, County Durham: This group of three councillors is notable for including Pete Molloy, a former leading member of the BNP who continues to hold far-right views. Councillor Billy McAloon was previously found guilty of assaulting two Spennymoor Town Council officials in 2016.

details circulated online, resulting in a group visiting his house when his partner was there alone. In May he was unseated by Mark Wilkinson, losing by 191 votes; two other FIP councillors currently sit on Oldham council.

One danger is that by stoking local tensions and resentments, hyperlocal politicians can foster the conditions for more ideological and better-funded far-right groups to exploit. In several areas, gains by right-wing independents acted as a precursor to the rise of the BNP in the early 2000s. In the case of Burnley, from the mid-1990s and against a backdrop of socio-economic decline and disillusionment with the political process, a group of independents savaged the local Labour party for allegedly favouring the "Asian" community. The independents gained 11 seats and became the main opposition in 2000. After galvanising ill-feeling in the area, the group's leader resigned in 2001 and the group promptly collapsed. This opened the political space which the BNP then occupied, eventually standing as the main opposition to Labour within the council.

It is worth impressing again that hyperlocal politicians span the political spectrum and for the most part, hyperlocal efforts both strengthen and enrich our democracy. However, as the UK's traditional far-right remains in the electoral wilderness, we must be vigilant of divisive elements that, while presenting themselves as credible, "non-political" alternatives to the mainstream, are actually stoking enmities and can slip in under the radar of the local media and campaigners.

POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT

LEAVE.EU



2021 SUMMARY

Leave.EU appeared to cease all activity from September 2021 onwards, with its website, Twitter feed and subsidiary Foxhole News all going silent by the end of the month. A flurry of company filings in August saw founder Arron Banks resign and the organisation fall into the sole control of Banks' longtime business associate, Jacobus Coetzee.

2022 PROSPECTS

No official announcement has been made about the future of Leave.EU, and both the main website and Foxhole News continue to encourage donations, so it is unclear whether there is any plan to revive the organisation in some form.

REFORM UK

LEADER: RICHARD TICE

2021 SUMMARY

Reform UK, the rebranded successor to the Brexit Party, officially relaunched in January 2021. With the loss of its central narrative and the departure of leader Nigel Farage in March, however, it spent much of 2021 struggling to break through into the national consciousness.

Sharing its anti-lockdown, "anti-woke" platform with rivals such as UKIP and Reclaim, it was only towards the end of the year that it began to solidify its position as the pre-eminent party for disaffected right-wing Tory voters.

Despite significantly out-polling other radical-right parties in some recent by-elections, Reform UK's vote shares have still been unimpressive, even in seats that voted overwhelmingly for the Brexit Party in 2019.

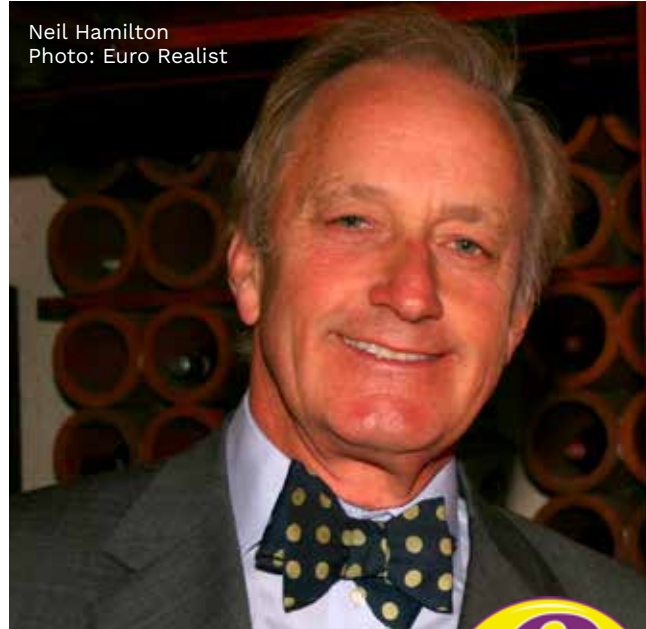
The sharp fall in the party's fortunes since relaunch was best illustrated by its dismal showing in the Hartlepool by-election in May, receiving just 1.2% of the vote in a seat that saw a 25.8% vote-share for the Brexit Party in 2019. The party also fielded 270 candidates in the local and regional elections, including a number of bigoted and seemingly unhinged candidates, but won just two seats.

2022 PROSPECTS

Reform UK will be hoping to further cement their position as the pre-eminent right-wing alternative to the Tories this year, but there is little sign that it is ready to cause the earthquakes that the Brexit Party managed in 2019.



Photo: 17p0h8o0n9e0



Neil Hamilton
Photo: Euro Realist

UKIP

LEADER: NEIL HAMILTON

2021 SUMMARY

2021 was another year of decline for UKIP, with leader Neil Hamilton utterly failing to reverse the exhausted party's fortunes.

It contested just 150 of more than 5,000 council seats up for grabs in May's local elections, and the candidates fielded saw their vote-share collapse even in previous strongholds. The party has continued its drift to the further right, selecting for example Voice of Wales co-presenters Dan Morgan and Stan Robinson to stand in May's Senedd election, as well as far-right "citizen journalist" Steve Laws for the 2022 Southend West by-election.

The myriad local splinter groups that have emerged from the imploded party are still winning seats in some places. But the continued failure of the national party might prompt more supporters to invest their efforts in local groups.

Leader Neil Hamilton has recently reached an agreement with some of the self-declared "migrant hunters", seeking their support the party and even asking them to stand as candidates. However many of these newcomers it may attract, though, others are surely to leave in disgust.

2022 PROSPECTS

Even if the current Conservative Party difficulties cause a defection of right-wing supporters, Reform UK seems more likely to secure those votes. While UKIP continues to benefit from brand recognition, its long decline is likely to continue.





HERITAGE PARTY

LEADER: DAVID KURTEN



2021 SUMMARY

Launched in 2020, the anti-immigration and self-described “socially conservative” Heritage Party, founded by former UKIP official David Kurten, failed to make any significant gains over 2021.

Kurten’s personal notoriety has been boosted by his adoption of COVID-19 conspiracy theories and attendance at anti-vaccine demonstrations, but this has failed to result in any boost to the party, with Kurten losing his seat in May’s London Assembly elections and the party receiving just 0.5% of the vote. Following its surprise fourth place finish in the Hartlepool by-election on the same day, the party has failed to reach even 1% in any subsequent by-election, with a particularly stinging 0.5% vote for David Kurten on his home turf of Old Bexley & Sidcup.

2022 PROSPECTS

Receiving essentially no press coverage, Heritage is the worst-placed of all minor parties to capitalise on disaffected Conservative votes and voters, and so is unlikely to make many gains this year.

5 STAR DIRECT DEMOCRACY PARTY (DEMOCRATS AND VETERANS)

2021 SUMMARY

The 5 Star Direct Democracy Party, which rebranded from the Democrats and Veterans Party in 2020, essentially ceased to operate last year. It fielded just one candidate in the 2021 local election, down from 14 in 2019. Their candidate, the disgraced former UKIP candidate James Dalton, came last with just 67 votes.

2022 PROSPECTS

Having barely updated its website or social media profiles in the latter months of 2021, it seems likely that the party will remain moribund in 2022.

RECLAIM PARTY

LEADER: LAURENCE FOX



2021 SUMMARY

The Reclaim Party is a project set up by actor Laurence Fox and dubbed at its launch as “UKIP for culture”. So far it has failed to capitalise on Fox’s own notoriety. Launched in September 2020, the party has followed the Brexit Party’s model, having no formal membership structure, which provides total control to the leadership in selecting candidates and choosing policies.

Fox stood for Mayor of London in May 2021, receiving a 1.9% share of first preference votes despite Reform UK having stood aside for his candidacy. In December, deputy leader Martin Daubney received 0.98% of the vote in the North Shropshire by-election, despite considerable hostility to the government at that time. In the run-up to that election, Reclaim gained its first councillor via the defection of a sitting Conservative councillor, who HOPE not hate later revealed to have posted anti-Muslim comments on social media. The party has refused to comment and it is unclear if he remains aligned with it.

2022 PROSPECTS

In December 2021 it was reported that the party’s main financial backer, Jeremy Hoskins, would continue to fund the party despite its disappointing results. Having focused heavily so far on opposing public health measures to control the pandemic, it remains to be seen whether Reclaim can win ground on other topics if the pandemic becomes less of a dominant issue.



Martin Daubney
Photo: Reclaim Party

WAR ON WOKE?



ROSIE CARTER profiles those who like GB News.

The launch of new channel GB News in the summer of 2021 has been labelled as an attempt at bringing Fox News-style news to the UK, taking an explicitly “anti-woke” position to fuel debate on divisive so-called culture war issues. The channel’s launch was largely seen as a flop, filled with glitches and low ratings, and saw the resignation of chairman and ‘face’ of the station, Andrew Neil, after just three months.

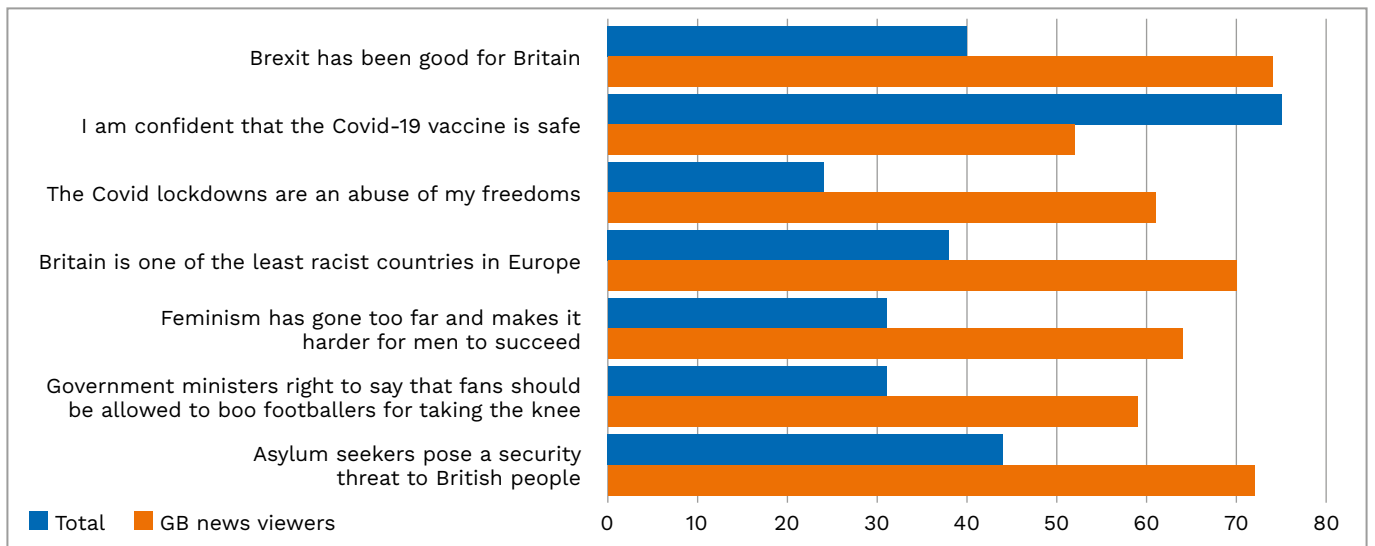
Nonetheless, the channel’s explicitly right-wing political leaning, backed by funders associated with backing Brexit and the right of the Tories, has offered a platform to a series of reactionary right-wing commentators. This includes a series of former Brexit Party candidates and representatives including Inaya Folarin Iman, former MEP Alexandra Phillips, and of course, Nigel Farage.

And while the channel’s content is said to promote “balanced debate”, GB News has repeatedly stirred the pot on divisive issues, from COVID-19 conspiracies to structural racism, all in the name of defending “free speech” and combatting “cancel culture”.

Our nationally representative polling of 1,500 people, carried out by Focaldata between 24–25 January 2022 looks at the views of those who say they are more likely to get their news from GB News than other channels:

- GB news followers are more likely to have voted Conservative in 2019 (52%) and to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum (79%). They are likely to hold anti-Labour views, sharing a very dim view of both current leader of the opposition Keir Starmer and former party leader Jeremy Corbyn, while there is a mixed view of Johnson and a positive view of Farage.
- Although their views tend to be very anti-establishment, and three quarters feel that politicians don’t listen to people like them (74%), they are no more likely to feel that democracy does not work well in the UK than respondents overall.

- They favour politicians who are strong, courageous, and straight talking above those who are caring or professional, and more than a third (38%) say they would like to see a political system in which a strong leader can make decisions without interference from parliament or the courts.
- They are most likely to disagree that black and Asian people face discrimination in their everyday lives (50% disagree compared to 21% overall), while 47% strongly disagree that Britain is institutionally racist compared to just 17% of all respondents. 92% believe that white people are unfairly made to feel guilty over historical racism.
- More than three times as many say that far-left groups pose the biggest threat to community cohesion and public order (30%) as respondents overall (9%), while just 3% say far-right groups compared to 23% overall.
- They are far more likely than the general population to say they recognise certain terms and to say they “know exactly what it means”; 63% for “cancel culture” compared with 32% overall, 71% for “wokeness” compared to 34% overall, and 83% for “political correctness” compared with 60% overall.
- 82% say that the mainstream media unfairly silences people who challenge the status quo on political and social issues, compared with 47% of respondents overall.
- They are far more likely to have consumed content about extreme conspiracy theories over the last year than the general population.
- They are also more likely to say that these conspiracies are true. 40% say it is definitely or probably true that elites are encouraging immigration to weaken Europe, while 51% say is definitely or probably true that Covid-19 is a bio-weapon intentionally spread by the Chinese state.



SECTION 7 – FAR RIGHT OUT AND ABOUT



'THROUGH STRUGGLE, WE FORGE

PATRIK HERMANSSON charts the growth of fascist fitness groups.

Fitness advice is a growing focus both for the far right in Britain and internationally. The “fitness” subculture is a potential entryway into far-right groups and radicalisation. While once a staple of 4chan’s /pol/ board, more recently explicitly fascist British fitness groups have grown in popularity on chat app Telegram, and active communities have sprung up focused on the topic. Some of the largest are directly connected to Britain’s largest extreme right group, Patriotic Alternative.

The language in these “fascist fitness” chat groups is often indistinguishable with that on any other fitness blog or Instagram post: increase your protein intake, avoid bread, work out regularly, and sleep properly.

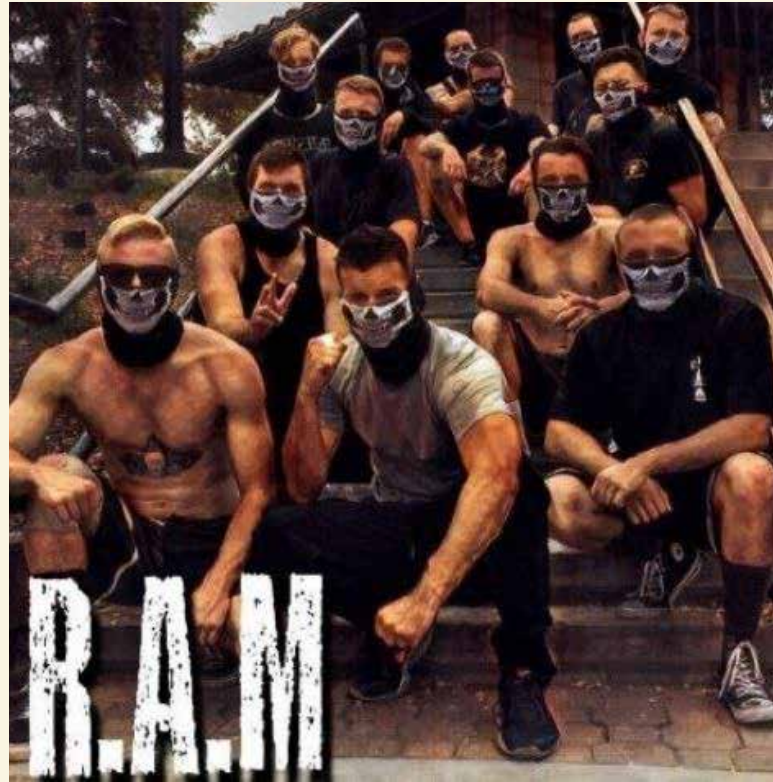
The tone is encouraging and accepting when members post images of their half-naked bodies, and ask for advice on both how to lose weight and gain muscle. Some look like avid gym-goers; others have just started and want to lose weight. Despite being far away from what one imagines as the “ideal” of the fascist man, these individuals are encouraged and welcomed into the closed chat groups in which fascist fitness activists congregate.

However, the photos of bare torsos are usually anonymised with stickers of Hitler’s face over each poster’s face, and between the fitness and weight loss advice is sandwiched the fascist propaganda. Both texts and promotion of far-right groups such as Patriotic Alternative (PA) are common. In other messages, more sinister reasons for the self-improvement projects reveal themselves. One admin of a group posted a picture of himself in a gym mirror with the message: “training to stop a bus loaded with Soros paid protesters”.

“DEFEND YOUR RACE, DEFEND YOUR LAND, ACHIEVE IMMORTALITY”

“Ready to join the SS,” writes one anonymous user after posting a shirtless picture of himself in the gym mirror. Other posts detail workout plans alongside questions on how to make improvements. One man posts before and after pictures of himself, saying: “Currently weight 279 so in total I’ve lost 25 lbs” and receives encouraging responses from the other members, including: “NEVER STOP. SIEG HEIL.”

The tone is accepting towards group members, but virulently hostile to political opponents. “I hate soy boys. Vegetarianism is an eating disorder,” writes one user, using the pejorative term “soy boy” to refer to other men who supposedly lack masculine characteristics. It’s common to see accusations of other men also being “low T”, meaning having low levels of testosterone. Physical fitness in these groups is not just about the individual, but a way for the members to differentiate themselves from what they view as a “weak” and “effeminate” political establishment.



Since its inception, fascism has defined itself in opposition to what it views as the decadence as well as “softness” of modernity. Instead, fascist groups and individuals have promoted physical strength, glorified struggle and underlined traditional gender roles – to counter what they view as the feminisation of men. This conspiratorial world view imagines that a supposedly softened and disorganised society opens up to the influence of sinister forces, and to resolve a healthy, physically and mentally strong population is required in response.

Ultimately, in the fascist view, the health of the nation is defined by the health of its people and how closely these reflect the ideals of purity and strength. At its worst this process leads to purging of what fascists consider impure groups: non-whites, those with disabilities and other examples of what they consider “degeneracy”.

Mussolini famously glorified violence and favoured it above reason and debate, answering a question about what his party programme was in 1920 by saying: “The Democrats of Il Mondo want to know our programme? It is to break the bones of the democrats of Il Mondo. And the sooner the better”. Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists (BUF) emphasised the importance of physical fitness of its members. The party organised sports clubs and its members’ magazine *Action* ran a weekly column called “How to Keep Fit” with fitness advice. It advocated for a reshaping of the educational system with a new emphasis on fitness, Mosley wrote in *Action* that from

OURSELVES INTO GREATER MEN'



age seven to 14, school would “mainly be devoted to physique building and medical supervision”. Another issue from 1938 read: “Right up to the age of 18 the duty of building a child’s body will be as great a preoccupation of the nation as the building of its mind”.

This connection between the health of the nation and its people remains today. Researcher on the far right, Ben Elley, argues that in far-right self-improvement groups, personal fitness is not just for one’s own benefit but is part of a political struggle. By becoming physically stronger they believe they can prevent the white race from being destroyed. Elley writes that self-improvement “become part of a righteous Manichean battle, greatly distorting the balance of input and reward that might normally be expected. Small personal victories [...] are incentivised as victories on the cultural battlefield”.

Fascist fitness groups on Telegram conceptualise their members’ bodies as a battleground. The group’s members urge each other to get more physically fit by lifting weights and exercising and making such exercise part of their far-right activism. “When you lift alone, you lift with Hitler”, one admin writes. It adds meaning to what would otherwise be a purely individual project. When viewed as part of a political project, lifting weights is a way to become a “hero” through pain and struggle.

This worldview is gendered, of course. German sociologist Klaus Theweleit argued that part of the fascist attraction to hardening oneself physically as well as mentally came from “misogyny or flight from the feminine, manifesting itself in a pathological

fear of being engulfed by anything in external reality associated with softness”. Several fitness-focused far-right groups only allow men as members and in Telegram chats, women are mostly relegated to a back seat, because femininity is what its members attempt to distance themselves from.

WHITE STAG: “HAIL PUSH-UPS. SCREW POLITICS”

One of the groups which has gone furthest in its emphasis on physical fitness is White Stag Athletic Club (WSAC), which has approximately 30 members. Formed in the last two years by pseudonymous Yorkshire-based security guard “Sarge”, it seeks to “fight degeneracy through honour, tradition, and brotherhood”.

“Through this struggle, we forge ourselves into greater men,” its introductory message says. In 2021, the group amped up its recruitment efforts and started to recruit individuals via a Telegram channel. Sarge, who is also connected to Patriotic Alternative, is an administrator for another large fitness chat, which he has also used to recruit. Sarge previously went by the name “Ash” and was one of the co-founders of the fascist podcast *The Absolute State of Britain*, meaning there is little doubt of the new group’s ideological direction.

“

An intrinsic part of the “self-improvement” message of these groups is to increase one’s capacity for violence.

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WSAC is an interesting case study because of its combination of fascist worldview with extreme emphasis on physical fitness alongside – in its own words – a rejection of organised politics as a way to effect change. Instead, it aims to produce hardened men and “better fathers than they had” themselves. Or so says Sarge, who claims to be a father to one child himself.

The tight-knit, secretive group organises local meet ups and aims to do a hike each year with all of its members. The hike is weighted, meaning participants have to carry a weighted backpack. This year’s hike took place on 15 January in Pen-y-ghent in Yorkshire. Alongside the hike, members are eventually expected to take part in fights with one other member, demonstrating the directly violent element of fascist fitness groups.

Throughout the year, members commit to doing a daily exercise programme designed by one of its leaders. This is updated regularly and published in a closed group on encrypted chat app Wickr. Once completed, members write “Hail Victory” in a closed chat group.

Despite its rejection of politics, WSAC’s fascism is demonstrated in the chat regularly. Members post pictures of swastika flags and when Kyle Rittenhouse, an American who shot and killed two anti-racist



protesters in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on 25 August 2020, was found not guilty in November 2021 the group erupted in celebration. “Hail Kyle” posted multiple users.

VIOLENCE AND BROTHERHOOD

Positioning physical fitness as part of a wider political struggle adds significance to an otherwise quite lonely activity, allowing groups like WSAC to form and grow around this shared identity and activity. This might be part of the reason why such groups have appeared and have risen in popularity during the pandemic. Disconnected physically, many have looked to online communities for connection, and when it comes to the far right, also ways to engage and push forward the aims of the movement under the constraints of social distancing restrictions. Physical exercise and self-improvement more generally can help satisfy the urge to do something practical, that goes beyond simply talking online, for the movement’s activists (while also being relatively low risk).

The danger of these groups lies, firstly, in their emphasis on transforming activists into soldiers that might be motivated to commit acts of violence. And, secondly, in the community they create where members start to associate, sometimes real, positive change in their lives with fascism.

An intrinsic part of the “self-improvement” message of these groups is to increase one’s capacity for violence. WSAC and many groups before it push their members not just to be physically fit but also to learn how to fight. In Telegram groups, American and European fight groups such as the Rise Above Movement (RAM) are often glorified. WSAC has also glorified RAM. Four members of RAM were arrested in 2018 for inciting and participating in violent acts against anti-racist protestors. WSAC’s requirement to take part in fights is inspired by international fight clubs like these.

However, direct violence is rarely the primary motivation for joining these groups, and the community aspect is central and one of their more sinister aspects. After observing fascist fitness groups

for several months, it is undeniable that some of their members make significant steps towards their goals. Users like “Dan”, who joined one of the larger Telegram groups in July 2021, has regularly posted pictures of his progress and said he had lost 45 lb. Moreover, he has graduated from being a lowly member to becoming an administrator of the group and now posts almost daily. Associating, in their view, positive change in one’s life, with a violent and hateful ideology, is dangerous. Elley describes it as the member who achieves his goals become “indebted to the movement for his change”.

Fascist fitness groups provide community and purpose that might be hard for some of these individuals to find elsewhere. This has been exacerbated by the pandemic, and is unlikely to disappear once restrictions are gone. Relationships and communities have already been formed, catalysed by a frustration within many parts of the far right with purely online organising. Fitness, alone or in group, and even if imaginary, provides a directly practical way of doing something for the far-right cause.





TOMMY'S RETURN

After a relatively quiet period, the unwholesome presence of 'Tommy Robinson' is popping up once again in 2022 – but an investigation into the finances of Stephen Lennon may yet wipe the smile from his face, say JOE MULHALL and NICK LOWLES.

Despite remaining the best known far-right figure in the UK, Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) has experienced several disastrous years and a significant decline in his reach and influence since the height of his notoriety and fame.

Last year (2021) proved to be another difficult year for Lennon, with much of his time preoccupied by ongoing legal problems that have thrown him into personal and

political crisis. However, the end of the year also saw him make a dramatic comeback.

As he had done for much of 2020, Lennon started 2021 by focusing on events in the US. Following Donald Trump's electoral defeat, much of the international far right focused on creating and spreading content that claimed widespread election fraud had been used to elect the Democratic challenger, Joe Biden.

Lennon followed these events obsessively and showed his support to those involved in the insurrection in Washington DC on 6 January.

Alongside US-focused content, he continued to spread medical misinformation, anti-vaccine and COVID-19 conspiracy theories throughout 2021. Even when other issues occupied his main focus, his social media channels continued to pump out misinformation on a near-daily basis throughout the year.

SELF-INFLICTED LEGAL WOES

Lennon also spent much of 2021 occupied by one particular issue: the ongoing libel trial brought against him by Jamal Hijazi, a young Syrian refugee. In October 2018, a video went viral of Hijazi, then a 15-year-old schoolboy, being attacked in the playground of a school in Huddersfield. In a subsequent video broadcast on his Facebook page, Lennon mendaciously claimed that the teenager was “not innocent and he violently attacks young English girls in his school”. As costs for the ongoing case mounted and the main trial began, Lennon suddenly declared bankruptcy and divorced his wife.

“

While his financial and legal woes will continue to hinder him, 2022 is likely to be one of Stephen Lennon's busiest years for some time

”

He decided to represent himself at the libel trial, which turned out to be a poor decision as he lost the case and was ordered to pay Hijazi £100,000 in damages on top of his legal costs, which now look likely to be in excess of £1 million. Lennon has claimed that he is unable to pay a penny as he is bankrupt – though a HOPE not hate investigation has identified well over £2 million in assets linked to Lennon, and an investigation to recoup what he owes is currently underway via an insolvency practitioner.

The court also placed an injunction on Lennon, which stopped him from publishing a long-trailed, self-produced documentary about the case. To get around the order, Lennon has given the film to the US-based conspiracy theorist Alex Jones (of InfoWars) to publish, but has asked him to hold off releasing it, as he (Lennon) believes he may be arrested on its release. There are plans for the documentary to be released in the first quarter of 2022.

This wasn't Lennon's only legal trouble in 2021. In October he was given a five-year stalking protection order, after he went to the property of *The Independent* journalist Lizzie Dearden in January. Lennon was attempting to stop the publication of an article outlining damaging revelations about his misuse of donations from far-right supporters, but failed and the article was eventually released in March. During the trial it emerged that Lennon hired a private investigator to track down private information about Dearden, and had spread unsubstantiated claims about her partner.

He would later claim, yet again, to his supporters that he was unfairly being victimised for merely being a “journalist ». However, few normal journalists would turn up outside a woman's home at 10.30pm at night

TEAM TOMMY

Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) is supported by a core team of people who are totally loyal to him and him personally. Between them, they run his social media channels, help on research, produce his films and provide security. There are tensions and rivalries between them, but they are bonded by a shared loyalty to brand Tommy. To the wider Lennon fan base, they are known as Team Tommy.

DANNY TOMMO Danny Tommo, real name Daniel Thomas, is Lennon's key confidant, though an incredibly controversial character who has tested the loyalty of many in Team Tommy. Thomas emerged from nowhere in 2019 and helped organise Free Tommy demos and more recently has worked on Lennon's “Rape of Britain” project. Now works for Urban Scoop.



DANNY ROSCOE Danny Roscoe, real name Scott Tomlin, is a recent recruit to Team Tommy, first emerging on the scene in 2020. Another controversial figure, he is widely disliked – and distrusted – by many of those who have been around Lennon since his EDL days. Confident and brash, he also now works for Urban Scoop.

HEL GOWER The longest serving Team Tommy member, Hel Gower has acted as Lennon's personal assistant since his early EDL days. A former regional HR manager for Tesco, Gower runs Lennon's TR Telegram group. Lennon jokes about her behind her back but is careful to keep her onside as she knows where the bodies are buried. She has little time for Danny Tommo or Danny Roscoe.

JACK DAWKINS Newcastle-based Jack Dawkins is another one who has been with Lennon since his EDL days. His real name is Craig Fowler and he co-runs Lennon's social media channels. A hardline racist.

NEM Birmingham-based 'Nem' is another veteran of the EDL and co-runs Lennon's social media channels with Jack Dawkins.

BRIAN OF LONDON Brian of London, real name Brian Thomas, has been closely linked to Lennon for many years. Now living in Israel, he arranged for Lennon to visit Israeli troops during a visit to the country in 2016. Writing under his real name, Thomas then wrote a blog in support of Lennon for the Times of Israel. Thomas is also involved in Lennon's social media efforts.

DANNY BARKER A longtime friend from Luton, Barker has provided security for Lennon for many years. Was arrested for his involvement in a fracas in Warrington during Lennon's 2019 Euro Election campaign, Barker has again been providing security for Lennon during the making of the Rape of Britain documentary.

ZAC WALTON Based in Sutton Coldfield, on the outskirts of Birmingham, Walton emerged on the scene in 2019, when he was also involved South East Coastal Defence group with another key Lennon supporter Glen Saffer in late 2018. Along with Danny Tommo, Walton quickly became a key aide to Lennon organizing meetings for Lennon's funders and providing security during the European Election campaign.

JONNY WONG Jonny Wong is a cameraman who has worked closely with Lennon since 2019. He had previously worked for Carl Benjamin, better known as the YouTuber Sargon of Akkad. Wong accompanied Lennon on his trip to Russia in February 2020 and has been working on the Rape of Britain documentary.

GINGER TONI Another key part of Team Tommy, Ginger Toni has acted as chief steward at many Lennon events in recent years. She emerged on the scene three or four years ago and played a central role in helping to organise many recent protests. Was unhappy about the association of some of Lennon's people to Patriotic Alternative, but she was convinced to stay involved.

Left to right: Danny Roscoe, Jack Dawkins, Hel Gower, Zac Walton, Ginger Toni, Brian of London, Danny Tommo, Jonny Wong





and stand in the street shouting disgusting, libellous and hurtful comments for all residents to hear.

Despite claiming to be bankrupt, Lennon was in Tenerife for much of September and October. While there he worked on the second instalment of his autobiography, which is due to be released in early 2022. He also attended a fitness camp and later claimed that he used the time to get “clean”, a possible reference to his well-documented drug problems.

OH TOMMY, TOMMY ...?

For someone who made his name organising demonstrations, Lennon only appeared sporadically in public during 2021. His only major outing in the UK was attending a Solidarity with Israel demonstration in London during May, for which he was widely criticised. Meanwhile in October he travelled to Dresden, Germany, to address a PEGIDA demonstration. His speech revealed just how conspiratorial he has become, talking at length about a supposed globalist plot to usher in a “New World Order”.

While in Germany Lennon met Jason Miller, the CEO of the new social media platform GETTR. He was joined at the meeting in Berlin by PEGIDA organisers Lutz Backman and Siegfried Daebritz. Since then, Lennon has adopted GETTR as his main social media outlet and has grown a significant following on it.

As 2021 drew to a close, Britain’s best-known far-right agitator was keen to draw a line under another damaging year and began to plot his return to public activism. For some years he had been working on a documentary series, “The Rape of Britain”, about on-street grooming by gangs. The project had previously appeared to have ground to a halt, but was resurrected by Lennon in the autumn with a focus on the Shropshire town of Telford.

Despite claiming to be bankrupt and having no money, Lennon used a cameraman, a security team, researchers and a private security company to undertake surveillance work. Using GETTR as his principle platform, where he has now accrued over

180,000 followers, he also raised a six figure sum in donations to fund his film project and lavish lifestyle.

On Saturday 29 January 2022, Lennon released his film to 1,500 followers outside Telford police station. The film told the harrowing story of one young woman who had been sexually abused by several men. As well as naming those men, Lennon also accused the now-retired police officer in charge of the overall grooming investigation in the town of corruption and colluding with the groomers to ensure they were not brought to justice.

While Lennon might have been privately disappointed with the turnout – having predicted 10,000 in attendance – even the numbers he did achieve reinforced his position as the most prominent far-right activist in the UK. His film has been watched, or at least opened, several hundred thousand times on social media. More importantly for Lennon though, he has successfully used it to raise even more money. Whether he, and his ex-wife who fronts up the company through which he operates, can keep it out of the reach of the insolvency practitioners investigating his bankruptcy, remains to be seen.

BUILDING AN ALTERNATIVE MEDIA BIZ

Stephen Lennon now claims to be working for Urban Scoop, which says it is a place for “truly independent, autonomous journalism”. Also working for Urban Scoop is one of Lennon’s most trusted lieutenants, Danny Tommo (real name: Daniel Thomas), Danny Roscoe (real name Scott Tomlin) and cameraman Johnny Wong.

Urban Scoop is, of course, run by Lennon through his (ex-)wife Jenna. It is the trading name of SquareFT, another supposedly independent media company for which Jenna Lennon is the sole director. Donations to both Urban Scoop and SquareFT go into the same bank account operating out of a business address in Luton.

Following on from the release of his “Rape of Britain” film, Lennon is promising to produce several more films about Telford, before potentially moving on to focus on other areas of the country.

There are also plans to release his documentary about the Jamal Hijazi case, which could see him break an injunction and, if so, return to prison. He has also promised to release a new book, which will tell the story of his life since his previous work, *Enemy of the State*, came out in December 2015. However, with the proceeds of this book likely to be seized in order to repay his debts, the Spring launch might be delayed further.

While his financial and legal woes will continue to hinder him, 2022 is likely to be one of Stephen Lennon’s busiest years for some time. Many of his former supporters and much of the wider far right vocally dislike him, but he still has the ability to cause widespread disturbances, plus his myopic focus on on-street grooming by Muslim men will likely dangerously heighten community tensions in numerous cities across the country – while fundraising will continue off the back of each new “revelation” and each new project.

Meanwhile, Lennon has already (and repeatedly) stated that he expects to be arrested and sent to prison again this year: knowing him, he has already factored that in to his fundraising plans, and previous periods of incarceration have certainly proved highly lucrative for the anti-Muslim agitator.

SECTION 8 – FAR RIGHT PROFILES



NAZI AND FASCIST GROUPS

PATRIOTIC ALTERNATIVE

LEADER: MARK COLLETT

DEPUTY LEADER: LAURA TOWLER

2021 SUMMARY

In 2021, Patriotic Alternative (PA) consolidated its place as the dominant force in UK fascist politics. Despite suffering numerous setbacks, embarrassments and increased scrutiny from the authorities, PA stood as a more streamlined and hardline outfit at the close of the year, although power struggles and splinters may be on the horizon.

The group returned to offline activism in full force in 2021, with most regional branches holding regular community building events alongside more traditional political activities. Its Yorkshire, Scotland and East England branches were particular areas of strength.

Meanwhile, its largest events were its national camp in July, bringing together roughly 140 activists for a weekend in the Peak District, and its annual day of action in early August, where approximately 160 activists engaged in banner drops across the country to coincide with Indigenous Peoples Day (an increase from roughly 100 activists in 2020).

In October, the group held its much-vaunted national conference in the Lake District, the first such event since March 2020, with leader Mark Collett proclaiming it to be “the biggest nationalist conference of its kind this century”. However, the event was beset by difficulties after its location was exposed by several anti-fascist groups that same morning.

PA continued to exploit cross-Channel migration and the prospect of refugees from arriving from Afghanistan: towards the close of the year its Yorkshire, Welsh, North West and West Midlands branches held small, unannounced “flash” demonstrations outside hotels alleged to be housing migrants/refugees. The group also formed a “rapid response” unit headed by the Yorkshire Regional Organiser (RO), Sam Melia, to better inflame tensions around potential flashpoints, for example journeying to Liverpool to hold a small protest after the attempted Remembrance Day bombing in November.

During 2021, PA increasingly pushed COVID-19 conspiracy theories and made overtures towards the UK’s loose anti-vaccine movement. The group produced anti-lockdown and anti-vaccine leaflets devoid of almost any indication of its underlying far-right politics, and PA activists canvassed anti-lockdown demonstrations in Belfast, Birmingham, Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle, Norwich and other locations. In December, Collett claimed that he intended PA to be “the resistance” against lockdowns and act as a “beacon” for the broader anti-vaccine movement.

As overseen by former BNP organiser Kenny Smith, PA formalised its processes and structure in 2021, establishing new branches, smaller sub-regional



(top) Mark Collett alongside his then-girlfriend, Jenna Smith.
(bottom) Laura Towler

groupings and appointing numerous officers. In September, the group finally established a small but functioning branch in the North East headed by Pheobe Hoare and Steven Wilson, who were both exposed by HOPE not hate in November. Following embarrassing anti-fascist infiltrations and the repeated “doxing” (exposure) of prominent activists, the group introduced stronger vetting measures in the spring, demanding photo ID and home visits for full membership, a highly controversial move that has given rise to much anxiety around data security. PA and affiliated social media figures continued to generate huge amounts of online content, although by February 2021 its reach was impeded by bans from most mainstream platforms, leading the group

PA banner drop in Leeds



to reach for alternatives. In April, an episode of the PA-aligned Patriotic Talk podcast hosted Oliver Bel, a Brit then on trial (and currently serving two years) for terrorism offences, plus Thomas Sewell, an Australian nazi who called for the rape of police officers, social workers and politicians involved in the alleged “cover up” of on-street grooming in the UK. The episode was streamed live but was not subsequently uploaded to the channel and Sewell’s comments were disavowed, with Collett later claiming that PA had disassociated itself from Patriotic Talk due to this episode.

During 2021, the group was subject to numerous defections, ejections and bitter disputes, many of them caused or exacerbated by Collett. Most damaging was the loss of Chris Mitchell in July. The regional organiser from the East England branch became embroiled in a hugely bitter and public fall out with the PA leadership. He was replaced by former BNP organiser Steve Blake, who subsequently helped to launch the rival Independent Nationalist Network alongside other disillusioned PA activists. Other regional organisers to abandon ship included Theo Wilmot from the South East branch, who has yet to be replaced, and James Goddard in the North West, a branch that has recently been bolstered by an influx of former BNP figures. The group also lost several London-based activists to the tiny Identitarian organisation, Identity England.

Throughout the year, PA hardened ideologically, with its underlying nazi politics increasingly coming to the fore. The group also came under greater scrutiny for extremism within its ranks, in particular the past involvement of several leading members in the now-proscribed nazi-terror organisation, National Action (NA).

Kris Kearns (aka Charlie Big Potatoes), a social media personality and former NA activist based in Spain, was appointed PA’s national “fitness officer” in July and, through his social media presence, became increasingly influential as the year progressed. In November, HOPE not hate detailed the links between PA and NA, including allegations from a former NA insider that Collett had collaborated with the now-defunct terror outfit in 2016, only walking away when he was refused a leadership role.

We also revealed that the group’s third-in-command, Sam Melia, had been photographed with leading NA members seven months after the group’s ban;

this is despite the claims of Melia’s wife, PA Deputy Leader Laura Towler, that he had never had “a single conversation with anybody in NA” (we had previously exposed Melia’s links to NA in 2018). Jake Bewick, who was also exposed as a former NA activist by HOPE not hate in 2018, was appointed the Yorkshire branch’s fitness officer in July, meaning that there are two former NA activists in the group’s Yorkshire branch alone.

2022 PROSPECTS

While PA remains a marginal group and is unlikely to register as a party in time for the May elections, it will seek to exert an outsized influence on election debates in key areas by inflaming local tensions. The group is willing to engage in dirty tactics. For example, during the recent Old Bexley and Sidcup and Southend West by-election campaigns, activists distributed a misleading leaflet made to appear as Conservative campaign literature but with pro-immigration messaging, designed to stoke anti-immigration sentiment against the Conservatives. PA’s key issue is demographic change, and so it will exploit any relevant data from the 2021 Census, set for release in late spring.

While it is possible the group will still grow – it is in the process of establishing a functioning branch in Northern Ireland, for example – PA may already be nearing a ceiling for its membership. Sections of this membership are also becoming disaffected with the endless “community” events, craving more direct action. Mark Collett may continue to take PA in a more radical direction in order to appease these “revolutionaries”, but he is far from a universally popular figure within PA. We may see an internal struggle emerge as a result; HOPE not hate understands that an internal faction has identified an alternative prospective leader and is considering its options.

Another possibility is the formation of a more radical offshoot. PA has brought together many formerly disparate elements of the far right, but as a result there are huge differences between its regions. One potential splinter candidate is PA’s Scottish branch, which is its most active, hardline and independent. Such eventualities are obviously concerning given the spread of a militant style of politics into the UK’s far-right fringes since the collapse of the BNP.

BRITISH MOVEMENT (BM)

LEADER: STEVE FROST



2021 SUMMARY

Considering the perilous state of its on-off stablemate the National Front (NF), the British Movement (BM) continued to defy political gravity, with a marked increase in its output during 2021.

During 2019 and 2020 there were considerable rumblings inside the BM about the attitudes of leadership figures, Steve Frost and Benny Bullman, towards recruitment, profile and membership. Frost was increasingly pressured to relinquish control to southern members led by Tim Ryan, who were both more energetic and not confined to only rare outings to obscure meetings.

Much of the injection of activism has been the influx of former members and supporters of both the Blood & Honour (B&H) music network, some former Combat 18 (C18) and National Action supporters.

Bullman was charged with and delivered a sizeable chunk of the almost miniscule music scene, courtesy of his band *Whitelaw*. Former B&H and C18 activists were busy distributing BM leaflets and stickers on the fringe of Loyalist protests in Northern Ireland. In doing so, they were joined by former NF activists, disillusioned and abandoned by the party.

Loyalist East Belfast in particular was plastered a number of times with BM materials, and BM supporters were active as far away as Portadown on protests.

In Yorkshire and the West Midlands, BM activists attended protests and ‘walks’ organised by Patriotic Alternative.

2022 PROSPECTS

Despite its ageing membership, the BM is likely to become more active and influential in the traditional nazi scene. It will continue to benefit from the demise of other far-right groups, while its collaborative way of working means it is rarely seen as a dangerous competitor by other groups.



Steve Frost



Will Browning (blue cap)

COMBAT 18 (C18)

LEADER: WILL BROWNING



2021 SUMMARY

Already in decline for several years, Combat 18 (C18) had a disastrous 2021 and has now virtually collapsed in the UK. A big split within the UK chapter occurred when Duncan Robertson, Al Mounsey and John Garry, three key southern-based supporters, all walked away, making threats to those staying behind as they did so.

The only people who now identify as being C18 in the UK are Karen Henderson and her partner John (aka Slaz), and Dagenham-based Nick Field. Also still aligning himself to C18 is Oldham-based Jason Wilcox. C18’s UK demise has been particularly embarrassing for Will Browning, who is supposed to deliver money from UK supporters to the coffers of C18 International, under the guise of something called the Prisoner Fund.



The money is mainly collected from music gigs, but the appalling turnout at recent C18 gigs – when they have actually happened – has meant that overheads have not been covered.

Another blow to C18 has been the departure of many of the UK-based Polish C18 activists, who often made up a considerable chunk of the audiences at gigs. A combination of Brexit and the pandemic has led to many returning home. There had already been quite a bit of disillusionment with the state of the UK nazi scene, following the debacle of the National Action demo in Liverpool in 2016, when several Poles were sent to prison for fighting with the police while the British nazis ran away in fear.

2022 PROSPECTS

C18 will continue to decline. Browning is already pressuring Karen Henderson and Nick Field to put on gigs, but there just doesn't appear to be the audience to make them profitable.

BLOOD & HONOUR

LEADERS: ROBERT TALLAND,
SIMON DUTTON AND BENNY BULLMAN



2021 SUMMARY

Blood & Honour (B&H) had high expectations of emerging from the pandemic stronger and re-energised, with supporters flooding back to gigs. There were indeed two B&H gigs organised in the autumn, Scotland in October and London in November, but neither was well attended.

Benny Bullman put on a gig in December, with *Whitelaw* headlining, but that too had a disappointing turnout.

Age is continuing to catch up with B&H now, as most of its supporters are now in their 40s, 50s and even 60s, with very few young people coming through. Compounding the problem, key B&H organiser Robert Talland has been taking more of a back seat, fearing that HMRC would investigate their finances.

While B&H has continued to struggle, many bands and B&H supporters are increasingly involved in the supposedly non-political 'Oi' scene, which has grown rapidly in the UK in recent years. Many such Oi gigs are organised by B&H activists and involve B&H/nazi-linked bands. While nazi salutes remain common at some of these gigs, their supposedly non-political appearance means that non-political skins also attend.

2022 PROSPECTS

Blood & Honour will try to put on more gigs this year, but without an influx of new support then audiences will continue to dwindle. The Oi scene is likely to continue to grow, as organisers find it easier to book venues and there is a wider audience pool to attract.



Benny Bullman's
Whitelaw

Gary Raikes



NEW BRITISH UNION (NBU)

LEADER: GARY RAIKES



2021 SUMMARY

The New British Union (NBU) has had another year without any notable actions or successes. However, the organisation is not dormant and leader Gary Raikes continues to irregularly publish its magazine, *The Blackshirt*, often blaming supposed attacks from “antifa” or technical issues for missing its publication date. Members have also put up stickers on a few occasions.

Several organisers have changed during the year, with younger members often growing impatient with the group’s over-inflated ambition and lack of concrete action. The NBU has also failed to engage with the wider far right and potential new members on Telegram, instead using Twitter and email lists as its primary means of outreach.

2022 PROSPECTS

The NBU will continue in a similar manner as the last year, with irregular newsletters and activity on Twitter.

WHITE STAG ATHLETIC CLUB

LEADER: “SARGE”



2021 SUMMARY

The White Stag Athletic Club (White Stag) is run by the pseudonymous former co-host of The Absolute State of Britain podcast, “Ash” (aka Sarge). It is a fascist survival, fitness and martial arts group that publicly surfaced in 2021 and started recruiting through Telegram, having previously been organised informally. Its focus is on creating offline communities, increasing the physical ability of its members and educating them in a fascist and traditionalist way of life.

While most of those who follow White Stag are also connected to Patriotic Alternative (PA), and it makes use of PA’s Telegram channels to promote itself, White Stag is not formally a part of PA, something made explicit by both organisations. In fact, it is critical of PA’s desire to gain influence through electoral politics, and instead models itself after far-right fighting clubs abroad, like the US-based Rise Above Movement. The group organises hikes to weed out physically unfit members, who eventually have to fight each other in one-to-one combat.

2022 PROSPECTS

Because of the pandemic, some of the group’s activities were suspended in 2021 and were pushed into 2022, meaning that it aims to organise several hikes, as well as meet ups focused on fitness and fights between members. It will continue to recruit, primarily through Telegram and seeks to create smaller, regional groups.



ORDER OF NINE ANGLES (O9A)

2021 SUMMARY

The highly secretive Order of Nine Angles (O9A) is a nazi-occult network that increasingly defines itself as “post-satanist”. It is organised on a decentralised basis, where ‘Nexions’ (branches) operate with apparent autonomy, although follow a central doctrine and “Satanic guide”. HOPE not hate is aware of at least five Nexions in the UK.

Despite its publicly-declared decentralised state, O9A has an inner circle made up of those who have been together for over 20 years. This sits alongside an older guard, the veteran members David Myatt and Richard Moulton.

O9A had a quiet 2021, partly due to the arrest and imprisonment of several of its younger adherents for terror-related offences in 2019 and 2020. This included those involved with the Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD), an offshoot of the now banned neo-nazi terror group National Action. Arrests also attracted international attention. US Army private Ethan Melzer, who allegedly sent information to an O9A-associated group with the aim of causing a “mass casualty” in 2020, is currently awaiting trial in America.

2022 PROSPECTS

O9A’s prospects in 2022 will depend on whether the group is proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the British government. Plans are already being laid inside O9A to go to ground if this is the case.



David Myatt
and Richard
Moulton



INDEPENDENT NATIONALIST NETWORK

LEADER: RICHARD LUMBY

2021 SUMMARY

The Independent Nationalist Network (INN) is a marginal far-right group that splintered from Patriotic Alternative in the summer of 2021.

While claiming to be “leaderless”, the driving force behind INN is Richard Lumby, formerly involved in PA’s West Midlands branch and before that a BNP organiser in Wolverhampton.

The group remains tiny, counting fewer than 40 “activists” in its internal chat group, with the largest grouping clustered in the West Midlands. The group’s best-known figure was Chris Mitchell, formerly PA’s East of England Regional Organiser, who helped launch INN after a bitter split with PA. However, he left INN in November, following allegations that he had collaborated with anti-fascists in order to expose his enemies on the far right.

Aside from some leafleting sessions and some subsequent alarmist coverage in local press outlets, INN achieved little of note in 2021.

2022 PROSPECTS

Early in the year, INN made efforts to establish links with the radical ends of the UK’s conspiracy theory-driven, anti-lockdown scene, with Lumby and other leading figures attending an event organised by Alpha Men Assemble in January. However, the group will likely remain confined to the outside fringe of far-right politics.

THE LINK

LEADER: MICHAEL WOODBRIDGE

2021 SUMMARY

The Link is an organisation formed in 2018 by Michael Woodbridge to “aid victims of State anti-race laws”.

Woodbridge is a British fascist who was a regular attendee at The London Forum and has more recently attended Patriotic Alternative events. The Link aims to support perpetrators of hate crime (which The Link also calls “thought crimes”). The organisation has promoted British nazi Jeremy Bedford-Turner, previously leader of The London Forum, and urged activists to send letters and support to him while he was incarcerated in 2018.

2022 PROSPECTS

The organisation will continue to operate relatively quietly and support some of the most extreme far-right activists in the UK.

Michael
Woodbridge



PROFILES: FAR RIGHT PARTIES

BRITAIN FIRST (BF)

LEADER: PAUL GOLDING

2021 SUMMARY

Britain First remains the best known far-right political party in the UK. However, in 2021 it began functioning as a more traditional party, with regional branches created and localised campaigning.

The impetus for this change came when the party finally registered as a political party with the Electoral Commission.

Britain First used to be a political party, but in 2019 the party was de-registered and fined £44,000 for failing to declare income. Numerous appeals by Britain First to sue the Electoral Commission came to nothing, except of course to fill the party coffers.

Eventually BF settled its debt and the party finally registered in September with Golding listed as leader, Aslea Simon as Treasurer and aging former jailbird Tim Burton as nominating officer.

Registered, BF spent much of 2021 building up a regional structure and activist base with a view to standing in the 2022 local elections.

Some campaigning had already begun in Wales, Scotland, Greater Manchester and South London in the run up to May's elections, though the extent of its electoral operation is still uncertain.

Internal strife continued to engulf the party through much of 2021. In late 2020 Paul Golding dramatically claimed to have unearthed a plot involving his 'Chief of Staff' and HOPE not hate.

Although nonsense, Golding went as far as to issue an 'eve of Armageddon' addresses to his followers from his new home in Manchester, looking prepared for what sounded like a military assault on his new dwellings by wearing a dressing gown and slippers.

This entertaining affair of plots and alleged 'state harassment' also showed the notorious and disturbing penchant Golding has for recording and even controlling the personal interests and lives of his members.

A humiliating financial scandal for Golding and Britain First will play out in court this year when his former Chief of Staff goes on trial for attacking Golding's car.

In April last year, *The New York Times* published an investigation into both Paul Golding's and Stephen Lennon's fundraising and financial interests in Russia.

According to the investigation, both Lennon and Golding had *at least* discussed hiding their monies in Moscow during visits there over 2019 and 2020 and according to one former high ranking member of Britain First, Golding had already opened secret bank accounts in both Russia and the United States.

Last year, BF focused heavily on invading and demonstrating outside hotels housing asylum seekers and refugees and this reflected the strong emphasis on public activism which sets the party apart from rest of the British far right.



Paul Golding

The high turn-over of members in Britain First has been a factor since its inception. Not only do members get 'burnt' by the party, more often than not financially, there is also high level of burn out and personality clashes. However, BF has a great ability to quickly replace members and gloss over or simply ignore internal discord or disharmony.

At odds with its attempts to portray a respectable electoral face, Golding has teamed up with a number of former members of the terror group Combat 18, such as the notorious football hooligan Andy 'Nightmare' Frain. Frain has travelled the country alongside Golding as he attempts to broaden further his influence in revived football thuggery circles.

Although Golding and Britain First attempts to ingratiate themselves into the anti-vax and anti-lockdown conspiracy movement but have been remarkably unsuccessful.

Throughout 2020 Golding and Britain First made the news by 'patrolling' the Kent coast in 'Operation white Cliffs' in a boat donated by a former supporter. Last year the boat had mysteriously disappeared and was never to be spoken of again.

However, alarmed at the growing activity by so-called migrant hunters namely 'Active Patriot' Alan Leggett, the 'Little Veteran' Nigel Marchman, Golding was forced to search the harbor in Ramsgate desperately trying to hire a boat and skipper. More recently, Golding launched a full scale attack on Marcham and Leggett by declaring they were

in league with HOPE not hate in an attempt to undermine Britain First and him personally.

Leggett and Marchman's crime was to reveal how only £1,500 of the £17,000 raised by BF actually going to its intended recipient, homeless ex-serviceman Tom Foley. To head off cries of fraud, Golding denounced them all, including a deeply troubled Foley, for working for HOPE not hate.

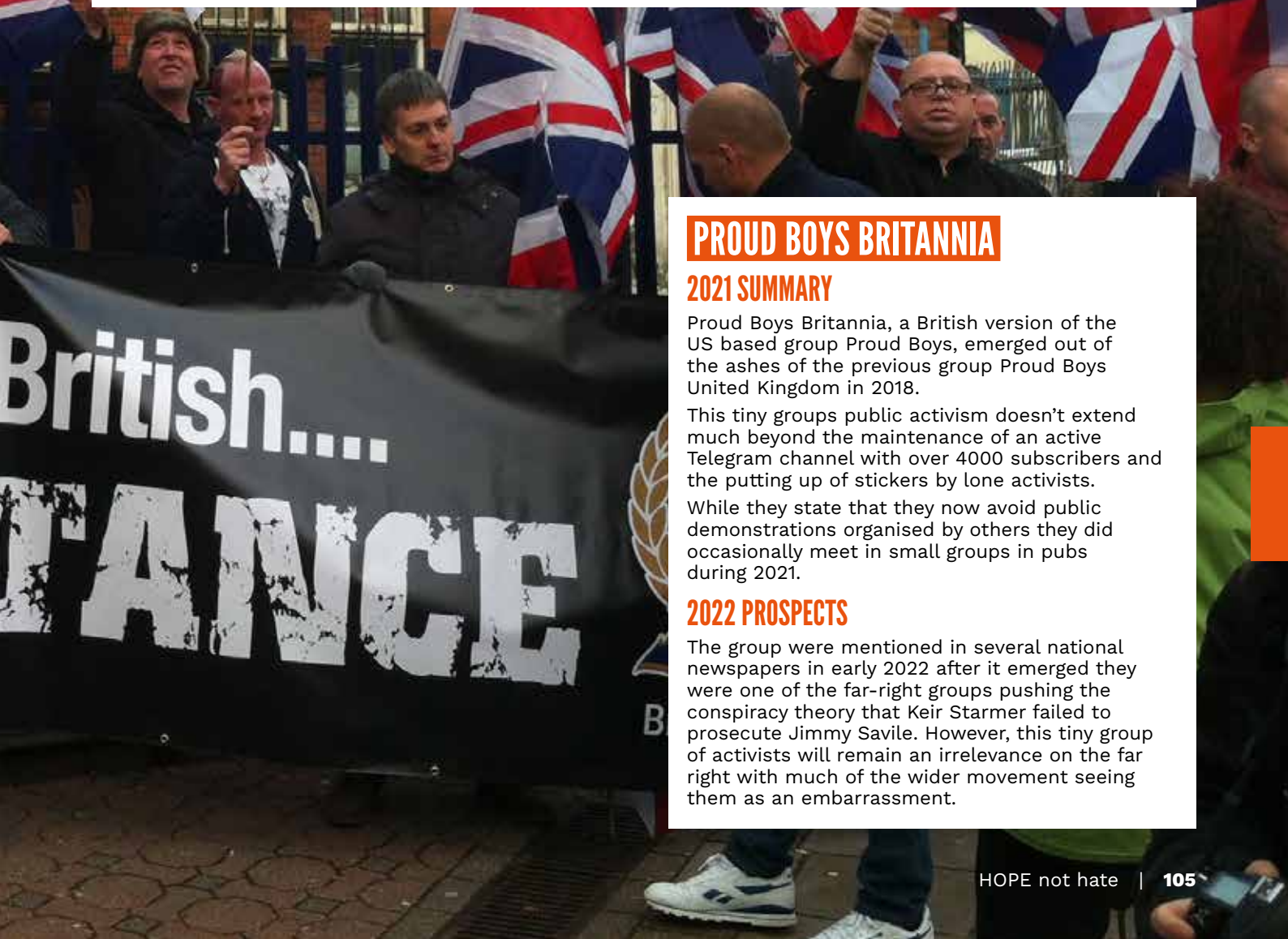
In September last year Britain First announced Golding was to debate his supposed arch nemesis, the convicted ISIS terror supporter Anjem Choudary, but like so many high profiles debates before, this never materialized.

The only person on the far right who Golding does seem to get along with is Stephen Lennon, aka Tommy Robinson. In addition to promoting each other on social media, the two men share the same accountant.

2022 PROSPECTS

Paul Golding, and in turn Britain First, has an amazing ability to survive and the party enters 2022 in a stronger shape than it has done for a long time. It is working hard in several local election areas, though it will be interesting to see how many candidates it can actually stand.

But Golding being Golding, financial scandals are always a possibility and just as he thinks he has got the party back on an even keel, he's likely to face more legal problems over the coming year.



PROUD BOYS BRITANNIA

2021 SUMMARY

Proud Boys Britannia, a British version of the US based group Proud Boys, emerged out of the ashes of the previous group Proud Boys United Kingdom in 2018.

This tiny groups public activism doesn't extend much beyond the maintenance of an active Telegram channel with over 4000 subscribers and the putting up of stickers by lone activists.

While they state that they now avoid public demonstrations organised by others they did occasionally meet in small groups in pubs during 2021.

2022 PROSPECTS

The group were mentioned in several national newspapers in early 2022 after it emerged they were one of the far-right groups pushing the conspiracy theory that Keir Starmer failed to prosecute Jimmy Savile. However, this tiny group of activists will remain an irrelevance on the far right with much of the wider movement seeing them as an embarrassment.

BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY (BNP)

LEADER ADAM WALKER

2021 SUMMARY

The BNP exists in little more than name over, with very little activity recorded in 2021 and a deserting membership.

Nevertheless, Treasurer Clive Jefferson and Chairman Adam Walker submitted their accounts for the year ending 2020 in August 2021. Most noticeably, the party took advantage of the government's job retention scheme. This is despite the party being Covid deniers and against-lockdowns.

The party also appear to no longer rent premises, saving them a whopping £1200 per year by being now administered from somebody's back room.

There were no dilapidations to report, though there was a marked increase in administering the party's website, which despite no activities and no rent, saw an increase in the overall miscellaneous and office costs.

The largest increase in the party's expenditure was its legal fees. However, legal challenges which had inflicted the party for several years appears to have fizzled out last year.

People often ask what is the point continuing the charade the BNP is a political party. The answer is tucked away under a series of negative incomes in their financial returns with the immortal line "the prospect of significant legacy income in the foreseeable future."

2022 PROSPECTS

The BNP is unlikely to undertake any activity and is only being kept afloat to ensure its current leadership benefit from any legacies left to the party.



THE NATIONAL FRONT (NF)

LEADER: TONY MARTIN

2021 SUMMARY

The death of stalwart activist Richard Edmonds would have hit the NF harder were it in a position to attempt activity in the year past.

The NF had discussions with the publishers of *Heritage & Destiny* magazine over a new party periodical, but like everything else with the party, it came to nothing and in fact the NF publicly attacked those behind H&D.

Adding to the party's woes has been the increasingly incompetent and incoherent leader, Tony Martin.

Only 27 activists managed to defile the memory of British and Commonwealth war dead last November in the habitually embarrassing NF parade on Remembrance Sunday to honour fallen white soldiers (Nazis).

2022 PROSPECTS

The NF appears in terminal decline and is likely to lose more of its ever-shrinking membership to rivals.



Adam Walker and Clive Jefferson



BRITISH FREEDOM PARTY (BFP)

LEADER: JAYDA FRANSEN

2021 SUMMARY

The pet project of evangelical fundraiser Jim Dowson to repair the reputations of Nick Griffin and Jayda Fransen is no closer to fruition than it was last year.

In early 2021 Fransen announced excitedly she had recruited former British National Party heavyweight Steve Squire - a notorious Soho pornographer.

Given Squire's previous and illuminating past humiliating Griffin, Fransen then had the duty of dumping Squire, quietly.

Former BNP leader Griffin tried once again to start a new life in Hungary (from where he was deported

in 2017) but merely suffered the humiliation of being arrested, held and deported by the Hungarian security services once more as he entered the country illegally.

It's not difficult to surmise that all is not well in BFP. With Griffin's odious Nazism and Fransen's increasing disillusionment and poor ideological understanding, Dowson, a notorious Loyalist, appears to be having a rapprochement with the Irish Republic and Catholicism.

Much of Dowson's personal and financial interest last year was in the training of far right clerical fascists in the republic, whilst Griffin and Fransen labored on in attempts to unseat and unsettle Mark Collett's Patriotic Alternative (PA).

In May, Dowson and Fransen threw themselves temporarily into campaigning as independents in the Scottish elections, but this ended in humiliation. Fransen contested the Glasgow Southside seat held by the Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and a nasty and public confrontation was followed by a derisory 46 votes at the polls.

Fransen also contested the Batley & Spen by-election but received just 50 votes, a 0.1% share.

Dowson was last seen in early 2022 handing out newspapers (alone) in Belfast city centre on the fringes of a Covid conspiracy demonstration. Not bad for a man who tried to make a quick buck selling facemasks during the height of the pandemic.

2022 PROSPECTS

The party of three will linger on, but it is very unlikely to make any impact.

FOR BRITAIN

LEADER: ANNE MARIE WATERS

2021 SUMMARY

For Britain is a far-right political party led by the anti-Muslim activist Anne Marie Waters. Whilst For Britain remains one of the UK's largest and best-organised far-right groups, the party endured a bruising 2021, with strategic missteps and dire electoral results exacerbating existing rifts.

For Britain's key moment was the May local elections, in which the party hoped to build on its modest wins of 2019. This year For Britain stood 60 candidates (up from 42 in 2019), at least ten of whom were former members of the fascist British National Party. Waters herself stood for a council seat in the party's prime target, Hartlepool, but controversially declined to contest the Parliamentary by-election in the town.

The results were abysmal, with For Britain failing to surpass 100 votes in 82% of the seats it contested and almost half its candidates receiving fewer than 50 votes. Most crushingly, the party lost its sole defending councillor, Karen King, in Hartlepool, and Waters herself placed sixth in her ward. Perhaps most dramatically, Eddy Butler, the "mastermind" behind the group's election strategy, received 26 votes (3%) in Loughton Broadway.

Following the failure, Waters reversed her position and stood in the July Batley-and-Spen by-election, announcing her run with the backing of the well-known anti-Muslim extremist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson), welcoming him as her "right-hand man" in the campaign and pledging to exploit local tensions around the Batley Grammar School issue. However, despite his promises – and much to her disappointment – Yaxley-Lennon's involvement in Waters' inflammatory campaign turned out to be negligible. Waters placed twelfth, with 97 votes (0.3%).

Whilst anti-Muslim politics continued to be For Britain's focus, the party further strayed into conspiratorial waters, in particular delving into climate change denial, including holding a small protest in Glasgow during the COP26 conference.

2022 PROSPECTS

Whilst the far right in the UK has few credible electoral options, the pressure is mounting on For Britain's leadership to improve on its results at the May elections, to prove the party has any political viability whatsoever.



Anne Marie Waters

ENGLISH DEMOCRATS

LEADER: ROBIN TILBROOK



2021 SUMMARY

The English Democrats has continued to operate on the fringes of the far right, fielding candidates at elections but failing to gain much traction for its English nationalist message. The party fielded ten candidates at May’s local elections, up from eight in 2019 but a far cry from the 60 candidates fielded in 2012. The party also stood in the Batley & Spen and Old Bexley & Sidcup by-elections, netting 0.6% and 1.2% of the vote respectively.

Party leader Robin Tilbrook appears to remain close to the leadership of the fascist Patriotic Alternative group, offering legal advice to leader Mark Collett and Laura Towler over a number of years.

2022 PROSPECTS

The party will seek to exploit its controversial candidacy in the Southend West by-election, in which it is fielding former Brexit Party leader Catherine Blaiklock, to generate further publicity, but its primary focus on English nationalism will remain a fringe interest on the far right.

SCOTTISH FAMILY PARTY

LEADER: RICHARD LUCAS



2021 SUMMARY

The Scottish Family Party (SFP) was launched in 2017 by former UKIP candidate Richard Lucas. His party opposes same sex marriage and many forms of gender equality legislation, and is also strongly anti-abortion, having campaigned on the issue.

SFP stood 48 candidates in the May elections, failing to win any seats and performing poorly across the board. SFP promoted an increasing amount of anti-trans and anti-LGBT+ campaign material and content on its social media, arguing that “Transgender Ideology” is damaging and “confusing children”.

However, the party also opposes protections for children and argues that parents should be allowed to beat their children, and it opposes the “UN Convention on the Rights of the Child”, saying this undermines the rights of parents.

The SFP also opposes hate crime legislation.

2022 PROSPECTS

The party hopes to stand numerous candidates in the local elections in May 2022, which are unlikely to gain more than a handful of votes.

The party will however continue its relatively successful social media operation and continue to produce misogynist and anti-LGBT+ content on its YouTube channel.

Richard Lucas

NATIONAL HOUSING PARTY U.K.

LEADER: PAT MCGINNIS



2021 SUMMARY

The National Housing Party U.K. is a group launched in 2021 by former BNP activist Pat McGinnis.

The group’s primary focus is opposing immigration and it campaigns for the UK to exit the UN Refugee Convention of 1951. During the year it has undertaken multiple banner drops with this message in Dover, during the Conservative Party conference and outside of London. The group’s leadership has posted both Islamophobic and antisemitic content on its social media accounts. The National Housing Party has also stated that climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic are hoaxes.

2022 PROSPECTS

It is still early days for the group, but McGinnis and his associates will continue to do banner drop actions and attempt to grow its supporter base.

ENGLISH CONSTITUTION PARTY

LEADER: GRAHAM MOORE

2021 SUMMARY

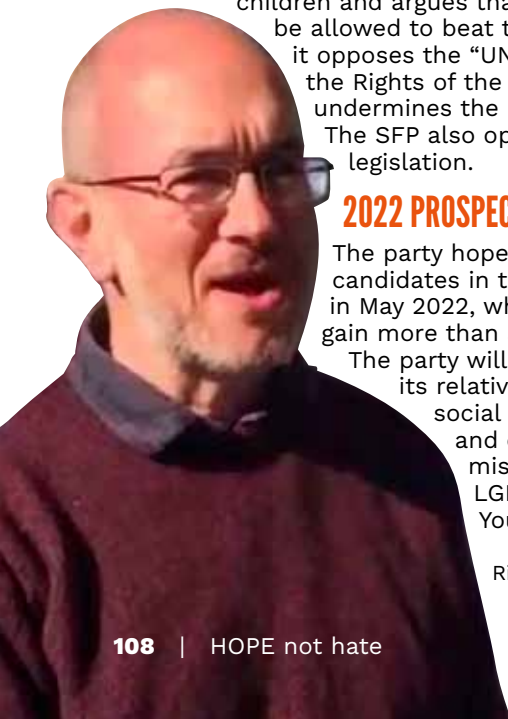
The English Constitution Party was founded by former English Democrat activist and conspiracy theorist Graham Moore (AKA Daddy Dragon) in November. Moore runs a YouTube channel where he hosts his “Full Breakfast” show and promotes his activism. He is also a vocal supporter of the QAnon conspiracy theory.

The party campaigns for “self-determination of the English” and England from what it calls “British imperial, colonialist rule”. Instead it wants a decentralised government in England where councils have greater independence.

The anti-immigration activist Alan Leggett (AKA Active Patriot UK) has regularly promoted the party via his various social media outlets.

2022 PROSPECTS

The party will seek to grow its supporter base in 2022, mainly through Moore’s social media and through collaborations with other far-right activists. The group will also continue its attempts to appeal to the wider anti-vaccine movement, for example running an advert in the January 2022 issue of the conspiracy theory publication *The Light* in which it rails against the use of “experimental gene vaccines on children”.



ANTI-MUSLIM

Gavin Boby



GAVIN BOBY

2021 SUMMARY

Gavin Boby is a planning lawyer and self-styled “mosque buster” who founded The Law and Freedom Foundation to prevent planning applications for mosques. His website currently claims he has won 47 out of 73 cases he has taken on.

In 2021, he opposed mosques in Redbridge, Leicester and Basildon, all of which went ahead despite his work. However, he claimed a win in Bedford when an application to change the use of a building to be used as a place of worship was refused.

Boby was also involved in the campaign to stop the former Hippodrome building in Golders Green, London, into a place of worship for the Shia Iraqi community. After a protracted campaign laced with Islamophobia, the building was eventually purchased by a church instead.

Towards the end of 2021 he claimed to have won another campaign in Havering, and is working to oppose a mosque in Hillingdon.

2022 PROSPECTS

This well-known anti-Muslim figure has long collaborated with racial nationalists, yet some people in local communities remain willing to collaborate

with him to oppose local mosques being built. He remains very active and rarely misses an opportunity to oppose planning permission for places of worship for Muslims in the UK. While he is not as high profile as he once was, his activism has a tangible negative effect on Muslim communities in the UK, and this will continue in 2022.

THE 4 FREEDOMS LIBRARY

2021 SUMMARY

4 Freedoms is an online ‘counter-jihad’ discussion forum run by Alan Ayling (AKA Alan Lake). The forum remains very small, with just a handful of posters producing the vast majority of the content, Ayling among them. Most chat rooms have fewer than 20 members. The forum underwent no developments of note in 2021, with membership still closed to new members.

2022 PROSPECTS

This tiny forum is now only used by a handful of people, and as it is not accepting new members there are unlikely to be any significant developments in 2022. It now acts more as an archive of anti-Muslim content and a place for a long-term group of activists to keep in touch.

HOLOCAUST DENIAL



CASTLE HILL PUBLISHERS / COMMITTEE FOR OPEN DEBATE ON THE HOLOCAUST

LEADER/EDITOR: GERMAR RUDOLF

2021 SUMMARY

Castle Hill Publishers (CHP) is a UK-based publisher of Holocaust denial literature, set up in 1998 by the convicted German Holocaust denier, Germar Rudolf.

Based in Hastings, East Sussex, it publishes a large catalogue of such denial literature. In 2014, it merged with the American Holocaust denial organisation, the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH), and is now part of the CODOH website. The sales from CHP now support all of CODOH's activities.

2021 was a difficult year for CHP, after its credit card processing partner cancelled its contract in February, forcing the group to use a new provider, driving up costs. CHP also complained that Brexit had ended its ability to ship books to Europe without VAT, and the new paperwork required adds another barrier to the chance that European deniers will be able to easily obtain such books in countries where denial material is banned. However, the group produced eight new, translated or reissued Holocaust denial works during 2021.

CODOH's forum stagnated in 2021, rising from 1,861 members in 2020 to 1,977 by the end of 2021. However, the group focused more on social media across the last year, with profiles on a wide range of platforms including Gab, VK, Codias, Minds, Pinterest, Imgur, Pearltrees, BitChute and Rumble.

The organisation also launched new "free speech" themed merchandise in 2021, including t-shirts bearing the image of imprisoned Wikileaks founder Julian Assange.

CODOH also publishes the denial journal *Inconvenient History*. In May 2021, the editor-in-chief resigned and that role has now been taken over by Germar Rudolf.

2022 PROSPECTS

While Castle Hill and CODOH faced significant challenges in 2021, it continued to be active and will remain an important publisher and distributor of Holocaust denial literature in 2022.

DAVID IRVING

2021 SUMMARY

While David Irving remains Britain's most infamous Holocaust denier, he is ageing and increasingly inactive. He remains best-known for his unsuccessful libel case against the historian Deborah Lipstadt in 1996.

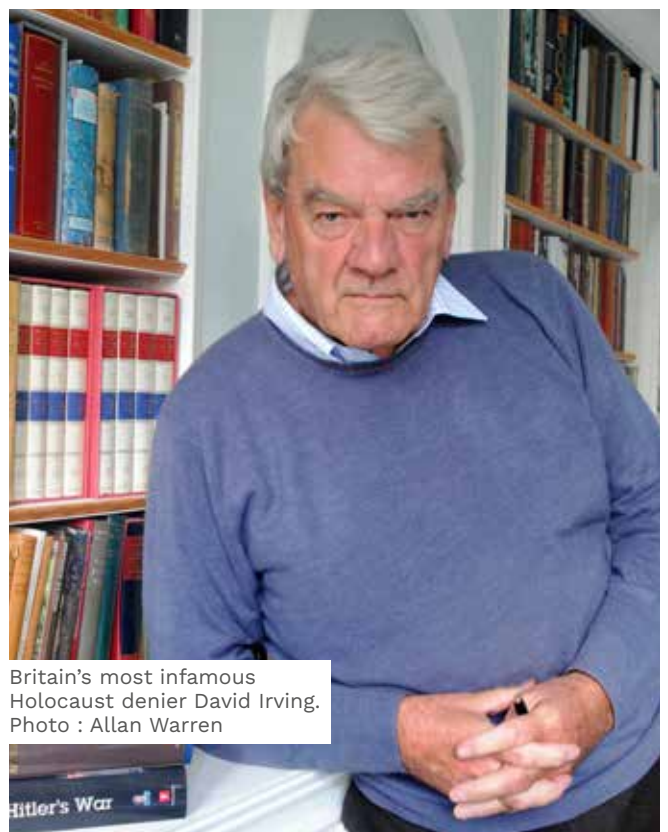
While he once enjoyed some mainstream recognition for his publications on Nazi Germany, he was discredited after he began minimising Hitler's and the Nazi regime's responsibility for the Holocaust.

Focal Point Publications is the publishing outfit established by Irving in 1980, which is now used to reissue and publish his disgraced books. Many of his works are available to download from his website.

2021 was a very quiet year for Irving, with one exception. In August, damaging footage captured during the recording of the documentary *The Meaning of Hitler*, was released. While taking a group of tourists on a tour of Treblinka, he was caught on microphone denying the importance of Auschwitz and mocking Jews who were worked to death in the camps.

2022 PROSPECTS

While Irving remains a pillar of the traditional, pseudo-academic denial scene, he is becoming increasingly irrelevant, as the scene itself diminishes in influence. He is likely to continue publishing his frequent newsletter with blatantly racist news commentary, but has not announced any new projects for this year or upcoming publications via Focal Point Publications.



Britain's most infamous Holocaust denier David Irving. Photo : Allan Warren



HISTORICAL REVIEW PRESS

2021 SUMMARY

Despite the death of founder Anthony Hancock in 2012, the Historical Review Press (HRP) continues to exist. However, today it is just a website that sells a variety of fascist, far-right and Holocaust denial literature, much of it produced by other publishers. Though it says it is open to new submissions, HRP has not published an original book for some time, and the group's Facebook has been inactive for years.

2022 PROSPECTS

There is no indication that anything will change for HRP. It will continue to sell a range of far-right and Holocaust denial literature, but it is unlikely to produce any new titles itself.

MICHÈLE RENOUF

2021 SUMMARY

Michèle Renouf is an Australian-born former model and a leading international Holocaust denier who continues to split her time between the UK and Rotkäppchenland in Central Germany.

2021 was a relatively quiet year for Renouf, but she did make several public appearances. In May she attended a Palestine Solidarity demonstration in London, where she was overheard promoting an antisemitic Holocaust denial website to other attendees.

In October she attended the funeral of Holocaust denier and neo-nazi Henry Hafenmayer in Stahnsdorf, Brandenburg, a small community between Potsdam and Berlin, alongside fellow Brit Peter Rushton. The funeral caused outrage when it transpired that the urn was buried in front of the gravestone of the Jewish scholar Max Friedländer.

2022 PROSPECTS

A Twitter account and blog set up during her 2020 trial in Germany for Holocaust denial were both very quiet in 2021, though became more active towards the end of the year and have posted regularly in early 2022. Her website and Holocaust denial film distribution business remain active.

Renouf will continue to be a central figure within the 'traditional' far right and Holocaust denial scenes in the UK and continental Europe.



Nick Kollerstrom with Michèle Renouf

NICK KOLLERSTROM

2021 SUMMARY

Nick Kollerstrom is a former honorary research fellow at University College London (UCL) who was dropped by the university in 2008, after he was exposed engaging in Holocaust denial. In 2014 he released a book, *Breaking the Spell: The Holocaust: Myth and Reality*, published by Germar Rudolf's Holocaust denial publishing house, Castle Hill Publishers.

Since the start of the pandemic Kollerstrom has focused much of his efforts on pushing COVID-19 conspiracy theories, and in 2020 he published *The Great British Coronavirus Hoax*. He continued in this vein in 2021. In January, he wrote an article for *The Unz Review* titled "There Is No Pandemic" and in March encouraged people to burn their facemasks on the Spring Equinox. He also continued to update his (little-read) website.

In November, he was suspended from Twitter after the Community Support Trust reported the account.

2022 PROSPECTS

Kollerstrom will likely continue to push COVID-conspiracy theories as long as the pandemic lasts.

ALISON CHABLOZ

2021 SUMMARY

Alison Chabloz is a musician, blogger and Holocaust denier from Glossop in Derbyshire.

In March last year she was jailed for 18 weeks after making antisemitic comments as a guest on the far-right podcasts, *The Graham Hart Show* and *Realist Report*. She claimed the Holocaust had been used as an "eternal cash cow" and said that the gas chambers were merely used "to save lives from typhus epidemics".

She was found guilty of sending offensive messages by a public network, which also breached the conditions for a previous suspended sentence she received for broadcasting antisemitic songs in 2018. In August her jail sentence was increased to a total of 24 weeks after losing an appeal against her conviction.

Graham Hart, who runs the show on which Chabloz made her comments, was also jailed for 32 months after admitting to stirring up hatred against Jews.

2022 PROSPECTS

Chabloz starts 2022 with yet more legal problems, facing another trial in February 2022 after being taken to court by the campaign group Eye On Antisemitism. However, the ongoing troubles allow her to paint herself as a martyr, and it is likely she will continue to try to make political capital from them. That said, the legal issues will undoubtedly limit her activity and effectiveness.



DISCUSSION GROUPS

TRADITIONAL BRITAIN GROUP

PRESIDENT: LORD SUDELY

**VICE PRESIDENT AND TREASURER:
GREGORY LAUDER-FROST**

2021 SUMMARY

The Traditional Britain Group (TBG) is a London-based, far-right discussion group that hosts gatherings, dinners and conferences.

In 2021, the TBG returned to offline organising, holding its annual conference in October, a key calendar date for the “intellectual” end of the British far right. The event featured speeches from the geneticist Walter Bodmer, the climate change denier Christopher Monckton, and the UKIP NEC member-turned-extreme antisemite Katie Fanning, who became a cause célèbre among UK white nationalists last year for suing a university for alleged discrimination against white students.

The international speakers at last year’s event were Stefan Korte and Gunnar Beck MEP of the German anti-Muslim party, Alternative für Deutschland. Konrad Smuniewski, from the far-right Konfederacja group in Poland, was scheduled to speak but dropped out at the last minute.

The group’s Christmas social featured a talk from the British far-right YouTuber Thomas Rowsell (aka “Survive the Jive”).

TBG remained a significant British far-right presence on social media, posting regularly across Facebook, Twitter and Telegram and producing content for its website.

2022 PROSPECTS

The TBG will continue to be an important meeting point for far-right elitists in the UK.



Lord Sudeley speaks at a Traditional Britain Group Conference. Photo: YouTube



Alan Harvey

PATRIOTIC FORUM/SPRINGBOK CLUB

CHAIRMAN/ORGANISER/SECRETARY: ALAN HARVEY

2021 SUMMARY

Alan Harvey’s marginal ventures, the Patriotic Forum discussion group (formerly the Swinton Circle) and the Springbok Club, a group for racist South African exiles, limped on through 2021.

Little of note occurred for either group: the Patriotic Forum was confined to a handful of Zoom meetings, while the Springbok Club held a few tiny meet-ups in south-east England.

2022 PROSPECTS

Harvey and his friends will continue to have little influence on the wider far right.

YORKSHIRE FORUM

2021 SUMMARY

After spending almost five years dormant, the Yorkshire Forum, a small far-right discussion group that once formed a part of the wider Forum Network, returned in February 2022. The Forum Network was formerly a key meeting point for the traditional far right in the UK, especially its flagship London branch, but has been inactive since 2017.

The group’s event on 19 February 2022 saw roughly 30 gather in Bradford for a series of dry speeches, the attendance diminished by poor weather. The event was chaired by Jim Lewthwaite of the British Democratic Party, a moribund BNP-splinter, and featured speeches from Stephen Crosby of the fringe Five Star Direct Democracy Party, Mike Whitby of far-right British Voice, and Alek Yerbury of the Yorkshire branch of Patriotic Alternative (PA). Among the expected collection of aging fascists and Holocaust deniers was a younger contingent of PA activists, including the group’s Deputy Leader, Laura Towler, and Yorkshire organiser, Sam Melia.

2022 PROSPECTS

Whether other Forum branches will dust off the cobwebs and resume activity after such a long hiatus remains to be seen. There is space on the traditional far right for semi-regular, regional conferences with a pseudo-intellectual bent, but splits will inevitably result if PA come to dominate these meetings.

IDENTITARIANS

IDENTITY ENGLAND

LEADER: CHARLIE FOX (AKA CHARLIE ROBERTS)

2021 SUMMARY

Identity England is a tiny Identitarian organisation made up of former activists of the defunct UK branch of Generation Identity and its now-defunct successor organisation, The Identitarian Movement.

2021 was a relatively quiet year for this tiny group, with its public activism amounting to little more than a few small protests and putting up stickers. On 4 November, activists displayed a banner outside a police station in Hampshire, and in December a small group of activists also attended a conspiracy theory rally in London where they distributed leaflets and unfurled a banner.

The group remains relatively active on social media, regularly updating its Twitter and Telegram channels. Identity England also has a website, which is infrequently updated with articles.

Identity England has failed to grow significantly again this year, but has convinced the odd activist from the London branch of Patriotic Alternative to switch allegiances.

2022 PROSPECTS

Identity England shows no signs of growth and will almost certainly remain an irrelevance within the UK far right, and one of the least notable groups on the international Identitarian scene.



IDENTITY SCOTLAND

2021 SUMMARY

Identity Scotland is a microscopic and only sporadically active Identitarian organisation linked to Identity England.

Its only activism in 2021 was putting up some COVID-19 conspiracy posters in February; postering in Glasgow in April, June and August; leafletting in Edinburgh in September; and a tiny banner drop at the COP26 climate conference in November.

2022 PROSPECTS

This small group of activists will continue to pop up infrequently, without impact.



LOCAL MATTERS

2021 SUMMARY

Local Matters is an Identitarian front group established in 2020 by former members of the UK branch of Generation Identity.

While the group claims to exist to promote “policies for an environmentalist, regionalist, direct-democratic England”, leaked documents obtained by the antifascist group Red Flare in 2020 showed that it was actually “a political project with a softer face; a face so soft that numerous members, including myself, have it on their CV. The ideas are certainly identitarian, but it’s [sic] presentation removes any interest that a group like Hope Not Hate or Antifa might have.”

The group remains extremely small and its limited activism had no impact in 2021. At the start of the year it released a manifesto, *Localism: Manifesto For A Twenty-First Century England* which was generally ignored by the wider far right.

The group ran several campaigns throughout the year, including an unsuccessful attempt to oppose the building of a KFC restaurant in Snodland, Kent. It also leafletted and held street stalls in various locations, including Liverpool. In addition, the group was seen at numerous demonstrations, including one in Leeds against the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, and another demonstration in Manchester in November, calling for the establishment of local parliaments.

2022 PROSPECTS

The group’s focus on localism and opposing authoritarian policies is designed to attract supporters from the progressive movement. However, it has as yet failed and remains highly marginal, a fact unlikely to change in 2022.

PUBLISHERS / MAGAZINES

HERITAGE AND DESTINY

EDITOR: MARK COTTERILL

ASSISTANT EDITOR: PETER RUSHTON

2021 SUMMARY

Heritage and Destiny (H&D) is the most important print publication produced by the British racial nationalist scene. The magazine produced six bi-monthly editions last year, with a regularity unusual for other nationalist publications, and produced its 100th edition in 2021.

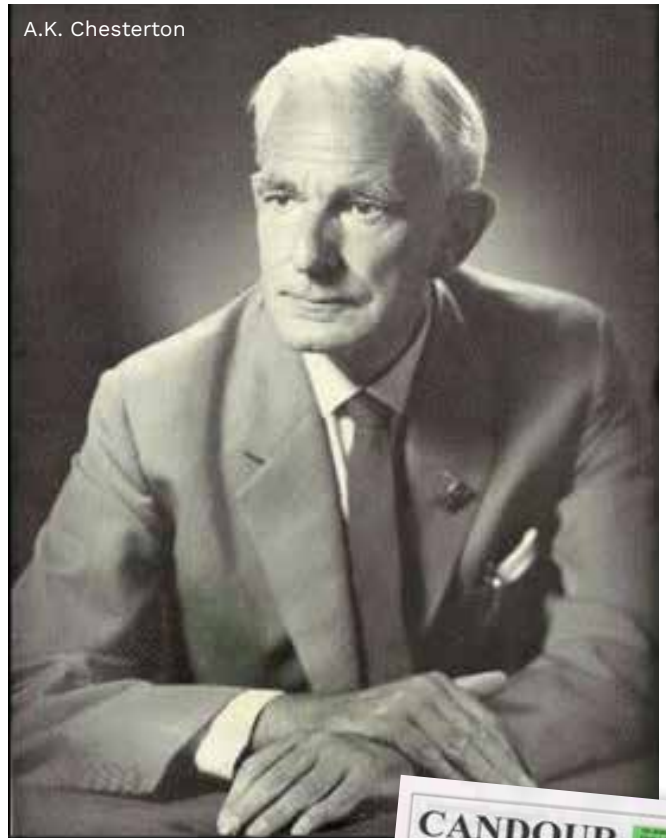
H&D is primarily read by the old guard of the British far right, and regularly carries obituaries for veteran fascists as this section of the movement dies out.

In May, Mark Cotterill stood for election in the Ribbleton ward of Preston City Council and in the Preston South East division of Lancashire County Council, but received just 181 and 204 votes, respectively.

The magazine has become an enthusiastic supporter of Patriotic Alternative (PA) and has reported regularly from PA events, including the group's national conference in October. H&D staff also attended other far-right events, such as the Richard Edmonds Memorial Meeting in south London in September.

2022 PROSPECTS

While vowing to remain a print publication, H&D expanded its online presence in 2021 and is now active on Instagram, YouTube, Gab and Twitter. While it is clearly making more of an attempt to connect with the younger elements of the movement, the magazine will continue to be influential in older nazi and far-right circles and it is unlikely the small readership will increase.



A.K. Chesterton

A.K. CHESTERTON TRUST / CANDOUR MAGAZINE

EDITOR: COLIN TODD

2021 SUMMARY

Candour magazine, Britain's longest-running fascist publication, has long been in decline and is now an irrelevance on the far-right. The Trust was first launched in 1996 to promote the work of veteran fascist A.K. Chesterton, and continued the publication of his magazine after his death.

While it has been in financial crisis for years, the magazine is run on a tiny budget and continues to limp on, publishing six new editions in 2021.

It also launched a new website in late 2020 and maintained its blog semi-regularly throughout the year. It has a small YouTube channel where it uploads fascist speeches and newsreels.

2022 PROSPECTS

Candour will likely struggle on through 2022. However, it is nothing more than a legacy project and will continue to have no wider impact on the British far right.



ARKTOS**CEO: DANIEL FRIBERG****HEAD OF ARKTOS UK:
GREGORY LAUDER-FROST****2021 SUMMARY**

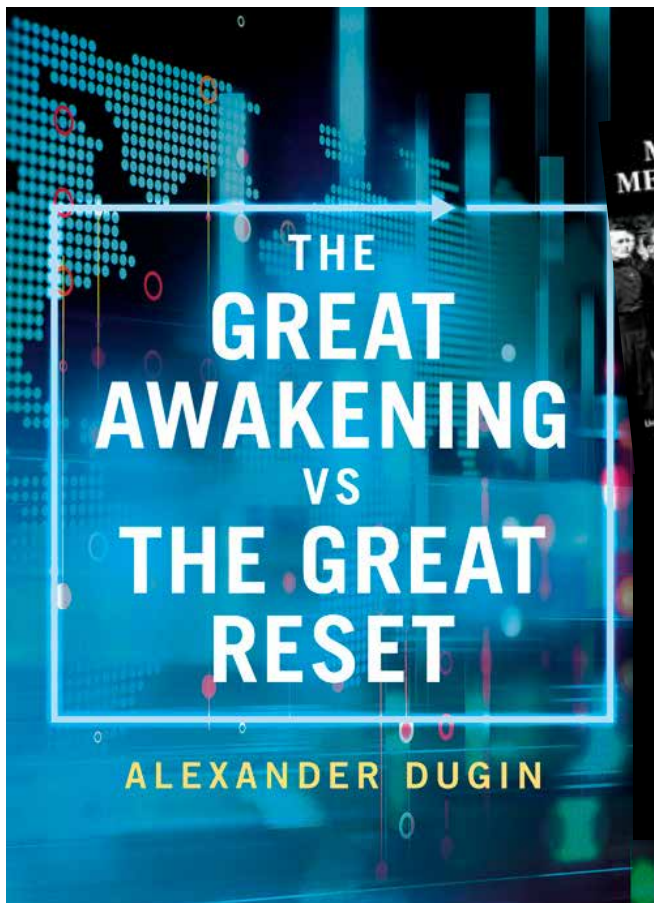
Launched in 2010 by Daniel Friberg, Arktos Media is one of the most important purveyors of European New Right and alt-right literature in the world. The publisher is registered in the UK, though much of its operation is based in other countries and it publishes a combination of new texts, translations and reissues.

2021 was a quiet year for Arktos, though it did release a series of new titles, including the latest offering from the increasingly bizarre Jason Reza Jorjani whose latest book was a strange text about the supposed relationship between UFOs and State Sovereignty

Arktos is now active on Telegram, Gab, Odysee, Minds and BitChute, and also has a podcast, though it only released one episode in 2021.

2022 PROSPECTS

Arktos will continue to be one of the world's leading far-right publishers, producing high quality products by leading racist, fascist and far-right writers. At present it has five books due for publication in 2022.

**LEAGUE ENTERPRISES: LEAGUE OF ST GEORGE / STEVEN BOOKS****2021 SUMMARY**

League Enterprises / Steven Books is the commercial arm of the long-standing League of St George, which was formed in 1974 by former members of Oswald Mosley's Union Movement.

The League of St George sporadically releases a magazine, *League Sentinel*, while Steven Books continues to publish extremely low-quality reprints of obscure fascist pamphlets, as well as selling far-right books by other publishers.

It remains a primary distributor of printed material related to racism, Holocaust denial and fascist books and pamphlets in the UK. It also hosts a series of Mosley speeches on SoundCloud. The League's website is updated very infrequently, usually with obituaries.

2022 PROSPECTS

The League of St George's years are now numbered, as its activists continue to die of old age. Steven Books will likely continue to distribute fascist and far-right books and pamphlets throughout the year.

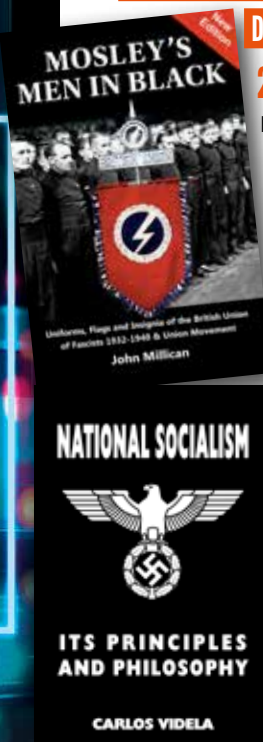
BLACK HOUSE PUBLISHING / SANCTUARY PRESS**DIRECTOR: JANET SLATTER****2021 SUMMARY**

In 2011, Janet Slatter launched Black House Publishing, named after the British Union of Fascists HQ, the "Black House". Until recently, it published reissued versions and reprints of fascist, nazi, Third Position and right-wing literature from authors including Oswald Mosley, Oswald Spengler, and Australian far-right author Kerry Bolton.

However, in March 2019 Slatter launched Sanctuary Press alongside Black House and moved many of the explicitly fascist books to the new concern. Both concerns remain very small, but they are important for making the work of Mosley accessible to younger generations of British fascists.

2022 PROSPECTS

Black House and Sanctuary publish very few new books these days, but will likely continue to sell their existing catalogues online.



FASCIST SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

COLIN ROBERTSON (AKA MILLENNIAL WOES)

2021 SUMMARY

Scottish vlogger Colin Robertson (aka Millennial Woes) suffered a blow in February 2021 when his channel was pulled by YouTube. Following that, however, he has continued to produce videos for a reduced audience on alternative platforms, including interviewing 63 guests for his annual “Millenniyule” streaming series throughout December.

Among the interviewees was Mark Collett, leader of Patriotic Alternative (PA), who welcomed Robertson back into the fold after he was previously ostracised due to an allegation of sexual assault at a PA conference in 2020. Collett has apparently dismissed the sexual assault claims as “water under the bridge”, despite saying he had been presented with “compelling evidence” at the time.

2022 PROSPECTS

Robertson will likely continue to produce content for his channel, Odysee, and maintain an active presence on Telegram, but faces continued reputational damage from accusations of sexual misconduct and harassment from other activists on the far right.



Colin Robertson



MORGOTH'S REVIEW

2021 SUMMARY

Morgoth's Review is a blog and YouTube channel set up and run by the pseudonymous Geordie blogger “Morgoth”. Created in 2014, the blog has become somewhat stagnant in recent years as Morgoth focuses on producing video content for his (at time of writing) 48,000+ YouTube subscribers.

Like many of his fellow travellers, Morgoth has spent much of 2021 tussling with the topics of COVID-19 and public health, and less time obsessively promoting antisemitism and racial politics. This shift appears to have won him the admiration of *The Spectator* contributor and former Breitbart London editor, James Delingpole, who invited him on to his podcast in June and described him as “one of the smartest people on the planet”.

Morgoth's aversion to offline political activity means he remains on the periphery of the Patriotic Alternative milieu, with a vaunted appearance at the PA conference failing to materialise.

2022 PROSPECTS

Morgoth will continue to create video content, and perhaps gain wider recognition thanks to the promotion by James Delingpole.

ON THE OFFENSIVE

2021 SUMMARY

With its British creator previously stepping back from producing content for the YouTube channel, ‘On The Offensive’ and all associated social media accounts disappeared from the internet entirely in early 2021. The figure behind it, a British man living in Vietnam and known only as “Hugh”, suddenly deleted his entire online presence without warning in March last year.

2022 PROSPECTS

The decision to delete all traces of the channel suggests that we are unlikely to see any activity from On The Offensive this year.



JAKES AND LATTE

2021 SUMMARY

At the end of 2020, the Thailand-based streamer known pseudonymously as “Jakes” deleted the online footprint of his Jakes and Latte show and launched a Telegram channel devoted to the NeoReactionary (NRx) strand of far-right ideology, reflecting a shift in his ideological outlook.

2022 PROSPECTS

The Reactosphere channel has made little impact this year, and is unlikely to make any in 2022.

SARAH LOVELL (AKA DAUGHTER OF ALBION)



2021 SUMMARY

Durham-based YouTuber “Daughter of Albion” has continued to produce video content for her 32,000+ subscribers and made regular guest appearances on channels run by other far-right streamers. In November, HOPE not hate identified the person behind the account as Sarah Lovell, a Durham-based former PhD candidate from Saltash, Cornwall. In December, Lovell made all of her existing YouTube videos private, citing personal reasons.

2022 PROSPECTS

It is unclear why Lovell decided to remove her existing video content late last year, but it may indicate a fear that her channel is under threat of suspension. If so, she may limit her more extreme content to Telegram or seek an alternate video platform.

DANIEL ATKINSON (AKA THE ICONOCLAST)

2021 SUMMARY

Having lost his YouTube channel in summer 2020, the far-right video producer Dan Atkinson announced in January



2021 that he would no longer be producing content as “The Iconoclast”, and deleted his BitChute channel. However, in June he set up a new Telegram channel under the same name and in December appeared on the stream with other fascist social media personalities, “The Ayatollah” and “Millennial Woes”.

2022 PROSPECTS

Despite describing himself as being “in a bit of a limbo”, Atkinson’s recent activity suggests that he might return to active content creation at some point in 2022.



THE ABSOLUTE STATE OF BRITAIN

HOSTS: “YURO PEON”, KRIS KEARNS (AKA CHARLIE BIG POTATOES) AND CRAIG WHYTE (AKA RUFFIAN DICK)

2021 SUMMARY

The Absolute State of Britain (TASOB), a weekly Patriotic Alternative-affiliated podcast that emerged from the UK alt-right, continued to be a fixture of the UK antisemitic far right in 2021.

TASOB experienced several line-up changes during the year. Early in 2021, co-host and PA London activist Ryan Williams (aka Nativist Concern) was exposed by the antifascist group Red Flare, leaving the podcast in March. In July, former National Action activist Kris Kearns (aka Charlie Big Potatoes) became an official co-host, joining the pseudonymous founding host and PA activist “Yuro Peon”, as well as the more recent addition, “Ruffian Dick”. In November, HOPE not hate exposed the man behind the Ruffian Dick pseudonym as Craig Whyte of Glenrothes, Fife.

Guests over the past year included Andreas Johansson of the Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement, plus the Finnish extremist Kai Murros and the American far-right activist Joseph Jordan (aka Eric Striker). In February, the podcast hosted the notorious Australian nazi Thomas Sewell; the episode in which he appeared was removed by TASOB in April, after he advocated for the rape of British police, social workers and politicians on an episode of Patriotic Talk, a separate PA-linked podcast.

2022 PROSPECTS

TASOB has yet to resume output. With its entire back catalogue removed from all platforms, it’s not certain the podcast will return in 2022. Some PA figures claim it will be “regenerating into a new form”.

FASCIST SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS (CONTINUED)

SCUM MEDIA

KEY FIGURE: NICK COTTON (AKA UNWASHED)

2021 SUMMARY

Scum Media is a far-right news and cultural project that, until last year, was co-run by former Tommy Robinson aide Lucy Brown and the YouTuber Nick Cotton (aka Unwashed), both former associates of Patriotic Alternative. During 2021, Brown withdrew from activism, leaving the project in the hands of Cotton.

In 2021, Scum focused primarily on the COVID-19 conspiracy theory scene, regularly covering street demonstrations and interviewing leading figures in the British anti-vaccine protest movement, including Piers Corbyn, Kate Shemirani and David Kurten.

The outlet continued to trade in racism, however, promoting the ‘Great Replacement’ conspiracy theory, while Cotton conducted interviews with the influential American white nationalist Jared Taylor, as well as the antisemite E. Michael Jones and the British anti-Muslim activist (and former deputy leader of Britain First) Jayda Fransen.

2022 PROSPECTS

Despite Scum’s overtures towards the UK conspiracy scene, the outlet remains highly marginal and will continue its existence in the wilderness.



Nick Cotton (aka Unwashed)
Photo: YouTube

WAY OF THE WORLD

2021 SUMMARY

Way of the World (WotW) is an anonymous far-right vlogger with a sizeable online following.

WotW continued to produce gloomy videos about perceived Western decline, blending COVID-19 conspiracy theories,



religious themes and antisemitism. In February, the WotW YouTube channel, which had tens of thousands of views, was banned, forcing the vlogger to rely on smaller alternative platforms and reducing his overall audience. He retains his Twitter account, however, on which he has almost 23,000 followers.

2022 PROSPECTS

WotW will continue to produce extremist content, although is unlikely to increase his reach significantly in 2022.



EDWARD DUTTON

2021 SUMMARY

Edward Dutton (aka The Jolly Heretic) is an English YouTuber and proponent of pseudoscientific “race science”.

Dutton continued to produce regular content throughout 2021. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he has so far avoided a YouTube ban, having racked up a total of 3,400,000 views on the platform to date. Guests on his channel this year include the Holocaust-denying bishop, Richard Williamson, Gregory Lauder-Frost of the Traditional Britain Group far-right discussion group, and the American white nationalist and misogynist, Roger Devlin.

Dutton appeared on other far-right streams, including the Patriotic Alternative book club and the Millennial Woes show of Colin Robertson (aka Millennial Woes).

2022 PROSPECTS

Dutton shows few signs of slowing, and will continue producing racist content for his international audience.

THE REALITY REPORT

2021 SUMMARY

The Reality Report (TRR) is a collective of fascist activists who describe themselves as “independent journalists”.

In reality, TRR spent almost the entire year feuding with other far-right groups and individuals. Leader Vincent Burke (aka Vinnie Sullivan) has been locked in conflicts with almost the entire British fascist scene, obsessively attacking the leadership of Patriotic Alternative, other groupings and a variety of far-right content creators.

2022 PROSPECTS

TRR will likely continue primarily as a vehicle for Burke’s outsized ego and aggression towards other far-right activists.



GARETH STONE (AKA HORUS)

2021 SUMMARY

Unmasked by HOPE not hate in November 2021, Gareth Stone is a content creator and livestreamer affiliated with the online Patriotic Alternative milieu. Stone has produced a number of revisionist videos in which he blames Jewish people for the outbreak of World War II, as well as during appearances on livestreams with other content creators.

While continuing to post frequent commentary to his Telegram channel, Stone has stepped back from producing his own video content and has appeared in fewer streams in recent months. He also appears to have lost his job after his identity was revealed.

2022 PROSPECTS

It remains to be seen whether Stone will return to producing video content, but he will likely remain a semi-regular guest on PA-aligned streams.



THOMAS HAMPSON (AKA CODCOMEDYTJ)

2021 SUMMARY

Thomas Hampson (aka CodComedyTJ) is a far-right social media activist and livestreamer who gained notoriety after creating extremely offensive videos through Omegle, a video chat app through which users are randomly paired.

Hampson often appears in Nazi paraphernalia, or in front of upsetting imagery, and uses racial slurs in order to shock users on the platform, later uploading recordings to his own social media channels, a tactic inspired by far-right activists from abroad, especially the Australian Tor Brookes (aka Catboy Kami).

In 2020 and 2021, a supporter community arose around Hampson. The community is active on Telegram and promotes fascist texts and virulent racism.

Hampson was arrested in May in relation to hate crime, and later announced he would step back from far-right activism. During his absence his chat group and channel were run by supporters and remained active. In December, he announced a comeback through a video posted on Telegram; however, the channel was later removed.

2022 PROSPECTS

Hampson’s community will remain active and inspire copycats, but the future of his own activism is unsure, due to his legal troubles.

FAR RIGHT CITIZEN JOURNALISTS



STEVE LAWS

2021 SUMMARY

Steve Laws rose to prominence over the past two years as one of a band of so-called ‘migrant hunters’, individuals who have filmed, harassed and intimidated refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. He also proved to be a key figure in creating and distributing anti-migrant content in online far-right networks during 2021.

Laws’ videos of Dover arrivals last year were shared by many far-right groups, including Patriotic Alternative. He also regularly shared posts from other far-right individuals, such as Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) and far-right groups such as Britain First. In 2021, he was a guest on Talk Radio, where he was erroneously described as a “social commentator” and was subsequently quoted in several mainstream newspapers.

Beyond his specific support for the ‘Great Replacement’ conspiracy theory, Islamophobia is rife inside Laws’ Telegram channel. He has repeatedly used dehumanising language such as “invaders” and “swarm” to describe migrants.

Earlier in the year, Laws helped organise a demonstration in Dover attended by a range of people from across the UK far right scene, which ended in four arrests. He is a close ally of Alan Leggett (aka Active Patriot), editing his documentary

about grooming gangs and accompanying him to his numerous court cases.

Laws himself was in court several times last year on charges related to his actions, including being arrested and found guilty of taking a dinghy without the owner’s consent. He appealed this decision in late 2021 (the court discontinued the case in March 2022). Dover Harbour Board also filed an injunction in 2021 against Laws, as well as against Alan Leggett (Active Patriot), Nigel Marcham (Little Veteran), Tracey Wiseman (XxTWxx) and an unknown person, for filming without permission at the docks. Unlike some of the other defendants, he refused to sign an undertaking to stay away from the docks and opted for a further court hearing in 2022.

2022 PROSPECTS

A former member of the anti-Islam For Britain party, Laws announced at the end of 2021 that he would be running as UKIP’s candidate in Southend West. This move could increase his audience and resources, and he is likely to become an increasingly established figure within the far right in Britain.

He has also asked his supporters to use Twitter to name those locations housing migrants (receiving many responses already) and announced he is planning on making a film about this all, which suggests he will be moving away from only filming migrants arriving on the beach, to potentially harassing them elsewhere, such as hotels.

NIGEL MARCHAM (AKA LITTLE VETERAN)

2021 SUMMARY

While Nigel Marcham was a key player in the anti-migrant scene during 2020, his activity has decreased over 2021.

He started a new YouTube channel, “Mission Impossible”, that has just over 800 subscribers, and has posted videos of himself taking a boat out to “patrol” The Channel. He has also posted footage of migrants at Dover, but was slowed by an operation and has been increasingly silent after Dover Harbour Board brought a case against him and several other (so-called) migrant hunters. As a result, he has signed an undertaking that he will not intimidate asylum seekers or enter the docks without permission.

Marcham has also increasingly posted conspiracy theories about the COVID-19 vaccine over the course of the year.

2022 PROSPECTS

Due to the undertaking he signed, he could be jailed for two years and face an unlimited fine if he breaches the agreement and enters Dover Port harbour without permission. Marcham announced in December 2021 that he was tired of the confrontations with Dover police and that he would now focus on his real passion, which was helping homeless veterans.



AMANDA SMITH (AKA YORKSHIRE ROSE)

SUMMARY OF 2021

Amanda Smith is an anti-migrant activist living in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, and is known for her content on social media, especially YouTube. Her videos mostly consist of harassing staff, security guards and anyone else she suspects of being a migrant at hotels and other accommodation she visits.

In January 2021, she and Alan Leggett (aka Active Patriot) were arrested for causing alarm and distress, and she claims they were banned from North Yorkshire as part of their bail conditions. She has also harassed staff at COVID-19 test centres, claiming COVID-19 is fake. On her accounts she has posted 5G and New World Order conspiracy theories and content from the fascist group Patriotic Alternative, as well as using disparaging language to talk about Muslims and migrants.

2022 PROSPECTS

Smith is very prolific on YouTube, uploading up to five videos a week. She began the year by filming at Dover harbour but by the end of the year, her videos were mostly of migrant accommodation. This is likely to continue to be her activity in 2022. Her constant activism is likely to be reflected in growing visibility on her YouTube channel (currently just under 2,000 subscribers).



HUGH THORNE (AKA BASED WELSHMAN)

2021 SUMMARY

Hugh Thorne is an anti-lockdown and anti-migrant far-right activist. Although he has shot videos about migrants, sometimes with Alan Leggett, he mostly focused on the lockdown during 2021 – for example, filming himself being arrested for breaking lockdown rules. He also focused on mass surveillance and has even posted a video about the mass incarceration of Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China. By the end of the year, Thorne had produced 113 videos on his YouTube channel, with more than half about the lockdown and restrictions.

2022 PROSPECTS

Thorne has nearly 10,000 subscribers on his YouTube channel and is likely to continue to latch onto the most salient topics in the far right for his various social media accounts. With the fluctuating pandemic restrictions and potential lockdowns, masks and anti-vaxx rhetoric are likely to be popular video topics.

VOICE OF WALES

2021 SUMMARY

Voice of Wales is a far-right broadcast hosted by Dan Morgan and Stan Robinson that, since 2020, has mobilised against migrants in the UK.

In February 2021, its YouTube channel hosted members of (American far-right street group) the Proud Boys, and the far-right former reality TV star, Katie Hopkins. The channel had nearly 9,000 subscribers and had registered more than 350,000 views, but after several videos were deleted for breaching guidelines, YouTube removed the account for “unacceptable language” in late February, and removed a second account set up in early March.

The pair represented UKIP in the May elections, with Morgan standing in the Swansea East constituency and South Wales West region, and Robinson in South Wales West region and the Swansea council by-election; however, they received appalling results across the board.



2022 PROSPECTS

Voice of Wales established a Telegram channel in December 2020 where it has been increasingly active, especially after its YouTube ban. By the end of 2021, the channel had 2,700 subscribers. While its reach is stunted on mainstream platforms, Voice of Wales is likely to continue to post interviews and podcasts on its website and via Telegram.

LITTLE BOATS 2020

2021 SUMMARY

Little Boats 2020 is an anti-migrant vigilante group established in August 2020 and led by Jeremy Davis, a wedding disc jockey.

The group was launched during a rise in mainstream focus on migrants, with the aim of filming and confronting migrants crossing the channel. The group, which sometimes refers to itself as a “flotilla”, has bragged about having conducted boat patrols at night in The Channel, and is aligned with Steve Laws.

Little Boats has remained very active on Twitter, Facebook and Telegram during 2021, with its supporters regularly posting against the supposed “invasion” of Britain. Supporters took part in an anti-migrant protest in Dover last May, where police arrested four protesters.

2022 PROSPECTS

Little Boats is likely to continue posting anti-migrant hate through 2022, but also on other topics such as anti-vaccine conspiracy theories, as well as general anti-lockdown posts. The group is also likely to continue recycling content from other anti-migrant activists, such as Steve Laws.



ALAN LEGGETT (AKA ACTIVE PATRIOT UK)**2021 SUMMARY**

Alan Leggett is perhaps the best known and most active of all the so-called ‘migrant hunters’ active in the UK. Formerly a loyal ‘Tommy Robinson’ supporter, he has made a name in the far right for his “citizen journalism”.

Leggett was active throughout the year, regularly filming newly-arrived migrants in Dover and outside accommodation for new arrivals across the country. Leggett made a “solemn promise” not to intimidate new arrivals and was banned from entering the Eastern and Western Docks in Dover in November, during a Canterbury Crown Court hearing after the Port of Dover sought an injunction against his behaviour. He faces two years in prison if he breaches the order.

In December he released a documentary about “Muslim grooming gangs”, playing it on a portable screen at seven towns in the north of England, often in front of the police stations. Audiences were tiny. However Leggett focused on filming his actions and his screen. This allowed him to generate a lot of content for his Telegram channel, which has subsequently been widely shared in far-right circles.

2022 PROSPECTS

While the injunction will limit his activity in Dover, he is likely to remain one of the most active content producers in the far right, pushing the issue of immigration and migrant accommodation so that it remains high on the movement’s agenda. That said, his numerous spats with other far-right figures during 2021 mean he is becoming an increasingly divisive figure in this milieu, so more infighting is likely on the cards this coming year.

**STREET GROUPS****DEMOCRATIC FOOTBALL LADS ALLIANCE****2021 SUMMARY**

The days when the DFLA could attract large numbers onto the streets are now long gone. Despite being more able to protest due to the lifting of lockdown restrictions, 2021 saw the group manage no street activism of note. The group’s website is also no longer online.

The group continues to maintain an active Facebook page which is followed by over 22,000 people. In terms of offline organising, this is now limited to some long-time activists continuing to meet informally.

2022 PROSPECTS

It is possible that the remnants of this organisation may finally completely collapse in 2022. Even if it limps on it will likely remain an irrelevance going forward.



FAR RIGHT ALTERNATIVE MEDIA



KATIE HOPKINS

2021 SUMMARY

Katie Hopkins' influence on public life dwindled still further in 2021, with the loss of her Twitter account (in 2020) severely limiting her ability to create outrage and bait arguments.

In January 2021, she joined UKIP and was warmly welcomed by the party. Her most notorious moment of the year was a trip in July to Australia, where her mocking of quarantine rules saw her planned appearance on *Big Brother Australia* cancelled and her visa revoked. In late November she self-published a memoir that got no attention.

2022 PROSPECTS

Hopkins is unlikely to ever regain the notoriety she craves, though it's likely she will continue to seek attention through publicity stunts and via her sizeable Instagram following. In May 2022, she will appear in a series of live stage shows in Blackpool.



BREITBART LONDON

EDITOR: OLIVER LANE



2021 SUMMARY

Breitbart London remains active but has not made much of an impression on the right-wing media scene over the past year.

Former editor and regular contributor James Delingpole spent much of 2021 flirting with more extreme far-right politics, inviting current and former members of *Patriotic Alternative* onto his podcast and appearing on a stream with Colin Robertson (aka "Millennial Woes").

2022 PROSPECTS

Breitbart London will continue to churn out low-quality reporting on culture war issues, but is unlikely to ever achieve the influence here that its parent company has had in the USA.

POLITICALITE

EDITOR: JORDAN JAMES



2021 SUMMARY

The right-wing clickbait site Politicalite sank further into obscurity over the course of 2021. Its Twitter account was suspended in February, following the suspension of its Facebook page in 2019, and although it has created new profiles on both platforms they have only a fraction of the former followings.

In June, the site was widely condemned for publishing flimsy allegations of sexual abuse against a left-wing journalist (that Politicalite had previously promised to "take down"). Perhaps related to subsequent legal action, the site owner Jordan James dissolved his two existing companies in September and created a new company in their place.

In early 2022 Politicalite was briefly in the news again, when HOPE not hate revealed it was the source of false rumours (repeated by Prime Minister Boris Johnson) that the leader of the Opposition, Keir Starmer, had failed to prosecute paedophile Jimmy Saville whilst Starmer was Director of Public Prosecutions.

2022 PROSPECTS

The chaotic nature of the operation, with promised ventures like a *Lion News* spinoff failing to materialise, makes it unlikely that Politicalite will ever be stable enough to thrive in 2022.



SARGON OF AKKAD/LOTUS EATER MEDIA

2021 SUMMARY

Having launched the multimedia ‘Lotus Eaters Media’ brand in late 2020, the misogynistic libertarian and former UKIP activist Carl Benjamin (aka Sargon of Akkad) put considerable effort into producing podcasts and articles throughout 2021 for paid subscribers to his platform, as well as uploading over 1,000 videos for the site’s YouTube channels.

The site hosts far-right, libertarian and conservative guests and covers a range of historical and culture war issues.

Despite being prominently featured on the Hearts of Oak website, Benjamin has made little input to the group over 2021.

2022 PROSPECTS

The Lotus Eaters platform has grown significantly in popularity over the past year and looks likely to continue over the coming year.



Carl Benjamin
Photo: Rebel
Wisdom

PAUL JOSEPH WATSON/SUMMIT NEWS

2021 SUMMARY

Paul Joseph Watson continues to promote divisive right-wing misinformation and conspiracy theories on a variety of platforms, including his YouTube channel, Summit News website, and regular articles for the American conspiracy theory hub Infowars.

Watson is unusual in this sphere in having retained his platforms on Twitter and YouTube, where many others have been deplatformed.

The ongoing pandemic, public health restrictions and aftermath of the US election have provided Watson with a rich vein of material on which to build his conspiratorial, hyper-partisan content, but for the past two years there have been falling numbers for his YouTube content.

2021 also saw fewer of the bizarre late-night Twitter meltdowns that became common for Watson in 2020.

2022 PROSPECTS

Watson will continue to produce his traditional fare for a primarily American audience, but might face greater competition from the burgeoning field of conspiracy theory-oriented commentators that the pandemic has produced.

HEARTS OF OAK

LEADERS: ALAN CRAIG AND PETER MCILVENNA

2021 SUMMARY

Founded in February 2020, Hearts of Oak was originally presented as an alliance between far-right and libertarian activists, including Stephen Lennon (aka “Tommy Robinson”), Carl Benjamin (“Sargon of Akkad”) and a number of former UKIP activists, including ex-leader Gerard Batten.

However, it is now run by Peter Mcilvenna, who does regular interviews for the group’s YouTube channel. Like most groups detailed in this report, it devoted much of its energy in 2021 to campaigning against lockdowns and vaccine mandates, while also discussing issues around free speech, immigration and Islam. The platform still collaborates with Lennon and regularly amplifies his messaging.

2022 PROSPECTS

Despite its high profile contributors and regular online output, Hearts of Oak has not received much attention over the past two years, with minimal online engagement. However, it retains the potential to organise on a wider scale in 2022.

SECTION 9 – NORTHERN IRELAND



Photo: Joshua Hayes / flickr

NORTHERN IRELAND IS FACING STARK CHOICES: AGAIN

MATTHEW COLLINS analyses the latest developments both north, and south, of the Irish border, as tensions rise and polling supports the ascendancy of Sinn Fein.

2021 was another difficult year for Northern Ireland's peace and democratic processes.

In March, Loyalist paramilitary groups informed the British and Irish governments that they were withdrawing their support for the Good Friday Agreement in protest at Northern Ireland's Irish Sea trade border (a result of the UK's post-Brexit agreement with the EU) with the rest of the UK.

While the withdrawal of support called for "peaceful and democratic" opposition to the sea border and Northern Ireland Protocol, the letter from the Loyalist Communities Council (an umbrella group that represents the interests of Loyalist groups: the Ulster Volunteer Force, Ulster Defence Association and Red Hand Commando) was written because they themselves were under internal pressure from younger, more militant Loyalists.

While under the watchful eye of Loyalist paramilitaries, riots in Derry and Belfast by Loyalist youths during March and April were as mindless and destructive as they were predictable. It also had the desired effect of reigniting clashes at 'Peacewalls' with Catholic and Nationalist youths under the watchful eye of Republicans.

In May there was a "significant" show of strength in County Armagh by a Loyalist militia. The weapons on display were rumoured locally to be part of the near-mythical consignment of weapons from South Africa to Ulster Resistance, a group formed by the Reverend Ian Paisley to resist the Anglo-Irish agreement in 1986. A photo circulated showing up to 10 masked Loyalists in paramilitary garb posing with machine guns near Markethill. The display was later followed up by graffiti elsewhere in the county, pointing to the reemergence of the Protestant Action Force (PAF), a particularly sectarian *nom de guerre* of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) which was used to claim responsibility for the murder of 41 Catholics during the troubles.

Rioting broke out again though on a much smaller scale in Belfast in early November, when two youths, one aged 12 and one 15, were arrested for assaulting members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The PAF also claimed responsibility for the hijacking and burning of a bus in Newtonards the same month, telling the driver it was the "beginning" of their

protest against the Northern Ireland protocol, which confuses but also protects Northern Ireland from the worst excesses of the United Kingdom's departure from the EU.

THE PROTOCOL

The introduction of the Protocol at the beginning of 2021 was perceived by Unionists as the biggest threat to the Union in the 100 year existence of Northern Ireland. A mixture of lethargy, COVID restrictions and Republican intransigence saw that any widespread celebration of the centenary of Irish partition culminated in little more than a commemorative stone being placed in protest on the rolling greenery at Stormont Castle. It was later removed.

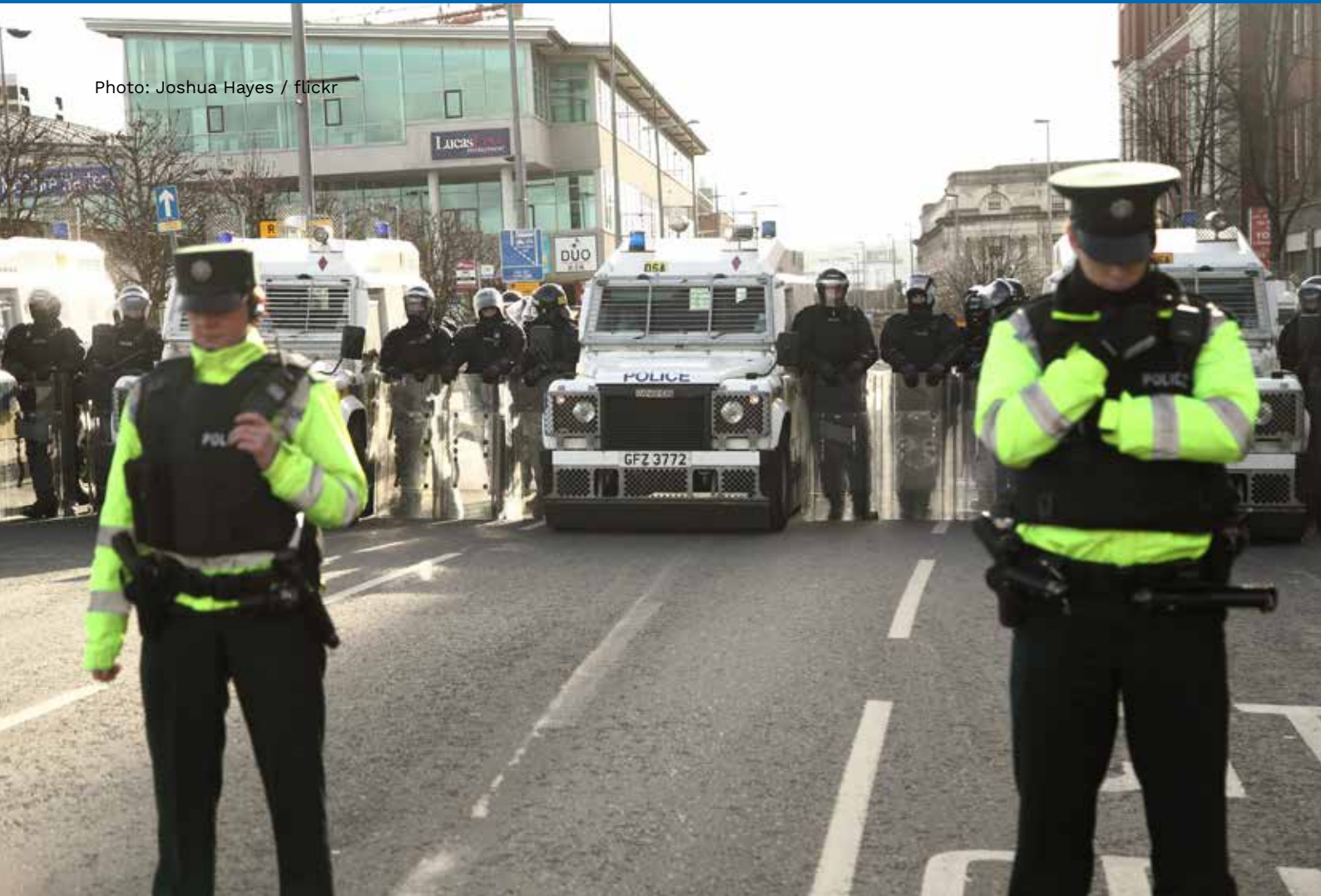
While Loyalist paramilitaries are still sworn to resist Irish unification (indeed it is their reason d'être for still not exiting an almost worn out centre stage) and a (now) longstanding indifference to each other and the communities they are sworn to protect, few political or other affronts to the union and Unionists can be tackled without acknowledging the fallback position of Unionism in crisis: its armed militias and Loyalist paramilitaries.

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which has held the post of First Minister, had increasingly threatened to "collapse" the Northern Irish Assembly held at Stormont Castle – and finally did so in January this year, to great acrimony. The DUP has been desperately trying to come to grips with a massive slump in the polls and the haemorrhaging of members and voters either further right or towards the Unionist centre ground.

Not only do many hardened Loyalists hold the DUP's former leader Arlene Foster responsible for the sea border, they accuse the DUP of "watering down" Unionism to placate a near-rampant Sinn Fein. Unionist voters have polled with their feet, believing that the DUP is either too out of touch on issues like LGBT+ and abortion rights, or alternatively not harsh enough on those and other issues.

These, and others who embrace the 'Northern Irish' identity, is both the key but most largely ignored group in the current climate.

Photo: Joshua Hayes / flickr



GROWTH AND RETREAT

As the DUP retreats back into the Paisleyism of its dark past, Sinn Fein is set to become the largest political party on both sides of the Irish border after the next set of elections. Such polling suits some Loyalist paramilitaries, who believe not only has the Good Friday Agreement been abandoned but so too have the conditions on which they agreed a ceasefire. Sinn Fein has, however, been dealt a surprising blow when voters in the Republic indicated that no matter the size and growing stature of the party, it was unlikely to dislodge the sitting coalition and form the next government.

Sinn Fein is on course to become the largest party at Stormont after the May 5 Assembly elections, according to opinion polls conducted in February this year. Meanwhile, in the Republic polling shows support for a United Ireland never less than 60% and sometimes as high as 80%.

All political parties in the Republic are committed to a United Ireland. While that idea could well be a future reality, Sinn Fein in the Republic is desperate it should be the party in power when that happens. It also seems far less intent on antagonising northern Unionists and has even reached out to them, explaining the proposed benefits both electorally and culturally of a United Ireland.

An end-of-year poll carried out by Lord Ashcroft found a majority of residents of Northern Ireland believed the province would ‘quit’ the United Kingdom within a decade.

Offers from Sinn Fein to Unionists have included making the Unionist holiday on 12 July an all-Ireland holiday in a United Ireland. Given the nature of much of the parading and ceremony that comes with the ‘twelfth’, such a notion gave a stark and otherwise ignored reminder to many in the Republic that a United Ireland poses significant cultural as well as economic challenges. To underpin this, a series of attacks carried out in Belfast during December on vehicles with number plates from the Republic were widely reported here.

“
*a majority of residents of Northern Ireland
 believed the province would ‘quit’ the
 United Kingdom within a decader*
 ”

Although such pledges and growing reassurances from Sinn Fein and other parties in the Republic of Ireland sit well with soft nationalists, and the ‘new’ Northern Irish and resigned unionists, it also shows a marked underestimation of the hardened depths and the roots of Loyalism. This ignorance is also most particular and unabashed in Britain, where the necessity to understanding Ireland has retreated along with large swathes of Irish émigrés from the 1980s who bought news and views of ‘the Troubles’ into the consciousness of the British public.

As well as the insincerity of the Irish Sea border and Brexit, how Britain now views the complexities of Ireland was no better exemplified than when the British government, in 2018, appointed a secretary of state, Karen Bradley, who did not know the difference between Unionists and Nationalists (the political stances traditionally adopted by Protestants and Catholics).

FEELING ABANDONED

Such is the climate created both politically and socially by an increasingly abandoned Unionist population, many nationalist observers have publicly queried why the Unionist and Loyalist leadership is hiding from issues that could very well determine where and how the Unionist population will live in the future. Some Northern Irish nationalists fear Unionists would retreat to a position of violent refuseniks – not an entirely alien mindset – in a United Ireland. And it's no longer simply a view from the trenches.

Former *Irish News* columnist Allison Morris, now writing for the *Belfast Telegraph*, has constantly posed such questions to the newspaper's core constituency, the Protestant and Unionist community. In January she underpinned the benevolent frustration in an article titled "Why unionists must start to deliver for young loyalists" and "Working class Protestants have been neglected for too long". There are approximately one million people in the north of Ireland who would possibly *in varying degrees* resist or protest any change to their status and nationality. Collapsing Stormont surely cosigns that chunk to a deathly silence. Some Unionists even suggest they would not sit in Stormont were there a Sinn Fein first minister.

The political frustration and inactions of Unionist politicians makes some in the community feel that it's only by force and violence can they be heard.

One senior Loyalist told us: "We're resigned to the fact that absolutely **** all gets done here without

some kind of uprising. The British government broke the peace agreement and the Good Friday Agreement, not us."

Stockpiles of weapons have been depleted – rusted, or used by cross-community crime gangs – so there is a shortage of weapons readily available to paramilitaries for anything other than 'ceremonial' displays and punishments. It would be foolish to assume there had not been efforts made to replenish these stocks.

A report at the end of the year triumphantly trumpeted that 16 of the community 'peacewalls' had been dismantled. It seems, sadly, a premature act. In a New Year statement, the Republican 'New IRA' recommitted itself to continuing its own armed campaign.

"Despite the war weariness myth perpetrated by the occupier, the IRA has not been defeated. We have one again proved that while Ireland remains under occupation, we will continue to resist."

This was despite three of its political prisoners renouncing violence in a bid for Christmas releases, and the group allegedly having to pay a criminal gang to carry out a Christmas murder on its behalf.

Meanwhile, the illegal Ulster Volunteer Force likewise gave notice at the start of this year that it would not disband, despite previously saying it would. It is worth remembering that as many as 30,000 people across Northern Ireland are still entangled in some way with the paramilitaries: a sobering thought.

Sadly, Unionist and Loyalist parties and commentators offer little in intellectual resistance or sense of proportion to their current plight and little of comfort in addressing the reality of a United Ireland. One leading figure in the DUP has already quipped at the traditional military solution for their current dilemmas.

If the Unionist establishment cannot find a way out of its predicaments and intransigence they could once more be forcing its young men back to an unavoidable war.



Secretary of State Karen Bradley was joined by then Prime Minister Theresa May and DUP Leader Arlene Foster. Photo: Northern Ireland Office

THE FAR RIGHT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland experienced an upsurge in far-right activity during the past 12 months, fuelled in part by tensions over the Irish sea border and exacerbated by COVID conspiracy theories.

Domiciled in the province, Jayda Fransen and Jim Dowson's British Freedom Party remained the most high profile British far-right group, while Britain First was sporadic and notably cautious.

There were cross-border incursions by far-right groups from the Republic, which resulted in violent confrontations with local anti-fascists.

Meanwhile, the traditional attitudes emanating towards Northern Ireland from the British far right have dulled into generational indifference. The Irish sea border issue saw a small but noticeable British Movement and Blood & Honour presence at some early protests, but there was also frustration that Northern Ireland and Loyalism no longer has a major agenda in the minds of the newer generation of British fascists.

Further alienation and confusion has arisen after even Dowson and Fransen appeared to have crossed the religious divide with far-right groups and individuals from the Republic. In due course this could become increasingly problematic, but on issues like the EU, COVID, anti-Communism and abortion, there is increasing dialogue and understanding between some groups either side of the border.

There was a concerted racist and far-right sticker campaign in parts of East Belfast last year, as well as in some of the smaller outlying towns like Portadown and Lisburn. This appears to be the work of a small number of ageing individuals linked together on Telegram, but without the sustained support of the British far right. There were also one or two hotel protests mimicking both British First and Patriotic Alternative's actions in Britain, which carried out by a former local councillor linked to Jayda Fransen.

During the year HOPE not hate had to warn a resident of East Belfast that his home was being targeted and his movements tracked by fascists for his own efforts in tackling the sticker problem, while earlier this year a well-known journalist was warned by police there was a credible threat to him from 'far-right' individuals



Jim Dowson and
Jayda Fransen

SECTION 10 – DEMOCRACY UNDER STRAIN



THE RISE OF DANGEROUS 'STRONGMAN' POLITICS

Declining trust and economic hardship are combining in a potentially toxic mixture to propel support for a new breed of 'strongman' politics, says ROSIE CARTER.

Since the 1970s, the British public has increasingly identified less and less with political parties¹. But over the past two years growing opposition to COVID-19 restrictions, and more recently the 'Partygate' scandal, have fanned resentments towards the political elite that were whipped up throughout, and after, the EU referendum.

While questioning the actions of political representatives is not always a bad thing, feelings of misrepresentation and voicelessness have increasingly found resonance in populist-right narratives. These anti-elite framings of "the elite" against "the people" have further eroded ties between voters and political parties, and increasingly put strain on liberal democracies, fuelling the appeal of "strongman" politics.

DAMAGED TRUST

Trust in political representatives, and the political system more broadly, has long been an issue but increasingly become the norm. For a majority, politics is seen as a one-way street. In our polling from late January this year², while the majority voiced having an interest in politics (around one in five – 21% – would say they don't), only 10% of people say they feel politicians listen to people like them.

And for many, local politicians are not hugely distinguished from MPs in regards to their distance from voters. While the local view is slightly more positive, there is little difference in responses when people are asked if they feel they have a say in decisions taken in Parliament and at the local level. Just 16% say they do at parliamentary level, while 21% say they feel they have a say in decisions taken at the local level. Many also feel that politics has little impact. Overall, 57% agreed with the statement "getting involved in politics is a waste of time because nothing ever changes".

People's relationship with democracy has been tested over the past few years by a series of political shocks, not least the turbulent and divisive period that led up to, and followed, the EU referendum. "Take back control" became a slogan that was

not just about sovereignty and the UK's relationship with the European Union, but for many signified a broader political alignment and a pushback against the status quo.

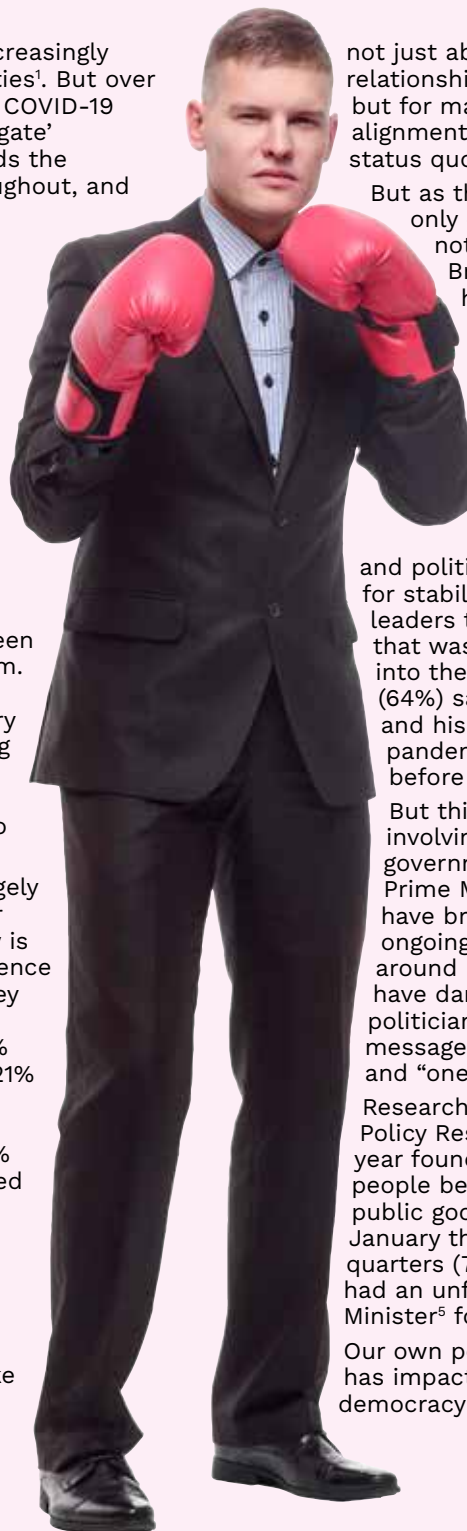
But as the negotiations dragged on, not only did many voters feel they were not getting what they wanted from Brexit, but most felt that politicians had left them in the dark over the process, distracting them from more important issues. In fact, the process fed the view of politicians as self-serving that the referendum campaign had already so turbo-charged.

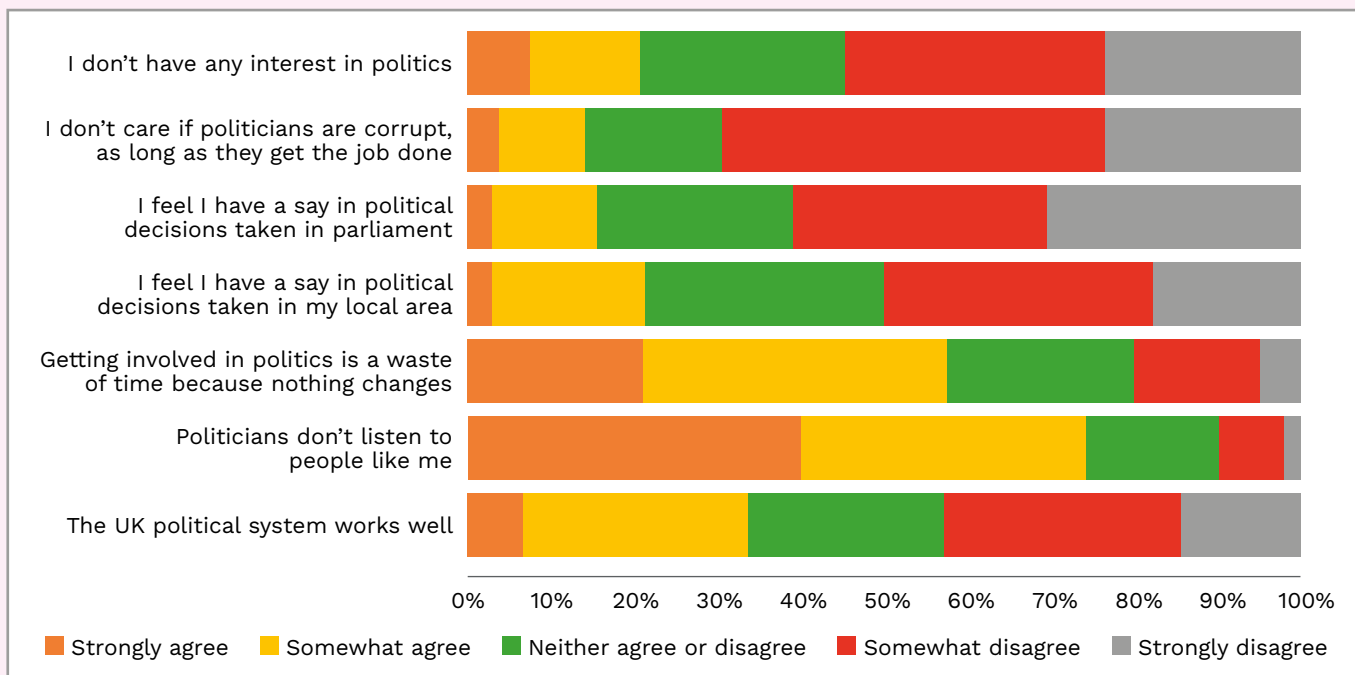
The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic further complicated the relationship between people and politics. In a time of crisis, people look for stability and put their trust in political leaders to get them through. And indeed, that was what we initially saw. Two weeks into the first lockdown, a large majority (64%) said they trusted Boris Johnson and his government to deal with the pandemic, up from 50% in the week before the lockdown³.

But this was short lived. Scandals involving Downing Street staff, government ministers, and finally the Prime Minister, who were all seen to have broken strict lockdown rules in the ongoing scandal about parties in and around No. 10 during strict lockdown have damaged trust between public and politicians. These events have sent a message that there is "one rule for them" and "one rule for us".

Research from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) in December last year found that just five percent (5%) of people believe politicians work for the public good⁴, while YouGov research from January this year revealed nearly three-quarters (72%) of the British public now had an unfavourable opinion of the Prime Minister⁵ following the recent scandals.

Our own polling has shown how this has impacted people's relationship with democracy more broadly.





The proportion of those who agree that “the political system works well” fell by 11% from July 2021 to January 2022, to just 34%. And in the same January poll, very few people could say that they feel very satisfied with the way democracy works in the UK – just 6% with the majority saying that they were not satisfied (57%).

While declining trust in the political system is a challenge to democracy in its own right, it has also

increasingly allowed anti-democratic, authoritarian and extreme right-wing ideas to grow.

WHAT PEOPLE WANT FROM THEIR POLITICIANS

Our poll asked people found that “honesty” (57%) was the quality they felt was most important for a politician. This was followed by “straight-talking” (31%), both of which were more popular character traits among older respondents. The rise of the “straight-talking” politician sets these figures (in respondents’ mindset) from an entrenched view of politicians as disingenuous or careerist – they are supposedly representative, accessible; they tell it how it is.

Most people also want politicians to be good communicators (27%), “hard working” (26%) and “intelligent” (25%), while the least popular traits were “ruthless” (3%), having a “sense of humour” (3%) and “charismatic” (3%).

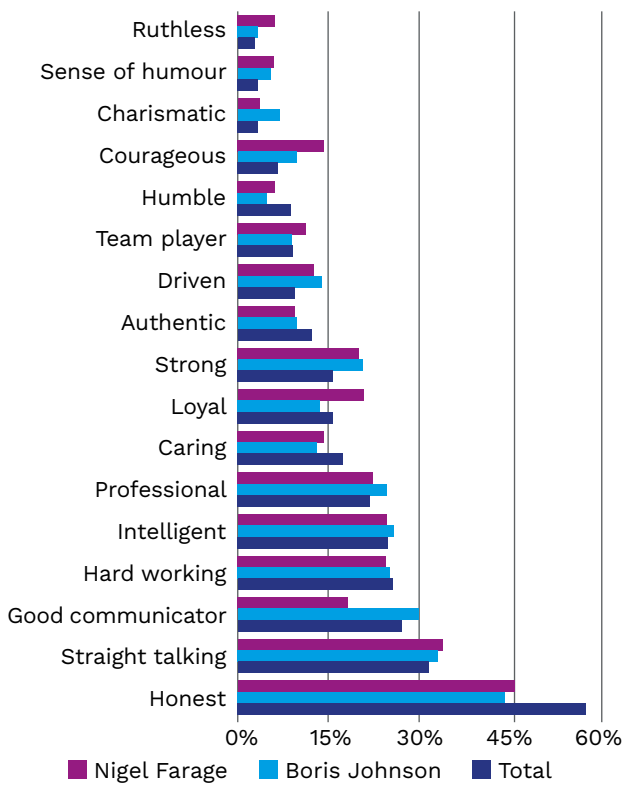
But for some, other traits were considered more important: 10% of GB News TV station followers saw “ruthlessness” as one of the most admirable traits for a politician, while more than twice as many (15%) than the overall population (7%) said “courageousness” was an important trait. “Strength” was seen as a more important factor to Conservative voters (23%) while “loyalty” was seen to be a more important factor for Brexit party voters (32%).

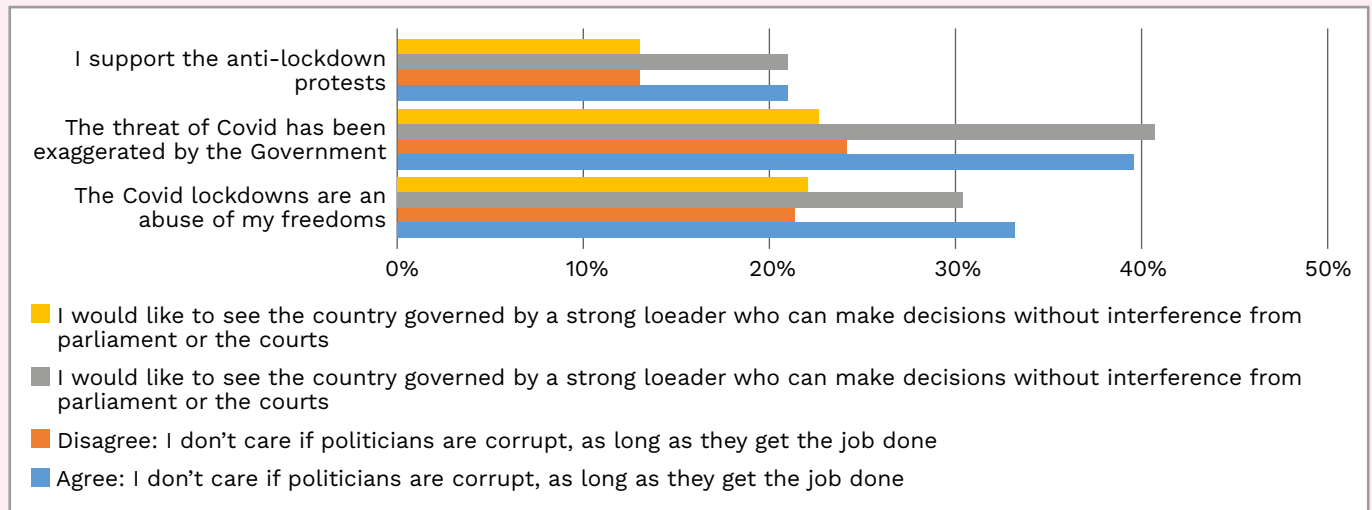
And there was a considerable amount of similarity between the views of those who view Boris Johnson very favourably and those who see Nigel Farage similarly – with both seeing strength, straight-talking, charisma and ruthlessness more important than all respondents overall. And while these figures have largely failed to win voters over, there is the potential for a “strongman” figure to capture public support by weaponising these traits.

A STRONGMAN APPEAL

The desire for this strongman politics and authoritarian rule may well seem contradictory to a sense of voicelessness and misrepresentation. But strongman politicians play (even prey) on a feeling of

Which of the following traits do you think are most important for a politician?





being “shut out” to make themselves appear as the voice of the people, pointing the finger and laying blame on elites. Often charismatic, they build their support as “true” representatives of the people, as those who will really “say it how it is”.

In times of fragility and uncertainty, people look to strong figures who can offer straight-talking answers. These strongman figures also offer an alternative to broader dissatisfaction with the political system.

Worryingly, in our late January poll, 15% of respondents, including more than a quarter of young people (26% of 18-24s) and one in five 2019 Conservative voters (20%), said that they did not care if a politician was corrupt so long as they got the job done.

Staggeringly, more than a quarter of all respondents (26%), including more than a third of those who voted for the Conservatives in 2019, voiced support for a system in which a strong leader could make decisions without interference from Parliament or the courts, while 56% were opposed and 17% remained unsure.

Those who voiced a preference for this kind of governance tended to be politically right-wing, more concerned about criminality and immigration than the general population, and more likely to value strength, loyalty, courage and drive in politicians.

And while they are also a very mixed group, with a larger share of 2019 Conservative voters (46% voted Conservative in 2019 while 28% voted Labour), many have moved away from Boris Johnson’s party, as more say they would vote Labour (32%) than Tory (31%) if there was a general election tomorrow. This suggests how the ‘Partygate’ scandals have undermined Johnson’s presentation as a strongman figure, making many of those with more authoritarian views politically homeless.

A sense of being ignored, of politicians serving themselves not their voters, and a widespread view of a ‘broken’ political system that is rigged to maintain the status quo, all have the potential to feed the appeal of strongman politics.

THE COVID-19 EFFECT

While the UK’s anti-lockdown movement has largely been framed around “reclaiming freedom” and individual rights, and even pushing back against authoritarian rule, much of its beliefs are rooted in populist anti-establishment and anti-mainstream thought.

Our polling suggests that those who favour authoritarian strongman politics – voicing preference for a political system where a strong leader can make decisions without interference from parliament or the courts, or who those who say they don’t care if politicians are corrupt as long as they get the job done – are more likely to be sceptical about the vaccine’s safety and to support anti-lockdown protests, or to feel that lockdown measures were a restriction on their freedoms.

But as well as this overlay, the impact of COVID-19 has the potential to broaden the appeal of strongman politics too, as the economic realities of the coronavirus outbreak and restrictions alongside soaring costs of living begin to take hold.

We have seen, time and time again, how hardship can brew deep resentments towards a distant political establishment and an economic model that is unfeeling to place or people. The hard end of the political right has found strength in exploiting genuine anxieties in communities that have been hurt most by economic decline and austerity. They have offered mass immigration and “cultural incompatibility” as simple answers to complex problems.

“Strongmen” fill a space by offering simple answers in times of great uncertainty. But these figures generally do more to add to existing challenges than to offer solutions. They continue to feed anger and resentments that can spill over into greater extremes.

While declining trust in the political system is a challenge to democracy, it has also allowed anti-democratic, authoritarian and extreme right-wing ideas to grow. Economic damage caused by of COVID-19 alongside sharply rising living costs is likely to bolster support for this form of politics.

NOTES

- <https://whatukthinks.org/eu/a-nation-of-remainers-and-leavers-how-brexiteer-has-forged-a-new-sense-of-identity/>
- Focaldata polling of 1,500 adults, fieldwork carried out 24-25th January 2022, weighted to be representative of the GB population
- https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/HnH_Covid-19-first-three-months_2020-06.pdf
- <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/dec/04/johnson-faces-trust-crisis-as-sleaze-shatters-faith-in-mps>
- <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2022/01/14/boris-johnsons-net-favourability-drops-another-all>

UNDERMINING DEMOCRACY

A bill that fundamentally changes the nature of voting and campaigning is being rushed through Parliament, and that brings danger for us all.

Against a background of growing political mistrust, the increased prominence of migration as a political issue, and an impending cost of living crisis, the Government's current legislative agenda and governing style is dangerously widening this possibility, and could cause severe long term damage to our democracy.

The Government's current Elections Bill, which has been progressing through Parliament, is a perfect

encapsulation of this. This is a bill that seeks to end the full independence of the electoral watchdog, the Electoral Commission, disenfranchises voters who don't carry 'acceptable' forms of ID, and gives the power to a single individual – the Secretary of State – to define who is and isn't a permissible campaigner in an election.

A bill that fundamentally changes the nature of voting and campaigning in this country is being rushed through Parliament with minimal pre-legislative scrutiny – without consent from political parties across the House (as usually happens with changes to voting systems and democratic engagement). Even the Conservative Chair of the Public Administration and



“
Once democratic norms are tarnished for the purposes of electoral support, it is extremely difficult to rebuild them
 ”

Constitutional Affairs Committee, William Wragg MP, warned that:

“The Elections Bill proposals lack a sufficient evidence base, timely consultation, and transparency, all of which should be addressed before it makes any further progress. We cannot risk any reduction of trust in UK elections, which is why the majority of the committee is calling for the bill to be paused to give time for more work to be done to ensure the measures are fit for purpose.”

On their own, each of the measures in the Elections Bill undermine the basic principles of a democracy and in which voters can place their trust. However, when placed alongside the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill; the Judicial Review Bill; and the Nationality and Borders Bill; plus alongside the impending reform to the Human Rights Act, it seems clear there is a coordinated and centralised attack on our democracy and democratic institutions from the heart of this government. These changes all seek to centralise power, riding roughshod over the parliamentary process to enact them. For a bill of this size and constitutional significance, it is almost unprecedented that it is not subject to pre-legislative scrutiny, and in the Lords the Government is looking to push it through committee stage in only five sitting days, leaving little time for effective scrutiny for something with so many contentious clauses.

It is clear that this deluge of attacks on British democracy and the rights and freedoms of the public is a part of a strategy. Civil society is having to battle on too many fronts to effectively provide a check on the wishes of the Government and the lack of scrutiny and late additions to bills are further entrenching this system of breaking down democratic norms.

These legislative changes don't exist in a vacuum either. As HOPE not hate polling has shown, there is a growing desire for 'strongman', populist politics, where 26% of the population would be happy to see a political system where parliamentary democracy is ended and a 'strong leader' can make decisions.

For the Conservative Party to use this brand of politics as the basis for a governing strategy is worrying and dangerous. Once democratic norms are tarnished for the purposes of electoral support, it is extremely difficult to rebuild them.

All this does is give the space for more authoritarian, more extreme parties and individuals to push the 'Overton Window' (for what is considered normal and acceptable) further towards a system of tyranny of the majority, with potentially harmful consequences for minorities in the UK.

An 80-seat government majority has a lot of space to carve out the future direction for the country, with limited scope for opposition. However, if the thrust of the Government's plan is to break democratic norms



William Wragg MP

and stoke culture wars, then the caveat “be careful what you wish for” applies, because the far right is sure to be emboldened by these measures.

When political trust is harmed, we know that a significant section of the public looks for alternatives – and all too often, that space is filled by those pushing a hateful agenda, which makes the state of democracy such a vital issue for anti-fascists to consider.

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill – A bill that disproportionately impacts black, Asian and minority ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, threatening the right to protest, criminalizing GRT encampments and expanding Stop and Search.

Judicial Review Bill – The bill will make it harder to challenge the Government in court, particularly for migrants, leaving the Government less accountable to the public.

Nationality and Borders Bill – The bill focuses significantly on institutional accommodation centres for people seeking asylum, suggesting an expansion of their usage and a move away from community accommodation. It also penalises refugees seeking asylum in the UK and the bill could remove citizenship for UK nationals.

Human Rights Act Reform – A Government consultation is underway on 'overhauling' the Human Rights Act, with the potential for widescale changes to be made including restricting Judicial Review and undermining basic freedoms.

YOUNG PEOPLE: A TIME FOR ACTION



We need to help our young people resist the lure of the extreme right, says NICK LOWLES.

One of the worrying aspects in our **State of HATE 2022** report is the increasing radicalisation of some young people. The impact of COVID-19, and in particular lockdowns and related conspiracy theories, has quickened and deepened a process that was already underway.

While young people in Britain today are overwhelmingly more liberal, open-minded and tolerant than older people, there is a small but growing cohort who increasingly adopt far-right ideas but also frame their world through the toxic language of culture wars and anti-establishment libertarianism.

To meet this growing threat, we are developing a Deradicalisation Unit that will utilise our research knowledge of the far right, combined with our policy work and deep understanding of the drivers of hate, to drive our outreach, particularly in schools.

This new work stream will see us employ a dedicated case worker to engage with young people in schools who show low levels of radicalisation, aided by a

psychologist to work with those with more entrenched views, and a researcher to help us better understand the platforms on which young people engage and then how we can better intervene.

CHANGING LANDSCAPE

State of HATE 2022 reveals that young people are more likely to come across, and believe, conspiracy theories than older people. Our research on far-right terrorism identifies a growing number of young people becoming involved in, and convicted, for terrorism offences. The way the far right increasingly uses technology and social media is much more suited to online behaviour of young people than the traditional media and secret meetings as once held by likes of the British National Party or National Front.

Finally, our own experience in schools reveals that a growing number of young people, particularly teenage boys, are adopting far-right narratives and tropes in a way that they have not done before. Of course, young people displaying racist views has always been there, but it is evolving, so vile racist language and even physical abuse is often being replaced by a narrative that they have gained online, leading to identification as part of a wider, deeper struggle against “wokeness” and the political left.

In many ways, how young people now engage with political extremism reflects the changing nature of the far right and its shifting priorities. Very few far-right groups or individuals talk openly about removing all non-white citizens and reinstating a white-only country. They might privately want this, but they know this is unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of people, including many of their own supporters.

Instead, the new battleground is increasingly around assimilation and integration, the dangers of Islam and political correctness and culture wars. The far right, and the young people increasingly attracted to it, see themselves on the front line of an existential threat to Western civilisation and the enemy is the Left (by which they include the media, the establishment and teachers) which is out to destroy their way of life.

The concept of this cultural war and a supposed desire by the political left to undermine and even destroy “western civilisation” is shared by large sections of the far right as well as conservative right, and it taps into a widespread unease about the direction of Britain, the impact of globalisation and the growing remoteness of people to power. This means it is far more prevalent across traditional and new media platforms than anything the far right themselves can produce, reaching greater numbers of people and with a constantly reinforced narrative.

WHY HOPE NOT HATE?

HOPE not hate’s daily work brings us face to face with this growing problem. Whether it is through our research, community or educational work, we interact

with young people directly and understand the need for a proper deradicalisation strategy. We have also seen the shortcomings in traditional law enforcement, school and community responses.

Over the last 25 years, we have built up extensive experience from helping individuals move out of far-right groups. However, we are acutely aware that we can and need to do more.

INTENDED OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Individuals drawn to far-right ideologies are often socially isolated and have an extremely limited view of their own talents and opportunities. It is these vulnerabilities which often draw them into the far right, where they find a sense of belonging and identity.

Our work with individuals involved in far-right activity and groups will leave them with support for a safer, happier future.

We will work with them on multiple complex issues, such as critical thinking, self-esteem and social skills, supported by the work of a clinical psychologist.

Our caseworker will also be able to provide advice to any individual and to those involved in caring for them (including family members, friends, teachers and other care givers and statutory services), whatever their level of involvement in far-right extremism – all the while to help people move away from far-right views and activity.

Ultimately, we hope that our new unit will help reduce the reach of the far right into society, and towards young people, and help those at risk develop greater resilience against any attempts to groom them towards the path to self-destruction and extremism.

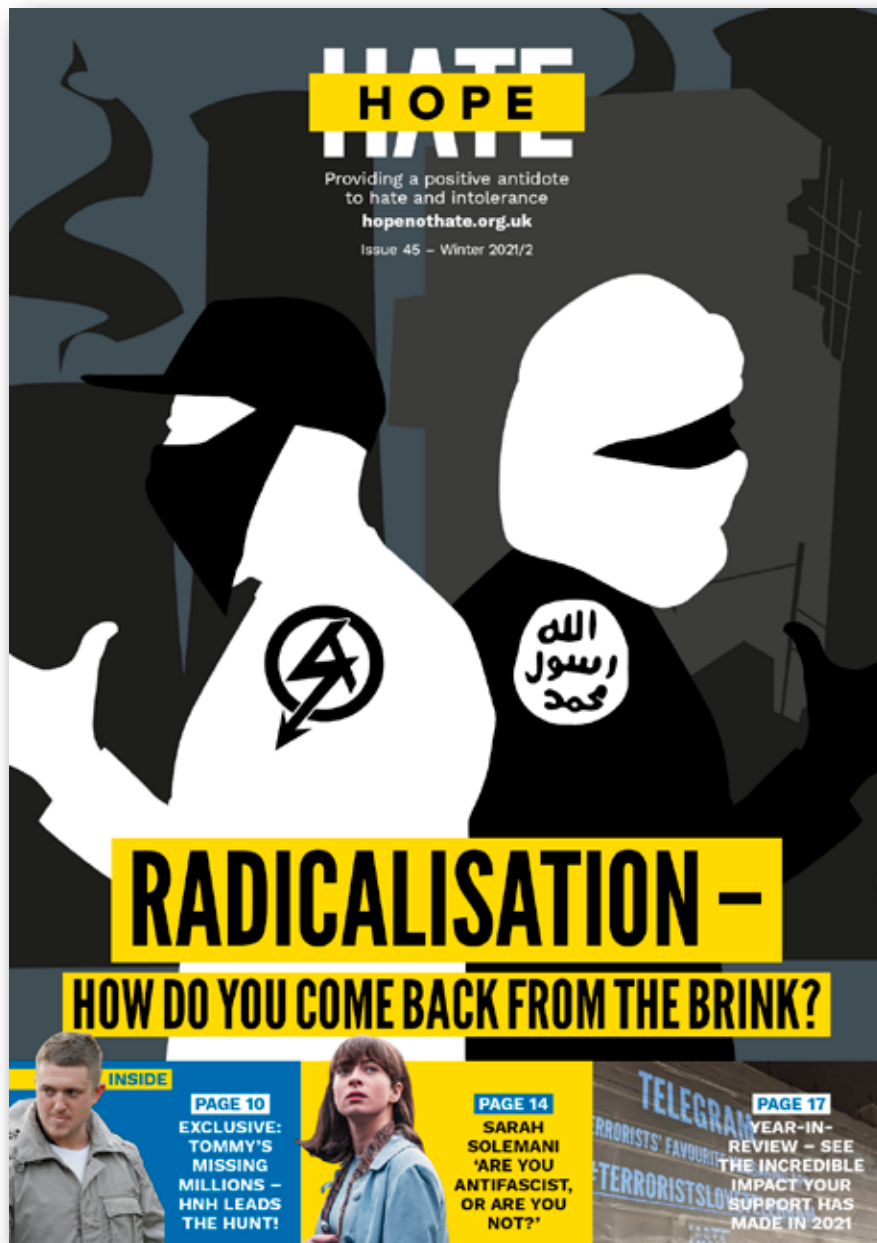


- 62% THINK THE RISK OF YOUNG PEOPLE BEING RADICALISED BY POLITICAL EXTREMISTS IS GREATER THAN IT WAS 10 YEARS AGO
- 66% ARE WORRIED BY THE AMOUNT OF EXTREMIST CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA
- 83% THINK SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES SHOULD DO MORE

Source: State of Nation poll, 24-25 January 2022

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